



HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society Vol. XLIII #2 February/March 2021

Third Tuesday Programs

Presented Via Zoom



On **February 16th**, **Randy Harwood** will present **“The Birds and Bees (and more) - a photographic celebration of the animal life in and around Palos Verdes”** via Zoom. We will get a photographic look at many of the common, and not so common, animals you might encounter on the Peninsula and in the nearby ocean.

Randy Harwood was a dentist in the South Bay for 40 years, where he served as a clinical instructor at his alma mater, UCLA. He served on the Board of the West LA Dental Society. He was a member of the Board and the President of the Los Angeles Underwater Photographic Society for over 20 years. Presently he is a Board member of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, chairs the Stewardship Committee, leads nature walks (hopefully again soon) and monitors and tracks wildlife for the Conservancy. He is a certified California Naturalist. He has pursued underwater and wildlife photography for many years.

On **March 16th**, at 7 PM, **Dr. Daniel Kinka**, Wildlife Restoration Manager (pictured below) and Michael Wainright, Senior Philanthropy Manager, present via Zoom, **“Restoring a Prairie Ecosystem,”** the story of the American Prairie Reserve (APR), a 3.2-million acre native habitat reserve growing in the heart of Montana’s Northern Great Plains.



The APR is working to restore a complete and fully functioning prairie ecosystem by creating the largest nature reserve in the continental United States. APR is focusing on research, exploration, and storytelling to help create protected areas; deploying state-of-the-art technology to monitor the state of ecosystems and wildlife both in Montana and globally and, finally, building capacity locally to improve the effectiveness of protected area management. A partner to this effort, the National Geographic Society is supporting two Fellows, our speaker of the evening, Dr. Daniel Kinka, APR Wildlife Restoration Manager, and Dr. Rae Wynn Grant, a large carnivore biologist. With the aid of APR staff and volunteers, the two are moving critical pieces of conservation work forward.

Conservation Concerns

By Jess Morton

Legislation introduced in Congress and a major grant to Audubon are encouraging signs that the serious environmental problems related to the Salton Sea will finally be addressed. The largest lake in California by far, the Salton Sea is the most significant critical habitat for birds in the state. It is a critical stopover point for millions of birds that pass through and or live there every year. And it has been dying a slow death of overuse and lack of replenishing rainfall for many years.

On the Congressional front, Rep. Raúl Ruiz, M.D. (D-Palm Desert), introduced the Salton Sea Public Health and Environmental Protection Act of 2020. The bill, if passed in the next session of Congress, would codify a 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between the state of California and the federal government to collaborate on habitat and dust suppression projects that would minimize harm to people and wildlife due to the shrinking sea.

“Audubon deeply appreciates Rep. Ruiz’ leadership on

the Salton Sea,” said Frank Ruiz, Audubon California’s Salton Sea program director. “As one of the largest land-owners near the Salton Sea, the federal government bears an equally large responsibility for its decline,



Blizzard - Snow Geese at the Salton Sea Photo: Jess Morton

which is harming hundreds of thousands of people and hundreds of species of birds. This legislation will ensure that the federal government will meet its responsibilities at the Salton Sea, especially over the next few years. The months ahead are crucial to controlling dust emissions and providing habitat as the sea continues to shrink.”

At the local level, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has awarded a grant of \$700,000 to Audubon California for efforts to stabilize, restore and/or enhance wetlands near the town of Bombay Beach, on the Salton Sea. The area hosts a number of emergent

wetlands formed by flows from nearby springs. These incidental wetlands, nearby saline wetlands and brackish pools have become home to species including the Yuma Ridgway’s Rail, American Avocet, Northern Pintail and possibly Desert Pupfish.

“The species that are already arriving to use this area, even without formal restoration or management of the habitat, show that nature takes advantage of even the smallest opportunity,” said Andrea Jones, director of bird conservation for Audubon California.

“Unfortunately, that opportunity at Bombay Beach will stay small without some major help. This grant will help us control the invasive tamarisk trees which choke out native plants, protect these wetlands from storm runoff, control dust and create badly-needed habitat for birds.”

This first phase of the project, which is expected to take two years, includes habitat and dust control project design, scientific monitoring and data collection, and community engagement in planning design. Following successful completion of this phase, groundbreaking on construction would start 2023.

Prospects for Controlling Climate Change-- A Personal Opinion

Four years ago in these pages, I was quite confident about predicting what was likely to happen on the environmental front under the new administration in Washington. In 2021, that task is much less certain. It will depend on whether Democrats and Republicans can find common ground in guiding this nation through the very troubled waters in which we find ourselves today. I have hopes, but they are severely limited because of the unilateral refusal to give ground on anything substantive by party leaders who insist on turning matters of public well being into political footballs. Nothing good ever comes of that.

Back then, both the legislative and administrative branches of government were firmly in the hands of those who were determined to undo the environmental gains of the prior five decades. The only error I made then was in underestimating the damage done over the four years, especially on the climate change front. While there have been modest gains here and there at the state and private sector levels, particularly here in California, at the federal level, we have lost considerably more than the four intervening years in being able to come to grips with the

one existential problem of our time, global warming and its dire consequences.

The incoming Biden administration laid out some ambitious goals in the weeks before taking office. While the House can be counted on to approve large parts of the climate control agenda, passage will be much harder in the Senate, even if the filibuster is done away with, and that seems unlikely. The passage of critical measures for emissions controls, green infrastructure funding and the like will depend on some party members breaking ranks for the good of the country rather than the party, something that did not happen over the last four years. Unless recent events have loosened the ideological stranglehold on party members, the world has little hope of limiting warming to

3 degrees, much less the 1.5 hoped for in the Paris Accords.

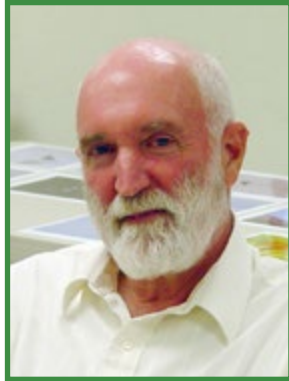
The international agreements on climate change reached in Paris were voluntary, and no one has met the targets set at the time. The Biden Administration will rejoin that effort and participate in future target-setting meetings. The goal at coming meetings is to set binding agreements, not aspirational ones. The US will be at the negotiating table for the next round, fortunately. Whether we can live up to any agreement made there will depend on the willingness of Congress to go along with it, because implementation will require appropriate legislation in addition to the administration's setting of mandatory standards. I have my hopes for success in this effort. And my fears of failure.



Wood Duck Reflections, Averill Park

Photo: Jess Morton

From the Editor



An Act of Infamy

By Jess Morton

The last four years has seen an unprecedented assault on the environmental protections on which the health of all wildlife and our fellow citizens depend. It is not just birds that are in peril of losing the habitats in which they live to pollution, exploitation of natural resources and greed. On January 6th, the birds may have been oblivious, but the entire human population of the planet witnessed an assault on the very habitat of the social contract on which the United States Constitution and all its dependent institutions are founded.

The National Audubon Society's president David Yarnold, put it very clearly in a statement released as the events of the day unfolded. We cannot agree more.

"Like the rest of the world, we watched the events at the U.S. Capitol in horror as anti-democratic zealots violently disrupted what

should have been a ceremonial start to the peaceful transition of power after a free and fair election.

"Every elected official who supports and gives voice to anti-American conspiracy theories about this election is directly responsible for the violence taking place in our nation's capital today, and they will bear the stain of this moment for the rest of their political lives.

"History — and we — will hold responsible the elected officials who have promoted the assault on our democracy.

"This includes first and foremost President Trump, and regrettably, members of Congress with whom we have previously worked in partnership on conservation issues. To them we say: you should be ashamed of yourselves. You have broken our trust and the trust of the American people and there will be consequences for that. We will not stand with people who have undermined democracy.

"There is no other way to say it: we are disgusted by the Members of Congress who have chosen to weaken the very process that brought them into office and who perpetuate the kind of voter suppression efforts that have long been used to disenfranchise Black and brown voters in this country.

"This is beyond politics. We take great pride in the fact that Audubon members span the political spectrum and

we cannot stand by while the foundation of our democracy is at stake. We will stand by our principles and we will hold our partners and leaders accountable.

"The blatantly racist contrast between the response of Capitol Police to insurrectionists smashing into the U.S. Capitol in order to subvert the results of a free and fair election compared with the unhesitatingly violent and militant response to Black and brown people peacefully protesting for the right to live is undeniable. It is incited and encouraged by the words and deeds of President Trump, but is also representative of an institutionalized racism in this country that must be dismantled.

"Five people have died, including a police officer who was defending the Capitol.

"Congress and law enforcement must do their jobs to uphold American democracy, prevent further violence, and uphold the rule of law.

"For more than 115 years, Audubon's members, volunteers and staff have been conservationists and community builders. Everything we stand for, all of the work we do to protect birds and the places they need, is predicated on the rule of law. We believe that those who have committed crimes should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law — and those who enabled them should be held to account."

RESULTS OF THE PALOS VERDES/ SOUTH BAY NEIGHBORHOOD BIRD COUNT

by Vincent Lloyd

For the first time in 55 years, the Palos Verdes/South Bay Christmas Bird count was cancelled as the epidemic began to spiral out of control at the end of November. As a safe alternative that would be consistent with stay-at-home orders, the Audubon Board came up with a plan for a Neighborhood Bird Count. Participants were invited to count birds in their yards and neighborhoods, observing epidemic safety precautions. The results are now in.

Venturing out under overcast skies, 35 eager observers participated in the Count, collectively observing for 115 hours and walking 68 miles. The submitted checklists included a total of 16909 individual birds. The species count was 166, comparable to normal CBCs.

The most abundant bird seen was the California Gull (1005 birds), followed closely by their arch-rival, the Western Gull (840). (Rumors that the Western Gull Association is filing a complaint about shredded checklists are unfounded.) You will not be surprised to read that the most common passerine was the House Finch (745). (We really do need to do a better job counting the House Sparrows, of which a mere 110 were observed!) On the other end of the scale, only one individual was seen of the following species: Wood Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Clark's Grebe, Wandering Tattler, Lesser Yellowlegs, Caspian Tern, Little Blue Heron, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Mountain Chickadee, Bewick's Wren, Phainopepla, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Hooded Oriole, Bullock's Oriole, Black-and-White Warbler, Lucy's Warbler and Wilson's Warbler. Particularly rare were the Long-tailed Duck, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, and Mountain Chickadee, each of which has been



Mountain Chickadee

Photo: Jonathan Nakai

seen less than ten times on the CBC. Rarest of all is the Little Blue Heron, a species which has never been seen on the CBC, but which may be becoming more common in our area. This individual has been hanging out for the past few weeks at the little wetland at Cabrillo Beach. The Lucy's Warbler, spotted by Tracy Drake and Lisa Fimiani at Bixby Marshland in Carson, and the Western Kingbird, found by Tracy and Lisa at Madrona Marsh, have been seen only once on the CBC. A close call was the Bald Eagle, seen a couple of days before Count Day on the L.A. River. Luck likewise failed our South Coast Botanic Garden team, as the Broad-winged Hawk was missing in action. Another eleven species were seen during Count Week, bringing the Count Week total up to 177.

September's fires seem to have driven an unusual number of mountain species into our area. Besides the Mountain Chickadee (found by Jonathan Nakai on the Willow Springs Trail at the upper end of George F. Canyon), there were 26 Purple Finch and 12 Pine Siskin. Birds that were missed this year included the Cactus Wren, Brown-headed Cowbird, Tricolored Blackbird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Tropical Kingbird, Merlin, Turkey Vulture, Costa's Hummingbird, White-winged Scoter, and pelagic birds other than the Black-vented Shearwater.

PV Audubon thanks all who contributed. Job well done!

All That Jaz



By Jazmin Rios

Projects for 2021

Happy New Year everyone! Since the start of my position as the Project Manager I have continued to reach out to local environmental organizations. I had the opportunity of meeting with folks at White Point Nature Preserve, Madrona Marsh and with Marcos Trinidad at Debs Park before the stay at home order went into effect in Los Angeles

County. We discussed future plans for the Audubon YES! Program such as having habitat restoration days again, once it is safe to do so.

I also visited Malaga Dune several times in search of irrigation water and found a potential source for future restoration efforts and a mushroom or two. I will be visiting Chandler Preserve with Ann Dalkey and Austin Parker to learn more about the adopt-a-plots for El Segundo and PV Blue Butterfly. Stay tuned for updates on both Malaga Dunes and Palos Verdes Blue habitat restoration efforts.

Now that schools have resumed classes and are back from the holidays, I am contacting schools with



established partnerships with our Audubon Yes! Program, and looking to create new ones. If you have any ideas or want to chat about any of these projects, feel free to reach out to me at mjazminrios@pvsub-audubon.org.

Bird-watching during the Pandemic

The pandemic has had a profound impact on our lives, the way we spend our time, and the activities we can safely engage in. One thing that changed for me and my family,

View Northeast from Malaga Dune

Photo: Carlos Salas





Allen's Hummingbird
Photo: Jess Morton

right outside our apartment. There was an American Crow down the block and three American Goldfinches were flitting from tree to tree. Carlos pointed out one of the few birds he is confident identifying, a single House Finch. Around the corner we spotted another hummingbird: an Anna's hummingbird! I was surprised to see one so close



House Finch Photo: Jess Morton

is on the record as far as I am concerned. Not only is this the first time I have participated in a Los Angeles CBC, it is special because Carlos got to participate with me. It kicked off what has become his amateur birding hobby. Now every time we go out on a walk or hike, Carlos makes sure he has his binoculars with him.

aside from moving 2,027 miles back west (i.e., Chicago to LA), was that I now had year round access to parks and nature.

My partner Carlos and I are fortunate to be able to work from home. This has allowed us to go on walks around our neighborhood during breaks, explore the city's green spaces, and, for the first time, participate in a Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count.

Given the time restrictions and Carlos needing to return home for a work meeting, we decided to count bird sightings around our neighborhood on a route we were both familiar with. We started our observations the moment we walked out of our apartment. Allen's Hummingbird! It was perched

to an Allen's, but there it was clear as day, boasting an iridescent magenta crown. Another bird in the books that Carlos is now able to identify.

One hour, 60 birds, and 11 taxa later, we headed back home with enough time for Carlos to make his meeting.

Even though my count falls outside of any of the official CBC target areas, this year's CBC



Photo: Jess Morton

Anna's Hummingbird

BIRDS OF THE
PENINSULA
November–December
2020

by Vincent Lloyd

The last two months of 2020 were unusually dry. The first good rain came at the end of December, when 0.87 inch fell at Madrona Marsh.

Early in November, Dave Moody spotted a late migrating **Swainson's Hawk** on the L.A. River at Willow St.; Joyce Brady saw another at Hopkins Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on Nov. 10. A **Broad-winged Hawk**, from Eastern North America, was seen at Banning Park in Wilmington on Nov. 1; that or another settled down in South Coast Botanic Garden (SCBG), where it seems to be spending the winter. As the tumultuous election year ended, a **Bald Eagle** patrolled the L.A. River.



Painted Bunting Photo: Jonathan Nakai

An iridescent female **Painted Bunting** stopped by Wilderness Park early in November (Manny Duran). A Texas bird, the female is all green; it doesn't look like it's the same species as the male, with its garish red, blue and green. The male **American Redstart** that Calvin Bonn found at Polliwog Park in Manhattan Beach on Dec. 24 is presumably the same individual that spent last winter there. Meanwhile, a female **Baltimore Oriole** (the eastern counterpart of Bullock's Oriole) has decided to winter at SCBG. The **Loggerhead Shrike** used to be common on the Peninsula in winter; now it's seldom seen; however this year shrikes were seen at Alta Vicente, Malaga Dunes, Torrance Beach and Madrona Marsh.

The sparrow family (the Passerellidae) are elegant, hard-to-identify and delightful to discover. This period, **Green-tailed Towhees**, a mountain Passerellid, appeared at DeForest Park in Long Beach, at Madrona Marsh, and at San Pedro Canyon. Dick Barth found a "**Pink-sided**" **Junco**,



Cackling Goose
Photo: Jonathan Nakai

(a subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco), at American Gold Manor in West Long Beach on Nov. 15. Unless you're an expert like Dick, be very careful in identifying this subspecies; Kimball Garrett recently remarked that it is perhaps the most frequently mis-identified bird. When in doubt, Kimball advises, just call it a Dark-eyed Junco. Another subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco that is easier to identify is the **Gray-headed Junco**; one popped up at Madrona on Nov. 16. Other unusual Passerellids included a **Brewer's Sparrow** at Wilderness Park on Nov. 9 (Johnny Ivanov), and **White-throated Sparrows** at Rolling Hills Estates Landfill Loop, Harbor Park, and (as usual) Crest Road in Rolling Hills. Sparrow lovers are encouraged to check out Rick Wright's fascinating (and detailed) survey of the



White-throated, White-Crowned and Fox Sparrows

Photo: Jim Aichele

Passerellidae in *Sparrows of North America*, part of the Peterson series.

The tyrant flycatchers, the Tyrannidae, are in another family that often turns up in unexpected places. Outstanding this period was the **Brown-crested Flycatcher** that is wintering at SCBG, the out-of-season **Western Kingbird** hanging out at Madrona (possibly a returnee from 2019), the returning **Tropical Kingbird** at Entradero Park, an **Eastern Phoebe** at the RHE Landfill Loop, and **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** at SCBG and Alondra Park (Jan Gardner). This last species breeds in our area, but is supposed to be in Mexico this time of year. Meanwhile, the **Vermilion Flycatchers** that have taken up residence in Columbia Park continue.

Other unusual passerines included the male **Summer Tanager** at American Gold Star Manor (DB), **Pine Siskins** at Wilderness Park, High Ridge Park, and a



Little Blue Heron

Photo: Jess Morton

home in South Torrance, and a **Japanese American Pipit** (an Asian subspecies) at the L.A. River (Moody). It was sapsucker mania at SCBG, where all three were seen during the period: **Red-breasted, Red-naped and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**. Other Red-naped Sapsuckers pounded away at Malaga Dunes, Wilderness Park, and the RHE Landfill Loop.

In the water bird department, Dave Moody found

an unexpected **Wandering Tattler** at King Harbor on Dec. 27. The team of Dick Barth and Jeff Boyd came across 65 **American Avocets** on the L.A. River the same day (along with countless **Black-necked Stilts**), while the Long-tailed Duck continued there. A **Cackling Goose**, a small version of the Canada Goose, was at Alondra Park in November (Adam Johnson). The immature **Little Blue Heron** continued at the Cabrillo Salt Marsh.

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Please note that all events will be subject to the restrictions in place at the time due to covid-19.

Visit our website at pvsb-audubon.org for cancellations, meeting location, or live streaming instructions.

EVENTS

February 16th, at 7 PM, world traveller and wildlife photographer **Randy Harwood** presents, “**The Birds, The Bees and More,**” a photographic celebration of the animal life in and around Palos Verdes.

March 16th, at 7 PM, Dr. Daniel Kinka, Wildlife Restoration Manager and Michael Wainright, Senior Philanthropy Manager, present “Restoring a Prairie Ecosystem,” the story of the American Prairie Reserve, which is creating the largest nature reserve in the contiguous United States.

REGISTER FOR ZOOM PRESENTATIONS
by email to David Quadhamer at
dquadhamer@yahoo.com

FIELD TRIPS

February 7th and 21st, and March 7th and 21st.

First and third Sunday bird walks at 8 at Harbor Park. Meet in the parking lot above the ranger station, located between Anaheim Street and Vermont Avenue.

February 9th and March 9th.

Second Wednesday bird walk at Madrona Marsh, led by Bob Shanman.

February 14th and March 14th.

Second Sunday bird walks at the South Coast Botanic Garden led by David Quadhamer. Meet in the parking lot at 8. There is an entrance fee to the garden for people who are not SCBG Foundation members.

February 21st and March 21st.

Third Sunday bird walks at Ballona Wetlands led by Bob Shanman. See Bob’s website <[www.wbu.com/redondo beach](http://www.wbu.com/redondo%20beach)> for details.

Every Tuesday morning: Tour de Torrance with Tommie Hite. Meet in the Madrona Marsh Nature Center parking lot at 8:30.

Site notes: Harbor Park, Madrona Marsh and most birding locations are open, but restrictions may apply. Please follow the guidelines at each location when there on your next birding expedition. The South Coast Botanic Garden is open by appointment. For tickets go to: <<https://southcoastbotanicgarden.org/buy-garden-entrance-tickets/>>.



Osprey with Mullet
Photo: Jess Morton

Poems About Ants

I was looking at Everyman
 that ecumenical Library of Poetry
 Plath, Poe, Pushkin--all those
 dead-early folks
 and the books with labels
 Sonnets: From Dante to the Present
 Love Poems, Persian Poets
 etc., poems about
 just about everything
 though I don't see in this Everyman
 the book of Poems About Ants
 leaving me to wonder
 just what it is about our world
 this universal citizen
 does not understand.

*From Findings
 By Jess Morton*



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 and Staff

- President: David Quadhamer, 310 833-3095
- Vice-Pres.: Ann Dalkey
- Treasurer: Jess Morton, jmorton@igc.org
- Secretary: Vincent Lloyd, vincent@sabik.org
- Directors: Paul Blieden, Tracy Drake
- Project Manager: Jazmin Rios, 562 896-3369

Committees:

- Calendar: Evi Meyer, evimeyer@cox.net
- Christmas Bird Count and
- Field Trips: Ann and Eric Brooks, motmots@aol.com
- Hospitality: Alene Gardner,
alene.gardner@sbcglobal.net
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Photos by the author unless stated otherwise.

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Please make checks to PV/SB Audubon and mail to: PO Box 2582, Palos Verdes, CA 90274

THIRD TUESDAY PROGRAMS

7 PM AT MADRONA MARSH

3201 PLAZA DEL AMO, TORRANCE



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On March 16th, Dr. Daniel Kinka presents “Restoring a Prairie Ecosystem,” the story of a 3.2-million acre native habitat reserve growing in the heart of Montana’s Northern Great Plains.



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By Evi Meyer

