

# HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society Vol. XLI #6 Oct./Nov. 2019

## California Acts

While the Trump administration continues dismantling federal protections for the many human health and welfare and wildlife values assembled over a half century of hard work, California has taken action to ameliorate the damage done within the state. The legislature has proposed SB 1 which empowers state agencies to adopt the federal protections available under the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts in effect as of January 22, 2017. Agencies which had established strong policies and regulations based on federal law, will find themselves challenged in court without SB 1.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is of particular interest to Audubon, since this is the federal law that protects birds and wildlife under threat of extinction. The listing of the California Gnatcatcher in 1993 as a Threatened Species has proved a boon to the Palos Verdes-South Bay region, making possible the acquisitions that have led to the creation of the Palos Verdes Nature Reserve. While it is doubtful that the administration's attempted evisceration of ESA would affect the agreements now in place here, the effects in other parts of the nation could be disastrous for wildlife.

California has again stepped into the breach. In a surprise move that goes beyond SB 1, the state has agreed to an emergency listing proposal for the San Bernardino Kangaroo Rat (SBKR). The proposal, drafted by the Endangered Habitats League, presented clear evidence that the SBKR is in imminent danger of extinction—evidence that the federal government has had for many years, but on which it has failed to act. Now the state has.

## October/November Programs

Tuesday, October 15, at 7 P.M., at Madrona Marsh, Jennifer Boyce presents "Seabirds and their Habitat Restoration on the Channel Islands." Jennifer is a restoration ecologist with NOAA's Restoration Center. Among the many facets of restoration besides the ones we might most expect having to do with habitat, is educating the public how to view seabird colonies without disturbing them.



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Tuesday, November 19, at 7 P.M. at Madrona Marsh, Dessi Sieburth takes us out for "Birding Alaska." Dessi was ABA Young Birder of the Year in 2015, and has continued on to become one of our nation's outstanding birders. Put together the words Birds and Alaska, and you are in for a treat. See you there.



are in for a treat. See you there.

## From the President



### Chapter News

By David Quadhamer

Chapter elections will be held at our November meeting. Nominees include myself for President, Ann Dalkey for Vice President, Jess Morton for Treasurer and Vincent Lloyd for Secretary. Paul Blieden and Tracy Drake have been nominated for seats on the Board of Directors. We are looking for people to serve on the board. If you're interested, please let one of us know.

Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon will again offer five grants of up to \$1,000 next year. This is the third year that we have offered the grants. Grant applications in the following categories will be considered. 1) Scholarships to help local birders attend conferences, classes and workshops or to study ornithology. 2) Research grants for collecting data on birds, birding, habitat conservation, and education. 3) Specific projects from organizations that have missions similar to those of PV/SB Audubon. The grant guidelines are posted on

our website. Applications are due January 15, 2020.

Our last round of grants helped the Audubon Youth Environmental Service Club fund the planting of deerweed and rattlepod at the Linden H. Chandler preserve in support of the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly. Another grant went to plant 176 shrubs and small trees at the White Point Nature Preserve in support of the California Gnatcatcher. One grant supported the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy's Citizen Science Cactus Wren Monitoring Program. Another grant funded the purchase of 200 native plants for El Segundo Blue Butterfly habitat restoration at the Vicente Bluffs Reserve. The final grant funded the creation of a "Bird-friendly and Climate-wise Community" mural at an elementary school in Plumas County (see image below).

The Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly habitat restoration continues at Rolling Hills Prep.

We will have some volunteer days starting in October. Please check the Events Calendar on our website for dates and times. Tools and gloves are provided. We can use some help restoring this important habitat.

Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is quickly approaching. Our CBC will be held on Sunday, December 22. Please save the date, then come along. Ten groups will be out counting birds within our count circle and we can use lots of help doing it! To take part, please e-mail Vincent Lloyd at [stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com](mailto:stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com). There are full details on our website.

Jennifer Boyce will give a presentation at our October meeting on habitat restoration for seabirds on the Channel Islands. In November, Dessi Sieburth will give a presentation on birding in Alaska. Our calendar of bird walks and other events can be found on our website and in this issue. Please join us.





## BIRDS OF THE PENINSULA

July–August 2019

by Vincent Lloyd

A wet spring gave way to a cool, foggy summer. Because of the mild conditions, there was still substantial water in the south pond at Madrona Marsh all the way through to Labor Day.

The Marsh was a haven for assorted vagrants. A juvenile Little Blue Heron made an exciting appearance at the end of August. It was first seen by Chris Dean and Mark Rubke on August 23 and attracted birders from all over L.A. The birds also gave rise to considerable discussion, because while adult Little Blue Herons are unmistakably blue, the juveniles are white and closely resemble Snowy Egrets. Since there were several Snowy Egrets at the pond, it was easy to compare. The difference in behavior was noticeable: Snowies tend to keep their necks curved while hunting, while the LBH hunted with its neck extended. It also poked its bill into the tules, whereas the Snowies kept to the water. Another time, while the Snowies were moving deliberately through the pond looking for prey, the Little Blue Heron just stood at the edge of the tules like a Night Heron. Little Blue Herons moved into the San Diego area in the 1980s, but are seldom seen this far north. eBird has no other records for the South Bay. According to Wikipedia, immature Little Blue Herons often associate with Snowy Egrets, who tolerate them

until they start turning blue. In fact, Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets are closely related, both belonging to the genus *Egretta* — along with the Reddish Egret, the Tricolored Heron, and the Little Egret. (The Little Egret is an Old World species that is in the process of invading the New World. It started breeding on Barbados in the 90s and is now spreading across the Caribbean. It is occasionally seen in Florida.)

In addition to the heron, several lost warblers sought refuge at the Marsh: a Lucy's Warbler, found by Mark Rubke on July 19, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, spotted by Christine Jacobs on July 23, and a Magnolia Warbler reported by Manuel Duran on August 28. In addition to the previously seen European Goldfinch and Swinhoe's (formerly Japanese) White-eye, exotic sightings included a Yellow-crowned Bishop that popped up in front of Janet Scheel on July 27, and a Bronze Mannikin that surprised Jonathan Nakai on August 9. A White-tailed Kite passed through on July 31 (David Sexton), possibly on its way to Harbor Park, where Randy Harwood saw one on the same day. Jonathan and Bobby Trusela spotted a Blue Grosbeak on August 29 (another was seen at South Coast Botanical Garden on August 24 by Manuel Duran and Alejandro Cedillo.) Mark Scheel reported a Nuttall's Woodpecker on Aug. 29 and Mark Rubke a female Phainopepla on Sept. 2.

Shorebirds started their southward migration in July. Some unusual sandpipers stopped by the L.A.

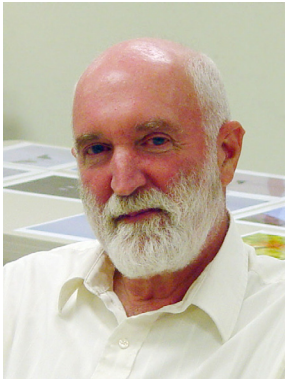
River at Willow St. A pair of Semipalmated Sandpipers attracted a large following Aug. 5 – 25. Jeff Boyd found several Red-necked Phalaropes on Aug. 1 and two immature Baird's Sandpipers on Aug. 18. Early in September, a pair of Red Knots made a rest stop (Shirley Reynolds and Dick Barth). Among other migrants, a Neotropic Cormorant was seen July 2 – 11 (CD) and two White Pelicans appeared on July 28 (Ryan Terrill). Two Acorn Woodpeckers continued in the area. A Common Gallinule was seen near Willow St on July 2 (Becky Turley, Kim Moore) and Aug 15 (Steve Morris).

Meanwhile, at Harbor Park, Two Band-tailed Pigeons were reported on July 7 (Jan and Michael Long). John Thomlinson found an unusual Solitary Sandpiper and two White-faced Ibises on Aug. 12. On Aug. 21, Jonathan Nakai and Bobby Trusela surprised a sleeping Lesser Nighthawk. Elsewhere, a Loggerhead Shrike, a once common species in the area, made an unusual comeback at Alta Vicente Preserve in RPV on Aug. 12. Chezy Yusuf found a Barn Owl at Hickory Park in Torrance on Aug. 21 while another was seen often at White Point Nature Preserve all through August. A Red-breasted Nuthatch was spotted on Crest Road in RPV on Aug. 25.

The author seeks reports from readers about unusual birds you see in the South Bay area (the area west of the Los Angeles River and south of I-105.) Send reports to [stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com](mailto:stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com).

## Conservation Matters

By Jess Morton



### The Dollar Wedge

Wildlife protection and developers' profits have been perched on opposite ends of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) teeter-totter since the act was first drafted by Congress. When ESA was being marked up in committee, the decision was made to let the scientific facts determine listing decisions. The members of Congress acknowledged that to write any balancing of financial interests into the act would render the act useless in the practical world. Utilitarians have hated ESA from the beginning, no aspect of it more than this one.

Were finance written into the Act, dollars would always win out over the public weal, because the value of wildlife and its required habitat cannot be calculated in monetary terms. If you have any doubt about this, think about my value or your own value. There are actuarial tables in which

you can look up dollar values placed on each of us, but how is that relevant to our own lives, family or place in society?

Although ESA theoretically excludes monetary factors during the listing process and its eventual implementation, money is never very far from ESA in practice. One need look no further than to the listing of our own California Gnatcatcher, the ins and outs of which have been documented in Hummin' for a quarter century, or the San Bernardino Kangaroo Rat (SBKR), written up on page one of this issue. In both cases, financial interests have played a major role in skewing or thwarting both listing and enforcement.

In one of the latest egregious moves to kill environmental protection laws, the Trump administration has

proposed to include the development industry's lodestar, writing into ESA procedures that financial considerations must be weighed. The effect of this would be to render ESA worthless, protecting only those species for which there is no opposition by anyone. Do such species even exist?

Certainly no new species would ever end up being listed, and even extant protections would be severely hampered, if not entirely defeated by an endless stream of legal challenges by those citing large fiscal damages caused by the listing of x, y or z. ESA might survive this onslaught here in California because of state legislative action, but elsewhere, the prospects for preserving our nation's wild heritage will have dimmed considerably.



California Gnatcatcher.

Photo by Jess Morton

## 2019 BIRD TAXONOMY UPDATES

by Vincent Lloyd

In June, the American Ornithological Society (A.O.S.) published the latest updates to the Checklist of Birds of North and Middle America (which covers North America proper, the Caribbean, and Hawaii). This year's updates include many changes to Mexican and Central American birds but very few affecting birds of the U.S. and Canada.

In fact, the only update likely to affect your U.S. bird-list is the change of the English name of the Blue-throated Hummingbird to the Blue-throated Mountain-gem. The Mountain-gems are a genus of hummers mostly in Central America, only one of which occurs in the U.S. The Blue-throated Mountain-gem breeds in the mountains of southeastern Arizona. Perhaps not wanting to seem too radical, the Committee at the same time rejected a sensible proposal to delete the hyphen in Mountain-gem. (And yet determined to show that they are balanced, they did delete the hyphen in Ground-dove. Evidently, consistency is not a principle of taxonomy!)

If you have traveled to East Asia or Europe, your species count may have just gone up, now that the White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta fusca*, has been split into three species. "White-winged Scoter" will be retained as the English name of the North American species, whose scientific name will be *Melanitta deglandi*, (named after a French ornithologist). The European species will be called the Velvet Scoter (as it already is in the UK); it will retain the scientific name *M. fusca*. The East Asia species becomes *M. stejnegeri*, Stejneger's Scoter (which this author hopes he never sees, as he has no clue how to pronounce its name. Why didn't the Committee approve the proposal to call it the "Siberian Scoter"???) Robert Ridgway, it seems, named this scoter after the Norwegian-born ornithologist Leonhard Stejneger. ("Melanitta", by the way, is Greek for "black duck". Sometimes ornithologists are unexpectedly logical.) Stejneger's



Scoters have been seen in the Aleutian Islands and could conceivably find their way to California; in fact, a male was reported in Foster City in 2005. They have a hooked knob at the base of the bill, yellow rather than black "lip" on the bill, and the male's flank is black rather than brownish. The splitting of the White-winged Scoter follows the split of the Black Scoter from the Common Scoter of Eurasia a few years ago. Could the Surf Scoter be next?

At the genus level, there is one addition and one subtraction. The storm-petrels (mustn't forget the hyphen!) of the genus *Oceanodroma*, which include most local storm-petrels, have all been thrown into the genus *Hydrobates*, the genus of the European Storm-petrel. It turns out that the Fork-tailed Storm-petrel is more closely related to the European Storm-petrel

(Continued on p. 6)



(Continued from p. 5)

than it is to the other species formerly included in *Oceanodroma*. Since the name *Hydrobates* is older, it has priority, even though there was only one species in *Hydrobates* and 17 in *Oceanodroma*. (The same thing happened to the warblers a few years ago: the dozens of species in *Dendroica* were moved into the genus *Setophaga*, which previously had contained only the American Redstart.) The family name remains Hydrobatidae. By the way, the European Storm-petrel has been added to the U.S. list, as it is now seen annually off the coast of North Carolina. (Another addition to the U.S. list is more interesting locally: the Nazca Booby.)

Even as one genus has been deleted, another has been added: *Leiothlypis*, a genus of warblers that includes Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Colima, Lucy, Nashville, and Virginia's Warblers. This change was first proposed in 2009 based on genetic evidence that indicated that these species are more closely related to each other than to any other warbler species. Subsequent research has strengthened that conclusion, so the Committee has finally approved the change.

Perhaps the most interesting news this year involves proposals that were turned down. One was the proposed split of the Northern Fulmar into Atlantic and Pacific species. Another was the split of Harlan's Hawk from Red-tailed Hawk, proposed by William Clark, co-author of the Peterson Guide To Hawks of North America. (If you get a chance, take Clark's excellent hawk identification class he gives at Pasadena Audubon.) Clark notes that the status of Harlan's Hawk has been debated for a long time: prior to 1891 it was considered a separate species; between 1891 and 1944 it was regarded as a sub-species of the Red-tailed Hawk; from 1944 to 1972 it was again a separate species; since 1973 it has been a subspecies.

Harlan's Hawk breeds in Alaska and the Yukon; it's the northwestern extreme of the range of the Red-tailed Hawk. They occasionally winter as far south as California. Clark's argument basically is that Harlan's Hawk shows distinctive plumage differences in both dark and light plumages. However, in a detailed response, nine other hawk experts argued that Harlan's Hawks interbreed with other Red-tails too often to be considered a separate species, and note that plumage characteristics of Harlan's Hawks can be found in individual hawks belonging to other subspecies of Red-tail, even as far away as Florida. Birders know that Red-tails vary enormously, so much so that the definition of the subspecies is itself controversial. To get a nice overview, scan the fourteen(!) plates of Red-tails in Wheeler's *Birds of Prey of the West*. The one genetic survey that has been published didn't find that Harlan's was genetically distinct. In any case, the Committee wasn't convinced that Harlan's should be split off. Maybe it is just as well. If Harlan's were made into a full species, we amateurs would be faced with the sometimes thorny problem of trying to identify real-life individual birds as either Harlan's or Red-tails. However, if you feel confident of your



Swinhoe's (?) White-eye.

Photo by David Ellsworth

i.d. and you want to count your Harlan's as a new species, hey — it's a free country.

Whereas the Harlan's Hawk is the sort of controversy that is scientifically interesting but ethically neutral, two other rejected proposals show that even the arcane science of avian taxonomy is not immune to the racial controversy that is dividing this nation. The first proposal was to re-name McCown's Longspur, which was named after a U.S. army officer, John McCown, who later became a Confederate general during the Civil War. Suddenly we're faced with a moral dilemma: is naming a bird after someone the moral equivalent to erecting a statue to them? The Committee chose to punt on this question.

The other controversy is a strange story that hits close to home because it concerns one of our most well-loved local birds, the Red-shafted Flicker. No, I'm not talking about the question of whether it should be split from the Yellow-shafted Flicker. The controversy this time is about its scientific name, *cafer*. It seems that this word is the Latinization of an ethnic term for black South Africans that is considered to be pejorative; in fact, it's known in South Africa as the k-word, and is highly offensive. How did this word get attached to a North American bird? The German ornithologist Gmelin, who first proposed the species in 1788, thought that the specimen had come from South Africa, because the tag read "Bay of Good Hope," which, alas, was in British Columbia and not near the Cape of Good Hope. To correct this error, a proposal was submitted to the Committee to change the scientific name to *lathamii*; John Latham described the first specimen in 1782. In a comment on the proposal, the Committee chairman remarked that "the action proposed in the Recommendation is outside the purview of our committee"; adding that the question was an international one, as several other bird species and non-avian animals also bear the name *cafer*.

One last rejected proposal that may disappoint was the change of the English name of the Saltmarsh Sparrow to Peterson's Sparrow,

in honor of Roger Tory Peterson. Probably the Committee didn't want to establish a new precedent.

P.S. Kimball Garrett has announced a taxonomic change that affects us locally because it has been adopted by eBird, even though it hasn't yet made it into the North American checklist. The White-eyes are Asian birds belonging to the genus *Zosterops*. In the past, these birds have been referred to as the Japanese White-eye. Common as cage birds, they have become established in both Hawaii and southern California. Based on genetic evidence, the Japanese population, now known as the Warbling White-eye, *Z. japonicus*, has been split from the mainland Asian species, Swinhoe's White-eye, *Z. simplex*. The two populations are nearly identical in appearance but have different calls. The Hawaiian birds are thought to be the Warbling White-eye. eBird has decided that the California birds are Swinhoe's White-eye, but Kimball considers this a "very tentative" identification. Locally, David Ellsworth has been studying the white-eyes in his neighborhood; he believes the calls and song match recordings of Swinhoe's White-eye. The classification of this pretty little bird is a minor issue in North American ornithology, but exemplifies a revolution: eBird has now eclipsed the A.O.S. as the practical authority!

### Chapter Support

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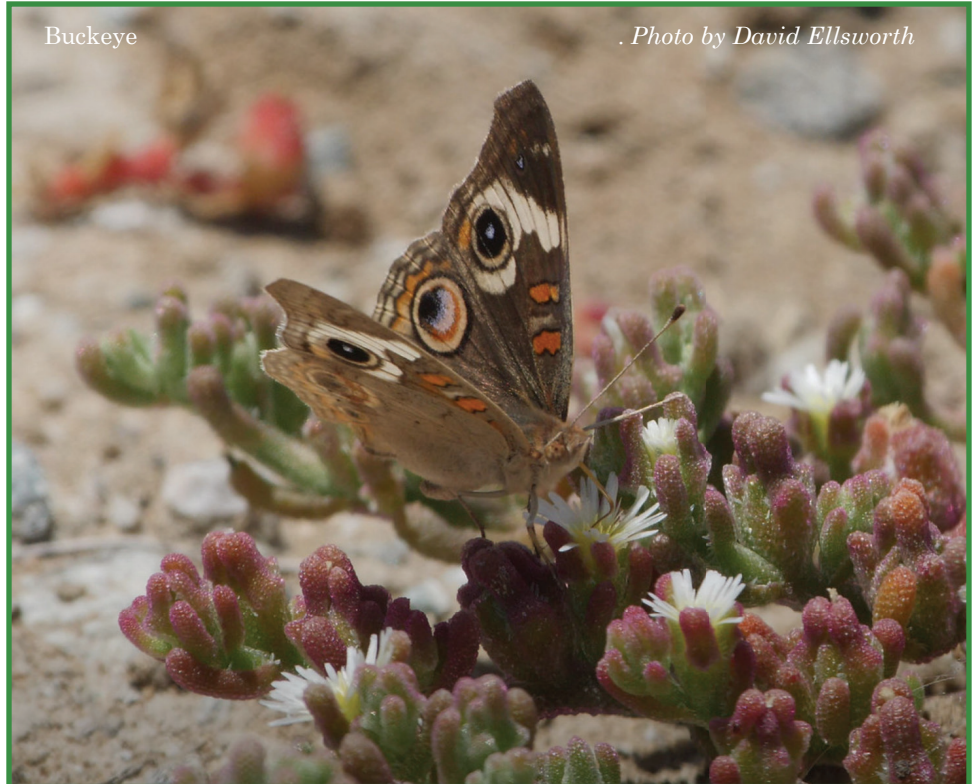
## RESULTS OF THE JULY BUTTERFLY COUNT

By Vincent Lloyd

It was a great year for butterflies! The 39th annual Palos Verdes Butterfly Count was held on July 14. Weather conditions were typical for July: foggy along the coast in the morning, sunny inland, breezy along the coast and in the afternoon, high temperatures in the 80s. Our team of 24 observers counted 1493 butterflies belonging to 30 species. This is the largest number of species reported since 2005! (That year, 32 species were seen; that number included the Woodland Skipper, Sagem, Northern White Skipper, and Spring Azure, species that are seldom seen in this area these days. These same species were also seen in 2003, when 33 species were counted — the highest ever — including a Brown Elfin).



Reakirt's Blue, 1984. Photo by Jess Morton



Buckeye

. Photo by David Ellsworth

This year's most exciting discovery was the Ceraunus Blue found by Tracy Drake at Madrona Marsh — the first time on the Count! This tiny blue butterfly, which ranges from Mexico to South America, is at the northern limit of its range in southern California. (St. Ceraunus was a bishop of Paris around the year 600.) Almost as exciting was the Reakirt's Blue that David Ellsworth discovered at 22nd Street Park in San Pedro. This lovely blue, closely related to the Ceraunus Blue, has been seen only twice previously on the Count, in 1998 and 1984. (This species was named for American amateur entomologist Tryon Reakirt, who for a few short years in the 1860s was one of the most highly respected entomologists in the U.S. His career came to an abrupt end in 1871, when

he fled to Lima, Peru, to avoid prosecution for fraud. He was last heard from in 1872, when he was 28. What happened to him after that is unknown.)

Another nice sight this year were the three Common Buckeyes: one found by Jess Morton in Chadwick Canyon, another seen by David Ellsworth at 22nd St. Park, and a third discovered by Tracy Drake at Madrona Marsh. This lovely butterfly, which is widespread throughout the U.S., used to be seen annually on the Count, but has been rather "spotty" the last few years. Another nice find were the three Dainty Sulphurs: one found by David Ellsworth at 22nd St Park, another found by Mike Bell at Linden Chandler Preserve, and one spotted by Tracy Drake at Madrona Marsh. This species had been seen only five times



## Here are the total counts:

Anise Swallowtail 7  
 Giant Swallowtail 11  
 Western Tiger Swallowtail 27  
 Swallowtail sp. 4  
 Checkered White 27  
 Cabbage White 366  
 White sp. 11  
 Orange Sulphur 8  
 Cloudless Sulphur 60

Dainty Sulphur 3  
 Gray Hairstreak 85  
 Western Pygmy Blue 10  
 Marine Blue 362  
 Ceraunus Blue 1  
 Reakirt's Blue 1  
 Square-spotted Blue 5  
 El Segundo Blue 43  
 Acmon Blue 19  
 Blue sp. 36  
 Fatal Metalmark 8  
 Gulf Fritillary 86  
 Mourning Cloak 36

American Lady 5  
 Painted Lady 14  
 West Coast Lady 10  
 Lady sp. 8  
 Red Admiral 3  
 Common Buckeye 3  
 Monarch 49  
 Funereal Duskywing 19  
 White Checkered Skipper 8  
 Fiery Skipper 51  
 Sandhill Skipper 6  
 Umber Skipper 73

before, all since 2004. It was a good year for the Ladies, too. After the outstanding flight of Painted Ladies in the spring, it's not surprising that 14 were seen on the count, but we also saw five American Ladies and 10 West Coast Ladies (as well as 8 unspecified Ladies); a big improvement over last year, when only four Ladies in all were counted.

As usual, the Cabbage White was the most abundant species (366), but the Marine Blue was not far behind (362). Numbers of Gulf Fritillaries, which are highly variable, were a bit down this year (86). Madrona Marsh had the highest species count (22) at any one spot, but David Ellsworth found 22 species in his tour of San Pedro. Gardena Willows had 19 species. No doubt last winter's generous rainfall was a major factor in boosting the numbers this year.

The results of our Count, along with about 400 other counts, will be included in the NABA Butterfly Count 2019 Report issued by the National

Butterfly Association. In 2018, Palos Verdes had the highest numbers of Funereal Duskywings (10) and White Checkered-skippers (30) of any of the counts.

Thankstothisyear'sbutterfly counters: Bill Arrowsmith, Fran Arrowsmith, Mike Bell, Jeanne Bellemin, Kathy

Berkholder, Paul Blieden, Mark Christensen, Ann Dalkey, Tracy Drake, David Ellsworth, David Faulkner, Stacy Herman, Darlene King, Annie Mason, Brian Mason, Jess Morton, Naoko, David Quadhamer, Cindy Reid, Mark Rubke, John Thomlinson, Lore Schmigdall, and Diane Smith.



Fatal Metalmark  
 Photo by Tracy Drake

## A Love Song to the Eastern Sierra

By Evi Meyer

Every year I travel to the Eastern Sierra to do some birding in the Mono Lake basin. The Mono Lake Committee, an environmental organization based in Lee Vining, offers wonderful field seminars for birders that take them deep into the habitats of the local ecosystem. This year, through recommendations of friends and strangers, I also had a chance to explore some of the most incredible landscapes the area has to offer.

Traveling up the 14 and 395 offers so much geologic and cultural history that it is worth a trip in itself. Driving through Red Rock Canyon State Park provides spectacular views of dark red rock formations, which contrast starkly with the black geologic formation called Fossil Falls, 45 miles to the north. Another 35 miles up the road lies Owens Lake, a former toxic dust bowl transformed into environmental success, and even designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Site of international importance. A bit further north a visit to Manzanar, one of ten American WWII internment

camps for Japanese Americans lets one reflect on some of our not so proud history. So, there is plenty to see on the way up to Mono Lake, but the last stop has to be Schat's Bakery in Bishop to stock up on pastry.

I usually travel up to the Sierra with my good birding friend Jess Morton, who has been referred to by the local Sierrans as Ansel Adams or John Muir. Since Jess is both an excellent photographer and expert naturalist that description seems very fitting. This summer we attended two of the Mono Lake Committee's field seminars called "Falling for Migration".

As part of the seminar we birded Bridgeport Valley where we saw lots of back-riding Eared, Western and Clark's Grebe chicks, as well as the Mono Lake area with thousands of Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. South of Lee Vining we visited Crowley Lake with its shorebirds, White-faced Ibises and Sage Thrashers. In the

Mammoth area we found a good cross section of mountain birds including White-headed Woodpeckers.

There is always so much to learn during these field seminars. The leaders are well known bird experts and share their knowledge generously. An additional benefit of participating in these seminars is the fact that the proceeds go towards bringing students from Los Angeles to the location from which they receive their drinking water. The main focus of the Mono Lake Committee's Outdoor Education Center (OEC) is to connect the people from Los Angeles to the source of their water, and show that balanced solutions are possible for meeting water needs of both people and the environment. There is no better way to do that than to educate young students on site.

Before and after the four days of field seminars we had some time to explore the landscape in and around the



White-faced Ibis show their iridescent rainbows



Mono Basin. A friend of mine had suggested visiting Convict Lake, which is reached by turning off of the 395 directly across from the Mammoth Yosemite airport.

on the three-mile loop trail around the lake provides gorgeous views of these mountains reflected in the still water. Half way through the trail, at the far side of the

traversed. Standing still for a few moments and listening to the Aspen leaves rustling in the wind was pure magic. Nature's music at its best. By the time we were back at the beginning of the trail we had all but forgotten its gruesome history.

Over a dinner at the Epic Café in Lee Vining a couple of strangers, with whom we shared a table, told us about this "best bang for the buck" (their words, not mine) nature trail they had explored the day before. It turns out that about ten miles up the road from Toms Place there is a place called Mosquito Flat, the trailhead to the Little Lakes Valley Trail. The trail is about 7 miles long and follows Rock Creek into a relatively flat alpine valley.

We knew that we would not have the time to spend an entire  
*(Continued on p. 12)*



Convict Lake from the north shore

Convict Lake received its name from an 1871 encounter between Robert Morrison, a Benton merchant and citizens' posse member, and three convicts who had escaped the Carson City state penitentiary. The convicts killed Morrison but were later captured and hanged in Bishop. This introduction to the lake, visibly posted at the trailhead, did not make for a light-hearted start of the walk.

However, it did not take long to be captivated by the beauty of Convict Lake. Though it is small, it boasts gorgeous turquoise blue water surrounded by dramatic mountains. A peaceful walk

lake, an Aspen forest has to be



Little Lake Valley, yet another hidden Sierra gem



*(Continued from p. 11)*

day on this trail, but decided to cut one of our birding field seminars a bit short and head up to the Little Lakes Valley for a late afternoon to early evening walk. It seemed like the perfect time to go since the small parking lot was clearing out with people returning from their day trips. The trailhead is located at about 10,000 feet. From there a narrow, short but steep uphill trail leads to the relatively flat valley with little further incline. The wildflowers at this elevation were absolutely spectacular covering the entire palette of nature's colors. Butterflies and other insects seemed to grow delirious with all the pollen and nectar they indulged in.

As soon as the trail along Rock Creek flattened out the landscape became studded with small glacier-carved lakes set against a breathtaking backdrop of snow

covered mountain peaks. Each small lake offered stunning alpine reflections only to be outdone by the next lake around the bend. I can't remember how many times we stopped just to acknowledge the "WOW-moments". This was easily one of the ten most beautiful places I have ever visited. We continued along the trail for about three miles, then headed back to return to the car before it got dark. What a perfect way to end the day.

At the beginning of our trip up the 395 we had noticed a small sign for "Obsidian Dome" just about five miles south of the June Lake junction. We made a mental note to perhaps visit this place on the way home. Coincidentally, the same strangers who had recommended the Little Lakes Valley trail had also been to the Obsidian Dome and highly recommended it. We did some research and decided to

leave Lee Vining early on our last day to visit this place before it got hotter than Hades.

A 2.7 mile bumpy dirt road leads to the base of Obsidian Dome, an old lava dome about one mile long and 300ft high. A short steep trail leads up to the center of the volcano with spectacular obsidian cathedrals and other volcanic rock formations through which one can walk. Because most of the rock formations are dark they heat up quickly in the morning sun. After about an hour of exploration without any shade we were ready to get into an air-conditioned car to cool down. On the way home we were laughing about the size of pumice rocks we were able to lift and how impressive that looked on photos.

After many years of going to Mono Lake to mostly look at birds, plants and insects, I have now found another reason to visit this area. The beauty of

the landscape of the Eastern Sierra in the Mono Basin goes way beyond just the South Tufas at Mono Lake with which I was familiar. There are gorgeous places all over this area and I will make sure that any future trip includes time to visit more of them, as well. It's good to listen to recommendations of friends and strangers and explore the unknown. There are always new things to fall in love with and sing their song.



Obsidian Dome, an ancient eruptive clutter



## This Unknown Peninsula

### Dew Drops

By Jess Morton

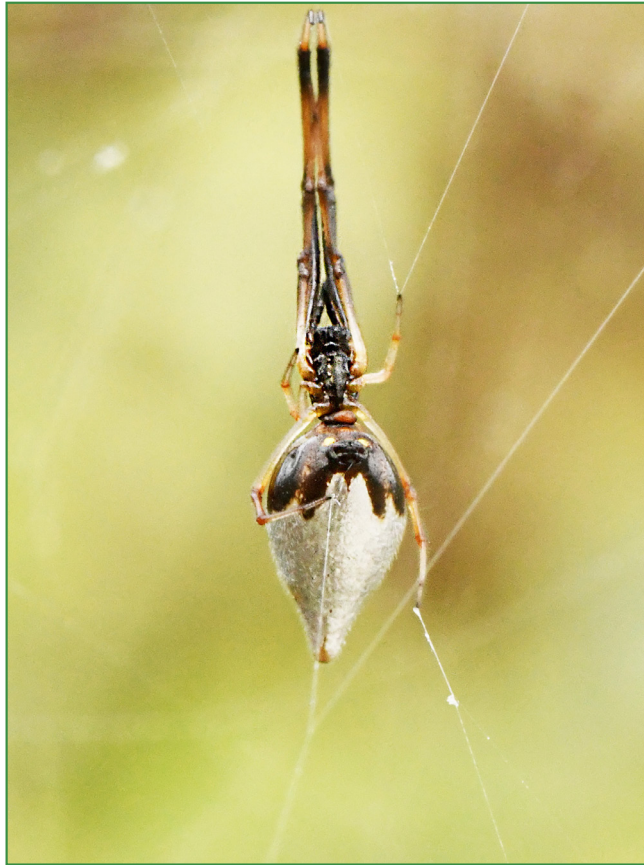
**F**our of them! That's unusual, I thought. A single kind of orb web weaver, or perhaps two, one large and one small, tend to dominate a particular shrub. A few feet over, another one or two will be present. But here, hung within this one cliff-hugging salt bush, and within little more than a hand span, were four different kinds of orb spiders.

Each of the four was a common member of our local arachnic (if that's a word) community, ranging from the little Trash-web Spider, *Cyclosa turbinata*, that hides in plain sight in the dead center of its web, to the very large Silver Orb Weaver, *Argiope argentata*. The smaller of the other two is the Labyrinth Spider, a member of the genus *Metepeira*. It combines its orb web with a separate shelter hung in a tangle of silk off to the side. Finally, there is the fall nemesis that likes to suspend its web in the shrubs just outside your front door at the perfect height for you to walk into. She—and the one that gets you is a female—is the Western Spotted Orb Weaver, *Neoscona oaxacensis*.

Now, you do not have to memorize those Latin monikers. There's no quiz at the end of this article,

but some folks just like big, odd words. (I, for one, plead guilty)

Anyway, while I was marveling at how these four spiders managed to interweave their webs without the various planes intersecting in the wrong places,



my attention was caught by a flash of silver sunlight. A drop of dew? On a warm morning long after an early fog had burned off? No! On close examination of this particular web, here was yet another spider, apparently sharing a much larger spider's web, a perilous place to be, I would think. About the size of a Trash-web

Spider, this little one was also hidden in plain sight. Rather than looking like just another bit of trash, this one simply looked like a water drop to a casual glance.

The thorax and base of the abdomen were actually quite dark, while the bulk of the abdomen formed a protuberant cone glistening of silver, with a streak of red running from its peak down its front side. The spider was very long legged, and when stretched out along a strand of silk in the web, looked like nothing more than a dew drop. If you can get past the fact that it's a spider, this is one gorgeous creature.

When I got home and started looking through my reference library, there it was and, appropriately enough, is named the Dew Drop Spider. Although its coloring varies, the general shape persists.

Also explained was its mode of life, as a kleptoparasite (from Greek for thief, as in kleptocracy). The Dew Drop Spider is one of several small creatures, including the males of the host species, that eat the insects trapped in the web that are too small for the web maker herself to bother with.

Nothing in nature goes to waste!

## MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

# Chapter Calendar

### EVENTS

Tuesday, Oct. 15, 5:30 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Tuesday, Oct. 15, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Jennifer Boyce, presenting a program on seabirds and their habitat restoration. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Tuesday, Nov. 19, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Dessi Sieburth, presenting a program called "Birding Alaska". Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

### FIELD TRIPS

Tuesday, Oct. 1, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." Join Audubon leader Tommie Hite and friends on a ramble around a great local birding area. Meet at Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, Oct. 2: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit [www.wbu.com/redondobeach](http://www.wbu.com/redondobeach) and click Birding with Bob.

Sunday, Oct. 6, 8 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Bird Walk through Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Join Audubon leaders to explore the newly restored KMHRP and witness the birds return to this sanctuary in the middle of our metropolitan area. Meet in the parking lot closest to Anaheim and Vermont.

Saturday, Oct. 6, 3 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente History Walk to Ocean Trails Reserve. Walk the switchback trail to the beach. Learn about local geology and local fall blooming habitat. Stay to watch the sunset from beautiful Founders Park. Moderate. For details, visit [www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm](http://www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm).

Tuesday, Oct. 8, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Wednesday, Oct. 9, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, Oct. 9, 8:30 a.m.: Midweek Field trip to Silver Saddle Resort with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com) or call 323-295-6688.

Saturday, Oct. 12, 9 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to George F Canyon. Wander along a willow filled canyon stream with coastal sage scrub restored habitat. Look down on the Peninsula's rare Catalina Schist from one of the few places you can see the rock exposed. Easy to moderate. For details, visit [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org).

Sunday, Oct. 13, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Audubon leader David Quadhamer 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, Oct. 13, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Sycamore Canyon and Oxnard Plain with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com) or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, Oct. 15, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Sunday, Oct. 20, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. For details, visit [www.wbu.com/redondobeach](http://www.wbu.com/redondobeach).

Sunday, Oct. 20, 8–11 a.m.: Bird Walk through Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. See Oct. 6 for details.

Sunday, Oct. 20, 8:30 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Silver Saddle Resort with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com) or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, Oct. 22, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Saturday, Oct. 26, 8:30-10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Dinuk Magamma. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Sunday, Oct. 27, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Ballona Creek and Freshwater Marsh with Eric and Ann Brooks.



For details, e-mail [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com) or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, Oct. 29, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Sunday, Nov. 3, 8-a.m.: Bird Walk in Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. See Oct. 6 for details.

Sunday, Nov. 3, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com) or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, Nov. 5, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Wednesday, Nov. 6: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit [www.wbu.com/redondobeach](http://www.wbu.com/redondobeach) and click on Birding with Bob.

Saturday, Nov. 9, 9 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to White Point Nature Preserve. Celebrate Veterans Day walking through restored coastal sage scrub habitat and stop at a former gun emplacement to learn about the military history of the area. Don't miss the Nature Education Center with activities for the whole family. Easy to moderate. For details, visit [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org).

Sunday, Nov. 10, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 13 for details.

Tuesday, Nov. 12, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Wednesday, Nov. 13, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. Oct. 9 for details.

Saturday, Nov. 16, 8 a.m.: Join Eric for the LA Audubon birdwalk at Kenneth Hahn Park. For details, e-mail [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com) or call 323-295-6688.

Sunday, Nov. 17, 8 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Bird Walk through Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. See Oct. 6 for details.

Sunday, Nov. 17, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. For details, visit

The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, of which PV/SB Audubon is the local chapter, are dedicated to the understanding and preservation of our natural heritage. Within the framework of National Audubon Society policies, we seek and implement ways to preserve indigenous flora and fauna, especially that of our local area, and provide educational services to the region's communities with respect to birds, wildlife, ecology and conservation.

**Executive Officers**

- President: David Quadhamer, 310 833-3095
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- Treasurer: Jess Morton, [jmorton@igc.org](mailto:jmorton@igc.org)
- Secretary: Vincent Lloyd,  
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- Directors:** Paul Blieden, Tracy Drake,

**Committees:**

- Calendar: Evi Meyer, [evimeyer@cox.net](mailto:evimeyer@cox.net)
  - Christmas Bird Count: Vincent Lloyd
  - Field Trips: Ann and Eric Brooks, [motmots@aol.com](mailto:motmots@aol.com)
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[dquadhamer@yahoo.com](mailto:dquadhamer@yahoo.com)
- Photos by the author unless stated otherwise.

[www.wbu.com/redondobeach](http://www.wbu.com/redondobeach).

Tuesday, Nov. 19, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Oct. 1 for details.

Saturday, Nov. 23, 8:30-10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Dinuk Magamma. See Oct. 26 for details.

Saturday, Nov. 23, 12:30 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 to strenuous. For details, visit [www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm](http://www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm).

NOTE: PV/South Bay Audubon field trips are generally free, but donations are much appreciated to support programs of the chapter.

THIRD TUESDAY PROGRAMS

7 PM AT MADRONA MARSH

3201 PLAZA DEL AMO, TORRANCE



On October 15th, "Seabirds and their Habitat Restoration on the Channel Islands" will be our topic of the evening, presented by Jennifer Boyce, a restoration ecologist with NOAA's Restoration Center.



November 19th, "Birding Alaska" is the title of Dessi Sieburth's presentation at our meeting. Dessi was American Birding Association (ABA) Young Birder of the Year in 2015



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Time-sensitive material

AVIANTICS

By Evi Meyer



Where is that blue paintbrush?

