



# Phainopepla

Published by the  
**San Fernando Valley Audubon Society**  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society  
For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife

Vol. 72 No. 1

February / March 2021

## General Membership Meetings: — Zoom Presentations —

### General Membership Meetings

For the foreseeable future, our in-person General Membership Meetings have been placed on hold. Please join us for our online presentations from the comfort of your home!

We look forward to the day we can gather safely together and share our love of birds.

Become a **NEW** member  
Your first year is **FREE!**  
Go to [SFVAudubon.org](http://SFVAudubon.org)

*Birdathon is Coming!*

Stay-tuned to the next issue for ways to get involved and support our educational activities.

**Thursday, February 25, 2021**

**5:00—6:00 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Freya McGregor**

Freya McGregor is the Birdability Coordinator, and has been birding since she was old enough to be told where to look by her birder parents back in Australia. Now an Occupational Therapist, her professional background is in blindness and low vision services. She is passionate about enabling all birders and potential future birders to enjoy birding and nature as much as she does, and works for [Birdability](#) to make this a reality for birders who experience access challenges as a result of a disability or other health concern. She also works part time as the Outreach Coordinator for the radio show and podcast [Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds](#), which is about birds and conservation. You can follow her on Instagram [@the.ot.birder](#). Please [click here](#) to register.



**Thursday, March 18, 2021 (Note: Third Thursday of the month)**

**5:00—6:00 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Kelsey McCune**

Kelsey McCune completed her PhD in animal behavior from the University of Washington in 2018. Her dissertation compared asocial California Scrub-Jays and social Mexican Jays on social behavior, learning ability, and personality traits. Her research discovered the presence of social learning in both the social and asocial species, that only Mexican Jays group by boldness, and that jays in the wild are better problem-solvers than jays held in captivity. Currently, Kelsey is a postdoctoral scholar at UCSB and part of the Grackle Project research group started by Dr. Corina Logan. This project compares multiple populations of grackles across their range to quantify the behavioral and physiological traits related to invasion success. Please [click here](#) to register.



Photo: Great-tailed Grackle, by Dr. Corina Logan



Audubon Family,

I am looking forward in thoughts and spirits to the New Year. This year has been challenging for everyone and while I cannot speak for each of our member's challenges and losses, I would like to highlight the work we have accomplished as an organization as we have continued to represent our members.

Even as our board grappled with the logistics, technology, and setbacks that we encountered, we have persevered to accomplish set goals and objectives. This has been a time of paradox as certain projects had to be reimagined and executed quickly, other projects have emerged requiring careful consideration, insight, and planning.

Establishing programming for our members in a virtual manner had to be accomplished quickly. To accomplish this goal we reached out to other local chapters in order to establish a pool of speakers that could be shared. Our Programs Chair Joanne Millius was able to establish a schedule of speakers with the help of our entire board who have constantly made suggestions and taken the lead. Everyone knows at this point how important the tech capacities of Zoom are now and Richard Davis has come through as our expert setting up the programs and notifying our members as well as other chapters who have joined up on our collaboration.

Our chapter was able to fund educational programming and materials to students by October, which is our regular Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Programs launch month. Our partnership with the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains took on a new importance as Kelly Kazmirchuk created, with her team, online learning for those teachers who have participated in our field trips to the Wildlife Reserve in the past. During this school year there have been 1,222 student contacts on Zoom with 36 teachers signed up and participating. The launch of this program has been very successful all due to Kelly's ingenuity, knowledge, and leadership skills as well as her commitment to students, teachers and her team at RCD. SFVAS funded the Placed Based Journals and supplies that were delivered to the school sites and the teachers are using the materials along with the added option of two in person RCD educators teaching the lessons.

This year of disruption has given us incentive to reflect on our mission and our outreach to our members and our community. A recommitment to provide equity, diversity and equal access to our members has been a topic of discussion and ongoing work. A year of free membership to the chapter has provided greater access to the community to our programming. As we move forward SFVAS will be improving our outreach. As we proceed we will reach out to our members in a poll that will provide us with the information we need so that we can best serve our members.

Muriel Kotin, as chair of the Post Fire Committee, is leading our Sepulveda Basin conservation work. She has been working with many organizations including the California Native Plant Society, Friends of the Los Angeles River, Rec and leading its post fire committee. Together they are working on a recovery plan that will include improving the habitat and pathways in the Wildlife Reserve. SFVAS will work to provide better access there for those in our community who have physical challenges that may interfere with their ability to enjoy wildlife, a concept called 'Birdability,' that is gaining traction.

I would like to thank everyone on our board that has worked so hard in committees and individually on behalf of the chapter. I would also like to thank our members for their support. On behalf of SFVAS I wish everyone a healthy and happy New Year.

*Paula Orlovich*

President SFVAS

## 2020 Christmas Bird Count *By Alexander DeBarros*

Another CBC has come and gone. This year presented special challenges that we have never experienced before and hopefully never will again. The CBC was conducted in the midst of a deadly pandemic that had already infected over 80,000,000 people worldwide (over 20,800,000 in the US, and 1,300,000 in California) and killed over 1,500,000 worldwide (over 350,000 in the US and 19,000 in California). In addition, the Sepulveda Basin, which has historically been our best spot, was hit with a series of fires that destroyed nearly all the natural area in the basin, including much of what had already burned down last year. We also faced the unusual situation of having absolutely no rain before count day. While it rarely rains around here anyway, we can usually expect at least one storm before mid December, but this year there was nothing until Christmas Eve, nearly a week after count day. The lack of rain resulted in several lakes and streams being completely dry on count day, costing us the hundreds of waterbirds that are usually seen there. Despite all this, we managed to get out birding anyway, with surprisingly good results. On December 19, 2020, 54 counters covered 86 locations, totaling 140 species and 16,661 individuals. For reference, last year's totals were 133 species and 18,922 individuals, and we've been averaging 129 species and 15,611 individuals over the last 20 years.

The rules of National Audubon allow us to note species seen during count week, the three days before and after count day. Thanks to our counters and eBird reports made by others who did not participate in the count, we added five additional species during count week, bringing our total for the week to 145 species, our highest count week total ever.

The primary objective of the Christmas Bird Count is to assess the health of the bird population by comparing the total number of individuals of all species seen in a count circle with earlier counts, as well as comparing the total number of species seen with past years. This is National Audubon's 121<sup>st</sup> CBC, and since our count began in 1957, our 64<sup>th</sup>.



Vermilion Flycatcher,  
Eden Memorial Park, By Ryan Spiro

There were some highlights, including:

- A **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, seen by Brian Bielfelt at Hansen Dam. Native to India and subtropical Africa, it has been widely introduced in cities throughout the Middle East, Europe, and the Caribbean, as well as Florida, Hawaii, Bakersfield, and Los Angeles. The L.A. population is centered in Marina Del Rey, so sightings away from there are of questionable origin. While there is no way to know for certain if this bird is an escaped pet or a vagrant from the Marina Del Rey population, it is most likely an escapee.
- Two **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** seen together, also by Brian Bielfelt at Hansen Dam. This species breeds throughout the county, but normally winters on the west coast of Mexico. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> count day record, with the 1<sup>st</sup> being a single bird photographed at Hansen Dam last year. This seemingly increasing trend is likely a result of climate change, with the area becoming warm enough to support Pac-slopes year-round.
- One **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** photographed by Kris Ohlenkamp at the Sepulveda Basin. This species is normally found from the Amazon Rainforest to tropical forests in southern Mexico, with one highly migratory subspecies breeding into southeastern Arizona and occasionally wintering in coastal California. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> count day record, having previously been seen in 2017.
- One **Clay-colored Sparrow** photographed by Rebecca Marschall at Sheldon-Arleta Park. This highly migratory species is normally found in the Great Plains, but a few stray into California, some with remarkable consistency (one has been reported at Madrona Marsh every year since 2012). This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> count day record,

having previously been seen in 2000 and 2007.

- One **White-throated Sparrow** found by Daniel Tinoco in his yard. This species is normally found east of the Rocky Mountains, but a few manage to stray into California every year. This is the 12<sup>th</sup> count day record, and the first since 2015. Rebecca Marschall found another one in her yard during count week, but unfortunately it decided to take count day off.
- A flock of 45 **Horned Larks**, found by Brian Bielfelt at Hansen Dam. This grassland species is very common in the Antelope Valley, and was once widespread in the San Fernando Valley as well, having been recorded on 28 previous counts, including our first CBC. However, as the San Fernando Valley transitioned from an agricultural area to a suburban one, their population declined to almost nothing, with a few eBird records coming most years from the few flat, open areas left, like Hansen Dam and the Hjelte Sports Center at Sepulveda. This is the first CBC record since 1997 (and for a sense of how long ago that was, I was born in 1998).

Other uncommon bird sightings include:

- One **Northern Pintail** seen in the L.A. River at the Sepulveda Basin. This species has been recorded on 43 counts, but only four since 2000.
- Sixteen **Eared Grebes**, 15 seen at the Encino Reservoir and one at the Sepulveda Basin. This species is usually seen in small numbers, and has been recorded on all but 11 counts, but hasn't been seen on count day since 2016.
- One **Virginia Rail**, seen at Hansen Dam. This highly reclusive marsh bird winters here annually, but it is often overlooked because it rarely appears out in the open. This is the 17<sup>th</sup> record, and the second year in a row it has been found at Hansen Dam.
- Two **Sora**, also seen at Hansen Dam. This close relative of the Virginia Rail largely shares its lifestyle, but is not quite as reclusive. This is the 28<sup>th</sup> record, the second year in a row it has been found at Hansen Dam, and the first time that more than one has been seen since 2010.



Spotted Towhee, 12/19/20, Mulholland Gateway  
Park, by R. LeVine

- One **Western Sandpiper** seen in the L.A. River at the Sepulveda Basin. This species has been recorded on 41 counts, but this is the first since 2013 (although it was recorded during count week in 2018).
- Two **Hairy Woodpeckers**, seen at Hansen Dam. It has been recorded on 14 counts, but only three since 1996. This species is usually found in high mountains, so these birds may be refugees from the Bobcat Fire, which burned almost 116,000 acres in the Angeles National Forest in September and October.
- Three **Nanday Parakeets**, one seen on Mulholland Dr. above the Encino Reservoir and two seen at Caballero Canyon. This species is native to Paraguay and the adjacent parts of Brazil, and has been introduced in Buenos Aires, Florida, Phoenix, and Los Angeles. The L.A. population is centered in the western Santa Monica Mountains, and just barely extends into our count circle. They were first counted in 2010, and have now been recorded six times.
- One **Plumbeous Vireo** was seen at Valley Plaza Park during count week. This species winters here in small numbers, and has been recorded on count day nine times (including last year). This is the 4<sup>th</sup> time it has been recorded during count week.
- One **Violet-green Swallow**, seen at the Sepulveda Basin. This species breeds in the local mountains, and a few stick around all year. This is the 17<sup>th</sup> record, and the first since 2014.
- Ten **Mountain Chickadees** were seen at Veteran's Memorial Park. Like the Hairy Woodpecker, this species is normally found in high mountains and conifer forests, but descends to our altitude every few years, and it has been recorded on 33 counts.
- Three **Marsh Wrens** were seen at the Encino Reservoir. This species prefers undisturbed areas near water, which are few and far between in the Valley. It has been recorded on 37 counts, but this is the highest of only three records since 2010.
- Twenty **Pine Siskins** were seen across five locations. In winter, this species becomes highly nomadic, moving around based on the available food, but it usually prefers high mountains. This is the 24<sup>th</sup> record, and the highest count since 1994.
- Four **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were seen at Wilson Canyon Rd. This California endemic breeds in the area, but becomes nomadic during the winter, much like the Pine Siskin. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> record, and the first since 2014.



Nanday Parakeets, 12/19/20, Caballero Canyon  
by R. LeVine

Unfortunately, many of our waterbirds have declined or disappeared. None of the following six species have been seen for some time now.

- **Blue-winged Teal**, seen on 14 previous counts, but only once since 1996.
- **Cinnamon Teal**, seen on 35 previous counts, but not on count day since 2011, although it was recorded during count week two years ago.
- **Canvasback**, seen on 51 previous counts, but not on count day since 2013. It was recorded in count week in 2016.
- **Common Merganser**, seen on 27 previous counts, but not since 2011.
- **Horned Grebe**, seen on 21 previous counts, but only five times in the last 30 years.
- **Long-billed Dowitcher**, seen on 30 previous counts, but only once in the last 15 years.



? Duck!, 12/19/20, Reseda Park, by Pat Bates

Also missing is:

- **Spotted Dove**, seen on 43 previous counts, but not since 2002. Predation from Cooper's Hawks and competition from Eurasian Collared-Doves are likely responsible for their disappearance. However, they were an invasive species to begin with, so this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

This year, we missed a few species that have been seen regularly for years. Many of this year's misses appear to be a direct result of the lack of rain before count day.

- **Cackling Goose**, seen annually from 2005 (when it was split from Canada Goose) to 2014, as well as 2016 and 2018 but not since then.
- **Wood Duck**, seen on 38 previous counts, but only once in the last five years.
- **Clark's Grebe**, seen on eight previous counts (although it wasn't split from Western Grebe until 1986), but not since 2018.
- **Herring Gull**, seen on 12 previous counts, but not since 2016.
- **Glaucous-winged Gull**, seen on 11 previous counts, including a record high last year.
- **Osprey**, seen on 26 previous counts, and annually since 2001. However, one was seen at Sepulveda on the last day of count week.
- **Barn Owl**, seen on 18 previous counts, including the last two years, but it was only seen during count week this year. Because it is a nocturnal species with a relatively low population density, it is undercounted.
- **Peregrine Falcon**, seen on 25 previous counts, including a record high last year, but it was only found in count week this year. This is the first time it hasn't been seen on count day since 1997.
- **Red-crowned Parrot**, seen on nine previous counts, including the last two years and a record high last year. This species is native to eastern Mexico, and has become established in the San Gabriel Valley, Glendale, and Burbank, with occasional sightings just barely extending into our count circle.
- **Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)**, seen on 24 previous counts, but not for the last two years.

Significant declines were noted among Domestic Goose sp., Muscovy Duck, American Wigeon, Mallard, Band-tailed Pigeon, American Coot, Least Sandpiper, Double-crested Cormorant, Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Vesper Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Brewer's Blackbird, and Great-tailed Grackle.

Loggerhead Shrike numbers remain low. Five were seen this count, about the same as the last few years. Seventy were counted in 2000, but they have only been seen in single digits since then. This species requires open grassland to hunt, so it's usually just seen at the Chatsworth Reservoir, and occasionally in the Santa Susana Mountains. This year's sightings were more spread out than usual, with sightings at Chatsworth Reservoir, Hansen Dam, and Sheldon-Arleta Park.

Vermilion Flycatcher numbers continue to increase. Three were seen on count day (a record high), with three more seen during count week. This largely tropical species has been recorded on our CBC since 1973, and almost continuously since 2017. Many birds are now resident and breeding throughout the rest of L.A. County, with large concentrations in the San Gabriel and Antelope Valleys. Their increasing population is likely an effect of climate change, with L.A. now being warm enough to sustain them.

While many species have declined, some have soared to exceptional numbers. This year's winner for the highest count was Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) with 1910 individuals. Honorable mention goes to American Coot (1303), Canada Goose (970), White-crowned Sparrow (905), House Finch (724), Rock Pigeon (686), Mourning Dove (657), European Starling (570), American Crow (562), and Lesser Goldfinch (537).



Mallards in love, 12/19/20, Reseda Park, by Pat Bates

Record highs were achieved by Eurasian Collared Dove, Gray Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Phainopepla, Lesser Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle).

We didn't lose any of the 34 species that have been recorded on all 64 counts. These include Canada Goose, American Wigeon, Mallard, Pied-billed Grebe, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, California Scrub-Jay, American Crow, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Mockingbird, American Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Spotted Towhee, California Towhee, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.



Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's), 12/19/20, Caballero Canyon, by R. LeVine

We managed to find two species that have never been recorded on our CBC before, bringing the total number of species recorded across all our CBCs to 255 species, plus two count week only, three probable escapees, 17 other taxa, and five questionable reports.

- One **Brewer's Sparrow** was found by Brian Bielfelt on Wilson Canyon Rd. This species breeds in the San Gabriel Mountains, and a few stick around all year. It was recorded in count week in 2014, but this is the first count day record.
- The escaped **Rose-ringed Parakeet** seen at Hansen Dam.



2020 CBC Counters (l-r), Richard Rachman, Natalie Beckman-Smith, & Sepanta Jafari Jozani, CSUN

Hansen Dam won the award for the most species, and Sepulveda Basin won the award for the most individuals. Brian

Bielfelt counted 83 species with 1439 individuals at Hansen Dam, and Kris Ohlenkamp counted 69 species with 2837 individuals at Sepulveda. Once again, the Department of Water & Power granted us access to count at the Chatsworth Nature Preserve. Art Langton and Mark Osokow counted 49 species with 1128 individuals.

Twelve locations reported a total of 28 unique species, reminding us of the importance of counting every location.

Special thanks to all 2020 count participants, who counted birds despite this year's hardships.

Rick Aglietti via eBird  
 Dick Avery (L)  
 Pat Avery (L)  
 Gee Gee Barden (F)  
 Dick Barth (L) (W)  
 David Barton (L) (W)  
 Kathy Barton (L) (W)  
 Pat Bates (L)  
 Jack Beckman-Smith  
 Natalie Beckman-Smith (L)  
 Luisa Bergeron  
 Brian Bielfelt (L)  
 Carla Breitner (F)  
 Rob Brown (L)  
 Theresa Butcher via eBird (F)

Teri Carnesciali  
 Dan Cooper (L)  
 Alexander deBarros (C) (L) (W)  
 Taylor Driggs (L)  
 Lynda Fenneman (F)  
 Ezra Garfield via eBird  
 Roz Gibson  
 Wendy Gladstone  
 Emma Hanna (L)  
 Marylou Hanna (L)  
 Jolene Herz (L)  
 Kathleen Hood  
 Jim Houghton (L)  
 Judy Howell  
 Benny Jacobs-Schwartz (L)

Sepanta Jafari Jozani  
 Nurit Katz (L)  
 Muriel Kotin (L)  
 Art Langton (L)  
 Abby Larson (F)  
 Rose Leibowitz (L)  
 Rebecca LeVine (L)  
 John Lobel  
 Scott Logan (L)  
 Rebecca Marschall (L) (W)  
 Heather Medvitz (L)  
 Dick Norton (L)  
 Kris Ohlenkamp (L)  
 Carolyn Oppenheimer (L)  
 Paula Orlovich

Mark Osokow (L)  
 Laura Pogoler  
 Richard Rachman  
 Judy Rothman (F)  
 Brad Rumble via eBird (W)  
 Dolores Ruzicka  
 Eric Shaphran  
 Robin Share (L)  
 Sharon Shingai  
 James Smith  
 Kim Tenggardjaja via eBird (W)  
 Donna Timlin  
 Daniel Tinoco (L)  
 Pat Turner (F)

- (C): CBC Compiler, organized the entire count  
 (L): Lead a team in the field on count day  
 (F): Counted birds at their feeder or yard on count day  
 (W): Reported species on eBird during count week that weren't seen on count day
- via eBird: did not join an official team, but reported species on eBird on count day
  - by Alexander deBarros, San Fernando Valley CBC Compiler

**SFVAS: CBC Record Holder**

A summary by National Audubon of the all-time highest counts of individual species, on United States Christmas Bird Counts #1-120, lists San Fernando Valley Audubon as the record holder for House Finch. A total of 21,621 were counted during the 67th CBC. –Submitted by Art Langton

Unique Birds Seen	Location	Sector Leader
Snow Goose	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Ross's Goose	L.A. River: Owensmouth to Vanalden	Benny Jacobs-Schwartz
Mute Swan	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Northern Pintail	L.A. River: Sepulveda Basin	eBird report on count day
Lesser Scaup	Encino Reservoir	Dan Cooper
Western Grebe	Encino Reservoir	Dan Cooper
Band-tailed Pigeon	Mulholland Dr. above Encino	Dan Cooper
Greater Roadrunner	Chatsworth Reservoir	Art Langton and Mark Osokow
Virginia Rail	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Sora	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Western Sandpiper	L.A. River: Sepulveda Basin	eBird report on count day
Green Heron	Sepulveda Basin	eBird report on count day
Red-Naped Sapsucker	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Hairy Woodpecker	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Horned Lark	Hansen Dam	Brian Bielfelt
Mountain Chickadee	Veteran's Memorial Park	Scott Logan
Violet-green Swallow	L.A. River: Sepulveda Basin	eBird report on count day
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Dearborn Park	Rebecca Marschall
Marsh Wren	Encino Reservoir	Dan Cooper
Lawrence's Goldfinch	Wilson Canyon Road	Brian Bielfelt
Clay-colored Sparrow	Sheldon-Aleta Park	Rebecca Marschall
Brewer's Sparrow	Wilson Canyon Road	Brian Bielfelt
White-throated Sparrow	Daniel Tinoco's yard	Daniel Tinoco
Vesper Sparrow	Chatsworth Reservoir	Art Langton and Mark Osokow
Great-tailed Grackle	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp

## 2020 Christmas Bird Count Summary

1	Snow Goose	5	Green Heron	23	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
1	Ross' Goose	7	Black-crowned Night-Heron	116	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
cw	Greater White-fronted Goose	60	Turkey Vulture	67	Wrentit
51	<i>Domestic Goose species</i>	cw	Osprey	116	Western Bluebird
970	Canada Goose	2	Northern Harrier	32	Hermit Thrush
2	Mute Swan	5	Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	American Robin
19	Egyptian Goose	15	Cooper's Hawk	17	California Thrasher
6	Muscovy Duck	2	<i>Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk</i>	85	Northern Mockingbird
44	Northern Shoveler	5	Red-shouldered Hawk	570	European Starling
13	Gadwall	91	Red-tailed Hawk	264	American Pipit
367	American Wigeon	cw	Barn Owl	170	Cedar Waxwing
359	Mallard	5	Great Horned Owl	8	Phainopepla
62	<i>Domestic Mallard</i>	6	Belted Kingfisher	724	House Finch
1	Northern Pintail	1	Red-naped Sapsucker	11	Purple Finch
61	Green-winged Teal	8	Red-breasted Sapsucker	20	Pine Siskin
5	Redhead	71	Acorn Woodpecker	537	Lesser Goldfinch
125	Ring-necked Duck	4	Downy Woodpecker	4	Lawrence's Goldfinch
26	Lesser Scaup	31	Nuttall's Woodpecker	160	American Goldfinch
25	Bufflehead	2	Hairy Woodpecker	146	Chipping Sparrow
9	Hooded Merganser	43	Northern Flicker (red-shafted)	1	Clay-colored Sparrow
121	Ruddy Duck	13	American Kestrel	1	Brewer's Sparrow
109	California Quail	2	Merlin	318	Lark Sparrow
55	Pied-billed Grebe	cw	Peregrine Falcon	19	Fox Sparrow
16	Eared Grebe	1	Rose-ringed Parakeet	284	Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)
6	Western Grebe	8	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet	905	White-crowned Sparrow
686	Rock Pigeon	3	Nanday Parakeet	26	Golden-crowned Sparrow
1	Band-tailed Pigeon	2	Gray Flycatcher	1	White-throated Sparrow
105	Eurasian Collared-Dove	2	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	1	Vesper Sparrow
657	Mourning Dove	265	Black Phoebe	162	Savannah Sparrow
3	Greater Roadrunner	59	Say's Phoebe	47	Song Sparrow
148	White-throated Swift	3	Vermilion Flycatcher	10	Lincoln's Sparrow
119	Anna's Hummingbird	1	Dusky-capped Flycatcher	235	California Towhee
66	Allen's Hummingbird	69	Cassin's Kingbird	22	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
31	<i>Hummingbird species</i>	5	Loggerhead Shrike	57	Spotted Towhee
1	Virginia Rail	6	Hutton's Vireo	2	<i>Sparrow species</i>
2	Sora	cw	Plumbeous Vireo	322	Western Meadowlark
1303	American Coot	173	California Scrub-Jay	11	Red-winged Blackbird
2	Black-necked Stilt	562	American Crow	7	Brown-headed Cowbird
112	Killdeer	241	Common Raven	22	Brewer's Blackbird
16	Least Sandpiper	45	Horned Lark	5	Great-tailed Grackle
1	Western Sandpiper	7	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	11	Orange-crowned Warbler
4	Wilson's Snipe	13	Tree Swallow	32	Common Yellowthroat
6	Spotted Sandpiper	1	Violet-green Swallow	1910	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)
2	Greater Yellowlegs	10	Mountain Chickadee	8	<i>Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)</i>
42	Ring-billed Gull	33	Oak Titmouse	17	Townsend's Warbler
232	Western Gull	416	Bushtit	4	<i>Warbler species</i>
162	California Gull	4	Red-breasted Nuthatch	378	House Sparrow
8	<i>Gull species</i>	7	White-breasted Nuthatch	cw	<i>Passerine species</i>
91	Double-crested Cormorant	4	Rock Wren	140	<b>Total Species (Count Day)</b>
102	American White Pelican	2	Canyon Wren	149	<b>Total Species + other taxa</b>
11	Great Blue Heron	4	House Wren	145	<b>Total Species + count week</b>
18	Great Egret	3	Marsh Wren	153	<b>Species + other taxa + count week</b>
12	Snowy Egret	44	Bewick's Wren	16661	<b>Individuals (species + other taxa)</b>

## A New Year's (Bird) Resolution

Written by Marianne Davis - December 15, 2020

Illustration by Wuchun Davis

As we look forward to this New Year that promises so much good news, I can't help but think about the wildlife around us who are part of our world. They don't make resolutions, they don't celebrate holidays, but they work hard 24/7 to stay alive and follow instincts that have been part of nature for ages. 2020 was a year full of setbacks for them, and as part of their community we can help turn things around and avoid extinction events.



Lesser Goldfinches at a Nyger-seed feeder

**Birds Need Help.** They need three basic things: food, shelter, and water. If you can feed the birds you bring fantastic entertainment to your yard or balcony, and just include some fresh water and you've got a magnet that they will find irresistible. Shelter is harder, but if you put in the right plants, you've done it. If you need help with what to feed, contact [www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org) and we'll give you some suggestions. (Look under "Resources," then "Backward Bird Identification" and you'll find menus for feeding, feeders, and seed.)

Bushtits in the bushes

**Plants: What you plant MATTERS.** Plants that are native support our local wildlife by providing food sources that have evolved with them. If you plant something from another continent or country, it may not provide any food, and your birds may choose not to shelter there. Mother birds are known to choose trees to nest in that provide lots of baby bird food right outside the door. No bugs, no food, and birds won't bother. Need help? Go to [www.calscape.org](http://www.calscape.org) for good ideas. Your local California Native Plant Society has regular sales, and there are nurseries like the Theodor Payne Foundation that specialize in natives. On the other hand, if you can't plant natives, all plants attract insects and provide shelter. Go for it!



Monarch taking a sip

**Avoid Pesticides and Herbicides.** Studies have found that bees, butterflies and many other essential insect workers are extremely sensitive to these poisons. We grew up using them, but it's time to reconsider. The Monarch butterfly is on the verge of collapse, and bees are still in trouble. Without bees our own food chain will fail as well as Nature's, so we must get serious about this one. As rodenticides have been outlawed starting in 2021, we can look forward to healthier populations of hawks, owls, and less danger of poisoning our own pets and children.

As a young Californian, I remember masses of butterflies, birds, and bees in our neighborhoods. Now it's time to rejoice if we see ONE nice butterfly or a new bird. If we take a few steps, we can turn it around. Let's work together to restore our properties so that people, wildlife, and ecosystems can live together and thrive. Here's to a Happy New Year filled with enjoying Nature! 🐦



## Calendar of Events

### February—March 2021

**Friday, February 12—Monday, February 15. Great Backyard Bird Count.** Join in counting the birds you see for as little as 15 minutes, in your neighborhood or anywhere in the world! Submit your sightings to <http://birdcount.org> or eBird.

**Thursday, February 25. Zoom General Membership Meeting. 5:00—6:30 p.m.** Join us online to learn about Birdability with Freya McGregor. If you are interested in joining our Zoom, please [click here](#) and enter your information. We will send you a link to the meeting. See page one for more details. See you there.

**Thursday, March 18. Zoom General Membership Meeting. 5:00—6:30 p.m. Note: 3rd Thursday. Speaker Kelsey McCune will present on the Grackle Project.** If you are interested in joining our Zoom, [click here](#) and enter your information. We will send you a link to the meeting. See page one for more details.

**Monday, March 22. Zoom Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m.** 🐦



Golden-crowned Sparrow, Caballero Canyon, 12/19/20, by R. LeVine

### Update on the Mounted Bird Collection at Emerald Bay

*(Follow-up on article from December/January 2021 Phainopepla)*

I wanted to give you an update about how we incorporated the specimens into our teaching. Obviously there were no student visitors to camp this season. However, one of our online classes with LAUSD had a section about animal adaptations. Students used nature journals throughout the courses, so we created some online photo galleries of two of the bird species (cormorant and pelican) and had them go through the galleries and sketch out different pictures and identify their adaptations, whether it be feather shape, webbed feet, beak shape, etc. It was really fun! While a kayak trip to Indian Rock may allow students to observe them in their habitat, this exercise allowed them to each slow down and observe the details up close and be inquisitive about what they were noticing. We also made sure to tell each class that the specimens were on loan from the SFV Audubon.

Here are the links to the galleries we made.

Brown Pelican: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/pTzXN7rRaPi2o9uY8>

Cormorant: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/pqVj48rKUak5daPo9>

I appreciate the offer of various species. That is very helpful! The extra focus on our feathered friends generated some interesting conversation this season also among our instructors. We were all based on the mainland, but a few of us went out for a weekend to EB to gather some video footage. We were discussing birds of prey on the island, and I showed them the specimens in person, and we looked up the history of the Osprey on the island and learned that they were part of a restoration effort in the early 2000s that we hadn't heard of before and are now able to share with students.

Here's a link to a little wrap up video we made with our instructors:

<https://youtu.be/yEnUyIYiHzo>

Burton Miller

Program Director | Emerald Bay Outdoor Academy

Western Los Angeles County Council

## *Audubon-at-Home* by Alan Pollack

---

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

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

---

### **We're the Bird People!**

Frequently when I open my presentations to school classes and other groups I explain that Audubon Society members are "The Bird People". We love birds. Typically I go on to say that you can easily recognize birders by our binoculars, drab clothing, long camera lenses, and floppy hats. We are lurking everywhere, as individuals or small groups, quietly watching birds.

As local bird lovers, we are blessed in that Los Angeles County is the "birdiest" county in North America. More than 350 species of birds may be seen here, either resident or migratory, during any given year. And of those, 200 species actively breed, build nests, and fledge their young. This is due to the wide variety of habitats found in our territory, including mountains, seashores, jetties, marshes, lagoons, deserts, arroyos, rivers, streams, and urban neighborhoods. The birds are everywhere.

We are reminded by Baba Dioum (1968) "In the end we will conserve only what we love..." and, in fact, Audubon and other birding organizations are consistently in the forefront of the Conservation Movement, protecting those areas where birds live against many attacks from all directions. This is true for San Fernando Valley Audubon.

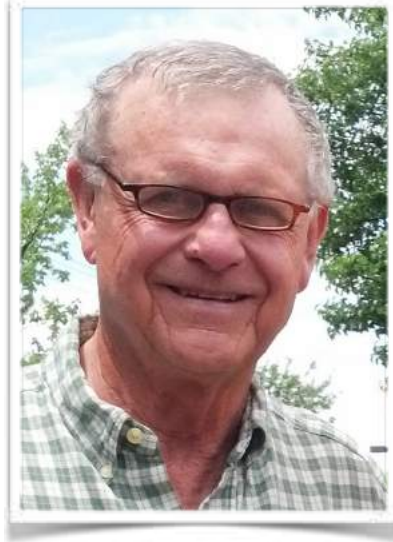
With the new Administration inaugurated in January comes the opportunity to review the past four years of rollbacks in wildlife and habitat protections. It's been a drip, drip, drip four years of water torture; I cannot think of a single action taken which was favorable to avian conservation.

The process of mitigating, reversing, and correcting these regulation relaxations, Executive Orders, mis-interpretations/representations, intentional lack of enforcement, defunding, underfunding, mismanagement, etc. will require much work to identify and correct the injustices, and to advance avian and human health protections. I believe the new Administration, as defined by the proposed Cabinet Members and Presidential Advisors, is capable, qualified, and intended to address these issues. But they can benefit from our local perspectives.

Please, if you are motivated, I ask that you email or call me that you are willing to chip in and commit to following and reporting how avian-related issues are being addressed in Washington. Then you and our Conservation Committee can determine ways to effectively communicate the Chapter's views to our policy makers. We can then focus our scarce resources on the issues currently active and where we can make a difference by raising our voices.

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. 🐦

## Retiring



### Dick Barth, Monthly Field Trip Leader

*For* the last 23 years SFVAS has been fortunate to have a great field trip program led by Dick Barth. Sadly, Dick has made the decision that he will retire and no longer lead trips when the pandemic is over. These birding trips to many destinations have formed a unique place in our chapter. They have been a bridge between local birding and birding that illustrates the range of habitat within our wider area. He created an annual program that visited mountains in the heat of the summer, beaches in the fall, and deserts in the spring. The highlight of the year for the group was the weekend trip when participants drove up to Morro Bay on the Friday, met at Morro Rock Saturday morning and spent the day birding around the beautiful estuary and Sunday at Montana Del Oro State Park.

Over 23 years many birders were introduced to species not living in the San Fernando Valley through these field trips and many have gone on to become excellent birders and leaders in the birding community. The chapter will always be grateful to Dick for his leadership, consistency, and patience on all these expeditions.

It would be great if we could find someone who would step into Dick shoes. However, failing that, if anyone reading this would like to lead a field trip once a year at Mount Pinos, Chillao, Joshua Tree, Morro Bay, or the Ventura Duck Club, Bolsa Chica or any of the other places Dick has covered do get in touch with Paula Orlovich (at [54warbler@gmail.com](mailto:54warbler@gmail.com)) and maybe we can put an annual field trip program together with a team of leaders.

A big thank you to Dick for giving us so many years and for currently birding the less visited parks in the area and finding rarities which expand our knowledge of the birds that inhabit our city. The chapter will be poorer for the end of this wonderful program. —*Rose Leibowitz, former SFVAS President*

## ***BIRDATHON: Past, Present, and Future***

The new year arrives and my inner clock tells me that it is time to begin organizing our annual Birdathon fundraiser! Historically, this has been **the** SFVAS “sponsored birding” event in which people pledge a sum of money for every bird species spotted on a walk on a designated date. Typically, the walks are in late April or early May and the money raised underwrites our running expenses and most of the environmental education and conservation initiatives that we sponsor.



Unfortunately, as has become iconic for all of us this past year, we were just gearing up for Birdathon a year ago, when Covid-19 crashed the party. No more group bird walks. No more collaring friends to join you and chip in for all the birds you spot together. However, as dire as it seemed at the time, Birdathon 2020 actually worked surprisingly well. We have a dedicated group of Birdathon walk-leaders who completed their walks by themselves or with family members. We also have a generous set of supporters who responded by pledging their funds to underwrite our conservation and education efforts.

While Covid-19 also temporarily shut down our traditional Sepulveda Basin Education Program, our needs have actually increased. For instance, we have shifted our efforts to supporting virtual education programs in collaboration with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Monica Mountains. Also, the recent fires in Southern California have created emergencies, both at the Sepulveda Basin and in nearby conservation areas that require our funds to repair critical infrastructure for wildlife and for long-term habitat restoration.

The schedule of Birdathon walks that need your support will be in the next edition of the *Phainopepla* and, informational updates will be emailed to our membership as the event draws closer. If you would like to volunteer to lead a walk, or to have your own birding event with sponsorship from friends and relatives,

please let me know by e-mail at [birdathon@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:birdathon@sfvaudubon.org) or by phone at (818) 995-1432.

Hoping to be back together face-to-face with you and our birds, next year.




Thanks for your help.

Richard Davis, Birdathon Chair.



*Photos by Richard Davis  
Western Bluebird (l), Green Heron (r)*

I requested a book from the Library on a whim: Katie Fallon, *VULTURE: THE PRIVATE LIFE OF AN UNLOVED BIRD* because the title sounded fun. It really is a fun book to read; Fallon takes the point of view of one female vulture and follows her life cycle, while writing about other astonishing vulture feats and virtues for the rest of the book. Even my non-birder friend wrote that he "LOVED LOVED LOVED" this little book, it was such a good read. Like I said, you can request it from LAPL, and enjoy learning more about this bird that plays such a critical ecological role in our world. —Submitted by Marianne Davis



Are you interested in nature?  
Wildlife conservation?  
Are you excited about birds and want to know more about them?  
Have we got an offer for you!


For a limited time, we are offering new members a **FREE one-year trial membership** in the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society.

At the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, our focus is birds, nature and conservation, and having fun! Under the current circumstances, most of our group activities are virtual, with Zoom general meetings featuring educational and entertaining speakers, and virtual bird walks. Next month, our regular bird walks will resume (check our monthly event schedule for details).

In "normal" times, we also host a variety of fun events and meaningful activities, including teaching school kids about ecology and wildlife at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, and holding classes on beginning birdwatching, backyard bird projects, and citizen science programs. And we make time for social get-togethers and lectures. We also sponsor a bluebird nest box program and perform community-service projects such as L.A. River clean-ups, along with other environmental organizations working to help save the planet.

JOIN US NOW!

Go to [www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org) to sign up!



## How to Participate in The Great Backyard Bird Count

Participating is easy, fun to do alone, or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds.

**Choose the easiest way for you to share your birds:**

- Identify birds with [Merlin Bird ID app](#) and add sightings to your list
- Use the [eBird Mobile app](#)
- Enter your bird list on the [eBird website](#) (Desktop/laptop)

All you need is a free Cornell Lab account to participate. This account is shared with Merlin, eBird, Project FeederWatch and other projects at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If you already have an account please use the same username and password for submitting your bird list for the Great Backyard Bird Count.

We recommend **observing birds for at least fifteen minutes**. [See this page for more counting instructions](#).

**It's That Easy!**

Submit one or more lists over the four days of counting and you become a contributing citizen scientist ([community scientist](#)). All eBird entries and saved Merlin Bird IDs over the four days contribute to the Great Backyard Bird Count.



**The Great Backyard Bird Count is February 12-15, 2021**

Bird watchers of all ages count birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are.

[Count birds anytime, anywhere, with eBird »](#)

# Virtual Birds for Virtual Birding

## REVIEW of HAWKS and OWLS

Photos courtesy of Don Shoemaker,  
Stephen Langton, Will Fulmer  
Taxidermy by Igor Caragon, John Schmitt,  
and others

Match the bird to its name.

- A) Great Horned Owl
- B) Red-tailed Hawk
- C) Barn Owl
- D) Cooper's Hawk
- E) Burrowing Owl
- F) Long-eared Owl
- G) Sharp-shinned Hawk
- H) Prairie Falcon
- I) American Kestrel
- J) Western Screech Owl
- K) Peregrine Falcon
- L) Red-shouldered Hawk



Bird 1



Bird 4



Bird 2



Bird 5



Bird 3



Bird 6



Bird 7



Bird 10



Bird 8



Bird 11



Bird 9



Bird 12

Submitted  
by Art Langton

Answers: 1-F, 2-E, 3-C, 4-J, 5-K, 6-D, 7-L, 8-B, 9-G, 10-I, 11-A, 12-H

## SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President:	Paula Orlovich	(818) 399-1994
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

### AT-LARGE DIRECTORS

Alexander deBarros	(818) 919-3425
Benny Jacobs-Schwartz	(818) 939-9913
Richard Davis	(310) 529-8865
Natalie Beckman-Smith	(818) 926-7825
Wendy Barsh	(818) 398-2104
Marylou Hanna	(310) 463-4882

### STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Bird Boxes:	Carolyn Oppenheimer	(818) 885-7493
Bird Observatory:	Mark Osokow	unpublished
Conservation:	Dave Weeshoff	(818) 618-1652
Editor <i>Phainopepla</i> :	Rebecca LeVine	(818) 776-0881
Finance:	Dave Weeshoff	(818) 618-1652
Programs:	Joanne Millius	(818) 335-5331
Youth Activities:	Muriel Kotin	(310) 457-5796

### SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Audubon-at-Home:	Alan Pollack	(818) 340-2347
BirdFest:	Rose Leibowitz	(818) 579-4976
Birdathon:	Richard Davis	(310) 529-8865
Christmas Bird Count:	Alexander deBarros	(818) 919-3425
Community Outreach:	OPEN	
Conservation Banquet:	OPEN	
Education Classroom:	Dave Weeshoff	(818) 618-1652
Education-SBEEP:	Paula Orlovich	(818) 399-1994
Field Trips:	Richard Barth	(310) 276-0342
Hansen Dam Rep.:	Dave Weeshoff	(818) 618-1652
Hansen Dam Walks:	Pat Bates	(818) 425-0962
Hospitality:	Teri Carnesciali	(818) 892-5029
Malibu Creek Bird Walk:	Dave Barton	(310) 990-6896
	Kathy Barton	(818) 929-2516
Membership:	Lynn Maddox	(818) 845-4688
O'Melveny Bird Walk:	Carolyn Oppenheimer	(818) 885-7493
OneWaterLA Group Rep.:	Mark Osokow	unpublished
Publicity:	Marianne Davis	(310) 529-8871
Sales & Service:	Diana Keeney	(818) 998-3216
Scholarships and Grants:	Marianne Davis	(310) 529-8871
Sepulveda Basin Steering:	Muriel Kotin	(310) 457-5796
Sepulveda Bird Walks:	Kris Ohlenkamp	(818) 521-8799
Social Media:	Jim Houghton	(818) 388-7207
SSFL Special Representative:	Mark Osokow	unpublished
Web Coordinator:	Jim Houghton	(818) 388-7207
Young Birders Group:	Alexander deBarros	(818) 919-3425

For Chapter leaders' e-mail addresses, see our website:

[www.SFVAudubon.org](http://www.SFVAudubon.org)

Follow us on:



Instagram @sfvaudubon



#sfvaudubon



Found an injured animal? Call Wildlife Rescue  
Center at (818) 222-2658

### TO BECOME A MEMBER AND/OR RENEW ONLINE GO TO

<https://www.sfvaudubon.org/membership/>

It's fast, secure, and saves time and paper!

Or mail this form and include a check made payable to:

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

Regular 1-yr Chapter Membership...\$25 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

1-yr Online Chapter Membership (No paper copy of *Phainopepla*)  
.....**FREE** for a limited time for new members \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Tax Deductible Contribution to SFVAS \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

New Member \_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (PLEASE INCLUDE):  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about SFVAS?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you want to join or renew by check, please be sure to include your email address if you want to receive an acknowledgment. We can no longer thank you by regular mail. If you do not have an email address, please know how much we appreciate your involvement with, and support of, SFVAS.

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).

*PHAINOPEPLA* is copyrighted ©2021 by the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. All rights reserved. All photographs used in the *PHAINOPEPLA* are used by permission and are copyrighted material of the credited photographers.

## Phainopepla

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

### *Inside This Issue*

Christmas Bird Count...2—7  
New Year's Bird Resolution...8  
Calendar of Events...9  
Emerald Bay...9  
Audubon-at-Home...10  
Conservation Corner...10  
Dick Barth Retiring...11  
Birdathon...12  
Free Membership Flyer...13  
Hawks & Owls Quiz...14  
Chapter Information...15

### **Thefts at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve**

There has been a long, unfortunate history of thefts from cars in the parking lots at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve in Huntington Beach. Valuable cameras and other optics have been stolen and expensive damage done to the cars. Birders and photographers from all over have been crime victims, perhaps including some members of our Chapter.

To deal with the problem, Sea and Sage Audubon Society has assembled a coalition of local law enforcement agencies, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Bolsa Chica citizens groups. The first step they are taking is to gather good information about just how extensive the problem is. They have created a survey which you can reach at this link: [BolsaChicaBreak-inSurvey](#).

If you have been affected, your input would be appreciated.