

# Phainopepla



Published by the  
**San Fernando Valley Audubon Society**  
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society



OCTOBER 2007 VOLUME 58 NO.8

**Audubon at Home** by Alan Pollack

## A Water-wise Wildlife Garden...part 1



We living here in Southern California are lucky to be in a Mediterranean climate where a huge variety of plant species can grow. However, we are not

so blessed when it comes to rainfall. Here in the L.A. area, we have not received our average 14 inches of rain for seven years now. This period of drought could extend for years, or as some experts are speculating, for decades into the future. It is therefore imperative to implement water conserving measures in our gardens. In this article and in next month's, I offer some suggestions.

The first and perhaps the most efficacious way for saving water, is to reduce or eliminate lawn. It is estimated that there are 20 to 30 million acres of lawn in the United States. The expansive, manicured lawn tradition found its way to this country from jolly, olde, rain-soaked England, where it evolved as a status symbol: the more acres of sod lawn you had, the richer you were. In most U.S. cities, lawns consume

30 to 60 percent of municipal water supplies, and in some areas (like the San Fernando Valley where I live) that figure is probably closer to 80 percent. And of what value is lawn for wildlife? Almost none.

The lawn story gets worse: in addition to water glut-tony, large swaths of lawn are often doused with millions of pounds of synthetic pesticides and herbicides which negatively effect the ecosystem in our soil, as well as poisoning any critter that happens to feed on the poisoned lawn pest (and so on up the food chain). Add to that the millions of pounds of chemical fertilizers applied to lawns and consider that all of these chemicals run off (most homeowners over-water their lawns) into our streets, sewers, streams, rivers, and ultimately the ocean where they do their toxic damage. And let's not forget the carbon dioxide that is pumped into the atmosphere from all those gasoline powered lawn mowers. And last, but not least, there are the health problems that all these products potentially cause, especially in children and in the workers who use them regularly.

Alternatives to lawn: if the lawn has been used for children to play on, consider a low growing, low water using, low maintenance native ground cover or an unplanted area of decomposed granite. If the lawn

*continued on back page*



# Birdathon 2007

**Thank you to everyone who donated his or her time and money to make this year's Birdathon a success. Together we raised over \$10,000! The proceeds will go toward education, conservation, and all the wonderful activities we offer. We could not do it without you!**

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## Monthly Field Trip Reports by Richard Barth



On July 21 we made our annual visit to Mt. Pinos, with a side trip led by Jim Moore to nearby Mt. Abel. The weather was great and most of our favorite montane target birds were found.

The sighting of the day was a brief look at an apparent California Condor (!) gliding away from us off Mt. Abel. White-headed Woodpecker, Green-tailed Towhee, “Thick-billed” Fox Sparrow, Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Cassin’s Finch and Mountain Quail graced our list. Townsend’s Solitaire and Hairy Woodpecker are sometimes difficult to locate, but luck was with us this year. Red-breasted Nuthatch was a nice catch for two of our birders. We tallied Chipping Sparrow, Purple Finch,

White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Wood-Pewee, Steller’s Jay, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Rufous Hummingbird, Band-tailed Pigeon, Northern Flicker, American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco, House Wren and Brown-headed Cowbird. Vying for most abundant species seen on the trip were Violet-green Swallow and Western Bluebird. We were a bit disappointed in not finding Clark’s Nutcracker, Dusky Flycatcher and Olive-sided Flycatcher this time.

We birded the Chilao and Buckhorn areas along the Angeles Crest on August 18 and had considerable success.

Our crew had several opportunities to study Dusky Flycatcher, and finding a Willow Flycatcher was an unexpected treat. Warblers on hand were MacGillivray’s, Hermit, Yellow-rumped and Wilson’s. Warbling Vireo was tallied, not often seen on this trip. We fared well with the nuthatches—Pygmy, White-breasted and Red-breasted. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hairy and White-headed Woodpeckers, “Thick-billed” Fox Sparrow, Brown Creeper and the beautiful Green-tailed Towhee were obligingly present for us. Other notable species from our day were Mountain Chickadee, Purple Finch, Band-tailed Pigeon, Western Wood-Pewee, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Cooper’s Hawk, Steller’s Jay, Oak Titmouse, House Wren, Western Bluebird, Spotted Towhee and Dark-eyed Junco. ♣

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## Program Notes - October 2007

### Jim Lowery to speak at October 25 General Meeting

Jim Lowery, author of *The Tracker’s Field Guide* (Globe Pequot Press 2006), will present a program about “Tracks as Window to the Animals’ World.” Founder and principal teacher of Earth Skills, Jim has taught tracking for 20 years, including special workshops in track reading animal movement and the tracking of specific mammals including black bears, bighorn sheep, elk, mountain lions, and badgers. He has trained monitors of snowy plover nesting on the central coast to identify tracks of potential nest predators, and is currently working with biologists on a mammal tracking survey at Edwards Air force Base. The “Track Windows” presentation draws not only from his field work and photography but also from five years of researching mammal biology. He will demonstrate how ‘tracks’ are “windows” to an animal’s body language. ♣

Note: Alan Pollack will be leading a Pierce College Extension class on restoring habitat in your yard on two Saturday mornings, October 20 and 27. In addition to his slide show/lecture, Art Langton will be giving a slide show on the birds likely to visit our Valley gardens and Betsey Landis, from the California Native Plant Society, will lecture on gardening with native plants. Watch for the Pierce Extension Fall Catalogue for details.



# Calendar of Events

**Tuesday, October 2. 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.

**Sunday, October 7. 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.

**Saturday, October 13. Antelope Valley Field Trip to California City and Galileo Hills. 7:00 a.m.** Directions: Meet at the Lancaster Park-and-Ride off Highway 14 at Ave. K. Leader: Jim Moore. For more information contact him at (661) 298-1130.

**Saturday, October 13. 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.

**Saturday, October 13. 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 trailhead 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, October 13. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 8:30–11:00 a.m.** Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! The White Pelicans are starting to return why don't you? 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 Wood-

ley 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.

**Sunday, October 14. 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.

**Tuesday, October 16. Weekday Wanderers Bird Walk at Hansen Dam. 8:30 a.m.** Directions: Take the Osborne exit from the Golden State Fwy (5). Go northeast past the intersection with Glenoaks. Turn right on Dronfield to enter the park. At the end of the road turn right and then left to go down the hill to the large parking lot. Alternately, you may take the Foothill Freeway (210) and exit at Osborne. At the off ramp turn right onto Foothill and then left on Osborn and left on Dronfield. Rain cancels. Call Carolyn Oppenheimer with questions (818) 885-7493 (before 7:30 p.m., please) or email to Carolopp@sbcglobal.net.

**Saturday, October 20. Monthly Field Trip: El Dorado Park in Long Beach. 8:00 a.m.** Directions: Take the 405 Freeway to the Studebaker Road exit in Long Beach. Go north on Studebaker to Spring Street, then turn east (right) on Spring to the park entrance. The parking fee is \$6. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot. Leader: Richard Barth (310) 276-0342.

**Saturday, October 20. 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, October 21. 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.

**Thursday, October 25. General Membership Meeting. 7:00 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. Welcome back. Hope you had a great summer. Our speaker will be author, Jim Lowery, who will speak on the topic of "Tracks as Window to the Animals' World." See "Program Notes" on page 3 for more information.

**Sunday, October 28. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m.** See October 14 for details.

**Sunday, November 4. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m.** See October 7.

**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.

**Future Field Trips: (Details later)**

**November 17. Ventura Harbor and Water Treatment Ponds**

**December. Christmas Bird Count**

**January 19. Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary**



## TEACHER APPRECIATION

Many fine teachers take advantage of San Fernando Valley Audubon's various education programs. They are teachers who understand the importance of their students learning about

nature, the environment, and sometimes more specifically about birds and birding. One such teacher is Dennis Hagen-Smith, a fourth grade teacher at Toluca Lake Elementary School. He has taken advantage of our programs for years and we have enjoyed working

with him and his students. We received thank you letters from his students after Donna Timlin and I visited his class in May. He also sent a note to us, which I'd like to share with you. We look forward to working with him and other teachers for a long time.

If you'd like further information about our education program, please contact me at (818) 222-2456, or Peng1lover@aol.com.

—Pat Jacobs, Education Chairperson ✂

Toluca Lake Elementary School  
4840 Cahuenga Boulevard  
N. Hollywood, CA 91601  
May 31, 2007

Hello Donna and Pat,

Thank you once again for visiting our classroom. As always you provided an excellent introduction to the study of birds, engaging students with your information while sparking their interest in birds and the environments that support them. Their newly-acquired knowledge has increased their understanding and respect for our local wildlife, as well as the importance of being good stewards of the environment.

Our visit to the Sepulveda Wildlife Area was greatly enhanced by the preparatory information provided during your visit. They were able to apply this information to their field observation, and thus have an even more meaningful experience. In addition, Audubon Adventures has provided excellent background literature and activities to further help prepare the students for their big day in the field! Thank you for extending this excellent opportunity to our students!

All the best,

(Signed)  
Dennis Hagen-Smith



## HELP WANTED: Field Trip Leaders

We are looking for people with a passion for nature and a desire to share that passion with children to train as new naturalists for our Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP). This program is operated with the assistance of the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of the Santa Monica Mountains and includes 30 yearly tours to the Basin by children in the LA Unified School District between fourth and sixth grade. Training will begin this October and will include information about identifying birds, discussing bird behavior with children, riparian habitat, and tips on working with children. Trainees must also observe four tours and co-lead four tours before a final qualification as a tour leader. The training is free; however, there may be a charge for some of the educational materials. No prior experience is necessary. If you qualify as a naturalist you may either do so as a volunteer or as an employee of the RCD. If this opportunity interests you call Stephen Vodantis, RCD Education Coordinator, at (818) 597-8627 ext. 103.

—Submitted by Carolyn Oppenheimer, SBEEP Chairperson ♣

## Friends of Kern River Preserve Weekend, October 27–28

The Kern River Preserve is hosting an appreciation weekend for Friends of Kern River Preserve on October 27 and 28.

The Preserve is an amazing piece of California riparian habitat, and an Audubon California preserve. Regular species include Summer Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Lawrence's Goldfinch and Willow Flycatcher (not all in October) and many other good species.

Many of us go to the Spring Nature Festival, or Butterbreed for migration in Kern County, but this event is in the Fall, after the bugs, and for Friends and donors only. Please consider becoming a Friend or Donor whether you join the weekend or not. Los Angeles Audubon is a Friend of the Kern River Preserve and supports this jewel of California. For more information go to: <http://kern.audubon.org/fkrp.htm>.

—Submitted by Muriel Kotin, President ♣

## ASK AUDUBON

**“I have heard that products with palm oil contribute to the destruction of bird habitat. What can you tell me about this?”**

--Submitted by Ted W., Sonora, CA

Palm oil, used as a cooking oil as well as a food ingredient, derives from oil palm trees which grow in tropical forests. This oil can be found in a variety of products such as bread, cakes, ice cream, cereal, cookies, chips, margarine, chocolate, paints, soaps, make-up, shampoo, shower gels, and fabric softeners. Rainforest and peat-swamps are generally clearcut to make room for oil palm plantations, destroying bird and other wildlife habitat. The destruction of rainforests and peat swamps affects climate change as well, as millions of tons of carbon dioxide which had been sequestered in the forests and bogs are released into the atmosphere. Malaysia and Indonesia produce 83 percent of the world's palm oil. Paraguay and areas of Central America are losing tropical forest to palm oil production as well. ♣

Due to health concerns about partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, palm oil has become more widely used, but is only marginally better. Palm oil is actually quite high in saturated fat, which raises blood cholesterol and can lead to clogged arteries and heart disease. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the World Health Organization have advised less consumption of this oil. Healthier alternatives include canola or olive oil. Palm oil contains about 50 percent saturated fat, while canola (also called rapeseed oil) contains only seven percent and olive oil has 13 percent. Canada is one of the largest exporters of canola oil to the US and a great deal of olive oil is from the Mediterranean region. Selecting oils that are good for the environment will also protect your health. If you do use palm oil, look for products that are sustainably produced. For more information, see <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/fats.html>. Submit your questions about consumer choices and how they affect the environment to [cblayer@audubon.org](mailto:cblayer@audubon.org). ♣



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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 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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San Fernando Valley Audubon Society  
PO Box 7769  
Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769

**Dated Material**  
**Please Deliver by Oct 1<sup>st</sup>**



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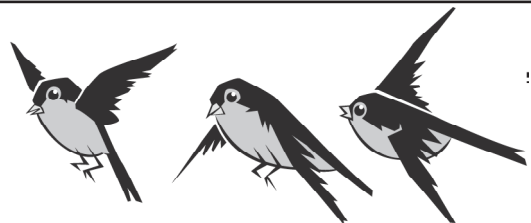
has been simply decorative, consider replacing it with a meadow of native grasses and perennials, or beds for native plants connected by paths of decomposed granite, or a pond/water garden, or a rock garden, or a succulent garden. Any of these choices will not only conserve water, but also save you time, energy and money. In the process, you will also be providing a welcoming habitat for our wild friends.

Alan Pollack offers free consultation/landscape design to help you make your yard wildlife friendly. He can be reached at [alpat62@aol.com](mailto:alpat62@aol.com) or (818) 340-2347. Or check out [www.audubonathome.org](http://www.audubonathome.org).

On Mayor's Day, April 29, 2007, a native plant garden designed by Alan Pollack and installed by him and some volunteer helpers was completed at the entrance of Calvert Street Elementary School in Woodland Hills. This was made possible by a generous donation from the Board of Directors of SFV Audubon Society. A more detailed article about the garden with before and after photos will be published next year. ♣

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**THANK YOU**  
David Aaron for all your  
wonderful work on the Phainopepla.  
Best of Luck.