



# Phainopepla

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*For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife*

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## Online General Membership Meetings

Please join us for our online presentations from the comfort of your home!

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

**Additional Changes at National Audubon Society Leadership**  
Effective April 23, 2021, David Ringer, Chief Network and Communications Officer, National Audubon Society, announced his departure. Along with Elizabeth Sorrell, they will begin a new venture together to help nonprofit organizations and companies do more for the environment and for communities.

Elizabeth Gray joined Audubon as President and Chief Conservation Officer in March, and she will be leading Audubon's next strategic plan.

## General Membership Meeting: – Zoom Presentation

**Thursday, June 24, 2021**

**7:00—8:00 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker: Kristie Stein**

**From: Southern Sierra Research Station**

**Presentation Title: Successes and Future Developments of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System**

Please [click here](#) to register. 🐦

## Clean Up of Haskell Creek in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve Saturday June 19, 2021 8:30AM – Noon

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is partnering with Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains for a greatly needed cleanup.

Please register soon to volunteer to help Haskell Creek at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-great-la-river-cleanup-haskell-creek-registration-151737560127>.

As FoLAR's announcement says, The River needs YOU! This summer, join FoLAR and our partners for a series of small, in-person cleanups to collect trash and prevent waste from polluting our watershed and urban waterways. Together, we will make a collective impact and do our part to tend to the vibrant urban ecosystems that thrive throughout Los Angeles.

**All registered volunteers will receive a CleanUp Starter Kit, available for pickup at a local REI or mailed to your provided address, with the essentials to participate, including trash bags and a pair of plant-based disposable gloves. Bring your own gardening gloves and tools like old pool nets and grabbers if you have them. SFVAS will have on hand a limited supply of tools and laundered gardening gloves, as well as trash bags provided by the Department of Recreation and Parks.**

Haskell Creek, a stream located in the Sepulveda Basin, links up with the LA River just before Sepulveda Dam. Haskell Creek flows through one of the rare wildlife reserves in the City of LA, the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve. It is also a great location for bird and river enthusiasts. You are likely to even spot a fish or two swimming in the creek!

The Resource Conservation District will offer small group educational walking tours for volunteers after they have finished cleaning.

To sign up for additional FoLAR cleanups, the link is <https://folar.org/cleanup/>

# Birdathon 2021 Has Landed But, There Is Still Time to Support Our Drive!!

By Richard Davis Email: [birdathon@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:birdathon@sfvaudubon.org)



(Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Pintail, and Northern Shoveler)

## A little bit of Birdathon history:

So, when did SFVAS begin having Birdathons? The first mention of Birdathon that I found is in the October 1979 issue of *Phainopepla* announcing the event for a single day: November 24. There were no walk leaders. All members were encouraged to go on their own walks on that day after recruiting their friends as sponsors to make donations based on the number of species spotted. And, it was a statewide Audubon event with various prizes awarded (for most species identified, most money raised, etc.) at the state and regional levels.

By 1981, Birdathon had become part of the National Audubon Society's fundraiser with prizes at the national, regional, and chapter levels. (Still no walk leaders and SFVAS sent your donations to National.) However, now the single day for the event fell on or near the anniversary of John James Audubon's birthday (April 26, 1785). In those days, one of our monthly SFVAS bird walks was in Descanso Gardens, near the end of the month. And so, the April walk in Descanso became a group SFVAS Birdathon event but still without what we would call a "Walk Leader." It seems you simply met with other chapter members at Descanso and everyone did their own tally of birds for their own sponsors. However, later in the 80s, there were "Counters", someone who was regularly responsible for that walk but, then as now, you could also join in to boost the number of species observed. And, by 1989, we had multiple days where several independent Counters would go to different sites for their Birdathon walk. That year, there were Birdathon events at Descanso, Morongo/Salton Sea, and believe it or not, Costa Rica!

In 1990, Audubon National announced a \$1 million fundraising goal for Birdathon. And, finally, the *Phainopepla* Birdathon announcement ("Birding for Bucks") began to include the names of our Counters. For 1990, these were Karen Johnson (Descanso), Steve Lyle ("the shore, mountains, woodlands, chaparral, and his back yard"), Mona Carlton (Morongo Valley), Steve Ducatman (secret location to be revealed to those who sign up to be Steve's sponsors) and Tom Newman (similarly undisclosed location in Southern California but should be good since Tom is the one who previously did Costa Rica).

Issues of the SFVAS *Phainopepla* from the 80s frequently included cartoons, many of which appear to have been clipped from *New Yorker Magazine*. These are two such cartoons embedded with Birdathon announcements. Artist unknown.



*Phainopepla* Birdathon Cartoons from the 1980s

So, when did our Birdathon become a specifically SFVAS fundraiser? Maybe I will try to find that out for next year if I have the ambition to read another decade of *Phainopepla* archives. Thanks to Carolyn Oppenheimer (Chapter Historian) and Art Langton whose family copies of *Phainopepla* are now being scanned for inclusion in our online database.

## Some background on our team Leaders

I am totally in awe of the dedication and service of our team leaders and I asked them to provide background on their length of association with SFVAS, offices they have held, when they started leading Birdathon walks, the number of species typically spotted and any rarities they recall on their walks. Here are their answers, roughly in descending order of how long they have been working with the SFVAS chapter. (Continued)

By May 10, 2021, all the scheduled walks for Birdathon 2021 had taken place and the species counts for each walk are shown in the table below.

Hopefully, you have made your pledge in support of one or more of these walks or a pledge to the general Birdathon 2021 campaign. If not, now is the time.

**You can still donate (online at [www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org))**

**Or mail your donation to SFVAS, PO BOX 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769**

Leader	Species Count	Location
Dick Barth	101	Long Beach
Kathy & Dave Barton	39	Malibu Creek State Park
Pat Bates	44	Hansen Dam
Joey Curti	36	Cold Creek Preserve
Allan & Muriel Kotin	59	Malibu & Nearby
Art Langton	80	Highway 33 from the Ocean to the Mountains
Kris Ohlenkamp	59	Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve
Carolyn Oppenheimer	35	O'Melveny Park
Paula Orlovich	33	Franklin Canyon
John & Andrew Willis		Ken Malloy Harbor Reginal Park & Cabrillo Beach Park
Lori Willis Memorial Fund	75	
<b>Total</b>	<b>561</b>	

## Arthur Langton

I became part of a family membership when my mother joined the chapter in the late 1950s, 1957, 1958, who remembers? She needed help doing the CBC at Chatsworth Reservoir, which had water in it in those days, and I had just earned Bird Study Merit Badge through Scouting so I could hardly say "No." So, I, my mother, Harry and Vivian Anderson did the Chatsworth portion of the CBC. I also worked with Paul Colburn and Harry Anderson down at Tucker Bird Sanctuary hanging out over bridge that crosses the stream tacking up burlap bags obscuring the view between the birds at the feeders and pedestrian traffic and movement on the bridge. Listened to Paul give the porch lecture to visitors on birds visiting the feeders and bird ID. After listening to it enough times, I gave the talk while Paul took a break. Managing the crowds at Tucker was a big deal in those days and not everybody could do it.

### Chapter offices:

President, three one-year terms  
Vice-president numerous times  
Recording secretary  
CBC compiler for nearly 50 years  
Field trip chairman  
Program chairman  
Conservation chairman  
Served on scholarship selection committee.  
Conservation award selection committee; worked on plaque design, wording  
1999 Conservation Award winner  
Fill-in for treasurer a couple of times; did accounts receivable.  
Part time walk leader at Descanso Gardens, Malibu Creek State Park  
Leader, beginning birders workshop and class (2 or 3 times)  
Birdfest speaker, exhibitor

### How long doing birdathons?

Since back when Martha Balken and Stuart Wells were organizing them, 1990s?

### Range of counts for the walks?

Depends on the walk, location: Malibu Creek State Park, 45-50+ species  
Highway 33; 75-100+ One year McGill Campground on Mt.Pinos was included just for fun and to see if we could break 100 birds. We did. Long day though, and only for the young and the restless.

**Unexpected species spotted during Birdathons.** Not so much this year but in past years, a few:

California Condor  
Eastern Phoebe  
Golden Eagle  
Prairie Falcon  
Lewis's Woodpecker  
Summer Tanager  
Four species of vireo the same year  
Seven warblers one year

**I worry more about the expected ones that got away.**



## Kris Ohlenkamp



I joined NAS in 1975 and became Conservation Chair in 1978, a position I held for more than 25 years. I was President of the chapter for two years in the 1980s, two years in the 1990s and two years in the 2000s. I have also led bird walks in the Sepulveda Basin on the first Sunday of the month since 1981 and have led Christmas Bird Counts there ever since then, as well as Birdathon counts since its inception. I don't recall when Birdathons began (maybe 10 years?) and have always led them in conjunction with my regular walks, so they don't stand out in my mind as anything unusual. However, in March and April I typically see about 60 species as the migrants have started passing through or are stopping to set up breeding territories while the winter residents are mostly still around. Over the years I have seen 220 species of birds in the Basin. There are always surprises! (Continued)

## John Willis

I joined SFVAS in 1982 and served as corresponding secretary in the mid 80s. My wife was active in the Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program while she worked for the RCDSMM. She passed away in 2003 and, in her memory, my son, Andrew, and I have been doing the birdathon each year to raise money for the Basin programs. I moved to Washington in 2015, but return to Southern California to keep our birdathons going. This will be our 18th year.

## Muriel Kotin

How long have you been associated with SFVAS? [Since around 1989.]

What offices held in SFVAS? [Recording Sec, President, SBEEP Coordinator, Youth Activities Chair, Rep to Steering Com.]

How long have you been giving Birdathon walks? [They've been just Allan & me, often accompanied by a friend or two.]

What is the range of counts for you? [Low 39 (2020), high at least 111, may have been around 120.]

Any unexpected species spotted during your Birdathons? [Too lazy to research.]

[FYI, when I started doing a Birdathon, they were not walks with a lot of people invited. Then leaders turned them into walks or tours and many were opened up to more participants. Not sure when.]

## Carolyn Oppenheimer

Richard, on the surface these look like easy questions to answer. However, I have been around so long I can't remember the answers. I know I started volunteering sometime in the late 90s. Possibly 97 or 98. I came onto the board about then as Corresponding Secretary. Then I was a VP, second I think, and I was also the Membership chair. I was in charge of the sales table at meeting for a while as well. Then I was President. After that I was chairperson of the Centennial Celebration in 2006. Then I chaired a committee known as the College Conservation Committee with the purpose of getting more college students to volunteer with us. As for bird walks, I started the Weekday Wanderers sometime around 1998 and later stopped wandering and just settled down at O'Melveny Park. I incorporated the regular O'Melveny walk into a Birdathon event at that time, probably sometime in the early 2000s. I almost always get between 30 to 40 species at O'Melveny. As for unusual species, I really cannot remember anything too out of the ordinary. I was surprised by the Golden-crowned Sparrows this year as they would usually be here only during winter. My favorite thing to find on the Birdathon is migrating warblers but this year I did not find many kinds of those. We just had the Wilson's Warbler sightings.



## Dick Barth

I've been associated with SFVAS for 24 years.

I have only been Field Trip Leader.

I led birdathons in conjunction with my Morongo Valley field trips for 22 years, and this year did my own count with one colleague (fellow-birder Jeff Boyd of Long Beach).

I don't remember all the totals, but I think they range from 49 to (this year) 101.

My birdathons have found lots of rarities over the years (too many to list), but no completely unexpected species.

## Paula Orlovich

I became involved with SFVAS after I retired from teaching about 10 years ago. I joined a walk at the Basin led by Kris and met Carolyn who was looking for a new member that would take over the SBEEP. I agreed to shadow her for a year and learn all about the responsibilities of the chairmanship and took over the position. After a period of time I was asked to become 1st Vice President and then following Rose became President of the chapter.

The funny thing is that although I loved birds, I didn't actually know their names and had to at least know the birds of the Basin as an Environmental Educator with RCD. So, I started to look, listen and gain some knowledge over time. This was my first year leading a Birdathon Walk! I gained the confidence to lead a walk after accompanying Muriel on the CBC and she commented on my ability to identify our species count. I really loved leading the Birdathon Walk this year because I had a wonderful team of birders with me who helped identify those species I was unable to identify. The bird that I saw with Rose at the end of the road into Franklin really made me gasp. It was a small bird with an almost neon stripe on its' head. It was a Golden-crowned Kinglet. I thought now that is a great mohawk trend!



## Kathy and Dave Barton

I have been on the board for over five years, first as a director and then two terms as recording secretary. Dave served on the board for one year.

**How long have you been giving Birdathon walks?** Two years

**Range of counts for the walks you have given?** Usually in the 40's to 50's

**Unexpected species spotted?** Yellow-breasted Chat has been found the last few years. *(Continued)*



### Joey Curti:

I've been working with SFV Audubon since 2018. Since then, I've partnered with SFV Audubon on a land acquisition in the Santa Monica Mountains to preserve seven acres of oak woodland habitat. SFV Audubon also helped fund my dissertation research studying the impact of roadways on California Quail movement and gene flow. I do not sit on the SFV Audubon Board or hold any offices, but maybe in the future!

This was my first year and it was so much fun! I can't wait to do this again next year. This year I anticipated 40 species. Some highlights of my walk include a Lawrence's Goldfinch pair, and many Black-headed Grosbeaks. 🐦

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## Allan and Muriel Kotin's 2021 Malibu Birdathon

### Birding in a Time of Disaster and Pandemic Recovery

Tuesday, April 20

**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 2021 Birdathon was informed by but less constrained than last year's. The pandemic lockdowns were past – hopefully permanently – although precautions were still necessary. Rebuilding from the 2018 Woolsey Fire was well underway and dry Southern California was unusually so. We opted to again remain close to home, rather than covering favorite locations in Orange and LA counties, but this year we were able to visit the area's wonderful natural parklands.

**Earlyish Start:** Allan and I got up soon after our alarm rang. While preparing breakfast at 6:48 I spotted a pair of **Mourning Doves (#1)** on the railing of our balcony. Soon after a small flock of **American Crows (#2)** flew past, not much farther away. A loose flock of **Western Gulls (#3)** flew over the shoreline. We would see these common species many times this day. The sky was a bright gray.

**Westward Beach at 7:20AM:** We spotted a **Black Phoebe (#4)** sitting on the fence of the restroom building at the curve on Westward Beach Road, probably hoping a tasty small insect would show itself, and saw a **California Gull (#5)** on the sand. At this point a call arrived from Ian, a kind fellow who offered to let us visit his home on Bonsall Drive to see the many birds that visit his garden in the mornings. With no beach traffic so early on a gray Tuesday morning, we made a quick U-turn and headed to his home. Driving across the Arizona crossing over Zuma Creek from Westward Beach Road to the Zuma Beach parking lot was a non-event. Between the lack of rain and apparent repair of what must have been a major undiagnosed leak, the creek and Zuma Lagoon have been totally dry for months. With water missing there, so were the birds. We drove to Busch Drive where a **California Towhee (#6)** flew in front of our car. We again crossed the dry creek on ironically named Rainsford Place and then continued up Bonsall Drive to Ian's home.

**7:38, Ian and Susan's Gardens:** It was easy to see why many birds visit the home of this hospitable family. Perched high over the Zuma Canyon Trailhead, they have many trees including coast live oaks, a well-irrigated lawn and hedge, and a fire-hardened drought-tolerant labyrinth garden Susan planted to replace a field of Deergrass that burned in the Woolsey Fire. The excitement there was a crow chasing a **Cooper's Hawk (#7)** high in the air, the crow more fairly going after this predator of songbirds than the many times they chase the relatively considerate Red-tailed Hawks who don't so often eat other birds. There were several hummers visiting flowering trees that we couldn't identify in the still cloudy light, but one was clearly an **Anna's Hummingbird (#8)**. A **Spotted Towhee (#9)** and a California Towhee fed on small morsels they were finding on the lawn, staying close to the protection of the edging hedge. A solo **Bushtit (#10)** gleaned insects in the center of an oak. A **California Scrub-Jay (#11)** squawked and then peered at us from the trees, while a **House Finch (#12)**, singing, ignored us.



Spotted Towhee Posing Elsewhere

**8:15, Zuma Canyon Lower Trail:** Almost as soon as we got out of my car in the parking lot, the screech of **Nanday Parakeets (#13)** announced they were about to fly overhead. A small group of **White-crowned Sparrows (#14)** partied under the fence. After we walked a few steps on the trail, we heard a sweet song and tracked it to a **Black-headed Grosbeak (#15)** singing in a huge sycamore tree.



Black-headed Grosbeak

As one good singer deserves another, we found a **Song Sparrow (#16)** on a dead branch of a willow – singing, of course! (Continued next page)



A Different Song Sparrow Seen Later at Legacy Park

I got a bit ahead of Allan on the trail and noticed a coyote at the far end of a field. He was joined by another. Having watched a viral video of a woman attacked by a bobcat in a suburban setting the previous evening, I was a bit nervous until Allan caught up with me. The coyotes were busy hunting for rabbits and ignored us, eventually trotting off.



Coyote

On the other side of the trail two **Golden-crowned Sparrows (#17)** flew into a California walnut tree and began to eat the white flower clusters. We were pleased to see them, as we had not been finding this species lately. An **Acorn Woodpecker (#18)** flew into a sycamore and a **Red-tailed Hawk (#19)** soared high over them. Almost immediately a **Nuttall's Woodpecker (#20)** flew into a different sycamore.

Other than an **Allen's Hummingbird (#21)** posing on a laurel sumac bush, sightings quieted and we turned back. We were rewarded by seeing an **American Robin (#22)** with a large clump of fluffy nest-building material in its beak land in a tree. Two noisy **Red-crowned Parrots (#23)** flew past before we reached our car.

**9:30AM, Carole Hill's Garden:** Carole's community was devastated by the Woolsey Fire. Last year her immediate neighborhood was quiet, largely abandoned and we saw many birds. Today many homes had been rebuilt or were in the process. The neighborhood was a construction zone. Both sides of the street were solidly lined by trucks. The quiet was gone. The wealth of birds was missing too. A Scrub Jay visited Carole's bird feeder, then a bold **Oak Titmouse (#24)** took her turn. A small flock of **Mallards (#25)** flew inland, surprising us as to where we found them.



Oak Titmouse Eating Bee Last Year (favorite photo)



Example of Rebuilding in Malibu Park Neighborhood

**Driving through Malibu Park:** Carole's neighborhood was a much happier place this year – but not for birdwatching. We added no new species and didn't even hear chickens over the construction noise. In just under a year, an impressive amount of rebuilding had taken place. It is likely that by next spring many more buildings will be completed and the neighborhood quite largely restored. We hope so for Carole's and the birds' sake.

**10:20 AM, Heading Home for a Quick Stop:** Inside our development, looking down from Zuma Bay Way, Allan found a **Ring-billed Gull (#26)** and an **Elegant Tern (#27)** on Westward Beach.

**11:00 AM, on Birdview Avenue:** Our second flycatcher of the day, a **Western Kingbird (#28)** rested on a bare branch, waiting for an insect to eat.



**11:50 AM, Pt. Dume Headland:** We were able to find an open parking space in the tiny, inadequate parking strip along Cliffside Drive. It was the first time we were able to visit the headland since before my knee replacement and the Woolsey Fire in November 2018. What a treat! And the clouds were retreating, much of the sky a lovely blue.

Point Dume Headlands from Land Side

The giant coreopsis flowers, a feature for which the Pt. Dume Headlands are known, were largely spent, but it was amazing that they were able to blossom at all after



Stand of Giant Coreopsis with Carrot Top Leaves

so little rain. Their yellow blooms were supplemented by bush sunflower (dark centers) and more shade loving canyon sunflower (yellow centers), adding more cheerful color. The headlands are even more widely known as the northwest end of Santa Monica Bay. (Continued next page)



Almost overlooked sea lion napping on a nearby rock

As we walked toward the viewing platform on the side of the headland, a soaring pair of **Common Ravens (#29)** joined the crows flying high over the beach below. Two **Brown Pelicans (#30)** sat on the water and were joined by a small flock more. A pair of **White-throated Swifts (#31)** sliced through the air, twisting, and turning.

Two Gray Whales basked in the ocean below, occasionally sending up plumes of spray. We identified them for a family at the observation platform who thought they were dolphins. They were even more excited to see whales.

After the excitement of seeing marine mammals, we were almost blasé about seeing two **Willetts (#32)** flying low over the ocean below us.



One of the two whales

**Back in the Car, Driving toward Crosscreek Road and Lunch:** We spotted a rather small raptor perched in a tall tree along the ocean side of PCH, a little west of Dan Blocker Beach. There was plenty of shoulder to pull off the road and check it out with our small spotting scope. We really needed the scope for the ID: it was a **Merlin (#33)**, our second smallest falcon. We had lunch at Howdy's, newly reopened, now in the shopping center with a Whole Foods, two blocks away from Malibu Lagoon. It felt good to again lunch at this seafood/Mexican eatery that had closed temporarily many years ago.

**1:10 PM, Malibu Lagoon:** Song Sparrows serenading us as we got organized was a good sign, although the separation of the spotting scope into two pieces was not. At least it kept together for the Merlin. Once we got to the path, we immediately found **American Coots (#34)**, **Gadwalls** (a kind of duck) (#35), and **Double-crested Cormorants (#36)**. As we neared the main viewing platform, we saw **Heermann's Gulls (#37)** on the sandbar before the beach. Three **Snowy Egrets (#38)** fished in the shallow water on the Adamson House side of the lagoon. As we turned back along the path, a pair of **Lesser Goldfinches (#39)** flitted among the sycamores close to the highway. **Caspian Terns (#40)** flew in and joined several others that were resting on a small island. A **Wrentit (#41)** sang, allowing us to find him moving about in the middle of a densely leaved little bush next to us. A pair of little **Pied-billed Grebes (#42)** swam and dove in the center of the lagoon. A **Great Egret (#43)** stretched its long neck over the shallow water, intently looking for fish around to grab for lunch.



Why is this Whimbrel standing on one leg?



Caspian Terns Ignoring Great Egret Who Doesn't Care

A shorebird called **Greater Yellowlegs (#44)** flew over the lagoon, calling. Another shorebird, a lone **Whimbrel (#45)** stood on the beach.

We thought we had seen all the gulls we were likely to find, but a **Bonaparte's Gull (#46)**, flew past, distinguished from other gulls by its small size, white wings trimmed in black on the trailing edge, and a black smudge behind its black eye. Nice!

Dozens of **Elegant Terns** were spooked into flight by a helicopter and settled near the Caspians. A few **Royal Terns (#47)** then showed up. Three **Canada Geese (#48)** floated lazily. We reached the beach, where we found a **Feral Rock Pigeon (#49)** on the sand and six **Black-bellied Plovers (#50)** on the cobble stones exposed by a still low tide. We turned back toward our car. As we walked inland, a flock of at least 25 **Western Sandpipers (#51)** flew inland and settled on an island, a couple of **Killdeer (#52)** among them. A small group of **European Starlings (#53)** in glossy spring plumage landed in a tree on the colony side of the lagoon fence.



Two Starlings and a Female House Finch



Male Yellow-headed Blackbird

We headed for home, where we arrived at 3:15 PM for rest time. We had driven 26 miles. I crashed while Allan worked at his computer.

**5:45 PM, Legacy Park:** This semi-natural, constructed park was in lovely condition. We walked from parking along its inland edge to the ocean side of its little pond without seeing many birds. Suddenly we found a blackbird party. First was a group of male **Great-tailed Grackles (#54)**, decorating a leafless sycamore, shamelessly showing off to attract mates. Male **Red-winged Blackbirds (#55)** joined them, almost as noisy and trying for attention. Then a bird with drab yellow patches on her neck and face – a female **Yellow-headed Blackbird (#56)** – appeared in another tree. Two male Yellow-headed Blackbirds then appeared. Wow!

Another member of the blackbird family appeared, a **Brown-headed Cowbird (#57)**, the despised black sheep of the family. Why despised? They are brood parasites, laying their eggs in the nests of unsuspecting songbirds to the great detriment of the host species. (Continued next page)



Brown-headed Cowbird

We were intermittently getting brief, distant looks at swallows chasing insects over the pond. Finally, we saw one well enough to identify a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow (#58)**. We were certain other swallows there were a different species, but neither of us could identify them.

**6:45 PM, Malibu Creek State Park:** We arrived at this favorite birding location near Malibu to add species found more inland in the Santa Monica Mountains. It was close enough to sunset for birds to be active and visible, but it was strangely quiet. The only birds were Crows and a Lesser Goldfinches. We walked half of the Braille Trail and decided it wasn't worth the effort. As we approached the main park road, we added a single species, a **Western Bluebird (#59)**.

**8:20 PM, Home and Done:** We stopped for takeout at Wood Ranch Barbecue on our way home. Our traveling statistics for the day were 63.1 miles driven and 4.1 miles walked. We were understandably tired but had an enjoyable day.

In celebration of the spectacles witnessed, turn up the sound and enjoy Allan's brief video of the Great-tailed Grackles at Legacy Park. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/9912ab6udhp22s1/GracklesShrieking.MOV?dl=0>

All photos taken by Allan on Birdathon day, except the Spotted Towhee taken several years ago, the Oak Titmouse from last year, and the photo of the stand of coreopsis from Muriel's phone. 🐦



Male Western Bluebird on Low Wood Fence

## Calendar of Events

### June–July 2021

**WE HAVE RESUMED BIRD OUTINGS, BUT PLEASE REMEMBER TO CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION. WE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW CDC GUIDELINES.**

**Sunday, June 6. Sepulveda Basin. 8:00–11:00 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. Contact him at [kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net).

**Sunday, June 6. Yucca Trail Walk 8:00–10:00 a.m.** Location: Grainger Property, 2060 Stunt Road, Calabasas. Park on the shoulder. The trail head is located near the deer crossing sign. Easy walk in beautiful chaparral with signage. No bathroom available. Bring water. Leader: Paula Orlovich. Contact her at [54warbler@gmail.com](mailto:54warbler@gmail.com).

**Sunday, June 13. Franklin Canyon Park. 8:00 a.m.** 2600 Franklin Canyon Dr., Beverly Hills. Directions: From the San Fernando Valley, take the Ventura Freeway (101) or Ventura Boulevard to Coldwater Canyon Boulevard. Head south to the intersection of Coldwater Canyon and Mulholland Drive. Make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Drive. Leader: Paula Orlovich. Contact her at [54warbler@gmail.com](mailto:54warbler@gmail.com).

**Saturday, June 19. 8:30 a.m.–Noon. Clean Up of Haskell Creek in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve.** San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is partnering with Friends of the Los Angeles River and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains for a greatly needed cleanup. Please register soon to volunteer to help Haskell Creek at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-great-la-river-cleanup-haskell-creek-registration-151737560127>.

**Sunday, June 20. 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. Leaders: Kathy Barton (818) 929-2516 and David Barton (310) 990-6896.

**O'Melveny Park Weekday Wander is on summer hiatus and will resume in September. See you then!**

**Saturday, June 26. Hansen Dam. 11640 Foothill Blvd., Sylmar, 8:00 a.m.** We will travel along a dirt road at the base of the dam—exploring promising sites along the way. Directions: From the 210 Freeway

eastbound, exit at Osborne, go right on Foothill, then left (about 0.15 mile) into the Hansen Dam Soccer Fields parking lot. Meet in the dirt lot on the east side of the parking lot. Leader: Pat Bates, (818) 425-0962, [batesbird@gmail.com](mailto:batesbird@gmail.com).

**Monday, June 21. Zoom Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m.**

**Thursday, June 24. Zoom General Membership Meeting. 7:00–8:00 p.m.** Join us online with guest speaker **Kristie Stein from Southern Sierra Research Station as she discusses the Successes and Future Developments of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System.** 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 you there.

**Sunday, July 4. Sepulveda Basin. 8:00–11:00 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. Contact him at [kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net).

**Sunday, July 11. Franklin Canyon Park. 8:00 a.m.** 2600 Franklin Canyon Dr., Beverly Hills. Directions: From the San Fernando Valley, take the Ventura Freeway (101) or Ventura Boulevard to Coldwater Canyon Boulevard. Head south to the intersection of Coldwater Canyon and Mulholland Drive. Make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Drive. Leader: Paula Orlovich. Contact her at [54warbler@gmail.com](mailto:54warbler@gmail.com).

**Sunday, July 18. 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. Leaders: Kathy Barton (818) 929-2516 and David Barton (310) 990-6896.

**Saturday, July 24. Hansen Dam. 11640 Foothill Blvd., Sylmar, 8:00 a.m.** We will travel along a dirt road at the base of the dam—exploring promising sites along the way. Directions: From the 210 Freeway eastbound, exit at Osborne, go right on Foothill, then left (about 0.15 mile) into the Hansen Dam Soccer Fields parking lot. Meet in the dirt lot on the east side of the parking lot. Leader: Pat Bates, (818) 425-0962, [batesbird@gmail.com](mailto:batesbird@gmail.com).



## Audubon-at-Home by Alan Pollack

A common question asked of me: How do you pick plants for one's garden? What I usually suggest is going to the [theodorepayne.org](http://theodorepayne.org) website and click on the Native plant database that lists needs and wants. Then go to [calscape.org](http://calscape.org). Enter your address or Zip Code to see which of the plants you chose at the Theodore Payne website are native to your area. Remember, the best time to plant is late fall or early winter so the roots have a chance to grow before the hot, dry summer.

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@sfaudubon.org](mailto:alan.pollack@sfaudubon.org).



### SFVAS Helps The Mono Lake Committee to Implement Motus Monitoring of Critical Habitats for Bird Migration on the Pacific Flyway *By Richard Davis*

The SFVAS board has donated \$10,000 to the Mono Lake Committee (MLC) to help with its installation of Motus towers to monitor migrant birds of the Pacific Flyway. MLC is a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use.



Solar Powered Motus Tag

As part of its research program, MLC is involved in an international collaboration to study role and importance of Mono Lake in supporting Phalarope populations. They will use the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, an international collaborative research network that employs automated radio telemetry to track birds, bats, and insects. Each Motus tower is equipped to detect the presence of any tagged animal that comes within range (10 to 30 km). MLC investigators and international collaborators will be using Motus data to find out how long phalaropes stay at Mono lake during their southward migration and to detect how dependent these birds are on Mono Lake as a rest and feeding stop. This summer MLC will be getting familiar with tower components and assembly with assistance from experienced Motus tower builders. In parallel, they are obtaining permits for placement of the towers at locations around



Wilson's Phalarope

Mono Lake selected to maximize bird detection. They anticipate that some birds will be banded this summer in order to test system-operation and that they will begin serious data collection during summer 2022. See [https://oikonos.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Phalarope-Surveys-at-Mono-Lake-2019-Report.final\\_.pdf](https://oikonos.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Phalarope-Surveys-at-Mono-Lake-2019-Report.final_.pdf) to learn more about the Phalarope studies.



In addition to supporting the immediate Phalarope study, these towers will become part of a larger long-term Motus infrastructure that will support and encourage world-wide migratory research programs. See <https://motus.org/> For example, birds tagged by other researchers in other parts of the world will also

be detected if they pass near Mono Lake. The presence of any bird at Mono Lake will be reported back to the investigators who applied the tags. With hundreds of towers currently installed, and millions of bird detections reported each year, the Motus network constitutes a growing and increasingly comprehensive tool to monitor birds throughout their migratory path across seasons, countries and continents. This kind of information becomes critical to us as we work to identify sites throughout the world that are most important to restoring the bird populations that are currently being lost.

For SFVAS, this represents an opportunity to partner with a respected, broadly based conservation group in a world-wide collaboration to identify, protect and restore habitats critical to migratory bird conservation.

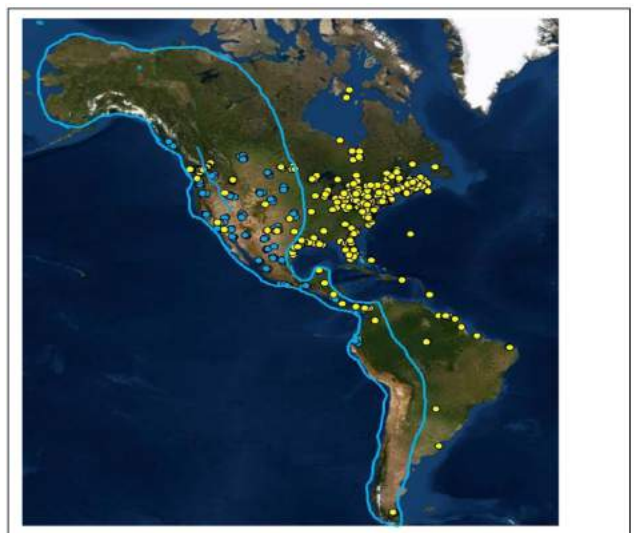


Figure Legend: Current (yellow dot) and projected (blue dot) locations of Motus



## SFVAS Helps With Care for Sick, Injured or Orphaned Birds at the California Wildlife Center *By Richard Davis*

These are challenging times for all of us, but even more so for charitable organizations like the California Wildlife Center (CWC). The CWC takes responsibility for the protection of native wildlife through rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned animals and through programs of education and conservation designed to reduce the numbers of such patients needing care. The organization has been in operation since 1996 and has historically treated about 4000 patients a year. During the pandemic, the patient load has increased to about 5000 with approximately 70% of these being birds. At the same time, Covid-associated restrictions have dramatically limited the use of volunteers, causing greatly increased workload on staff and reduced flexibility in how that work can be carried out. Moreover, Covid restrictions have increased costs of supplies, particularly animal diets, at the same time as the availability of foundation support for buying these supplies has dramatically declined.

SFVAS has historically provided some support for CWC, but, in recognition of the special difficulties being faced this year, the board recently voted to provide \$20,000 to help meet CWC's budget shortfall with respect to animal diets. This contribution represents about 50% of CWC's overall diet expenses for the year. 🐦



## Spring Break in the Canopy

Andrea Ehr Gott, April 2021

there's a springtime surge in decibel level  
after a quiet year-long party drought  
trees erupt with riotous bird song and dirty dancing  
~ celebration time, come on ~  
~ there's a party going on right here ~  
~ let's all celebrate and have a good time ~  
welcomed back by screaming admirers  
a bright oriole lands, struts his stuff  
so unnaturally yellow in flashy jumpsuit  
he belongs under a 1980s disco ball  
doing the hustle, mirrors reflecting his golden charm  
branches sway suggestively to his john travolta moves  
she's the scrub jay disco queen, tall and assertive  
sporting shiny blue hot pants over long slim legs  
matching turquoise necklace, seductive bobbing tail  
boogies to the beat with bold strides in sunray strobes  
but releases bad vibes - she will steal what is yours  
drowning out the others  
rowdy gangs of loud-mouthed lime green parrots descend  
looking for trouble, find it in each other and squabble full-throttle  
told to leave, they fly off screeching obnoxiously  
flirtations cut short, wasted good looks  
two oversized monarch butterflies, striped and striking  
flutter in, park gingerly at the flower power bar

bashful they fold their wings, sip cocktails, eyes only for each other  
it's too noisy, not their scene  
they float away coupled and blushing  
a lizard darts onto the dance floor, stops abruptly  
looks to see who is watching and performs ten push-ups, no sweat  
avian audience is unimpressed, ignores the imposter  
a featherless distant cousin, not their type anyway  
drab little brown birds peck at the door to come in  
bouncer checks their id and turns them away  
they beg and chirp objections until  
hawk glides overhead, big stealth dude with authority  
immediate power cut turns the arboreal disco silent and still

## BOOK REVIEW By Marianne Davis

**OWLS OF THE EASTERN ICE: A QUEST TO FIND AND SAVE THE WORLD'S LARGEST OWL**, by Jonathan C. Slaght, copyright 2020, Farrer, Stran, and Giroux. Borrowed from LAPL.

Blakiston's fish owls have a wing span of six feet, and stand over two feet tall, and look like a large fluffy bear that can fly. They are well-suited for the frozen, hostile environment of the Kahbarovsky Province of Russia.

Jonathan Slaght embarked on a five year thesis study of these huge owls, that were poorly understood until he and his Russian colleagues spent quality, uncomfortable time studying them. The freezing weather, icy rivers that the owls hunt around, and the challenges of transport in that region make one realize that Slaght is one of those tough breeds of scientists that seem to thrive on bad conditions. His work provides insight not only into the owls, but the locals of the area, and his work continues to help conserve this rare species and others like it.

<https://jonathanslaght.com/praise-for-owls-of-the-eastern-ice/> 🐦

## SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

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

If you want to join or renew by check, please be sure to include your e-mail address if you want to receive an acknowledgment. We can no longer thank you by regular mail. If you do not have an e-mail 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).

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## Phainopepla

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

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

#### **WE ARE HIRING!**

**Well, actually we are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help us conserve bird habitats. Choose a conservation topic you're passionate about and we'll help you make a real difference for our feathered friends.**

Our mission is to carefully analyze various threats to, and engage in programs to improve, the lives of our local and migrating avian friends. Within the limits of our resources we try to address issues relating to all wildlife habitats, including open space preservation, wildlife corridors, climate change, chemical and trash pollution, invasive human activities, regulatory and legislative activities, and others. **We could do so much more with your help!**

- We advocate for legislation and regulation to preserve and expand avian habitats in the San Fernando Valley and beyond, by Zoom and other communications (until in-person meetings are possible).
- We participate in activities to preserve open space and wildlife corridors in those geographies where we have, or might have, influence.
- We monitor new and ongoing local, state and federal projects and programs for weaknesses and adverse impacts on wildlife habitats.
- We encourage, sponsor and conduct wildlife habitat improvements including site cleanups and drought-resistant, bird friendly native plant propagation, as well as prevention of window strikes.
- We subscribe to the activities and initiatives of our state Audubon organization
- We subscribe to the activities and initiatives of National Audubon Society.
- We partner with other non-profit organizations where our goals coincide, including the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area Steering Committee.
- We financially support non-profit organizations which make a difference in meeting our Chapter conservation goals (see the April/May 2021 *Phainopepla* for details).

We do all these things with the understanding that we are acting on behalf of our 1,800+ members of the San Fernando Valley and beyond. **Therefore, we need your input and assistance to prioritize our actions and expenditures, and to expand our influence through our actions.**

If any, or all, of these activities or programs are of interest to you, please contact Dave Weeshoff, Conservation Chair at (818) 618-1652 or Dave.Weeshoff @SFVAudubon.org. We need your opinions and assistance. 🐦