



HUMMIN'

www.pvsb-audubon.org

Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

Vol. XLVI #2 Mar/Apr. 2024

Phone Booth for the Birds

By Jess Morton

What does one do with an old pay phone? A story in the Washington Post let us know how Takoma Park, Maryland, musician, composer and audio inventor David Schulman used one to bring local birds into people's lives. A few years ago, he rewired an old pay phone to make it a play phone for bird calls. With the assistance of other local tinkerers and support from the city, he installed the phone near a restaurant on a busy street. Now school children and residents



Bird call phone Photo: Tom Huizenga

of the town use the phone to listen to the calls of local birds, one per keypad digit. The bird is identified and then the calls come through to the delight of all who make use of the free service.

Here is something to replicate! Another citizen service project, similar to the Little Free Library program. Bird Calls for All.

Monthly Meeting Programs

“The Endangered Habitats Conservancy” is Michael Beck’s topic for our March 19th



program. As founder and executive director of the conservancy, Michael has steered the acquisition and management of land parcels into a network of habitat preserves that continues to play a crucial role in San Diego County land conservation. The sister organization to the Endangered Habitats League, EHC owns and

manages 8500 acres in the county, acquisition of which the policy work of EHL has made possible. Well respected by business interests, conservationists, and governmental agencies alike, Michael has served in a public capacity by chairing the San Diego County Planning Commission.



On April 16th, continuing their talks on bucket list road trips, Ann and Eric Brooks will present “On the Road with Ann and Eric to Rwanda.” In December, 2023, along with 4 intrepid birders and a Belgian and an Ugandan guide, they visited 3 National parks and several Important Bird Areas. The group saw almost 300 species of birds in 10 days, as well as monkeys and Big Game. A rewarding adventure not to be missed!

From the President Presidential Update By Ann Dalkey

Sitting here at my desk in early February, I see our rain gauge shows that we've received 3.96" of rain since the current storm began 24 hours ago. While this amount of rain in one day is too much and too fast, we know that this spring will bring bountiful flowers as we move from winter to spring. The anticipation for good things to happen makes me excited for our Chapter this year.

I am most looking forward to having a new website for our chapter, one that will be colorful and easy to navigate. In addition to featuring bird photography by our local birders, it will have information in an easy-to-use calendar where chapter activities are listed. The website will be a source of information for all, such as when is the next Chapter Program Meeting, or where is there a bird walk? You will also be able to read older Hummin' newsletters and catch videos of our Chapter Program Meetings.

I hope that you all will join the Chapter's activities. One of my favorites is the 1st Sunday Bird Walk at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park, led by Manuel Duran. These leisurely walks visit a variety of habitats, with plenty of time to see the birds and learn from experts along on the hike. Manuel and his friends are very helpful for new birders, so don't hesitate to join in! Oh, this walk goes whether the wind is blowing or it's threatening to rain!

Unfortunately for us, our recently hired Program Manager Jessica Medrano has resigned from her half-time position. Jessica obtained a full-time dream job working at the Channel Islands. I wish her well in this new position. And, next, we will begin interviewing for her replacement quickly.

Finally, we had a very successful year-end fundraiser, supplemented by a bequest. Thank you to all who contributed so generously!

Birds of the Peninsula By Vincent Lloyd December 2023/January 2024

Even though this is an El Niño winter, an event that often brings extra rainfall, December and January were average months: one storm system in December and one in January each brought about three inches of rain. In contrast, the strong storm that barreled through the area on February 1st brought three inches in one day; three days later the Great Atmospheric River of 2024 arrived that dumped another six inches or so on the South Bay over three days. The high temperature during December-January was 80 on Dec. 5; the low was 39 on Jan. 9 and 12 (Torrance Airport).

Two rare bird species visited the South Bay during this period. On January 19th, Graham Montgomery discovered a **Yellow-billed Loon** at the Cabrillo Pier. This loon breeds on the coast of the Arctic Ocean and normally winters along the Pacific coast of southern Alaska and British Columbia. The species hadn't been seen in our area since 2013. Birders flocked from all over L.A. to see this rarity only to discover that its bill was entangled in a net. Fortunately, it was rescued and taken to nearby International Bird Rescue, where the loon was freed from the net and later returned to the wild. Then on Feb. 1, Willie D'Anna spotted a **Crested Caracara** flying about over Alta Vicente. This bird may have been the Caracara that was seen at Hahamonga Watershed Park in Pasadena on Dec. 27 or the one spotted at Ballona Wetlands and San Joaquin Marsh last June. Prior to that, the most recent sighting in the area was at Pt. Mugu in January 2012. Wherever it came from, it has not been seen again as of this writing. The Crested Caracara is a large member of the falcon family, although in behavior it resembles a vulture. Flying overhead, it is recognized by its white throat, black wings with white in the primaries, white tail with black terminal band, and bare red skin in front of the eyes. It occurs

widely from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. In the U.S. it is found in south Texas and southeastern Arizona. It is common in southern Baja California.

The Tyrannidae are the family of tyrant flycatchers, one of the largest bird families in the New World. Locally, the family is represented in the winter by the **Black Phoebe** and **Cassin's Kingbird**. Several less common flycatchers have been wintering in the area. A **Brown-crested Flycatcher** continued at South Coast Botanic Garden for the fifth winter. Nearby was a **Western Flycatcher** (formerly Pacific-slope Flycatcher), common in summer but unusual in winter. A **Western Kingbird** was spotted at Madrona Marsh on Dec. 5 (Melody Houghton); it is distinguished from Cassin's Kingbird by its white outer tail feathers as well as its distinctive call. A **Tropical Kingbird** continued along the Los Angeles River at the Willow Street crossing; it has a bright yellow chest and a massive bill. **Vermilion Flycatchers** popped up at Columbia Park, Magic Johnson Park, and Victoria Park. We are at the very northern limit of this bird's range, which extends down into South America.

A **Cassin's Vireo** hung out at SCBG from Dec. 27 to Jan. 14; while a **Plumbeous Vireo** was seen by many at Harbor Park all through December and January. These two species, both having white "spectacles", are so similar that they were once considered to be the same species, the Solitary Vireo. John Cassin (1813-1869) was the dean of American ornithology in the middle of the 19th century; he amassed the world's largest collection of specimens and published the first scientific descriptions of many birds of western North America. In addition to Cassin's Vireo and Cassin's Kingbird, Cassin's Auklet and Cassin's Finch also bear his name (but not for much longer). If any one deserves to have a bird named after him, it is Cassin.

Cathy and Jim's bird feeder at the top of the hill in Rolling Hills attracts many birds not often seen elsewhere in the area. A **Varied Thrush** visited them on CBC day (Dec. 23). They had the lone **White-throated Sparrow** this



Varied Thrush Photo: Jim Aichele

winter. It was joined by a **Sooty Fox Sparrow** on CBC day; these Fox Sparrows breed along the Pacific coast from Washington to Alaska. A **Hooded Oriole** continued coming to their feeder into January; this species normally winters in Mexico.

The female **Black and White Warbler** continued at Madrona Marsh for the ninth winter; it was joined by a male on Dec. 5 (Jeanne Bellemin, Melody Houghton). Another Black-and-White continued at Wilderness Park through the end of January. The **Palm Warbler** wintering at Avila Park adjacent to the L.A.



Palm Warbler
Photo: Manuel Duran

(See *Birds of the Peninsula* continued on page 8)

From the Editor's Desk By Jess Morton

Alfie and Me by Carl Safina

“Alfie and Me” is one of those rare books that captures the imagination of all who read it. Written by celebrated author and scientist Carl Safina, this book is an unusual memoir that lies at the unexpected intersection of owls and Covid-19. In it, we find a record of how a scientist who knows birds well, takes into his care a doomed nestling Eastern Screech Owl and discovers that, given the time and patience to observe carefully—and with a good deal of luck, just how much more there is to know



Eastern Screech Owl

Photo: Jess Morton

about both birds and oneself. The reader is treated to a look into the life of a single bird as it, the Alfie of the book's title, is rescued, nursed through to fledging and finally becomes a successful parent. At the same time, Safina finds that there are personal and philosophical strands winding through his own life that are equally evocative and thought provoking.

Long-time chapter members may remember Carl as a keynote speaker when we held a Southern California fisheries forum jointly with the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in the 1990s. He went on to become a MacArthur Fellow and has pursued independent studies on the conservation of birds and wildlife. His books “The View from Lazy Point,” “Eye of the Albatross” and others became best sellers, as much because of their subject matter as from the grace of Safina's writing.

“Alfie and Me” is indeed about both author and subject. Carl and his wife Patricia took on the task of trying to save an abandoned nestling screech owl that was emaciated and with feathers loaded with fly eggs ready to hatch and devour a dead carcass. Perhaps if it had not been for the Covid-19 lockdown, they would have dismissed the task as far too difficult because of their very busy working schedules. But those were on hold for now, and challenges are not given short shrift in the Safinas' world. They named the bird in their care Alfie because that name could be either masculine or feminine, a sexual determination that would take a year to be discovered.

As the little bird came back to life and thrived, Carl had to find a balance in how much care could be given, especially since this bird would unavoidably be imprinted with the human presence in its life. It was an amazing journey, and one interwoven with a study of philosophy that gave Carl a fuller understanding of how our cultural heritage differs from that of many indigenous cultures, and what it meant to him on a personal level. It is a journey he offers to share with you if you wish to come along. It is a book well worth your time to read. And consider.

The Travelers Four Journeys / Many Destinations By Jess Morton

The birds pass overhead
whorls of outstretched wings

while other migrants thread
byways, river crossings
from homelands they have fled

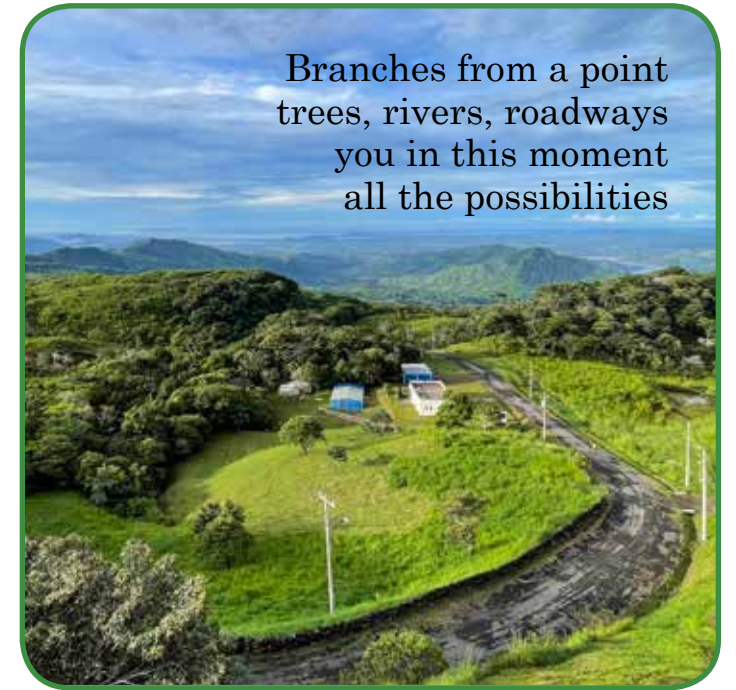
while I just pack my things
for home and daily bread



Hold to the ridgeline
until the fog clears
the roads go downhill
in both directions



Branches from a point
trees, rivers, roadways
you in this moment
all the possibilities



Out of the garden
guided by compass
headings on a map
river or roadway
might even follow
a crack in the wall
its thin seam leading
erratically
upward out of sight
a destination
that the ant may know
but cannot explain





Antbirds
By Jess Morton



Antbirds! There is something in that name that sets my senses tingling. Mystery. Adventure. Lessons in the way the natural world always holds surprise. Any activity you can think of is done by one or more creatures somewhere in the world.

I had read of antbirds and knew that they were involved in some way with following swarms of army ants, picking off escaping creatures. But beyond that vague summary, my knowledge verged on zip. Thus my travels to Panama in recent years have proved a revelation. Antbirds is not a term limited to one or two birds specialized on army ants, it is a huge bird family restricted to the

New World, the majority of which are not ant followers. The family just gets that name because of a conspicuous number of members that do. The more generic use of the term “antbird” would include ant-swarm followers from a number of other families, including such exotic sounding species as Red-throated Ant-Tanager and Thicket Antpitta.

Shown here are, spiraling counter-clockwise from center: Spot-crowned Antvireo (female), Barred Antshrike, Spot-crowned Antvireo (male), Bicolored Antbird, Spotted Antbird, Dot-winged Antwren and Black-crowned Antshrike.

(See Antbirds continued on page 10)

(Birds of the Peninsula continued from page 3)

River was still there on Jan. 13; a second Palm Warbler relaxed at Harbor Park from Dec. 10 to Jan. 19 (Manuel Duran). Also at Harbor Park, the **Nashville Warbler** that Eddie Monson spotted in November continued through the end of January. **Summer Tanagers** were observed at Orizaba Park in Long Beach, the Virginia Country Club, Polliwog Park, El Retiro Park, Peck Park, and Point Fermin. Their normal winter range is from southern Mexico to northern South America.

Cactus Wrens were seen at Alta Vicente, Pelican Cove, and Agua Amarga Canyon. A **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** was at Pelican Cove on Christmas Day; that's the best place to see them. Rather unexpected were the two Rufous-crowns that many saw at Harbor Park on Dec. 27. **California Gnatcatchers** were

seen at various points along the south side of the Peninsula, from Agua Amarga to Point Vicente, as well as at the Navy Fuel Depot (DFSP).

In the duck and goose department, Naresh Satyan found a solitary **Brant** at Lunada Bay during the CBC (a Brant is a goose that resembles a small Canada Goose). Dick Barth came across what appeared to be a **Eurasian x American Wigeon hybrid** at Magic Johnson Park on Jan. 24. As many as 36 Redheads were seen in the L.A. River all through December and January. Gregg McClain spotted a **Greater Scaup** at Golden Shores at the mouth of the river on Jan. 14; Sara Boscoe found another at Cabrillo Beach on Jan. 16. Nearly identical to the more

common Lesser Scaup, the Greater Scaup is distinguished mainly by the shape of the head (its head is rounded; the Lesser's is peaked). Bob and Julie Schallman espied a single **Northern Pintail** at Pier 12 on the Navy Mole on Jan. 7, while Dick Barth had sixteen on the River on Jan. 19. Dick spotted the only **Common Goldeneye** of the period on the River during the CBC. **Hooded Mergansers** were seen hanging out at the Willow Street crossing, Harbor Park, and Walteria Lake. **Black Scoters** were found at Golden Shores and the Navy Mole. A male **Long-tailed Duck** appeared at Cabrillo Beach on Dec. 10, while another was on the River on Jan. 6.

A couple of mountain birds rarely seen in our area were the Oak Titmouse that lingered at Shoreline Aquatic Park in Long Beach from Dec. 14 through the end of January (Alexander Yan)

and the **White-breasted Nuthatch** that Tracy Drake spotted at the Palos Verdes Golf Club during the CBC on Dec. 23. Meanwhile, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued to be seen all over the South Bay; usually they occur only at the top of the hill in Palos Verdes. **Brown Creepers** hung out at Hopkins Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach, at Harbor Park, and at Vista de Vizcaíno in San Pedro. Four **Mountain Bluebirds** wintered at Victoria Park from Dec. 22 to Jan. 22 (Calvin Bonn); Ed Griffin spotted two others at Point Vicente on Jan. 6. Ryan Goldberg found another mountain species, the **Pine Siskin**, on Valley View Road in Rancho



Long-tailed Duck
Photo: Jess Morton

Palos Verdes on CBC day; this bird was in the same area where Ryan found a siskin in 2018.

A **Band-tailed Pigeon** was found at Harbor Park on Dec. 27, the same day as a **Common Gallinule** visited there, while a **Sora** hung out there all through December and January. Jonathan Nakai spotted a second Sora at Ocean Trails during the CBC. A lovely **White-faced Ibis** brought grace to the Willow Street crossing during January.

It was a busy period for the order Charadriiformes (Gulls, Sandpipers, and relatives). Up to forty **American Avocets** beautified the Willow Street crossing all through the period. **Long-billed Curlews** appeared at Agua Amarga Canyon on Dec. 8 (Hannah Toutonghi) and Willow Street on Jan. 4 (Riley Daniels). **Short-billed Dowitchers** were seen at Willow Street on



Snowy Egret and White-faced Ibis Photo: Christine Jacobs

Dec. 9 (Kevin Alcantar), the Dominguez Channel on Dec. 14 (Dave Moody), and the Del Amo Crossing on Dec. 31. Up to 29 **Wilson's Snipes** congregated at the Willow Street crossing in December; 11 were at Anaheim Street on CBC day (DB). **Wandering Tattlers** were encountered in the L.A. Harbor, at Cabrillo Beach, and at the Redondo Beach marina. **Red Phalaropes** popped up at Hermosa Beach on Jan. 2 (Julien Amsellem) and Dockweiler Beach on Jan. 5 (Van Pierszalowski). **Arctic** or **Parasitic Jaegers** were at Dockweiler on Dec. 22 (Sam Krah) and Terranea on Jan. 27; **Pomarine Jaegers** were seen in Santa Monica Bay on Dec. 7 and along the San Pedro Escarpment in the Catalina Channel from Dec. 10 to Jan. 13. Dwight Murdy found a pretty **Ancient Murrelet** at Cabrillo Beach on

Jan. 15. Unusual gulls included an adult **Little Gull** on the San Pedro Escarpment on Dec. 10 (Andy Birch), a **Laughing Gull** on Cabrillo Beach on Dec. 16 (Chezy Yusuf), a third-cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Willow Street Jan. 7–14, and a **Thayer's Iceland Gull** at the same place Jan. 13–20 and a second Thayer's in the L.A. Harbor on Jan. 27 (Brandon Stidum).

In the woodpecker department, a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was at Harbor Park Dec. 18 through Jan. 14. **Acorn Woodpeckers** continued at Willow Street, while a single

Acorn wandered to Madrona Marsh on Jan. 21 (AY). Also spotted at Madrona was a **Yellow-shafted Flicker** on Dec. 8 (TD). **Northern Harriers** were at Terranea during the CBC (Sandra Blair) and at Madrona on Jan. 25 (Brian Mason). A **White-tailed Kite** was reported commuting over the

Harbor Freeway near Harbor Park on Dec. 19.

On the national scene, the first **Cattle Tyrant** to be found in the United States has been wintering in downtown Corpus Christi, Texas, since November. This South American bird looks like a kingbird that walks around on the ground. Equally exciting is the second U.S. record of a **Crane Hawk**, a beautiful red-legged hawk of the American tropics, that visited the Falcon Dam area of the Rio Grande valley in January.

Vincent seeks reports from readers about unusual birds found in the South Bay area (the area west of the Los Angeles River and south of I-105.)

Send reports to:
stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com.

Antbirds

(Continued from pages 6 & 7)

All species in the antbird family maintain breeding territories, are monogamous, and mate for life. Their nests are cup-shaped and supported in vegetation. Two eggs are laid. Both parents care for the young, and when the two chicks fledge, each parent will shepherd one of the them through to independence.

Contrary to what one might expect, there are parts of the Amazon basin where dozens of antbird species coexist. This is possible because most antbirds tend to be highly specialized, often being very particular about where they feed. This allows mixed flocks of birds to



Black-hooded Antshrike
Photo: Jess Morton

forage together alongside an ant column. Some like Bicolored Antbird, a swarm follower, hunts on or close to the ground while a Spotted Antbird will be higher, but still in undergrowth. When several members of the same species are foraging with a column of ants, the resident pair has dibs on the best spots at the picnic table. The dishes served will be a tasty “arthropod-surprise,” for the most part,

though some of the largest antbird species may munch an occasional frog or lizard.

Mysterious Neighbors



This has to be one of the oddest looking creatures on earth, at least from a human perspective. To us, this appears to be an animal with long sort-of fangs in distress, what with those arms thrown over its head. But that’s anthropomorphic illusion. She, and it is an adult female, is actually in her web hung on the underside of a railing, with all eight legs folded neatly “under” her. To us, she is upside down. To her, just the reverse! I am the one upside down. Those “fangs” are actually tubercles atop her head.

This is a bolas spider, an uncommon California coastal resident with the most amazing prey capture method of any spider. She is related to our orb web spinners, but such a mundane pursuit is not for her. She dangles a strand of silk with a drop of glue on the end, and then, of an evening, releases pheromones to attract male moths. Her pheromones are close enough to those used by some female moths to attract mates, that the males come to the spider instead. She swings her gooey bolas at the moth and reels him in. It’s dinner time! The male bolas spider is tiny in comparison to the female’s half inch length. He too uses pheromones, but preys on moth flies in a more normal spiderish way, grabbing them with spiny legs.

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Bird walks and other in person events are limited to people who have been vaccinated. Masks are recommended.

Sunday, Mar. 3, at 8 AM: Bird walk at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Meet in the parking lot between Vermont and Anaheim above the ranger station.

Saturday, Mar. 16, at 9. Birding For Kids at Madrona Marsh.

Tuesday, Mar. 19, at 7, in person at Madrona Marsh and via Zoom. Our program is “**The Endangered Habitats Conservancy,**” presented by Executive Director **Michael Beck**. See page 1 for details.

Wednesday - Thursday, Mar. 27-28. Early “Birds and Blooms” tour to Carrizo Plain. Ann and Eric Brooks leaders. Email motmots@aol.com to take part.

Sunday, Apr. 7, at 8 AM: Bird walk at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Meet in the parking lot between Vermont and Anaheim above the ranger station.

Tuesday, Apr. 16, at 7, in person at Madrona Marsh for “**On the Road With Ann and Eric, Part 2,**” in which **Ann and Eric Brooks** gives us a sense of the birds, wildlife and people of Rwanda.

Saturday, Apr. 20, at 9. Birding For Kids at Madrona Marsh.

Wednesday, Apr. 24. Field trip to Bear Divide bird migration site near Santa Clarita. Ann and Eric Brooks leaders. Email motmots@aol.com to take part.

The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, of which PV/SB Audubon is the local chapter, are dedicated to the understanding and preservation of our natural heritage. Within the framework of National Audubon Society policies, we seek and implement ways to preserve indigenous flora and fauna, especially that of our local area, and provide educational services to the region’s communities with respect to birds, wildlife, ecology and conservation.

Executive Officers and Staff

President: Ann Dalkey
 Vice-Pres.: Vacant
 Treasurer: Julian Chasin
 Secretary: Jazmin Rios
 Directors: Prevail de Rox, Tracy Drake, Jess Morton, Jonathan Nakai, David Quadhamer

Committees:

CBC: Jonathan Nakai, pvsbird@gmail.com
 Field Trips: Ann and Eric Brooks, motmots@aol.com
 Hospitality: Alene Gardner, alene.gardner@sbcglobal.net
 Hummin’: Jess Morton, jmorton@igc.org
 Mailing List: Ann Dalkey
 Programs: Jan Gardner, janet.gardner800@gmail.com
 Webmaster: Prevail De Rox, kprevailderox@gmail.com
 YES: Jazmin Rios, mjzminrios@pvsb-audubon.org

Photos by the author unless stated otherwise.

Chapter Support

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

Your donation is tax-deductible \$ _____

Please make checks to PV/SB Audubon and mail to: PO Box 2582, Palos Verdes, CA 90274 or donate on line at pvsb-audubon.org/donate-join/

Mail my Hummin’ E-mail my Hummin’

THIRD TUESDAY PROGRAMS

7 PM AT MADRONA MARSH

3201 PLAZA DEL AMO, TORRANCE



“The Endangered Habitats Conservancy” is Michael Beck’s topic for our March 19th program. He is the founder and executive director for the conservancy that plays a crucial role in San Diego County wild lands and habitat conservation.

On April 16th, the Brooks present “On the Road with Ann and Eric to Rwanda,” chapter two of their birding travel series. On a December, 2023, trip their group saw almost 300 species of birds in 10 days.



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

Time-sensitive material
Please deliver promptly

AVIANTICS

By Evi Meyer

