

the wren tit

PASADENA AUDUBON SOCIETY | VOLUME 72 · NO. 3 | FEBRUARY-MARCH 2024



president's perch 

GET YOUR BIRD ON

Luke Tiller

Ten days back I was heading to do some shopping at Hahamongna Native Plant Nursery when on a whim I decided to stop in at the park itself. I wanted to check if I could see the **Chestnut-sided Warbler** that our field trip chair Darren Dowell had uncovered there in mid-November.

The park has been a real hotspot this winter, and I quickly ran into four other birders who were seeking out the rare species that Darren and others had turned up over recent weeks. These included a young birder and his dad from Studio City and a local couple, one of whom it turned out grew up birding with a friend of mine from my time running hawkwatches in Connecticut. We all quickly joined forces and soon managed to find a few of the target birds, sharing **Black-and-White Warbler** and **Cassin's Vireo** sightings.

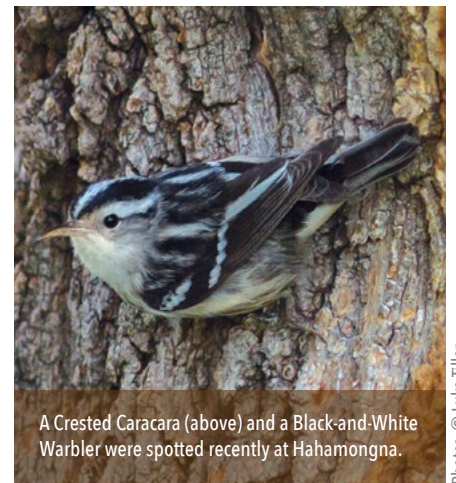
We paused at the bridge over Berkshire Creek and watched as many of the birds began to come to take advantage of the water there for either a bath or a drink. As I was about to call it a day on my impromptu birding adventure,

I spotted a distant raptor whose shape I know mainly from my time birding in Texas. I quickly got my new birding acquaintances on the bird as it glided directly over us passing close enough for a couple of acceptable photographs of just the fifth record of **Crested Caracara** for Los Angeles County.

This diversion from making my yard more welcoming to local birds encapsulated much of what I love about birding: walking with my canine pal, sharing the enjoyment of our feathered friends with other birders (especially young ones), meeting someone connected to another friend through the small world that is birdwatching, and the excitement of finding something unexpected. More important perhaps than finding it was the chance to share the excitement of seeing something unexpectedly cool with others.

Fun Birding Tips for February and March

Head to somewhere with open water like the Santa Fe Dam or Hahamongna and look for migrating swallows—watching them hunt



A Crested Caracara (above) and a Black-and-White Warbler were spotted recently at Hahamongna.

Photos © Luke Tiller

over open water is a great way to hone your ID skills with these challenging birds.

Go to the Antelope Valley to look for interesting hawks and more before they head north (I particularly like the agricultural fields around Avenue E between 50th and 80th Street East in Lancaster).

Or plan a trip further afield to the San Diego Bird Festival (it promises a host of great trips and has a wealth of great guides—including yours truly).

Monthly Chapter Meetings

Get your Zoom link at: www.pasadenaaudubon.org/meetings

► FEBRUARY 21

Inside the Mind of a Chickadee 7:00-8:30pm, via Zoom
A Mountain Chickadee may hide more than 50,000 seeds, caching them for the long winter ahead. How can this tiny bird remember where they all are? It's a question that behavioral ecologist Ben Sonnenberg has been studying for years. He will take us inside the world, and the mind, of a chickadee.



© Ben Sonnenberg

► MARCH 20

Sounds Wild and Broken 7:00-8:30pm, via Zoom
Birdsong offers delight to our ears and also reveals hidden aspects of birds' lives. Join us as writer and biologist David Haskell discusses how careful listening can help us understand why birdsong is so diverse, how it is embedded in the other sounds of the world, and the role of sound in conservation.

Upcoming PAS Board Meetings

► FEBRUARY 13; MARCH 12 7:00-8:30pm
Contact jamiec.pas@gmail.com if you would like the Zoom link to attend.

Classes

Register at: www.pasadenaaudubon.org/classes

► FEBRUARY 22 & 29

How Birds Work 7:00-9:00pm, PAS Offices (75 S. Grand Ave.)
Cost: \$75 for members, \$100 for non-members, \$20 for Young Birders (under 18)

We love birds. But how much do you know about how birds actually function? In this fun introduction to bird biology, Chris Spurgeon, PAS Program Chair, explains their unique circulatory, respiratory, digestive, and reproductive systems. By the end, you'll know the answers to timeless bird questions such as: How can a duck stand on a frozen lake all day and not freeze its feet off?

Volunteering Opportunities

Spanish Edition Birding Guide Donations Help us connect with organizations and institutions that would benefit from our Spanish edition *Birding Guide* donations.

Book Club for Birders Let's read, discuss and revel in the world of natural history, ecology, birds, and more! We're seeking someone to lead our book club.

Board Position: Secretary Join our amazing Board! The Board meeting is every second Tuesday of the month from 7:00 to 8:30pm

Volunteer Meetup ► FEBRUARY 6; MARCH 5 5:00-6:00pm, PAS Offices (75 S. Grand Ave.)

Want to learn more about ways to get involved? Let's chat! Questions or want to RSVP? Email our Programs Coordinator, Jamie Cho, at jamiec.pas@gmail.com.

Social

► FEBRUARY 28; MARCH 27

Birds & Beers 5:00-8:00pm, Wild Parrot Bewing Co. (2302 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena)

Wingspan Gaming! Socializing with Friends! Making New Friends!

chapter news

PERSONAL THANKS FROM THE PRESIDENT



As I sit and write this, I'm both looking forward to a new year of birding adventures, but also reflecting on all PAS' accomplishments from 2023. First off, I want to thank everyone who supported our end-of-year campaign in 2023. I'm hoping to thank at least one of you in person by taking you out for a day of guided birding at some point later in the year, and we will do the draw for that at our next chapter meeting (Feb. 21st, 7 PM, more on Calendar).

Though we do have three great members of staff (our new Executive Director Jared Nigro, Programs Coordinator Jamie Cho, and Garden Educator Evellyn Rosas), our industrious board is entirely voluntary and our only "payment" is getting to see other PAS and community members starting to get the same enjoyment that we all get out of birding.

I'd like to thank all my fellow board members for their contributions over the year, but offer up a special thanks to Carl Matthies who has been

our newsletter Editor since September 2020. Carl's sense of humor really shone through his work and kept *The Wrenit* an enduringly entertaining read. His input has been valuable across the board and I'm delighted that he will be staying on as a member-at-large for now. I'm of course excited to see where the new *Wrenit* team take the publication—starting right here.

A more permanent loss to the organization is our retiring Executive Director Lois Brunet. Lois is set for a well-deserved retirement to France later in 2024 after six-plus years with the organization. Of course, a short paragraph can't begin to cover all that she's done for us but suffice to say we will be forever in her debt for helping mold the Pasadena Audubon Society into the more professional, well-oiled, and welcoming organization it has become. And we will, of course, miss her greatly.

That said we are always looking forward as an organization and you can find an introduction to our new ED on Page 3.

— Luke Tiller

A FOND FAREWELL

Lois Brunet



© Sean Dourly

As I contemplate leaving Pasadena and Pasadena Audubon Society for the old country, where the birds are all different, I've been wondering what birds I'll remember most fondly. Not spark birds or nemesis birds, souvenir birds maybe.

The Acorn Woodpecker comes to mind first. Its laughing song and clowny face contradict its fascinating lifestyle... granaries with up to 10,000 acorns, territorial battles to the death, colonial nesting. The bird is so cool that we selected it as the mascot for our public school program, the Bird Science Program. I know I'll remember the Acorn Woodpecker whenever I think of that program and all the docents and interns who make it a success, a window into the world of birds for a world of local kids.

Then there are the Bushtits, with their sweet contact calls, flitting from shrub to tree in single file. They were one of the first species to nest in our Native Habitat Garden at Washington Elementary. And what a surprising nest they make, the hanging gym sock. We have a couple in our nest collection, and I love to invite a child to put a finger inside and to imagine how it would feel to be a nestling, safe and warm. I'll always think of Bushtits when I remember the Native Habitat Garden.

Then there are the migrants, the Western Tanager and the Hooded Oriole. They appear like magic—kind of the way volunteers and members show up—new faces, eager



Photo from Lois Brunet's archive

to join and to contribute, each with their special talents. Some come to stay, some move on and then return. The changing cast of characters adds to the rich, resilient fabric of our organization. I'm always so proud to say PAS members, volunteers and now staff have been passing the baton forward for 120 years, sharing the love of birds with our community. When I think of all the amazing folks I've met through PAS, I'll remember the Western Tanager and the Hooded Oriole.

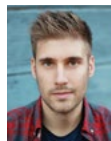
And finally, the hummingbirds. Some folks may not know that hummingbirds are confined to the Americas. Eurasia has the sunbirds, but hummers are really something else, dazzlingly iridescent, acrobatic, and fierce. These astonishing little flying jewels will always be associated in my mind with PAS. So much industry—that's our hardworking board—and so much beauty in a small package. That's Pasadena Audubon.

I'll be forever grateful for the honor of being PAS Executive Director and will be watching from afar to see what fabulous new projects develop in the coming months and years.

Lois Brunet joined PAS as a member in 2016 and served as Program Manager from 2018, which grew into Executive Director as programs blossomed.

Meet New Executive Director Jared Nigro

My absolute favorite part of non-profit work is creating an environment where everyone feels empowered to use their voice and be seen and heard. As I start this new role as your Executive Director, my mantra will be: "The birder in me sees the birder in you."



Okay, so maybe it is a blatant plagiarism of "Namaste," but nonetheless it is the mindset I want to harness in cultivating and expanding PAS' mission to fellow birders and the community at large.

Let me tell you a bit about myself. My favorite bird growing up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was the Baltimore Oriole. I was always intrigued by the male's striking bright orange colors and that rich whistle sound.

My passion for writing brought me to Los Angeles, where I received my BFA in writing and performed for the famed comedy theater company The Groundlings. You can still catch me doing improv around town in the evenings.

Always a conservationist, my first job out of college was for

the Gottlieb Foundation's award-winning nature and wildlife photography gallery G2. Working there introduced me to the world of environmental non-profits, scientists, birders, explorers, photographers, and all-around dynamic people.

The combination of my love for nature and my background in writing and performance turned me into a natural at stirring up public excitement for the Gottlieb Native Garden (and the garden's first book, *The Gottlieb Native Garden: A California Love Story*). I introduced the garden and its mission of re-wilding our urban lands to folks at functions such as the Academy Awards pre-party, Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, P22 Day, the Theodore Payne Foundation's Native Plant Garden Tour, and many more.

In 2019, I took my mission-driven non-profit skills in a different direction, as I began work for the Los Angeles Railroad Heritage Foundation. As Chief Operations Officer, I grew the foundation's mission of "diligently preserve and dynamically present rail history with a focus on the Los Angeles Basin" to thrive in the COVID-19 and post-pandemic era.

During that time, I created online events such as multi-day virtual field trips, a weekly reading series, and the crowd-favorite "unboxing series" where I would "unbox" model trains to teach kids about the mechanics of different locomotives and steam engines.

As I embark on this new feathery journey, I am hungry to learn about you. You as a birder, your favorite species, and what warms your heart at PAS. Please feel free to come right to me and strike up a conversation. I am ready to meet you!

- Jared Nigro

120 YEARS OF THE PASADENA AUDUBON SOCIETY



Ira Blitz

In 1850 America's natural resources appeared inexhaustible. Nature was to be conquered, not protected. Women's hats were being made out of bird feathers and even dead birds. Contests were held by hunters at Christmas to see who could shoot the most birds. Ornithologists, taxidermists, and museums all contributed to the loss of wildlife.

The effect on bird populations was evident and in response the first Audubon Society was formed in Boston in the late 19th century. These trends were also noted in Pasadena and just needed a spark to ignite a vigorous response.

That spark occurred one evening in March 1904. W. Scott Way was in his eucalyptus grove in Altadena when he heard gunshots ring out. Investigating, he found that hunters had piled an express wagon high with mourning doves taking them to market. Outraged, he vowed at that moment to form a society for bird protection.

Mr. Way was a book publisher and one-time game warden. He had about 15 acres north of Palm Street in Altadena.

On March 23, 1904, he placed an announcement in the Pasadena Evening Star for a meeting to address this issue. This took place on March 25, 1904, at the Board of Trade located on Colorado Boulevard just off Fair Oaks Avenue. "All lovers of birds" were invited to attend. Over forty people came.

The stated purposes of the organization were to prevent the killing of birds, to lobby for bird and wildlife protection laws, to discourage the wearing of feathers, to provide education in the public schools regarding bird conservation, and to encourage the study of native birds. Of note, there was no mention of bird walks or "birding" as these concepts had not yet been thought of.

At the meeting, bylaws were adopted and temporary officers were appointed. Another meeting was planned for the following week at the same place to form an Executive Committee.



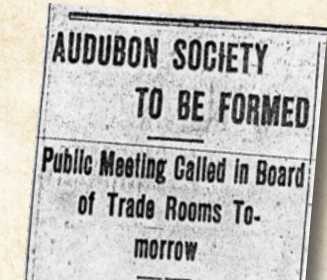
The intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Colorado Boulevard in 1905.

W. Scott Way became the Secretary/Treasurer of the new organization then called the Audubon Society of California, the first in the state. Garrett Newkirk of Altadena, a dentist by profession but passionate about the protection of birds, became Chairman and later the first President when that office was created in 1908. Elizabeth Grinnell, mother of the soon-to-be famous ornithologist Joseph Grinnell, became Vice President.

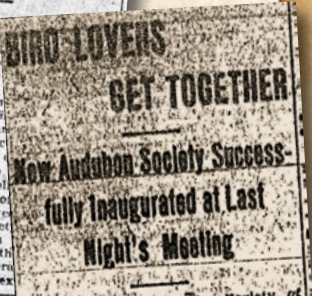
Other Audubon societies soon formed in California and a new name was needed to distinguish the one in Pasadena from the others. The new name, chosen in 1909, was the Pasadena Audubon Society.

The late PAS member Don Rogers and the Pasadena History Museum were the source material for this story and illustrations.

Ira Blitz has been a PAS member since 2006. He was the Board Secretary and Archivist from 2014 to 2020, the same year he retired as a physician after 50 years of practice.



A public meeting in the board of trade rooms on evening at 7:30 o'clock. The objects of the spread knowledge in culture and the relation to discourage the wear except those of the ostrich fowls; to prevent the eggs of wild birds; to say exercises in the public to encourage the study of the promoters of the make the Pasadena society for a state organization similar local societies, they in turn to co-operate national society now in ex



The California Audubon Society, of Pasadena was organized last night at a meeting of bird-lovers and bird-protectors in the board of trade rooms. There were over forty persons present. W. Scott Way called the meeting to order and stated the purpose of the society. Dr. Garrett Newkirk was made temporary chairman and Mr. Way secretary-treasurer. Addresses were made by Dr. Conger, Dr. Canfield, Mrs. H. Meyers, Mrs. Elizabeth Grinnell, Herman Cook, H. H. Wicks, John H. Kennedy, B. O. Bowen and P. J. McNally. By-laws were adopted and temporary officers appointed to serve until the annual meeting in May. An executive committee will be selected and organization completed at a meeting next Friday night in the same place. The first annual meeting will be a picnic to take place at Altadena or in one of the mountains nearby. A pleasant feature of the evening



Dr. Garrett Newkirk of Altadena, above, became the first Chairman of the Audubon Society of California, and in 1908, President of what would soon be renamed the Pasadena Audubon Society.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD

Carl Matthies, PAS Member-at-Large

There are a handful of birds that even most non-birders know, like our national symbol, the Bald Eagle, and the Mallard, America's most familiar waterfowl. Western Bluebirds would probably be at that level were it not sharing the limelight with an eastern and a montane cousin. Of all the wonderful birds we have the privilege of observing in our area, I've spent the most time around them, monitoring about two dozen nest boxes at Alhambra Golf Course since spring of 2022.

At seven inches, Western Bluebirds are relatively small but sturdy thrushes typically found in woodland edges between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Coast.

More than blue—Adult males live up to the name, with vibrant blue head, throat, wings, and tails, a russet breast extending down the flanks and over the mantle, and blue-tinged belly and undertail coverts.

Females show plenty of blue as well, mainly on the wing and tail feathers, but are otherwise rusty and grey. Juveniles can be distinguished from adult females by the presence of white spots on the back and breast.

While they may not sing ethereal arpeggios like some other members of the thrush family, male Western Bluebirds string together a pleasant enough series of whistles at dawn. By the time I make my rounds, well after sunup, the only vocalizing is the single descending kew note used by pairs to locate each other.

Researchers have found that Western Bluebirds adopt the local dialect regardless of their genetic relatedness to their neighbors. This may have something to do with their occasional custom of communal or cooperative breeding. Juveniles and even adult males will sometimes aid their parents in raising offspring. It all sounds very wholesome, but beneath the veneer of respectability, it's more like "Peyton Place."

Genetic studies have revealed that up to 45 percent of nests have one or more chicks that are half-siblings to the rest.

Their diet consists of insects and other small invertebrates. In fact, bluebirds are so adept at grabbing bugs that farmers originally hung nest boxes to get their assistance with pest control.

Western Bluebirds also eat a variety of berries, usually in the leaner months. However, at Alhambra Golf Course, breeding pairs on their second brood in late June/early July feed their nestlings a lot of Carrotwood berries: empty nests are carpeted with the seeds.

Declining numbers—Collectively, Western, Mountain, and Eastern Bluebirds have possibly been the sub-



Female (left) and male Western Bluebirds. © Tom Cassaro

ject of more citizen science than any other organisms. In response to sharply declining numbers, concerned naturalists established the North America Bluebird Society (NABS) in 1978 as a non-profit organization to promote the "recovery of bluebirds and other cavity-nesting bird species in North America."

According to NABS, there are at least 58 state and regional affiliates monitoring bluebird nest boxes in most of the continental US, much of Canada, and even Bermuda!

On top of that, all three North American bluebirds are bellwether species in National Audubon's Climate Change Project, a semiannual census of birds deemed particularly sensitive to the effects of global warming, the winter portion of which is happening right now (www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch).

Wildlife Drama at Nest Box Monitoring

I got involved with Western Bluebirds thanks to an especially zealous member of the Southern California Bluebird Club named Dick Purvis (more about on *Wrentit* vol. 70, no. 4). Purvis hung so many bluebird nest boxes in the parks, cemeteries, and golf courses of Orange County that he had to move on to L.A. County, including Alhambra Golf Course.

Checking the nest boxes every 7-10 days is important for promoting reproductive success of Western Bluebirds, and thwarting reproductive success of House Sparrows, an invasive species and the bluebirds' main competition for nest boxes, at least in Alhambra.

Ants are also known to invade nests with catastrophic consequences. On one occasion, my wife and I rescued the lone surviving chick from an ant-infested nest, cleaned it off, and successfully transplanted it in another nest with chicks the same age.

Both male and female play an active role in care and feeding of the young, which typically number three to six. The feistier pairs will swoop down and snap their bills at me when I approach.

Western Bluebird nest box monitoring offers a front-row seat to wildlife drama, even in the middle of a golf course.



ELAINE MACPHERSON

Eaton Canyon Champion and Voice of PAS

Dec 21, 1942 - Oct 21, 2023

Elaine MacPherson had a long double association with Eaton Canyon Nature Center and Pasadena Audubon Society.

She completed docent training at the Nature Center in 1986, became an active docent naturalist, and participated in just about every event they hosted. When the center was lost in the 1993 fire, she was part of the group that directly assisted in the long and detailed rebuilding of the new place.



Her interest in learning more led her to take several bird identification classes over the years. She was proud to have been a top student.

For PAS she led many public bird walks for many years at the Huntington Gardens with Dan Lewis, served on the Board, and participated in many field trips. She was a faithful attendee at PAS monthly meetings.

Elaine also volunteered her home phone and answering machine to be the voice of PAS, answering untold numbers of bird questions from the calling public.

She retained a spontaneous enthusiasm for nature and all things natural, often sharing something she'd seen on television or in newspapers or magazines. These often reflected scientific studies, and Elaine assisted this author in hand-recording details during many bird banding sessions.

As she slowed down in later years, Elaine was still very appreciative for rides to local birding sites, from mountains to deserts to coast.

Elaine MacPherson was a very giving person, caring deeply when someone was ill, or hurting from suffering a loss. We are now the ones hurting and we will long remember Elaine.

– Mickey Long

Elaine MacPherson was supremely enthusiastic, generous to a fault, and cared deeply about birds and our chapter.

Elaine not only gave many years of service to PAS, she also was a member of Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO), a women's philanthropic and educational organization that raises money for scholarships for women. She welcomed new members with love and acceptance, and did all she could to support our chapter and to help the women who asked for our assistance.

I was fortunate to call Elaine my friend. We spent hours birding, talking, and laughing together. I've never heard anyone appreciate a bite of delicious food quite as vigorously as Elaine! She was very supportive of me, as well as both of my children, and I will miss her terribly.

– Laura Solomon

VICKI "MAX" BRENNER

She made birdwatchers out of us

Nov, 1951 - Aug 1, 2023

Vicki "Max" Brenner was a birder and member of the Pasadena Audubon Society when she passed away from a rare liver cancer last August at the age of 71. I met Max and her wife Denise Dimin about ten years ago when I moved to Los Angeles. The two of them were instrumental in introducing me to many wonderful aspects of the region.

Max walked their dog Tango at Arroyo Park every morning and took beautiful photos of birds. She posted them daily on Facebook,



and lots of her friends, near and far, would help with identification when necessary.

Max discovered a pair of owls nesting in the Arroyo and documented them raising their young every spring for several years.

"Max absolutely made birdwatchers out of the people she met in the Arroyo," said Ryan Togioka, another PAS member. "A motley crew of birdwatchers, dog walkers,

joggers, and nature lovers also spend their mornings in the park. And Max, always cheerful, would say 'good morning' to every one of us. Over time, everybody on the trail got to know Max. And gradually, through these short, friendly meetings, a small circle of friends formed around her."

"She opened a lot of eyes to the natural wonders that could be found in the park. In particular, she was a real booster for the pair of Great Horned Owls that nested beneath the San Rafael Bridge. Whenever she spotted the owls, Max would point them out to other walkers on the trail. Most people had no idea that there was a nest under the bridge, and they were always amazed to see these elusive birds in the daytime. But that was Max. She was always generous with her knowledge of the Arroyo and its birds."

Max Brenner was born near St. Paul, MN. She earned a B.A. in theater at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and her M.A. in technical theater at Arizona State University. That set the stage for her career in lighting for television and live shows in L.A.

She became a founding partner in an Emmy Award-winning entertainment lighting design company for video, film, concerts, and live events, and traveled the world with top lighting designers, entertainers, and producers. Max was the inaugural chief lighting technician for the award-winning daytime talk show "The Talk," where she remained for nine years until she retired.

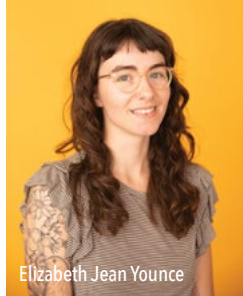
In January 2023, Max, Denise, and I took a trip down to Orange County to see the Snowy Owl who spent a few months on top of a suburban rooftop. Max took beautiful photos and we had a great time. We miss her.

– Emily Allen

IMPASSIONED IMPRESSIONS OF THE NATURAL WORLD

Meher McArthur

A trio of lively, red-capped Acorn Woodpeckers transport acorns to stash in their holes in the trunk of an Englemann Oak; below them are three House Finches sitting on Toyon branches laden with deep red berries. A Great Blue Heron wades elegantly among the Broadleaf Cattail rushes on which a Yellow-Rumped Warbler and a Common Yellowthroat are perched.



Elizabeth Jean Younce

These two exquisite designs grace the giclée prints, tea towels, and Nalgene water bottles that have been available for sale on the Pasadena Audubon Society website. They are the creations of Elizabeth Jean Younce, an artist and business owner based in

downtown Los Angeles who has made it her mission to use her considerable printmaking and illustration skills to spotlight the country's native flora and fauna. Her exquisite images exhibit not only masterful technical skill but a deep and passionate concern for the natural world.

Younce received her BFA in illustration and printmaking from the Savannah College of Art & Design in 2015, followed by an MFA in printmaking from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2018. She worked for three years as a master-printer for Tandem Press in Madison, WI, before relocating to Los Angeles, where she now works as a master-printer for Gemini G.E.L., a renowned workshop, exhibition space, and publisher of limited-edition prints. She is also the founder of Mustard Beetle: Textiles, Press, & Goods, a business to print her illustrations onto paper, fabric, and other goods, all produced sustainably.

As an artist, Younce engages in regular volunteer activities and collaborates with environmental organizations. Beyond the partnership to create PAS merchandise, she is a docent with their Bird Science Program. All of these worlds intersect in her work.

Her 2021 solo exhibition, *The Withering*, at the Talon Gallery in Portland, OR, spotlights in thoughtful and meticulous detail native creatures endangered both by human activity and invasive species in various ecosystems throughout the country. In one particularly moving print entitled "If Only It Stayed This Way," a Greater Roadrunner perches on a cholla cactus, clutching a centipede in its beak. Though all seems normal for the bird and cactus, the small swarm of Africanized bees buzzing around them suggest their great potential threat to their ecosystem in Arizona's Saguaro National Park.

In all aspects of her work, the birds and animals around her provide inspiration for life and art. They



function, she explains, as a visual metaphor to overcome seemingly impossible situations in our lives. "These creatures are beautiful, delicate, yet strong and capable of survival. We are wild and fragile beings; we have similar wants, needs and desires."

Check out PAS gear in collaboration with Elizabeth Jean Younce

<https://www.pasadenaudubon.org/pasgear>.

Her artwork: elizabethjeanyounce.com Instagram: @MustardBeetle



Top: *Chaparral* (left) and *LA River* (right), limited edition Giclée prints of original screenprints by Elizabeth Jean Younce.

Left: *If Only It Stayed This Way*, 2021, by Elizabeth Jean Younce—Greater Roadrunner, Teddy-bear Cholla cactus, and (invasive) Africanized honey bee. Graphite and watercolor, 16" x 20"

CONDORS & ALLIES, PART 2: Spiritual Teachings of the Yurok Tribe

Fernanda Ezabella

In 2003, the Yurok Tribe created a task force to decide what was the most important land-based species to bring back to their ancestral territory in Northern California. The eldest of their elders had no doubts.

“Without pausing or hesitating, he just said: prey-goneesh,” remembers Tiana Williams-Claussen, using their native name of the California Condor, a magnificent bird that once soared over Pacific Northwest skies as far north as British Columbia.

Williams-Claussen had no idea of her tribe’s deep cultural ties with the bird, the largest in North America and an important piece of their origin narrative. But soon she started to understand as she became instrumental in their return after more than 100 years.

“Because he flies so high, higher than any other bird in the region, we believe the condor helps carry our prayers to the heavens”

– Tiana Williams-Claussen

After receiving a B.A. in biochemical sciences from Harvard University, Williams-Claussen returned home to the Yurok Tribe, the biggest native community in California with around 5,000 members. Located in parts of Del Norte and Humboldt counties, the territory encompasses a 44-mile stretch of the Klamath River, with plenty of giant redwood trees.

Williams-Claussen was the first employee of the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department in 2008, followed by biologist Chris West, an expert in California Condors. The Yurok Condor Restoration Program was the focus of the department, a partnership with the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

After more than ten years of studies, such as assessing the habitat for suitability, the first four condors were released into Yurok territory across Redwood National and State Parks in 2022.



Elders from the task force that decided to bring California condors home meet with Williams-Claussen to see the birds’ arrival, in 2022.

Today, the Pacific Northwest flock is the smallest and youngest group of California Condors: only 11 birds aged one to four years. The three newest members arrived last November after being hatched and raised in the Los Angeles Zoo (more on Condors & Allies, Part 1, *The Wrentit*, vol. 72, no. 2).

In total, there are only about 300 flying free in California, Baja California (Mexico), Arizona, and Utah, thanks to the recovery program started in 1979 by the USFWS.

“Our birds are kind of teenagers at this point. They don’t reach full maturity until about six years old, when they begin breeding,” said Williams-Claussen, Wildlife Department director. “So in the absence of parents and older mentors, we act like their parents. We provide food until they figure out their resources.”



Williams-Claussen holds a California condor at the Oregon Zoo during a health check.

Creator and the Condor

Condors became extinct in the wild in 1987 due to rampant hunting, habitat destruction, and lead poisoning (when they eat the carcasses of animals killed by lead bullets). But they were also erased from the cultural landscape: condors are an integral part of Yurok folklore, in rituals banned following the arrival of the Spanish Catholic colonizers.

“Because he flies so high, higher than any other bird in the region, we believe the condor helps carry our prayers to the heavens and all around the world when we’re asking for the world to be in balance,” said Williams-Claussen.

She described their role in a dance when Creator asks for a song to be used as a prayer in the world renewal ceremony. The condor decides not to sing, but Creator insists, and the song is the most beautiful the world has ever heard, which is then given to the Yurok people to guide their ritual.

“Creator was able to see the true spirit of people,” said Williams-Claussen, noting that condors, in real life, don’t sing. “And he saw the condor had a lot of wisdom from being the guy who flies higher, sees the whole world, and has a lot of kindness in his heart.”

“Maybe the condor wasn’t the prettiest guy out there, bald head and all, but he just had this great spirit.”

While California Condors are starting to soar anew, Williams-Claussen passionately shares their spiritual values with the younger generations. “Growing up, I didn’t know anything about the condor. But today my daughter knows.”

in the next *the wrentit*: Condors & Allies, Part 3: The Flock in Baja California



MY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT EXPERIENCE

Katarina Doorly, 10 years old

Last December, I had a great experience on the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) with the Pasadena Audubon Society. My family and I have been members since 2022 and this was our second CBC. The first one was really fun, but so was the second. This time, the Young Birders Club went to Eaton Canyon on a bird count co-led by Luke Tiller and Catherine Hamilton.

The first bird we saw was one of the best of the day. It was a Merlin! I was happy because I hadn't seen one in a while. We started walking on the trail loop near the nature center when Luke beckoned us over. We climbed up a slope over to the tree he was sitting under, and there was a Great Horned Owl! The owl was the best bird of the day. We even went back later because one of the kids did not get to see the owl.

After the count, my family and I went to the CBC dinner. I liked the dinner because my photos of the owl and the merlin got into the slideshow. You can see my photos on Instagram @LAKatbirder.

The club welcomes young birders of all levels and meets on the first Wednesday of the month, from 5:30 to 6:30pm. Sign up at www.pasadenaudubon.org/youngbirders



Katarina Doorly (left) looks on as PAS president Luke Tiller (right) points out some wonders of nature. Also impressed are Ella and Tarta Smitheman. Possom the dog is distracted.

© Sean Doorly



Great Horned Owl at Eaton Canyon during the CBC walk. Photo by Emerson Walsh, age 12, member of the Young Birders Club.

The Wrentit, Revamped

Fernanda Ezabella

I will never forget Carl Matthies' enthusiasm when I pitched my first bird stories to *The Wrentit*. I had finally found a place to write about my favorite subject! He even encouraged me to make a series out of one of these stories, and I did—about the California Condors (page 8).

When I became a member of the Pasadena Audubon Society in 2022, reading *The Wrentit* was always a treat, especially because of Carl's comedic touches and light-spirited stories. Now that he is stepping down as *The Wrentit* Editor after almost four years, I've taken his post with a curious mix of humility and excitement.

But for one Carl Matthies, you need two to match his meticulous work. Patrick Walling is with me and he is the one behind this new stylish design that we hope you have noticed.

In four years of volunteering with PAS, Patrick has done a lot. If you got déjà vu reading this revamped *Wrentit*, you're probably a reader of PAS' *Birding Guide to the Greater Pasadena Area*, which he worked on for 18 months and took inspiration from. A professional graphic designer, Patrick was first drawn to birding while admiring the shore and estuary birds of Morro Bay, CA, and is both excited and honored to be on the *Wrentit* team.



As for me, I'm a journalist by trade. I was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and moved to Los Angeles 13 years ago to be a correspondent. My husband and I are "hummingbirders," catering to dozens of hummers on our balcony in the Hollywood Hills.

We hope to hear from you with new ideas, suggestions, and contributions. Our mailbox is always open: pas.wrentit@gmail.com.

COMING SOON Jon Fisher details the numbers from the 2023 Christmas Bird Count: 14,000-plus birds and 165 species.

2023 IN REVIEW: Main Threats to Our Local Birds

Dave Weeshoff, PAS Vice President

The year 2023 was a busy and productive one for your Conservation and Advocacy Committee. We addressed the most critical threats to our local birds and beyond:

Anthropogenic Climate Change

We worked with 23 local nonprofit organizations to encourage the Pasadena Department of Water and Power, through the Pasadena City Council, to declare a climate emergency and commit to providing their customers with 100% carbon-free electrical power by 2030. Early in 2023, the city council voted to make that commitment and in December agreed to provide, by mid-2024, a clear “optimized plan” on how that would be achieved. Much work is yet to be done to assure Pasadena’s commitment and focused implementation of this high-priority project in 2024 and beyond.

Window Collisions

The team has worked diligently and in detail to formulate a program to address the issue of birds dying as a result of window collisions within our area of influence—the San Gabriel Valley—but particularly in the residential areas of Pasadena. We are requesting all Pasadena Audubon members, and eventually many others, to contact and inform our team of any window strike and allow us to help them reduce the possibility of further collisions on their property. We are prepared to provide individualized consulting regarding activities and solutions that would be most effective in minimizing and eliminating the conditions conducive to deadly window collisions.

Outdoor Cats

To address the leading cause of bird deaths in North America—outdoor cats—we sponsored and participated in the first annual “Catio Tour” project and encouraged over 50 households to visit successful local Catio installations for ideas on how they might provide an outdoor experience for their predatory cats but prevent them from killing our local birds.

Habitat Maintenance and Conservation

Darren Dowell and a group of energetic volunteers removed a huge amount of



Jamie Cho photo.

Volunteers at the Arroyo Seco on Coastal Cleanup Day.

invasive plants at Hahamongna Watershed Park. Later, hundreds of pounds more were taken by Carl Matthies and friends. The Conservation Team also supported two trash cleanups, at Peck Road Water Conservation Park and, on Coastal Cleanup Day, at an Arroyo Seco site. We are also closely monitoring the recent announcement of a possible expansion of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, as well as working on tree-planting opportunities in our communities.

PAS members continue to participate in various community science projects, as always through eBird, but in addition they got involved in Audubon’s Feeder Watch program and Project Phoenix, which studies the effects of wildfire smoke on California birds.

Please contact me with comments, questions, suggestions, or to join our Conservation and Advocacy Committee. Dave Weeshoff: (818) 618-1652 or weeshoff@sbcglobal.net

MOTUS’ FIRST DETECTION (and it’s not a bird)

Chris Spurgeon, PAS Program Chair

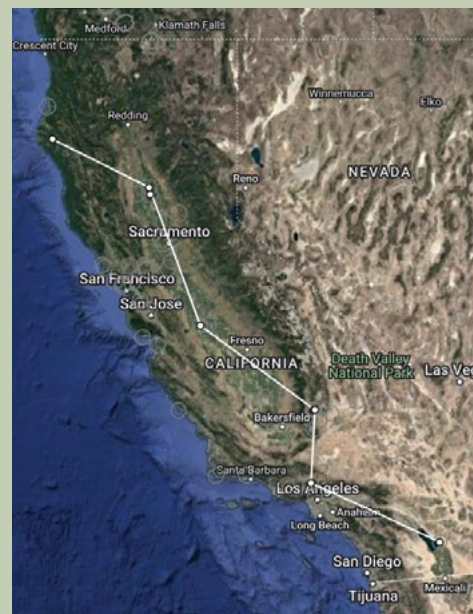
Hard to believe, but our Motus tracking station at Bear Divide has been up and running for a full year! The station is one of more than 1,500 stations scattered around North America, all listening for signals from migrating birds that have been equipped with tiny radio transmitters.

We were thrilled to learn that a couple of months ago our station made its first detection. And we were astonished to learn that the creature zooming past Bear Divide wasn’t a bird at all, it was a bat!

This past autumn the California Department of Fish and Wildlife attached Motus transmitters to several dozen Hoary Bats throughout the Pacific Northwest. Hoary Bats are known to migrate long distances every spring and fall, and the little guy who flew past Bear Divide certainly lived up to that reputation. Originally equipped with a Motus transmitter at the end of September near the California-Oregon border, it was detected migrating past Sacramento about a month later. Two days after that it was detected near Fresno, and then just five days (or nights) later it flew right past our Bear Divide detectors! And then the very next day it was detected more than a hundred miles further south, by the Salton Sea.

It’s this type of detailed migration information that makes Motus so valuable. Pasadena Audubon continues to be active in the Motus world. Our grants

program funds researchers and helps pay for the tiny transmitters they attach to migrating birds. (The transmitters aren’t cheap, costing more than \$200 each). We’re also in the planning stages of installing our second Motus tower in the Hollywood hills. And we’re actively seeking locations and collaborators for even more stations. Thanks to all of you who’ve helped support our Motus efforts!



THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL RECENT DONORS!

your generous support keeps our community thriving

GOLDEN EAGLE (\$1000 - \$1999)

Gary Breaux, Dave Weeshoff, Sok Tng (*In honor of Lois Brunet, on her retirement*)

GREAT HORNED OWL (\$500 - \$999)

Karlene Goller, James & Marilyn Hildebrandt, Sally & John Howell, Carl Matthies, Reilly Moss, Peter W Nichols, Kristen Ochoa & Shana Pallotta, Presenti Foundation, Charles Stevens

ACORN WOODPECKER (\$250 - \$499)

Emily L Allen, Lois & Pascal Brunet, Wendy Clough, Nancy Davis, William Murphy, Lucy Pliskin, Doris Popoff, Beth & Steve Roth, Vicki Salmon, Deborah Tammearu

CALIFORNIA THRASHER (\$100 - \$249)

Michael & Marguerite Abrams, Paula Bailey, Ira Blitz, Jane Brackman, Ursula Mary Brooks, John & Judy Campbell, Ellen Carroll, Michele Carter, Patricia Colville, Elizabeth Cordero, Lisa Day, Tim Delia, Sean Doorly & Denise Gretchen-Doorly, Hilary & Steve Dorsey, Darren Dowell, Carolyn Ellis (*in honor of Lois Brunet, with gratitude*), Lynne Fahland, Susan A. Frank, Lynzie Flynn, Karen Freeburg, Celia Gerry, Terry J. Ginsberg & Pamela M. Allen, Monica Greening, Gerry Hans & Mary Button, Karin Hanson (*in memory of Kim*), Donna Heinze, Mary Ann & Jeff Laun, Nancy McIntyre, John Merriam, Christina Mannino & Jeremy Leader, Tanya Miller, Dana P Newman, Robert & Gail Nishinaka, Ellen Osheroff, Susan Paulsen, Wendy & Anthony Price, E J Remson, Pilar Reynaldo, Deborah Saxe (*in memory of Robert Saxe*), Richard Schulhof & Sandra Goodenough, Loretta Selinger, Sylvia Stachura, Alyce Williamson, David T Woodley

WRENTIT (\$5 - \$99)

Cindy Alberts Carson, David Almada, Francisco Alonso, Rhonda Anderson, Marie Barnidge-McIntyre, Barbara Bellano, Edwina M Berg, Julianne Biondi, John Birsner & Pamela Stones, Jordana Blacksberg, Kitty Blassey, Margaret Bruell, Estelle Charlebois, Tom Cheyney, Alex Coffey, Bette Cooper, Susanna Dadd, Jack Danna, Felicitas de la Cruz, Cynthia Devora, Hui Ding, Ruth Edwards, Ellen Fiol, Lisa Fowler, Katherine Gabel, Danielle Garcia, Julia Garnant, Karen Gibson, Sharon Gillman, Evelyne Glaser, Bettina Graf, David Grant & Steven Sanchez, Jeffrey & Leeann Hale, Susan Haleblan, Eulalia Halloran, John & Anna Hallstrom, David M Hansen, Margaret Haskin, Andrew Havens, James T Heringer, Silvia Heubach, Dan Holguin, Wanda Houchin, Linda Jensen, Claudia Keith & David

Lorenzana, David Kimball, David Labowitz, Ruby Lassanyi, Nancy D Lavelle, Victor D Levine, Donald A. Lieu, Hannah MacLaren, Aline Mayer, Steven Milam, Marcia & Jon Miller, Sara Mori, Clair Morrissey, Cynthia Murphy, Patrick J Oliva, Kristine L Olsen, Dennis & Margaret Page, Olga Palo, Julie & Peter Parker, AJ Almeda & John Paul, Stacey L. L. Poston, Philip Regan, Karen Reid, Mary Renaker, Karen B Reynolds, Kristin Roberts, Leroy Russ, Marjorie Rydberg, Joanne & Gordon Sasaki, Lora Smith, Barbara Sohal, Harry Spilman, Robin Stafford, Judith Sullivan, Heidi Taylor, Luke Tiller, Glenna M Watterson, Winnie Wear, Dorothy Weiss, Roslyn & Joe Witt, Tai-Ling Wong

DAWN CHORUS (Monthly Donors)

Emily L. Allen, Mertin Bern, Ava Bise, Hannah Carbone, Gesna Clarke, Kathy Degner, Gail Gibson & Connie Pearson, Karin Hanson, Sarah Hilbert, Jared Knickmeyer & Linda Elkin, Alice Lewin, Mario Mariotta IV, Krisen Ochoa & Shana Pallotta, Taylor Paez, Susan Reedy, Laura & Gavin Solomon, Chris Spurgeon, Elaine Tietjen, Cheryl Walling, Patrick Walling, Dave Weeshoff



BECOME A PART OF THE DAWN CHORUS

Consider joining our monthly donor program to provide ongoing support for all our programs and events. Sign up at pasadenaudubon.org/donate. Dawn Chorus donors receive a beautiful enamel pin designed by PAS' own Patrick Walling and Graham Hamby!

New Member Joins PAS Board

Since October 2023, Emily Allen has been part of the Pasadena Audubon Society Board and chair of the Membership Committee, where she takes good care of our 1,600-plus members, a number that is at an all-time high.



Emily recently retired from Cal State Los Angeles where she was Dean of the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Technology. She is a long-time hiker, backpacker, camper, and birder and is excited about committing some of her newly found time to PAS.

Her favorite time to go birding is whenever she gets out of the house, and her favorite bird is the one she just identified. She hopes to make some headway soon in learning to bird by ear.

As the Membership Chair, Emily works with the Board to ensure that our programs are inclusive and that members enjoy their involvement in PAS activities.

PAS is looking to add folks to the Membership committee. Please reach out if you're interested in joining. It's a great way to volunteer your time for the good of the birds (and the PAS people). Contact her at membership@pasadenaudubon.org

► a warm welcome to our newest members!

ALHAMBRA: Kathryn Hirano

ALTADENA: Kim Alvarez, Paul Dios, Norah Small

ARCADIA: Toby & Cornelia Odell, Stan Sander

CERRITOS: Susan Sugahara

DUARTE: Kevin Kane

GLENDALE: Alexandra Quinn, Eileen Ybarra

KAGEL CANYON: Edith Stone

LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE: Gay Hill

LA CRESCENTA: Jim Conley

LOS ANGELES: Juliana Escudero, Clara Halle,

Jennifer Morris, Patricia Taylor

MONROVIA: Lauren Dowd, Tracy & Alexander Ramirez,

Jessica Woodruff

NORTH HOLLYWOOD: Holly Cusick

PASADENA: Ryan Bell, Gabriela Nava & Garrett Blackwell,

De Thompson, Juan Pablo Vigneaux Ariztia

ROSEMEAD: Kristi Tea

SAN MARCOS: Tammah Watts

SAN MARINO: George Foo

SANTA MONICA: Irazu Martin

SHERMAN OAKS: Lisa Day

SIERRA MADRE: Leonie Jordan,

Kevin Mack & Aditi Sapra

SOUTH PASADENA: Hsiang Pin Hong

WATERTOWN: Carrie Sweredoski

pasadena audubon society board & staff

Luke Tiller
Dave Weeshoff
Mayra Sánchez Barba
Gary Breaux
Chris Spurgeon
Emily Allen
Darren Dowell
Sok Tng
Ashwin Sivakumar
Deborah Tammearu
Carl Matthies

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Programs
Membership
Field Trips
Development
Conservation
Member at Large
Member at Large

luke.tiller@gmail.com
weeshoff@sbcglobal.net
mgsanchez@ucdavis.edu
gnbreaux@gmail.com
chris.spurgeon@pasadenaaudubon.org
membership@pasadenaaudubon.org
dowell.darren@yahoo.com
soktng@gmail.com
ahs.birder@gmail.com
revdeb.tammearu8@gmail.com
cmatthies@yahoo.com

Jared Nigro
Jamie Cho
Evellyn Rosas

Executive Director
Programs Coordinator
Garden Educator

jaredn.pas@gmail.com
jamiec.pas@gmail.com
evellynr.pas@gmail.com

the
wrenit

The Wrenit is published by the Pasadena Audubon Society
75 S Grand Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105

Editor: Fernanda Ezabella | pas.wrenit@gmail.com
Art Director: Patrick Walling
Printer: Marina Graphic Center (310) 970-1777

Messages or queries for Pasadena Audubon may be left at (626) 410-7506.
For change of NAS address call (800) 274-4201.

**PASADENA
AUDUBON
SOCIETY** Founded 1904
75 S. Grand Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91105

DATED MATERIAL

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
No. 1880
Pasadena, CA




Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

Printed on 10% recycled paper
FSC Certified

**PASADENA
AUDUBON
SOCIETY**

Our Mission: To bring the excitement of birds to our community through birding, education, and the conservation of bird habitats

BIRDS & BEERS



**4TH WEDNESDAY
OF EACH MONTH**

5 PM TO 8 PM

WILD PARROT BREWING CO.
2302 E COLORADO BLVD, PASADENA



American Goldfinch © Mickey Long