

Phainopepla



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PROGRAM NOTES

Jonathan S. Feenstra, Ph.D., to Speak about Tricolored Blackbirds in Southern California at Thursday April 22, 7:00 p.m. General Membership Meeting. See Calendar Section for directions.

The Tricolored Blackbird is North America's only colonial nesting landbird and is nearly endemic to the state of California. In the past century the statewide population has seen a precipitous decline, and for nearly 15 years state and federal agencies have been monitoring and trying to save major breeding colonies. For the past few years the population in Southern California has been attracting more attention. In this presentation Jon describes the latest results of how our local Tricoloreds are doing and what is on the horizon.

Jon Feenstra is a freelance ornithologist living in Los Angeles. He holds a Ph.D. in chemical physics from Caltech but now works as an ecological consultant and bird surveyor, and as a tour leader for WINGS. When he is not looking through binoculars, he cooks, reads, climbs, bikes, listens to music, and travels the world. ♪



**SEPULVEDA BASIN 2010 WILDLIFE
RESERVE CLEANUP
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
SATURDAY, APRIL 10
8:30 A.M.—NOON**

Photo by Rosemary Leibowitz
Sepulveda Basin, 3/10



Birdathon article and photo by Rosemary Leibowitz, 3/13/10, Family Bird Walk **It is Birdathon Season Again!**

The months of April and May bring our annual Birdathon. You have probably received your pledge letter for this annual fundraiser, a sponsored birding event. The money raised covers most of our ongoing expenses and helps support our educational programs for school children, including the Sepulveda Basin Environmental Educational Program (SBEEP) based at the Sepulveda Wildlife Bird Sanctuary. Please join us in pledging a set amount of money on the number of species to be spotted during a designated bird walk and then do come on the walk itself! Many members choose this event to honor the leader whose walks she or he has been able to enjoy. If you did not receive a pledge form, please e-mail me at rose.leibowitz@sfsvaudubon.org and I will be happy to send you a form. ♪

BIRDATHON EVENTS

Join us and help count at one or more of these walks!
See the Calendar Section for directions and times.

- Kris Ohlenkamp–Sepulveda Basin, April 4
- Art Langton–Malibu Creek State Park, April 18
- Caroline Oppenheimer–O’Melveny Park, April 20
- Jim Moore–Butterbreds Springs, Galileo Hills, Piute Ponds, April 21
- Richard Barth–Morongo Basin, April 24
- Nancy Herron Knode–Descanso Gardens, May 9



The Nominations Committee Report **GET INVOLVED AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**



The Nominations Committee is pleased to announce the following slate of candidates to serve on the Board of Directors of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society for the 2010–2011 program year. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor at the April 22 General Membership Meeting, provided such nomination receives the approval of the nominee and is supported by a written petition signed by five members of the Society. The election will be held at the May 27 meeting and installation will take place at the June 24 meeting.

- President: Dave Weeshoff**
- 1st VP: Mike Van Norman**
- 2nd VP: Rose Leibowitz**
- Treasurer: Ann Ohlenkamp**
- Corresponding Sec: Heather Medvitz**
- Recording Sec: Diana Keeney**

- 3rd Year Board: Mark Osokow**
- 2nd Year Board: Donna Timlin**
- 1st Year Board: Aurelio Albaisa**
- 1st Year Board: Lynn Maddox**



The committee would like to thank all SFVAS members who have served the chapter in any capacity. We invite those of you with an interest in becoming more active in chapter activities to let us know.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Nominations Committee (Photo: Your current Board at work, by Mathew Tekulsky) ♪



Special Upcoming Event

Bird Walk at Tejon Ranch, Saturday, May 22

Leader Jim Moore. This will be a joint venture between SFV Audubon and Los Angeles Audubon. Tejon Ranch is open only by special arrangement with escort, as one could easily get lost on the web of dirt roads covering this huge property. We will visit Big Sycamore Canyon and Los Alamos Creek, probably amounting to a few miles of easy hiking up the future realignment of the Pacific Crest Trail through the south-central portion of Tejon Ranch. We will see magnificent oak woodlands, stunning sycamore riparian woodlands, late wildflowers, and diverse chaparral vegetation communities, as well as the birds that call these canyons their home. Take Interstate 5 north to Quail Lake Rd. (Hwy 138). Continue east for 8.7 miles

to 300th Street West. Turn north and continue on the paved road until it curves to the left. At this point, leave the paved road and continue on the dirt road until you come to the Tejon Ranch gate. Registered participants meet here at 7:30 a.m. Bring lunch, as we will be out most of the day. Those wishing to carpool can meet at the McDonald's on the east side of Interstate 5 at Lake Hughes Road at 6:45 a.m. High clearance vehicles recommended; we will carpool into these at the ranch. Rain cancels. Please advise Jim Moore, at jim.moore@sfvaudubon.org of your intention to participate at least two weeks before the event so we can advise the ranch staff of the number of participants. ♣

Monthly Field Trip Report by Richard Barth

We visited the Ventura County Game Preserve on February 20.

Our special target bird this trip was a female Ruff ("Reeve") which had been previously reported on the property. We managed to locate the bird thanks to a tip from members of Ventura Audubon who found it in a different area from where it had been originally reported. In the same location as the Ruff was a Stilt Sandpiper, also a winter rarity in California. A few of us stayed late on the walk, finally found a perfect vantage point for viewing both birds, and had excellent looks. Other shorebirds of interest on the day were Dunlin, Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Curlew and Wilson's Snipe. We ended up with fifteen shorebird species.

Our duck list totaled ten species, with Cinnamon Teal and Northern Pintail probably being the most popular. The numbers of White-faced Ibis were impressive. Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers were readily seen. We heard quite a few Virginia Rails.

Tree, Cliff and Northern Rough-winged Swallows were moving through the area. Marsh Wrens popped up here and there, scolding our presence. Say's Phoebes seemed to be more numerous than in past years here, and we had one "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warbler. American Pipit, Savannah Sparrow and Western Meadowlark were well represented. We found no Yellow-headed or Tricolored Blackbirds this visit. ♣

BIRDING CHATSWORTH PRESERVE ON VALENTINES DAY

What could be finer than a birding tour of one of the Valley's few remaining open, undeveloped spaces on a clear and pleasant February day? Such were the conditions enjoyed and opinion rendered by eight Chapter members and guests as they accumulated a count of 50 plus species while inside the fence of Chatsworth Nature Preserve. The four and a half hours were insufficient to view all but the most bird-rich habitats as time seemed to pass all too quickly.

Of particular interest were the seasonal ponds and marshes which provided forage and habitat for yellowlegs and a variety of puddle ducks including shovelers, Gadwalls, wigeon, and Mallards. Should the rains persist throughout February, March and into the spring migration season as they are predicted to,

these ephemeral ponds should continue to be attractive to other varieties of ducks and wading birds. The permanent pond, now filled to overflowing, proved attractive for Canvasbacks, a lone Osprey, and a Sora which was heard but not seen.

Other highlights of the morning included good looks at a flock of Western Bluebirds, dozens of Canada Geese, a Peregrine Falcon, Greater Roadrunner, Rock Wren, and a mysterious accipiter (or was it a Merlin?) Herpers found and photographed a Barn Owl on the intake tower and a rarely found night snake.

Our thanks to the LADWP for approving and arranging access to the preserve on a truly gorgeous day. - Submitted by Art Langton ♣



Calendar of Events

Saturday, April 3. 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, jim.hardesty@sfvadubon.org.

Saturday, April 3. 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.

Sunday, April 4. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. A BIRDATHON EVENT. 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 kris.ohlenkamp@sfvadubon.org or (818) 986-7785.

Saturday, April 10. 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, April 11. 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: Olga Clark or Nancy Herron Knode. For more information, contact Dottie Ecker, (818) 790-0659.

Saturday, April 17. 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) 252-6187.

Saturday, April 17. FREE Gardening for Wildlife Workshop. 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. A limited number of *Phainopepla* readers are invited to attend a slide show/lecture on "Restoring Habitat, One Yard at a Time", given by Alan Pollack, Audubon-at-Home Chair, followed by a tour of his garden. Art Langton will also present a slide show/lecture on the birds one might expect to see in a San Fernando Valley garden, followed (hopefully) by a native plant landscaper speaking on the use of natives in the garden. Learn the basics for how to attract birds, butterflies, and other wildlife, how to conserve water, soil, and plant and animal life. Please e-mail me at alan.pollack@sfvadubon.org with any questions and to reserve a spot.

Sunday, April 18. Malibu Creek State Park Bird Walk. A BIRDATHON EVENT. 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 \$12 per car. Leader: Art Langton, (818) 887-0973.

Tuesday, April 20. O'Melveny Weekday Walk at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. A BIRDATHON EVENT. 9:00 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 0.6 miles, 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.) or carolyn.oppenheimer@sfvadubon.org.

Wednesday, April 21. Butterbredt Springs, Galileo Hills, and Piute Ponds. A BIRDATHON EVENT. Probable species: 115. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the McDonalds on Crown Valley Road in Acton, or 6:00 a.m. at the park-n-ride lot on the east side of Avenue S in Palmdale. We will then stop in Palmdale for a brief search for LeConte's Thrasher, then to Butterbredt Springs and onward to Galileo Hills, Piute Ponds and finish at Apollo Park in Lancaster where we have seen Lesser Nighthawks in previous years. Leader: Jim Moore. Please advise Jim by e-mail, jim.moore@sfvadubon.com, if you plan to join him.

Thursday, April 22. GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING. 7:00 p.m. Everyone welcome. 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, Jonathan S. Feenstra Ph.D., will talk about Tricolored Blackbirds in Southern California. See "Program Notes", page 1, for more information.



Saturday, April 24. Monthly Field Trip to Morongo Valley. 8:00 a.m. A BIRDATHON EVENT. Probable Species: 65–70. This desert oasis offers great birding in the spring. Warblers, flycatchers, hummingbirds and orioles are among the birds expected. At least one pair of Vermilion Flycatchers has been seen every April in memory. Directions: Allow 2.5 hours to drive from the San Fernando Valley. Take Interstate 10 east to Route 62, which is past the Palm Springs turnoff. Go north to the tiny town of Morongo Valley and turn right on East Drive to the Big Morongo Preserve. Bring lunch and drinks. In the afternoon we will drive to Joshua Tree National Park to look for wildflowers, Scott’s Orioles, Pinyon Jays, Brewer’s and Black-throated Sparrows. Leader: Richard Barth, (310) 276-0342.

Sunday, April 25. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See April 11 for details.

Saturday, May 1. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. See April 3 for details.

Saturday, May 1. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See April 3 for details.

Sunday, May 2. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See April 4 for details.

Future Field Trips: (Details later)

May 8. Walker Ranch/Placerita Canyon Area (second Saturday)

June 12. Rancho Sierra Vista Preserve (second Saturday) †

THE AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN—Article and Photo by Mathew Tekulsky

The American White Pelican spends the winter at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve in Van Nuys, California, and one year in early March, I spent a few days at this 225-acre Garden of Eden (just a stone’s throw from the 405 Freeway) observing and photographing this remarkable bird.

The first thing that impresses you about the American White Pelican is its size. It has a nine-foot wingspan and can weigh up to 20 pounds. And yet, it is a gentle species—silent during the winter and only known to make a few grunts and squawks on its northern nests during breeding season.

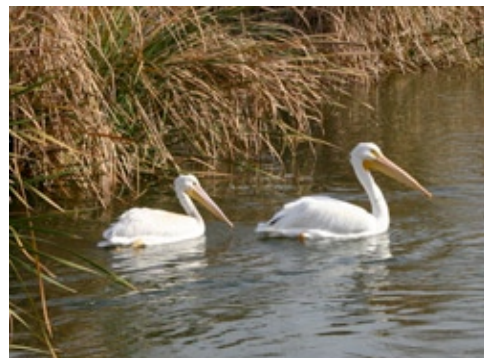
After discovering about 15 American White Pelicans hanging out with a group of Double-crested Cormorants on an island in the middle of a lake at the reserve, I removed myself to a corner of the lake where I had seen the cormorants, along with the Pied-billed Grebe and a small flock of Mallards, feeding along the reedy edge of the water.

It didn’t take long for some of the pelicans to drift over, and I ran off about five rolls of film throughout the day, capturing the pelicans in many different postures and with the sun providing a backlight, sidelight, and an over-the-shoulder (i.e. head-on) light.

In one three-hour period, a group of four American White Pelicans engaged in a fascinating behavior pattern which they repeated again and again. First they hugged the reeds and gradually made their way closer to me. They were spread out a bit, not in single file, so they covered a large area of this corner of the lake. When they approached the shore, they all stopped and stared at me. Were they waiting to be fed? Probably just curious. But then, one would turn its pouchy beak sideways and lunge into the surface of the lake, pulling in a great amount of water and everything that was in it—no doubt including any small fish it managed to capture. Later, I read that the American White Pelican is one of the few bird species that engages in cooperative hunting behavior, driving fish into shallow water and surrounding them.

But the true majesty of the American White Pelican is revealed when it flies. Watch it run and flap its wings along the water, quickly gaining lift, and then witness it soar upon the thermals, as if it’s out for an afternoon stroll—which is exactly what is going on, as the American White Pelican does not dive into the water after its prey, as does the Brown Pelican. In order to land on the surface of the lake, the pelican makes a wide circle around the area in which it wishes to land, lets down its landing gear (i.e. feet), and splashes calmly into the water as does a duck. It folds its wings over its back and looks over at you as if to say, “Do you see anything extraordinary in that?”

Indeed, the American White Pelican rules! †





Audubon-at-Home by Alan Pollack

Here is your chance to attend a **FREE** gardening for wildlife workshop!

Saturday, April 17, 9:00 a.m. ~ 1:00 p.m.

I am inviting a limited number of *Phainopepla* readers to come to my home for a slide show/lecture on "Restoring Habitat, One Yard at a Time", followed by a tour of my garden. Then Art Langton will present a slide show/lecture on the birds one might expect to see in a San Fernando Valley garden, followed (I hope) by a native plant landscaper speaking on the use of natives in the garden. Learn the basics for how to attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife, how to conserve water, soil, and plant and animal life. Please e-mail me at alan.pollack@sfv Audubon.org to reserve

a spot. If there are more requests than spaces, I will add additional days.

Please e-mail Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, with any questions you have with regards to creating a wildlife-friendly garden that can be used for publication. Alan 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 contacted at (818) 340-2347 or at alan.pollack@sfv Audubon.org. ♡



SEPULVEDA BASIN 2010 WILDLIFE RESERVE CLEANUP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED SATURDAY, APRIL 10 8:30 A.M. – NOON

Photo: Rosemary Leibowitz

Haskell Creek, where it runs through the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area, hosts many riparian trees and shrubs, such as cottonwoods and willows. Songbirds forage and nest in the trees, while egrets and herons fish in this heart of the Wildlife Area. Unfortunately it is infested with trash, like plastic bags and Styrofoam.

Please help restore the creek's beauty!

Equipment and Clothing: You will get muddy and maybe wet. Please wear rugged clothing and shoes or rubber boots. If you have them, please bring work gloves and long-handled tools to reach items.

Directions: Take Woodley Avenue (which is 1/2 mile west of the I-405 Freeway) north from Burbank Boulevard. Go 1/2 mile north to the signs for the Wildlife Reserve and Japanese Gardens. Turn east (right). Bear right where the road forks. Continue east 1/2 mile to the end of the road. Sign in at the amphitheater, just beyond the large rock monuments and rock-faced buildings.

More Information: The event is appropriate for adults and older students. Students can earn community service hours. **It is not appropriate for young children but OK for older elementary school students if they are closely supervised.** ♡

Rain cancels.

Questions: (310) 457-5796 or (818) 831-6061.

**Sponsored by San Fernando Valley Audubon
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 \$ _____

Student 1-yr Chapter Membership....\$10 \$ _____

Optional First-Class Postage.....\$5 \$ _____

Contributions to SFVAS..... \$ _____

Total..... \$ _____

New Member ____ Renewal ____ School ____

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How did you learn about SFVAS? _____

Save a tree! I DO NOT want to receive a hardcopy of the *Phainopepla*; I'll get my news online

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 Rose Leibowitz at (818) 990-5405 or e-mail her at rose.leibowitz@sfvaudubon.org.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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2nd Vice President:	Margie Maseda	(818) 378-1084
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Mathew Tekulsky	(310) 962-5653

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Birdathon:	Rose Leibowitz	(818) 990-5405
Christmas Bird Count:	Art Langton	(818) 887-0973
Community Outreach:	Sharon Ford	(818) 780-5816
Conservation:	Kris Ohlenkamp	(818) 986-7785
Coordinating Council Rep:	Jim Hardesty	(818) 346-6712
Descanso Bird Station:	Dottie Ecker	(818) 790-0659
Descanso Bird Walks:	Nancy Herron Knode	unpublished
Descanso Bird Walks:	Karen Johnson	(818) 790-1687
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Web Coordinator:	Jim Hardesty	(818) 346-6712
Youth Activities:	Muriel Kotin	(310) 457-5796

For Chapter leaders email addresses, see our web site:

www.SFVAudubon.org

CHAPTER PHONE (818) 347-3205

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Phainopepla

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
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to see this issue in full color!
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Membership

SFVAS is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope you will get involved with our many field trips and activities. Please contact Rose Leibowitz, Membership Chair, with any questions at rose.leibowitz@sfvaudubon.org.

Local:

Gregory Jensen
Scott Logan
Fabienne Melkanoff

National:

Shannon Ainsworth
Joan Aldrich
Audrey Bahr
Cindy Baglio
William Barbour
Ruth Barnett
Cat Bartick-Sweeney
Lorna Bausch
Kathleen Benedict
Craig Bernstein
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Pamela Eils
Joseph Eisner
Emma & Luke Fitzgerald
Maria Forbes
Judith Goldstein
Don Gordon
Robin Grossman
Daniel Hagen
Roberta Hagopian
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Jim Hickman
Joanne Hines
Margaret Hogue
Agoura HS
Doreen Johnson
Gary Justice
Laurine Keeler
Paula Kennedy
Deanna Kimel
Allan Klein
Jean Kleine
Susan Komins
E. Lewis
A. Liper
Tim Malachosky
Mary McCarthy
Nora Miculs
William Mir
Gary Moltzer
Pamela Moss
Janet Morissey

Patricia Neithart
Sidney Olshan
William Omalley
Ruth Osias
Carmen Otoya
Elaine Panush
Dattatray Patankar
Kathleen Parsons
Erika Perez
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Marisa Ramirez
B. Randall
Linda Reavely
Walt Ruppel
Susan Rudinger
Maxine Russell
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Helen Simmons
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Kathleen Smith
Gordon & Marcela Smoire
Arlene Sobel
Marshall & Elizabeth
South
Amy Stern
Ken & Debra Style
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