



HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

Vol. XLVII #3 May-June 2025

Birdathon 2025 By Jess Morton



Spring migration is in full flight! It's Birdathon time, our Audubon chapter's big fund raiser to support not only our local initiatives, but also important help we provide for conservation work throughout the Western Flyway, Chapter birders will be joining me to see how many bird species we can see right around home on a single day. Please show your support for the team by giving at pvsbaudubon.org. Thanks!

Monthly Meeting Program

Bats is the subject of the meeting program on May 20th, at Madrona Marsh, at 7, reprising a Master's Degree presentation. After hearing about these locally-scarce creatures, you are invited to join us for a bat walk on the marsh led by our speaker to find those present.



Also, please join us on June 17th for our regular monthly meeting when photographer **Rafa Ramirez** discusses the ins and outs of wildlife photography and presents a portfolio of his outstanding work, including amazing images of our local Peregrine Falcons.

The meeting can also be attended from home via the Zoom link noted on the website.



Presidential Update

By Ann Dalkey

We have been making efforts to see that presentations at the Chapter Program meetings run more smoothly by having a Webmaster manage the video and Zoom connections. Those efforts have helped significantly!

However, sometimes “things happen,” as was the case at our April meeting. One was that our Webmaster Brad Waller won an election for Council Member in Redondo Beach. We have a backup in Dianna Kim, but this time Dianna had a previously planned international trip and was unable to help out with our April program meeting. Nevertheless, we had a terrific presentation from Dr. Olivia Sanderfoot who described impacts on birds from air pollution and wildfire smoke.

Our next Chapter Program Meeting will be centered around bats. We'll have a Master's Presentation and also head outside to look for bats in Madrona Marsh. This will be a fun event as the Marsh will be open at night during a search for bats. Previously a bat watch was held at the Marsh but no bats were observed. But now, I suspect there will be some bats, especially since one moved into a bird box in my backyard. I live one mile due west from Madrona Marsh and suspect that my bat, named Otis, migrated to my backyard from the Marsh.



Snow Geese at the Salton Sea
Photo: Jess Morton

In June, we will host an amazing photographer, Rafa Ramirez. Most recently, Rafa captured amazing images of our local Peregrine Falcons, though he's equally adept at photographing other wildlife. His photos and comments makes me smile! And when you see Rafa's photos, you too will smile.

California Audubon Update

The Climate Bond, also known as Prop 4, was passed last November with the support of the majority of Californians. The proposition will provide \$10 billion dollars in funding to safeguard drinking water, combat wildfires, protect natural lands, and improve community resiliency against natural disasters. This funding will directly translate to habitat protection, water conservation, and coastal resiliency, all issues which Audubon cares deeply about. California's state budget proposal has allocated approximately \$2.6 billion, with the rest to be scheduled after engagement with the Legislature on an expenditure plan. We hope to see Prop 4 dollars fund additional nature-based climate solutions rather than backfilling any department shortfalls.

Last session, with your collective help and efforts, we were able to get SB 583, the **Salton Sea Conservancy**, signed into law. Now, we are continuing the fight and ensuring that this new conservancy is effective and remains inclusive as intended. Ensuring a sustainable future for the Sea requires active participation from communities throughout the region, who must have a voice in planning projects that impact them. The Conservancy will coordinate initiatives to protect public health while providing critical habitat for shorebirds and shallow-feeding ducks, safeguarding a vital ecosystem for millions of birds.

Who are the Community Scientists?

By Keith Haney



You are!

Fueled by the development of smartphones and apps over the past two decades, almost everyone now has the technology to contribute to environmental research in the palm of his or her hand. While exploring your local parks, reserves, or even your backyard, your phone is a GPS unit providing local weather conditions, and with apps like eBird, iNaturalist, Merlin, Seek, and others, you have the capability to record the what/where/when of your observations.

Why bother? Besides the gratification of learning more about our natural world, and the satisfaction of seeing your digital collection of observations grow, you have the potential to advance research on climate change, habitat loss, and other significant environmental topics.

Your impact is measurable. In April, we had our annual Spring Butterfly Count, and coming up July 12th is our Summer Butterfly Count (I hope you'll reach out to let me know you'd like to participate!). Each year these data are shared with the North American Butterfly Association and support the work of scientists studying butterfly trends. Earlier this year, our data were included in an article



Western Snowy Plover
Photo: William Tymczyszyn

published in Science, raising public awareness of the decline in butterfly populations and how we can help mitigate that decline.

What about birds? Our chapter members don't just count butterflies. From May 17th through 25th we will venture to local beaches to count Western Snowy Plovers. This will be our last survey until the final one of the year in September. Again, the data we generate are shared and ultimately inform U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's actions to conserve this species threatened by human beach activities.

Science involves work. As your local chapter of the National Audubon Society, we strive to advance the Society's strategic “Flight Plan” for “Bending the Curve” of the precipitous decline of bird populations. A keystone of this plan is Habitat Conservation and Restoration of the places birds need. You can help us restore degraded habitat locally by volunteering to weed out invasive plant species and replace them with our native coastal sage scrub plants. Our

(Chapter Projects continued p.9)



Birds of the Peninsula February - March 2025 By Vincent Lloyd

February and March brought much needed rain to the South Bay — about 4.5 inches. Yet that failed to make up for the lack of rain in November, December and January. Through the end of March Torrance Airport recorded just under six inches, about half the long-term average. The lack of rain is evident at Madrona Marsh, where standing water is limited to the south basin; Canada Geese are fighting for nesting sites, pushing out the Mallards. The highest temperature during the period was 84° F on Feb 27; the low was 30° on Mar 3 — March was significantly cooler than average.

The first early spring migrants started to appear in February and March. On Feb 16, the first **Rufous Hummingbird** of the year was reported in Redondo Beach. The first **Warbling Vireo** was spotted at Harbor Park on Mar 5. The first migrating **Western Kingbird** was observed at the Willow Street crossing of the Los Angeles River on March 15 (another Western Kingbird spent the winter at Madrona Marsh).

The outstanding rarity of the period was the adult **Bald Eagle** spotted by Riley Daniels as it was being mobbed by crows while it flew over the bluffs overlooking Torrance Beach on Feb 9. Perhaps the most unusual passerine was the **Northern Parula** discovered by Manuel Duran at South Coast Botanic Garden (SCBG) on Mar 3; it hung around till Mar 23.

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was photographed at SCBG on Mar 10 (Phil Bartley). Meanwhile, no **Acorn Woodpeckers** have been reported in the area since Feb 22. The two **Tropical Kingbirds** that have wintered at the Willow Street crossing were seen as late as Apr 4. It's been a good winter for **Vermilion Flycatchers**: they have been seen at Magic Johnson Park, 22nd St Park in San Pedro, Columbia Park, DeForest Park, Harbor Park, and Willow Street. A **Loggerhead Shrike** hung out at Harbor

Park through Feb 22. Keep an eye out for the **Oak Titmouse** that was heard at Columbia Park on Feb 16. Joan Campbell spotted a **White-breasted Nuthatch** at SCBG on Mar 23. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** appeared at Magic Johnson Park on Feb 19 (Sara Ramirez) and Madrona Marsh on Mar 4 (Jerry-Brenda Grenard). **Phainopepla** popped up in Lomita (Manuel Duran, Alejandro Cedillo), Sand Dune Park (Bob Shanman), and SCBG (Johnny Ivanov).

The **Purple Finches** that have been wintering at SCBG were still there at the end of March. Two **Pine Siskins** were reported from a home in Gardena on Feb 25. Two more were at Harbor Park on Mar 10 (Michael Grossman), where two weeks later Manuel Duran and Alejandra Cedillo found two **Lawrence's Goldfinches**. This pretty little goldfinch of the hills breeds only in California and northern Baja. **Slate-colored Juncos** (the eastern race of the Dark-eyed Junco) were spotted at Alondra Park, Chadwick School, Long Beach Municipal Cemetery and Polliwog Park. The only **White-throated Sparrow** in the area was the one Rob Hamilton found on Feb 28 at little Drake Park next to the 710 in Long Beach, while a **Black-throated Sparrow** was at White Point on Mar 29 (Joan Campbell); this last species



Northern Parula Photo: Manuel Duran

is a bird of Western deserts. The two **Clay-colored Sparrows** and the **Grasshopper Sparrow** continued at Madrona Marsh into April. **Tricolored Blackbirds** were seen at Harbor Park on Feb 8 and Madrona Marsh on Mar 3; they were the first seen in the area since Jan 2023. This once common blackbird of the Pacific States is in serious decline.

The female **Black-and-White Warber** at Madrona and the male at Hopkins Wilderness Park continued through the end of March. The **Palm Warbler** at Drake Park was last seen on Mar 2. A **Nashville Warbler** visited



Lawrence's Goldfinch Photo: Manuel Duran

Harbor Park from Feb 16 to Mar 18 (MD&AC). **Hermit Warblers** appeared at Madrona, Malaga Dunes, SCBG, and Wilderness Park. The **Summer Tanager** near the Boundary Trail was last seen on Feb 18 while the one at Virginia Country Club in Long Beach continued to at least Mar 7.

The only **Cactus Wrens** seen during the period were at Alta Vicente Reserve. **California Gnatcatchers** were at Alta Vicente, Forrester Preserve, and Ocean Trails (just in: Tori Fay heard one at Harbor Park on Apr 5). Sadly, no **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** were seen on the Peninsula, but Nancy Salem came across one at Heritage Park in Signal Hill on Feb 5.

Turning to the anatids (ducks and geese), a pair of **Brant** at Point Vicente on Mar 18 (TF)

were the only Brant reported in the area. Three **Snow Geese** were at Alondra Park on Feb 10 (Deanna Harwood). A couple of **White-fronted Geese** hung out at Magic Johnson Park for a week in mid-March (Kevin Alcantar). An interesting **Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal** hybrid was at the Willow Street crossing on Feb 16 (Van Pierszalowski). Several **Redheads** cruised the L.A. River through Mar 7. Four **Greater Scaup** were reported at Golden Shores the last two weeks in February, while a couple of **Pintail** were seen at Dominguez Gap on Mar 26 (Jasmin Minott). A female **Common Goldeneye** lingered at Willow Street through Mar 15 (Thomas Ford-Hutchinson). Single **Black Scoters** were spotted at Dockweiler Beach, Manhattan Beach, and Golden Shores through Mar 24; while a single **White-winged Scoter** lingered at Golden Shores through Mar 15. The single **Long-tailed Duck** on the lower L.A. River was last seen on Mar 18.

The report of a **California Quail** at Forrester Preserve on Mar 9 (Gina Barton) was the first sighting since September. A **Band-tailed**



Cactus Wren Photo: Randy Harwood

(See Birds of the Peninsula continued on page 8)

Spring Migration

By Jess Morton



Migrants

Not a matter of movement, but of necessity,
the migrants pass by, shadows on the moon
that connect constellation with constellation,
the midnight's black made bright with their cries.

Or silent as the sea holding its breath at tide's turn
come the lines of birds, wings sewing the sea down,
brant and loon stitching south and north into one Earth,
gathered each into the seam of its own direction.

March and the dawn Sun opens its golden feathers.
An oriole returns, his harsh song silver to other ears
and the cottonwood takes the part of this prodigal
its leaves nodding their assent in the least breeze.

The whales travel along the unseen rails of the sea.
The young grays riding on the discovery of dawn,
humbucks and blue breach in the summer channels
bowing to the engines of change that drive them.

And the pulse of migration beats with lemon wings.
The sulphurs' irregular parallels cross the hills.
They come, flickering Suns over blacktopped streets,
day after day, enigmatic lines that do not meet.

The migrants themselves are but shades of darkness,
driven into the berry fields, scarcely seen, go unheard,
become the cursed shapes bobbing in the heat of noon.
Unwanted, these scorned men, these migrant women.



Migrants: Gray Whale and clockwise from left, Wandering Glider, Sandhill Cranes, Least Terns, Hooded Oriole, Snowy Owl, Spotted Sandpiper and Yellow Warbler.



(Birds of the Peninsula continued from page 5)

Pigeon was reported from Madrona Marsh on Feb 8. Chris Dean came upon a **White-winged Dove** at little Helen Keller Park in Athens on Feb 12. The **Common Gallinule** at Harbor Park continued through Feb 15 while the one at Dominguez Gap was last seen on Mar 26.

Long-billed Curlews appeared at Cabrillo Beach, Golden Shores, and Royal Palms Beach as late as Mar 16. **Wilson's Snipes** were spotted at Entradero Park on Feb 18 (Charlie Keller) and Madrona Marsh on Mar 21 (Patty Drew). A **Wandering Tattler** was sighted from a boat in the L.A. Harbor on Mar 1, while another (or the same one) was at White Point on Mar 22 (Andrea Rosborough). A couple of **Ancient Murrelets** were identified among the many sea birds in the San Pedro Channel on Mar 16, while three others were at 270 Bank on Apr 4. The first-winter **Lesser Black-backed**



White-tailed Kite Photo: Jess Morton

Gull that Kimball Garrett found in January on Dockweiler Beach was still there on Mar 21. **Black Skimmers** continued at Cabrillo Beach through Mar 22 and along the L.A. River into April.

Neotropic Cormorants are becoming regular visitors to the South Bay. Dave Moody and Tracy Drake saw two of them at AES Wetland in Redondo Beach on Mar 16; another was at Dominguez Gap on Mar 18, while others continued at the Willow Street crossing into April. A **White Pelican** was at AES Wetland on Mar 3 (DM), while several others continued at Harbor Park through March. Up to four **White-faced Ibises** continued along the L.A. River into April. The **Northern Harrier** reported at Point Vicente on Mar 1 (Stella Oganessian) may have been the same bird that was spotted at SCBG on Mar 15 and 31. Manuel Duran found a **White-tailed Kite** at Harbor Park on Mar 23, perhaps the bird photographed there by Jess Morton on Feb 2; this park is the best place to look for them in the area, but you may have to explore the wild south end of the park. **Barn Owls** are all around us, but the only ones reported on eBird were the one Chezy Yusuf observed in a Torrance neighborhood in early February and the one Marie Barnidge-McIntyre saw at Virginia Country Club on Mar 14.

Elsewhere in California, a **Chatham Albatross** was photographed on Tanner Bank, thirty miles off San Nicolas Island (the remotest of the Channel Islands). This rare albatross breeds only on a single rock in the Chatham Islands group, a New Zealand territory. There are only one or two previous records in California of this species, which was recently split from the Shy Albatross. Elsewhere in North America, a tropical **Yellow Grosbeak** turned up in Arkansas on Feb 20. An Asian **Eyebrowed Thrush**, a rare visitor to the West Coast, was found near Vancouver, Washington on Mar 4. Another East Asian bird, the **Amur Stonechat**, attracted a flock of birders to a National Wildlife Refuge near Galveston Bay (Texas) starting on Mar 10. A swallow from tropical America, a Gray-breasted Martin excited birders on Staten Island, New York, on Mar 26.

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.

Chapter Projects continued from page 3)

currently ongoing project with Rolling Hills Preparatory School is improving habitat quality for the threatened California Gnatcatcher and is intended to increase numbers of the endangered Palos Verdes blue butterfly.

Exercise your scientific talents! Reach out to me (ProjectManager@PVSBAudubon.org) if you'd like to hear more about any of these activities and the various ways in which you can engage. Better yet, come join our "Meet the Birds!" bird walk on the 4th Saturday of each month at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center (9 to 11am) and we can chat while enjoying this beautiful preserve.



California Gnatcatcher
Photo: Jess Morton

The Peregrines of Point Fermin

By Jess Morton

The triumphal scream came from behind me! Before I could turn, the male falcon came barreling past me at shoulder height, scarcely feet away, and sped on out over the cliff's edge. In its talons was a sizable gray bird, perhaps a pigeon, that would be a feast for his mate. He wheeled over the sea and sped in toward the cliff face where she waited. He dropped the bird at her feet, rose upward, and perched in front of their aerie high on the face of the cliff, perhaps looking at the egg she had laid that morning. He had just become a first-time father!

Peregrines have nested successfully at Point Fermin for years, unconcerned with the dozens of photographers that gather in spring to record their lives. The birds mate for life, but that can be short for these birds that depend

on skill and agility to catch prey—other birds. The female of this pair has been there for years, but her mate of last year was injured and then disappeared. The young male that makes up

the pair today appeared a few months ago, and it took a while before the two came to accept each other. Time will tell if they can raise a brood of three or four, as has been the case for years now. Stop by to take a look. They are easy to find—just look for the cameras. The birds will be close by.



Spring Butterfly Count Results

By Keith Haney

Thank you to all who came out on April 12th to look for butterflies and support our ongoing partnership with the North American Butterfly Association monitoring population trends for these fascinating creatures.

Over 20 counters braved the initial chilly and overcast conditions to survey 13 different locations across our count circle (which spans to Gardena in the north, I-710 in the east, and to the ocean west and south). The sun eventually came out, however, and we were rewarded with 164 butterfly sightings representing 18 different species.

The umber skipper was the most abundant and broadly distributed butterfly sighted, with monarch, western tiger swallowtail, mourning cloak, gulf fritillary, and cabbage white butterflies also being spotted widely across the circle. Our richest butterfly habitat on this day was Canada Park (Rancho Palos Verdes) where Tracy Drake observed 15 different species, including the 3 most common local swallowtails (anise, western giant, and western tiger)!

In addition to butterflies, some of our counters took note of the dragonfly and damselfly species



Gulf Fritillary
Photo: Tracy Drake

observed as well. By far, the pacific forktail damselfly was the most common species recorded, with 42 out of the 62 dragonflies and damselflies sighted. Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park was the hotspot for seeing these otherworldly flying insects.

These results are an improvement over last spring's paltry 7 butterfly species seen under rainy conditions, and are in line with our 5 year average of 15 species found during spring counts.

Our summer butterfly count will be July 12th when we will expect to see approximately 25 different species. Please send me an email (ProjectManager@PVSBAudubon.org) if you'd like to participate – I can't think of a better way to spend a summer afternoon than watching butterflies in the name of science!



Monarch Photo: Tracy Drake

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Friday/Sunday May. 2-4th. **Field trip** to Big Morongo and Salton Sea for spring migrants. Email **Ann and Eric Brooks** at motmots@aol.com for details and to register.

Sunday, May. 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.

Tuesday, May. 20th, at 7, at Madrona Marsh. **Local Bats** is the subject of the evening's talk, to be followed by a bat walk on the marsh.

Saturday, May. 24th, at 9. **Meet the Birds!** with **Keith Haney** at Madrona Marsh. Birding for all ages and levels of knowledge in a biologically blessed place. Come on out!

Saturday/Sunday May 31-June 1. Field trip to Big Bear. Email **Ann and Eric Brooks** at motmots@aol.com for details and to register.

Sunday, June. 1st, at 8 AM: Bird walk at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Meet in the parking lot between Vermont and Anaheim above the ranger station.

Sunday June 8th. **Field trip** to San Gabriel Mountains. Email **Ann and Eric Brooks** at motmots@aol.com for details and to register.

Tuesday, June. 17th, at 7, at Madrona Marsh, Photographer **Rafa Ramirez** presents selections from his portfolio at our regular monthly meeting. Join us either in person or via Zoom.

Saturday, June. 28th. **Field trip** to Mt. Pinos/Mt. Cerro Noroeste/Condor Preserve. May be toasty mid-day. Layers, lunch, lawn chairs, water!! Email **Ann and Eric Brooks** at motmots@aol.com for details and to register.

Saturday, June. 28th, at 9. **Meet the Birds!** with **Keith Haney** at Madrona Marsh. Birding for all ages and levels of knowledge in a biologically blessed place. Come on out!

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.:	Richard Watson
Treasurer:	Julian Chasin
Secretary:	
Project Mgr:	Keith Haney projectmanager@pvsbaudubon.org
Directors:	Tracy Drake, Dianna Kim, Jess Morton, Jonathan Nakai, David Quadhamer

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Field Trips:	Ann and Eric Brooks, motmots@aol.com
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YES:	Keith Haney

Photos by the author unless stated otherwise.

Audubon Membership

To **join or renew** PV/SB Audubon membership, go to [Audubon.org](https://audubon.org) 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.

THIRD TUESDAY PROGRAMS

7 PM AT MADRONA MARSH

3201 PLAZA DEL AMO, TORRANCE



Join us on **May 20th** for a program on bats, followed by a walk on the marsh led by our speaker to sample the kinds in our skies. On **June 17th**, wildlife photographer **Rafa Ramirez** will show selections from his portfolio, including his amazing images of our local Peregrine Falcons. Meetings are in person or can be attended from home via the Zoom link noted on our website.



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AVIANTICS

By Evi Meyer

