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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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Scree

By Jess Morton

Strange word, scree. But it's suggestive of uselessness, a wasteland, something no one could want. And it's sort of like that, the rock rubble at the base of a hill. Loose stuff shaken from its clutch upon a slope by wind, rain, earthquake. Stuff shattered and discarded.

And so, we have gotten rid of it around here. In its place are hillside plantings, road cuts, houses and apartment complexes. This is what we do with "useless" places. But there are those for which that place used to be home. So it is that a



Rock Wrens at Shoreline Park



little brown bird called the rock wren, once common around the South Bay and on the peninsula has become scarce. To find one, you have to climb down from your high perch on the hill and take a look in out-of-the-way places—along the rocky shoreline and in the old Forrestal quarry. Places like that where loose rock still clutters the ground and piles against the hillside. That's where they are.

Rock wrens. What marvels these little birds are, too. They bubble with song and move from stone to stone with a hop, skip and bob, their bodies moving up and down in time to some internal music we cannot hear. It's that bobbing motion that makes rock wrens easy to identify. Then they disappear into a crevice, their small sparrow size letting them explore hidden places for food, for nesting, for safety.

These wrens, like most of their kin, are drab when seen from a distance, their brown and buff tones helping to disguise their presence when they stop moving. Still, the pattern of the back and tail when seen up close is intricate, with darker and lighter shades stitched cleverly together, as if by an affectionate grandma.

Photos by Jess Morton

See Scree, Page 4

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Tracking Area Birds and Butterflies



By David Quadhamer

I have some good news to report about our Executive Board. Paul Blieden is now our Vice President and Vincent Lloyd is now our Secretary. Paul also took on the challenge of being our webmaster and has begun working on the website. Thank you, Paul and Vincent! We are still looking for a Treasurer who will maintain the finances of our chapter. Some accounting experience is preferable but not required. Finally, we are looking for members for our Board of Directors, who will help decide how to run the chapter and provide new ideas about which projects and causes to spearhead.

The next Chapter board meeting will be held before our monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 21, starting at 5:30 pm.

We will hold our annual planning meeting in August. The date and time have not yet been determined, but it may be on a Saturday morning at Madrona Marsh. This planning meeting is open to everyone. Please come and share your ideas about what our chapter should be working on for the upcoming year.

We have numerous bird walks in the South Bay led by very knowledgeable birders who are happy to answer your questions and some interesting presentations coming up. Tom Ryan, primary biologist for Snowy Plover Surveys in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, will discuss his recent studies of Least Terns and Snowy Plovers at our June meeting. Tracy Drake, preserve manager and naturalist of Madrona Marsh, will present with Jun Saito on the Mallard families of the marsh at our July meeting. Both presentations promise to be lively and informative! Check out the calendar on page 8, and join us!

* * *

The Audubon YES Awards ceremony was held at Madrona Marsh on April 17 (see below photo). Eighteen students qualified for an award this year: Emily Hong, Olivia Tarrin, Donna

Kim, Lauren Chung, Irene Suh, Mike Hodgkiss, Gene Whang, Sunghyun Kim, Yoonchan Lee, Yoonjin Lee, Andrew Jin, Seoyoung Yoon, Esther Chu, Sijun Hwang, Jayna Jung, Jenny Kim, SoungBae Kim and Daniel Lim.

At the awards ceremony Irene, Olivia and Lauren gave a presentation about the work they have done restoring habitat for the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly. They have put together a website (www.savethebluebutterfly.com) that describes their wonderful work, including an amazing amount of restoration.

* * *

Our chapter participated in the California Brown Pelican survey on May 7. This was a joint effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, eBird, state agencies and Audubon. Participants monitored known roosting sites and other sites along the coast. Brown Pelicans were federally listed as endangered in 1970. Fortunately, they have recovered enough that they were removed from the Endangered Species list in 2009. The most recent population estimate is 70,680 breeding pairs. The survey helped track shifts in population of the California Brown Pelican and helped define their distribution and abundance.

The California Brown Pelican survey took place on Bird Day LA. Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon hosted a table, along with International Bird Rescue (IBR), at Royal Palms in San Pedro. IBR was able to arrange to have a rehabilitated California Brown Pelican released while we were there. It was inspiring to see a pelican released back into the wild!

IBR has a Blue-Banded Pelican tracking project in which everyone can take part. They place a blue band with an easily readable unique ID number on all Brown Pelicans they treat at their centers, one of which is in San Pedro. Each blue band has a unique code, and when people see a Brown Pelican with a blue band, they can report the code online at: www.bird-rescue.org. This tracking method allows the IBR to determine each Brown Pelican's travel patterns and to check whether it has received treatment before.

See opposite page



More than a dozen students qualified for an Audubon YES award this year.

Photo by Stacy Herman

'Least Terns and Snowy Plovers' on Tap for June

Presented by Tom Ryan
Tuesday, June 21, 7 p.m.
Madrona Marsh Nature
Center, Torrance

Tom Ryan will present on his recent studies of Least Terns and Snowy Plovers. This will include the most recent population studies of Snowy

Plovers and recent advances in efforts to protect them on Los Angeles and Orange County Beaches. The Least Tern research has taken many directions in recent years. Ryan will discuss efforts to teach American Crows not to eat Least Tern eggs as well as research into Least Tern migratory patterns using geo-locators. He will also share about a recent trip to Oaxaca to find them

Tom is primary biologist for Snowy Plover Surveys in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California, as well as the senior biologist and project manager at Ryan Ecological Consulting.

The Madrona Marsh Nature Center is located at 3201 Plaza del Amo, Torrance, CA, 90503. For more information about Chapter programs and activities, please visit our website: <http://pvsvb-audubon.org/index.html>



Least Tern

Photo by Tom Ryan

QUADHAMER, Continued

* * *

Our annual Birdathons have come and gone. Jess Morton and I led individual teams this year in search of as many species of birds as we could find. The Birdathons are our biggest fundraiser and main vehicle to keep our chapter running and going strong.

If you've already pledged for one or more of our Birdathon teams, thank you for your support! If you haven't yet, please consider doing so. A pledge of "A Bill a Bird" would be wonderful, and a donation in any amount would be greatly appreciated. It can be on a per-species basis or a flat amount. Please contact Jess (jmorton@igc.org) or me (dquadhamer@yahoo.com). Thank you very much!

AVIANTICS

By Evi Meyer



SCREE, from Page 1

Rock wrens have relatively long, thin and down-curved bills and flattened crowns that let them probe places that a finch, for instance, would find impossible. While they may take in some seeds, the bulk of their wrenish diet is arthropods: spiders and insects gleaned from the holes and crevices where they have sought their own—and now unsuccessful—refuge. From their prey, the wrens get all of the water they need, which means they can occupy barren landscapes few other birds can tolerate.

Nests are built in sheltered spots in crevices under hillside ledges. There is often an accumulation of small stones and other bits of stuff—fur, feathers, bone, what have you—that lead to the nest entrance. The wren's own yellow brick road! It would be interesting to know if this plays a role in mate selection, making rock wrens our own local bowerbirds.

A loose cup of hair, rootlets, sticks, spiders' silk and such, the nest is not elaborate and would fit easily in the palm of your hand. Indeed, there may not be enough room in the nest-

**Rock Wren***Photo by Jess Morton*

ing crevice between floor and ceiling for even the most enthusiastic builder to do anything with. After all, there has to be room for the five or six eggs laid (sometimes up to eight) and the brood that will emerge from them. The eggs are white with some small reddish mottling. During the course of a season, two and sometimes three broods will be attempted.

For many years, rock wrens seemed quite rare in our area. But they are here today and you can find them with a bit of looking in out-of-the-way places. Perhaps it was just that I did not look in the right places for them. Perhaps it was that their numbers really were very low.

I suspect the former rather than the latter. Take a walk down any trail to the beach, from White Point around to Point Vicente, and you are likely to see one or two if you have a little patience. Shoreline

Park and Forrestal are good bets, too. Anywhere there is an accumulation of scree. That useless stuff. Just don't try to convince a rock wren about its uselessness, though. Fortunately, it's an argument you would lose.

Environmental Priorities Network Announces Coming Events

The Environmental Priorities Network is sponsoring its eleventh annual Solar Homes Tour in Torrance and the Beach Cities on Saturday, June 11, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Using the sun to produce electricity is the best thing that can be done to reduce the dangers of the climate crisis. It will also save you money!

A flyer is available that provides the names and addresses of each homeowner as well as the time when each home is open to visitors. These homes have other environmental features such as solar hot water heating, low voltage lighting, drought-tolerant planting, and electric cars.

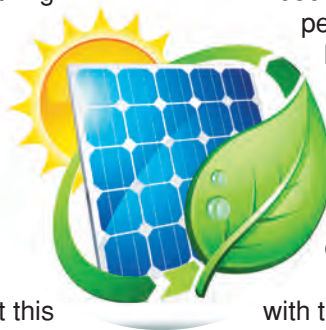
To obtain the flyer or more information about this EPN event, contact Lillian Light at llight@verizon.net or 310-545-1384 or Diane Wallace at dmbarkwall@gmail.com or 310-266-1241. While there is no charge for the flyer or home visits, contributions are welcome.

Save the date for an interesting public forum on Saturday, Oct 22. To determine how bird ranges will be affected by global warming, Audubon scientists used climate models

to predict the ranges of 588 North American bird species under future climate scenarios. They found that 314 of them will lose more than 50 percent of their current range by 2080. More than 120 of them may lose more than 50 percent of their current range by 2050. Many birds like the Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, and Common Loon face the risk of extinction.

Audubon leaders are very concerned about the serious dangers birds face in a warming world. Protecting them will require conservation efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions while safeguarding critical habitat.

The PV/South Bay Audubon Chapter is joining with the Environmental Priorities Network to sponsor this public forum about what must be done to save endangered birds and other wildlife. We need to urge leaders at the local, state, and national levels to enact policies that lower greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy. To limit the effects of global warming on birds, we need more people to drive electric cars and install solar panels. Find out more by attending the Solar Homes Tour!



BIRDER'S DIARY

A Walk at Maggie Marsh

By Jess Morton

The chilly weather broke on Wednesday, the afternoon clearing to warm sun and producing swarms of migrant birds—and people. The boardwalk through Magee Marsh teemed with birders, huge cameras bristling over binoculars like the feathers on preening birds, sweeping up together as clots of photographers tracked a bird moving through the trees and into the understory vegetation around them.

Scarlet tanagers and orange and black Baltimore orioles. Northern parulas, chestnut-sided, bay-breasted and Blackburnian warblers; the brilliant yellows of prothonotary warbler and, you guessed it, yellow warblers. Myrtles and Maggies, too. Make that magnolia warbler, common in this particular place on this particular day of migration. Gorgeous birds with yellow throats and white eye lines punctuating their black faces. The breast is yellow with black streaks up the sides coming together to create a marvelous collar under the chin on the male birds. Maggie Marsh, indeed!

Bill Cullen, Evi Meyer and I had come east for the “Biggest Week in Birding” festival. Based at Maumee Bay Lodge on Lake Erie, the event, now in its eighth year, showcases one of the places where migrants traveling north into Canada concentrate. It’s a Mecca for birders, as is Point Pelee across the lake from here and the most famous of all Canadian birding spots. We were not disappointed either; the birds were great and, for us, the weather cooperated. Either side of the time we were there, it was cold and wet—not weather for confirmed southern Californians at all.

We went on field trips that took us to several birding hotspots from Toledo to Sandusky Bay. But the best was Magee with its long boardwalk winding through the forested wetlands immediately inland

from the Lake, and the masses of birders there proved we were not the only people to think so. We went there on each of three days, greeted by a new set of birds each time. One day the sky was filled with flocks of blue jays moving along the coastline, wave after wave of them. Another day saw a mass migration of birders along the boardwalk. A Kirtland’s warbler had been found. But we went the other way, preferring to have a bit more calm to our birding.



Eastern Screech Owl

Photos by Evi Meyer



The namesake Maggie at the marsh

Woodcocks proved to be an exciting part of the trip for us, with birds both on the ground during the day and in the air at evening. The latter was the point of one field trip to a known breeding location where we could watch the birds mount high into the late evening sky with sweeping flights and then drop to the ground. One came down so close to us that even in the deep dusk in which they do their courtship dance, we could make out the male’s form as he moved back and forth, quartering the compass as he went—so close that even I, half deaf as I am, could hear his soft call

notes. Amazing stuff!

Eastern screech owls were another special bird for us. There is a boardwalk at the Maumee Lodge, too, and it is fitted out with nest boxes for owls. Used nest boxes! And there they were, one with a rusty head sticking out of the entrance hole, another with two or three chicks just visible back in the box, watching the world happen around them. We spotted one mother near her box on a tree branch. She too was watching, making sure nothing got too close to her brood.

There were a lot of other birds, of course: swans, eagles, ducks, shorebirds and land birds. We also got to hear talks by Ken Kaufmann, who, with his wife Kim, are the sparkplugs and driving forces behind the festival. Kim runs the Black Swamp Conservancy, the official sponsor of the festival, which this year drew an estimated 80,000 people in two weeks. So, there were lots of people to visit with: two whom I had not seen in years, one from my time on the National Audubon board and another from a long-ago butterfly count. Then there was ice cream. Bill, Evi and I will not forget that critical part of our journey: “Oops,” the flavor for me one day and “Buckeye pie” the next. There are other flavors, Bill assures me, so perhaps this will be the first of many birding trips to northwestern Ohio, Maumee Bay and Maggie Marsh!

'The Mallards of Madrona' A Focus on Family: From Setting Territory to First Flight

Presented by Jun Saito & Tracy Drake

Tuesday, July 19, 7 p.m.
Madrona Marsh Nature
Center, Torrance

Jun Saito and Tracy Drake will present a talk about the Mallard families of Madrona from 2014 to 2016. Jun has spent several years tracking each family from discovery day — the day we first notice the family off nest, to flight day, when the young leave Madrona in the summer.

In the process of this study, Jun and Tracy have learned about how difficult it is for a duckling to reach juvenile time as well as how each mother is very different in mood, temperament, awareness, and devotion to their young. Like human moms, there are some good ones and some bad ones. To be fair, there are also good and bad dads!

During the program, Jun and Tracy will present data, tell stories, share photos and videos and as a bonus, discuss other bird and mammal families that were observed during the study.

Tracy Drake became the manager and naturalist of the Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center in January 2002. She is in charge of an 8,000 square foot Nature Center and a 50-acre nature preserve that is thought to be the last seasonal freshwater wetlands in Los Angeles County. She is an employee of the City and provides the day-to-day operations management of the Preserve.

Tracy became interested in nature while growing up in the Monterey Hills region of Los Angeles where she spent many hours observing and interacting with the regions plants and animals. Tracy earned a master's degree in recreation administration focusing on outdoor resource management with an emphasis on environmental education from Indiana University. Next, she worked for the California State Parks as an interpreter and then in the horticulture field until accepting the position at the Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center.

One lesson she teaches in her programs is that it is really important to realize how we are connected to every-



Grace, above, is one proud Mallard mom at the Madrona Marsh. Shown below is Farrah's brood.

Photos by Jun Saito



thing in nature. Only then can people see how much they affect the natural world through their thoughts, actions, opinions and decisions.

Jun Saito is an intensely curious and compassionate man. It was curiosity that led him to Madrona and made him wonder about our mallard duck families in 2013. Since that time, he has followed every single family, getting to know them, their personalities, habitats, losses and successes.

He is on the preserve nearly every day from when the first mallards are born in March until the last fly away in July. And when they are gone, he misses them. He is an amazing man who cares deeply about our preserve, and because of his work, we have made several management changes so that the ducks that breed on the land can continue to survive and thrive.



Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim
CSU Dominguez Hills

Woolly bluecurls *Trichostema lanatum*

Some native plants have a reputation for being hard to grow, with special requirements difficult to meet in local gardens. While we often avoid such plants, some are so pretty that they tempt us anyway. One such plant is Woolly bluecurls, *Trichostema lanatum*.

Woolly bluecurls is a California native Mint, spanning from Monterey County to northern Baja. It can still be seen in the Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral of the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains. Sadly, much of its native range has been lost to human development.

This evergreen shrub reaches 3 to 5 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide. Its narrow leaves are perfectly adapted to dry conditions: waxy on top and hairy beneath. The foliage has a wonderful, complex aroma. Foliage and flowers can be brewed into a tasty tea.

Woolly bluecurls has some of the prettiest flowers of any native shrub. Most often blue-purple, they grow in upright spikes at the tips of branches. There is nothing quite like them in terms of their overall impact. This is truly a diva plant!

The flowers are adapted to their pollinators, the hummingbirds and large native bees. Nectar is produced deep within the floral tube (consumers need a long tongue to reach it). The sexual parts extend out beyond the petals, and pollen is transferred as a by-product of nectaring.

The Woolly bluecurl can be short-lived (three to five years) in the garden. It likes sun, and its deep roots make it a tough survivor. After the first two years, this plant needs little or no summer water. If you have clay soil, plant it on a low berm. Water if needed in winter, but no standing water and no fertilizer. Tip-prune after flowering in summer, then ignore.

Woolly bluecurls is an important medicinal plant. You might want to include it in your herb or medicinal garden. For more on this plant see: <http://mother-natures-backyard.blogspot.com/2016/05/plant-of-month-may-wooly-bluecurls.html>



For more information on growing and purchasing this plant, visit the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. You can also learn about local native plants at the “Out of the Wilds and Into Your Garden” series on the first Saturday of each month at the center.

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Events

Wednesday, June 1, 7 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Tuesday, June 21, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker, Tom Ryan, is the primary biologist for the Snowy Plover Surveys in L.A. and Orange counties, and will report on them (see p. 3 for details). Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Tuesday, July 19, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Speakers Jun Saito and Tracy Drake will present a program entitled “The Mallards of Madrona” (see p. 6 for details). Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Field Trips

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

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

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

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

Saturday, June 11, 9 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Abalone Cove. Visit the newly landscaped trails lined with drought-resistant plants and interpretive signage. Enjoy a walk down to explore the tide pools and pillow lava formations. Moderate. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.



Bell's Vireo

Photo by Evi Meyer

Saturday–Sunday, June 11–12, 8 a.m.: Annual Fieldtrip to Big Bear with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

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

Tuesday, June 14, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See June 7 for details.

Saturday, June 18, 10 a.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Point Vicente Lighthouse and Bluff Reserve. Join us for a tour of the Point Vicente Lighthouse grounds, the PVIC museum, the native plant garden and a walk along the spectacular bluff top at the Point Vicente Bluff Reserve. Easy. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Sunday, June 19, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. For details, visit Torrance.wbu.com.

Tuesday, June 21, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See June 7 for details.

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

Sunday, June 26, 8:30 a.m.: Fieldtrip to San Gabriel Mountains with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, July 5, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 7 for details.

Wednesday, July 6: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on "Birding with Bob."

Saturday, July 9, 9 a.m.: 36th Annual Palos Verdes Butterfly Count. Our chapter survey of the regional diversity and abundance of butterflies is part of the national survey conducted by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). To take part (half or full day), e-mail count compiler Tracy Drake at TDrake@TorranceCA.gov. She will have a list of places you can survey. If you are new to the count,



El Segundo blue butterfly at Terranea

Photo by Jess Morton

come to the Madrona Marsh Preserve at 10 a.m. You'll learn about our local butterflies while participating in the count. The count will be conducted within a 15-mile circle centered at the PV Reservoir, covering such important butterfly habitats as our coastal bluffs, canyons, marshes, parks, fields and wetlands. We often have national high counts in participants and several butterfly species, including the endangered El Segundo blue (see above photo).

While a knowledge of butterflies is helpful, it is not a requirement, so here is your chance to take part in one of the 10 oldest counts in the nation!

Saturday, July 9, 9 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to La Rotonda and Ocean Trails. Walk along restore habitat on the bluffs surrounding the Trump National Golf Club and possibly catch a glimpse of rare California Gnatcatcher songbirds while walking to the beach. Moderate to strenuous. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, July 10, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See June 12 for details.

Sunday, July 10, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Mt. Pinos, Mt. Abel and the Condor Preserve with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Wednesday, July 13, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See June 8 for details.

Saturday, July 16, 3 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Ocean Trails Reserve. Walk the public trail system and enjoy the vistas and summer blooming habitat. Moderate. Visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Sunday, July 17, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com.

Tuesday, July 19, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 7 for details.

Saturday, July 23, 8:30-10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magamma. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Sunday July 31, 8:30 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Ballona Creek and Freshwater Marsh with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.



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

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The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and National Audubon Society, of which PV/SB Audubon is the local chapter, are dedicated to the understanding and preservation of our natural heritage.

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