HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society Vol. XLIII #3 April/May 2021

April 20th at 7 via Zoom

Y2Y

The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative: Connecting Habitat for People and Wildlife is the topic of our April program that will be presented by Hannah Rasker, the Y2Y organization's Program and Adaptive Management Coordinator. Y2Y was created to harness the passion and experience of groups and individuals who want to keep a magnificent mountain landscape healthy and intact. The Y2Y region stretches 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to Canada's Yukon Territory. It spans five American states, two Canadian provinces, two Canadian territories, and the traditional territories of at least 75 Indigenous groups.

Y2Y's role is to set the context for regional conservation work by providing the vision for a healthy landscape, and to bring partners together to achieve as a network what none of us can accomplish alone.

Originally from the Rocky Mountain West, Hannah grew up exploring the mountains and rivers around Yellowstone National Park and has a life-long passion for contributing to the success of conservation efforts. She received her MSc in Environmental Conservation from the University of Wisconsin's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, focusing on reviewing, monitoring and evaluation practices within this vast, biologically rich region.

May 18th at 7 via Zoom

ODES

For our May Zoom meeting, Naturalist, Photographer, and Artist Kim Moore will present "Those Dashing Dragons: An Introduction to Our Local Dragonflies," using her photographs of local dragonflies to illustrate her discussion of their lifecycle, anatomy, and behaviors, where and when to find them, and how to identify them.

After retiring from a career in information technology for the financial industry, Kim pursued her interests in nature, photography, and art. She has taken classes in entomology, zoology, birding, botanical illustration, and journaling. She is a certified naturalist through The Los Angeles Coastal California Master Naturalist Program. She participates in environmental education and in citizen science activities including local butterfly surveys, bird counts, and biodiversity hunts and studies. Additionally, she is a member of several photography groups, the Audubon Society, and is the secretary of the Lorquin Entomological Society. For more about Kim's work, visit her website: <http://kimssight.zenfolio.com/>.

All That Jaz

By Jazmin Rios

My favorite days to go to the beach are the colder, rainy days when the bird count is high and the human count low. Some folks may think it miserable weather, but I enjoy the tranquility and the time I get to spend with the plovers.


Potential Snowy Plover Nesting Habitat

Perhaps their affinity for rain is how our snowy plovers got their family name. The word plover comes from the Latin word pluvial, or relating to rain. I am hopeful that the snowy plover nesting project I have begun working on will be successful and that one day I will spot a snowy pair nesting at Hermosa Beach, or maybe even a little snowy chick standing in the rain. That's a way in the future, but work has begun.

Thanks to the volunteers at Hermosa Beach we have spotted 56 snowy plovers there this winter, so far! Once we have an enclosure set up for them, we could have snowy pairs nesting in spring, too! This past February, I had meetings with Katy Kughen at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Karina Johnston at The Bay Foundation. Both gave me tips on how to proceed. I also attended the "Snowy Plovers in Los Angeles County Workshop" led by Stacey Vigallon at LA Audubon. During these meetings it became apparent that my next step is to organize a meeting with both the City of Hermosa Beach and the LA County Department of Beaches and Harbors, something I am planning for this month. I have frequented the Santa Monica Snowy Plover restoration site to get a better idea of how that restoration can best translate to Hermosa Beach. Visiting Santa Monica has given me a better perspective on how both wildlife and people behave toward an enclosure on part of a public beach. During my visits I have witnessed very little human disturbance of the restoration site, which is promising.

I have had a lot of meetings the last couple of months, but thankfully, I got to visit some new sites. Although it was a bit early in the season, I went to the Chandler Preserve to hunt for butterflies. I met with both Ann Dalkey and Austin Parker and we talked about potential restoration locations and opportunities


Looking for PV BlueButterflies

for YES! Program participants. Ann also coordinated a meeting with Steve Hagee at Rolling Hills Prep (RHP) to take a look at the restoration site for the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly there and talk about programing for YES! Although restoration at RHP has been at a halt for the safety of the students, the site is in decent shape, with lots of deerweed for PV Blue caterpillars. There are also plans for a butterfly release that I hope I get to see.

I am continuing to coordinate projects and forming other new relationships for the YES! program. I have been in touch with Nadia Flores, a coordinator at Esperanza College Prep in East Los Angeles and met with Dr. Wilnelea Gonzales from UC San Diego, who studies the Gulf Fritillary Butterfly. We talked about potential partnerships and a mentorship program for the YES! Program. Potential projects include floristic quality assessment, a butterfly count project and other wildlife monitoring programs like those I led during my time at the Urban Wildlife Institute in Chicago. If we are able to get enough partnerships on board, we may be able to start a small pilot of the mentorship program at the start of this next school year.

BIRDS OF THE PENINSULA

January-February 2021

by Vincent Lloyd

After a healthy rain in December, only a quarter inch fell in the South Bay in January, while February was dry; it appears that another drought year is upon us.

Visitors to Madrona Marsh in February witnessed a most unusual bird: a male hybrid hummingbird, apparently a cross between a Costa's and an Anna's. Since these two species belong


Anna's X Costa's Hummingbird

to the same genus, it is not surprising that they interbreed on occasion. **Costa's hummingbird** is an uncommon winter visitor in the South Bay; the hybrid is rare indeed.


Red Fox Sparrow

An unusual sparrow was the Red **Fox Sparrow** that visited Cathy and Jim in Rolling Hills in January and February. The Red Fox Sparrow is distinguished from other Fox Sparrows by the reddish striping on the back and the faint wing bars. The Red Fox Sparrow is a bird of the boreal forest from Alaska to Newfoundland; it's the common Fox Sparrow in eastern North America. The ones that winter in the Southwest are thought to breed in British Columbia. Whether it is a subspecies of the Fox Sparrow or a separate species is one of those controversies that leads to brawls at ornithological conferences, but somehow fails to excite the birds themselves, who just go on doing Sparrow.

An even more surprising bird was the **Black-billed Magpie** spotted by Bernardo Alps at Royal Palms on January 30. This unmistakable large black-and-white member of the crow family is common in western North America and Eurasia. Recently, the North American species was split from the Eurasian species when genetic studies showed that it is more closely related to the **Yellow-billed Magpie** of California than it is to the Eurasian magpie. The nearest breeding area of the Black-billed Magpie is about 150 miles away in the Owens Valley, but since it is non-migratory it normally is not found in Los Angeles County. A Black-billed Magpie was seen on the Palos Verdes Christmas Bird Count in 2011 and 2012; that bird was thought to be an escapee because photographs suggested it was the Eurasian species. It's possible that the same bird, or another caged bird, has escaped again. The Yellow-billed Magpie, which is endemic to California, breeds only about 100 miles away in Santa Barbara County, but is never seen here because it is closely tied to the Valley Oak.

It has been a good winter for ducks in the South Bay. The flock of 17 **Snow Geese** at Harbor Park continued through the end of February. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were seen at AES Redondo Wetlands (Dave Moody) and Alondra Park (Chezy Yusuf) in early January, while **Brants** continued at Cabrillo Beach. Up to 9 **Redheads** were seen on the Los Angeles River; single birds were at Harbor Park and Alonda Park. The team of Dick Barth and Jeff Boyd spotted a female **Common Goldeneye** on the L.A. River during the first week in February. Meanwhile, several **Black Scoters**, **White-winged Scoters**, and **Long-tailed Ducks** — all sea ducks — continued on the river.

Tom Miko saw an unusual juvenal **Swainson's Hawk** at Wilderness Park on Jan. 10. The **Broad-winged Hawk** continued at South Coast Botanic Garden through early February; it was joined by a **Turkey Vulture** on Feb. 11. **Northern Harriers** were spotted at Madrona Marsh, Harbor Park, and Palos Verdes throughout January and February.

A mountain bird not often seen in our area is the **Band-tailed Pigeon** that appeared at South Coast Botanic Garden on Jan. 24 (TM). A **White-winged Dove** popped up at Madrona Marsh on Jan. 5; it was possibly the same bird that was seen in September. Likewise the **Neotropic Cormorants** that visited the Los Angeles River last summer returned in February. **California Quail** were reported at Harter Park in Miraleste on Feb. 15. **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** were pecking away at Wilson Park on Jan. 12 (Kevin Kosidiak) and Wilderness Park on Feb. 5 (Richard Norton).

Oak Titmouses (some say "titmice", but the second element is really "mose", an Old English word unrelated to "mouse") are common only thirty miles away in the San Gabriel Mountains but are rarely seen in the South Bay, but during this period they were spotted in Old Torrance, Palos Verdes Estates, and South Coast


Varied Thrush

(Birds continued on Page 11)

Conservation Concerns

MBTA on the Mend

By Jess Morton

The Department of the Interior has announced that it will rescind the "M-Opinion" and legal directive implemented by the previous administration which effectively gutted the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), While the Southern District of New York has ruled that the 2017 Solicitor's Opinion did not align with the intent and language of the 100-year-old law, and overturned the policy, the rule is still in place. The good news is that while the final rule has gone into effect, the Department will soon announce a new rulemaking process that should reinstate and strengthen those important provisions of the law. It is expected that this new rulemaking process will add a reasonable permitting process to manage incidental take, both clarifying MBTA's longstanding protections and providing the certainty industry wants.

The change by the Trump administration centered on the enforcement of "incidental take." It attempted to limit the MBTA's protection only to activities that purposefully kill birds, exempting all industrial hazards from enforcement. Any "incidental" death—no matter how inevitable, avoidable or devastating to birds—became immune from enforcement under the law. If this change had been in place in 2010, BP would have faced no consequences under the MBTA for the more than one million birds killed in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

As it had done with the 2017 opinion, the National Audubon Society and several other conservation organizations filed a federal lawsuit in January, again in the Southern District of New York, challenging the damaging final rule. The suit to void the illegal final rule will be continued under the new administration until it is voided or replaced by one that is aligned with MBTA's intent.

On the Congressional front, with a bipartisan group of more than 90 co-sponsors, the Migratory Bird Protection Act was passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee in the 116th Congress. The bill would secure protections for birds and direct the Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a permitting process for "incidental take" through which relevant businesses would implement best management practices and document compliance, further driving innovation in how to best prevent bird deaths. The bill will have to be reintroduced in this Congress in order to be considered again.

Recent scientific research has revealed the loss of 3 billion birds in North America since 1970 and that two-thirds of those birds are at risk of extinction due to climate change. In light of these alarming reports, the National Audubon Society is advocating for a multi-front approach to reinstate the longstanding MBTA protections with a common sense interpretation of this foundational law. As Audubon's Susan Greenberger has said, "Birds are telling us they are in trouble and we are running out of time to act."

Birder's Diary
Swifts

By Jess Morton

Swifts! That's what that high tinkling sound is, I said to myself. Now, where are they? I scanned the sky and then looked out to sea, and there the White-throated Swifts were. Three sleek black and white bundles of feathers looping and weaving complex patterns through the updrafts over the cliff face as they hunted the insects being carried aloft by those rising winds.

What an appropriate name for these sickle-winged marauders that spend virtually all of their waking hours on the wing. They hurtle high overhead after the aerial plankton, primarily insects, on which they thrive. A few birds are faster, and a few fly farther afield, but I doubt that any can sustain a swift's speed for as long, nor travel as many miles every day. The only possible rivals I can think of at all are seabirds.

Of the four species that have been seen on the peninsula, the White-throated Swift is by far the most frequently encountered. They can be found at any time of year, most commonly along the coastal bluffs and hillsides, where they nest in rocky clefts. While they number in the tens today, in the 1970's several hundred swifts lived in the quarry cliffs at the end of Forrestal Drive. The collapse of one rock face there may have done in a good many birds. It certainly did in the best habitat, and nesting swifts are scarce there, today.

Sometimes inelegantly described as cigars with wings, White-throated Swifts are rather stubby birds, somewhat larger than a sparrow, with very long narrow wings. But there is nothing inelegant about these birds. They are striking in their sleek black and white plumage; butlers of the skies.

Our other swifts show little or no contrast in their plumage. Of them, the small Vaux's Swift is common in migration, occasionally appearing in large flocks for a day or two, before moving on. With them, on rare occasion, is their eastern counterpart, a Chimney Swift. The two species are so similar though, that only an expert can separate them in the field. A fourth species, the Black Swift, is also migratory here, and though a western species, is rare along the coast. Inland, it has the amazing habit of nesting behind waterfalls. A safe enough place, when one stops to think about it.

Swifts are frequently heard before they are seen. Certainly that was true of my birds today. Theirs is a musical series of descending notes, which I once described in a poem as: "tinkling notes falling where the headlong swifts/have cracked through crystal air." It is a sound to remember. It's a command to look upward in search of these consummate aerialists.

It is another poem, though, that describes one of the White-throated Swifts most remarkable characteristics. In "Physics of Flight," I wrote of them: "Unaware that two objects cannot coexist/the white-throated swift hurtles at tall rock/where a fissure must open to accept it." Amazingly, our swifts only roost and nest in narrow, vertical crevices in rock faces. They neither sit on the ground nor perch in trees as other birds do. They are incapable of doing so. In fact, they belong to the family Apodidae, which means without feet. While that is not really true of them, their feet are tiny and play no part in their approach to either roost or nest. Into their crevices they zoom, seemingly at full speed. Hair raising, the first time you see it.

Their nests are pasted to some vertical rock face hidden within the crevice with a salivary glue, and are made of short twigs and grasses lined with feathers. Typically, four or five eggs are laid, and the full nestling cycle takes about six weeks. The young are strong fliers once out of the nest, soon foraging completely on their own. Then it is that they take their place in the crystal chorus of the White-throated Swifts whirling high overhead.

Why Oxpeckers are not called Zebrapeckers

By Evi Meyer

Zebras have fascinated me since my childhood because of their striking stripy looks. When I encountered wild zebras in the African savannah as an adult I was even more puzzled about their appearance that did not seem useful in that habitat. Their silhouettes looked like those of ordinary horses at a distance, but up close they appeared exotic in their stripes, glamorous in their behavior and certainly untamable in their spirits. I had read that their stripes give them a cryptic appearance for protection from predators, and that seemed perfectly acceptable to me. Only recently did I learn that there might be other reasons for the stripes, which can even determine how smaller animals interact with zebras.

I was recently given a book called "Zebra", in which authors Christopher Plumb and Samuel Shaw give long descriptions of the evolutionary history of zebras and their importance in culture and art that goes back tens of thousands of years. Midway into the book they establish and partially debunk different hypotheses for the stripes, one of which was the belief that they provide a protective, cryptic appearance.

It turns out that the crypsis hypothesis in which the stripes serve as camouflage in the savannah and protect zebras from predators is not as solid as often thought. A team of researchers from the University of Calgary and UC Davis have come up with an experiment in which they reproduced zebras as seen by non-humans. They passed digital images through filters that simulated species-specific visual systems of predators such as lions and spotted hyenas, essentially attempting to determine the maximum distances through which these predators could resolve stripes. At dusk, when carnivores hunt, lions and hyenas can discern stripes only up to 56 meters and 34 meters respectively. Beyond this distance zebras appear gray to them. The range at which these predators can resolve stripes is easily within the range they can hear or smell the zebras, which indicates that the stripes really don't provide camouflage and protection from being hunted.

A second hypothesis for zebra stripes is aposematism, which is the advertising of an animal to potential predators that it is not worth the effort of attack. Striped skunks and poison frogs are two examples of animals where that works really well. Certainly zebras can kick and bite formidably, but wounds on zebras are more severe than on any other ungulates as determined in a three-year field study in Africa. If the stripes would warn off predators that simply would not be the case.

It is sometimes said that stripes can dazzle predators and make it harder for them to judge speed and position. Experiments conducted with human subjects attempting to capture moving targets found that parallel-striped targets are significantly easier to capture than perpendicular- or oblique-striped ones. This research was done with human subjects, but it is reasonable to assume that lions and hyenas would have similar visual perception of the striped targets.

It is pretty well known that zebras have unique stripe patterns, similar to human fingerprints. These patterns make it possible for us to identify individual animals within a population. It has been hypothesized that zebras use these unique stripes to recognize members of their own species and encourage mutual grooming. Since other equids without stripes are able to recognize each other by sound or smell, it is difficult to determine to which extent zebras recognize each other by the stripe patterns.

Could stripes on zebras help them with thermoregulation? Field studies with infrared cameras to determine the surface temperature of zebras compared to impalas, buffalos and giraffes in the same area have not shown lower temperatures for zebras. Heat stress might be reduced by the white stripes of zebras, but stripes do not seem to be an evolutionary response to heat stress.

That leaves one more hypothesis for zebra stripes. Could it be possible that the stripes are a defense against biting flies that could transmit dangerous or lethal diseases? Some flies apparently have trouble landing on striped surfaces. There is evidence that different polarization of light from black and white surfaces disrupts the vision of horseflies. It was also observed that different species of flies, including tsetse, are less likely to land on zebras than on wildebeests. In addition to that, field research showed that the presence of body stripes is associated with tsetse fly distribution. It seems possible that ectoparasite avoidance could indeed be a driving force behind the evolutionary selection for stripes on zebras.

I remember distinctly how the guides in Africa warned the game drive passengers not to wear dark colors, as those are magnets for tsetse flies. At the time I just followed the orders and was glad to see those flies land on different species of large, dark mammals instead of me. They were left alone on their hosts until the oxpecker brigade came in to devour them from backs, legs, eyes and ears. It was quite a spectacle to observe. Subconsciously I registered that I did not see a lot of flies on zebras, but did not think much of it.

Only now that I had read about possible evolutionary reasons for the stripes on zebras did I look at all the zebra pictures I had taken during my trips to Africa to check for the presence of Oxpeckers on them. Out of hundreds of shots I could only find one of a zebra with two oxpeckers, both of them sitting on black –and not white – stripes. This is of course only anecdotal information, but it seems to fit the hypothesis of ectoparasite avoidance. It definitely makes sense that these birds are not called zebrapeckers.

While we still don't know for sure what the reasons for the evolution of stripes on zebras are, I started wondering why and how other animals developed black and white stripes. Striped skunks, raccoons, some butterflies and lemurs all have entirely or partially striped bodies. The one I find most curious, however, is our abundant avian winter visitor with the dashing zebra head that marks the beginning of fall for us. What are the function and purpose of the striped head on White-crowned Sparrows? I can imagine many possibilities, but for me personally, the most important one is to remind me of my favorite animal, the ZEBRA.

AVIANTICS By Evi Meyer

WHO WERE THEY?
Thomas Nuttall

by Vincent Lloyd

In 1834 young Richard Henry Dana, having been obligated to discontinue his classes at Harvard by eye troubles, signed up as a common seaman aboard a ship bound for California, then an outlying province of Mexico. His adventures and his descriptions of the mistreatment of seamen in the 1830s were recounted in his famous memoir, Two Years Before the Mast. The book gives us a fascinating glimpse into life in Mexican California. In one passage, Dana tells of his astonishment when he runs into one of his professors at Harvard, Thomas Nuttall:

"Professor Nuttall was strolling about San Diego beach, in a sailor's pea jacket, with a wide straw hat, and barefooted, with his trousers rolled up to his knees, picking up stones and shells."

Nuttall's energy, bordering on recklessness, coupled with meticulous scientific rigor, made him one of the pioneering botanists of the U. S. According to historian Susan Delano McKelvey, "Nuttall stands virtually alone among our early plant collectors, in terms of his scientific qualifications, his breadth of knowledge of plants derived from field experience, and the publication of his discoveries."

Oddly, neither America nor botany were in his family background. Nuttall was born in England in 1786 to a family of modest means. He grew up in Blackburn, Lancashire, where he was apprenticed to his uncle Jonas Nuttall, a printer. Uncle Jonas must have been disappointed when young Thomas declined to join the family printing business and instead set sail for America. The story goes that the day after his arrival in Philadelphia, he found an interesting plant and sought out local botanist Benjamin Smith Barton, who identified it as a common greenbrier. Smith became Nuttall's mentor; in turn, Nuttall went on collecting trips for Smith. In 1810 Nuttall started on an expedition to the Great Lakes, eventually joining an Astor trading expedition up the Missouri River, where he collected many specimens of plants that had been discovered during the Lewis and Clark expedition a few years earlier but lost in transit. On the way back he went down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. By this time, war with Britain was imminent and Nuttall thought it wise to return to England. After the war, he returned to America for more adventures. The first took him collecting in Kentucky, Tennessee and the southern Appalachians.

Returning to Philadelphia, he produced his first major scientific work, The Genera of North American Plants (1818). The next year he set off on an expedition up the Arkansas River. He wrote a popular account of this trip, Travels into the Arkansa [sic] Territory, in which he describes many dangerous adventures with natives, friendly and not-so-friendly. Washington Irving knew Nuttall and said of him, "a zealous botanist…groping and stumbling along a wilderness of sweets, forgetful of everything but his immediate pursuit." In 1825 Nuttall was appointed Instructor of Botany and Ornithology at Harvard (despite never having attended college). During this period he wrote a major two-volume work on birds, Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and Canada. The work was edited and re-issued in the 1890s as Birds of the United States, which went through several editions. I picked up the 1929 edition at a used book store. It is a bird book that is a joy to read. In the section on the Red-winged Blackbird (which Nuttall called the "Red-winged Troopial"), we read:

"They are migratory north of Maryland, but pass the winter and summer in great numbers in all the Southern States, frequenting chiefly the settlements and rice and corn fields; towards the sea-coast, where they move about like blackening clouds, rising suddenly at times with a noise like thunder, and exhibiting amidst the broad shadows of their funereal plumage the bright flashing of the vermilion with which their

Nuttall's Woodpecker

wings are so singularly decorated. After whirling and waving a little distance like the Starling, they descend as a torrent, and, darkening the branches of the trees by their numbers, they commence a general concert that may be heard for more than two miles."

After ten years at Harvard, Nuttall was once again seized by wanderlust. He resigned his professorship and signed onto his biggest adventure of all, the Nathaniel Wyeth expedition to the Northwest. On this trip he was accompanied by a young naturalist named James Kirk Townsend. They went down the Snake River, over the Blue Mountains, and into the Columbia River valley in Oregon Territory, collecting botanical specimens all the way. During the winter, Nuttall hopped on a ship to Hawaii, returning to Oregon in the spring. After a second collecting season in Oregon, he got wind of a ship in California that would soon return to the eastern U.S., and in that way came to be on the beach in San Diego where he surprised his old student Dana.

Nuttall and Dana returned together to Boston on the same ship, where the sailors referred to the Professor as "Old Curiosity" on account of his crates of curious specimens. Nuttall entertained Dana with stories of his many collecting expeditions across North America. Nuttall spent the next few years working at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. His last major work, North American Silva: Trees not described by F.A. Michaux, came out in 1841. By this time, Uncle Jonas, who had become a landed proprietor of an estate near St. Helens, Lancashire, died without a son. Perhaps reluctantly, he willed the estate to Thomas — but on the condition that Thomas spend at least nine months of the year in England. Nuttall was now over 50 and perhaps decided that his adventuring days were over; he spent the remainder of his life as a country gentleman at Nut Grove Hall, Sutton, Lancashire, where he died in 1859 at the age of 73. This house, built in 1810, still stands today and is a listed building (i.e. a registered historical building). Naturalist Asa Gray, writing in 1844, summed up Nuttall's legacy:

From that time [1808] to the present no botanist has visited so large a portion of the United States, or made such an amount of observations in field and forest. Probably few naturalists have ever excelled him in aptitude for such observations, in quickness of eye, tact in discrimination, and tenacity of memory.

Among the plants Nuttall brought to the awareness of science were the Gambel Oak, Quercus gambelii, the Great Basin sagebrush, Artemisia tridentata, our familiar California bush sunflower, Encelia californica, and the goldenbush Isocoma. Among the many plants that bear his name are the Pacific Dogwood, Cornus nuttallii, and the Sego Lily, Calochortus nuttallii (the state flower of Utah). Nuttall's contributions to ornithology include the descriptions of Swainson's Thrush and Forster's Tern. Four birds bear his name: the Yellow-billed Magpie, *Pica nutalli* (Audubon), the Common Poorwill, *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii* (Audubon), Nuttall's Woodpecker, *Dryobates nutallii* (Gambel), and Nuttall's White-crowned Sparrow, whose wistful song is so characteristic of the Central California coast.

Yellow-billed Magpie

Chapter Calendar

In person meetings and bird walks have been suspended temporarily due to covid-19.

Visit our website at pvsb-audubon.org for live streaming instructions for links to our monthly programs. See page 1 for articles about our April 20th and May 18th speakers and their programs.

SPRING BUTTERFLY COUNT

The second annual Palos Verdes Spring Butterfly Count is scheduled for Saturday, April 10. The spring count, conducted under the direction of the North American Butterfly Association, seeks to survey our early-flying butterflies. We need both beginners and old pros to help count the butterflies. If you have butterflies in your garden, your report would be valued. If interested, please contact Vincent Lloyd at stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com.

The summer Butterfly Count will be held on Saturday, July 10. — Vincent Lloyd

(iNaturalist continued from back page)

iNaturalist community what it is and start a discussion. What is great about the app is that you can even add images you have taken of birds or wildlife months or years ago by uploading them through your phone or desktop to get an identification.

Another reason to get an account is that it keeps all your observations in one place with your images. So next time you hear that call and you want to remember what species of bird that was you can easily check on your phone app or desktop. I have organized my observations on iNaturalist by projects. I have projects from my time in Chicago when I participated in a BioBlitz and others that I led with interns assessing wildlife. I recently started a new group named Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society with our logo, so if you have an account or are thinking of opening one up, please add the project and let's start IDing some wildlife. You, too, can contribute to science!

2021 BIRD-A-THON 2021

The PV/South Bay Audubon Birdathon team is at it again! We're counting birds to support Audubon's quest to keep birds flying and our youth programs running. Every species seen adds money to the effort. In addition to the Snowy Plover and Audubon YES! projects Jazmin describes on page 2, we are providing significant help for community and international conservation efforts, Please help us out by investing in the future. You can donate through our website at pvsb-audubon.org or why not pledge a buck a bird (or more). We can expect to find anywhere from 100 to 125 species, depending on the day's luck (and looking).

Email your pledges to Jazmin at
mjazminrios@pvsb-audubon.org

(Birds continued from Page 3)

Botanic Garden. A **White-breasted Nuthatch** visited SCBG on Jan. 10, while a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was reported at Linden Chandler Preserve on Jan. 28. **Varied Thrushes**, usually seen during infrequent irruptive years, popped up at South Coast Botanic Garden in January and at Rolling Hills into February (C & J). **Pine Siskins** appeared at SCBG, High Ridge Park, Polliwog Park, and elsewhere through Feb. 15. Jonathan Nakai noticed a **Yellow-billed White-crowned Sparrow** at Madrona on Jan. 2; these birds, probably the Puget Sound subspecies, have a yellower bill and a different song than the usual **Gambel's Sparrows**. Other unusual sparrows were the Brewer's Sparrow at 22nd St. Park on Jan. 14 (BA) and the **Pink-sided Junco** at Wilderness Park on Jan. 24 (TM). **Bullock's Orioles** winter in small numbers in the South Bay, but the **Hooded Oriole** at SCBG from Jan. 15 to Feb. 8 was rare; the **Baltimore Oriole** there continued through Feb. 21. A **Summer Tanager**, espied by Bob Shanman on Feb. 2, was another unusual winter visitor at SCBG.

American Oystercatchers have become regular in our area, with sightings at Royal Palms Beach, White Point, Cabrillo Beach, and the L.A. River. This bird, formerly found only south of Guerrero Negro in Baja, has been spreading northward over the last few years. It's a different subspecies from the eastern bird shown in field guides. As it freely interbreeds with the **Black Oystercatcher,** hybrids are common; brave birders try to identify pure individuals using the infamous "Jehl Scale", which is way too complicated for this observer.

Meanwhile, several rarities that arrived last fall have continued to enjoy our pleasant winter weather. Conspicuous among them is, the **Little Blue Heron** at Cabrillo Salt Marsh; this species is also spreading north from Baja. Continuing at South Coast Botanic Garden are the **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, the **Brown-crested Flycatcher**, and the **Bell's Vireo**. Continuing at Madrona Marsh are the **Western Kingbird** and the **Loggerhead Shrike**. The **Tropical Kingbird** remains at Entradero Park, the **Eastern Phoebe** at Rolling Hills Estates Landfill, the **Eurasian Tree Sparrow** at Wilmington Marina, the **White-throated Sparrow** in Rolling Hills, the **American Redstart** at Polliwog Park, and the **Hermit Warbler** at Franklin Park. **Cactus Wrens** were spotted at Alta Vicente, Filiorum Preserve, Three Sisters, and Abalone Cove. The first migrating **Rufous Hummingbirds** showed up at SCBG and Chadwick Canyon during Feb. 10–12, heralding the beginning of spring migration.

Vincent 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

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Photo credits Costa/Anna Hummingbird: Jonathan Nakai Varied Thrush & Red Fox Sparrow: Jim Aichele

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

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Vice-Pres.:	Ann Dalkey
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Secretary:	Vincent Lloyd, vincent@sabik.org
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Project Manager:	Jazmin Rios, 562 896-3369

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Calendar:	Evi Meyer, evimeyer@cox.net
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Please make checks to PV/SB Audubon and mail to: PO Box 2582, Palos Verdes, CA 90274

BIRD-A-THON

Dive on in for a bill a bird!

Birders will soon fan out across the South Bay to count and photograph birds for our annual Bird-a-thon fundraiser. We missed holding one last year, so we're asking everyone to dive a little deeper this year. To see what your pledges and donations go to support, see project manager Jazmin Rios's column on page 2. Then, email your pledge to her at mjazminrios@pvsb-audubon.org.

2021

Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2582
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

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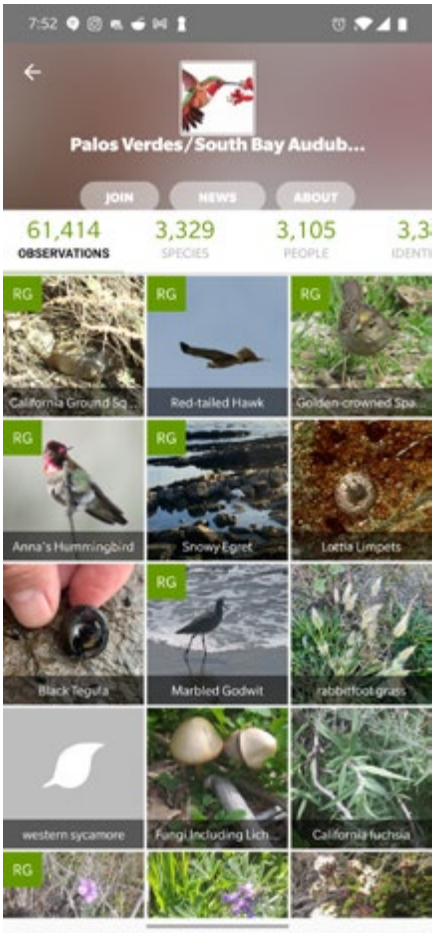

iNaturalist

By Jazmin Rios

Many of us use eBird as a tool. I have another free tool called iNaturalist that is very helpful while birding and during hikes in the neighborhood. You can filter by location to see nearby bird species, as you can with eBird, but iNaturalist also allows you to collect all observations, whether of an organism, animal track, nest, or sound, to share with the nearby community and everyone else. Scientists use iNaturalist observations to inform them on their research. In fact, over one hundred publications were based on iNaturalist observations last-year alone!

Whenever I take a walk and am curious about a plant or animal I see, I post its picture into iNaturalist and often obtain an identification in real time. If the app is unable to identify the species immediately, do not worry! One of the best features is that you are sharing your observation with experts. They and your fellow citizen scientists may well be able to narrow down the identification.

Have you been curious about that flower the Costa's Hummingbird is perched on in one of your pictures? Or you hear a bird and are not quite sure who it is? iNaturalist can help identify the flower or call if you simply add your observation, i.e. the "evidence", in this case an image of the flower or the sound of the bird's call. Once submitted to iNaturalist, you can ask the

(iNaturalist continued on Page 10)