

# Phainopepla



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**Audubon at Home** by Alan Pollack

## A Water-wise Wildlife Garden...Part 2



In addition to reducing or eliminating lawns (which I addressed in my last article), there are many other measures we can take to conserve precious water in our gardens. Such as:

These methods put water where it's needed, into the soil directly in contrast to sprinkler systems where much of the water is lost to evaporation and runoff. (Where overhead sprinklers are used, they should be scheduled for the early morning hours, e.g., 3–6 a.m., and only for long enough duration to irrigate without causing runoff. And, if you want to drive me really crazy, water your lawn during or right after a heavy rain. Sprinkler control systems can and should be turned off during the rainy season—if we ever get one of those again.)

### **Capturing rainwater and overhead sprinkler water**

Replace non-porous surfaces (concrete, asphalt, brick, etc.) with porous ones (decomposed granite, gravel, etc.) Instead of water running off into the street and sewer system (with its toxic brew of chemicals, if you haven't eliminated those), it will percolate into your garden soil. An added bonus—by removing materials that are heat trapping, you will lower the temperature around your home. Create swales and dry stream beds which will act as collectors. Place rain barrels under downspouts. Since this water is acidic, it can be used for your acid loving plants or diluted with our alkaline tap water.

**Using low-water-using plants, preferably native plants.** (More on this subject in future articles.)  
Using drip, soaker hose, and hand irrigation

### **Use of gray water—where it is permitted**

#### **Mulching**

Mulch is any material placed on the surface of the soil which helps to retain its moisture. In addition, mulch suppresses weed growth (Mother Nature abhors bare soil the way she abhors a vacuum—leave it bare and something will grow), provides habitat for creepy crawlly things, and if it's an organic material, its slow decomposition improves soil structure. The leaves and pine needles that fall from our trees are nature's mulch. Other organic mulches include grass clippings, bark chips, wood chips, straw, and the compost that can be made from collected organic materials. The city of Los Angeles and some surrounding cities provide

*continued on back page*



## Hansen Dam

By Seth Shteir

SFVAS Conservation Co-Chair, and representative on the Hansen Dam Park Advisory Board (HD-PAB)

Hansen Dam is one of the most important recreational and wildlife areas in the San Fernando Valley. Many hikers, joggers and equestrians visit the park on a regular basis. The Dam is also home to many native plant and bird species, including the endangered Least Bell's Vireo.

Like many other urban refuges or parks, there are many threats to Hansen Dam, including illegal ATV incursions, crime, invasive species, large homeless encampments, and off-the-leash dogs. Hansen Dam is also the site of major events that can have an impact on the wildlife and surrounding communities, such as the Fourth of July fireworks celebration and the San Fernando Valley Fair. Our organization is currently concerned about the impact of illegal fishing in the wildlife lake.

What is needed to improve conditions at Hansen Dam is the consistent presence of rangers and other law en-

forcement officials. The current patrols don't seem adequate for such a large and heavily-used area. There is currently a plan for the future construction of a ranger station at Hansen Dam.

NOTE: On December 1, SFVAS and the California Native Plant Society, (CNPS) will feature a joint, general, natural history hike concentrating on plants, birds, and environmental issues affecting the Hansen Dam area. Fire recovery and invasive plant species may be of particular interest to those interested in plants and the effects on birds and other wildlife. A second issue of looming importance is water management and the consequences for native fish, particularly the Santa Ana Sucker, a federally-listed species. We may also encounter a few lizards, some insects, fish, and tadpoles. See the Calendar of Events for more information. ♣

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## Monthly Field Trip Reports

by Richard Barth



American Redstart

On September 15 we traveled to Orange County, visiting Huntington Central Park and Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve.

Creating the most excitement at Huntington Central were sightings of at least two American Redstarts and

a Virginia's Warbler! Another rare species, Blackpoll Warbler, was being seen in the park; but, we were unable to find it. We tallied eight species of warblers for the walk. Hutton's Vireo was a nice find, and we were pleased to see Warbling Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, House Wren, Downy Woodpecker and Nuttall's Woodpecker. Two adult Great Horned Owls were roosting not far from the library building.

At Bolsa Chica we accumulated fourteen species of shorebirds, almost par for the course. The expected heron species were seen, but we were disappointed in not locating a Reddish Egret that had been reported recently. There were two large flocks of Black Skimmers plus Caspian, Forster's and Elegant Terns on the exposed flats. A single Common Tern was found as we were nearing the end of our walk. Belding's Savannah Sparrow, a denizen of the saltmarsh pickleweed areas here, was happily accounted for. ♣



# **BIRD WALKS FOR FAMILIES AND BEGINNERS**

SEPULVEDA BASIN WILDLIFE AREA



**SECOND SATURDAYS OCTOBER THROUGH MARCH  
8:30–11:00 a.m. (FREE)**

San Fernando Valley Audubon will lead free bird walks for beginning adults and families with school-age children on the second Saturday of each month, **October 2007—March 2008**. (Dates are Oct. 13, Nov. 10, Dec. 8, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, and Mar. 8.)

Enjoy the lovely Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, with its trails and wildlife lake. Many birds come here in winter. This is your opportunity to learn more about bird identification and behavior, while becoming acquainted with the Wildlife Area—its trees, plants and water.

### **Who is this walk designed for?**

- anyone who has never been on a bird walk ←
- beginning birdwatchers ←
- and families with school-age children ←

**Time and Meeting Place:** The Wildlife Area entrance and amphitheater are in the south-east part of Woodley Park. Meet at the amphitheater at 8:30 a.m.

**Directions:** Turn north from Burbank Boulevard onto Woodley Ave., which is 1/2 mile west of the San Diego Freeway (I-405). Travel about 1/2 mile to the second possible right turn. Turn east (right) at the sign for the Wildlife Reserve. Bear right at the fork in the road and go east 1/2 mile to the Wildlife Area parking. Walk south past the monumental rocks and restroom building to the amphitheater.

**Equipment and Clothing:** Wear sturdy shoes and layered clothing. A cap or hat with a brim is suggested. We have binoculars to loan, but bring your own if you have them.

**More Information:** Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061. Reservations are not needed except for large groups. **Rain Cancels.**



# Calendar of Events

**Sunday, November 4. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m.** Directions: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about one-half mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about one-half mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. For more information contact him at (818) 225-8348 or e-mail: Kris.Ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net.

**Tuesday, November 6. Antelope Valley General Membership Meeting. 6:30 p.m.** The Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in the Elyze Clifford Interpretive Center, at 43201 35th Street, in Lancaster. Contact: Jim Dodson (661) 942-3662

**Saturday, November 10. 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: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about one-half mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about one-half mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Meet across the road from the parking lot at the low buildings. For more information, contact Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5796 or aKotin@earthlink.net, or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061 or ljonesbird@aol.com

**Saturday, November 10. Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docents' 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, November 11. 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, November 17. Monthly Field Trip: Ventura Harbor and Water Treatment Ponds. 8:00 a.m.** Directions: From the San Fernando Valley, take the 101 Freeway to the city of Ventura, exit Seaward Avenue, turn left over the freeway, then immediately left (south) on Harbor Blvd. to Spinnaker Drive and proceed to the end. Look for birders in the last parking lot on the left. Leader: Richard Barth (310) 276-0342.

**Saturday, November 17. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m.** Directions: Exit the Ventura Freeway (U.S. 101) at Las Virgenes Canyon Road and proceed north to the trail-head parking area at the end of the road. Please bring plenty of water and wear proper shoes. No toilets are available on site. Leader: Jim Hardesty (818) 346-6712, jnhardesty@roadrunner.com.

**Saturday, November 17. Antelope Valley Field Trip to Piute Ponds. 7:00 a.m.** We'll take a trip through the ponds looking for shorebirds, waterfowl, and desert scrub birds. Meet at the Ave. C Gate off of Sierra Highway between Lancaster and Rosamond. Leader: Jim Dodson. For more information contact him at (661) 942-3662.

**Saturday, November 17. 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, November 18. 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, November 20. Weekday Wanderers Bird Walk at O'Melvney Park. 8:30 a.m.** Directions: Go north on Balboa Blvd. from the 118 Freeway. Turn left (west) on Sesnon Ave. The park is on the right about .5 miles past the turn. Meet in the parking lot. Rain cancels. Call Carolyn Oppenheimer with questions (818) 885-7493 (before



7:30 p.m., please) or e-mail to Carolopp@sbcglobal.net.  
**Thursday, November 22. Happy Thanksgiving. NO MEETING.**

**Sunday, November 25. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m.** See November 11 for details.

**Monday, November 26. SFVAS Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m.** Balboa Mission Town Hall, 16916 San Fernando Mission Blvd., at Balboa (southeast corner) in Granada Hills.

**Thursday, November 29. General Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m.** Everyone welcome. 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. Our speaker will be, playwright, author, Margit Ahlin, presenting "The Avian Olympics." See "Program Notes", this page, for more information. Looks to be a delightful evening.

**Saturday, December 1. Hansen Dam Natural History Walk. 8:30–11:30 a.m.** This will be a general natural history hike for California Native Plant Society, (CNPS) and SFVAS members, concentrating on plants, birds, and environmental issues affecting the Hansen Dam area. Mark will be available for additional explorations of Tujunga Wash after the basic trip. It is always a

good idea to bring water and munchies, especially for those wishing to explore Tujunga Wash. Also, BRING BINOCULARS AND A HAND LENS IF POSSIBLE. Directions: Take Osborne exit from Golden State Fwy. (5). Go northeast past intersection with Glenoaks. Turn right on Dronfield to enter the park. Proceed downhill to the large parking lot. Alternate directions: Exit Osborne from the Foothill Fwy. (210). At the off ramp, turn right onto Foothill. After a short distance, turn left onto Osborne and then left on Dronfield. Proceed to the lower parking lot. Leader: Mark Osokow, e-mail mark.osokow@sfaudubon.org Rain postpones to Saturday, January 5.

**Sunday, December 2. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m.** See November 4.

**Tuesday, December 4. Antelope Valley General Membership Meeting 6:30 p.m.** The Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in the Elyze Clifford Interpretive Center, at 43201 35th Street, in Lancaster. Contact: Jim Dodson (661) 942-3662.

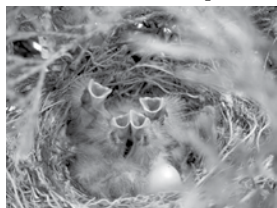
**Future Field Trips:** (Details later)  
**December 15.** Christmas Bird Count  
**January 19.** Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary  
**February 16.** Private Game Preserve

## Program Notes - November 2007

### MARGIT AHLIN TO SPEAK AT NOVEMBER 29 GENERAL MEETING

Margit Ahlin, Los Angeles Zoo docent and lecturer on Class Aves, will present her irreverent look at the superstars of the bird world with "The Avian Olympics," a PowerPoint presentation that explores avian superlatives and record holders. Hosted (by remote broadcast) by Bob Costas-Hummingbird and Stella C. Eagle.

### Membership



SFVAS is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope you will get involved with our many field trips and activities.

\*Dr. Wayne Aller  
Souhail Kaspar

Merle Dvorak  
Rosemary Volpi

Annmarie Hunter

\*Denotes renewing member

### Audubon California Establishes Endowment to Support California State Parks

Audubon California announced that it has established an endowment to provide long-term financial assistance to California State Parks to support important conservation, restoration, and public outreach projects. Beyond an initial \$700,000 donation, Audubon California will continually raise funds and contribute to the endowment, which will pay out five percent annually to projects throughout the state's park system. To read more about the partnership, please visit [http://www.audubon-ca.org/newsroom/070927\\_park\\_endowment.html](http://www.audubon-ca.org/newsroom/070927_park_endowment.html).



# Agreement reached on Tricolored Blackbird restoration

Diverse interests will work together rather than seek regulatory protection for rapidly declining species



Sacramento – An alliance of 16 leading environmental, agricultural and government agencies and organizations have finalized an agreement that charts a cooperative approach for restoring

the rapidly declining Tricolored Blackbirds that are an important part of California's native wildlife. The agreement, hammered out over 18 months, pledges diverse interests to work together as opposed to seeking additional regulatory protection for this species through the Endangered Species Act.

Among the parties to the agreement: Audubon California, California Farm Bureau, California Cattlemen's Association, California Department of Fish and Game, Sustainable Conservation, University of California, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

California is home to 95 percent of the world's population of Tricolored Blackbirds, and while recent trends appear to indicate the species numbers have stabilized at around 250,000-300,000 birds, these numbers are far below numbers in the 1930s. They are listed as a state species of special concern. The birds commonly nest in silage fields and other areas around dairy farms in the San Joaquin Valley and in limited areas in southern California, which presents a risk when fields are ready for harvest and young birds cannot yet fly.

"This agreement is an important down payment on the Tricolored Blackbird's future," said Graham Chisholm, Audubon California's Director of Conservation. "Californians have a special responsibility to secure its future, and we're committed to working with farmers in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys to protect this bird's nests and young."

According to Steve Thompson, Manager of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's California/Nevada Operations, "Tricolored Blackbirds are particularly vulnerable to large-scale nest failures such as a sudden harvest of their habitat early in the spring. At times you can find up to 80,000 nesting adults on only 40 acres, that's a significant portion of the entire world's population. Under this new agreement, the partners will help facilitate management strategies to implement actions spelled out in this plan, including habitat creation, research, monitoring, and outreach."

This agreement is one of a series of conservation efforts that Audubon California has supported on private lands. The organization's Landowner Stewardship Program works with private landowners to conserve and restore wildlife habitat on farms and ranches in a manner compatible with existing agricultural operations. Audubon has also helped negotiate agreements with farmers to help protect Tricolored Blackbird colonies. These agreements compensate farmers for delaying the harvesting of silage crops in order to allow the young blackbirds to leave the nest.

—by Garrison Frost, [gffrost@audubon.org](mailto:gffrost@audubon.org)

## Please Report Observations of Color-Banded Tricolored Blackbirds!

—Submitted by Robert J. Meese, Ph.D., Department of Environmental Science & Policy, University of California Davis

Nearly 1800 Tricolored Blackbirds were color-banded during the 2007 breeding season; your assistance in reporting observations of these color-banded birds is essential to help us learn more about them. Please report observations to: [tricolored.blackbird@gmail.com](mailto:tricolored.blackbird@gmail.com).

All birds were fitted with a U.S. Geological Society (USGS) aluminum band, a white color band (denoting the year) and an additional color band denoting county (Yolo County=green, Yuba County=blue, Colusa County=orange.)

Please report the following information:

1. Observer name(s)
2. Observer(s) e-mail, mailing address, and phone number
3. Observation date and time
4. County and approximate map location (USGS quad or DeLorme)
5. Latitude (decimal degrees)
6. Longitude (decimal degrees)
7. Number of color-banded birds and color combinations observed
8. Dominant land cover type(s) where foraging or roosting flocks were observed
9. Approximate number of birds in flock
10. Land ownership (public/private), if known
11. Were birds roosting or foraging?
12. Were birds on or near a dairy or other source of stored grains?
13. Approximate distance to stored grains
14. Additional information (any additional information that you deem relevant) ↓



**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      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Optional First-Class Postage.....\$5      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions to SFVAS.....      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total.....      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about SFVAS? \_\_\_\_\_

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 non-profit conservation/education organization, and is dedicated to "the conservation of wildlife and natural resources."

Articles, letters, drawings, and photographs concerning conservation, the science and ecology, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for publication in the PHAINOPEPLA.

Material from other newsletters or newspaper 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 Chris Van Beveren at (818) 998-3122 or e-mail her at [becktravel@yahoo.com](mailto:becktravel@yahoo.com)

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*All Phones are area code 818 unless otherwise noted.*

For Chapter leaders email addresses, see our web site:

**[www.SFVAudubon.org](http://www.SFVAudubon.org)**

**CHAPTER PHONE (818) 347-3205**

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## Phainopepla

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[www.sfvaudubon.org](http://www.sfvaudubon.org)

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free mulch for the taking (check with the City Website, Dept. of Sanitation in L.A., to get locations.) Inorganic mulches are things like rock chips and gravel. A very low-growing ground cover can serve a similar purpose, though obviously requires some watering.

So, which will you be: a water-wise gardener or a water-wasting one? ♣

### **Huge victory for the California Condor**

Audubon California applauds signing of AB 821

In a major victory for Audubon California and other organizations that advocate on behalf of the endangered California Condor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, on October 13, signed landmark legislation to ban the use of lead ammunition from important habitat areas. The new law will require the use of non-lead centerfire ammunition within the Department of Fish and Game's deer hunting zones within current and potential condor range in California.

Condors frequently feed on animal carcasses left behind by hunters, and ingest dangerously high levels of

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lead from ammunition. This poisoning has threatened to halt the progress we have made in bringing the Condor back from extinction.

"This is a great day for the California Condor and the State of California," said Glenn Olson, Executive Director of Audubon California. "This is really an indication of how much of an impact we can have when we all work together for a common goal." Olson commended Schwarzenegger for signing the Ridley-Tree Condor Conservation Act (AB 821) but gave special thanks to Assemblyman Pedro Nava who authored the bill.

Your calls, letters, and e-mails helped make this victory happen. ♣