

PROGRAM NOTES:

John Luker to speak at Thursday, December 9, SFVAS General Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m.

TOPIC: Rocketdyne: Clean up, Resources, Public Involvement

Join us for a presentation and slide show, by John Luker, updating the public on current clean-up/resource management issues. The focus will be on the "Future Probable Beneficial Uses to the State of California." The evening will also include a discussion of public participation opportunities for the Audubon Society and the public as a whole, followed by a Q & A.

John Luker is a Documentary Cameraman/Photographer who has been working locally on Rocketdyne and public volunteer issues for over five years. Currently, he is Vice-President of the Santa Susana Mountain Parks Association (SSMPA) and Chairman of the Santa Susana Volunteers.

See Calendar Section for directions. \forall

IMPORTANT! Please NOTE: Due to the Christmas holiday our normal meeting schedule has been changed. The next scheduled General Membership Meeting will be Thursday, December 9, 7:00 p.m.

SAVE the DATE: Friday, March 11, 2011 SFVAS Annual Awards Banquet Featured Speaker: Mel White, Writer Adults \$50 Students \$35

Send in your reservation form found on page five TODAY!





2010 Christmas Bird Count Information Sunday, December 26, 2010

In place of the Chapter's usual monthly field trip, the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will once again join chapters across the country, North and Central America, Hawaii, and the Caribbean and take part in the National Audubon Society's 111th annual Christmas Bird Count. Count totals and data collected are forwarded to and analyzed by interested researchers in cooperation with the NAS and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

The bird count provides a measure of the nation's early winter bird populations including species composition, distribution and population trends. Bird count numbers are often the only long-term, comprehensive information available regarding local wintering bird populations. As this chapter continues into its second half century of bird counts, some trends are clearly evident. While the skill level of counters continues to improve and field guides to be upgraded, some of our once common birds continue to decline. White-crowned Sparrows are only a tenth as numerous as 40 years ago while Horned Larks and Varied Thrushes have disappeared entirely. Starlings, grackles, and Allen's Hummingbirds once never seen are now common.

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 our count. The more eyes in the field the more birds seen both in variety and numbers. Several of our count areas are underserved and can use all the help they can get. Extensive birding experience is not a prerequisite, only a willingness to come out and count wind, rain, or shine.

Those unable to join on the count groups may assist by noting species and numbers of birds at backyard feeders, parks, and neighborhoods provided these counts take place within a 7.5 mile radius from the count center at the intersection of Balboa and Nordhoff. Please report such counts along with the time spent observing to the compiler by post, phone, or e-mail (Art.Langton@sfvaudubon.org) no later and preferably before January 5, 2011.

While count participation is free and open to all, a \$5/person donation to offset the chapter's payment to NAS will be greatly appreciated and accepted.

Hansen Dam and Vicinity

From the intersection of Osborne and Glenoaks, go north on Osborne to Dronfield (signal), turn right on Dronfield and enter park. Proceed downhill to large parking lot. Look for counters with binoculars. Bring lunch, drink and be prepared to walk.

Meeting time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting time: 12 Noon

Meeting time: 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Jim Moore

Bee Canyon and O'Melveny Park

From the intersection of Balboa and Rinaldi, go north to Balboa and Sesnon. Turn left (west) on Sesnon and continue .5 miles. Park is on the right. Meet in the parking lot. NOTE: Leader can use help counting the park but will, with others, be ascending up the canyon well into the late evening in search of montane species and owls. Come prepared with food and drink, appropriate clothing for the late hour and climb.

Leader: Tracy Drake

Sepulveda Wildlife Area

Meet in 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 (Continued on page 3)



Limekiln and Aliso Canyons, Porter Valley Country Club

Meet at the sign for "Limekiln Canyon Lower Trail" on the south side of Chatsworth Street one-half block west of Tampa Avenue.

Leaders: Carolyn Oppenheimer and Donna Timlin

Chatsworth Nature Preserve

Check with the leader the week prior to count date to confirm the availability of this location at (818) 887-0973. Entrance will be by way of the Plummer-Valley Circle gate .9 miles west of Topanga Canyon Blvd. Bring lunch, drink, and plan on being locked in until about 2:00 p.m.

Leader: Art Langton

LA Pierce College

Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Meeting time: 8:00 a.m.

Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Enter the campus from Winnetka and meet by the flagpole in front of the Administration building. Bring drinks, snacks. Pierce is a large area needing several counters.

Leader: Aurelio Albaisa

Additional locations, times, and leaders as well as changes and modifications to the forgoing may be announced at the December 9 membership meeting.—Arthur Langton, compiler ψ

Monthly Field Trip Reports by Richard Barth

El Dorado Park in Long Beach was our destination on October 16. Only three participants joined me on the walk, two were Long Beach residents.

Our top sighting of the day was an immature female Vermilion Flycatcher that had recently been found in the park. Also of interest was a late-ish Western Kingbird. We were pleased to see Hutton's Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Common Moorhen, Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper, Western Grebe, Chipping Sparrow, Cassin's Kingbird, Say's Phoebe, Western Meadowlark, Nutmeg Mannikin, Hermit Thrush, and Western Bluebird. Impressive was a flock of about 50 American Goldfinches. Yellow-rumped Warblers were so plentiful that we were concerned about overlooking a rare warbler in the flurry of activity. We did tally Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, Orange-crowned, and Common Yellowthroat on the day. Our raptors were Cooper's, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Osprey, American Kestrel and Turkey Vulture. We saw the expected herons. ψ

Audubon-at-Home Mailbox by Alan Pollack

Please e-mail Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, with any questions you have with regard 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@sfvaudubon.org. ψ







Calendar of Events

December

Saturday, December 4. 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@ sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, December 4. 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, December 5. 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 (818) 986-7785 or kris.ohlenkamp@sfvaudubon.org.

Tuesday, December 7. Antelope Valley Audubon Committee will hold its Quarterly Meeting and 3rd Annual Holiday Potluck. 6:00 p.m. The Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in the Elyze Clifford Interpretive Center, at 43201 35th Street W., in Lancaster. Bring a food item to share and join in the festivities. Contact Bob or Bonnie Weatherman (661) 269-2051 for more information.

Thursday, December 9. SFVAS 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. Our speaker, John Luker, will give a presentation and slideshow titled, Rocketdyne: Clean up, Resources, Public Involvement. See Program Notes on page one.

Saturday, December 11. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 9:00-11:00 a.m. Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! Are the White Pelicans back yet? Come check it out. These popular walks, designed for

beginning birders and school-age children, are resuming 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. Leader(s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones, (818) 831-6061. Reservations are not needed except for large groups. Rain cancels. Please visit our website www.sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, December 11. 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 12. 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 Dottie Ecker, (818) 790-0659.

Tuesday, December 14. NOTE: 2nd TUESDAY. O'Melveny Weekday Walk at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 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@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, December 18. 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.

Sunday, December 19. 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 \$12 per car. Leader (s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796, muriel.kotin@ sfvaudubon.org and/or Art Langton, (818) 887-0973.



Due to the Christmas holiday there will be NO General Membership Meeting on December 23. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 27. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Sunday, December 26. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See December 12 for details.

January

Saturday, January 1. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See December 4 for details.

Sunday, January 2. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See December 5 for details.

Saturday, January 8. High Desert Bird Prowl. 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Here is an opportunity to seek out wintering hawks, owls, Mountain Plovers, Mountain Bluebirds, longspurs, sparrows, etc. Directions: Take the 405 or 5 Freeway north to the 14 Freeway. Exit the 14 at Avenue S south of Palmdale and drive to the Park-n-Ride Lot just east of the off-ramp. We will meet at the west end of the lot and carpool for the morning. Bring snacks and

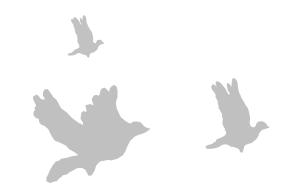
beverages. Scopes and FRS radios will be helpful. We will return to the meeting spot about 1:00 p.m. No fee, no reservation. Leaders: Jim Hardesty, (818) 346-6712, and Jim Moore, (661) 298-1130.

Future Field Trips: (Details later)

January 15. Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary

February 19.

Private Game Preserve in Ventura County



San Fernando Valley Audubon Society Awards Banquet Friday, March 11, 2011 □ 6:00 p.m. No Host Bar □ 7:00 p.m. Dinner Airtel Plaza Hotel, 7277 Valjean Avenue, Van Nuys

Featured Speaker: Mel White, Writer Conservation Award Recipient: TBA

Name	e Phone		
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	Enclosed is my check (\$50.	00/person, \$35.00/student) for \$	_
Addi	tional Names	·	

Please make check payable to: San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. Mail to: Jeanne Polak-Recht, 11002 Garden Grove Avenue, Northridge, CA 91326

The buffet-style dinner will also include selections for vegetarians. The cost is \$50.00 (\$35.00 for college students) including tax and tip. Reservations must be made in advance. Please list names of all guests in your party and mail in this form by March 4, 2011. THERE IS NO RESERVED SEATING. Reduced parking fee at Airtel or street parking is FREE. You will not receive a confirmation of your reservation. Reservations will be held at the door.

For further information call Jeanne Polak-Recht, Chairperson, at (818) 360-1438.





The Water Hole

Photo and article by Mathew Tekuslky

One year in August, I decided to spend a few days photographing the birds

at the water hole in the canyon behind my house in the Brentwood Hills. Now, this water hole is actually a small stream that is caused by runoff from the hill on which I live, which emerges from a pipe by the side of the service road leading down to Sullivan Canyon.

Along this verge, willows and cattails have grown, and small puddles have formed where the sediment and plants block the flow of water. It is a constant flow, however, as water is always emerging from the hill due to rain and, in the dry season, the watering of plants by the residents further up the hill.

The birds, of course, are keenly aware of this water source, artificial though it may be. But to a bird, water is water, and they all need it—to drink, bathe, and otherwise cool off from the hot days of summer.

My first day at the water hole, I was greeted by an Oak Titmouse standing in the stream, looking up at me. He took a few sips and then flew up into the trees. The Lesser Goldfinches were watching this, perched on various branches. Slowly but surely, they all crept down to the water, within eight feet of me. They drank, bathed, and otherwise cavorted in the stream, always ready to fly off at my slightest movement. The Song Sparrow joined them for a drink, and the shallow water barely covered his feet. It must have cooled him off nicely.

The next day, I was greeted by the Song Sparrow first, as if he had never left the water hole, and then I photographed the Lesser Goldfinch, which was belly-deep in a pool of water, tilting his head down from time to time for a sip. Suddenly, upstream, a California Towhee emerged from the brush and took some sips from the center of the gully. A naturally skittish bird, he didn't stay long in the open and he retreated into the bushes practically upon my glancing in his direction.

On Day Three, the Song Sparrow and Lesser Goldfinch greeted me again. I watched the Lesser Goldfinch eat some berries from a plant along the side of the stream. Then the bird dropped down to the wa-

ter for a sip, along with two other Lesser Goldfinches. The following day, after photographing the Song Sparrow in the water, a rare event occurred: a Black-headed Grosbeak flew to a nearby perch, and I snapped a few shots of this summer visitor.

After the grosbeak flew off, I watched one of the Lesser Goldfinches taking a bath in one of the deeper areas of the stream. First the head went into the water, shaking back and forth, and then the flight feathers and tail feathers went in, with more shaking back and forth. Water was flying everywhere, and then, just as suddenly as it had started, the bird came to a stand-still, immediately dry as the water just rolled off of its back, like on a duck. He just stood there, belly-deep in the water, looking up at me as if nothing had just happened—but that was one refreshed bird!

I couldn't make it back to the water hole for five days, but on August 17, I got a real treat as the Wrentit greeted me from his spot in the stream, in the dappled shade caused by the overhanging branches. A very wary bird is the Wrentit, but this fellow made a few visits down to the very same spot in the water, right in front of me. (Ironically, I captured the best image on my first attempt.)

Nearby, the Lesser Goldfinches were drinking away, and further upstream, I noticed a Scrub Jay bend his legs and stretch his neck into the gully for a sip, keeping his feet dry for some reason. (Maybe he thinks it's easier to escape that way.) The Song Sparrow made his obligatory visit, and the day was complete.

The following day, who was at the water hole but a group of Bushtits! A couple of these tiny birds took a bath side-by-side, and I got a good photo of one of their cousins observing them from a nearby perch on a branch above the stream. Soon, the Bushtits were "peeping" off into the scrub. The Lesser Goldfinch and Oak Titmouse also visited the waterhole that day, and I took photos of both of these species.

On my final day at the water hole that August, I photographed an American Robin by the side of the stream, as well as the Lesser Goldfinch drinking from the stream and a House Finch taking a bath.

So there you have it, life at the waterhole. I don't know who was more refreshed, the birds or me! ψ



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

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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 Rose Leibowitz at (818) 990-5405

or e-mail her at rose.leibowitz@sfvaudubon.org.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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the *Phainopepla*; I'll get my news online

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Descanso Bird Walks:	Karen Johnson	(818) 790-1687
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Youth Activities:	Muriel Kotin	(310) 457-5796

For Chapter leaders email addresse's, see our web site:

www.SFVAudubon.org **CHAPTER PHONE (818) 347-3205**



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Phainopepla

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society PO Box 7769 Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769

Dated Material

Please visit our website to see this issue in full color! www.sfvaudubon.org

Phainopepla December 2010



INSIDE THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

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.\psi

Joan Langa

Local:
Nina Carder
National:
Kristina Altmayer
William Ames
Annette Anderson
Gudrun Armanski
Mary Baisley
Louis Balicki
Greg Banstein
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