



HUMMIN'

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Birding on a Restoration Project, or 'If You Grow It, They Will Come'

By Laura Botzong, Simone Boudreau, Ann Dalkey, and Harrison Kirner, PVPLC

Twice monthly, enthusiastic Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society members join with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) to conduct bird surveys at a restoration site. In what is becoming a remarkable study, this group is doggedly pursuing the goal of recording the bird community's response to a 21-acre habitat restoration within the Three Sisters Reserve of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve. The restoration consists of 14 acres of coastal sage scrub and 7 acres of grasslands.

The restoration process has unfolded in a series of activities. First, the ground needed to be cleared of the thick cover, nonnative annual grasses, black mustard and fennel. Goats



California gnatcatcher

Photo by Evi Meyer

happily ate their way through much of the cover in January 2009, clearing the site to make it much easier for the PVPLC

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Western meadowlark

Photo by Jess Morton

THIS UNKNOWN PENINSULA The Song of the Meadowlark

By Jess Morton

Though it is now many decades since, one incredible shower of clear descending notes I heard on my first day of birding still echoes through my memory. The song itself, given only once, was distant, flung across the draw from the then-wild Western half of the South Coast Botanic Garden. Our walk leader was occupied helping us identify a number of other birds in view at the time, so he either did not hear the song or simply noted it automatically, without comment, presuming we would hear the song again when we were close and could find the bird in binoculars, something that did

not happen. In either case, the bird was not tallied among the 40 species I saw on that gorgeous February morning.

The amazing song remained a mystery for several weeks until I heard it again, this time across a sunny coastal meadow of fennel, wild oats and scattered sage scrub. Now, my bird was in full voice, and I would have time to find it. Even though I had half memorized my field guide by this time, I was unprepared for my first clear view of the vivid yellow and black chest of a Western meadowlark, especially one fully abandoned to song. "Spectacular" does not do that vision justice.

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field crews to conduct their restoration activities. Irrigation pipes were installed in September that year. Starting in October, the field crews removed over 500 nonnative acacia trees and chipped them into mulch. In November, volunteers and the field crews began installing more than 7,900 native plants and spreading 1,085 pounds of native seeds. Since then, the field crews have mowed and weed-whipped the area on a regular basis to keep the nonnative plants at bay while the newly installed native plants grow to their mature size.

While all birds will benefit from the restoration, there are two species that receive special consideration in PVPLC's work: the California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*) and the coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*). Both species have limited populations, and on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, they are isolated from other populations. At the survey's three-year mark, we wonder whether these species have begun to use the new habitat.

The California gnatcatcher is found in coastal sage habitats that are dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and includes California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) and California bush sunflower (*Encelia califor-*



Coastal cactus wrens at the Three Sisters Reserve in Palos Verdes.

Photo by Evi Meyer

nica). They nest in mature sagebrush that reach a height of about three feet. Studies have found that after a wildfire, it takes four to five years for the vegetation to grow back to a height that is once again suitable for gnatcatchers. In a similar fashion, we can expect the same for our restoration project. Thus, we can predict that the gnatcatchers will utilize the new habitat within four to five years of the restoration.

We found that the gnatcatchers are observed more frequently during the summer months, and most are found at the coastal sage

scrub restoration site. The numbers of gnatcatchers seen at the site from July through September, since the survey began, are shown in Table 1 (see p. 4).

Most interesting in these numbers is the lack of gnatcatchers observed in summer 2010. At that time, the newly installed plants were still very small. A year later, the canopies had begun to develop, but the plants were around 30 percent of their ultimate mature size.

For the coastal cactus wrens, we expect several years will pass before the habitat will suit their needs. Cactus wrens prefer a habitat that contains at least 20 percent mature cactus in the coastal sage scrub. Also, the cactus stands need to be good

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Meadowlark, from Page 1

Since then, I have learned how much a part of grassland landscapes these meadowlarks are, giving them their most distinctive voice and lending them color on dreary mornings. These seed-eating birds are as characteristic of grassy meadows as their cousins, red-winged blackbirds, are of marsh and reed beds. Though common in Southern California, the meadowlark's fortune has risen and fallen with the human uses of the land during the past two centuries.

The advent of ranching and agriculture in the 19th century must have brought a huge increase in the habitat

available for them, concomitant with a great population explosion. Then, as the human population began its own local late 20th-century explosion, and suburbanization stretched across once-farmed hills and valleys, those new meadowlark habitats ceased to exist. From dust to dust.

It always surprises me how many meadowlarks can be crammed into a small field of grass and remain completely invisible. Invisible, that is, until you step into the field and the birds explode out of it. Take a step and two dozen birds rise and wheel away, a blur of wings and commotion that quickly settles 200 yards off, safely out of reach. Ah, but there are many

more still present, as your next step or two will demonstrate, and as you walk into the field, birds will lift off in their twos and sixes to dart away. And dart it is, for they will fold their wings in flight, long pointed beaks, short tails and chunky bodies like so many darts aimed at the bulls-eye of safety just over there.

But wait a while. One of the meadowlarks will hop up on a post or low bush to sing. It matters little if you can see the bird — all you need are ears. For me, it will be the same as on that first morning of birding, a magical song cascading into awareness from somewhere far away yet incredibly close to the heart.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Reject the Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline



By Lillian Light

Are you worried about the wave of extreme weather occurring in countries around the globe? Recent months have brought “historic floods in Pakistan, displacing 20 million people from their homes; the historic drought and fires in Russia; and the great Australian flood that covered an area the size of France and Germany combined.” (*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 16, 2011, p. A19). In our country, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico are experiencing droughts more intense than any previous ones. In the past summer, Texas endured the highest average three-month temperature ever recorded for any state, in the history of government records dating back to 1895. Texas also received just one fifth of its average annual rainfall. In late August, Hurricane Irene was the 10th natural disaster that caused more than \$1 billion in damage during the past year.

In their climate-change models, scientists have predicted these changing patterns of drought, flooding, hurricanes and rising temperatures, and they attribute these extreme weather events to the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. To avoid plunging our world into a much worse future weather crisis, we must reduce our use of fossil fuels and turn to renewable sources of energy.

So why is our State Department moving toward approving a 1,711-mile tar sands oil pipeline? The Environmental Protection Agency has called the State Department’s review “environmentally objectionable” and is calling for a more in-depth review based on sound science. It appears the department has caved in to pressure from the oil industry.

The Canadian oil and gas company, TransCanada, is proposing to build the Keystone XL Pipeline to carry dirty tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to Texas. Giant oil corporations invested in Canada’s tar sands, and they are counting on this pipeline to make the expansion of oil extraction operations profitable. It would carry more than 700,000 barrels of tar sands oil into the United States daily and would double imports of this controversial oil.

Tar sands oil is one of the dirtiest fuels on earth. The first step in the process is to strip-mine large areas of Alberta’s boreal forest. Strip-mining a single barrel of oil requires the destruction of four tons of boreal wilderness. A recent Natural Resources Defense Council report estimated that 160 million migratory birds could ultimately perish from tar sands operations. The oil, a tarlike substance called bitumen, is extracted with steam or water heated by burning natural gas. The EPA

estimates that the greenhouse gas emissions from tar sands oil are 82% greater than those produced by conventional crude oil. This does not take into account the destruction of the forest that sequesters carbon.

The project poses a major threat to water supplies on both sides of the border. It takes three barrels of water to extract each single barrel of oil. Tar sand operations use roughly 400 million gallons of water a day. Most of this water is dumped into large man-made pools known as tailing ponds. Operations in Alberta have already resulted in 65 square miles of toxic tailing ponds, which kill migrating birds and pollute downstream watersheds.

The Keystone XL would carry bitumen, which is more corrosive than crude oil, thinned with other petroleum condensates and then pumped through the pipeline at high pressure and at a temperature greater than 150 degrees. The threat of spills is enormous. In the summer of 2010, one million gallons of tar sands oil poured into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan from a pipeline run by the Enbridge Company. TransCanada’s Keystone I pipeline has spilled 12 times in six states during its first year of operation. In July, an ExxonMobil pipeline spilled more than 40,000 gallons of crude into the Yellowstone River.

The Keystone XL would cross major rivers, including the Missouri, Yellowstone and Red Rivers, as well as the Ogallala Aquifer. The latter is a shallow underground reservoir supplying water for agriculture and drinking water for two million people. A spill above the Ogallala could dump as much as 180,000 barrels of oil tainting that vast water supply.

I strongly urge all who are reading this article to contact President Obama (1600 Pennsylvania Ave, Washington, DC 20500; info@barackobama.com) and ask him to intervene and reject importing dirty tar sands oil, a project that will exacerbate global warming as well as endanger our water supplies. Let’s join nine Nobel Peace Laureates in advising Obama to reject Keystone XL.

Their letter reads, in part: “We urge you to say no” and “turn your attention back to supporting renewable sources of energy and clean transportation solutions. This will be your legacy to Americans and the global community: energy that sustains the lives and livelihoods of future generations.” To read more, visit <http://nobelwomensinitiative.org>.

Please Note

The PV/SB Audubon has openings for speakers in the 2012-2013 calendar year, so please let us know if you want to do an hourlong presentation at our monthly meeting. We’d love to hear about your travel and birding adventures! Contact Candy Groat at groat99@aol.com. Also, two photo credits in our last issue were incorrect: Jose Sandoval took the photos of the bittern and the Black-crowned night heron, plus the Woodland Skipper butterfly.

PVPLC from Page 2

sized, reaching up to three feet in height. There are existing cactus stands within the coastal sage scrub restoration area and also several future stands where young cactus plants were installed as part of the restoration.

As with the gnatcatchers, the most cactus wrens were observed during summer 2009. This was a period following the goat grazing but prior to the start of major restoration activities. Did the removal of the nonnative over story result in a short-term surfeit of insects for the birds? Since September 2009, this site has



California gnatcatcher

Photo by Jess Morton

seen a lot of work — in particular the ongoing nonnative plant removal effort. Has the continued presence of the work crews bothered these two bird species? Or, does the small canopy sizes of the newly installed plants provide insufficient forage and cover for the birds, especially the gnatcatcher? These are questions we will keep considering in the survey as the work continues the next two years.

PVPLC is planning to add more container plants during this coming winter while continuing to remove nonnative plants.

Will we see more gnatcatchers using the new habitat? Will cactus wrens venture more frequently into the existing cactus stands as the habitat matures? Time will tell.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the Three Sisters Bird Survey. To volunteer, please visit the PVPLC website at www.pvplc.org or contact Ann Dalkey at adalkey@pvplc.org or 310-541-7613, ext. 208.

TABLE 1. Total Number of California Gnatcatchers Observed at the Coastal Sage Scrub Restoration Site from July through September

Year	No. of Birds		Restoration Activities
	CAGN	CAWR	
2008	5	2	Prior to start of restoration activities.
2009	10	11	Nonnatives had been grazed, acacia trees still present.
2010	None	None	Acacia trees removed, irrigation in stalled, young plants and seeds in stalled nine months earlier. Nonnative plant removal ongoing.
2010	8	None	Plants in ground for 21 months. Non native plant removal ongoing.

Note: CAGN = California gnatcatcher; CAWR = Cactus wren.

Summary of birds observed during the three years of Three Sisters Reserve Bird Surveys. All birds are counted, but not all are identified to species, resulting in a higher total count than shown below.

Species	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
Allen's hummingbird	14	22	16
American crow	30	42	24
American goldfinch	—	2	2
American kestrel	1	2	3
Anna's hummingbird	60	75	79
ash-throated flycatcher	—	—	1
barn swallow	14	7	6
Bewick's wren	27	30	18
black phoebe	5	22	21
black-headed grosbeak	—	2	—
blue grosbeak	1	—	—
blue-gray gnatcatcher	5	—	2
bush-tit	74	31	43
cactus wren	28	30	13
California gnatcatcher	18	24	9
California towhee	94	144	156
Cassin's kingbird	4	6	3
cliff swallow	21	14	15
common raven	35	44	16
common yellowthroat	—	1	1
Cooper's hawk	6	—	7
European starling	—	—	1
golden-crowned sparrow	—	2	—
hermit thrush	1	4	5
house finch	311	273	409
house sparrow	1	—	1
house wren	7	3	16
Lazuli bunting	—	6	—
lesser goldfinch	47	104	145
mourning dove	32	24	18
Northern flicker	—	6	1
Northern harrier	1	—	—
Northern mockingbird	15	18	18
N. rough-winged swallow	6	5	—
olive-sided flycatcher	—	—	1
orange-crowned warbler	—	—	2
Pacific-slope flycatcher	—	2	—
red-tailed hawk	3	7	8
rock dove	—	2	—
rock wren	—	—	1
ruby-crowned kinglet	—	—	5
rufous-crowned sparrow	5	9	7
Say's phoebe	14	13	11
Scott's oriole	—	—	1
sharp-shinned hawk	1	—	2
song sparrow	2	—	3
spotted towhee	88	97	121
Vaux's swift	—	2	—
Western gull	—	2	1
Western kingbird	—	1	1
Western meadowlark	—	9	67
Western scrub-jay	23	37	25
white-crowned sparrow	45	64	78
white-throated sparrow	—	—	1
white-throated swift	22	21	2
Wilson's warbler	1	1	—
yellow warbler	4	1	—
yellow-rumped warbler	—	—	24
No. of species identified	37	42	47
Total birds observed	1,169	1,326	1,532

Your Backyard Habitat

By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim
CSU Dominguez Hills



Bird's-eye Gilia *Gilia tricolor*

Signs of fall are in the air. Some native plants are losing leaves while fall-blooming bush sunflowers are in their full

glory, and migratory birds are returning to our yards. Fall is also a great time for garden planning. One of the more enjoyable fall tasks is ordering seeds. The annual wildflower seeds you obtain now will provide a year's worth of enjoyment and a source of seeds for years to come. Two excellent seed sources, both of which offer seeds by mail order, are the Theodore Payne Foundation (store.theodorepayne.org/category/SEED.html) and Larner



Seeds (www.larnerseeds.com/_pages/wildflower_annual.html). Both of these offer a good selection of California native seeds at reasonable prices.

Annual wildflowers like Bird's-eye Gilia play an important role in the backyard habitat garden. The flowers are a key source of nectar/pollen for native bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Seed-eating birds relish the seeds. In fact, you may need to collect the seeds of some favored species if you

want to ensure seed for the next year!

But California annual wildflowers offer much more than habitat. Their pretty colors and interesting shapes are valued worldwide. Annual wildflowers are versatile; they can be grown in pots, tucked around shrubs and perennials or featured in flowerbeds and cottage gardens. While many native wildflowers like sun, many — including Bird's-eye Gilia — do fine with about two to four hours of sun per day or dappled sun.

Annual wildflower seeds should be planted just before the first good winter rain event because birds will eat them if planted too early. They do best with a light raking-in or gravel mulch. Most seedlings will emerge in one to two weeks after the first rain. Be sure to water young seedlings during winter dry spells. *Gilia tricolor* and many other California native wildflowers bloom in spring from February through May.

All annual wildflowers need adequate water until after blooming ceases, but then taper off. Collect the seed from seed capsules dried on the plants. Store seed in paper envelopes in a cool dry place.

For more information on growing and purchasing this plant, visit the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. You can also learn about local native plants at the "Out of the Wilds and Into Your Garden" series on the first Saturday of each month at the center.

Birds of the Peninsula

May to August 2011

By David Ellsworth

First, I would like to thank Tracy Drake and Bob Shanman for taking charge of the column from September 2010 to April 2011. They did a great job, especially considering that they had such enormous shoes to fill. Given their example, I thought I could do it, too. It turned out to be much harder than I could possibly imagine. As a result, my first column will be somewhat atypical.

Before going any further, I should give a brief introduction. I've loved animals all my life, but it was only relatively recently that the perfect storm occurred to hook me into birding. It was March 2006, and having already lived next to Cabrillo Beach for six years, I saw a Townsend's Warbler in my backyard. I had no idea that such a beautiful and enigmatic bird was in my neighborhood, let alone right behind my house. Up until then, I'd never knowingly seen *any* kind of warbler anywhere. About that time I noticed for the first time that House Finches not only sing but also have repertoires of multiple regional songs, many of them melodic and beautiful. These two gravity wells pulling me in are emblematic of the way I have approached birding ever since, being equally enthralled and attentive of both sight and sound, and capturing them as best as I can with photography and audio recording. I was amazed by the diversity of birds in my neighborhood, and thrilled by the richness of the experience of observing wild birds. Before getting into birding, I had already been doing photography for six years, and computer programming since the age of eight. Because I don't drive a car, I've concentrated mainly on birding my local patch, which includes Cabrillo Beach, 22nd Street Park, White Point Nature Preserve and Ocean Trails.

As long as I've been subscribed to *Hummin'*, I have felt that "Birds of the Peninsula" was its centerpiece. When



Black Phoebe siblings

Photo by David Ellsworth

the last issue of *Hummin'* was published without this column, I was at first confused, thinking it must be on a different page than usual! When I learned that Tracy and Bob had actually retired from writing the bird report, after I got over the initial shock I figured I might have to take on the job myself. I showed up for the next Audubon meeting, and sure enough, nobody else volunteered...so I stepped up and said, "Well, frankly, I'd like to try it." The main issue, in my mind, was that it's wonderful to have a historical record of bird observations in the Palos Verdes Peninsula going back so far, and it'd be terrible to have the flow of information into that archive stop now. I didn't want to leave it up to chance, hoping that somebody (who?) would volunteer. I felt I had most of the skills needed; what I lacked in knowledge, I could make up for by consulting past records.

My plans are extensive. I intend to recreate the bird search/bird selector script, giving it access to the "missing years" (the old one only goes up to 2006) and the latest data. From there, I intend to present the data in various tables that make it easier to visualize. The best thing would be to get all the histor-

ical data onto eBird, but that's very unlikely to happen, as all the original observers would have to put it there. Ultimately, the electronic "Birds of the Peninsula" could go beyond merely supplementing the column; it could allow birders to comment on and offer their interpretations of publicly posted observations and groups of observations.

Things haven't exactly gone as planned so far, due to the unexpected length of time needed to get this off the ground. So, I will not be able to offer readers a first column as complete as I would have liked. Having to deal with four months of data (May through August) with only two months to work on it (mid-August to mid-October) has made the job much harder. Having a partner would really help — if anybody wants to volunteer to work with me on this, I would really appreciate it. What I especially need help with is (1) writing about the weather (i.e., summarizing the weather of the reported period and interpreting its effect on birds) and (2) interpreting observations, groups of observations and absences of observations in a way that goes beyond what was reported.

In a departure from the format of previous columns, I have decided to present a small selection of observations here, while posting the full list on the web. The table for May through August 2011 is available at <http://bit.ly/ndKJUE> (please note that upper- and lowercase is important in this URL.). The initial offering is a static table, but the plan is to make it more dynamic in the future, allowing searches and different views.

Brants continued at Cabrillo Beach into early May and beyond.

Thanks to frequent eBird reports from Bernardo Alps (BA), I can fill in gaps during which I didn't go down to the beach myself. From 5/3 to 5/10, there were multiple Brants; and from 5/12 to 7/5, a single straggler stayed behind. On 4/29 and 5/5, I (David Ellsworth–DE) photographed a banded Brant, but it was only on 5/5 that I got the full band number (starting with 1987) and reported it. It turned out that this goose was banded in Chevak, Alaska, on 2010/07/21 as an adult. It's one thing to know abstractly that Brants migrate here all the way from Alaska, but for me, it was quite a thrill to have proof!

Don Sterba (DS) reported many observations of nesting or possibly nesting ducks at Ballona Freshwater Marsh (BFM): Gadwall on 5/22 (a male, a female and six juveniles) and 6/1 (three families with ducklings); Cinnamon Teal on 5/11 (a female with about 10 ducklings); Ruddy Ducks on 6/26 (with young a few weeks old). A male/female pair of Blue-winged Teal was at BFM on 5/1 (DS) and 5/8 (Bob Shanman–BS). One male BWTE was seen at the Los Angeles River on 6/15

(Rare Bird Alert–RBA), and one Red-breasted Merganser was near Cabrillo Beach on 5/5 (DE).

DE and Jose Sandoval (JS) found an American Bittern at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park (KMHRP) on 6/28. On 8/11, JS photographed a second, downy individual, suggesting that nesting took place; the last sighting was of an adult on 8/22 by JS. From 5/1 to 8/21, DS frequently reported multiple Least Bitterns singing and calling at both BFM (as many as two) and Playa Vista Riparian Corridor (PVRC) (one). His excellent coverage of the area culminated on 8/7 with a visual sighting of a black-capped male at PVRC flying between reed patches, and on 8/21 with a sighting of two downy chicks/juveniles.

The sighting of a continuing Xan-

tus's Murrelet at Ballona Creek, close to shore and foraging, was extraordinary. This bird was found by David Bell on 8/12, and dozens of birders came to see it from 8/12 to 8/20. The magnitude of this event is hinted at by the fact that 40 different birders reported seeing it on LACoBirds and/or eBird, and it's likely that most of the birders who went to see the bird didn't report their sightings. Around the same time, one and sometimes two Pigeon Guillemots were seen in the same area, with first sighting also on 8/12 (Brian Daniels). On 8/18, William Cullen and Evi Meyer saw two XAMUs along the channel. That last XAMU sighting was on 8/20 (Donna Bray, John Fitch), and the last PIGU sighting was on 8/31 (Bob Pann, Daniel Tinoco).

Amazingly, Dinuk Magamma (DMa) saw two different Blackpoll Warblers within a week of each other: a male at Madrona Marsh Preserve (MMP) on 6/6, and a female at Alondra Park (AP) on 6/13. (The BLPW at MMP was spotted first by Tracy Drake and identified by DMa.) DMa found an adult male Black-and-white Warbler at AP on 6/16, and another BAWW was reported in Westchester on 6/24 (RBA). A Virginia Warbler was reported at Forestall Canyon on 4/30 (John Ivonoff). The Palm Warbler wintering at BFM continued until 5/4 (DS).

A MacGillivray's Warbler was seen by DMa on 5/7 at MMP. DS observed a singing MGWA at Cabora Drive on 5/11. Kevin Larson spotted a singing American Redstart in his Westchester backyard on 6/18. A very late Yellow-rumped Warbler ("Myrtle") was found at DeForest Park on 6/10 (Richard Barth).



Xantus's Murrelet, above, and Caspian terns, below, enjoy the coast.

Photo by David Ellsworth



The PV/South Bay Audubon Bird Quiz

By Martin Byhower

First of all, there are two different species in our last Bird Quiz, but they are often mistaken for one another. One is very common here, the other quite rare (and typically seen only during winter). The first difference you may note in the pictures shown below is that one of the birds has a long extended neck, and the other's looks short. In fact, both birds are capable of extending their necks or retracting them to the point where they looked hunch-backed and no-necked. The second bird will only extend its neck in mid-prey-strike, but the first bird will also extend its neck vertically while hiding in reeds. This illustrates how important behavior is in identifying birds. Both birds can be found in similar habitats, and both are primarily crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk) as well as largely nocturnal.

The second most obvious difference in the photos is that the first bird has clearly distinct, dark and continuous streaks that extend along the entire throat (and breast, too.) The second bird has more faint, blurry, patch streaks. This is the most obvious difference when the birds are standing. Also notice the differences in head and bill proportions. Were you to see the birds in flight, you would notice the distinctly contrasting feather patterns; the outer flight feathers on the first bird are dark, the inner ones are much lighter, and this is visible both from above and below. The second bird has a trace of such contrast, but it is much more faint, and the darker feathers don't appear blackish as they do in the first bird.

Going backwards a bit, the overall shape and patterns of the birds makes it clear that they are in the family Ardeidae, which includes the herons, night-



NEW QUIZ BIRD

This bird is commonly misidentified. It was once endangered to the point of near extirpation in our area — thanks to DDT, the bird is now a common resident, often horrifying folks who like to feed songbirds as it swoops down and grabs them from the feeders. Look for the answer in our next issue!

Photo by Jose Sandoval

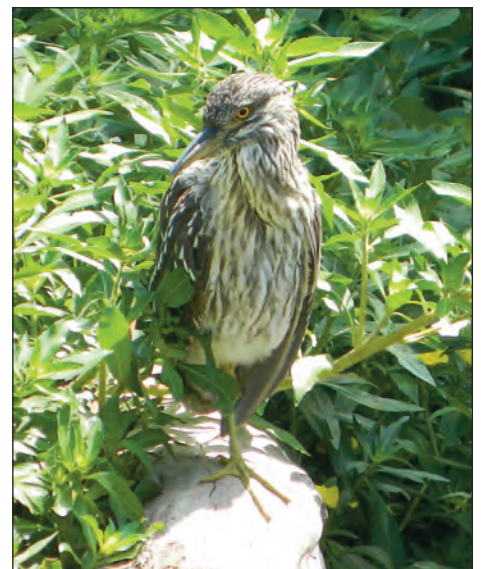
herons, egrets, and bitterns. This is a family whose members novice and non-birders often mistake for and identify as “storks” or “cranes.” The night-herons, particularly juveniles, superficially re-



semble bitterns, and this is particularly true in the case of the **Black-crowned Night-heron** (the bird shown at right below) and the **American Bittern**, shown at left.

Last summer, while trapping Eastern Banded Water Snakes in Machado Lake, I saw an American Bittern, which astounded me, since the bird hasn't been recorded in the area as a summer resident (and breeder) for about a century. I looked in vain for a second bird, but never saw two birds at once, which would be just about the only way to determine if a potential breeding pair was present.

This summer, however, Jose Sandoval first discovered the presence of a single bird (on June 28) and then confirmed that *two* birds were present (on Sept. 11)! We have no evidence that they bred successfully, or even attempted to do so, but hopefully in the future, when the habitat improves with implementation of the Proposition O “habitat upgrades,” this may occur.



The Black-crowned night heron (above) and bittern from last month's quiz

Photos by Jose Sandoval

What's Happening with Audubon YES!

By Marcos Trinidad, YES! Director

In Los Angeles County, some young people have never seen the ocean despite spending their entire lives just a few miles away from the Pacific. But thanks to programs like YES! (Youth Environmental Stewards), South Bay students don't have to grow up disconnected from the natural environment that surrounds them.

The YES! program was founded 15 years ago to inspire and educate urban youth, bringing their energies and idealism to bear on the environmental needs of their communities. Participating teens earn awards for environmental services they perform for their community, encouraging them to volunteer for a variety of different environmental organizations and causes. Thanks to YES!, the next generation of conservation leaders are being born — right in the South Bay.

In October, YES! members from Madrona Marsh will be attending a four-day camping trip to Owens Valley Lake, a dry lake bed in central California. The YES! members will learn the importance of these two ecosystems and how they are ecologically and biologically linked in vital long-distance relationship. Through invasive weed control, reintroduction of native species through planting, and water quality testing the students will become stewards of the land and learn why water conservation is so important in the South Bay.

Our YES! program has been so successful at engaging young people in environmental action that our Palos Verdes-South Bay Audubon Society thinks Audubon chapters and other organizations around the country ought to be using it. With help from a 2011 TogetherGreen Innovation Grant, we will create a step-by-step handbook for starting up a YES! program, guiding other Audubon chapters in establishing the program and involving more young people in their conservation programs. We'll also use our funding to train YES! members in habitat restoration, native plant propagation, and trail maintenance. YES! has also partnered with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy to train YES! awardees to help lead volunteer events that will restore 25 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat, which is home to several species of conservation concern—including birds like the California gnatcatcher and the cactus wren, and butterflies like the Palos Verdes blue and El Segundo blue.

As you can see, we have our work cut out for us this year. Our YES! members are doing a fantastic job and I want to encourage all of our PV/SB Audubon members to give a hand in not only congratulating these students but also in supporting the YES! program by sponsoring a student. You can sponsor a student that may not have the resources to become a member: Just \$35 will pay for an Audubon membership. Let's continue the great work together! Audubon YES! is open to all student Audubon Society members and their families. If you know of any organizations or areas in need of volunteers, please contact me at marcos@pvsb-audubon.org or 323-945-4346.



Wilson's warbler

Photo by David Ellsworth

Bird Report, from Page 7

The Harris's Sparrow first spotted by Martin Byhower (MB) on 2/27 continued at Three Sisters Reserve until 5/8 (Jonathan Feenstra-JF, Michael Park) and on that date was observed to be singing two-note and three-note phrases—"a one-second slightly ringing (note) whistled followed by another (or two) on a higher pitch" (JF). MB found a Spotted Towhee at KMHRP on 6/12, which according to Mitch Heindel is an amazing and possibly unprecedented summer record for that location (although there is a record on eBird of a SPTO reported at KMHRP on 2008/06/09 by Jeff Skrentny).

I found at least three Rufous-crowned Sparrows at White Point Nature Preserve on 7/12, adults and at least one juvenile, which may be the first record of RCSP at that location. Dan Cooper and Rob Hamilton found a juvenile Dark-eyed Junco ("Oregon") being fed by a female as a male sang nearby, along the Marvin Braude Bike Path in Marina del Rey—very strong evidence that the nesting occurred on-site.

Please report your local sightings to me at: pvpbirds@gmail.com. Comments concerning the column, what you would like to see in the future, corrections of errors and submissions of photos as candidates to appear in the next column are also welcome.

CALENDAR

Meet, Learn, Enjoy, Restore

Events

Saturday, Oct. 1, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Natural history walk at Bixby Marsh.

Explore the new 17-acre Bixby Marshland after a half-hour introductory walk with Audubon leaders Jess Morton and John Nieto. Walks begin on the hour at the parking lot welcome table. Learn about how the marsh came into being, see the results of this successful restoration and view the many birds that have made the wetland home. Located in Carson, Bixby Marshland is on the west side of Figueroa Street, south of Sepulveda Blvd. The marsh is managed by the L.A. County Sanitation District: www.lacsd.org/education/.

Wednesday, Oct. 5, 7 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Wednesday, Oct. 5, 7 p.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' birding class on introduced species at South Coast Botanic Garden. Walks before class start at 6 p.m. as long as daylight permits. The fee for eight classes is \$36 for SCBGF members, \$40 for nonmembers.

Saturday, Oct. 8, 9 – 11 a.m.: Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park (KMHRP). Come take part in Audubon's important partnership with the Chadwick Ecommunity and the City of Los Angeles to restore habitat in Harbor Park. Led by two Chadwick students and teacher Martin Byhower, this is a hands-on opportunity to learn about invasives removal and native species planting. Students earn community service credits. Wear closed-toe shoes, long pants and a hat. Bring water, a snack, sunscreen, bug repellent and work gloves. Harbor Park is located at 25820 Vermont Ave. Call Martin at 310-541-6763, ext. 4143.

Wednesday, Oct. 12, 7 p.m.: The Brookses' birding class on bird families and nomenclature at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 5 for details.

Thursday, Oct. 13, 8:20 – 10:30 a.m. Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. In collaboration with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC), our chapter will be monitoring the bird population on the Three Sisters habitat restoration site as a long-term project (see Dalkey's cover story in this issue). Volunteers are needed to be trained in identification and the methods used in the survey. To participate, contact Ann Dalkey at adalkey@pvplc.org or 310-541-7613, ext. 208.

Saturday, Oct. 15, 8:20 – 10:30 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See Oct. 13 for details.

Tuesday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Randy Harwood. Randy will be talking about the birds of the Sierras. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Wednesday, Oct. 19, 7 p.m.: The Brookses' birding class on fall shorebirds at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 5 for details.

Sunday, Oct. 23, 1-3 p.m.: Audubon BBQ and YES! Awards Ceremony at Madrona Marsh. Join us for a barbecue and social hour before the awards ceremony honoring our wonderful Youth Environmental Stewards (YES!) volunteers.

Wednesday, Oct. 26, 7 p.m.: The Brookses' annual Halloween bird costume event at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 5 for details.

October						
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27	28	29	30			

Wednesday, Nov. 2, 7 p.m.: The Brookses' birding class on the Christmas Bird Count at South Coast Botanic Garden. Walks in the garden before class start at 6 p.m. as long as daylight permits. The fee for eight classes is \$36 for SCBGF members, \$40 for nonmembers.

Saturday, Nov. 5, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Bixby Marshland walk. See Oct. 1 for details.

Thursday, Nov. 10, 7:35 – 9:45 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See Oct. 13 for details.

Saturday, Nov. 12, 9 – 11 a.m.: Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at KMHRP. See Oct. 8 for details.

Tuesday, Nov. 15, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker for the night will be Stephen Shunk. He will be reporting on Inland Islands of Woodpeckers. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Saturday, Nov. 19, 7:50 – 10:00 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See Oct. 13 for details.

Field Trips

Sunday, Oct. 2, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.

Audubon leader Stephanie Bryan will lead this walk through the garden, located at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes. There is a minimal charge for nonmembers of the SCBG Foundation, or you can join there.

Tuesday, Oct. 4, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” Join Audubon leader Dave Moody and friends on a ramble around a great local birding area. Meet at Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday, Oct. 8, 9 – 11 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Frascati Canyon. Explore this beautiful canyon, one of three on the east side of the Peninsula overlooking the harbor with some steep trails. Moderate to strenuous. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, Oct. 9, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP. Join Audubon leader Martin Byhower and explore this important natural area of the South Bay. See Oct. 8 event for directions.

Sunday, Oct. 9, 8 a.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks’ fieldtrip to Sycamore Canyon and Oxnard Plain. For details, call 310-913-2799 or 310-913-2798.

Tuesday, Oct. 11, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Oct. 4 for details.

Wednesday, Oct. 12, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday, Oct. 15 – 16: The Brooks’ weekend fieldtrip to San Diego. For details, call 310-913-2799 or 310-913-2798.

Sunday, Oct. 16, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. For details, visit <http://torrance.wbu.com>.



A heron at the Ballona Preserve.

Photo by Jose Sandoval

Tuesday, Oct. 18, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Oct. 4 for details.

Wednesday, Oct. 19, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 2 for details.

Sunday, Oct. 23, 3 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Ocean Trails at Trump National Golf Course. Walk the switchback trail to the beach. Learn about local geology and fall blooming habitat. Stay to watch the sunset from beautiful Founders Park. Moderate. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Sunday, Oct. 23, 8:30 a.m.: The Brooks’ fieldtrip to Ballona Creek and Fresh Water Marsh. For details, call 310-913-2799 or 310-913-2798.

Tuesday, Oct. 25, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Oct. 4 for details.

Tuesday, Nov. 1, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Oct. 4 for details.

Sunday, Nov. 6, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 2 for details.

Wednesday, Nov. 9, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See Oct. 12 for details.

Saturday, Nov. 12, 3 – 5 p.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Sacred Cove. Situated between Portuguese Point and Inspiration Point, this small cove features wonderful rock formations edged with tide pools and a channel into the cave. Strenuous. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, Nov. 13, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP. See Oct. 9 for details.

Tuesday, Nov. 15, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Oct. 4 for details.

Wednesday, Nov. 16, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See Oct. 2 for details.

Saturday, Nov. 19, 8 a.m.: The Brooks’ fieldtrip to Kenneth Hahn State Recreational Park Plain with Los Angeles Audubon. For details, call 310-913-2799 or 310-913-2798.

Sunday, Nov. 20, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. For details, visit <http://torrance.wbu.com>.

Saturday, Nov. 26, 2:30 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Abalone Cove Shoreline Park. Tour the tide pools teeming with fascinating marine life. Moderate. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Tuesday, Nov. 29, 8:30 a.m.: “Tour de Torrance.” See Oct. 4 for details.



For more information on local events, please visit the Chapter website at www.pvsb-audubon.org. For a complete list of events at Madrona Marsh, visit www.southbaycalendar.org and click on “Friends of Madrona Marsh.” For a complete list of activities for Audubon’s YES! program, visit www.AudubonYES.org.

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YES! Committee: Evi Meyer, Connie Vadheim
YES! Director: Marcos Trinidad, marcos@pvsb-audubon.org
*Retiring; a replacement is needed. President won't retire without a replacement.
**These important positions need to be filled ASAP!
NOTE: Please send corrections to Nancy Feagans at nancy@pvsb-audubon.org.

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