



# Phainopepla

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**San Fernando Valley Audubon Society**  
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For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife

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## General Membership Meetings

San Fernando Valley Arts & Cultural Center  
18312 Oxnard Street, Tarzana  
(818) 697-5525

For the foreseeable future, our General Membership Meetings have been placed on hold. We look forward to the day we can gather safely together and share our love of birds.

## BIRDATHON

There is still time to send in your pledges to our annual Birdathon.

DONATE online at  
[www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org)

It's FAST, SECURE, & EASY!

*Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (and our normal summer hiatus) there will be No General Membership Meetings in June, July, or August. Stay-tuned to our website, [www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org) for updates.*

## Letter from SFVAS President

*Dear Audubon Family*

I am sitting in my garden watching an Allen's Hummingbird zip into one of our feeders and wondering what are you seeing in your gardens and neighborhoods. Undoubtedly the pleasure of our sightings has given us a sense that at least here we have our quiet moment, our moment of wonder. These certainly are strange times and we all seek that sense of normalcy and hope. Today many parks and trails are opening. This indeed will allow us to enjoy birding in small groups.

As I look ahead to our events and walks I realize there is too much uncertainty to begin our regular planned activities. It saddens me that our annual Pot Luck at the San Fernando Valley Arts and Cultural Center cannot occur. I was really looking forward to singing, "We Are the Champions" by Queen!! I was looking forward to honoring our outgoing board member, Sharon Ford, the chairperson of our Outreach Committee, and welcoming in our new board members. I was looking forward to seeing all of you.

For now we will wait, seeing our friends and family at a distance. We can adjust however because the magic of birds has required us to be stealth, to use scopes and binoculars and our ears to really hear what is happening. We know how to demonstrate respect and honor nature. So really no matter what, even during difficult times, "We Are The Champions."

Be safe, be well, and happy birding.

*Paula Orlovich*



## BirdFest 2020

Sadly the 2020 BirdFest committee, in conjunction with the National Park Service, has decided that an in-person gathering in November will not be advisable. However plans are progressing to host an online equivalent that same weekend. More information will be coming and suggestions are welcome from members who have been dying to have some more online information. Feel free to contact Rose Leibowitz at [roselbirds@gmail.com](mailto:roselbirds@gmail.com).

## Nominating Committee

We are pleased to announce the new members of the SFVAS Board of Directors for our 2020-2021 year which begins on July 1, 2020. The election was held this year by mail-in ballot. Officers and directors who will continue their current term are indicated with <c> after their name. Those newly elected this May are indicated by \*.

### Officers (2-year terms):

- President: Paula Orlovich\*
- 1st VP: Teri Carnesciali \*
- 2nd VP: Marianne Davis \*
- Corresponding Secretary: Barbara Heidemann <c>
- Recording Secretary: Kathy Barton <c>
- Treasurer: Jim Houghton <c>

### Board Members at Large:

- 3rd Year Board: Alexander deBarros <c> and Benny Jacobs-Schwartz <c>
- 2nd Year Board: Richard Davis <c> and Rob Brown <c>
- 1st Year Board: Wendy Barsh\* and Marylou Hanna\* 🐦

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## Birdathon 2020 by Richard Davis

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A big "Thank you!" to all our Birdathon leaders who went out and independently recorded their sightings for the 2020 Birdathon. And thank you to all who have donated or made pledges to support our Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP). Please donate online at [www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org) or mail your donations to SFVAS, PO Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409. Our fundraising success will be reported in the next *Phainopepla*.



Here are the latest results:

- **High Desert Big Day (Jim Moore) Total Species: 70**
- **O'Melveny Park, (Carolyn Oppenheimer) Total Species: 39**
- **Hansen Dam, (Pat Bates) Total Species: 41**
- **Richard Barth, Total Species: 59**
- **Simi Hills/Santa Susana Mountains Big Day, (Mark Osokow) Total Species: 33**
- **Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Preserve, (Kris Ohlenkamp) Total Species: 62**
- **Malibu Creek State Park, (Kathy Barton & David Barton) Total Species: 39**
- **Allan & Muriel Kotin, 2020 Birdathon Lite Total Species: 39**
- **Lori Willis Memorial Fund (John and Andrew Willis) Total Species: 21**
- **Art Langton, Highway 33: Quest from the Ocean to the Mountains Total Species: 80**



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### A BIRDATHON IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Earlier in the birding year Richard Davis requested I do a birdathon along a route in Ventura County from the Pacific shore north along State Route 33 into the upper end of the Cuyama River. Since the asking, the COVID-19 virus has initiated drastic changes in most everyone's behaviors and attitudes reinforced by admonishments from our local and State leaders to use such common sense practices as staying at home, practicing social distancing and isolation, avoiding gatherings, washing hands frequently, wearing face masks, etc. As locally, county, city, and state parks were closed even the settling pond at the Ventura Water Treatment Plant. US Forest Service Recreational Areas (campgrounds and picnic area) were closed but trailheads were open. Therefore some good birding areas were off limits and out of reach while others remain available with few, if any, visitors social distancing at its best. If dog walking and sky watching are on the approved list for the homebound why not binocular walking and birdwatching?

Taking advantage of the late April end to the unseasonable gloom and dampness and keeping the restraints and restrictions in mind, I started off to see what birds might be found and how close I could come to reaching my published quota of 75 species. I started off at Ormond Beach, deserted except for an odd surfer and fisherman, and found a typical collection of common coastal and late wintering birds. Atypical was a cooperative Eastern Phoebe perched at the south end of Perkins Road.

Then north to La Canada Larga, a nice piece of open green grassland, attracting vultures, Blue Grosbeaks, a Lazuli Bunting, orioles, kingbirds, and a Roadrunner. More miles on brought me to a quick stop at Ojai Meadows for a mallard, Ruddy Duck and a late Golden-crowned Sparrow. In a birdathon, every bird counts, even the most ordinary and common. At Wheeler Gorge (or Springs on some maps) twenty-five more species were added including several flocks of Band-tailed Pigeons, numerous noisy Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Tanagers, Warbling Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Robin, a wood pewee, Steller's and Scrub Jays, and three warblers, Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, and Wilson's.

The area adjacent to Rose Valley Lakes and waterfall was badly burned in 2017 and the riparian vegetation as yet to recover sufficiently to again be a good birding location. Next on the itinerary, was the stop at Ozema Fire Station at the upper end of the Cuyama River. Not a lot of birds here but usually one or more good sightings if the past is a good prediction of the future. This year was no exception with Western Bluebirds, a Hermit Warbler the Myrtle variation of the Yellow-rumped Warbler, and two White-faced Ibis in an ephemeral pool in barley field. This left the grand total of the day at 80 species, several more than predicted. This is not a record of any sort but the number isn't as important as the time spent in the fresh air under blue skies and green trees, the recipe for the rejuvenation of the soul and spirit. This is why I bird and recommend it to all. One never knows what might be seen with a good look in the right place at the right time. -Art Langton



## Hansen Dam Birdathon

I did a lonely Hansen Dam birdathon birdwalk Sunday, April 24, 2020. It was relatively quiet—far fewer people along the trail than usual. The high points were a Western Tanager fly-by, many California Quail, Lawrence's Goldfinches, and Rock Wrens putting on a show. Recorded 41 species—more than usual—sometimes I think we chase them away by talking. I was there about four hours, LAPD chased me out finally. —Pat Bates



## Allan and Muriel Kotin's 2020 Birdathon Lite Or Birding in a Time of Disasters Sunday May 3 *(edited for space)*

**Background:** A Birdathon is a 24-hour search for as many species of birds as you can find and identify. Ours is dedicated to raising money for San Fernando Valley Audubon's Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP). Our 2020 Birdathon was necessarily quite different from all previous Kotin Birdathons. This one was our best attempt to make lemonade from our handful of lemons. For the past several years we have left our Malibu townhouse mid-morning on Day 1 and driven to favorite birding spots in Orange County. We would start the clock once we were ready to start the bird search, drive home in the dark, and resume birding the next morning in Los Angeles County until exactly 24 hours later. This was clearly not possible in April or early May 2020. Like everyone in California, we were under stay-at-home orders because of the often-lethal coronavirus, so we reduced our expectations for the number of bird species we would see from an ambitious 100 to 30 and our miles driven from well over 100 to 7.1. This is the story of a Birdathon under lockdown. Occurring a year and a quarter after the disastrous Woolsey Fire that destroyed many homes in the Malibu Park–Point Dume neighborhoods, it is also the story of destruction, survival, and rebuilding.

**Early Start:** Allan and I got a much earlier start than usual to have as successful an adapted Birdathon as possible. We had hoped to spot some birds as we ate a hasty breakfast, but we saw only two birds flying over the ocean that were probably gulls. It was a sunny, cool morning, with a partial, distant marine layer.

**On Our Way at 6:45AM:** At 6:50 we tallied bird **#1** when we heard the cooing of a **Mourning Dove**. Of course, we would see these doves many times later today. We drove to the Arizona crossing, where the road that connects Westward Beach Road to the Zuma Beach parking lot crosses Zuma Creek. (An Arizona crossing is a seasonally usable section of road crossing a creek that is designed to go under water and become impassable when water flow is high.) Near the very shallow water were a **Song Sparrow, #2, Dark-eyed Junco, #3,** and an **American Crow, #4**. After driving under PCH and now on Busch Drive, we saw our first mourning dove on one of their favorite places, a phone wire.

After driving higher up Busch, we spotted bird **#5**, a **California Towhee**, followed by the Pinecone Bird, which as many birders know, is a variant of the Lesser Leaf Bird. These uncountable “birds” were followed by species **#6**, the **European Starling**. We



*Mourning Dove On A Wire*

were also seeing more and more burned sites and rebuilding activity.

**7:00AM, Carole Hill's Garden:** Carole, good friend, SBEEP colleague and Malibu neighbor, was out to welcome us to her spacious garden, a bird haven. After a few minutes we started finding birds. First a **Northern Mockingbird, #7**, on a distant eucalyptus, then **California Scrub Jays, #8**, on one of Carole's trees. A tiny **Oak Titmouse, #9**, began to move around the tree, intrigued by Carole's bird feeder but intimidated by the much



larger jays. Seeing the Titmouse eating was an early highlight of the Birdathon which was to include other birds Allan photographed while they ate.



*Oak Titmouse Eating Bee*

A flash of golden-orange streaked by us from left to right. What?!? Eventually it moved again and landed where we could view it in our binoculars, revealing itself as a **Hooded Oriole, #10**. A **Cooper's Hawk, #11**, flew from distant tree to distant tree. A **Black Phoebe, #12**, landed briefly on a neighbor's dead tree and quickly sallied forth after what undoubtedly was a short-lived insect, before landing again on the same tree. **Northern Rough-winged Swallows, #13**, flew over the canyon below, chasing the insects they feed on. An **Allen's Hummingbird, #14**, hummed around the eucalyptus trees, while the screeching of **Nanday Parakeets, #15**, alerted us of their flying way overhead.

**Driving through Malibu Park:** We left Carole's at 7:40. At her suggestion we checked out her neighborhood, especially checking wires in the burned-out areas. Quickly we began finding **House Finches, #16**. We passed a yard that obviously houses a flock of chickens, as we heard a rooster crowing and hens going "buck-buck" or whatever it is they say, but we have some pride and did not tally the chickens. We found our first **Red-tailed Hawks, #17**, of the day. Stopping to take a scenic photo of the ocean we found our first **Acorn Woodpecker, #18**.



*Acorn Woodpecker*

Near the corner of Busch and Merrit we encountered **#19, Cedar Waxwings**. This may have been the first time Allan or I have seen these delightful small birds in Malibu. They were perched with more Acorn Woodpeckers in a huge California sycamore tree. These small, social birds have pointy crests on their heads and fly in close, tidy clusters. Sometimes one can see them perched in a large group, passing a berry from bird, to bird, to bird.

We saw a flock of swallows flying over a field. After getting out of the car for a closer look, we realized there were two species: **Violet-green Swallow, #20**, and **Cliff Swallow, #21**. Driving farther through the neighborhood, we found species **#22, Western Bluebirds**, the second of our "eating" birds.



*Western Bluebird with Yummy Bug*

**Bonsall Drive on Foot:** We parked the car on Bonsall near the Thorne Farm and walked to the locked entry to the lower Zuma Canyon trailhead. Bonsall has a diverse mix of suburban homes, elegant estates, horse properties, farms, an orchid nursery, fields, and chimneys missing their destroyed houses. Three **Red-crowned Parrots, #23**, flew overhead, distinguishable from the Nanday Parakeets by much shorter, blunt tails. A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher, #24**, perched on a low branch in an avocado tree between sallies to catch insects. **Lesser Goldfinches, #25**, landed in a jacaranda tree.



*Lesser Goldfinch*

A **Downey Woodpecker, #26**, appeared and a **House Wren, #27**, a truly tiny bird with a big voice, brought food to a nest in a tree hole. As we approached the locked gate at the end of

paving on Bonsall where the entrance to the Lower Zuma Canyon Trailhead begins, we started to hear clear birdsong tones rise and fall, over and over. We should have been able to identify it, but our memories and imaginations failed us. Finally, I got a quick glimpse of an orange bird with a black head: a male **Black-headed Grosbeak, #28**. It disappeared into the field next to the dirt road we couldn't enter, but we knew what species we had heard singing.



*Closed Gate and Where We Turned Back Toward Car*

As we walked to the car, we added **#29, a Common Raven**. It was soaring high in the sky. Allan took a photo of a male House Finch eating, our third and final photo of birds "chowing down."



*House Finch Eating Wild Oat Seeds*

**Home at 10:00AM:** We were happy to be home for a while after driving 7.1 miles and walking 1.0 miles. We relaxed and enjoyed a very early lunch.

**On Foot at 11:00AM:** We went for a walk from our home. As we headed down Zuma Bay Way, the main street of our townhome development, a **Western Gull, #30**, flew low enough overhead that we could positively I.D. its species. We didn't have to settle for "gull" or "seagull." When we got to the Y where the road merges with the road to the back gate of the adjacent mobile home park, we paused to look down at the beach and Zuma Lagoon. We found a **Great Egret, #31**, at the edge of the lagoon. It seemed to realize there were few or no

fish there and moved to the close side of the wetland, where it looked for land critters to dine on.



*Great Egret Looking for Lunch*

On the ocean edge of the beach were all three kinds of large sandpipers we had seen during the past week. Our bonanza included four **Whimbrels, #32**, a **Willet, #33**, and a **Marbled Godwit, #34**. We continued down Zuma Bay Way, to a favorite resting and lookout spot, where there is a tree stump where two can sit with a great view. There was a dad and daughter on the stump, so we looked down from a spot nearby. We didn't see anything new and walked toward the road when the dad called out: "Whales!!!" We turned back. There were at least two gray whales, maybe three, close to shore.

Around the time we stopped seeing whales, surfacing, spouting, diving and spy hopping, we were bemused to see a posse of seven mounted sheriff's deputies on the sand of Zuma Beach, heading toward Westward Beach. Apparently, they were part of the effort to keep people off the beach so that they wouldn't infect each other with the coronavirus.



*Part of the Posse, 2020 Style*

Back to birdwatching, we added **#35, Feral Rock Pigeon**, which were perched on the roof of the now closed restroom building. We eventually made our way to Westward Beach Road. We walked inland briefly and turned onto the little road linking to the Zuma Beach parking lot. This section still has water in it, in addition to a crow drinking, a **Mallard, #36**, snoozed on the



west bank. We turned around and headed back to Westward Beach Road, where we walked toward the beach. Looking up toward the Stump Lookout from Westward Beach Road an **Anna's Hummingbird, #37**, rested on a laurel sumac shrub. A



*Zuma Creek Looking Toward Lagoon and Ocean*

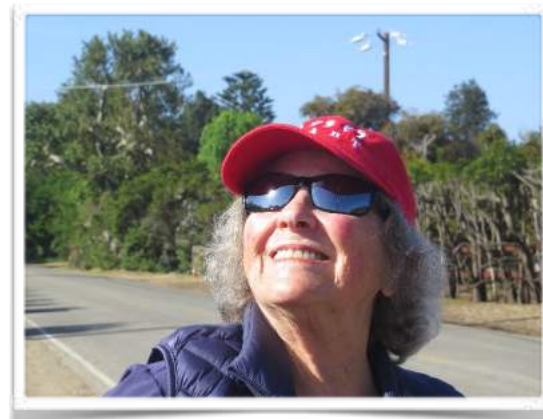
flock of eight **Brown Pelicans, #38**, flew up coast over the ocean in formation, escorted by two gulls. We walked downcoast along Westward Beach Road to its end, where the gate to the road leading to the parking near The Rock of Point Dume is kept permanently closed these days. We turned onto Birdview and then up the stairs leading up to our development. It's about a 130-foot elevation gain up to our town home, puff-puff. We got back home at 12:35PM, after walking 0.9 miles.

#### Epilogue:

We enjoyed our much more modest Birdathon than we had been doing. We were less exhausted, used much less gas, and were much more ecological. We found somewhat less than half the number of species of our earlier Birdathons. We suspect that next year we will do a slightly expanded version that includes more of Malibu. We hope we will be able to visit Malibu Lagoon and the start of the Zuma Canyon lower trail. May the coronavirus emergency be over by then and our abilities to handle the effort still intact.



*Allan Sighting Distant Gulls from the "Stump"*



*Muriel in the Morning Sun*

All photos taken by Allan on Birdathon day, except the Acorn Woodpecker taken earlier at Malibu Creek State Park and the photo of Allan taken on Muriel's phone. 🐦

# Calendar of Events

## June–July

At this time, all SF Valley Audubon walks and meetings have been cancelled for June and July.

If walks in July are made possible, they will be listed on our website.

Saturday, July 4. Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docents' Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Please call the Nature Center to confirm if walk will take place. 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. Various leaders. For more information, call the Nature Center at (661) 259-7721.

### A Great Season for Horned Owls - by Patricia Bates



Poppa

Great Horned Owls (GHOWs) are amazing creatures. These night-hunting apex predators have adapted to almost every nook and cranny of the N. American continent. They prey on just about anything that walks, crawls, or flies — as long as it isn't more than two or three times their size.

Woodley Park, home of the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, has large trees in a park setting, plus a zillion gophers, thus has at least one breeding pair per season. Nesting starts late in the year; because chicks grow large before going solo, it takes time and a lot of food to raise them. Most of the time it's fairly unusual to spot a GHOW sleeping the day shift, hidden high in a tree. But when raising two, three, or four babies to full size, it's harder for them to remain out of view — which is a boon for birders and photographers.



Snacking on a gopher



Momma

This season, mating started in November, and continued into February. (Even owls want to have a little fun before the hard work of parenting begins!) In February and March, they started hanging around the nest, and though the eggs and owlets weren't visible from the ground, it was clear they were present and viable. In early April, the first fuzzy little owlet heads started peeking over the top of the nest. By mid-April, four owlets were scooting around on the branches near the nest, occasionally climbing up and down to other branches. Four owlets is a bumper crop — Woodley Park had five a few years ago, but two of them died. By early May, owlets were showing up in nearby trees; often, they'd climb down one tree, walk over and climb up another. Eventually, they tried out their wings, flying from tree to tree but staying close to the parents, who were still feeding them. The owlets will wander further and further afield until around the end of June, when they'll finally head out on their own. (Since GHOWs will actually prey on their own kind, these kids are finished with home and their parents.)



Posing



Success!

Springtime visitors to the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve get to experience and enjoy the wonder of bird reproduction in many of its varied forms. There's something very special about the Great Horned Owls: unlike most nesting birds whose babies are up and out in almost no time, we get to watch owlets and cheer them on as they grow, develop personalities and hone their skills.



Do I know you?

The incredibly cute faces are a plus, too. Photos by Patricia Bates

## Audubon-at-Home by Alan Pollack

Email 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](mailto:alan.pollack@sfvaudubon.org).

## March / April Field Trip Reports by Richard Barth

Our Morro Bay Weekend on March 21-22 was cancelled due to COVID-19 suggested protocols.

The Morongo Valley field trip on April 25 was cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns (and the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve was closed to the public).

## Who does all that illustration stuff? by Marianne Davis



This past year you may have noticed that our fliers and materials have a new, artsy look. We asked WuChun Davis if she would do some drawing for our marketing efforts to make them more attractive, and she quickly agreed. Her drawings have graced our meeting fliers and some of our program materials and we're sure you would recognize some of them.

WuChun is a fine arts student who lives in Encino. She has studied at Otis, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is now taking local art classes and working. She prefers line drawing and fine techniques, and enjoys her assignments that pull together elements of nature into an attractive piece.

WuChun commented that drawing for SFVAS has added a new skill to her portfolio. Instead of her traditional approach, she uses digital tools to make the art. WuChun also enjoys learning about the birds she's assigned to illustrate. As for local birding, she likes the local mourning doves. "They are so gentle and always try to stay still and camouflage themselves, I wonder how they survive! They are so lovely to look at and listen to. It's like a meditation."



### Hope

Leave the light on  
For the moths to hover  
Fluttering wings against lampshades.

Leave the light on  
To keep the dark minds from wandering  
Comforted in anticipation of tomorrow

Let it burn warming  
A promise  
Of long walks next to earthy river  
The loons calling, as they slide across the water.

Paula Orlovich



## Spotted Sandpiper

Descanso Gardens

5/12/19

In my role as a Docent while chatting with a visitor at the Descanso Gardens Bird Observation Station I was distracted by a bird flying through my peripheral vision. I had my camera ready, as always, and photographed the bird while it briefly perched on a pipe rising from the lake. At close examination it was determined to be a Spotted Sandpiper (that's the name of the bird, not a comment that I "spotted" a Sandpiper). This species has been reported only twice before at the Gardens, each time in May. —*Dave Weeshoff*



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## Memorable Sightings at Lake Balboa

One of my favorite birding places in San Fernando Valley is Lake Balboa / Anthony C. Beilenson Park in Van Nuys. In the last 10 years, I've seen 80 different avian species at that location. I consider Lake Balboa one of the best places to watch and photograph Ospreys from a close distance. Besides Fish-hawks, I've also observed other raptors, including Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks; American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcons. The lake hosts numerous waterfowl species in the fall and winter, which is the best time to visit it.



Sabine's Gull



Brown Pelican

Among the most memorable birding encounters at the lake, I remember the excitement of seeing a young Sabine's Gull on October 8, 2010, and a rare appearance so far inland of a juvenile Brown Pelican on April 28, 2018. —*Alexander Viduetsky*

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*Below we are spotlighting some local students and the varied work they are doing.*

## Natalie Beckman-Smith



I'm a lifelong birder, and have recently joined SFVAS. I've loved everything nature related for as long as I can remember, although birds have always been my favorite. At CSUN I am getting my Bachelor's in ecological and evolutionary biology, and I hope to continue with it through graduate work. I'm doing specimen taxidermy with Dr. Jim Hogue and have prepared several bird mounts from parrots to partridges. I've just started learning bird banding from Mark Osokow at the SFV Bird Observatory, and help Carolyn Oppenheimer with Western Bluebird nest box management and surveying at the Sepulveda Basin. In the future, I am seeking a career that allows me to connect others with nature, whether that be as a researcher, teacher, park ranger, or museum curator. I enjoy teaching, and particularly introducing others to the joys of birdwatching. Urban naturalism is something that I'm really passionate about as someone born and raised here in the San Fernando Valley. I want to help Angelenos see the amazing biodiversity that is right outside their homes.

## Richard Rachman

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Our city is surrounded on all sides by towering mountains, and these are teeming with biodiversity and the noise of wildlife. As for me, my work as a vegetation field technician for the National Park Service and Mountain Restoration Trust continues. Much of our work is remote, and we spend very little time around people. My job is recording all the plants we find in our approximately 200 plots around the mountains. When I'm not keying plants out to figure out their species or hiking up strenuous hillsides filled with mustard and grasses, I'm listening to the sounds of birds. As a grad student, I like birding around our campus, watching the local Peregrine Falcon perched on top of our tallest building. I sit in the garden and listen to the male Allen's Hummingbird's fight each other for territory amongst the fairy duster flowers. There is a spot by one of the campus diners where I can watch families of residential, urban adapted Dark-eyed Juncos making defense calls as I walk by. Even at work I try to sneak my attention away for just a moment to be able to see what I can so loudly hear.

The loud call of our California Quail, followed by the fluttering of their flight to a spot nearby, and their noisy grumbling as they run to a new shrub, is one of my favorite parts of working in Southern California shrubland. The birds are the perfect combination of charismatic and adorable. I like thinking about how they disperse seeds and are a source of food for so many predators, birds-of-prey and mammals alike. I worked studying sage grouse for a summer in Northern California, and though I missed home tremendously, there's quail up north too, and if I didn't see a Greater Sage-Grouse flushing from a shrub, it was most likely a quail.

I am told by many it's healthy to get in touch with nature in these troubling times. I know I am. If I did not have work, plants, and nature, I would struggle to find other outlets. Just as the mountains are filled with wildlife, so too are the valleys and basins of Los Angeles County. I plan on continuing to contribute my faunal and floral finds of Los Angeles on iNaturalist and keep a distance of six feet or more from other folks. Let us find our peace, so that we may one day again grumble away with our flock, adventuring in the shrublands.

## Elliot Bloom

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I first became interested in birds on an undergraduate research trip to Amazonia through California State University, Northridge. The flycatchers were visually stunning and their diversity in South America is incredible, so I decided to explore character displacement (patterns of change in a species across its range) in some flycatcher species. The project was fun and got me hooked on studying birds. I wanted to continue studying character displacement and my master's advisor had an idea to investigate morphological displacement in South American penguins, so I took it. In addition to niche dynamics, the implications of morphology on ecology have become interesting to me. This influence of morphology on avian performance is very exciting and a key component of my thesis.

Penguins, in addition to other seabirds, on the Pacific coast of South America are facing a huge threat. Abundant fisheries operate in these waters and their consistent removal of fish potentially makes foraging more challenging for seabirds; my thesis should help address some of these concerns. Penguins are a popular representative of the avian community so fostering interest and support for bird conservation and their habitat will be more successful by furthering topics on these flightless seabirds. 🐧



## SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

|                                 |                   |                |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| President:                      | Paula Orlovich    | (818) 481-5605 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President: | Teri Carnesciali  | (818) 892-5029 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President: | Marianne Davis    | (310) 529-8871 |
| Treasurer:                      | Jim Houghton      | (818) 388-7207 |
| Corresponding Secretary:        | Barbara Heidemann | unpublished    |
| Recording Secretary:            | Kathy Barton      | (818) 929-2516 |

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| Benny Jacobs-Schwartz | (818) 939-9913 |
| Alexander deBarros    | (818) 919-3425 |
| Rob Brown             | (818) 616-3071 |
| Richard Davis         | (310) 529-8865 |

### STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

|                             |                     |                |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Bird Boxes:                 | Carolyn Oppenheimer | (818) 885-7493 |
| Bird Observatory:           | Mark Osokow         | unpublished    |
| Conservation:               | Dave Weeshoff       | (818) 618-1652 |
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| Birdathon:                   | Richard Davis       | (310) 529-8865 |
| Christmas Bird Count:        | Alexander deBarros  | (818) 919-3425 |
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| Conservation Banquet:        | OPEN                |                |
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For Chapter leaders' e-mail addresses, see our website:

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The *PHAINOPEPLA*, published six times a year, is the newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409. 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, ecology, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for publication in the *PHAINOPEPLA*.

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

**Membership to National Audubon is separate and can be initiated on the website [www.Audubon.org](http://www.Audubon.org).**

If you have any questions about membership, renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Lynn Maddox at (818) 845-4688 or e-mail her at [Lynn.Maddox@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:Lynn.Maddox@sfvaudubon.org).

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## Phainopepla

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### *Conservation Corner* by Dave Weeshoff, Conservation Chair

*I*t's been two months since I last penned (keyed?) this bi-monthly missive, and obviously the changes have been cataclysmic (or add your own adjective here). So, how are things in the global Conservation community?

First, if we were ever destined to see a pandemic which forces us to shelter in place and social distance, as now, we are fortunate to have the established, high-speed Internet infrastructure and our personal investments (PCs, iPads, smartphones) to allow us to communicate as individuals and among groups so easily through Zoom, Meetup, YouTube, etc. Many conservation organizations (including SFVAS) can still be quite productive in both organizational administration and in meeting their Mission Statement goals. Many NGOs and politicians are reaching out to their members with educational programs, event (electronic) organizing, advocacy, Town Hall meetings, etc., knowing that their constituency is somewhat comfortable with the electronic media and not dissuaded by technology. They are also reaching out to the children of their members with science education, travelogues, natural history programs, handicraft activities, etc. to supplement distance learning for school children. Certainly there are many disadvantaged socio-economic groups without Internet access, and that problem must be addressed.

Parenthetically, the truly amazing scientific content of the Internet allows our curiosity to be satisfied simply by following the leads, prompts, and links. Start with a simple question (e.g., why do birds have feathers?), then follow the links to ideas and facts beyond your imagination. We are a species with innate curiosity – follow your passion (in this case, of course, is birds).

Second, we are seeing the acceleration of “below the radar” activity among those who have less respect for our environment and the other species that occupy planet Earth. Oil companies, plastic manufacturers, some government regulators, etc. seem to be taking advantage of our focus on COVID-19 to bypass inspections, encourage regulation exceptions, ignore enforcement, reduce opportunities for community participation, reverse prior commitments, and disregard scientific evidence to advance their causes. We must (and will) continue to be actively vigilant and speak out where environmental protections are under threat, from whatever direction.

Third, of course, we must reach out in gratitude to our family, friends, neighbors, those who are struggling for any reason, and our First Responders (in the broadest definition of the term). We are all in this together, for certain.

And, finally, I wish you a happy belated Earth Day. If you didn't already, raise a glass to Mother Earth—she controls our destiny, and we now are in the position to control hers—for better or worse.

As usual, please call me at (818) 618-1652 or email [Dave.weeshoff@SFVAudubon.org](mailto:Dave.weeshoff@SFVAudubon.org) with questions, comments, criticism, or to enlist in our conservation activities on behalf of our feathered friends.