

Phainopepla



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PROGRAM NOTES

General Membership Meeting, Thursday, December 4, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

Due to the Christmas holiday there has been a change in our regular meeting schedule. The normal General Membership Meeting for December has been cancelled. Instead, the December General Membership Meeting will be held on Thursday, December 4, 2008, 7:00 p.m. Our speaker will be SFVAS Board member Dave Weeshoff. His topic will be "Aquatic Bird Rehabilitation."



"", a colorful slide presentation, describing in words and photographs how orphaned, sick, injured, and oiled aquatic birds (including pelicans, gulls, loons, grebes, terns, et al) are cleaned, rehabilitated, and released back into the wild, as

well as what each of us can do to mitigate human impacts on our feathered friends. Dave's photography and entertaining style promise to bring these subjects to life.

Dave is on the Board of Directors of the International Bird Rescue Research Center and the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, and is a frequent guest speaker on environmental issues for Heal the Bay, an organization concerned with improving the water quality off the Southern California coast, and the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, concerned with the plague of plastic in the oceans. Photo by Dave Weeshoff ♪





**2008 Christmas Bird
Count Information
Saturday,
December 27, 2008**

In place of the Chapter's usual monthly field trip, the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will join chapters across the country and take part in National Audubon's 109th annual Christmas Bird Count. The count is part of the world's largest cooperative wildlife survey with over 50,000 participants in North and Central America, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. Count totals are forwarded to and analyzed by interested researchers in cooperation with the NAS and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

The bird count provides a measure of the nation's early wintering bird populations including species composition, distribution and population trends. Bird count numbers are often the only long-term, comprehensive information regarding local wintering bird populations. As the Chapter count enters its second fifty years some trends are clearly evident: the skill level of the counters continues to improve, the numbers of even the common most birds continues to decline with a few notable exceptions, and some species have long disappeared from the count while others are relative newcomers.

Members and friends of the Chapter are encouraged to save the date and join one of the count groups listed below as numbers of participants are crucial to the success of the count. The more eyes in the field, the more birds are seen. Several of our count areas are underserved and can use the additional help. Extensive birding experience is not necessary, only a willingness to come out and count wind, rain, or shine.

Those unable to join one of the count groups may assist by noting species and numbers of birds at backyard feeders, parks, and neighborhoods provided the location of such counts is within a 7.5 mile straight line distance from the count center at the intersection of Nordhoff and Balboa. Please report such counts along with the hours spent observing to the compiler by letter, phone, or e-mail (wrentit@att.net) no later than and preferably before January 5, 2009.

While count participation is free and open to all, a \$5 donation to offset the Chapter's fee due NAS will be greatly appreciated and accepted.

Hansen Dam and Vicinity Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m. From the intersection of Osborne and Glenoaks go north on Osborne to Dronfield, turn right on Dronfield and enter the park. Proceed downhill to a large parking lot. Look for counters with binoculars. Bring lunch, drink. Leader: Jim Hardesty

Bee Canyon and O'Melveny Park Meeting Time: 12 noon. From the intersection of Balboa and Rinaldi, go north on Balboa to Sesnon. Turn left (west) on Sesnon and continue .5 miles. Park is on the right. Meet in the parking lot. Leader: Ron Melin

Sepulveda Wildlife Area Meeting Time: 7:30 a.m. Meet at the parking lot east of Woodley Avenue and north of Burbank Blvd., south of the Tillman Water Treatment Plant. Bring lunch, drink. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp

LA Pierce College Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m. Enter the campus from Winnetka Avenue and meet by the flagpole in front of the Administration Building. Bring drink, snacks. Leaders: Allan and Muriel Kotin and others. Allan and Muriel need assistance here.

Limekiln and Aliso Canyons, Porter Valley Country Club Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m. Meet at Limekiln Canyon. Park on the north side of Rinaldi about one block west of Tampa. This area was heavily impacted by the Sesnon fire but may still be worth a look. Leaders: Carolyn Oppenheimer and Donna Timlin

Wilson Canyon Meeting time: 7:30 a.m. Directions: Exit the 5 or 210 Freeways on Roxford and turn right (north). Roxford turns east and becomes Olive View. Continue about 1.2 miles, pass Olive View Hospital, and watch the sign indicating entrance to Wilson Canyon. Turn left and follow road .7 miles to parking lot overlooking dam. This is a fee area. Leader: Jim Moore

Chatsworth Nature Preserve/Reservoir
For information regarding the time and meeting location of possible counting activities in this location, phone the compiler (Art Langton), prior to count day, at (818) 887-0973.

Additional locations, times, and leaders as well as changes and modifications may be announced at the December 4 membership meeting. Art Langton, compiler Ψ



Costa Rica 101 by Chris Van Beveren



Just before Labor Day, Jim and I headed to Costa Rica for the first time. I called the itinerary “Costa Rica 101” because it was short and visited only the two main tourist centers of Arenal and Monteverde, plus the capital San Jose. September is part of the Green Season, a lovely euphemism someone has coined for the Rainy Season. We got some rain everywhere, but it was not a problem except in Monteverde. There it rained enough to basically shut things down. No zip lines, lots of mud, clouds obscuring what would have been ocean views from our balcony, and very few birds visible. My first suggestion is to think twice about Monteverde. Famous though it is, in the dry season it is very crowded, and in the wet, difficult. The dry season is



December through March.

The other parts of the country were fine in the Green Season; in fact the light sprinkles kept the temperatures down to delightful levels, and did not seem to bother the birds at all. Costa Rica impressed us as a remarkable bargain, in these days of currency sticker shock in Europe and Asia. Dinner for two in hotel restaurants was typically under \$25.00, and hotels rates under \$120, sometimes way under. We liked all the hotels we stayed at, especially in Arenal. Some of the country’s roads are quite good; others can be narrow, steep dirt tracks. If you choose not to drive, there is a network of public shuttle buses.

So about the birds! We saw 104 species total. The first six days we were part of an organized, general tour that paid occasional attention to birds, but mostly we poked around the hotel grounds on our own. During this time we identified 50 species of which 27 were life birds. The most fun were finding the Squirrel Cuckoos and Rufous-naped Wrens in the rain the first day, and the 8 hummingbird species at the gift shop feeders at Monteverde. The plants around the door to our unit at Arenal were full of Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, and on the grounds we enjoyed finding exotic woodpeckers, doves and a Passerini’s Tanager, while we weren’t busy gaping at the volcano, which was gloriously visible. The sun comes up early in Costa Rica year round, and we met many of our tour mates up enjoying the view at 5AM. After dark, we were taken to watch the bright red-hot lava rocks bouncing down the side of the volcano, an unforgettable sight.



Our last day was a free day after the tour. We engaged a professional birding guide for the day, Kevin Easley, who came highly recommended and more than lived up to our expectations. Our day with Kevin produced 76 species, with some overlap of birds seen earlier in the trip but with 39 life birds new that day. Most of them were excellent views in Kevin’s scope, as he is a master at the quick find, focus, and step back so the customer sees the bird. The best bird of the day is a hard choice because so many were fabulous: a flock of Montezuma Oropendulas right off the bat, Lineated Woodpecker, Scarlet Macaws, and the

Black and White Owl, Also beautiful motmots, parakeets, trogons, and tanagers. We found a Gray Hawk, not a lifer but a much better view than we had in Texas. Like it was perched on your hand and you could see every feather. We have the entire list on a .PDF for anyone who is interested: e-mail me at becktravel@yahoo.com.

I must warn you, come once and Costa Rica will entice you back again and again. ♪



Calendar of Events



Tuesday, December 2. Antelope Valley Audubon General Meeting and Holiday Banquet. 6:00 p.m. The Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in the Elyze Clifford Interpretive Center, at 43201 35th Street, in Lancaster. You are invited to bring a food item and/or anything you would like to share from recent outdoor nature experiences. A media projector will be available. Contact Bob or Bonnie Weatherman (661) 269-2051 for more information.

IMPORTANT! Please NOTE: Due to the Christmas holiday, our normal meeting schedule has been altered. We have canceled the normal December meeting and rescheduled it for Thursday, December 4, 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 4. General Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd., Encino. Located between Moorpark and Ventura Blvd., on the west side of Balboa, just south of the Presbyterian Church. Come early for social hour. Our speaker will be SFVAS Board Member, Dave Weeshoff who will speak on Aquatic Bird Rehabilitation. See "Program Notes" on page one.

Saturday, December 6. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. Directions: Exit the Ventura Freeway (U.S. 101) at Las Virgenes Canyon Road and proceed north to the trailhead parking area at the end of the road. Please bring plenty of water and wear proper shoes. No toilets are available on site. Leader: Jim Hardesty (818) 346-6712, jnhardesty@att.net.

Saturday, December 6. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Take closest freeway to I-5 North and exit at Parker Road. Turn right and proceed to stop sign (Castaic Road), proceed to next stop sign (Lake Hughes Road), proceed to next stop sign (Castaic Lake Drive) and turn right. Entrance to the park is on the right. Parking is in Lot 4, so make a right turn after the kiosk, then an immediate left turn into the lot, parking to the left. Leader: Roger McClure. For information, contact the staff of LA Co Parks at (661) 257-4050.

Sunday, December 7. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Directions: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about one-half mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about one-half mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. For more information contact him at (661) 229-6986 or kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, December 13. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 8:30–11:00 a.m. Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! These popular walks, designed for beginning birders and school-age children, have resumed for the current cool season. Directions: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about one-half mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about one-half mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Meet across the road from the parking lot at the low buildings. Leaders: Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796 and Linda Jones, (818) 831-6061. **RAIN CANCELS.**

Saturday, December 13. Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docents' Bird Walk. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Take the 405 or 5 Freeway north to the 14 Freeway. Exit the 14 at Placerita Canyon. Turn right at the end of the off ramp and continue about 1.5 miles to the park entrance. Turn right and park at the Nature Center. Leader: Bob Fischer. For more information, call the Nature Center at (661) 259-7721.

Sunday, December 14. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Meet at the first wide place after entering the gardens. Admission is free for early birders. Located at 1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada. Leader: Karen Johnson or Nancy Herron Knode. For more information, contact Karen at (818) 790-1687 or lv2bird@aol.com.

Tuesday, December 16. O'Melveny Weekday Walk (formerly Weekday Wanderer's) at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 8:30 a.m. Directions: Take the 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway and exit at Balboa Blvd. Turn north, driving two miles to Sesnon, turn left going west .6 mile, turn right at park entrance. Meet in the parking lot. **RAIN CANCELS.** Contact Carolyn Oppenheimer at, (818) 885-7493, with any questions (before 7 p.m., please) or CarolOpp@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, December 20. Santa Monica Mts. Conservancy Bird Walk at Towsley Canyon. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Go north on I-5 through Santa Clarita, exit Calgrove and turn west (left) under the freeway and then left again on the Old Road. Watch for the sign, "Ed Davis Park at Towsley Canyon." Turn right and park in the back lot. Meet at the kiosk. Leader: Roger McClure. For further information, call (661) 255-3606.

Sunday, December 21. Malibu Creek State Park Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Meet at the second (lower) day-use parking lot. Entrance to the park is on the west side of Las Virgenes Road, just south of Mulholland Hwy. Entrance fee is \$8 per car. Leader(s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796, aKotin@earthlink.net and/or Art Langton, (818) 887-0973.



Saturday, December 27. Christmas Bird Count. Join us for National Audubon's 109th annual Christmas Bird Count. See the article on Page 2 for locations and times.

Sunday, December 28. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See December 14 for details.

Saturday, January 3. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. See December 6 for details.

Saturday, January 3. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See December 6 for details.

Sunday, January 4. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See December 7 for details.

Future Field Trips: (Details later)

January 17. Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary

February 21. Private Game Preserve

Monthly Field Trip Report

 by Richard Barth

We birded El Dorado Park in Long Beach on October 18. Our group tallied 70 species on the walk, the same total as last year.

While we spotted nothing completely unexpected, Red-naped Sapsucker is always a nice fall/winter find in southern California. A roosting Great Horned Owl created some excitement as did an Osprey cruising over the lake areas. Very few ducks were on hand, with Blue-winged Teal getting the most attention. A good number of Brown Pelicans wandering inland was notable. Hermit Thrush, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Western Tanager, Western Bluebird, Cassin's Kingbird, Say's Phoebe, Marsh Wren, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Belted Kingfisher (heard), Western Meadowlark and Nutmeg Mannikin were tallied. We had a Hutton's Vireo, not readily seen here. Our warbler list featured Orange-crowned, Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, Wilson's, Yellow-rumped and Common Yellowthroat. We were disappointed in the sparrow turnout, but did observe Savannah, Chipping and White-crowned. In addition to the Osprey mentioned, the hawks on hand were Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, Cooper's, Sharp-shinned and American Kestrel. The adjacent San Gabriel River produced a few shorebirds...Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper and Black-necked Stilt. ♣





Audubon at Home by Alan Pollack

California native plants for your wildlife garden: trees

When most people think of native plants, they typically picture something scraggly and unattractive. Well, I confess there are those, but with hundreds of plants to choose from, one can also find some real, horticultural beauties. I begin with some of the trees that do well in the Los Angeles basin and surrounding area.

Coast Live Oak, *Quercus agrifolia*, is a fast growing evergreen tree and can reach from 20 to 40 feet in height and width. It is very adaptable and can be found in many communities within 50 miles of the coast. It has small, spiny leaves and, like all the oaks, plentiful acorns which are favored food for squirrels and woodpeckers. In fact, woodpeckers, which live in families, usually "adopt" an oak tree as its home base, a different tree for each family. It is drought tolerant.



Valley Oak, *Quercus lobata*, in contrast, is a very large, fast growing, single or multi-trunked, deciduous tree, usually 15 to 40 feet in height but with ideal conditions, can reach 70 to 100 feet in height and width. It is found in interior valleys, foothills, and riparian habitats where there is ample ground water. Unlike the Coast Live Oak, its leaves are large and lobed, similar to maple leaves and like other oaks, produces acorns.

California Sycamore, *Platanus racemosa*, is a fast growing, single or multi-trunked, deciduous tree reaching 30 to 80 feet in height. It too is found mostly in riparian habitats because it likes some ground water. It has very attractive, mottled, flaking, gray bark, ball like flowers and seed heads, and maple-like leaves that host the tiger swallowtail butterfly.

Southern California Black Walnut, *Juglans californica*, is a medium sized, 15 to 30 foot, single or multi-trunked, long-lived, deciduous tree that tolerates poor soils. It has compound leaves, edible nuts, and requires no supplemental water once established.

Desert Willow, *Chilopsis linearis*, is a deciduous, single or multi-trunked, small tree or tall shrub, 12 to 20 feet in height and width. Usually

found in desert washes, it adapts to other habitats that are hot and dry. In its dormancy, from late fall to mid-spring, it has bean-like seed pods and in the spring, large, showy flowers emerge that are very attractive to hummingbirds. It is very drought tolerant.



Toyon, *Heteromoles arbutifolia*, is the only California native that has retained its Native American name. It is also known as Christmas berry (for its bird-edible, red berries in winter), and Hollywood (for the resemblance of its leaves to English holly) and tinsel town takes its name from this plant common to the Chaparral on our local hills. It is a large shrub 6 to 15 feet tall and wide, or a small, multi-trunked tree 20 to 25 feet tall and wide. It is drought tolerant.

California Bay Laurel, *Umbellularia californica*, aka Oregon myrtle, aka pepperwood, is a slow growing, evergreen tree that reaches 20 to 25 feet in a garden (or may stay as a tall shrub). It is very adaptable, tolerating wet or dry, sun or shade. The foliage is very aromatic and late winter flowers are followed by olive size fruits (edible?).

Western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*, is a deciduous, tall shrub or small tree, 10 to 20 feet, single or multi-trunked. The display of magenta flowers in spring, before leaves appear and reddish-brown seedpods in winter attract birds and butterflies. It is very drought tolerant.

Stay tuned for native shrubs for your wildlife garden... ♣

Alan Pollack, Audubon-at-Home Chair, offers free consultation/landscape design to help you make your yard wildlife friendly. He also gives a free, PowerPoint slide show/lecture to community groups, high school and college classes on attracting wildlife to your garden and sustainable gardening practices. He can be reached at alpat62@aol.com or (818) 340-2347 or at www.sfvaudubon.org.





JOIN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON

To get started with your membership,
use the following form and mail to:

SFV Audubon Society
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 7769
Van Nuys, CA 91409

Make all checks payable to SFV Audubon.

SFVAS Membership

Regular 1-yr chapter membership....\$20 \$ _____

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Contributions to SFVAS.....\$ _____

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The PHAINOPEPLA, published ten times a year, is the newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409, 818-347-3205. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, a non-profit conservation/education organization, and is dedicated to "the conservation of wildlife and natural resources."

Articles, letters, drawings, and photographs concerning conservation, the science and ecology, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for publication in the PHAINOPEPLA.

Material from other newsletters or newspaper should include the source and date. Copy for the PHAINOPEPLA should be in the hands of the editor by the 3rd of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter.

An introductory membership to the National Audubon Society is \$20 and should be sent separately to:
National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 52529, Boulder, CO 80322. Be sure to write "C12" on the form to assure assignment to our chapter. For renewals, use the form in the National Audubon magazine, "Audubon".

If you have any questions about membership, renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Jim Moore at (661) 298-1130 or e-mail him at jimmoore@socal.rr.com

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For Chapter leaders email addresses, see our web site:

www.SFVAudubon.org

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The Future of Conservation 2009 Audubon California Assembly

The Audubon California Assembly is held every 18 months. All chapter leaders, members, and friends are invited to attend. The next Assembly is scheduled for:

March 15, 16, and 17, 2009
Asilomar Conference Grounds
Pacific Grove, California

www.visitasilomar.com

Register by December 11, 2008, and save \$50. <http://ca.audubon.org/docs/09AssemblyRegistration.pdf>.
Speakers and workshops will focus on emerging strategies for conservation of birds and their habitat in the 21st Century.

Come Celebrate Our 13th Annual Festival! Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival January 16–19, 2009

For more information about the Festival, check out our website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call (805) 772-4677. You can request that your name be added to the mailing list for our 2009 brochure, or register online. Both the brochure and online registration will be available in October 2008. The registration deadline is January 5, 2009, but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly. ♪