



# Phainopepla

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For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife

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## SPECIAL AUGUST Online Program: Sepulveda Basin Vision Plan

Thursday, August 24, 2023, 7:00—8:30 p.m.

The Sepulveda Basin, particularly the Wildlife Area, is a core territory for the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society and has been the focus for many of our key conservation and education activities. Recently, LA City has commissioned a study with the mission to develop a long-term strategic plan for the future of the Basin with the objectives to:

- Increase resilience of the Basin and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Increase ecosystem function within the Basin using nature-based solutions.
- Create natural functioning of the LA River and Tributaries.
- Improve interface between recreation and ecological areas.
- Improve water quality of streams and outlets entering the Basin.
- Improve multi-modal transportation access to the Basin and within the Basin.
- Enhance recreational, educational, and cultural programming.

**Speakers: Jessica Henson and Richard Lewis III from OLIN a company of landscape architects/urban designers working to create landscapes and urban designs, worldwide.**

We are asking Jessica and Richard to present their developing plan, particularly with respect to the wildlife area and to respond to comments and suggestions from the audience. Zoom details will be emailed in August. If you are not already on our distribution list, [Click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to all events.



### Online General Membership Programs

We hope you will join us for our informative Zoom Programs. [CLICK HERE](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to all events.

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### Let's Talk Pigeons

Thursday, September 28, 2023, 5:00—6:30 p.m.



Pigeons are everywhere and we birders aren't usually excited to see them. But watching pigeons can improve our understanding of our local birds from genetics to behavior to conservation. Plus, their history is endlessly fascinating. This talk by nature cartoonist Rosemary Mosco will have you chuckling while you rethink the pigeon. She will be speaking to our SFV Audubon chapter on September 28 at 5:00 in the evening.

Rosemary makes books and cartoons that connect people with the natural world. Her *Bird and Moon* nature comics won the National Cartoonists Society's award for Best Online Short Form Comic, were the subject of an award-winning exhibit, and have appeared in exhibits at AAAS headquarters and the Peabody Essex Museum.

She makes science books for kids and adults, and gives engaging keynotes. She has written and drawn for *The New York Times*, *Audubon*, *Ranger Rick* magazine, and more. She has also judged a bird tattoo contest, and her favorite glacial landform is the Esker. If you are not already on our distribution list, [Click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to all events.



## Birdathon 2023 Wrap-up By Richard Davis

A big thank you to all our walk leaders and our generous donors.

[We are so glad and thankful you came to join us.](#)

**B**irdathon 2023, our major annual fundraising event, officially ended May 31. We want to thank all our donors for their generous support and we send special thanks to all our walk leaders who have shown their long-term devotion to SFVAS. It is your unstinting generosity that allows us to reach our goals.

These are the species counts for all Birdathon events. Overall, 138 different bird species were observed.

For each Birdathon event, the teams were able to observe birds not witnessed by any of the other teams.

<u>Team Leader</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Total Species</u>
Carolyn Oppenheimer	O'Melveny Park	04/18/2023	33
Unique Observations:	Townsend's Warbler		
Pat Bates	Hansen Dam	04/22/2023	54
Unique Observations:	Belted Kingfisher		
	Warbling Vireo		
	Lawrence's Goldfinch		
	Lark Sparrow		
Art Langton	Hwy 33 Ocean to Mountains	04/28/2023	90
Unique Observations:	American Avocet		
	Brewer's Blackbird		
	Brown-headed Blackbird		
	Bufflehead		
	Cinnamon Teal		
	Clark's Grebe		
	<i>dowitcher, species</i>		
	Eurasian Collared Dove		
	Greater Roadrunner		
	Greater Scaup		
	Greater Yellowlegs		
	Horned Lark		
	Lewis's Woodpecker		
	<i>loon, species</i>		
	Ring-necked Duck		
	Sanderling		
	Snowy Plover		
	Townsend's Solitaire		
	Vesper Sparrow		
	Western Grebe		
	White-faced Ibis		
	Yellow-headed Blackbird		
Kris Ohlenkamp	Sepulveda Basin	05/03/2023	60
Unique Observations:	Black-necked Stilt		
	Egyptian Goose		
	Northern Cardinal		
	Scaly-breasted Munia		
	Western Sandpiper		
Muriel and Allan Kotin	Malibu & Nearby	05/04/2023	62
Unique Observations:	Royal Tern		
	Merlin		
	Red-crowned Parrot		

<b>Charlie Wilken</b> <b>Unique Observations:</b>	<b>Aliso Canyon Park</b> Blue-gray Gnatcatcher Costa's Hummingbird	<b>05/06/2023</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>John and Andrew Willis</b> <b>Unique Observations:</b>	<b>Palos Verdes</b> Black Skimmer California Gnatcatcher Eared Grebe Pacific Loon Pelagic Cormorant Peregrine Falcon	<b>05/06/2023</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Paula Orlovich</b> <b>Unique Observations:</b>	<b>Franklin Canyon Park</b> Green Heron	<b>05/13/2023</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Katheryn and Dave Barton</b> <b>Unique Observations:</b>	<b>Malibu State Park</b> Northern Rough-winged Swallow <i>yellow-bellied kingbird sp.</i>	<b>05/21/2023</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Luisa Bergeron &amp; Rebecca Marschall</b> <b>Unique Observations:</b>	<b>O'Melveny- Young Birders</b> Western Bluebird (Eggs and Hatchlings)	<b>05/28/2023</b>	<b>20</b>

This table shows the 138 species seen (in alphabetical order). For a list of bird sightings by leader [Click Here](#).

Acorn Woodpecker	Caspian Tern	<i>loon, species</i>	Tree Swallow
Allen's Hummingbird	Cassin's Kingbird	Mallard	Turkey Vulture
American Avocet	Cedar Waxwing	Merlin	Vesper Sparrow
American Coot	Cinnamon Teal	Mourning Dove	Violet-green swallow
American Crow	Clark's Grebe	Nanday Parakeet	Warbling Vireo
American Goldfinch	Cliff Swallow	Northern Cardinal	Western Bluebird
American Kestrel	Common Raven	Northern Mockingbird	Western Grebe
American Robin	Common Yellowthroat	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Western Gull
Anna's Hummingbird	Cooper's Hawk	Nuttall's Woodpecker	Western Kingbird
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Costa's Hummingbird	Oak Titmouse	Western Sandpiper
Barn Swallow	Dark-eyed Junco	Orange-crowned Warbler	Western Tanager
Bell's Vireo	Double-crested Cormorant	Osprey	Whimbrel
Belted Kingfisher	<i>dowitcher, species</i>	Pacific Loon	White-breasted Nuthatch
Bewick's Wren	Eared Grebe	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	White-crowned Sparrow
Black Phoebe	Egyptian Goose	Pelagic Cormorant	White-faced Ibis
Black Skimmer	Elegant Tern	Peregrine Falcon	White-throated Swift
Black-chinned	Eurasian Collared Dove	Phainopepla	Wilson's Warbler
Black-crowned Night-Heron	European Starling	Pied-billed Grebe	Wrentit
Black-headed Grosbeak	Forster's Tern	Red-Crowned Parrot	Yellow Warbler
Black-necked Stilt	Gadwall	Red-shouldered Hawk	Yellow-breasted Chat
Black-throated Gray Warbler	Great Blue Heron	Red-tailed Hawk	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Blue Grosbeak	Great Egret	Red-winged Blackbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Great-tailed Grackle	Ring-billed Gull	
Bonaparte's Gull	Greater Roadrunner	Ring-necked Duck	
Brandt's Cormorant	Greater Scaup	Rock Dove	
Brewer's Blackbird	Greater Yellowlegs	Royal Tern	
Brown Pelican	Green Heron	Ruddy Duck	
Brown-headed Blackbird	Heermann's Gull	Rufous Hummingbird	
Brown-headed Cowbird	Hooded Oriole	Sanderling	
Bufflehead	Horned Lark	Scaly-breasted Munia	
Bullock's Oriole	House Finch	<i>scoter, species</i>	
Bushtit	House Sparrow	Snowy Egret	
California Gnatcatcher	House Wren	Snowy Plover	
California Gull	Killdeer	Song Sparrow	
California Quail	Lark Sparrow	Spotted Towhee	
California Scrub-Jay	Lawrence's Goldfinch	Surf Scoter	
California Thrasher	Lazuli Bunting	Townsend's Solitaire	
California Towhee	Lesser Goldfinch	Townsend's Warbler	
Canada Goose	Lewis's Woodpecker		



# Birdathon 2023 Finale: Young Birder's Event *By Richard Davis*



For the final Birdathon 2023 event, we joined up with The Young Birders, an SFVAS sponsored program that is currently run by Luisa Bergeron and Rebecca Marschall. Young Birder's walks take place once a month, typically the last Sunday of the month, at a rotating set of sites including Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, O'Melveny Park, Franklin Canyon Park, and more parks around the San Fernando Valley. These walks take young birders and their families on a slower-paced and more relaxed exploration of the outdoors and the birds, plants, and other interesting natural stuff that may be encountered.

If you would like to learn more about the young birders program, you can check out Young Birders on the SFVAS website or contact Luisa or Rebecca by email ([youngbirders@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:youngbirders@sfvaudubon.org)).

For this event, we brought sample nests that could be seen and touched. I always find it astonishing that the nest design is genetically determined. The Bluebird builds a shallow nest mostly with grass and long pine needles. The Nuthatch builds a soft felt-like nest, perhaps with Cottonwood cotton. And the wren completely fills the cavity with relatively coarse sticks and then adds a small feather-lined pocket on top at the back of the cavity. With no formal training, each species energetically seeks out the perfect material to build a nest in the style that is encoded in its DNA.



For today's walk, we also brought our 15-foot selfie stick to peek inside our new "Slot Boxes" with a cellphone camera. Our conventional Bluebird nesting box has an entry-hole designed to just allow a bluebird in but to exclude larger predators and competitors. The Slot box entry has the same vertical dimension but extends horizontally to the full width of the nesting box. So far, no complaints from any of our cavity-nesters.

## What a difference a week makes!!



These pairs of pictures are from three different nesting boxes. For each nesting box, the picture on the right was taken during our Birdathon event with young birders. The picture on the left was taken of the same box, one week earlier.

Like many birds, bluebirds lay eggs, one every day or so, but without incubation. Once they have produced enough eggs for a full clutch (4-6 eggs for bluebirds) they begin incubation, keeping the eggs warm with constant body contact. Because the eggs only show rapid development after incubation begins, all the eggs develop simultaneously, most often hatching on the same day. Thus, for the nesting box shown in the left picture-pair, there was only an increase in the number of eggs (from 2-5) over the a week.

For the middle picture-pair, we started with four eggs and, clearly, over the intervening week, incubation and hatching occurred. So, at the end, we get to see Dad Bluebird, determinedly continuing nesting duties, with at least one chick, hatched and waiting for food.

For the right hand picture pair, hatching had already occurred at the first week when we saw fuzzy chicks, one or two days old. And, one week later, we see marked feather development and the beginnings of that characteristic blue color.

## Calendar of Events

To reach an event leader you may call our forwarding message service at [\(747\) 237-3720](tel:7472373720)

### AUGUST 2023

**Sunday, August 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. Park in the lot and walk past the low, rock-faced buildings to our meeting place on the other side of the buildings. Leader: Alexander deBarros, [Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org).

**Sunday, August 20. Malibu Creek State Park. 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: Kathryn Barton and David Barton. [kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org).



**Thursday, August 24. SPECIAL General Membership Meeting: Sepulveda Basin Plan. Online Zoom Program: 7:00–8:30 p.m.**

**SPEAKERS: Jessica Henson and Richard Lewis III** from OLIN a company of landscape architects/urban designers working to create landscapes and urban designs, worldwide.

We are asking Jessica and Richard to present their developing plan, particularly with respect to the wildlife area and to respond to comments and suggestions from the audience. Zoom details will be emailed in August. If you are not already on our distribution list, [Click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to all events.

**Saturday, August 26. Hansen Dam Birding 8:00–11:00 a.m.** 10965 Dronfield Avenue, Pacoima. Directions: Take the Foothill/Osborne exit from the 210 Freeway, go right (east) on Foothill, to Osborne (1st light), go left, then left again at Dronfield. Meet in the lower parking lot (down the hill from the Ranger Station). If the lower level or the gate is locked, park either on the upper level or street and meet at the Ranger Station. Accessibility is excellent for this site, which is entirely on a packed dirt road. Leader: Pat Bates, [pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org).



### SEPTEMBER 2023

**Sunday, September 3. 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. Park in the lot and walk past the low, rock-faced buildings to our meeting place on the other side of the buildings. Leader: Alexander deBarros, [Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org).

**Thursday, September 14. A Bird Sit with Nature Journaling, O'Melveny Park. 10:00–11:30 a.m.** If you would like to mindfully connect with birds and all of nature, join us at O'Melveny Park—at the picnic tables near the bathrooms. (Rain cancels and moves it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday.)



What to bring: a cushion or a comfortable chair, a beverage/snack, binoculars, a journal, and something to write/draw with. This event is limited to 10 people. To reserve a spot, contact Diana Keeney at [diana.keeney@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:diana.keeney@sfvaudubon.org) or Teri Carnesciali at [teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org).

**Sunday, September 17. Malibu Creek State Park. 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: Kathryn Barton and David Barton. [kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org).

**Tuesday, September 19. Weekday Wander at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 9:00–11:00 a.m.** Directions: Take the 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway and exit at Balboa Blvd. Turn north, driving two miles to Sesnon, turn left going west 0.6 miles, turn right at park entrance. Meet in the parking lot. RAIN CANCELS. Contact Carolyn Oppenheimer at [c.oppenheimer@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:c.oppenheimer@sfvaudubon.org).

**Saturday, September 23. Hansen Dam Birding. 8:00–11:00 a.m.** 10965 Dronfield Avenue, Pacoima. Directions: Take the Foothill/Osborne exit from the 210 Freeway, go right (east) on Foothill, to Osborne (1st light), go left, then left again at Dronfield. Meet in the lower parking lot (down the hill from the Ranger Station). If the lower level or the gate is locked, park either on the upper level or street and meet at the Ranger Station. Accessibility is excellent for this site, which is entirely on a packed dirt road. Leader: Pat Bates, [pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org).

**Sunday, September 24. Young Birders Group. 9–11:00 a.m.** This walk is recommended for young beginning birders. We will have binoculars to share, but if you have your own, don't forget to bring them! If you're planning on coming, please send us a quick e-mail at [youngbirders@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:youngbirders@sfvaudubon.org) so we have an idea of how many folks to expect. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions, suggestions for walk locations, or anything else. Please check our website for updates. E-mail Luisa and/or Rebecca at [YoungBirders@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:YoungBirders@sfvaudubon.org) for more information and we will add you to our e-mail list.

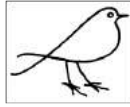
**Thursday, September 28. General Membership Zoom Meeting 5:00–6:30 p.m. SPEAKER:**

**Cartoonist, Rosemary Mosco.** Pigeons are everywhere and we birders aren't usually excited to see them. But watching pigeons can improve our understanding of our local birds from genetics to behavior to conservation. Plus, their history is endlessly fascinating. This talk by nature cartoonist Rosemary Mosco will have you chuckling while you rethink the pigeon. If you are not already on our distribution list, [Click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to all events.



## 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 can be contacted at (818) 340-2347 or at [alan.pollack@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:alan.pollack@sfvaudubon.org).



# Bird Sit Bulletin



by Teri Carnesciali

When we hold our monthly Bird Sit with Nature Journaling at O'Melveny Park, we frequently have the pleasure of seeing Western Bluebirds. We've observed these beautiful birds perching and flying among the pines, foraging on the ground, flycatching as well as mating. Their brilliant blue coloration certainly catches the eye of our participants. A couple of them recorded their sightings on the journal pages shown here.

Western bluebirds build their nests in cavities that woodpeckers created but are no longer using. The dead trees that woodpeckers rely on are often removed from parks so not all bluebirds are able to find suitable nest sites. Members of our chapter have been working to address that situation for a long time. For the last thirteen years SFVAS member Carolyn Oppenheimer has been monitoring and maintaining nest boxes in some public parks. She's been assisted by several volunteers, recently including Natalie

Beckman-Smith and Luisa Bergeron. The bluebirds have definitely accepted and are utilizing the nest boxes. Some of the birders in our bird sit group have seen them bringing food to the nestlings in one of the bluebird boxes built by another member, Richard Davis. The nest boxes at O'Melveny are monitored by Richard and his wife, Marianne. Our thanks to all our wonderful volunteers supporting the bluebirds!

You can learn more about helping Western Bluebird populations from the Southern California Bluebird Club at [www.socalbluebirds.org](http://www.socalbluebirds.org) and from the California Bluebird Recovery Program at [www.cbrp.org](http://www.cbrp.org).



By Mary Lou Sharp



By Patty Ryan



Photo by Richard Davis

There will be no Bird Sit with Journaling in August. We will meet again in September.

Come and join us!

## Malibu Creek State Park—June Birdwalk

Report by David J. Barton

Last June, SFVAS added to its tradition of successful monthly bird walks at Malibu Creek State Park. A group of fourteen birders—regulars, beginners, and experienced—covered about 2.5 miles and turned up a total of 50 species in about four hours in this riparian oak woodland in of the Santa Monica Mountains. Cool weather, including early morning overcast skies which eventually yielded to gently sunny conditions, made the walk particularly pleasant. The group enjoyed terrific views of Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, California Quail, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and a treeful of Northern Rough-winged and Tree Swallows. The songs of Oak Titmice, House Wrens, and Yellow Warbler were frequently heard, and Ash-throated Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, California and Spotted Towhee, Nuttall's, Acorn and Downy Woodpecker, Anna's and Allen's Hummingbirds, Phainopepla and an American Kestrel were also seen. A skulking Yellow-breasted Chat was heard by all and seen by a few.



A full list of the birds observed can be found at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S142014415>. SFVAS conducts bird walks at Malibu Creek State Park on the third Sunday of each month. For details, consult the SFVAS events calendar at <https://www.sfvaudubon.org/events>.

## BIRD COLLECTION AT WORK

by Arthur Langton

During the months of May and June the Chapter along with portions of the mounted bird collection participated in public outreach programs at Placerita Canyon Nature Center Open House on Saturday, May 13, as well as the postponed and rescheduled Chatsworth Nature Preserve Earth Day celebration on the afternoon of Saturday, June 24. Each event was well attended by the public and many contacts between them and the Chapter were made. Forty-five membership allocations were completed and returned along with some small monetary donations. Additional handouts available to interested individuals included flyers on attracting hummingbirds, raptor identification, bird conservation, along with Chatsworth bird checklists. With the assistance of the Davis family and Charlie Wilken time was available to make contacts with other organizations and individuals with similar goals possibly setting the foundation for future networking and collaboration. A short video was produced by the DWP on the afternoon's activities for showing to the LADWP's board of commissioners. Included was a brief but unmistakable view of the Chapter's exhibit and bird display. Fortunately, visitors and exhibitors were blessed with the last of this spring's pleasant weather. Thanks must be extended to the LADWP, the SSMPA, and Sharon Shingai for organizing this event.

**SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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The *PHAINOPEPLA*, published six times a year, is the newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is a non-profit chapter of the National Audubon Society, and is dedicated to "Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife."

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) 425-0962 or e-mail her at [Lynn.Maddox@sfvaudubon.org](mailto:Lynn.Maddox@sfvaudubon.org).

For Chapter leaders' e-mail addresses, see our Website: [www.SFVAudubon.org](http://www.SFVAudubon.org)

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## Phainopepla

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## Book Report by Marianne Davis

### ***A MOST REMARKABLE CREATURE: The Hidden Life of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey*, by Jonathan Meiburg**



I got this book from LAPL, thinking it would be another nice non-fiction read on raptors. Boy, was this book ever a surprise! Considering that Meiburg is a travel bug, likes history of the planet, and a bandleader (Shearwater), I should have known better. Far from being a tome on caracaras, it also traces planet history, how Darwin reacted to these astonishing birds, and all about William Henry Hudson (whom I had never heard of), who admired them. Reading about Hudson got me to read an article about him, "The Naturalist Who Inspired Ernest Hemingway and Many Others to Love the Wilderness," by Patrick Symmes, May 2017, and here's the link for you online readers: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/naturalist-ernest-hemingway-others-love-wilderness-180962775/>

Anyway, Hudson was even more attuned to our current feelings that all animals and creatures were sentient and had their own right to be on the planet, even critiquing Darwin's simpler way of attributing everything to being a lesser form to humans. So, he was ahead of his time. He also was one of the first to acknowledge that pheromones had great potential for study, beyond anything humans could imagine.

The biggest population of caracaras seems to be in the Falklands, some on the plains of Patagonia, Peru, and Guyana. There are different types of them, but they all seem to be incredibly smart, adapt to everything, and unfortunately adapt well to adjacency to humans, which gets them killed. They are ancient, as fossil evidence shows them keeping company with South American giant sloths, mammoths, and bears twice the size of our current grizzlies. Ancient Incas revered them. There are even ancient caracara bones found in the La Brea tar pits, where a mural suggests what the area might have looked like 20,000 years ago; the caracara lurks in the lower right corner. A fossil bird found in the Pampas, is named *Caracara major*, and was as large as a bald eagle, the largest falcon ever found, an eight-foot wingspan. Condors are the nearest relatives surviving in our area now.

One of the best spots for viewing caracaras is, interestingly, on the way to Antarctica. In Ushuaia, Argentina (where all the cruise ships depart for Antarctica), the city dump always has a bunch of them on hand. I intend to check them out when we finally get there. (*They were indeed there in great numbers.*)