



Drawing by  
Guy Coheleach

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Founded 1904

**Pasadena Audubon Society**  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 55 – No. 2

*To bring the excitement of birds to our community through birding, education  
and the conservation of bird habitats.*

March-April 2007

## March Program

### **Birding on \$4.00 a Gallon**

**Wednesday, March 21, 2007**

**Kimball Garrett**

Whether gas is \$2 a gallon or \$5, long birding road trips in four-wheel-drive “Birding Assault Vehicles” are hardly defensible environmentally or economically these days. The allure of traveling to distant birding sites will always remain, but this talk emphasizes the benefits of birding on the county level, and especially of local “patch” birding around Los Angeles. We’ll discuss how to keep good records about the birds of your “patch,” and how such data can reveal fascinating things about our local birds.

Kimball Garrett is a long-time local birder and has the advantage of being able to see 5,000 bird species within 100 feet of his desk at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Kimball will be signing his newest book, “Birds of the Los Angeles Region”, by Kimball L. Garrett, Jon L. Dunn and Bob Morse. Copies will be available for sale.

#### General Meetings held at:

**Eaton Canyon Nature Center**

**1750 N. Altadena Drive, Pasadena**

7:00 pm Social

7:30 pm Program

## **President’s Perch**

Last year your Board of Directors voted to reinstitute PAS’s policy of sending a donation to other non-profit organizations that help us to achieve our goals in birding and conservation. I am pleased to announce that at our February meeting, it was decided to make \$1,000 donations to: **City of Pasadena**, to assist in their planting of an oak tree at City Hall; **Eaton Canyon**, to support their docent program; and **Huntington Gardens**, where we have our popular monthly bird walk.

## April Program

### **Channel Islands Birds:**

**Stories of Extinction and Survival.**

**Wednesday, April 18, 2007**

**Hartmut Walter**



Island Loggerhead Shrike

California’s eight Channel Islands Harbor one endemic bird species and many endemic subspecies. Some are extinct, one is critically endangered and unprotected, and others receive enormous conservation funds. This is a story of people, livestock, and complex habitat-species interactions.

These donations are separately funded by money the Board set aside last year for this purpose and will not affect our programs. If you have an organization that we should consider for a future donation, please let me know.

*Walter*

## May Program

### **The Answers to All Your Panama Birding Questions:**

*Or at least all the ones we could think of*  
**Wednesday, May 16, 2007**

**Panama Birders**



Collared Aracari

Last October, eleven hardy members of Pasadena Audubon Society ventured to Panama for a week. They came back with a new sense of camaraderie and great stories. Oh, and lots of fantastic photos and video! Come hear about the tower, Pipeline Road and the Wild & Crazy Spot. See not only birds but rodents, larger mammals, and incredible scenery. You will practically be able to smell the rainforest and its inhabitants.

Please join us for a great evening in Panama!

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## Conservation

### Desiderio Update

On February 5, 2007, the Pasadena City Council met to hear public comments on the three proposals regarding the Desiderio Army Reserve Center under the Colorado Street Bridge. This 5.1-acre site will be closed by the federal government, which is also considering transferring the land to local governance. As the most likely recipient of the land, the Pasadena City Council has been asked to recommend how the land will be used. After hearing the comments of more than 60 citizens, the City Council voted to recommend a hybrid proposal from Habitat for Humanity, the California Art Club, and the Arroyo Seco Foundation. While the Pasadena Audubon Society supported the proposal made by the California Art Club and the Arroyo Seco Foundation, we remain optimistic that all parties can work towards a project that ensures open space and plentiful bird habitat.

Please keep in mind that the City Council's vote is a recommendation only, and that the federal government will have the final say. If you have further concerns regarding the City Council's recommendation, please consider contacting Representative Adam Schiff.

Laura Garrett  
PURPLECOW@JPS.NET

### Update on Annandale Canyon

Roger Wolf, President of Safety and Open Space First Pasadena, informs us that the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) is considering setting aside \$2,000,000 to acquire the undeveloped Annandale Canyon wild lands tract located in Pasadena's portion of the San Rafael Hills bordering the north end of Glen Oaks Boulevard. The Trust for Public Lands (TPL) has already conducted a study to determine the feasibility of preserving this land. The study was paid for by the SMMC and agreed to by the City of Pasadena and the developers who hold a financial interest in the property.

By the time you read this, the SMMC will have already held its meeting to discuss this issue, but it isn't too late to send them your comments at [HTTP://SMMC.CA.GOV/](http://SMMC.CA.GOV/). This is some of Pasadena's last wild land, and it can be protected if we help. Good news at last.

Laura Garrett  
PURPLECOW@JPS.NET

## Field Trip Reports

### Impressions from the Carrizo Plain

All About the Raptors  
January 27-28, 2007

Roy van de Hoek brought the natural history of the Carrizo plains to life with his expertise from geology to kangaroo rats to birds. His experience on the plain and knowledge as a naturalist added another dimension to our prior visits to the Carrizo Plain. His knowledge of the San Andreas fault let us see the landscape features in an entirely different perspective. Hills became shutter faults and bends in streams became fault-displaced river beds.

The little motel in California City was a kick, as we were taken back to the 1950's. Kenny, the owner, was very supportive of birders and he must have a keen eye for garage sale finds to furnish the rooms! We enjoyed the camel decor in our suite.

We delighted in seeing the raptors - especially the great looks we got at Golden Eagles perched and flying around the northern plains!



I will never forget the very close-up views of a Red-tailed Hawk eating its prey. The raptors were definitely a highlight! Roy was a fantastic leader as he taught us so much about the flora, fauna and geology of the Plain. For example, I loved learning about the Giant Kangaroo Rat and his "precincts," the Pallid Bat that hunts on the ground, and the shutter ridges that line the San Andreas Fault.

Laura Garrett

The incredible number of raptors was unforgettable. Six Golden Eagles, dozens of Ferruginous Hawks, Peregrine and Prairie Falcons, American Kestrels, one Rough-legged Hawk, one Richardson's Merlin, one Turkey Vulture, both Accipiters, and of course many, many Red-tailed Hawks. Other excitement: The great views of the Barn Owl flying, the Short-eared Owl screech, the stargazing, the Helmeted Guineafowl at the motel, the Tricolored Blackbird, the San Andreas Fault, and all of the great scenery.

John Garrett



Sunday morning the fog rolled across the hills on the plains and suddenly we could see more than a hundred Pronghorn Antelope browsing across the fog-shrouded hill while the meadowlarks sang. Magic!

Susan and Frank Gilliland

The best memory for me was the Wild & Crazy Raptor Spot. While standing in one spot we had a view of an American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Red-tailed Hawks, Ferruginous Hawk, and Golden Eagle. The view made for a great afternoon!

Ron Cyger

### Field Trips (continued)

Big Morongo Reserve  
Saturday, May 19th, 2007  
8:00am - 1:00pm

This desert oasis and migrant trap offers great birding in the spring. Warblers, flycatchers, hummingbirds and orioles are among the birds expected. At least one pair of Vermilion Flycatchers has been seen every April in memory. Join us as we walk the trails in Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and into adjoining Covington Park, where you will enjoy one of the

finest birding locations in the world, with over 250 species of birds making stops at the Preserve annually.

Directions: Allow 2 hours drive from Pasadena. Take Interstate 10 east to Route 62, which is past the Palm Springs turnoff. Go north to the tiny town of Morongo Valley and turn right on East Drive to the Big Morongo Preserve at 11055 East Drive. Meet at the Information Kiosk at the south end of the parking lot. Bring lunch and drinks. Rain in Pasadena cancels.

Kathi Ellsworth and Lance Benner

## 2006 Christmas Bird Count

Despite some inclement weather, our 2006 count was very successful. Forty-three birders took to the field and counted a respectable 159 species between rain showers. Quite impressive is the fact that four birds new to the count were recorded. The rare birds are exciting to be sure, but as I've written many times before, the heart of the count is the census of our many regular and even common species, whereas rarities come and go.

Taking a closer look at that aspect, the count has chronicled the increase of **Great-tailed Grackles** over the last two decades and also documented the decline of two formerly more common species; the **Spotted Dove** and **Loggerhead Shrike**. Would you believe that 133 shrikes were recorded on the count 55 years ago? These days we're fortunate to get one or two. How about the fact that **Great-tailed Grackles** were unrecorded prior to 1993, yet the 2006 count produced 262 of them?

Though we count far more individual birds than on counts of decades ago, there are unsettling trends. Aside from the **Loggerhead Shrike** decline, imagine the declines in counts of **Western Meadowlark**, **Savannah** and **Lark Sparrow** since the count began in the late 1940s. Open country birds are often hit hardest by urbanization and other development since that is the land most easily converted. There still seems to be enough wetland habitats within the circle, fragmented though it may be, to support a good diversity of waterfowl and waders. Regional trends were reflected in the Pasadena count data this year. Numbers of **Hooded Mergansers**, **Mountain Chickadees**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets** and **Mountain Bluebirds** illustrated this phenomenon. All were present in greater than normal numbers in the county and also turned up on the Pasadena count in above average numbers.

With the revised A.O.U. checklist order, we now begin with waterfowl which have been pushed to the front of the list. We had **Snow Goose**, **Ross's Goose** and **Greater White-fronted Goose** all at Legg Lake on count day, and there was a second **Ross's Goose** at Lincoln Park. A **Eurasian Wigeon** at Almansor Park in Alhambra was back for another winter (though it was missed on the 2005 count, it was seen the two previous years). Three **Canvasback** at Legg Lake were a good find, as they are often missed. In all, twenty species of waterfowl were recorded.

**Cooper's Hawks** have undergone population increases over the last ten years or so. Pasadena CBC counts of this species have doubled over the last decade

and they are doing well even in residential areas. This year's count was twenty-four individuals. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** numbers by contrast have remained fairly constant. Of course separating these two in the field is often a challenge, but over the long term I believe the numbers paint an accurate picture even though there may be a few misidentified birds.

For the first count ever, **Peregrine Falcons** outnumbered **Merlin** (by a count of six to five). Merlin have staged a comeback since the 70's and we might call this the decade for Peregrines. They have been increasing in the U.S. generally as well as on the Pasadena count. While once very rare, it's not difficult to find them now in the area, especially along the San Gabriel River.

Quite rare on the count were three **Western Sandpipers** along the San Gabriel River. These were the first recorded since 1995; a year when there was very good habitat behind the Rio Hondo dam. Interesting gulls included a rare **Thayer's Gull**, two **Herring Gulls** and a high count of eleven **Glaucous-winged Gulls** on the SGR.

A total of seven **Spotted Doves** were found; far more than on any recent count. The increase of **Cooper's Hawks** noted earlier has been implicated in the drastic decline of this introduced dove. They do seem to be holding on in small numbers, but it's a far cry from their abundance in decades past.

The closely related **Eurasian Collared-Dove** had not previously been recorded on the count: thus one found in Highland Park was a first. This species has expanded rapidly in recent years on the deserts and elsewhere along the coast, but rather slowly in coastal LA County. It will be interesting to watch the trend on future counts.

Rounding out the Columbiformes was a rare **Common Ground-Dove** found at Hahamongna Watershed Park. This attractive little dove was last recorded on the 1986 count. They have always been very scarce in coastal Los Angeles County, but much more common in Orange and Ventura counties.

**Western Screech-Owls** put in a very good showing with seven found in the foothills; a note of thanks to Lance Benner for his efforts in pursuing these birds so successfully. Two **Barn Owls** were also recorded in addition to a number of the expected **Great Horned**.

Woodpeckers were highlighted by a **Williamson's Sapsucker** in Pasadena; the first one seen on the count since 1984. The bird was found a few days before the count at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena.

Normally our best chance for this species would be one that might wander down to Mt. Wilson, so this bird in the valley was unexpected.

Last year's stunning male **Vermilion Flycatcher** returned to the soccer fields at the end of Rush Street in South El Monte. Bigger news for the count though was our first **Tropical Kingbird** at Lincoln Park in East Los Angeles, just within the circle. These birds are expected in fall when small numbers occur primarily along the coast, but a few linger through the winter. A truly impressive find was a **Bell's Vireo** of the nominate eastern race found in November by John Garrett in his backyard. Fortunately the bird remained through the count for an extraordinary record that constitutes not only a first for the count but a first record for LA County for this subspecies. Even the expected **Least Bell's Vireo** (the southwestern subspecies) is very rare in winter, though now locally fairly common as a breeder.

Though we generally get a few swallows of one or two species, they were absent from the count this year. These birds are tricky to track down as they cover a lot of territory when foraging and only a few spend the winter in the area to begin with. You have to be in the right place at the right time to get them.

**Red-whiskered Bulbuls**, concentrated at the Huntington Gardens and the Arboretum, totaled 112 birds this year. They seem to be holding their own and then some, as this count is well above the average. A few wandering birds or pairs are also regularly found away from the main areas of abundance, and this year was no exception.

**Golden-crowned Kinglets** were widespread in small numbers in the region this fall and winter and we had nine of them in the circle on count day. This is well above average and the highest count since 1998.

Three **Mountain Bluebirds** were found in South El Monte adjacent to the Rio Hondo. This species too experienced a significant movement into the area last fall, so it's not surprising that we got them on the count. Also worth noting was the presence of a flock of thirty birds just outside the circle at Santa Fe Dam.

We usually get at least one or two **Yellow Warblers** on the count, but this year we had a high count of seven. This was an impressive number, made more so by the fact that all were found along the San Gabriel River. It's rare to find them away from willow riparian habitat and obviously enough of it exists along the

(see 2006 CBC, page 7)

## Field Trips

### Hahamongna Monthly Walk

**Saturday, March 3, 2007**

**Saturday, April 1, 2007**

**Saturday, May 5, 2007**

**8:00 am – noon**

This monthly bird walk is for birders of all ages and experience. A good variety of birds should be in residence. Bring binoculars, birding guide, water and wear walking shoes. No dogs.

Exit the north 210 at Berkshire and make a right, then a left at Oak Grove. The Hahamongna Watershed Park entrance is on the right at the next stop light. Take the first left after entering Hahamongna, and park by the ballfield

*Ron Cyger*

### Eaton Canyon

#### Monthly Walk

**Sunday, March 18, 2007**

**Sunday, April 15, 2007**

**Sunday, May 20, 2007**

**8:00 am – noon**

Pasadena Audubon and Eaton Canyon Nature Center are cosponsoring monthly walks at Eaton Canyon. The walks are led by Hill Penfold, who has been leading them at ECNC for many years. Hill is wonderful with birders of all levels and Eaton Canyon is one of the best locations to learn the birds of the Pasadena area.

The walks are held on the third Sunday of each month. Meet at the flagpole: bring water, binoculars, hats, *but no dogs*.

*Hill Penfold*

### Huntington Library

#### Birdwalks (PAS Members only)

**Sunday, March 25, 2007**

**Sunday, April 22, 2007**

**Sunday, May 27, 2007**

**8:00 am – 11:00 am**

A special benefit for Pasadena Audubon Society members is the chance to bird the Huntington Library grounds. Attendance is by reservation only and limited to 15 participants. We thank our member and Huntington curator, Dan Lewis, for making these trips possible.

Contact Elaine by email (preferred) or phone, putting "Huntington" in the subject line to avoid inadvertent deletion.

*Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis*

### Bird Banding at Zuma

#### Canyon with Professor

#### Walter Sakai

**Saturday, March 10, 2007**

**early morning – 11:00 am**

Professor Walter Sakai from Santa Monica College is a master bander who operates a banding station in Zuma

Canyon near Point Dume in Malibu. Walt will introduce us to banding "hows" and "whys" and will provide very close looks at numerous chaparral species.

He invites us to join him when he starts banding at sunrise (6:10 am!), which is when bird activity peaks, but later arrivals are also OK. He prefers that guests remain for the entire banding session. Additional info: [HTTP://HOMEPAGE.SMC.EDU/SAKAI\\_WALTER/BANDING.HTM](http://HOMEPAGE.SMC.EDU/SAKAI_WALTER/BANDING.HTM)

Please contact Lance Benner for reservations and logistics.

*Lance Benner*

### Salton Sea

**Sat.-Sun., March 24-25, 2007**

**All day Saturday and until noon Sunday**

We usually find over 100 species for the weekend and over the years we have seen the following numbers of species: 27 geese & ducks, 13 hawks, 15 waders, 8 gulls, 6 terns, 11 flycatchers, 10 warblers, and 16 sparrows. This is one of the premier birding spots on the continent! We will bird all day Saturday and half a day on Sunday, heading home after lunch.

This trip is only for Pasadena Audubon members and is limited to 12.

*Ron Cyger*

### Piute Ponds and Central Antelope Valley

**Saturday, April 14, 2007**

**7:00 am – noon**

Piute Ponds is one of the top birding destinations in Los Angeles County. Expect thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl, some migrating land birds, some rarities, possibly Le Conte's Thrasher. Our trip will also include stops at a private ranch, and the Lancaster Water Treatment Facility. Time-permitting stops include Apollo Park, and a hike about a half-mile out to the edge of Rosamond Lake if water remains on the lakebed. Birding at Piute Ponds requires an access letter from Edwards Air Force Base so participation will be limited to 12 people. Please contact me for reservations and instructions.

Meet at 7:00 am at the park-and-ride at Avenue S at Highway 14 in Palmdale at 7:00 where we will carpool. Dress warmly. Spotting scopes recommended.

*Mike San Miguel*

### Point Vicente and Ocean Trails

**Saturday, April 28, 2007**

**7:00 am – 11:00 am**

Watch thousands of Waterfowl, Loons, Shearwaters, Cormorants, Gulls and Terns moving just off the point. Jaegers and even some alcids could be

encountered. Good chance of seeing whales and other sea mammals. Bring your scope (a necessity), a chair, and a thermos of coffee. After birding at the point we visit nearby Ocean Trails to look for California Gnatcatcher in recently restored coastal sage scrub habitat. We may also observe a few land bird migrants.

Meet at the Point Vicente Public Fishing Access parking lot at 7:00. It is on the south side of Palos Verdes Drive. From San Pedro take 25th St./Palos Verdes Drive west for about six miles and make a U-turn at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center (look for the light-house); return 0.3 miles back to the parking lot.

*Mike San Miguel*

### Owling in the San Gabriel Mountains

**Saturday, May 12, 2007**

**6:00 pm – midnight**

Six species of owls breed in the San Gabriel Mountains and spring is usually the best time to find them present and actively vocalizing. We will first look for Northern Pygmy Owl and diurnal montane species, and then after dark we'll look for Flammulated, Northern Saw-whet, Western Screech, and Great Horned Owls. Possibles: Spotted Owl, Common Poorwill. Limited to 12 people.

Please contact Lance for reservations and directions.

*Lance Benner*

### Big Santa Anita Canyon

**Saturday, June 9, 2007**

**6:00 pm – 10:00 pm**

We will hike up Big Santa Anita Canyon to Sturtevant Falls to look for diurnal species while it's still light and to look for Black Swifts arriving to roost at dusk. On the way back we'll look for owls, poorwills, and glow worms. Other possible species: American Dipper, Purple Finch, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, and Canyon Wren.

Take 210 to Santa Anita Avenue, exit north to its end past the gate, and up to the parking lot at Chantry Flats (about 3.5 miles above the edge of Arcadia). An "Adventure Pass" is required to park. We will meet in the lower parking lot at the gate.

Bring water, food, lights, bug repellent, a jacket, and sturdy shoes. It's 4 miles to the waterfall and back with a steep half-mile climb at the end, so our pace will be leisurely.

*Lance Benner*

Calendar
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*Submit material for the next Wrentit by April 1<sup>st</sup>*

**March 2007**

Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Leader*
3	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
12	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Pasadena Presbyterian Church	585 E. Colorado (at Madison)
14	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
20	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Peck Pit	Sid Heyman & Madeline West
21	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Birding on \$4.00 a Gallon
24-25	S-S	7:00 am	Field Trip	Salton Sea <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Ron Cyger
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Dan Lewis & Elaine MacPherson

**April 2007**

7	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
10	Sat	Sunrise	Field Trip	Malibu Bird Banding	Lance Benner
14	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Pasadena Presbyterian Church	585 E. Colorado (at Madison)
15	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
17	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Rancho Santa Ana	Madeline West & Sid Heyman
19	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Channel Islands Birds
22	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Dan Lewis & Elaine MacPherson
28	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Sea watch: California Gnatcatcher	Mike San Miguel

**May 2007**

5	Sat	All day	Birdathon	You choose!	Will Fulmer
5	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Hahamongna Watershed Park	Ron Cyger
9	Wed	7:30 pm	Board Meeting	Pasadena Presbyterian Church	585 E. Colorado (at Madison)
12	Sat	6:00 pm	Field Trip	Owling: San Gabriels	Lance Benner
15	Tue	9:00 am	Magpie Study Group	Lower Arroyo	Sid Heyman & Madeline West
16	Wed	7:00 pm	General Meeting	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Program: Panama Stories
20	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Eaton Canyon Nature Center	Hill Penfold
19	Sat	8:00 am	Field Trip	Big Morongo	Kathi Ellsworth & Lance Benner
25	Sun	8:00 am	Field Trip	Huntington Library Gardens <i>(PAS Members Only)</i>	Elaine MacPherson & Dan Lewis

**\*Trip Leader Information**

Mark Scheel (Chair)	(818) 366-7343	scheel@tapir.caltech.edu
Larry Allen	(626) 288-2701	larryallen@earlymusicla.org
Lance Benner	(626) 791-1187	lbenner@charter.net
Ron Cyger	(626) 449-3625 (before 9 pm)	ron@cyger.org (preferred)
Kathi Ellsworth	(626) 564-0652	pandionsky@yahoo.com
Jon Feenstra	(626) 792-4346	feenstra@its.caltech.edu
Nick & Mary Freeman	(818) 247-6172	mnfreeman@earthlink.net
Sid Heyman	(626) 571-5991	
Dan Lewis	(626) 398-4805	danolewis@earthlink.net
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Elaine MacPherson	(626) 355-9412	birdergrrl@aol.com
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Ed Stonick	(626) 796-0595	edstonick@earthlink.net
Madeline West	(626) 574-0429	west226@adelphia.net

## Q&A with Jon Dunn

### (Part II)

Jon Dunn is the chief consultant for the National Geographic Society's "Field Guide to the Birds of North America", and the author or coauthor of many other birding books. He also acts as a guide for Wings, the bird tour company. A native of Southern California, Dunn now lives near Bishop, but we caught up with him as he was passing through on the way to a birding trip in Cuba, two days before the release of the fifth edition of the Field Guide.



*Why did you choose to live in Bishop? I know what it would be for me; I just love the area.*

Yeah, that was enough. Inyo County's also an interesting zone. The Sierras are a great separating zone between coastal species and subspecies, and interior ones. Some coastal ones have "fingers" following oaks in the canyons on the east side of Sierra, so it's a wonderful place to study speciation.

*That's why Butterbrecht Springs is so good?*

Yeah; that's also a place where a lot of migrants, I think, cross over going west up the foothills of the Sierra. They winter in west Mexico and then come across. Kimball [Garrett] has had big numbers of migrants in El Golfo at the head of the Gulf of California.

*[A Scrub Jay flies in and flushes some White-crowned Sparrows.]*

That's another case where there may be an additional split needed with the Scrub Jays. The interior birds, east of the Sierra in the dry mountains, are much shyer, and are visually completely separable. The Woodhouse group. These birds [La Cañada] have very white flanks and a big bill and a strong blue band on the sides of the chest. The birds in the White Mountains and the Inyo Mountains have brown flanks and a blended blue band and a narrower bill. Yet having said

that, there's a little finger of the coastal ones that come up to the Alabama Hills and to about the Independence area. So these Scrub Jays are what we call peripatric – they abut each other's populations. There's very little if any interbreeding that goes on, except maybe north of Topaz Lake, that little range there. Research indicates some hybridization.

*Species and subspecies splits are described in field guides by appearance, song, and so forth. Is DNA important when researchers decide on a split?*

Yes. If you go to the technical meetings of the AOU, all the papers these days are on DNA. Mitochondrial DNA will tell you the history of the maternal relationship. There's other types of DNA you can look at, like nuclear DNA, that might be a better read. It's one of the things that people use to determine if something's a species or not. Where populations are allopatric [occupying different geographical areas] and have been for a long time, one might expect the DNA to be quite different, even when nothing else seems different. It shouldn't be the sole grounds for doing a split. We have a case we're evaluating now, of the bird call of the Greater Antillean Oriole. It was formerly called the Black-cowled Oriole and merged with a species in the Yucatan and Central America. The DNA of the mainland birds is dramatically different, so they split off Central American and Mexican birds into Black-cowled Oriole. The other species is Greater Antillean Oriole, but it has four different-looking populations, one of which is on Cuba, one on Puerto Rico, one on Hispaniola, and the fourth is now restricted to Andros in the Bahamas. The Andros bird has the most yellow on it. The others are appreciably blacker. In fact, the one on Andros is much like the Central American ones. So there's a motion now based on vocal evidence, and to some degree DNA, to split those four island subspecies as full species. And that's being considered. Based on what vocalizations are like, and behavior. But sometimes it's still sort of a crapshoot. You look at what are the species limits, and other cases with orioles, which would be an important factor. It's one of the more interesting aspects of ornithology. Like the White-crowns, here – the DNA of the Puget Sound birds is very different from the Alaskan White-crowns; they sing differently. The ones that you [see] in the High Sierra winter in Mexico, and have different songs as well, and chip differently. And yet those birds, in their morphology, look very similar to the ones

that breed east of Hudson Bay, which you see in the Eastern U.S. And yet *those* birds sing and chip like Alaskan birds. Sometimes there's no clear answer.

*So I've got Alaskan birds here but if I went out to Redondo Beach I'd have Puget Sound birds?*

Well, Redondo Beach would have Alaskan birds. The limit for Puget Sound birds is about Malibu Lagoon, Big Sycamore Canyon. Right there in the parking lot there's a good-sized flock of *pugetensis*.

[The interviewer gets a quick lesson in the trinominate naming system.]

I have very strongly a philosophy that there's no real limit; even beginning birders can become advanced very quickly, if the interest is there.

*I remember the irruption of Pine Siskins in the winter of 2004-2005. Are there others down here?*

There are others. Red-breasted Nuthatches, Crossbills. Evening Grosbeaks, although seemingly fewer, or even Pine Grosbeaks. Winter before last, the Rocky Mountain birds moved out of their core range, down to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon and into the White Mountains of Arizona. And one, presumably of that subspecies, even turned up in Kern County at Galileo Hill Park in early November and stayed four or five days, feeding on dandelions.

*So here in the L.A. area, are we just not positioned to get most of these irruptions?*

Well, you get some. I think the East and the plains can be a little more dramatic for irruptions of winter finches. Partly because those little towns are so empty, and when the stuff does occur, it's more obvious.

*[The Ruddy Ground-dove that Dunn has been waiting to observe appears, and he adds it to his county list.] It seems everybody keeps their bird lists in different ways.*

I do it the old-fashioned way. A checklist.



2006 CBC (continued)

river to support a fair number. Six Wilson's Warblers was a good number for that species and well above the recent average of two per count.

Another great bird was a female Black-throated Blue Warbler discovered just a few days prior to the count by Susan Frank at her home in Pasadena. The bird cooperated and was seen on count day as well. Rare at anytime in California, this was a very exciting bird for the count, eclipsed this year only by the ultra-rare Bell's Vireo.

Four Western Tanagers were found with birds at Debs Park, the Arboretum and at the Huntington Gardens. This is above the recent count average, but lower than numbers have been in past years.

A rare Vesper Sparrow was in South El Monte in the fields at the end of Rush Street where two had been the week prior to the count. Also of interest were two White-throated Sparrows. In among the common Dark-eyed Juncos were two scarce but regular 'Slate-colored' Juncos.

After a prolonged absence, two Bullock's Orioles, a male and a female, were at the Huntington Gardens on count day. They were last recorded on the 2000 count. This was once a more reliable spot for wintering orioles (both Hooded and Bullock's), but they have been hard to come by there recently.

Aside from a bit of the wet stuff, it was an enjoyable and productive count. With 159 species tying last year, we were only two away from the count record. For some enlightening fun, I averaged the

species counts from the early 80s and compared them to the last five counts. The older counts averaged 132 species while today, twenty years later, the average is 153. That's a fifteen percent increase and it's pretty significant. Not only do we know more about identifying birds today, but with more and more birders in the field, we have learned a lot about where to find them.

A big thank you to all the dedicated counters, without whom we could never pull this event off. It's been an educational and fun decade and a half for me as count compiler and I look forward to many more counts in the years ahead.

Jon Fisher

2007-2008 Officer Nominations

Officer nominations/election for Pasadena Audubon Society for the 2007/2008 term will be held at the General Meeting on Wednesday, May 16, 2007. Those nominated for election are:

- President: Will Fulmer
Vice President: Norm Arnheim
Treasurer: Peggy Ogata
Secretary: Jean O'Hagan

Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor or may be emailed to Bev McKenzie at LBMAC2@EARTHLINK.NET prior to the May General Meeting.

Elections will be held at the General Meeting on Wednesday, May 16, 2007 and results will be formally announced at the Annual Dinner in June.

Magpie Bird Study Group



The group meets the third Tuesday of each month. We bird 9:00 am to about 11:30 am, eat sack lunches and have a short business meeting. All PAS members welcome.

Tuesday, March 20, 2007 Peck Pit

Meet in the parking lot.

Tuesday, April 17, 2007 Rancho Santa Ana

Meet in the parking lot.

Tuesday, May 15, 2007 Lower Arroyo

Meet by the casting pool.

Tuesday, June 19, 2007 Descanso Gardens

Meet at the entrance.

Sid Heyman
Madeline West

PAS on the WEB

Website

HTTP://WWW.PASADENA AUDUBON.ORG

ListServe

HTTP://GROUPS.YAHOO.COM/GROUP/PASADENA AUDUBON/

Become a Chapter-only Member of PAS

Policy changes by the National Audubon Society have severely reduced the share of NAS membership dues returned to local chapters, funds which Pasadena Audubon has used to finance its programs and services. To make up for the loss of funds from National Audubon, Pasadena Audubon, like many other National Audubon chapters, now offers Chapter only memberships.

When it's time to renew your National Audubon membership, we invite you to instead become a Chapter only Member of the Pasadena Audubon Society, or make a donation to our Chapter to support our programs. Chapter-only dues are \$20 per year, or \$15 for seniors and students, all of which remains with our local chapter to fund our programs, including publication of The Wren Tit.

We thank you all for your support!

Membership Application

Name
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Donor's address for gift membership:

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Yearly Membership for Individual or Family

PAS Chapter Only [ ] \$20 [ ] \$35\* [ ] Other

\* Plus Chapter Pin and Tee Shirt or PAS Birding Guide

[ ] \$15 Senior/Full-time Student

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