Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

Vol. XLVI #4 July/August 2024

A New Voice for Audubon By KeithHaney

Keith Haney is our Audubon chapter's new Project Manager. In the coming months, Keith will be inspiring students to take part in Audubon YES! as volunteers in blue butterfly conservation, as you will hear in his July presentation at Madrona Marsh. He tells us about himself in the column below. -- Ed.

No joke, my life changed the Friday in April when I received a call from our Chapter President, Ann, offering me the position as your Project Manager. After having spent the past couple of decades applying my biology degree towards the development of pharmaceuticals, my vocational journey has finally come full circle and brought me home.

Growing up in San Diego with an animalloving mom, and an outdoors-loving dad, I gleefully participated in YMCA Adventure Guides, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, as well as our family camping trips to the local mountains and desert. The combination of nature and nurture which shaped me, led to my filling out those primary and middle school career surveys to give the result 'park ranger' (which was close enough to 'John Muir' as a career for my satisfaction).

Off to UC Santa Barbara I went, and while pursuing my bachelor's degree in biology, I had the good fortune to survey germinating chaparral plants in recently burned areas alongside 'Eminent Ecologist' Joe Connell (who in addition to teaching the importance

(See Keith Haney continued on page 5)

Summer Meeting Program



On July 16th at 7, **Keith Haney** will present "**Looking Ahead: Prospects for the Blues**" at Madrona Marsh Nature center, in a program that will also be available via Zoom.



Keith will describe PV/SB Audubon's plans to help save the endangered Palos Verdes blue butterfly (PVB), working closely with Rolling Hills Preparatory School and the US Fish & Wildlife Service, by 'kick starting' the management of important PVB habitat adjacent to the school. Originally listed as endangered in 1980 and subsequently thought to be extinct for many years, the butterfly was rediscovered in 1994! However, suitable habitat remains problematic, despite heroic efforts by dedicated conservationists, and this beautiful organism's fate is still uncertain.

Presidential Update By Ann Dalkey

Summer is upon us! I enjoy the longer daylight and the warmth that it brings. After two long winters that brought 20-inches or more of rain both years, I am very much ready for summer! Are you?

One of my favorite summer birds is the California gnatcatcher (Polioptila californica), a Federally listed threatened species. In summer, one can hear a family on a foraging expedition in local preserves where the coastal sage scrub habitat the bird requires is found. They travel in a line with an adult leading the way and the other adult bringing up the rear, chattering all along the way. Once I watched a young California gnatcatcher stop at a cactus while its parents called loudly to inform the voungster that cactus is not a place to stop! Eventually mom and dad gave up and led the brood further through the sage brush. Well, that woke up the youngster and it quickly left the cactus to catch up with its family!

Our Chapter provides opportunities for local birding. After all, the only way to observe wildlife activities is to go out to see them. For diverse viewing, join the Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park birdwalk where you can observe birds in a variety of habitats. At 8:00 a.m., on the first Sunday of the month, Manuel Duran leads our walk through the park. He, along with other regulars, willingly helps walkers see and identify the birds and other wildlife encountered. Another regularly scheduled bird walk takes place at 9:00 on the fourth Saturday of the month at Madrona Marsh. Our new Project Manager Keith Haney is leading these walks and will have spare binoculars and spotting scopes with him.

There are other birdwatching opportunities during the year. For those, see the calendar listing on page 11 of this newsletter, or check on line at pvsbaudubon.org. Plus, we do more than birdwatching. On July 13, we are conducting our 44th annual summer butterfly count. All are invited to take part in this family-friendly activity. No experience is required. There will be several groups of counters, each at a different location to cover the many habitats of the South Bay. If you would like to join, please send an email to info@pvsbaudubon.org with your contact info no later than July 12.

Also, come to our Program Meetings. All are welcome, whether an Audubon member or not. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month, except for August and December. The presentations are interesting, the company great, and the snacks served are very tasty!

See you soon!



A California Gnatcatcher ventures through enemy territory--Cactus Wren country! Photo: *Evi Meyer*

Birds of the Peninsula Appell - May 2024 By Vincent Hoyd

April and May brought delightfully pleasant weather to the South Bay. Curiously, the low temperature for the period, 45°F, on April 6, was followed just three days later by the high temperature, 84°F. The last major storm of the winter rolled through on April 14, bringing half an inch of rain; the seasonal total was 24 inches. As usual, May brought heavy morning fog to the area.

2024 has been the Year of the Caracaras. In February, a Crested Caracara flew over Alta Vicente on its way to Santa Barbara County. Then in May, local birders came across a Yellow-headed Caracara hanging out around the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and Narbonne Avenue in Lomita. Locals report that it has been there since late April and has become something of a celebrity. The Crested Caracara, on the one hand, is an occasional visitor to Southern California. It is established in Baja California Sur, about 700 miles away, and occurs in Arizona and the Gulf Coast as well as mainland Mexico and into South America. The Yellow-headad Caracara. on the other hand, is a mainly South American bird; its nearest breeding grounds are in Costa Rica, about 2500 miles away. Neither caracara is migratory, so when one is seen so far out of its range, the suspicion inevitably arises that it is an escaped bird. Over time it has become accepted that Crested Caracaras do sometime wander naturally to Upper California, but the Yellow-headed Caracara is so far out of range that no one can be sure that it got here by itself. If the California Bird Records Committee decides to accept it as a natural occurrence. this would be the first California record (a bird reported in Humboldt Bay in 2007-2008 was not accepted by the CBRC.) By coincidence, another Yellow-headed Caracara has been residing in southeastern Florida for the past



few weeks and a third was found in Houston, June 7. Caracaras belong to the falcon family (Falconidae), but constitute a separate branch of the family. They are omnivores rather than carnivores. The Yellow-headed Caracara is a scavenger that feeds on carrion, small animals,



and insects, including ticks found on cattle.

Turning to songbirds, the **Tropical Kingbird** that spent the winter at the Willow Street crossing of the Los Angeles River was last seen on Apr 9. A **Grey Flycatcher** was reported at Alta Vicente on May 20. **Vermilion Flycatchers** were spotted at Columbia Park,

(See Birds of the Peninsula continued on page 8)

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From the Editor's Desk By Jess Morton

Birdathon Report

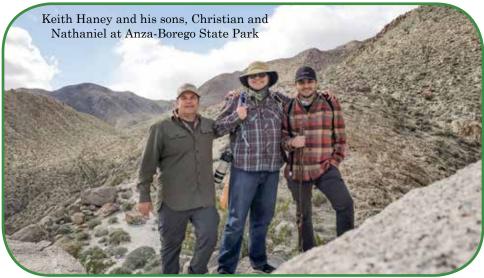
The 2024 Palos Verdes/South Bay Birdathon was a great success, with the team of Evi Meyer and myself, led by Bob Shanman, gathering up 106 species of birds and bringing more than \$16,000 in for chapter initiatives. One of the main beneficiaries of this will be our conservation partners at Adopta Bosque Panamá. Also supported by this effort will be our work with Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly conservation and education at Rolling Hills Prep being led by Keith Haney, with close assistance from Ann Dalkey.

The weather May 7h, the day we picked for the count, was glorious and we got off to a good start early with skimmers and tattlers at Cabrillo Beach. But great weather is not always best for high bird species counts, especially when migration is in full swing and the night before was clear. Clear, indeed! Because that's the kind of night migrating birds like for travel, and all the birds that had been building up over the previous few days cleared out. So we had to make do with fewer than hoped for species of flycatchers, vireos and warblers.

We did find some unusual birds, though. Ann and Eric Brooks came up with a Band-tailed Pigeon, normally an inland species, and both White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows. Of the latter two, the first, our most abundant winter visitor, is normally gone by the end of April, and the white-throats are an eastern species that is scarce in southern California and always makes its way onto the rare bird listings. Tracy Drake had to work that day, but before going into the office, managed to add Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting to our Birdathon list.

Many thanks go to all who supported our Birdathon as they could, many with a buck a bird, and several with considerably more than that. It all goes to a good cause. And if you have not already donated, it is not too late to do so, either through PayPal on our website or by check to PO Box 2582, Palos Verdes, CA 90274.

(**Keith Haney** continued from page 1)



of disturbance, competition, and succession in ecological communities, taught me to appreciate the intelligence of American Crows). But it was mostly my internship in the vertebrate museum handling Spotted Towhee specimens, and the birding field trips of my vertebrate zoology class, that opened my eyes to the wonderful world of birds (That moment many of us have when the light bulb goes off, "Wait a second, there's more than European House

Song Sparrow

Sparrows and Mourning Doves I can see around me!").

Following graduation, the need to obtain gainful employment was urgent and after a few failed attempts to land a job in wildlife conservation, I took a job in the laboratory. It was for a good enough cause, though. At the time, the work wasn't focused on finding the next cure, but instead on leveraging microbiology in the search for 'green' alternatives to chemical pesticides. Success in agricultural applications was followed

by a move to textiles and foods and finally to the pinnacle application of biotechnology – human therapeutics. Along the way, I learned skills at the lab bench, how to lead teams, the tools for managing projects, and gained just enough Quality Assurance and Regulatory knowledge to stay out of trouble.

Which brings me to our PV/SB Audubon Chapter. I'm thrilled to be able to apply what I've learned over the years to chapter projects, starting with the conservation of Palos Verdes blue butterfly habitat in partnership with Rolling Hills Preparatory School and US Fish & Wildlife Service, while I come up to speed on coastal sage scrub flora and fauna, and in becoming familiar with our local preserves and reserves. After years of studying Title 21 of the CFR, I look forward to tickling my brain learning some of the nuances of Title 50 (wildlife management, conservation, and protection). Additionally, I look forward to taking the lead on our Madrona Marsh bird walks, launching an initiative with our local scouting community, and getting to know each of you!

In my time outside of Audubon, I'm completing coursework to become a UC-certified California Naturalist, occasionally indulging in a good film noir, and can frequently be found spending time with family, traveling between Torrance, Irvine, and San Diego.

Greater White-fronted Goose Canada Goose Muscovy x Mallard Cinnamon Teal Mallard Scaup sp. Surf Scoter Indian Peafowl Eared Grebe

Rock Pigeon **Band-tailed Pigeon** Eurasian Collared Dove Mourning Dove White-throated Swift Anna's Hummingbird Allen's Hummingbird American Coot Black-necked Stilt

American Avocet Black Oystercatcher Killdeer Whimbrel Marbled Godwit Long-billed Dowitcher Wandering Tattler Willet Bonaparte's Gull Heermann's Gull Ring-billed Gull Western Gull California Gull Black Skimmer Caspian Tern Royal Tern Elegant Tern Pacific Loon

Common Loon

Brandt's Cormorant Pelagic Cormorant Double-crested Cormorant Brown Pelican Black-crowned Night Heron Snowy Egret Green Heron Great Egret Great Blue Heron Osprey Cooper's Hawk Sharp-shinned Hawk Red-shouldered Hawk Red-tailed Hawk Great Horned Owl Downy Woodpecker American Kestrel

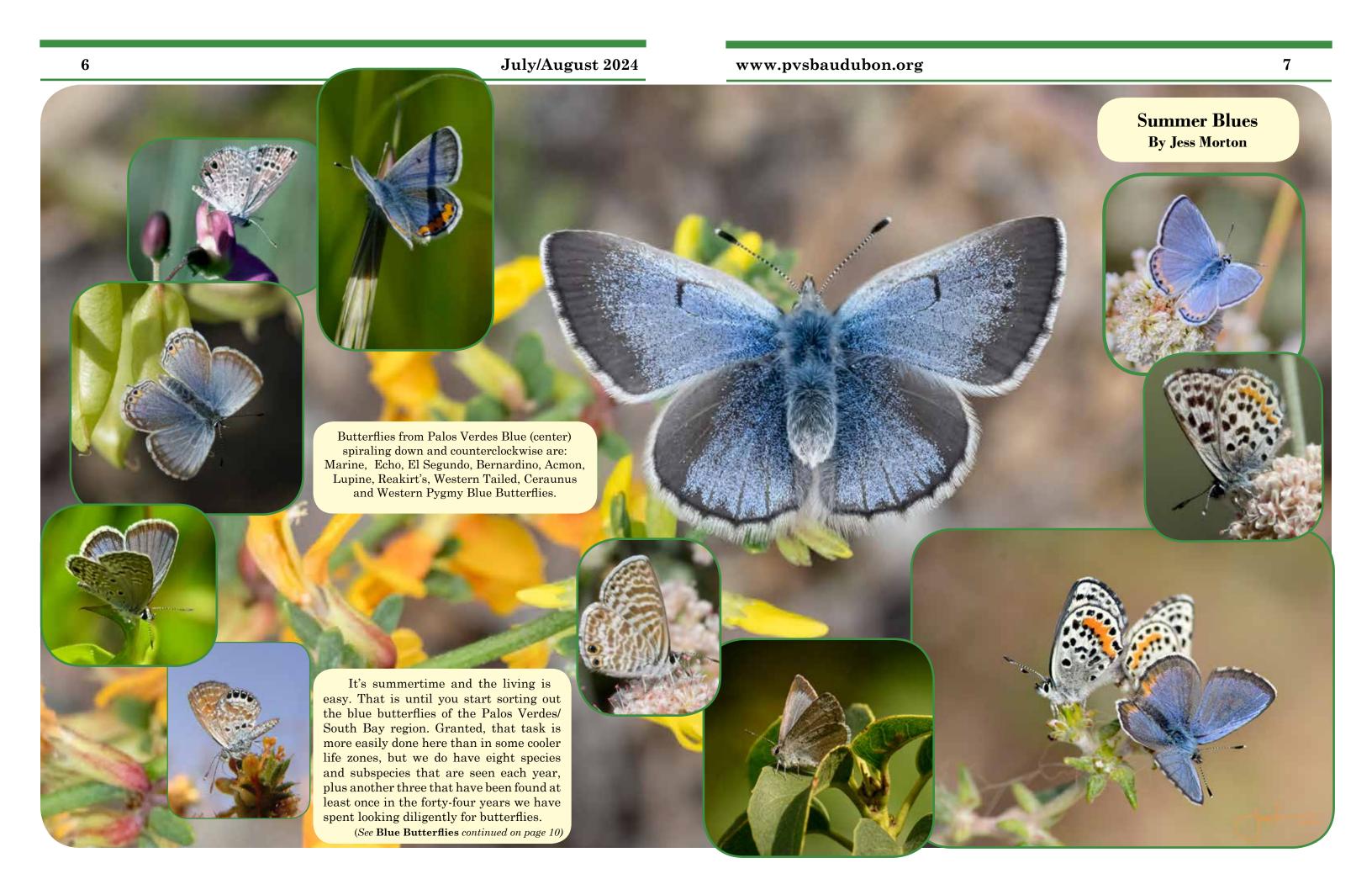
Peregrine Falcon Yellow-chevroned Parakeet Western Flycatcher Black Phoebe Say's Phoebe Ash-throated Flycatcher Cassin's Kingbird Western Kingbird Hutton's Vireo Warbling Vireo California Scrub-Jay American Crow Common Raven Northern Rough-winged Swallow Barn Swallow Cliff Swallow Bushtit

Swinhoe's White-eye California Gnatcatcher House Wren Marsh Wren Cactus Wren **European Starling** Northern Mockingbird Western Bluebird Swainson's Thrush American Robin Cedar Waxwing Scaly-breasted Munia House Sparrow House Finch Lesser Goldfinch American Goldfinch Dark-eyed Junco White-crowned Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

California Towhee Spotted Towhee **Hooded Oriole** Bullock's Oriole Red-winged Blackbird Brown-headed Cowbird Brewer's Blackbird Great-tailed Grackle Orange-crowned Warbler Common Yellowthroat Yellow Warbler Townsend's Warbler Wilson's Warbler Western Tanager Black-headed Grosbeak Blue Grosbeak Lazuli Bunting

Indigo Bunting



(Birds of the Peninsula continued from page 3)

Magic Johnson Park, Chester Washington Golf Park on May 22. Course, and Madrona Marsh. Manuel Duran and Alejandra Cedillo came upon a **Plumbeous** Gnatcatchers at the Naval Fuel Depot on Vireo at Harbor Park on May 19. The two Oak Apr 18; many others were seen in scattered **Titmouses** seen at Harbor Park May 7 to 18 were probably the same birds that had been seen off and on since September. Another titmouse Alta Vicente on May 28. Others were spotted was at DeForest Park on May 18 (Mark Wilson). A White-breasted Nuthatch was reported at Alta Loma Park in South Torrance on May 11. Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to be seen widely around the South Bay. Melody Houghton came across a lone Phainopepla at Madrona Marsh on Apr 20. A single Purple Finch was spotted at South Coast Botanic Garden on Apr 9 (MD & AC). A single **Pine Siskin** was at Madrona Marsh on May 7 (Andrew Thornton); while Lawrence's Goldfinches were seen at Malaga Dunes on Apr 6 (Chezy Yusuf) and Entradero Park on May 21 (Linda Pittman).

In the sparrow department, the last reported White-crowned Sparrow was seen at Harbor Park on May 18 (Braxton Landsman, Connor Cochrane). Dick Barth spotted a **Chipping** Sparrow and a Brewer's Sparrow, both Crossing on May 2. Yellow-breasted Chats popped up at Victoria Park, George F Canyon, Madrona Marsh, Entradero Park, Harbor Park. and Filiorum Preserve. Dick Barth counted 51 Street crossing on May 10.

White Warbler on Signal Hill May 15 to Jun 1 (Joyce Brady); another Black-and-White at Harbor Park on May 19 (Karen Suarez); Palm Warblers at the Willow Street crossing. Harbor Park, and DeForest Park; a **Tennessee** Warbler at Madrona Marsh on May 1 (Jesse Pline) and another at Banning Park on May 28 (Chris Dean); and a **Blackburnian Warbler** Rescue in San Pedro has taken in hundreds of at DeForest Wetlands on Apr 27 (Becky Turley, Kim Moore, Merryl Edelstein, and Christine San Francisco Bay Area). If you can help, they Jacobs). Adam Johnson found a breed- will put your donation to good use: go to www. ing-plumage Myrtle Warbler (the eastern race birdrescue.org.

of the Yellow-rumped Warbler) at Wilderness

Bob Schallman counted 18 California locations on the south side of Palos Verdes. Randy Harwood found five Cactus Wrens at at Three Sisters Preserve, Filiorum Preserve, Abalone Cove, and Angels Gate Park. Rufous-



in breeding plumage, at the Willow Street crowned Sparrows were seen at Filiorum Preserve on May 23 (Karly Moore, Michael Abrams) and Pelican Cove on May 30 (Adam Johnson).

Brown Pelicans prefer fishing in salt Yellow-headed Blackbirds at the Willow water; unlike White Pelicans, Brown Pelicans are seldom seen inland even a few miles. Unusual warblers included: a Black-and- However, in late April, many Brown Pelicans started showing up at inland bodies of water like Harbor Lake and Puddingstone Reservoir. This happens when the birds can't find enough food in the sea; indeed, the birds appear to be weak from hunger. Mysteriously, there appear to be plenty of suitable fish in the sea. A similar incident occurred in 2022. International Bird starving pelicans (so have their facilities in the www.pvsbaudubon.org



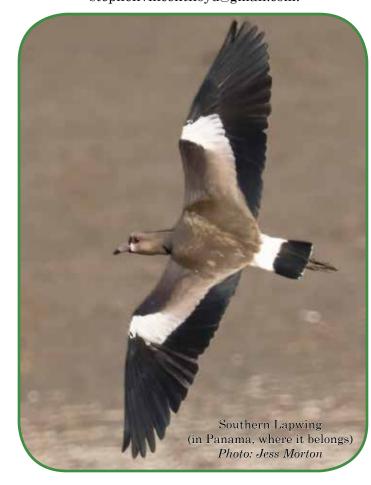
The sole White-winged Dove seen in the South Bay during the period was at Alta Vicente on May 20 (Ezra Cohen). Costa's Hummingbirds were spotted at Sand Dune Park (Tom Miko), South Coast Botanic Garden (Hetali Karia), and Filiorum Preserve (Karly Moore). A Common Gallinule was seen by many at Harbor Park on Apr 7. An American Oystercatcher was on the middle breakwater of L.A. Harbor on May 19 (Loren Wright). An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull visited the L.A. River at 26th Street on Apr 10 (Mark Wilson, Naresh Satyan). A Black Skimmer was at Harbor Park from May 26 into June (Darren Dowell). Not often seen in this area, a Black Tern was seen perched atop a dead loon in the San Pedro Channel on May 2 (Jonathan Feenstra). Golden Shores Marine Preserve was a loon hotspot with a Common Loon seen on Apr 25 (Merryl Edelstein), a **Pacific Loon** on Jun 2 (Kelsey Reckling, Van Pierszalowski), and a Red-throated Loon on Jun 3 (Robert Hamilton). Another Pacific Loon was at Harbor Park on Jun 2 (Andrea Call). A Brown Booby was in the Channel off P.V. on Apr 18 (Tobin & Keegan Brown); that or another was seen again on May 23.

In the hawk department, a Northern **Harrier** swooped by the DeForest Wetlands on Apr 30 (Curtis Marantz, Sylvia Afable). Randy Harwood spotted a juvenile Broad-winged Hawk soaring over the Rolling Hills Landfill Loop on May 29. Barn Owls were observed in action on Pioneer Avenue, at Hickory Park, at the Willow Street crossing, and at White Point.

No White-tailed Kites were seen during April and May. Meanwhile, Acorn Woodpeckers pecked away at the Willow Street crossing, at DeForest Wetlands, and at Banning Park in Wilmington.

Farther afield, a rare Golden-winged Warbler was photographed on San Clemente Island on Jun 3. A Swallow-tailed Kite was seen from Southeast Farallon Island on May 4. On the national scene, the Grey Gull continued along the Alabama-Florida state line into April, while an **Ivory Gull** appeared in Michigan. The second North American record of the **Southern Lapwing** was discovered in the Rio Grande Valley on Apr 16. In Arizona, a **Tufted** Flycatcher visited Ramsay Canyon on Apr 26 and a Yellow Grosbeak showed up in Catalina (just north of Tucson) on May 22.

Vincent seeks reports from readers about unusual birds found in the South Bay area (west of the Los Angeles River and south of I-105.) Send reports to: stephenvincentlloyd@gmail.com.



July/August 2024

Summer's Blue Butterflies

(Continued from pages 6 & 7)

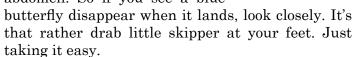
The most famous of these blue butterflies are our two federally-listed endangered species, the Palos Verdes Blue (PVB) and the El Segundo Blue (ESB). The PVB is on the wing early in the year, though some lab-raised butterflies are released into the wild as late as May; part of an ongoing recovery effort. Two other early season species are the Echo Blue (AKA Spring Azure) and Western Tailed-Blue. Both are restricted to native habitat, so unlikely to appear in anyone's back yard.

The ESB is a summer species. It is now widespread along the coast thanks to successful habitat restoration. Closely related to the ESB is our Bernardino Blue. Until recently, these have both been considered subspecies of the Squarespotted Blue, a species widespread in the west. But there are questions about this. One paper has been published raising the ESB to full species status, and I have questions about our Bernardino Blue. Is it, or isn't it? Larvae of each of these butterflies are specialized to deal with toxins in the plants they eat, toxins that preclude other insects from consuming them. The ESB specializes in *Eriogonum* parvifolium, a buckwheat. The Bernardino Blue specializes in a different buckwheat—but not the third species of buckwheat our Square-spotted Blue uses! What gives? I do not know.

What I do know is that none of those is the blue butterfly in your garden. That is most likely a Marine Blue, and if not, then an Acmon Blue. Either can be found at any time of year and anywhere locally. Also found throughout the year is the Western Pygmy Blue, the tiniest of all butterflies, and so small most people will not notice them, even if dozens are

present. The other butterflies on pages 6 and 7 are very rare here.

One other species deserves to be mentioned, the White Checkered-Skipper. A gray, black and white butterfly (right), it will often appear blue in flight. This is an optical effect from refraction of sunlight by the hairs on its decidedly hairy abdomen. So if you see a blue



Mysterious Neighbors



Now that's a peculiar looking mushroom, I thought. There in the deep shade of a path through a Panamanian jungle, a dark, thickened plus sign was drawn plunk in the middle of a smallish mushroom's white round cap. How did that get there?

It was not an arithmetic plus sign, nor had anyone painted it, but a plus it was, nevertheless. A zoological plus by my reckoning. It was not immediately obvious what it was. I soon became convinced it was an orthopteran of some kind. Perhaps a grasshopper, but, if so, the weirdest one I had ever seen. Rather than having legs running along the sides of the abdomen as with every species of grasshopper and katydid I knew, this critter's legs were perpendicular to its body, jutting out from midway along the body, each with tibia and tarsus tucked below out of sight. The legs, head and tail formed a perfect cross.

Furthermore, once in my camera's view, the animal appeared weirdly inverted. This grass-

hopper (?) seemed to be looking directly at me while its legs faced the other way. How could it see where it was going? How could it manipulate things behind its back? This, of course, was an illusion. Its eyes had large dark markings on top that gave it the appearance of staring at me. Balefully, too. Pretty good defensive strategy, I decided.

I was right about the order to which this critter belonged. It's in a family new to me. On iNaturalist, these have been dubbed monkey grasshoppers. Some are quite colorful. Mine, not so much. But it sure was a plus for that walk in the woods!

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Registration is not required. Follow COVID guidelines advised by LA County Health Department. Masking is optional.

Sunday, July 7th, 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 July 13th. 44th annual **Summer Butterfly Count** to tally the butterflies of the Palos Verdes/South Bay region. Contact **Kim Moore** at kims.sight@verizon.net to take part.

Tuesday, July 16th, at 7, Keith Haney presents "Looking Ahead; Prospects for the Blues" See page 1 for details.

Saturday, July 27th, at 9. Birding For Kids at Madrona Marsh.

Sunday, July 28th, at 8. Field trip to Mt Pinos and the condor preserve. Meet in Frazier Park. For details and to register, email Ann and Eric Brooks at motmots@aol.com.

Sunday, August 4th, 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, August 10th, 9-Noon, at Madrona Marsh, Annual planning session open to all members. We value your ideas!

Saturday, August 24th, at 9. Birding For Kids at Madrona Marsh.

Sunday, August 25th, at 8:30. Field trip to the Tehachapi Mountains. Email Ann and Eric Brooks at motmots@aol.com for details and to register, 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
Project Manager: Keith Haney

Directors: Prevail de Rox, Tracy Drake,

Jess Morton, Jonathan Nakai,

David Quadhamer

Committees:

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Photos by the author unless stated otherwise.

Audubon Membership

To **join or renew** PV/SB Audubon membership, go to <u>Audubon.org</u> and select the link to Membership & Giving.

To get Hummin' by email (and /or print), send your preference to **info@pvsbaudubon.org**.

PV/SB Audubon Chapter Support

Support your local chapter's work with checks made to PV/SB Audubon and mailed to: PO Box 2582, Palos Verdes, CA 90274 or give on line at **pvsbaudubon.org/donate**

On July 16th, Audubon's Project Manager Keith Haney presents "Looking Ahead; Prospects for the Blues," an introduction to our chapter's work with the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly in cooperation with Rolling Hills Prep School over the next school year. His talk will cover some of the history of this endangered butterfly and

our chapter's past efforts to aid its recovery. Keith will also outline plans for future local conservation initiatives around the South Bay, working with schools, cities and other organizations.





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

