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For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife

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Online General Membership Programs

We hope you will join us for our informative Zoom Programs.

[CLICK HERE](#), to signup and receive a link prior to all events.

—Reminder—

**No General Membership Meetings June-August.
See you in September!**

Have a great summer

Birdathon it's not too late to donate!

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To reach an event leader or board member call our Chapter Phone Number
(747) 237-3720
Number is a Message Forwarding Service

Annual Awards Luncheon

“Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Future”

Saturday, June 8, 2024

Noon

Braemar Country Club

Tarzana

Honorees:

Kris Ohlenkamp, 2024 Service Award

California Wildlife Center, 2024 Conservation Award



KRIS OHLENKAMP

In 1975 I joined the National Audubon Society because of the magazine and my interest in the environmental movement. I knew nothing about birds. I became active in the chapter about three years later when I met the chapter leadership at a California Audubon convention at Asilomar State Park. I asked the President (Bob Smith) what I could do and immediately became his right-hand-man. Some of those tasks actually involved birds, so I decided to attend one of the Chapter's walks and see what that was all about. I saw a Killdeer in a spotting scope and it changed my life. A few years later I realized that the Los Angeles River in the Sepulveda Basin was rarely "birded"—even on the Christmas Bird Count. So I began birding there and eventually started leading monthly walks. I led walks there for a little over 40 years and have now seen 220+ species. Because of its location, popularity and habitat diversity it is now one of the premier birding locations in Los Angeles County—286 species have now been recorded there. But it wasn't all fun. I became the Chapters Conservation Chairman early in the 1980s and served in that role whenever I wasn't President (two terms each in the 80's, 90's and 00's). I coordinated our 100th anniversary banquet, oversaw the transfer of member Marjorie Holms estate, and had several battles with the Corps of Engineers, and others, regarding the Sepulveda Basin. I was often way out of my comfort zone and could not have survived without the assistance and support of many Chapter members. The Basin was my home and those members were my family. Now I live in Ventura County and am actively volunteering with Ventura Land Trust and Friends of Condors Wild and Free.

THE CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE CENTER

The wonderful care that California Wildlife Center provides to local native animals has inspired San Fernando Valley Audubon to honor CWC with this year's Conservation Award. Their core work is the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned native wildlife. CWC is one of the few rehabilitation centers in the area and the only facility in LA County permitted to rehabilitate mule deer fawns, coyote pups, crows,

ravens, and hatchling and fledgling songbirds. In addition, they treat both land and marine animals. More than 170 species of animals have been treated by the CWC. Animals are accepted 365 days a year either directly from the public or from veterinarians and other animal care centers. There is no charge to the public when they bring in a needy animal. They operate the facility through donations and grants. That this organization exists brings comfort to all who care about the survival of our local native animals. 🐾

Birdathon 2024 Is Almost Over!



Thanks to everyone for keeping an eye out for us.

Birdathon, our major fundraising event for the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, runs from April 1 to May 31 so, we are almost done for this year. The table shows the number of species reported by each team leader.

Team Leader(s)	Location	Date	Total Species
Kris Ohlenkamp	Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve	April 7	62
Alexander deBarros	Santa Monica Mountains	April 15	93
Carolyn Oppenheimer	O'Melveny Park	April 16	36
Katheryn & David Barton	Malibu Creek State Park	April 21	54
Luisa Bergeron & Rebecca Marschall	O'Melveny Park —YOUNG BIRDERS EVENT	April 28	46
Allan & Muriel Kotin	Malibu and nearby	May 2	64
Charlie Wilken	Aliso Canyon Park	May 5	27
Art Langton	Highway 33: From the ocean to the mountains	May 6	90
Paula Orlovich & Jolene Herz	Serrania Park, Woodland Hills	May 12	26
John & Andrew Willis	Palos Verdes Peninsula	May13	47
Lori Willis Memorial Fund			
Pat Bates	Hansen Dam	May 25	35

A **BIG THANKS** to all these team leaders who donate their efforts year after year. And of course, we want to thank all of you who have given your generous support.

Have you donated? It's not too late. But **HURRY!!**

Make your Pledge or Donate Now by clicking [HERE](#) or by scanning the QR code.

(www.sfvaudubon.org/thank-you-for-supporting-birdathon/)



For a complete list of all the bird species found by each team, click here:

[Birdathon 2024 Species List](#)

Teams for Birdathon 2024 spotted a total of 155 species. But, because of birding in different environments and bird-spotting skills and luck, several teams spotted species unique to their walk.

Pat Bates

Hansen Dam

Total Species: 35
Unique Species: 1

- Rock Wren

Alexander deBarros

Santa Monica Mountains

Total Species: 93
Unique Species: 10

- Canyon Wren
- Common Poorwill
- Green-winged Teal
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- Red-throated Loon
- Royal Tern
- Rufous-crowned Sparrow
- Vesper Sparrow
- Western Grebe

Muriel and Allan Kotin

Malibu and Nearby

Total Species: 64
Unique Species: 4

- Common Loon
- Forster's Tern
- Pacific-slope Flycatcher
- Red-crowned Parrot

Art Langton

Highway 33: Ocean to Mtns

Total Species: 90
Unique Species: 15

- American Robin
- Barn Owl
- Bufflehead
- Eurasian Collared Dove
- Golden Eagle
- Greater Scaup
- Lark Sparrow

- Loggerhead Shrike
- Rock Dove
- Sabine's Gull
- Sanderling
- Snowy Plover
- Steller's Jay
- Western Sandpiper
- White-faced Ibis

Marschall-Bergeron

O'Melveny- Young Birders

Total Species: 46
Unique Species: 5

- Black-chinned Hummingbird
- Black-throated Gray Warbler
- Hermit Warbler
- Vermilion Flycatcher
- Western Wood-Pewee

Kris Ohlenkamp

Sepulveda Basin

Total Species: 62
Unique Species: 5

- Bell's Vireo
- Belted Kingfisher
- Egyptian Goose
- Green Heron
- Neotropic Cormorant

John and Andrew Willis

Palos Verdes

Total Species: 47
Unique Species: 4

- California Gnatcatcher
- Downy Woodpecker
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Ruddy Turnstone



On May 23, 2024 we held our first in-person/hybrid General Membership meeting at the Tarzana Community & Cultural Center. After some minor technical difficulties we enjoyed listening to our speaker, Will McLean Greeley, via Zoom, with our new Owl Video Conference camera (perfect for a bird meeting.) Our annual election was held, a recap of our yearly activities and accomplishments, and refreshments were served. It meant for a delightful evening. See you at the next one!



SFVAS GO Native Mid-Valley YMCA Project

By Pat Bates 5/2/2024

On April 14, 2024 Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel (D-Encino) was joined by multiple volunteers and other elected officials who participated in nearly 20 service projects across the San Fernando Valley as part of the Assemblymember's Third Annual Valley Day of Service.

One of the many service projects was at the Mid-Valley YMCA in Van Nuys, a vibrant organization which provides multiple community services. In connection with Asm. Gabriel's Day of Service, the YMCA wanted to have a native plant pollinator garden planted in a 90' x 13' strip of land which divides a public sidewalk from their pre-school walkway. One caveat—it could not attract honeybees!

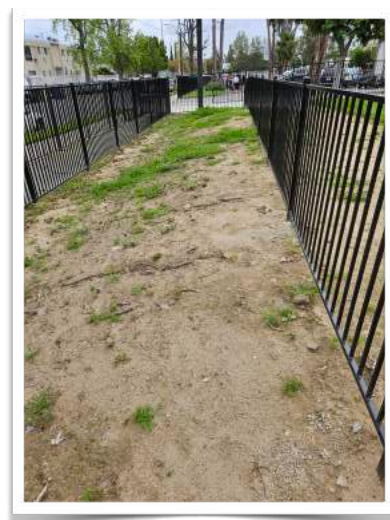
Although the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society was a late entrant to this project, it was right down our alley! By request, a bug and bird but not so much honey bee friendly design was created by SFVAS. It includes our wonderful native Toyon, Epilobium, Yarrow, California Sagebrush, Buckwheat, and some Santa Catalina Island Bush Mallow donated by Pat Bates from SFVAS. Lots of native Narrow-Leaf Milkweed was donated by the Santa Monica Mountains Fund, along with the loan of many shovels! SFVAS purchased and delivered the rest of the plants, many from Matilija Nursery which gave us a generous discount.

The day of the planting event proved to be interesting, challenging and ultimately beneficial. Nearing the end of our Southern California rainy season, it rained! Pat Bates from SFVAS was there early along with Oscar Rodriguez and Lionnel Zaragoza from the Mid-Valley YMCA to bring the plants out from their secure location and place them where they would be planted. As the milkweed were quite young and delicate, Pat & Oscar planted them, marking them with flags in hope they would not be trampled once the large number of volunteers arrived. Delivery of several cubic yards of mulch had also been arranged and it awaited the project.

Eventually the constant rain slowed a bit and miraculously a large group of volunteers from Northeast Valley Health Corporation and a few independent volunteers arrived! It was time to grab shovels and slip-slide in the mud digging holes in the gentle slope, with flags going on each new plant inserted. Surprisingly quickly, all the plants were in their new homes in very wet soil and the job of hauling the mulch in, bucket by bucket began. At the end, the strip was transformed just in time for the skies to open up to miraculously water the new garden.

We at SFVAS welcome this type of project at just about any location, be it a commercial, government, or other property. The mission of our project is to promote and expand bird and bug friendly habitat throughout our area—contact us at info@sfvaudubon.org.

Before and After's



Calendar of Events

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

JUNE 2024

Sunday, June 2. 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.



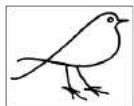
Saturday, June 8. Annual Awards Luncheon. Braemar Country Club. Noon. Join us as we honor Kris Ohlenkamp with our Service Award and California Wildlife Center with our Conservation Award.

Thursday, June 13. 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 3rd 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 Teri Carnesciali at teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org. Co-leader: Mary Lou Sharp.

No General Membership Meetings June–August
Have a great summer!

Sunday, June 16. 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: Katheryn Barton and David Barton. kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org.

Bird Sit Bulletin By Mary Lou Sharp



Have you ever tried a “bird sit” instead of going on a bird walk? In a bird sit we quietly observe the environment and write about or sketch the birds, plants, hills, sky—whatever catches our eye or ear that day. Steviann and David Yanowitz, regular bird sit attendees, recently commented, “The bird sit is a lovely vacation/staycation from our routine. We spend a very peaceful time relaxing with sweet, kind and sensitive people who teach us about the many local birds—sharing our thoughts, experiences, poems and drawings away from the normal hubbub of life. What a treat!”

To reserve your spot, contact Teri Carnesciali at teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org. Beginning birders are always welcome and no artistic talent is needed. Bring your binoculars or a camera, a notebook or journal and something to write or draw with. We meet in the picnic area near the restrooms in O'Melveny Park in Granada Hills on the 2nd Thursday of every month except July and August. Rain cancels the bird sit and it moves to the 3rd Thursday.



Saturday, June 22. Hansen Dam Birding 8:00—11:00 a.m. 10965 Dronfield Ave., Pacoima, CA. Dronfield Ave. intersects Osborne St. approximately ½ mile south of Foothill Blvd. Turn into the park on Dronfield, and meet near the ranger station. Accessibility is good for this site which is mostly on a packed dirt road. Leader: Pat Bates, pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org.

Sunday, June 30. Young Birders Group. 9:00—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 plan to join us, please send us a quick e-mail at 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 for more information and we will add you to our e-mail list.

JULY 2024

Sunday, July 7. 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.

Sunday, July 21. 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: Katheryn Barton and David Barton. kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, July 27. Hansen Dam Birding. 8:15—11:00 a.m. 10965 Dronfield Ave., Pacoima, CA. Dronfield Ave. intersects Osborne St. approximately ½ mile south of Foothill Blvd. Turn into the park on Dronfield, and meet near the ranger station. Accessibility is good for this site which is mostly on a packed dirt road. Leader: Pat Bates, pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org.



David & Steviann Yanowitz

Birdathon 2024 at Malibu Creek State Park

By David J. Barton

Heavy fog blanketed Las Virgenes Road as Kathy and I approached Malibu Creek State Park on April 21, 2024. Our hearts sank as we wondered how many birds we would be able to observe in heavy pea soup as part of our fundraiser for Birdathon. We need not have worried—by mid-morning the haze burned away, leaving warm sun and clear blue skies.



Our count group was eighteen strong, and eager to hit the paths through the chaparral and riparian oak woodland of this gem of the Santa Monica Mountains. The group included not only regulars and experienced birders, but also neophytes excited at the possibility of a lifebird. The ages ranged from ten to “senior citizen.” This year, we were joined by a group of UCLA students studying environmental sciences, one of whom graciously volunteered to carry our scope.



Avian vocalizing was active as soon as we arrived, allowing us to tick Bewick's Wren, House Finch, Spotted Towhee, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, American Crow, Acorn Woodpecker, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Nanday Parakeet, and Ash-throated Flycatcher before we even left the parking lot. We then quickly turned up our first of many House Wrens (singing wildly), crushing scope views of a singing male Blue Grosbeak, and a pair of Lazuli Buntings. Serenaded almost continuously by the song of Yellow Warblers, we logged Red-tailed Hawk, Orange-crowned Warbler, Western Bluebird, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Heading down Crag's Road along the creek, we encountered Mallard, Great Blue Heron, late-in-the-season Lewis's Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Bullock's Orioles and Black-headed Grosbeak. At the visitor's center, we enjoyed the dizzying acrobatics of Cliff Swallows nesting under the bridge, as well as a Double-crested Cormorant fishing in the creek.

Taking a tally, we were pleased to have counted 54 species of bird that morning, (our “neophyte” birder got an amazing 44 lifers!) and even more pleased to have generated proceeds for the worthy cause of environmental education. 🐦

2024 BIRDATHON REPORT ALONG HIGHWAY 33

Unlike last year when the section of Highway 33 between Ojai and Lockwood Valley Road was closed due to washouts and slippages from the succession of atmospheric rivers which drenched Southern California, this spring the highway was officially declared open, sort of. Pavement patching was evident, frequent, and obvious throughout the section through the mountains with several sections of single lane road serving both directions under the guidance of automatic signals over sections of incomplete or pending repairs frequently where the downhill side of the road had slipped into oblivion. Delays, wait times for signal changes varied from 5 to 15 minutes depending on the length of single lane road under signal control.

Usually the day starts at Marina Park, Ventura, but not this year. The walkway from the Park out to the jetties, breakwater, and main harbor channel was closed due to recent storm damage so Arnold Road and Ormond Beach served as a closeby and alternative starting point. Here were found flocks of migrating flocks of Whimbrels, Sanderlings, Surf Scoters plus a single Snowy Plover using US Naval fencing as protection from unwelcome intruders. The only warbler of the day, a Common Yellowthroat, was recorded here. Enjoying the seasonally wet playa were a number of gulls including Western, Ring-billed, California, Bonaparte's, and Sabine's, this latter easily identified by the W-shaped, triangular pattern of the grayish tones across its mantle.

Then up the road for a three mile detour up and back through La Canada Larga. As in years past, over a dozen vultures were present augmented in variety by kingbirds, an Ash-throated Flycatcher, Lazuli Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks, Western Bluebirds, and a Loggerhead Shrike. Highlighting this side trip was locating two owls, Barn and Great Horned. Nearby Foster's Park was skipped for the second year in a row as it's still closed due to the flooding of the Ventura River winter 2023.

Ojai Meadows provided singing Song Sparrows, more Red-winged Blackbirds, grackles, and a Spotted Towhee. From here, on to Wheeler Gorge, inaccessible last year but still worth a visit and close inspection. Both Steller's and Scrub Jays were present along with Band-tailed Pigeons, Phainopeplas, a Black-headed Grosbeak, American Robin, Hooded Oriole, and at least a dozen or more migrating Western Tanagers.

Rose Valley Lakes and campground seemed unusually quiet birdwise, but did contribute several Lark Sparrows, a Golden Eagle, and two Lewis's Woodpeckers.

The usual collection of swallows were distributed over parts of all areas visited. Despite reaching a count total of ninety species, this was achieved despite only one warbler sighting, and the total absence of any vireos, wrens, swifts, empid flycatchers or pewees. Strange to be sure, but then every year seems peculiar, unusual, unique or strange in some way along Highway 33. These are the traits, however, that make spring birding along it interesting, challenging, and worth doing in support of a good and worthy cause.

—Art Langton 🐦

Allan and Muriel Kotin's Malibu Area 2024 Birdathon - Thursday, May 2

Birding while Breakfasting: Still somewhat asleep, we breakfasted from 7:00-7:15. We watched a flock of **Brown Pelicans (#1)** fly upcoast over the shore. The ubiquitous **American Crows (#2)** flew around the roofs below us. Twittering **House Finches (#3)** flew over our roof, no doubt towards the well-visited feeder our neighbor across the street has put up on her balcony. A **Black Phoebe (#4)** sallied forth to grab a hapless insect that tried to fly past. Then the phoebe returned to the roof to await attempted passage by another yummy(?) morsel. Thus began our 2024 Birdathon, a 24-hour search for as many species of birds as we can find and identify. It was part of the wildlife show we love watching from our kitchen and eating area. The weather was much more pleasant than last year. We had bright light under partly cloudy skies and comfortably cool temperatures. As always, our Birdathon is dedicated to raising money for San Fernando Valley Audubon's Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP).



A Male House Finch Posing at Malibu Creek

In Motion: As we pulled out of our garage at 7:20, we saw another species that regularly visits the neighbor's feeder, a pair of **Mourning Doves (#5)**. Driving down Zuma Bay Way, our development's main street, we saw a **Dark-eyed Junco (#6)** flying from a kangaroo plant in the median, probably heading to the popular feeder. Soon we were driving along



Pelicans and Gulls from Westward Beach Road

Westward Beach Road, which we drove as far as possible, turning around just short of the picturesque headlands you see in many commercials and that rock climbers enjoy scaling. Our first "beach bird" was predictably a **Western Gull (#7)** resting on the sand. We found **Whimbrels (#8)**, **Heermann's Gulls (#9)**, and **California Gulls (#10)** on the wet sand below the road. On the ocean were a couple of **Double-crested Cormorants (#11)** and some less expected birds. There were two species of loon: a **Pacific Loon (#12)** and a **Common Loon (#13)** as well as a **Surf Scoter (#14)**, a kind of sea duck. We felt lucky to find these sea birds that have largely migrated away after wintering on our local ocean waters. We found a sea lion, too, always a treat to see. Driving back toward the parking exit, we found only one more species, a **Red-tailed Hawk (#15)**. This, our most common bird of

prey, was the only species of raptor we would find today.

We turned up Birdview Avenue at 7:40. Near the end of the steep U-curve, just before the residential area of Point Dume, a tiny **Bushtit (#16)** flew across the steep road. Being in nuclear family mode for nesting season, it was alone, instead of being with a flock of its kind as they are most of the year. We ignored a rare empty parking space for the headlands, considering Allan's tumble last year and continued driving back to PCH. A **Western Kingbird (#17)** did its thing, flycatching, using a phone wire as its perch. Western Kingbirds are found here only in the spring and summer.

8:20 AM, Malibu Creek State Park: Friend and team member Judy Howell arrived here promptly at 8:15, unlike us. She greeted us with her sightings of a **California Towhee (#18)** and a pair of roadway **Mallards (#19)**. A more interesting look at a Cal Towhee was a bit later, when I spotted one along the Braille Trail pathway, gathering grasses for a nest. The first **Turkey Vulture (#20)** of the day soared leisurely. An **Acorn Woodpecker (#21)** flew past, disappearing into a live oak tree.



Acorn Woodpecker

We kept noting the call of an Ash-throated Flycatcher in case we didn't see one later. We clearly saw a perched **Pacific-slope Flycatcher (#22)** watching for insects to catch. Flocks of Swallows flew high, presumably chasing after swarms of insects that were invisible to us. Eventually we saw them clearly enough to identify: **Northern Rough-winged (#23)** and **Cliff Swallows (#24)**. An **Anna's Hummingbird (#25)** rested briefly on the roof of the restrooms. A brilliantly blue male **Blue Grosbeak (#26)** sang from a row of shrubs and was joined by a female, she in subtle shades of pale tan.



Male Blue Grosbeak

Several pairs of **Red-crowned Parrots (#27)** flew over the grosbeaks. An **Oak Titmouse (#28)** called while perching in low twigs of an enormous coast live oak. A **Song Sparrow (#29)** sang from higher in the tree. A male **Yellow Warbler (#30)** was a brilliantly yellow summer visitor. Two **Common Ravens (#31)** soared together, likely mates. A **Western Bluebird (#32)** in a shrub added to our sightings of blue birds. A **White-breasted Nuthatch (#33)** flew into a huge, old oak and disappeared until it flew to another location in the same tree, to resume climbing trunks and branches while probing the bark for insects. A **Scrub Jay (#34)**, scolded us, our last new

sighting of blue songbirds for the day. A **Great Blue Heron (#35)** flew high in the sky, looking for a place to land, whether for fish in the creek or small land animals in a field. A family of **House Wrens (#36)** lingered in the remains of an old tree that was burned in the Woolsey Fire, the adults apparently finding grubs or other insects in the dead wood to feed to the (Continued next page)

fledglings. A **Hutton's Vireo (#37)** teased us by quickly disappearing into clumps of oak leaves every time we got a glimpse.

It finally tired of the game and allowed us a good look. As we completed the loop part of the trail, we were less than delighted to find a lowly **House Sparrow (#38)** in this lovely natural park. We usually find this introduced species only in urban spaces, especially the outdoor eating areas of fast-food joints. We more happily watched a **Spotted Towhee (#39)** forage next to the pathway.

After walking back toward our cars on the paved road, we got glimpses of tiny birds in willows along the creek. We finally got enough of a look to identify **Lesser Goldfinches (#40)**. We returned to our cars and drove through the upper parking lot where we found **Barn Swallows (#41)**.



House Wren, its Long Beak a Tool for Prying out Insects



Brilliant Colors of Nanday Parakeet Camouflaging the Bird

They were flying in and out of nests under the eaves of a restroom structure. **10:20 AM, King Gillette Ranch:** Just inside the gates of this nature park we found a large field of unmowed mustard plants, an obvious fire hazard. Then we happily saw large numbers of **Red-winged Blackbirds (#42)** that were nesting in the mustard. They were taking advantage of the cover provided by the unkempt invasive weeds. We parked at the Visitor Center of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. After visiting its elegant restrooms, we watched a flock of **Nanday Parakeets (#43)** fly past, screeching noisily.

We were excited to find swallow nests in the eaves of the main building, our attention attracted there by swallows flying back and forth from the nests. We were able to make out many shapes in the nest openings and thought they were baby swallows until Allan downloaded his photos onto his computer....



Visitor Center Eaves of Its Tower



Closeup of "Swallow Nestlings"

A joke on us. The "baby swallows" turned out to be acorns, many acorns. The local acorn woodpeckers have been storing acorns in the swallow nests.

They are chock full of acorns. We hope a few of the nests are still being used as swallow nests, but all or most have been repurposed. Another cause of a housing shortage? How should we characterize the acorn woodpeckers? Are they rascals, villains, industrious, or creative? Or should we not characterize this unexpected behavior? Too tired to walk, we drove slowly through the roads of King Gillette. A solitary **Canada Goose (#44)** swam on a pond that was covered by a green carpet of duckweed. The goose was unenthusiastically eating the duckweed or maybe it was getting full by the time we saw it.



Canada Goose on Duckweed

The only other new species we found here was a small flock of **European Starlings (#45)**. This is another introduced species of bird that we're not happy to find in our natural lands. We left King Gillette and drove a few miles to the Las Virgenes Creek Restoration Project behind the Starbucks on Agoura Road. We did not linger long, as there were few birds and no new ones. We headed for lunch in Malibu.

11:40 AM, Driving Malibu Canyon: Judy found a **Say's Phoebe (#46)** perched on a plant along the road in the part of Malibu Creek SP that is north of Mulholland. We did not find any new birds at lunch at Ollo.

1:05 PM, Malibu Lagoon: We immediately found **Gadwalls (#47)** close to the first viewing area. One ate algae while swimming and the other ate while walking in even shallower water. The water level of the lagoon was low because the deep channel gouged through the beach by rushing rainwater has been kept open by late rains. As we walked toward the viewing area overlooking the main channel, a flock of **Killdeer (#48)** landed on muddy flats to our right. The first of many **Great-tailed Grackles (#49)** flew over the higher land on the (Continued next page)

north side of the path. Straight ahead, on the main channel were large numbers of double-crested cormorants and brown pelicans. There were many terns. We were able to identify many of them as **Forster's Terns (#50)** and **Elegant Terns (#51)**. **Violet-green Swallows (#52)** flew low over the water, giving us good looks at their white rumps, an identifying field mark. We picked out **Ring-billed Gulls (#53)** and **Bonaparte's Gulls (#54)** from the many other gull species that were clustered together.

Walking west, past the main viewing area, towards the Malibu Colony, we passed a **White-crowned Sparrow (#55)** that was foraging on the ground, one of few that hadn't migrated away yet for the nesting season.

Judy and I left Allan at the picnic tables along the path to the beach so he could rest his back. We wanted to find the odd-looking heron on the beach sand that a photographer had pointed out. From the overlook viewing area it was possibly a rare Little Blue Heron. By the time we got close to the beach, the mystery heron had left. Viewed later on his computer, distant photos Allan took revealed it to be an ordinary Great Blue Heron. However, our walk did find us a **Snowy Egret (#56)**, **Great Egret (#57)**, and a male **Red-breasted Merganser (#58)** that was swimming in the lagoon near the beach. Mergansers are ducks that dive for fish in shallow water.

2:50 PM, Legacy Park: We walked the path leading to the little pond. Our first-of-the-day **American Coot (#59)** swam on the lake, as did a couple of **Pied-billed Grebes (#60)**. The predictable begging Mallards and **Feral Rock Pigeons (#61)** came to beg near the bench at the southwest corner of the pond. The three species we expected to add at this location were there, and no other new ones.

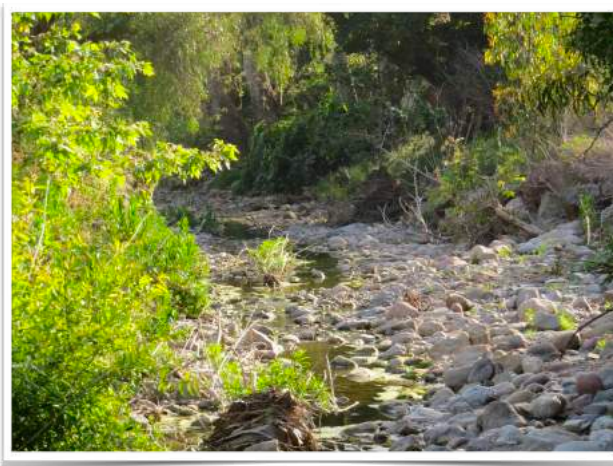
We thanked Judy for her help and company and headed home, exhausted. We relaxed, I checking over my notes of our search so far and dozing and Allan catching up with ubiquitous computer "stuff." We managed to find the energy to head out again at 5:05 PM.

5:10 PM, Zuma Canyon: We drove slowly on Busch Drive to Rainsford to Bonsall, looking for birds. A goodly distance up Bonsall, we saw an **Allen's Hummingbird (#62)**, gathering nectar from Mexican sage flowers. Just before Zuma Creek near the end of the paved roadway, Allan spotted three **California Quail (#63)** foraging among short grasses. Judy had seen them at Malibu Creek. I didn't realize neither sighting was on our list until writing this report. The full list turned out to be 64 species, a pleasant surprise.

We drove into the trailhead parking lot, where my car was the only vehicle. Allan found the first **Ash-throated Flycatcher (#64)** we



The Male Quail (left photo) has the Fancy Helmet and Plume



Zuma Creek between the Quail Sighting and Pavement's End

saw all day, posing on a wood fence. It felt good to see one after hearing them so often. We were charmed by a family of California Towhees moving back and forth between feeding on the dirt floor of the parking lot and resting on the fence. Other vehicles arrived, causing the towhees to retreat to the other side of the fence.

It was pleasing to wrap up the search with good sightings of three bird species we knew were observed earlier, plus the surprisingly elusive Allen's Hummer.

6:15 PM, Home for the Day: We pulled back into our garage and recorded a few statistics. The total mileage for the car was 48.1 miles. My feet had walked 3.5 miles. We dined on leftovers while watching birds through the windows. We saw no new species. By the time it was too dark to see any birds, we had run out of energy to even look.

All photos taken by Allan on Birdathon day 🐦

History of the Sepulveda Basin and its Wildlife Area by Kris Ohlenkamp

The Sepulveda Dam was completed in 1941 by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) after several devastating floods occurred along the Los Angeles River in the 1930s. Upstream of the Dam, 1542 acres of land was dedicated as a flood control/retention basin and is owned by the federal government (USACOE).

Prior to the Dam, nearly all this land was probably used for agriculture during the earlier 1900s and rangeland during the 1800s. Very few native plants survived these eras. However, there are five small seasonal creeks that flow into the LA River here (Encino, Bull, Rush, Woodley, Haskell) and there are remnant pieces of riparian communities which have survived. There is also a natural spring nearby at Los Encinos State Historic Park. The water table was undoubtedly much nearer the surface 200 years ago and I suspect that much of this area was seasonal marsh with Cottonwoods, Sycamores, Alders, Willows, et al.

Since creation of the Dam, in years of extensive seasonal rainfall and during intense rain events, the gates of the Dam may be closed to reduce the risk of flooding downstream. When this occurs, significant acreage behind the Dam transforms into a temporary lake, sometimes covering several hundred acres. I have witnessed this approximately eight times in the last 42 years.

The area most susceptible to inundation includes the approximately 200 acres of officially designated Wildlife Area in the SE corner of the Sepulveda Basin. The heart of this area is the 48 acre South Wildlife Reserve and the 60 acre North Wildlife Reserve. These two areas (divided by Burbank Blvd.) were designated in 1979 and 1981 respectively. In the South Reserve, California native plants were installed, a Pothole Pond with City water was created and a Seasonal Marsh was dug in 1985. The Wildlife Lake in the North Reserve was created in 1988 along with trails and informational kiosks. Dedication ceremonies were held two years later—after the project was completed.

Constant flows of water are provided to the Wildlife Lake and adjacent Haskell Creek by the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant (and Japanese Garden) which was completed on 88 acres of land within the Basin near Woodley Avenue in 1972.

The fields directly East and West of Woodley Avenue were added to the Wildlife Area designation between 1994 and 1998. All of these areas (except the 48 acre South Reserve) are leased to, and administered by, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

In addition to maintenance by the City, volunteers with California Native Plant Society (CNPS) have been removing invasive non-native plants and planting appropriate native plants to provide better habitat for native wildlife. Volunteers with San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) provide numerous educational programs on site, regularly sponsor creek clean-ups, and lead several bird and nature walks through the Wildlife Areas.

Haskell Creek has grown into a unique (in the San Fernando Valley) and valuable breeding ground for several endangered, threatened, and sensitive species of birds: Least Bell's Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, et al. The entire Wildlife Area was damaged significantly by the first ever, 50+ acre, human ignited fire in 2019, but is recovering.

The diversity of habitats in the Sepulveda Basin; lakes, lawns, agriculture, riparian corridors, open fields, oak woodlands, and the lack of significant nocturnal disturbance, as well as native vegetation, are a magnet for migrating birds, wintering waterfowl and spring/summer breeding birds. Over 300 bird species have been seen here. It is one of the premier birding locations in Los Angeles County and it has all been re-created from wasteland. 🐾

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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 3rd of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter.

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Phainopepla

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Hansen Dam Monthly Birding - April 27, 2024

The morning at the Hansen Dam Ranger Station was cool and crystal clear, quickly warming up to about 70°. This was our first time at Hansen in two months as the March excursion was rained out. About 14 people joined the walk including a few folks from Pasadena Audubon. We were fortunate to be able to approach the south side of the lake, but there were still muddy areas. All in all, the bird count was significantly lower than April 2023 perhaps because of the warmer weather. A high point was a family of Killdeer, with the parents putting on a show to convince us to avoid their chicks! Our endangered Bell's Vireos were heard calling at multiple locations, so they have arrived and are in nesting mode. Significant non-bird sightings included a cow costume draped over a sign and part of a mannequin stuck in the mud.—*Pat Bates*

