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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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Birding Context

By Evi Meyer

I always considered cell phones necessary but bothersome. Keep one on hand for emergencies, and that's it. When I am out in the field, I like to enjoy my birding experiences without being interrupted by incoming calls, so my phone stays silenced most of the time.

However, after I inherited an iPhone I realized that there are some distinct advantages for birders in the little black marvel. Not only does it offer birding apps for ID purposes, but it also lets birders access bird alerts and eBird postings when they are in the field. This enabled me to encounter some great birds I never would have found on my own. But it was a simple "text" sent to me by a friend that gave me the opportunity to observe something I had wanted to see for a long time.

For many years I had been longing to witness ospreys hunt for fish and carry off their prey in their talons right in front of my eyes or, better yet, in front of my camera. Though I had witnessed several experiences of that nature from afar, I was never really able to get a close look at the spectacle and capture it photographically.

I knew that Fish and Game regularly restocks trout in one of the lakes at El Dorado Park in Long Beach in the winter-time. I had to be there on the day of the fish release to see actively hunting ospreys or on the following day. Fish and Game is never very specific about their release dates on its website. So, someone needs to be there when it actually happens and alert the rest of us.

This is where one text message changed everything. While I was at work, I heard a text come in on my phone. It was from a birder and photographer friend who was at El Dorado Park while the trout were being restocked. Luckily I was not scheduled to work the next day and there was no doubt in my mind as to how I would be spending it. I alerted my friend and frequent birding partner Tommye Hite, and the two of us headed out the next morning.

Soon after we arrived at the lake, the spectacle began. There were three ospreys circling over the lake. We had been



Osprey catching trout at El Dorado Park in Long Beach

Photos by Evi Meyer

told by other birders, who had arrived earlier, that the birds had started their hunt right after sunrise and returned about every hour for more. And so it was that we saw these Nimrods of the avian world plunge into the lake with supreme power and grace and retrieve unsuspecting trout from the surface of the water.

As soon as their wet bodies were airborne again, White Pelicans started to chase them for the fish clutched in their huge talons. What a sight that was! One observer told us that the previous day, one of the Pelicans got so excited about the possibility of snatching the fish from an Osprey still in the

See Osprey, Page 2

TO OPEN OR NOT TO OPEN?

The Alondra Park Island Native Plant Garden

By **Jeanne Bellemin**
 Professor of Zoology
 El Camino College

Over the past 14 years, my El Camino College students and I have created a rather unusual native garden on a very unnatural island. The Alondra Park Island Native Plant Garden is thriving with the winter rains and 2012 improvements. This past year we painted the proud garden shed that was built by Max Pena and his LBCC and ECC construction students and funded by the South Coast Chapter of CNPS.

Another improvement was the removal by Carson Animal Control of dozens of hungry rabbits, which necessitated the fencing of most of the native plants. Now that we are down to just two rabbits, we are removing much of the unsightly fencing so our natives may grow and shape themselves naturally.

Dave Latimer worked last fall to identify and label the plants so that we

may better keep track of what we have. Now that there is shelter under the native plants, my fall-semester students made one last improvement by adding a lizard habitat of recycled cement block that was laid out in the form of two grey whales. I have just added three Southern Alligator Lizards, as this species is the most common lizard in our backyards. On that same day in December, there were five white pelicans and many migratory ducks on the lake and resting on the island.

Challenges present themselves with the new year. In late December, I met with Joe Mendoza, deputy director of South County Parks and Recreation Department for Los Angeles County, along with Bill Arrowsmith and Dave Latimer. It appears L.A. County would like to have an open access plan to allow the public onto the island.

The island has been closed to the public for several decades. The island and surrounding Alondra Lake is a prime stop-over place for migratory wa-

terfowl. Closure of the island has provided a safe sanctuary for birds of all types to nest, rest and even die in peace — unmolested by the general public. It has also allowed the native garden to be relatively free of vandalism although some people have illegally gained entrance and vandalized the shed and plants. Therefore, I am opposed to the open unregulated access for the public that the county first suggested.

At the same time, I would welcome some regular supervised and perhaps guided access so that people could appreciate our native garden. If the island were open once or twice a month a month with a supervised schedule, then the public would be able to appreciate the native plants and birds.

Perhaps even regular guided bird walks could occur there as they do at Madrona Marsh in Torrance. I welcome public comment on the access issue of our island garden from all you bird watchers and native plant naturalists (Jbellemi@elcamino.edu).

Osprey, from Page 1

water, that it ensnared the entire bird complete with trout in its large gular sack. Luckily, the sharp talons ended that ambitious attempt immediately.

Tommye and I stayed at the lake for about six hours, completely ignoring the rest of the birds at El Dorado Park: a first for both of us. We had so much fun watching the spectacular action and decided to go back the next time I receive a text. When that happens, we will be happy to share this information with anyone who is interested in seeing ospreys in action. Just let us know.

So, don't get me wrong. I am still a very moderate cell phone user and don't walk around with the device glued to my ear. Though I do fully embrace the advantages it offers for better birding experiences, there are definitely places — such as the dinner table — where it should not be present. Nothing it can provide will replace good conversation over a nice dinner with a pleasant bottle of wine.



American White Pelicans chased the Osprey to try to steal its prey.

Smart Chicks Know When to Catch a Ride

By Evi Meyer

We typically associate the term *riding* with a horse, saddle and reins, the rider and horse moving in perfect synergy. Only by recently becoming an active birder did I find out that there is also an avian form of riding. I had heard that young Grebes are known to hitch rides on their parents' backs. I subsequently became determined to witness this with my own eyes (and camera), no matter how many birding trips it took.

For the past few years, I have frequently visited our local wetlands. Though I enjoy birding in those habitats year round, in the spring breeding season I always paid particular attention to Grebes in the hope of seeing the back-riding for which they are known. I managed to see baby Pied-billed Grebes with their distinct clown faces interacting with their parents on many occasions, but I was never lucky enough to see them hitching rides. Was this all a myth, or is it really true that Grebes' parental care includes shuttling the young around on their backs?

That question was answered on a Sunday field trip with the Brookses' last September. Our destination was the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary (SJWS) in Orange County. Just before I met with the people in my carpool, I checked the Orange County bird postings, and sure enough, there was a Clark's Grebe reported to have a "backrider" in one of the ponds at SJWS. This could be a really good day.

We started birding at 8 a.m. and worked our way through about 3.5 miles of trails in between various ponds and creeks. We did see some spectacular bird life along the way (60 species in total), but it was not until almost noon that we



Grebes sharing a meal together

Photo by Evi Meyer

reached the pond where the Grebe family had been reported. We did see several individual Clark's Grebes, and then finally saw one with a little white fluff ball sitting on its back. Our group was mesmerized. I was ecstatic. Here it was, what I had been wanting to see for so long!

We all doted on this endearing interaction between parent and chick, but it was getting close to lunchtime and our birding group had mostly lunch in mind. So they moved on to the picnic tables outside of the Audubon House — without me. I hunkered down along the reedy shoreline, totally enchanted by what was happening right in front of me.

Soon after the group split off, the parent Grebe swam closer to where I was sitting, making the back-riding chick visible even without binoculars. How much better could it get? A lot better!

The second parent flew in with a small fish and presented it to the adult with the chick. They proceeded to process the fish into bite-sized pieces and then feed it to the young one while it was riding on the back, neatly tucked in between the parental wings. At some

point, however, the chick was fed up with the smaller pieces and it went after what was left of the fish. What a spectacle! But there is more.

Apparently this little chick was from the second clutch of this year. Soon after the fish was delivered, a much larger same-year bird, still in juvenile plumage, appeared from out of the reeds. It was clearly interested in getting in on the action as well. There was a bit of sibling rivalry going on, but the parents' full attention went to the younger sibling to make sure that its belly would be filled. The older one's time for mooching was definitely over.

I spent about half an hour observing the family life of these beautiful Clark's Grebes all by myself. It felt like a private showing to me, but was just the nitty-gritty everyday routine for the Grebes.

But as exhilarating as it was to be able to finally witness these birds' back-riding behavior, my stomach was beginning to signal me that it was time to rejoin my group. When I did, I reported on what I had seen and then bit into my sandwich with gusto. It tasted absolutely delicious.

The PV/South Bay Audubon Bird Quiz

By Martin Byhower

Last month's quiz bird seemed like a bump on a log — which is a good clue, for starters. Birds that you can find around our area that hug branches are mostly uncommon. “Tree-huggers” include nuthatches (a lot of Red-breasted ones and a few White-breasted ones were around this winter!), Brown Creepers, Black and White Warblers, and Woodpeckers. Although a scant few of these are around at the time I write this, woodpeckers are by far the most likely. Being zygodactylous (having toes that point backwards as well as forwards) is a big plus if you are a tree creeper, and woodpeckers all have this feature. You can see it if you look at our bird closely.

Now the question is: Which woodpecker is it? Northern Flickers, Downy Woodpeckers and Red-breasted Sapsuckers are our only regular woodpeckers on the peninsula and surrounding areas. Flickers are very unique and distinctive, and I hope you ruled them out immediately. Downy woodpeckers would have clean flanks, distinct spotting on the wings and a clean white stripe down the back. They have a black cheek patch surrounded by white and a proportionately much smaller bill than our bird. That leaves sapsuckers, the most likely of which is the Red-breasted species.

However, on closer examination (especially if you are looking at the online color version), you'll note that the red is more limited on the face and the red on the chin is distinctly separated from that on the head, unlike a Red-breasted Sapsucker. If you could see the bird from a different angle, you would also note that the red doesn't extend down onto the breast. Red-breasted Sapsuckers lack the distinct black and white pattern on the face.

This leaves two possibilities: Red-naped or Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Especially in recent years, Red-napes have become much more common. In adult birds, the differences between the two

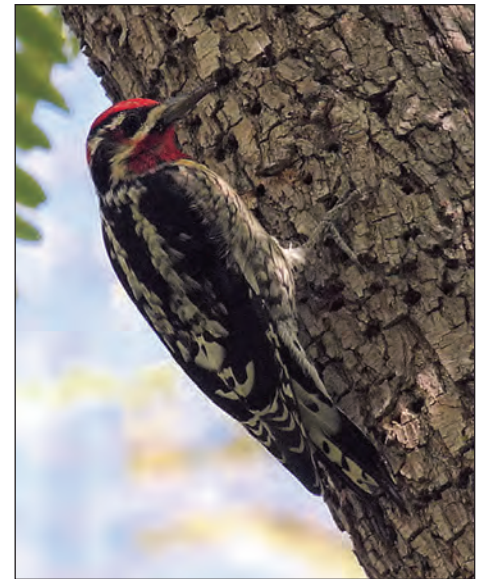


You would have to be pretty unobservant if you walk the trails in the foothills and don't find this guy! Hint: He is most often seen on the ground, but you'll often see his kind in bushes like this Lemonadeberry. Look for the answer next time!

species can be subtle, especially between the males of the species, both of which have the solid red chin, like our bird. However, you can just make out the red patch on the nape of our bird. Not all Red-napes have this, and hybrid Red-naped x Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can have this, but the odds are, our bird is a Red-naped.

A few good places to find these on a somewhat regular basis are Harbor Park and the South Coast Botanic garden, but they move around and are notoriously shy. As you approach, they often fly off in the opposite direction, on the other side of the tree, and you never even see them take off. When they stick around in a tree, they will often quietly loop around to the side you are *not* on.

The natural history of these guys is pretty interesting. They drill holes in trees (often Oaks, *Eucalyptus*, *Casuarina*, Red Willows and others) that girdle the trunk. As the sap bleeds from the tree, they lap it up — yummy! Unlike Acorn Woodpeckers, they don't store seeds in the holes. Also, though they might occasionally grab an insect that is attracted to the sap, they usually only get sap. They will often have a group of different trees they are working on simultaneously, so they might “make the rounds” during the day.



Have you figured it out yet?

Photo by Steve Wolfe

An anecdotal observation I have made about them is that there is often one Yellow-rumped warbler and one female Anna's Hummingbird hanging around the active holes, at least the ones in the red willows at Harbor Park. Sapsuckers peck a bit more quietly than other woodpeckers, making them harder to detect by sound. Their pecking is said to be more irregular than the often-steady drumming made by their cousins.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Welcome to PV/South Bay Audubon 2013!



By Nancy Feagans

As the new Chapter President of the Palos Verdes South Bay Audubon Society, I would like to introduce myself and tell you a little about my background, how I became interested in birds and my “birding experience” to date.

I am retired from the aerospace industry where I worked for over 25 years at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. Over that period I filled several roles, the most recent of which was that of Information Management Engineer for the Kepler Project: a space observatory launched by NASA to discover earth-like planets orbiting other stars. Fun projects in retirement include creating and maintaining websites for organizations and individuals, and running a small photo business specializing in environmental portraiture.

As far as family, my hubby Dan and I have been together for 20 years, and we have a son and twin grandchildren in Colorado as well as a daughter and four grandchildren in the Netherlands. Though I’m not able to travel abroad as often as I’d like to see family in The Hague, I am able to visit Colorado several times a year and enjoy time with my son and the twins.

I currently live in Redondo Beach and first became interested in birds in May 2000 when Dan and I shared a little weekend/vacation cabin in the Cleveland National Forest above Lake Elsinore. We quickly became curious about all the different kinds of birds we saw in the front yard of our cabin. “What’s that?” we wondered as little gray birds with black heads foraged on the ground. “And what about those?” we asked ourselves as small birds with top-knots hopped around in our oak tree and surrounding scrub brush.

Of course, we thought we knew what the raucous blue birds with white eyebrows were — Blue Jays — but nope! Respectively, these birds turned out to be Dark-eyed Juncos, Oak Titmice, and Western Scrub Jays, all species common to the area. As we noticed more and more different birds, the more curious we became, especially me. And so it started.

Soon I invested in a good pair of binoculars and Kenn Kaufman’s *Birds of North America* — my very first field guide, one of many now adorning my bookshelves. Each weekend became an adventure in finding birds and identifying their species — or *attempting* to make an ID. Many would become LBBs (Little Brown Birds) in my notes, and some would become known as GABIGGL (Got Away Before I Got

a Good Look). But before long I learned to recognize a number of different species, and became more aware of birds off the mountain as well as at our cabin.

In the spring of 2003, the *Bird Watcher’s Digest* sent out a call for a few people across the country to test out some professionally marketed “squirrel-proof” feeders. I responded right away, describing our cabin’s locale and environment and my experiences with squirrels robbing our numerous feeders (which by then numbered about seven if I count the two hummingbird feeders we had put up).

To my delight, I was chosen to be one of just five individuals nationwide to participate! Soon the feeders arrived, we installed them in the front yard of our cabin, and I observed and took notes on the success of each feeder. The bottom line was that most were effective to a degree, some more than others. The resulting article in the May/June 2003 issue of *Bird Watcher’s Digest* can still be found online at www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/print.php?id=413.

Always an advocate for nature and the environment as well as a newly hatched birder (pun intended), it made sense to join the local chapter of the Audubon Society when I moved to Redondo Beach in the summer of 2005. Within a couple of years I became Secretary and Webmaster of the Chapter, and in October 2008, Dan and I took on a new project: installing, monitoring, and recording the results of 12 Western Bluebird nest boxes at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park.

This has been an extremely rewarding venture, and over the past four breeding seasons we’re happy to report that 112 Western Bluebirds and 91 Tree Swallows have successfully fledged from our boxes!

As President of the Palos Verdes South Bay Audubon Society, I am very much looking forward to implementing the goals and objectives we plan to formulate at the Feb. 6 Board of Director’s Meeting set for 7 p.m. at Madrona Marsh. These meetings occur on the first Wednesday of even-numbered months and are open to all, so if you are interested in attending, please feel free to join us. Your thoughts and ideas are always welcome!

CLARIFICATION

In the cover photo of the previous *Hummin’*, the bird may have been misidentified. Kimball L. Garrett, ornithology collections manager at the L.A. County Natural History Museum, believed it to be either a juvenile Costa’s or Black-chinned hummingbird, not an Anna’s hummingbird. Consensus could not be reached.

BOOK REVIEW

What the Robin Knows

By Jess Morton

Jon Young's new book, *What the Robin Knows*, is a fascinating look at a side of birding that all of us sense, but few really understand. It is about birds, not in the way field guides or scientific texts are about birds — ticking off details of plumage or disconnected bits of where they are or how their digestive system is put together — but in the far broader subject of what it is to be a bird.

There are some very commonsense ways of thinking about birds that few of us really consider, and these that lie at the heart of Jon's book. Think about what a bird's brain has to be if a bird is

to survive and the pejorative term "bird-brain" dissolves into a counterproductive misunderstanding. Birds know their environment. They have to. They know their neighbors and neighborhood intimately, almost certainly better than you know yours. They know where shelter is. They know where food is. They know what other birds do, and they pay attention when something is not right. For them, it is not a matter of two plus two equals four, but that one plus one could all too easily be zero.

"Deep bird language is an ancient discipline, perfected by Native peoples the world over. Finally, science is catching up..." writes author Jon Young in his book.

Young presents wonderful examples to prove his points, inventing descriptive terms such as "bird plow" (and you may inadvertently be one) to help clarify his thoughts. Jon's background is as a tracker, encompassing a set of skills that let him understand a place he might visit in the way the birds and other creatures there might understand it. In this book, he teaches us birders bird calls in ways that we sort of know, but with his insights can know far better, making us both better birders and better stewards of the places we bird.

It's an easy read and I highly recommend it. Please visit <http://whattherobin-knows.com/> for more information about the book and its engaging author.

BIRDER'S DIARY

By Jess Morton

Hurricane Gulch lived up to its name on Jan. 15 this year. But it was not your usual, humdrum hurricane. This was a hurricane of seabirds that invaded the in-shore waters at Cabrillo Beach chasing a trapped and doomed monster school of anchovies.

Unable to get back out into the relative safety of open water, the fish became brunch and dinner for thousands of birds that spent the hours from late morning, when David Ellsworth first discovered them, to evening whirling over the waters of the cove as the fish moved from one side of the beach to the other in hopes of surviving the onslaught. I had never seen such a sight before, nor had the staff at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, all of who came out to gape at the sight or try to recall a prior occurrence.

The most remarkable part of the event were the thousands of Black-vented Shearwaters that came in shore to complement the thousands



A Shearwater feeding frenzy

of California and other gulls, terns, cormorants, grebes and pelicans present. While large numbers of Black-vented Shearwaters spend each winter in the Channel and further off shore, it is very rare that they can be seen plying the surf. On this day, many of the Shearwaters were seen diving into and even shoreward

of the breakers as they feasted. It was a stunning sight.

The birds were still present the next morning, resting in huge rafts not far off shore, rafts that would dissipate over the next 24 hours as the birds moved out, this one depleted fishing venue no longer of interest to anyone but us birders.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Opposition to Rebuilding the Redondo Power Plant



By Lillian Light

Does it make sense to have a power plant facility on the coastline, adjacent to the Santa Monica Bay ocean environment? The citizens group “Building a Better Redondo” and the leaders of NoPowerPlant.com present persuasive arguments against it, and are urging a Yes vote on Measure A, the Power Plant Phase-out Initiative, on March 5. We environmentalists who are concerned about the greenhouse gas emissions that stream from the smokestacks of such power plants have to agree.

The Redondo AES has applied to the California Energy Commission for a new power plant to replace the current facility, which uses an ocean-water cooling system that must be phased out by 2020. Many Redondo residents oppose a new power plant because of the health risks from the particulate pollution that will be generated by the new facility.

While AES has said that the new plant will create energy in a “cleaner” way, opponents say that, in its application, AES proposes to run the plant much more frequently, creating far more pollution. According to AES’s own filings, particulate pollution is expected to increase by a factor of at least 5, adversely affecting the health and brain development of local residents.

Boston University School of Public Health published a report in 2008 that followed children from birth through age 10. They found that children exposed to higher levels of particulates scored significantly worse on tests of memory as well as both verbal and nonverbal intelligence. Exposure to these air pollutants also retards lung growth and increases the number of cases of lung disease (like asthma) cardiac disease, and cancer in children and adults.

Measure A phases out power production on our waterfront by 2021. It is a zoning change from industrial to commercial and open space. It rezones the AES site for a maximum of 40% commercial and a minimum of 60% parks and open space. AES retains ownership of its land with the ability to develop, lease or sell the land. The city is not required to buy the property or develop the land; it merely determines land use, instead of that decision being made by a Fortune 200 company

based in Virginia. The initiative includes an incentive for hotel, office and institutional uses of the 40 percent commercial land. All specific development is left to the city council and the public to decide and vote on.

The L.A. Basin does not need power from AES. State officials testified to the Redondo Beach City Council that there is excess capacity in our part of the power grid. Three new power plants will be online this year in the L.A Basin. – El Segundo, City of Industry and Sentinel. Even with the San Onofre nuclear plant offline, AES operated at a mere 6.18% capacity in the first nine months of 2012.

A large group of concerned residents oppose a new power



AES Redondo Beach Power Plant.

*Photo by Chelsea Sektnan
Reprinted with permission of the Easy Reader*

plant. In less than five weeks, 7,468 registered voters signed the petition to get Measure A on the ballot. They are aware that AES funds less than one percent of the city’s budget. Under Measure A, new commercial property potential occupancy, sales and property taxes would raise much more money for the city than a new power plant.

We are hoping that a new coastal park will enrich our area, and will provide much needed recreation for South Bay residents. The California Coastal Conservancy and other agencies and foundations are expected to provide funding for this park. If all our environmentalists vote Yes on Measure A on March 5, we can look forward to having a beautiful waterfront park rich in plant, insect and bird life. It will be an open place to stroll, smell the sea and listen to the sounds of nature. Visit <http://nopowerplant.com/npp/> to help this vision come to pass.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YES

By Marcos Trinidad, YES Director

It's that time again ... ForestAid in the Angeles National Forest. So far we have YES members signed up for three volunteer days. ForestAid is a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and TreePeople. The partnership was established to engage volunteers from the Los Angeles Basin and surrounding areas to connect with their National Forest. YES members will plant Jeffrey pine and Coulter pine seedlings.

This year the planting site will be at Chilao Campground, one of the areas that was affected by the 2009 Station Fire, where approximately 160,000 acres of forest burned. The volunteer days begin on Feb. 21 and last until the end of April. The plantings will take place both on weekdays and the weekend. So, if you wish to join in on the fun, please sign up at treepeople.org.

In addition to the great work that Audubon YES has been doing, the past few months YES has been getting a lot of publicity. I would like to congratulate Rachel Dokko of Peninsula High for making it onto the cover of Audubon Adventures. Audubon Adventures is a poster that the National Audubon Society displays nationwide.

The poster features a few students who are truly inspiring and who are making a difference in their community. Rachel has adopted an area of land on the Palos Verdes Peninsula to restore to habitat for the Palos Verdes Blue butterfly. She leads a group of students on weekly efforts to weed, propagate and plant.

"I wanted to do my part to make a difference for a new future," said Rachel when asked about her motivation. "While my friends are sleeping or studying or watching TV, I'm learning about the native plants and animals that live where I live."

YES was also featured on "This Week in Torrance," a news program that is aired on Torrance CitiCable News channel. The report covered the work that YES members have been doing at Madrona Marsh.

We are thrilled to have YES members across the airwaves and the Web. Keep up the great work and continue to support our goals of promoting youth involvement in preserving natural wildlife habitat.

Audubon YES is open to all student Audubon Society members and their families. If you know of any organizations or areas in need of volunteers, please contact me at marcos@pvsb-audubon.org or 323-945-4346.

When Push Came to Shove



These canvasbacks are in a shoving match for dominance, and their expressions said very well who was winning.

Photo by Jess Morton

Volunteers on Patrol Needs You

By Ken Swenson

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) and the City of Rancho Palos Verdes are recruiting volunteers to serve on a new Volunteer Trail Patrol Program to help protect the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve from damage and vandalism and keep it a safe experience for all visitors.

The Preserve is the culmination of efforts started in 1987 when Dr. Bill Ailor and others formed the PVPLC to acquire, protect and preserve natural open space lands on the Peninsula. With the partnership of the City of RPV and with support from federal, state and local agencies, the Coastal Conservancy and millions of dollars of financial support and countless volunteer hours, approximately 1,400 acres of land were set aside as a home for the native flora and fauna that had largely disappeared.

The Preserve sits in a heavily suburban setting, and more people visit it today than ever before as a place to enjoy the scenic beauty and as a popular destination for outdoor recreation. However, it is subject to a variety of federal, state and municipal laws that control its use in order to protect the conservation values that are the underpinning of its creation. The natural wonder of the Preserve and the fragile ecology of the native environment that the Preserve exists to nurture are not immune to the pressures of use. While rules require visitors to stay on approved trails, not to disturb the plant and animal life, many do not. Worse, efforts to replant and to encourage compliance by using signs and barriers are routinely met with vandalism.

Rangers from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) patrol the Preserve on a limited basis but are unable to make substantial inroads due to the number and mobility of violators and the limited patrol time available. The result is increasingly obvious off-trail and unauthorized trail use that damages

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Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim
CSU Dominguez Hills

Purple Clarkia *Clarkia purpurea*

Spring is the time of wildflowers. You may have noticed a charming little wildflower that grows in spring in wildlands and native plant gardens. Its flowers — in shades of pastel pink-purple — are delicate enough to grace an English cottage garden. The plant you've admired is Elegant Clarkia (*Clarkia purpurea*), which once grew abundantly in low-lying areas of the South Bay and the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Purple Clarkia, like other native Clarkias, is a member of the *Onagraceae* or Evening Primrose/Willow Herb family. This family includes a number of lovely flowering plants including garden fuschias, California Fuschia, the Evening Primroses and the Suncups (*Camissonia* species). Plants in the family *Onagraceae* are particularly common in western United States.

In addition to having flowers in parts of four, many species in this family open either at dawn or dusk — hence the common name “Evening Primrose.” Purple Clarkia is open in the daytime and pollinated by day-flying insects like bees, as well as hummingbirds. This makes it a great addition to life-friendly insect gardens.

Our local Purple Clarkia is particularly lovely. The petals are almost white near the center and pink-purple at their edges

habitat (unlawfully), damages the natural geology and terrain, prevents natural revegetation that would fill in old trails that are not in the trails plan, costs time and money to repair, replace, and replant, and ruins the scenic beauty and the outdoor experience for other visitors.

In order to assist the MRCA rangers, the city and PVPLC are working to establish a Volunteer Trail Patrol Program. The Program is not finalized, but it is expected that Volunteer Trail Patrol members will assist the MRCA rangers by regularly patrolling the Preserve on foot to observe and report violations. But they will not be able to issue citations or make arrests.

The information collected will allow the MRCA rangers to respond to violations and to focus enforcement efforts. Patrol members will also have opportunities to assist in educating visitors to the Preserve. The plan is for volunteers to receive training to function more safely and effectively, to be subject to rules and a code of conduct, and to be regularly evaluated. The city and PVPLC are asking for a minimum hourly commitment per month to ensure success. For more information or to join the patrol, please contact Barb Ailor at info@PVPLC.org.



with a darker magenta spot or wedge. The petals' coloration and irregular edge suggest a lady's fan, hence this plant's other common name “Fairy Fans.” Purple Clarkia is as easy to grow as it is beautiful. Clarkias thrive in any local soil and can take full sun or partial shade. You can grow them in garden beds or containers. They look beautiful with other native wildflowers and make a robust cut flower. Birds love the seeds, and you can also parch them for use as pinole or in baked goods.

Purple Clarkia is grown from seed (see links below for seed sources). A good trick is to cover the wildflower area with a thin (< 1 inch) layer of gravel. This helps the plants survive cold, drought and hungry birds. Gently rake in seeds before a good rain. Keep the soil moist until flowering is done, then taper off so seeds develop. Gather seeds (you can invert whole plants into a paper bag and let them drop out) or let them re-seed naturally. Give seeds to your neighbors as a nice, life-friendly gift!

For more information, see <http://mother-natures-backyard.blogspot.com/2013/01/plant-of-month-january-purple-clarkia.html>.

CALENDAR

Meet, Learn, Enjoy, Restore

Events

Saturday, Feb. 2, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Natural history walk at Bixby Marsh. Explore the 17-acre Bixby Marshland after a brief introductory walk with Audubon leaders Jess Morton and John Nieto. Walks begin on the hour. Learn about how the marsh came into being and view the birds that have made it home. Located in Carson, Bixby Marshland is on the west side of Figueroa, just south of Sepulveda Blvd. The marsh is managed by the L.A. County Sanitation District: www.lacsd.org/education/.

Wednesday, Feb. 6, 7 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Saturday, Feb. 9, 9 – 11 a.m.: Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Come take part in Audubon's partnership with the Chadwick Ecommunity and Los Angeles to restore habitat. This is a hands-on opportunity to learn about removing invasives and planting native species. Students earn community service credits. Wear closed-toe shoes, long pants, a hat and work gloves. KMHRP is located at 25820 Vermont Ave., just west of the Harbor Freeway. Call Martin at 310-541-6763, ext. 4143.

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' birding class (TBD) at South Coast Botanic Garden. Walks in the garden before class start at 6 p.m. as long as daylight permits. The fee for this four-week session is \$23 for SCBGF members, \$33 for non-members. For details, call 323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Thursday, Feb. 14, 8:00 – 10:15 a.m. Bird survey on a habitat restoration

site. Along with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC), our chapter is monitoring the bird population on the Three Sisters habitat restoration site. Volunteers are needed to be trained in identification and survey methods. Contact Ann Dalkey at adalkey@pvplc.org or 310-541-7613, ext. 208.

Saturday, Feb. 16, 7:50 – 10 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See Feb. 14 listing.

Tuesday, Feb. 19, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Bob Shanman. Bob will be presenting his trips to Costa Rica. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Saturday, Feb. 16, 9 – 11 a.m.: The Stories of Birds, a beginner's guide to birds. Tracy Drake will give a short presentation in the Nature Center about "Big Voices, Little Birds", featuring House and Bewick's Wren, Western Scrub Jay, Mockingbirds, Crows and Ravens. The second part of the program will be outdoors, using the newly learned skills at the marsh. No previous birding knowledge required.

Wednesday, Feb. 27, 7 p.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' birding class on Gulls at South Coast Botanic Garden. Walks in the garden before class start at 6 p.m. as long as daylight permits. The fee for this four-week session is \$23 for SCBGF members, \$33 for non-members. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Saturday, March 2, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Bixby Marshland open to the public.



American Lady butterfly

Photo by Tracy Drake

Please see Feb. 2 listing for details.

Saturday, March 9, 9 – 11 a.m.: Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at KMHRP. See Feb. 9 listing.

Thursday, March 14, 8:20 – 10:30 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See Feb. 14 listing.

Saturday, March 16, 8:20 – 10:30 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See Feb. 14 listing.

Saturday, March 16, 9 – 11 a.m.: The Stories of Birds, a beginner's guide to birds. Tracy Drake will give a short presentation in the Nature Center on "A Season for Ducks," featuring American Wigeon, Gadwall as well as Cinnamon, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal. The second part of the program will be outdoors, using the newly learned skills at the marsh. No previous birding knowledge required.

Tuesday, March 19, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Don DesJardin, presenting a program entitled "Search for the Jocotoco Antpitta." Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Field Trips

Sunday, Feb. 3, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.

Audubon leader Jess Morton and Dinuk Magamma will lead this walk through the garden (26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes). There's a minimal charge for nonmembers of the SCBG Foundation, or you can join there.

Tuesday, Feb. 5, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." Join Audubon leader Dave Moody and friends on a ramble around a great local birding area. Meet at Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, Feb. 6: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks the first Wednesday of every month. Please visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on "Birding with Bob."

Saturday, Feb. 9, 2 – 5 p.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Sacred Cove. Enjoy a favorite Conservancy walk with an emphasis on geology and the sea. Explore the tide pools between colorful rock formations and the rushing water from the sea cave — a special place for kids. Strenuous. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, Feb. 10, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP. Join Audubon leader Martin Byhower and explore this important natural area of the South Bay. KMHRP is located at 25820 Vermont Ave., Harbor City.

Sunday, Feb. 10, 8:30 a.m.: Fieldtrip to San Jacinto Wildlife Refuge with Eric and Ann Brooks for ducks, owls and more. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday to Monday, March 15 – 17, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to the Colorado River, Cibola NWR, Salton Sea and Imperial Valley with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, call 323-295-6688

or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Sunday, Feb. 17, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. For details, visit Torrance.wbu.com.

Tuesday, Feb. 19, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Feb. 5 listing.

Wednesday, Feb. 20, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Audubon leader Stephanie Bryan will lead this walk through the garden (26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes). There's a minimal charge for nonmembers of the SCBG.

Sunday, Feb. 24, 1 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Abalone Cove Shoreline Park. Tour the tide pools teeming with fascinating marine life. Moderate. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente's Whale of a Day. Find fun, food, entertainment and education on the grounds of PVIC. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Sunday, March 3, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Feb. 3 listing.

Sunday, March 3, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Malibu Lagoon State Park with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, March 5, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Feb. 5 listing.

Wednesday, March 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, March 9, 9 – 11 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Eagles' Nest. Journey down Burma Road with its interesting geological for-

mations and sweeping views from the "Eagles' Nest." Observe habitat restoration in action. Moderate. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, March 10, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP. See Feb. 10 listing.

Wednesday, March 13, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See Feb. 13 listing.

Saturday, March 16, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Kenneth Hahn State Recreational Area with Eric and Ann Brooks and the L.A. Chapter of Audubon. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

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

Tuesday, March 19, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Feb. 5 for details.

Wednesday, March 20, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Feb. 20 listing.

Saturday, March 23, 10 a.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Forrestral nature Reserve. Walk through coastal sage scrub habitat. Learn about the local geology. Moderate. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Saturday to Sunday, March 23 – 24, 8 a.m.: Tentative fieldtrip to Morro Bay, returning through Carrizo Plain wildflowers, with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

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



Please visit the Chapter website at www.pvsb-audubon.org or www.southbaycalendar.org. Area youth are encouraged to visit www.AudubonYES.org.

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Audubon So. Cal. Council Rep.: John Nieto, johnnieto@pvsb-audubon.org
Birdathon Teams: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Tracy Drake, tdrake@torranceca.gov
Jess Morton, jmorton@igc.org
Birds of the Peninsula: David Ellsworth, davidells@cox.net
Bird Walks—KMHRP: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Madrona/Polliwog Park/Ballona: Bob Shanman, wildbirdbob@gmail.com
Out of Area: Eric & Ann Brooks, motmots@aol.com
Tour de Torrance: Dave Moody, dsmoods@verizon.net
South Coast Botanic Garden: Stephanie Bryan, scbryan@aol.com
Bluebird Nest Project: Dan Lee & Nancy Feagans, nancy@pvsb-audubon.org
Calendar: Evi Meyer, evimeyer@cox.net
Christmas Bird Count: David Moody, compiler; Ann & Eric Brooks, motmots@aol.com
Community Outreach: John Nieto, johnnieto@pvsb-audubon.org
Conservation: Lillian Light*, lkligh@verizon.net
Education: Evi Meyer, evimeyer@cox.net
E-mail announcements: Jan Gardner, Janet.Gardner@ngc.com
Field Trips: Eric & Ann Brooks, motmots@aol.com

Hospitality: Alene Gardner, Alene.Gardner@sbcglobal.net
Hummin' Editor: Michelle Fisher
KMHRP: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Membership manager: Vicki Nishioka
Membership outreach: David Quadhamer
Programs: Candy Groat, groat99@aol.com; Bob Carr, robertfcarr@aol.com
Publicity: *Vacant***
Restoration—Harbor Park: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Science Advisory Committee: Candy Groat, groat99@aol.com
Surveys—Three Sisters Restoration: Ann Dalkey, adalkey@pvplc.org
Snowy Plover: Ron Melin, er2melin@gmail.com
South Bay Birds: Dave Moody, dsmoods@verizon.net
Webmaster: Nancy Feagans, nancy@pvsb-audubon.org
YES! Committee: Evi Meyer, Connie Vadheim
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NOTE: Please send corrections to Nancy Feagans (e-mail address above)

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