



HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

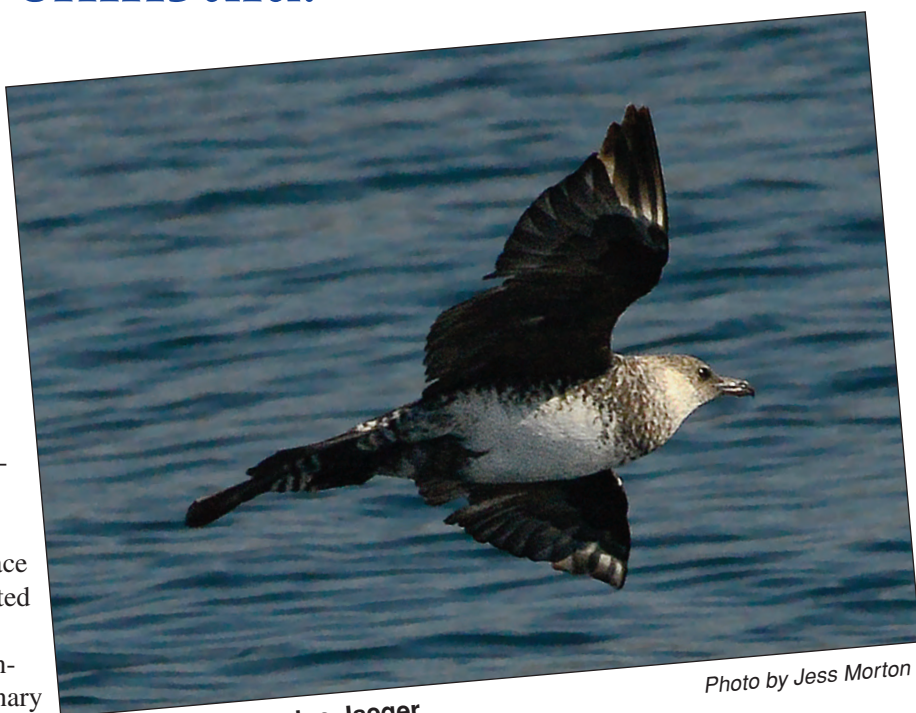
December 2014/January 2015 Vol. XXXVI No. V

This Unknown Peninsula: JAEGERS

By Jess Morton

There is no thrill in birding quite like that which comes with immediately identifying a bird one has never seen before. It's that shocked flash of recognition—this one! This is *it!* And all the books one has read over the years dissolve away into the bird of flesh and feather before you. There is an awed mystery here, especially when it's a bird one has dreamed of seeing for years, that something almost mythical now has a tangible reality. This wild creature does exist after all.

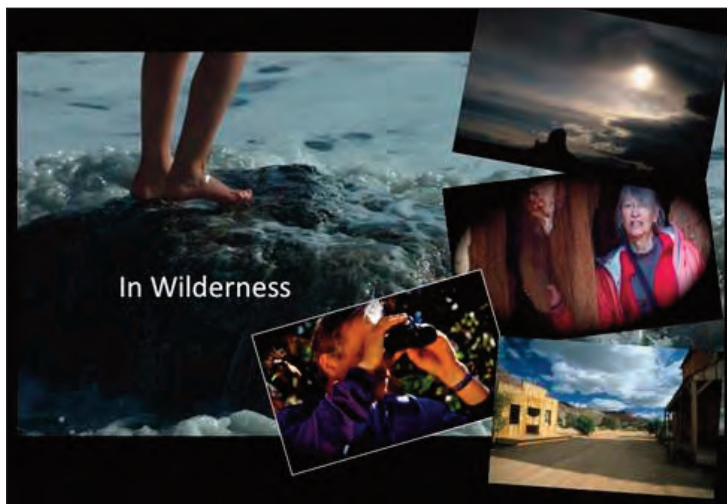
For me, several birds occupy this select place in my psyche, but the one I think I least expected was the South polar skua that flashed over my head on a pelagic a few years ago. It was so unexpected, yet I knew it on the instant. No ordinary jaeger this one, but a far traveler, a massive hunter skimming in across the waves to lift itself over the boat in which I was a passenger, moving swiftly across my view and



Pomarine Jaeger

Photo by Jess Morton

See Jaegers, Page 2



In Wilderness

'In Wilderness' & 'New Discoveries and Challenges in Ornithology'

Presented by Dr. Anita Caplan & Dr. Bob Caplan
Madrona Marsh Nature Center
January 20, 7 p.m.

These two highly praised films explore the human experience of wilderness. "Watershed" brings together a conservationist, cinematographer, choreographer, composer, and dancers. Together their company becomes part of a global celebration of clean water. The magic of photomontage blends human movement with breathtaking, lyrical images of America's most precious assets — its people and its natural resources. In "Twosome," a man and woman are each driven to explore remarkable settings — stunning canyons and lost coasts — each searching for something different, and each finding it.

JAEGERS, from Page 1

as swiftly sweeping away to port. “Skua!” I yelled to bring it to the attention of the other birders on board and swung my binoculars around to catch a last fleeting glimpse as the bird continued on its journey, our momentary conjunction in time and place dividing itself into two separate futures.

I said “no ordinary jaeger this one,” but to me all jaegers really are extraordinary. The name jaeger is an ancient one. Meaning hunter, it is present in modern German, but goes back to a common root that emerged also as old Norse and English usages. In addition to having an innate wildness implicit in their name, to me jaegers seem exotic creatures within that gray-brown-black-white world of seabirds, even though similar in appearance to most of them. There is a flash of white at the base of the primaries that does set them apart from the others, and they are generally more stocky than their close kin of gulls and terns. They also have extended central tail feathers, the shapes of which assist in identifying one species from another. But those are not the things about them that grabs me. It’s essence has to do with their solitary nature, the fact that



A Pomarine Jaeger soaring off the coast of Palos Verdes.

Photos by Jess Morton

AVIANTICS

By Evi Meyer



they fly with an assurance the others do not seem to have, and that there is a self-possessed indifference about them that speaks to me of timelessness and distance. They are of the sea itself, a force of nature distilled into beating wings and fearlessness.

The most frequent of the jaegers seen off the peninsula are pomarine jaegers. The size of mid-sized gulls when measured against them, they appear much larger when alone. We also find parasitic jaegers off our coast and an occasional long-tailed jaeger. South polar skuas, the largest of all these jaegers, are for us, *rara avis* indeed. All jaegers are polar nesters, with our three more regular species being nesters of the northern tundra. On the breeding grounds, the birds will feed on lemmings, other small animals and berries. When they leave the breeding grounds, they head out to sea, where they are most likely to be seen well off shore. There they feed on fish and other marine prey. All, especially parasitic jaegers, will take fish from gulls and terns, pursuing them until they force them to disgorge their catch in order to escape being harried. Jaegers—the hunters—are at their work!

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Counting on Some New Folks to Lend a Hand



By David Quadhamer

We will be electing officers and board members at our December meeting. I will be running for President, Martin Byhower will be running for Vice President and Jess Morton will be running for Treasurer. We still have an opening for Secretary. The Secretary takes the minutes at each meeting and distributes them to the

other board members. If you're interested in being our Secretary, please let me know. Our board meets six times per year, so there isn't a large time commitment. Our board members are Eileen Byhower, Robert Carr, Ollie Coker, Tracy Drake, Stacy Herman, Lillian Light, Donna Morton and Brandon Winner.

Our annual appeal letter was mailed to members recently. Your donations help us with regional conservation efforts, including our efforts at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park and our Audubon YES program. We have worked to restore Harbor Park and were instrumental in acquiring the \$130 million in funding for the restoration currently going on at the park. Our Audubon YES volunteers volunteer for the Madrona Marsh and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. Your donations also go toward bringing speakers to our monthly meetings. Additionally, we provide a number of bird walks and field trips each month at various locations throughout the South Bay.

We have received some large donations that are very much appreciated. If you haven't made a donation yet, please consider doing so. Your donations really do make a difference in our community. All donations are appreciated and every donation helps.

The 49th Annual Palos Verdes Peninsula Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on December 21. Each CBC takes place in a 15-mile diameter count circle. Our circle is centered at the Palos Verdes Reservoir and is divided into 10 areas, with volunteers assigned to one of these areas. At the end of the day, just after dusk, we meet at Madrona Marsh for a potluck dinner, and we figure out how many species of birds were seen. It is a lot of fun and really interesting to find out what the other groups have found. We typically find around 160 species of birds for the day.

We always need help with the CBC each year. Each group has a knowledgeable birder, so you don't need to be an expert in order to help out. We just need people out looking for and tallying birds. If you're interested in participating in the CBC, please contact Ann Brooks at motmots@aol.com.

The Christmas Bird Count is the largest and longest run-

ning Citizen Scientist program in the world. The first CBC was held on Christmas Day in 1900. There were 27 observers at 25 locations across Canada and the United States. Today the CBC runs over a three-week period and has expanded to more than 63,000 participants at more than 2,200 locations. The locations now range from above the Arctic Circle to the waters of the Drake Passage off Tierra del Fuego, Chile.

The first CBC was organized by Frank Chapman as a protest of, and an alternative to, the Christmas Side Hunt. The Christmas Side Hunt was a popular tradition 100 years ago. The point of that contest was to try and shoot as many birds as possible in one day. The Christmas Bird Count is a much better alternative!

Data from the CBCs and from Breeding Bird Surveys help scientists understand how bird populations are changing across North America. This data was used for Audubon's recent "Birds and Climate Change" report. The report covers 588 species of birds in North America, and findings show that 314 species are projected to lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080.

Martin Byhower's bird walk at the South Coast Botanic Garden will move to the second Sunday starting in December. Stephanie Bryan will be starting her third Wednesday walk at the South Coast Botanic Garden in December. Both walks at the Garden start at 8 a.m. Tracy Drake and/or Dinuk Magamma are leading a bird walk on the fourth Saturday of each month at Madrona Marsh from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Join us on a bird walk or come to a meeting. We have a lot of bird walks every month. Some good birds have been seen recently, including a Bald Eagle named "Luna" at Harbor Park. Luna was hatched and banded in Twin Harbors over on Catalina. Luna even made it into the *Daily Breeze*!

Check out the calendar in this newsletter to see when and where our bird walks take place. You never know what you might find. We have some interesting presentations coming up as well. I look forward to seeing you.

'Costa Rica Revealed'



**Presented by Ann Brooks,
Eric Brooks and Bob Carr
PV/South Bay Audubon Chapter
Madrona Marsh Nature Preserve
December 16, 7 p.m.**

**All programs are hosted by the
Madrona Marsh Nature Center, 3201
Plaza del Amo, Torrance; please visit
www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com**

ON THE ROAD

Central Oregon's Cabin Lake

By Steve Wolfe

Cabin Lake is located in the dry pine forests of central Oregon, on the eastern side of the Cascade Range. You approach the area via dirt roads, some of them rough, all the time wondering either “What could possibly be out here?” or “Where *is* it?”

But Cabin Lake is famous among birding circles in the Northwest; it's at a meeting place of the eastern Cascade pine forests and high desert ecosystems.

In terms of facilities, there is just a primitive campground, and a historic Forest Service guard station. Yet it's here that Deschutes National Forest built two permanent bird blinds, and to attract birds, each blind has a small concrete basin called a “guzzler” that fills with water from a nearby storage tank. So you enter a blind, sit ... and wait.

You usually don't have to wait too long before a bird perches on the sticks and rocks lining the sides, takes a sip or even bathes — and all this is taking

place about 10 to 15 feet in front of you.

Some of the birds I saw when I was there in August — and these are the more common birds there — include Crossbill, White-headed Woodpecker and Lewis's Woodpecker. I also saw Cassin's Finch, Northern Flicker and Clark's Nutcracker, all “up close and personal.”

With its blinds and water guzzlers, Cabin Lake is remote so it's a day's destination, but it's well worth the time and effort to get there.



At Cabin Lake, visitors can get up close and personal with an array of avian friends, including Lewis' woodpecker, directly above, or the Crossbill, shown at top right.

Photos by Steve Wolfe



Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim
CSU Dominguez Hills

California wood mint *Stachys bullata*

Shady areas of the garden can present a challenge, particularly when gardening for habitat. The area under trees is sometimes neglected, even in life-friendly gardens. One plant family that excels in shade is the Mint family (Lamiaceae). Among the shady mints, the wood mints are among the most showy and useful.

California wood mint is native to coastal California from the San Francisco Bay to Orange County. It prefers shady places that are at least seasonally moist. In the wilds — and in your garden — it's irresistible to hummingbirds and butterflies, particularly the Skippers. Combine it with Hummingbird sage and you'll make your hummingbirds happy from winter to summer.

Like many in the Mint family, *Stachys bullata* grows as a low-spreading groundcover (1 to 2 feet maximum). Its leaves are typical triangular mint leaves, but with minimal minty aroma when crushed. The foliage was traditionally used to make an infusion/tea for treating skin sores/wounds and sore throats.

The flowers of California wood mint are large for mints and brightly colored in pink or pinkish-purple. The flowering stalks are held above the foliage, providing easy access for hummingbirds and butterflies. Plants bloom from winter or spring through summer with some water. The flowers make nice, long-lasting cut flowers.

Stachys bullata is easy to grow if you have a shady spot under trees, a north-facing exposure or even a shady container on a porch. It is fine with any local soil, from sand to clay. It



does like a little summer water — maybe once or twice a month. Using a thin, 1- to 2-inch organic (bark) mulch will help it get established.

Other than that, *Stachys bullata* is an easy plant to grow. Like most mints, it needs to be cut back to the ground in fall or winter when it starts looking ragged. Just clip off the stem if it “runs” where it's not wanted. That's about it.

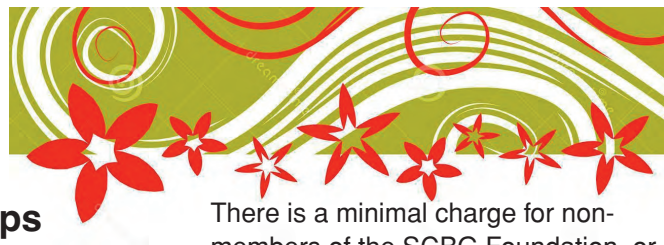
For more on this plant, please visit <http://mother-natures-backyard.blogspot.com/2014/11/plant-of-month-december-california-wood.html>.



For 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, Dec. 3, 7 p.m.: **PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting** at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Saturday, Dec. 13, 8-10 a.m.: **Pre-Christmas Bird Count Class** at Madrona Marsh classroom taught by Bob Shanman. Bring binoculars, a small notepad and a pen or pencil. Weather permitting, there will be a practice count at the marsh after class. The fee for the class is \$5.

Tuesday, Dec. 16, 7 p.m.: **Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers.** Our speakers are Bob Carr, Ann Brooks and Eric Brooks, who will be giving a presentation about the birds of Costa Rica. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Sunday, Dec. 21: Christmas Bird Count of the PV/South Bay Chapter of Audubon. For details, contact Dave Moody at dsmoods@verizon.net

Sunday, Dec. 28: Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 7 p.m.: **Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers.** Our speakers will be Dr. Anita Caplan and Dr. Bob Caplan, adventure travelers and filmmakers. They will be giving a presentation entitled "In Wilderness." Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to 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 have been cancelled indefinitely.

Tuesday, Dec. 2, 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 Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, Dec. 3: 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, Dec. 6, 2 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

Wednesday, Dec. 10, 8 a.m.: **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh** with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday, Dec. 13, 9 a.m.: **PVPLC Natural History Walk to Peck Park Canyon.** Walk through shaded canyon woodlands at the site of the former Hernandez Ranch on the east side of the Peninsula in San Pedro. Moderate. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, Dec. 14, 8 a.m.: **Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** Audubon leader Martin Byhower will lead this walk at the garden, located at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes.

There is a minimal charge for non-members of the SCBG Foundation, or you may join there.

Tuesday, Dec. 16, 8:30 a.m.: **"Tour de Torrance."** See Dec. 2 for details.

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 8 a.m.: **Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** Audubon leader Stephanie Bryan 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 may join there.

Saturday, Dec. 20, 8 a.m.: **Fieldtrip to Kenneth Hahn State Recreational Area** jointly held by Eric and Ann Brooks and L.A. Audubon. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Saturday, Dec. 27, 8:30-10:30 a.m.: **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh** with Audubon leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magammanna. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Tuesday, Dec. 30, 8:30 a.m.: **"Tour de Torrance."** See Dec. 2 for details.

Sunday, Jan. 4, 1:30 p.m.: **Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Abalone Cove Shoreline Park.** Tour the tide pools teeming with fascinating marine life. Moderate. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Tuesday, Jan. 6, 8:30 a.m.: **"Tour de Torrance."** See Dec. 2 for details.

Wednesday, Jan. 7: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details,

CONSERVATION CORNER

Protect our Precious Pollinators



By Lillian Light

Honey bees, scientifically known as *Apis mellifera*, are dying at rates unprecedented in history, putting America's entire beekeeping industry at risk, and threatening the stability of the the nation's food system. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared that it is no longer confident that our country has the ability to "meet the pollination demands of U.S. agricultural crops." The rapid loss of honey bees threatens to unravel agricultural production all across the country.

Bees are required to pollinate one third of the nation's food crops including almonds, cherries, blueberries, pears, strawberries and apples. Honey bees are responsible for pollinating more than 90% of the country's annual crops of carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, avocados, peaches, grapes, melons, beets and alfalfa. The latter is critical to the dairy cows that produce the milk on which so many people rely. These beneficial insects are critical in maintaining our diverse food supply.

Last winter over a third of all honey bee colonies in the U.S. died, and domestic honey production for 2014 is projected to be the lowest ever recorded. Way back in June of 2007, scientists found that bee die-offs were due to a group of pesticides known as neonicotinoids (also called neonics). Further research has found that even low levels of these pesticides impair bees' ability to collect food, to produce new queens, and to find their way back to the hive. Many independent, unbiased studies have linked this group of deadly chemicals to

an increased susceptibility to deadly parasites and viruses as well as to "colony collapse disorder."

Already 15 countries have imposed a two-year restriction on the use of these chemicals. Europe has taken a big step to protect bees by putting into effect a ban on the top bee-killing "neonic" pesticides. Please contact the administrator of our Environmental Protection Agency, and urge her to revisit the safety of toxic herbicides, and then to enact an immediate moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides to protect our pollinators. Our nation's ability to produce food depends on immediate action by the EPA.

Please send another important message to the EPA. The beautiful and fragile Monarch Butterfly migrates 2,500 miles from Canada or from the United States to Mexico every year. However, this year's monarch migration was at a record low — which marks the third straight year of steep declines. Scientists are sounding the alarm and claiming that the cause of crashing Monarch populations is the increased use of Monsanto's Roundup pesticide by the nation's farmers. This pesticide wipes out plants like milkweed, which is the only food that monarch larvae can eat. Milkweed is now gone from at least 100 million acres of crops.

Can you urge the EPA to adopt tough restrictions on pesticide-resistant crops and toxic herbicides, like Roundup, responsible for the rapid disappearance of Monarch butterflies?

Ms. Gina McCarthy, Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20460
McCarthy.Gina@EPA.gov

visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on "Birding with Bob."

Saturday, Jan. 10, a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Vicente Bluffs Reserve/PVIC and Lighthouse.

Enjoy a walk along the Bluff Edge Trail. Easy. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, Jan. 11, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Dec. 14 for details.

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See Dec. 10 for details.

Saturday to Monday, Jan. 17-19, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Carrizo Plain and Kern Wildlife Refuge with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail mot-mots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Sunday, Jan. 18, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com.

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See Dec. 2 for details.

Wednesday, Jan. 21, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Dec. 18 for details.

Saturday, Jan. 24, 8:30-10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magammana. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.



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 and their families are also encouraged to visit www.pvsb-audubon.org/AudubonYES.html.

PALOS VERDES/SOUTH BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Vice President: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
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Annual Fundraiser/Conservation Awards: Eileen Byhower, Donna Morton
Audubon So. Cal. Council Rep.: David Quadhamer, dquadhamer@yahoo.com
Birdathon Teams: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Tracy Drake, tdrake@torranceca.gov
Jess Morton, jmorton@igc.org
David Quadhamer, dquadhamer@yahoo.com
Birds of the Peninsula: Open
Bird Walks: KMHRP: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Madrona/Polliwog/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: Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net
Bluebird Nest Project: Open
Calendar: Evi Meyer, evimeyer@cox.net
Christmas Bird Count: David Moody, compiler;
Ann & Eric Brooks, motmots@aol.com
Community Outreach: Open
Conservation Awards/Special Events: Eileen Byhower, Donna Morton
Education: Open
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
Mailings manager: Bob Shanman, wildbirdbob@gmail.com
Membership outreach: David Quadhamer, dquadhamer@yahoo.com
Programs: Candy Groat, groat99@aol.com; Bob Carr, robertfcarr@aol.com
Publicity: Open
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 Director: Marcos Trinidad, marcos@pvsb-audubon.org
NOTE: Send corrections to David Quadhamer (dquadhamer@yahoo.com)

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