

Phainopepla

December 2006

Web Edition

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HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!



Photo by Steve Agrella

Phainopepla



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Program Notes

Jon L. Dunn To Talk About Sparrow Identification at December 28 Meeting



*Confused by those sparrows in immature plumage or not sure about the differences between genus *Aimophila* and *Spizella*?*

To answer these and other challenges in sparrow identification, the Chapter is most fortunate and honored to have one of birding's foremost authorities on field identification as speaker at its December 28 membership meeting. Jon Dunn grew up in Encino, graduated from Birmingham High School, and Cal State San Diego with a degree in political science. His introduction to birds and birding was with monthly Chapter field trips, Sundays at Descanso Gardens, and frequent forays into Sepulveda Basin where he found and publicized his sightings, including the Blue Grosbeaks and Short-eared Owls.

Since this early start, Jon has gone on to be the chief editor of the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, and co-authored, with Kimball Garrett, *A Field Guide to Warblers of North America*, and *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* as well as numerous articles and videos describing the identifying features of complex groups of birds. Few articles on bird identification are published without Jon Dunn listed in the bibliography. He is a senior field guide for Wings Birding Tours Worldwide. He has served on the board of directors of the American Birding Association, and is a much sought-after speaker at bird symposiums and conferences.

Jon's topic for the evening will be the identification of sparrows endemic to Southern California. This is a program you won't want to miss. It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we welcome Jon back to the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. To fully enjoy the program and see all critical identifying features, you are encouraged to bring binoculars to this meeting. 🌿



Photo by Steve Agrella

2006 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

In place of the usual monthly field trip, the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will take part in the National Audubon Society's (NAS) 107th annual Christmas Bird Count. This is one of our Chapter's longest-standing traditions dating back to 1957. Our count is part of the world's largest cooperative wildlife survey with over 50,000 participants in North and Central America, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. Counts are organized, compiled, and analyzed by the NAS in conjunction with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

The bird count provides researchers and other interested parties with measures of the nation's winter bird population including species composition, distribution, and population trends. Information collected by our Chapter has often proved valuable in supporting our efforts to preserve, protect, and manage local open space and habitat. Bird Count numbers are often the only comprehensive, long-term information available regarding local wintering bird populations.

Members and friends of the Chapter are encouraged to save the date, December 16, and join one of the count groups listed below. Your participation is crucial to the success of the count. The more eyes in the field, the more birds are seen. Several of our count areas are underserved and can use your help. Extensive bird identification skills are not necessary, only a willingness to come out and count, wind, rain or shine. If further persuasion is needed, read *Monitoring Needs of North American Landbirds*, by Terry Rich of the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the July/August issue of *Birding*. The bird count is birding with a purpose.

Those unable to join one of the counting groups listed below may assist by noting species and numbers of birds at backyard feeders, parks, and neighborhoods, provided the location of such counts comes within a 7.5 mile radius of the intersection of Nordhoff and Balboa. Please report such counts along with the hours spent birding to the compiler by letter or phone no later than December 28, 2006.

While count participation is free, a \$5 donation to offset costs incurred by NAS will be greatly appreciated.

Chatsworth Reservoir/Nature Preserve

For information regarding the time and location of possible entrance into this area, phone Art Langton, prior to count day, at (818) 887-0973.

Hansen Dam and Vicinity—

Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m.

From the intersection of Osborne and Glenoaks go north on Osborne to Dronfield, turn right on Dronfield and enter the park. Proceed downhill to the large parking lot. Bring lunch and drink.

Leader: Jim Hardesty.

Bee Canyon and O'Melveny Park—

Meeting Time: 12:00 Noon

From the intersection of Balboa and Rinaldi, go north on Balboa to Sesnon. Turn left (west) on Sesnon and continue 0.5 miles. Park is on the right.

Leader: Ron Melin.

Sepulveda Basin and Wildlife Area—

Meeting Time: 7:30 a.m.

Meet at the parking lot east of Woodley Avenue and north of Burbank Blvd., adjacent to the Tillman Water Treatment Plant. Bring lunch and drink.

Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp.

Limekiln and Aliso Canyons—

Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Limekiln Canyon. Park on the north side of Rinaldi about one block west of Tampa.

Leader: Carolyn Oppenheimer

Wilson Canyon—Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Take the Roxford exit from either the 210 Fwy or 5 Fwy. Turn north on Roxford.

The road curves right and becomes Olive View Drive. Watch for the park entrance road on the left at 14055 Olive View Drive (1.2 miles).

Go uphill 0.7 miles and bear left at fork.

We will trust the gate is open for us this year.

Bring water and snack.

Leader: Sonya Onderwyzer

LA Pierce College—Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Enter campus from Winnetka Avenue and meet by the flagpole in front of the Administration Building. Bring drink, snacks.

Leaders: Muriel and Allan Kotin

For additional information, phone the compiler, Art Langton, at (818) 887-0973 🐦

Monthly Field Trip Report by Richard Barth



On October 21 we birded El Dorado Park in Long Beach. The weather was beautiful but our number of participants was low and the number of birds was down from other visits.

We managed only four warbler species:

Yellow-rumped, Townsend's, Orange-crowned and Common Yellowthroat. Our flycatcher list consisted of Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe and Cassin's Kingbird. The sparrow-types were also scarce with just White-crowned, Dark-eyed Junco, California Towhee and Spotted Towhee being found. We did tally Hermit Thrush, House Wren, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Western Scrub Jay, Ruby-crowned

Kinglet, Western Bluebird and Lesser Goldfinch. We saw Pied-billed Grebe and the usual five species of heron. Our only ducks were Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Gadwall, Ring-necked and Ruddy. Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Cooper's Hawks were present as well as Osprey, American Kestrel and a fly-over falcon that was probably a



Merlin. Other sightings of some interest were Common Moorhen, Western Grebe and two out-of-place Brown Pelicans. 🌿



(l-r) Kestrel, Grebes, Green Heron Photos by Steve Agrella

WIND POWER AND MIGRATING SONGBIRDS By Seth Shteir, Conservation Chair

Painted Buntings in southern Minnesota? If this sounds like an electric Kool-Aid induced bird watching fantasy, think again. By the year 2100 average temperatures are predicted to rise 2.5–10.4 degrees Fahrenheit. The changes in temperature could be devastating for bird populations and humans alike.

Avoiding scenarios like this make reducing fossil fuel use imperative. Alternative energy provides a way to reduce our production of carbon dioxide. At a recent Audubon meeting at Starr Ranch, three representatives from the wind power industry attempted to garner support for wind power from Southern California Audubon chapter leaders.

Wind power is cheap and doesn't add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. According to Andy Linehan, Wind Permitting Director for PPM Energy, it is currently the only economically competitive alternative energy form. He says that his company and many other industry leaders want to make sure that the placement and construction of wind farms happens right.

Mr. Linehan states that four factors are needed for successful wind projects: adequate wind, nearby transmission lines, willing landowners, and acceptable environmental consequences. It is this last factor that is a sore point with bird enthusiasts. Linehan points out that only after a project meets all four criteria should it be given a permit. Julia Levin, Policy Director for Audubon California agrees, "The single most important thing is where you site the new wind farms." Finding locations where all these factors are present can be a challenge and it may be no surprise that such sites are scarce.

Several of the presenters pointed out that birdwatchers and the wind power industry need to collaborate and may have more in common than meets the eye. However, the wind farm at Altamont remains a sore point among many birdwatchers who remember that this project killed 4000 raptors a year and that instead of addressing the problem, the industry attempted to dodge responsibility. Wind power advocates at the meeting admitted that Altamont has been a complete disaster, one that the wind industry can't afford to repeat. Both chapter leaders and wind industry representatives agreed that more information about bird migration at specific locations and the way wind farms can be operated to minimize bird mortality should be a research priority. 🌿



December 2006 Calendar

Please Note: There will be no Monthly Field Trip in December due to the Christmas Bird Count.

Saturday, December 2. FALL FESTIVAL. Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve. 10:00 a.m. –3:00 p.m. Join us for this Chapter sponsored event. For directions and information see page 6 or call Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061.

Sunday, December 3. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Directions: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about 1/2 mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about 1/2 mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about 1/2 mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. For more information contact him at (310) 455-1827 or e-mail krisohl1@verizon.net.

Saturday, December 9. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 8:30–11:00 a.m. Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! These popular walks, designed for beginning birders and school-age children, are resuming for the current cool season. Directions: Same as for December 3, except walk across the road from the parking lot to the low buildings to meet. For more info, contact Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5769 or aKotin@earthlink.net or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061 or LJonesBird@aol.com.

Saturday, December 9. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Exit the Ventura Freeway (U.S. 101) at Las Virgenes Canyon Road and proceed north to the trailhead parking area at the end of the road. Please bring plenty of water and wear proper shoes. Co-sponsored by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. Leader: Jim Hardesty (818) 346-6712, jnhardesty@adelphia.net .

Saturday, December 9. Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docent's Bird Walk. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Take the 405 or 5 Freeway north to the 14 Freeway. Exit the 14 at Placerita Canyon. Turn right at the end of the off ramp and continue about 1.5 miles to the park entrance. Turn right and park at the Nature Center. Leader: Bob Fischer. For more information, call the Nature Center at (661) 259-7721.

Sunday, December 10. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Meet at the first wide place after entering the gardens. Admission is free for early birders. Located at

1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada. Leader: Karen Johnson or Nancy Herron Knode. For more information, contact Karen at (818) 790-1687 or lv2bird@aol.com.

Saturday, December 16. Christmas Bird Count– See article on page 2 for locations and times. Join us!

Saturday, December 16. Santa Monica Mts. Conservancy Bird Walk at Towsley Canyon. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Go north on I-5 through Santa Clarita, exit Calgrove and turn west (left) under the freeway and then left again on the Old Road. Watch for the sign, “Ed Davis Park at Towsley Canyon.” Turn right and park in the back lot. Meet at the kiosk. Leader: Roger McClure. For further information, call (661) 255-3606.

Sunday, December 17. Malibu Creek State Park Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Meet at the second (lower) day-use parking lot. Entrance to the park is on the west side of Las Virgenes Road, just south of Mulholland Hwy. Entrance fee is \$8 per car. Leader: Muriel Kotin (310) 457-5796, aKotin@earthlink.net.

Tuesday, December 19. Weekday Wanderers Bird Walk at O'Melveny Park in Granada Hills. 8:30 a.m. Directions: To reach the park, go north on Balboa Blvd. from the 118 Fwy. Turn left on Sesnon Ave. The park is on the right in about 1/4 mile. Meet in the parking lot. Rain cancels. Call Carolyn Oppenheimer with any questions (before 7:30 p.m., please) at (818) 885-7493, or e-mail at CarolOpp@aol.com.

Sunday, December 24. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. See December 10.

Thursday, December 28. General Membership Meeting. 7:30 p.m. Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd., Encino. Located between Moorpark and Ventura Blvd., on the west side of Balboa, just south of the Presbyterian Church. Come early for social hour. We are honored to have our speaker, Jon L. Dunn, an authority in field identification to discuss sparrow identification. Attendees are encouraged to bring binoculars to this meeting. See “Program Notes” on page 1 for more information.

Future Field Trips: (details later)

January 20. Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary

February 17. Private Game Preserve in Ventura County 🌿



Blue Grosbeak Photo by Steve Agrella

SANTA CLARITA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Wednesday, December 27, 2006 Meet at 6:30 a.m.
 Western Bagel 23170 W. Valencia Blvd.
 (At Bouquet Canyon Rd.—in Kmart shopping center)
 Valencia, CA (661) 254-1287

Dan Cooper, who was then with Audubon California, based in Pasadena, officially started the Santa Clarita Christmas Bird Count in 2003. The count is part of the national network of Christmas Bird Counts, and covers a standard 15-mi. diameter circle centered near Central Park in Santa Clarita, 40 miles north of Los Angeles. The habitat consists mainly of arid coastal scrub dominated by California Buckwheat and sages. A large portion of the count is urban, and this urban section is growing larger each year. The Santa Clara River, one of the last undammed rivers in southern California, flows through the center of the count circle. Popular birding areas within the count circle include Placerita Canyon County Park, Castaic Lagoon, and the lower portions of San Francisquito and Bouquet canyons. Dress warmly—it will be cold in the morning (20s or 30s).

Questions? Call Dan Cooper at: (323) 397-3562 (cell) 🌿

SALTON SEA DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (PEIR) AVAILABLE—90 DAY COMMENT PERIOD UNDERWAY *By Seth Shteir, Conservation Chair*

The Salton Sea is the indisputable bird watching mecca for southern California. The Draft PEIR for the restoration of the Salton Sea is now available online at www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov.

Elements of several of the alternatives would benefit wildlife and more information will be forthcoming, but Audubon members should oppose Alternative 7. Alternative 7 does not provide water resources for air quality mitigation. Particulate matter from the dry lakebed could contaminate the air, resulting in air quality poorer than the Owens Valley, the worst dust polluter in California. Additionally, it is questionable whether the dam slated to be built under this alternative would be able to withstand an earthquake. Finally, Alternative 7 would result in the Salton Sea being surrounded by development. More information about the alternatives for the Salton Sea Restoration will appear in future editions of the *Phainopepla*. 🌿



Birdathon 2006



The following is a list of donors who specifically designated their Birdathon donations to the Allan and Muriel Kotin/Judy Howell Team. The money raised helps fund the Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP) directed by Muriel Kotin. Together they raised \$2,806! This outstanding program would not be possible without their generous contributions. Thank you for your support!

KOTIN BIRDATHON DONORS

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Fall Festival At Sepulveda Basin

Wildlife Reserve

Saturday, December 2, 2006

10:00 a.m. till 3:00 p.m.

FREE!

Have you ever seen the lovely Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, with its trails and wildlife lake? The many birds that visit here in winter? The cottonwood and willow trees starting to shed golden leaves in late fall? A visit here is like a visit to a national park, but it is just a short trip away. This is your opportunity to take a guided tour through the Wildlife Reserve. You will be able to look at the birds through binoculars and pond life through microscopes at viewing points. Experts will show you the special trees, plants and water.

Where: The Wildlife Reserve entrance and amphitheater are in the southeast part of Woodley Park.

Directions: Turn north from Burbank Blvd. or south from Victory Blvd. onto Woodley Ave., which is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of the San Diego Freeway (I-405). Travel about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and turn east at the sign for the Wildlife Reserve. Bear right at the fork in the road and go east $\frac{1}{2}$ mile on the park road to the Wildlife Reserve parking. Walk south past the monumental rocks and restroom building to the amphitheater.

Activities: Set aside time to savor the day. Why not bring a picnic lunch? In addition to guided tours from 10:00-3:00, there will be special activities from noon to 2:00 in the amphitheater area:

- **Crafts for Kids**
- **Live Critters**
- **Displays**

In Case of Rain:

Event will be postponed a week to December 9th.

More Information: Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5796
or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061.

JOIN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON

To get started with your membership, use the following form and mail to:

SFV Audubon Society
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 7769
Van Nuys, CA 91409

Make all checks payable to SFV Audubon.

SFVAS Membership

Regular 1-yr chapter membership\$20 \$ _____
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The PHAINOPEPLA, published ten times a year, is the newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, P. O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409, 818-347-3205. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, a nonprofit conservation/education organization, and is dedicated to “the conservation of wildlife and natural resources.”

Articles, letters, drawings, and photographs concerning conservation, the sciences and ecology, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for publication in the PHAINOPEPLA. Material from other newsletters or newspapers should include the source and date. Copy for the PHAINOPEPLA should be in the hands of the editor by the 7th of the month to be included in the following month’s newsletter.

An introductory membership to the National Audubon Society is \$20 and should be sent separately to: *National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 52529, Boulder, CO 80322*. Be sure to write “C12” on the form to assure assignment to our chapter. For renewals, use the form in the National Audubon magazine, *Audubon*.

If you have any questions about membership, renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Jim Van Beveren at (818) 998-4905 or e-mail him at jvanbeveren@vbandb.com.



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All phones are area code 818 unless otherwise noted.

For chapter leaders email addresses, see our Web site:

www.SanFernandoValleyAudubon.org/sfvas

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