

Phainopepla



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PROGRAM NOTES

Larry Arbanas to Speak at April 23 General Membership Meeting, 7:00 pm



Larry Arbanas, the bird filmmaker, has been out in the field for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology again and this time he asks us to pull out our trusty rulers and a United States of America map. What is the longest straight line that can be drawn from any one point to another in the continental U.S.? That's right, Florida to Alaska. Recent filming expeditions to both those locations yielded some great opportunities to capture footage of birds.

What do Limpkins and Northern Wheatears have in common other than wings, bills, feathers and all that other well-known bird stuff? If you know, Larry would love to hear what you've got to say about that. He hasn't a clue! But he would love to share images of those birds with us, regardless, and many other FL and AK specialties such as Bristle-thighed Curlew, Tri-colored Heron, Bluethroat and Wood Stork. There will even be some Peregrine Falcons for you non-vegetarians. And, of course, a moose will have to work its way into the lineup. (Not a bird, newbies!)

Larry looks forward to visiting with us again this year. ♪

The Nominations Committee Report

GET INVOLVED AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The Nominations Committee is looking for candidates to serve on the Board of Directors of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society for the 2009–2010 program year. The candidate slate will be announced at the General Membership Meeting on April 23, with an opportunity to entertain nominations from the floor. The election will be held at the May 28 meeting and installation will take place at the June 25 meeting.

The committee would like to thank all SFVAS members who have served the chapter in any capacity. We invite those of you with an interest in becoming more active in chapter activities to let us know.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Nominations Committee (Muriel Kotin (chair), Heather Medvitz and Kris Ohlenkamp) ♪





Birdathon by Rose Leibowitz

It is Birdathon Season Again!

The months of April and May bring our annual Birdathon. You have probably already received your pledge letter for this annual fundraiser, a sponsored birding event. The money raised covers most of our expenses and helps support our educational program for school children, based at the Sepulveda Wildlife Bird Sanctuary. Please join us in pledging a set amount of money on the number of species to be spotted during a designated bird event and then do come on the walk itself! Many members choose this event to honor the leader whose walks she or he has been able to enjoy. The list of the walks in April indicates which is being included in the Birdathon this year. There will be more in May. If you did not receive a pledge form, please e-mail me at Rosemary.Leibowitz@sfvaudubon.net and I will be happy to send you a form.

BIRDATHON EVENTS

Kris Ohlenkamp, Sepulveda Basin, April 5
Caroline Oppenheimer, O'Melveny Park, April 21
Jim Moore, Butterbredt Springs, Galileo Hills, Piute Ponds, April 22
Dick Barth, Morongo Basin, April 25
Art Langton, Chatsworth Nature Preserve, May 10
Nancy Herron Knode, Descanso Gardens, May 10

Monthly Field Trip Report by Richard Barth

On February 21 we toured the Ventura County Game Preserve. Pleasant, mild weather made for a very enjoyable four-hour trek around the property.

American Bittern is one of our target birds here, and this year we tallied five individuals on the walk. A Tundra Swan was the big surprise of the day, and was the first one found on this trip in memory. Virginia Rail and Sora were heard but eluded our view.

The preserve usually produces amazing numbers of Red-tailed Hawks, and this year was no exception. Northern Harriers were readily seen, which is good news as the species is in decline over much of the country. White-tailed Kite and Merlin are always special finds. American Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk and Turkey Vulture rounded out the day's raptor list.

Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail and Bufflehead were of interest from our duck list. Notable among the shorebirds were Dunlin, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt and Marbled Godwit.

Swallows are known to be early migrants and we saw Tree and Barn moving through the area. Belted Kingfisher, Marsh Wren, American Pipit, Western Meadowlark and Say's Phoebe were present as well as Lincoln's, Savannah (including Belding's), Song, Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows. We missed target birds Tricolored and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. †





SEPULVEDA BASIN 2009 WILDLIFE RESERVE CLEANUP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 8:00 A.M. - NOON

Haskell Creek, where it runs through the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area, hosts many riparian trees and shrubs, such as cottonwoods and willows. Songbirds forage and nest in the trees, while egrets and herons fish in this heart of the Wildlife Area. Unfortunately it is infested with trash, like plastic bags and Styrofoam.

Please help restore the creek's beauty!

Equipment and Clothing: You will get muddy and maybe wet. Please wear rugged clothing and shoes or rubber boots. If you have them, please bring work gloves and long-handled tools to reach items.

Directions: Take Woodley Avenue (which is 1/2 mile west of the I-405 Freeway) north from Burbank Boulevard. Go 1/2 mile north to the signs for the Wildlife Reserve and Japanese Gardens. Turn east (right). Bear right where the road forks. Continue east 1/2 mile to the end of the road. Sign in at the amphitheater, just beyond the large rock monuments and rock-faced buildings.

More Information: The event is appropriate for adults and older students. Students can earn **community service hours**. It is **not appropriate for young children but OK for older elementary school students if they are closely supervised**.

Rain cancels.

Questions: 310.457-5796 or 818.831-6061.

*Sponsored by San Fernando Valley Audubon
www.SFVAudubon.org*



Calendar of Events

Saturday, April 4. 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@att.net.

Saturday, April 4. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Take closest freeway to I-5 North and exit at Parker Road. Turn right and proceed to stop sign (Castaic Road), proceed to next stop sign (Lake Hughes Road), proceed to next stop sign (Castaic Lake Drive) and turn right. Entrance to the park is on the right. Parking is in Lot 4, so make a right turn after the kiosk, then an immediate left turn into the lot, parking to the left. Leader: Roger McClure. For information, contact the staff of LA Co Parks at (661) 257-4050.

Sunday, April 5. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. A BIRDATHON EVENT. Probable species: 70. 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 (661) 229-6986 or kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, April 11. 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, April 12. 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, April 18. 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.

Saturday, April 18 SEPULVEDA BASIN 2009 WILDLIFE RESERVE CLEANUP, 8:00 A.M.–NOON

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Please help restore the creek's beauty! Directions: Take Woodley Avenue (which is 1/2 mile west of the I-405 Freeway) north from Burbank Boulevard. Go 1/2 mile north to the signs for the Wildlife Reserve and Japanese Gardens. Turn east (right). Bear right where the road forks. Continue east 1/2 mile to the end of the road. Sign in at the amphitheater, just beyond the large rock monuments and rock-faced buildings. This event is appropriate for adults and older students. Students can earn community service hours. It is not appropriate for young children but OK for older elementary school students if they are closely supervised. Rain cancels. Questions: Call Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061. See page 3 for more information.

Sunday, April 19. 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 \$10 per car. Leader(s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796, aKotin@earthlink.net and/or Art Langton, (818) 887-0973.

Tuesday, April 21. O'Melveny Weekday Walk at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 8:30 a.m. A BIRDATHON EVENT. Probable species: 36–40. Directions: Take the 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway and exit at Balboa Blvd. Turn north, driving two miles to Sesnon, turn left going west .6 mile, turn right at park entrance. Meet in the parking lot. RAIN CANCELS. Contact Carolyn Oppenheimer at, (818) 885-7493, with any questions (before 7 p.m., please) or CarolOpp@sbcglobal.net.

Wednesday, April 22. Butterbredt Springs, Galileo Hills, and Piute Ponds. A BIRDATHON EVENT. Probable species: 115. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the McDonalds on Crown Valley Road in Acton, or 6:00 a.m. at the park-n-ride lot on the east side of Avenue S in Palmdale. We will then stop in Palmdale for a brief search for LeConte's Thrasher, then to Butterbredt Springs and onward to Galileo Hills, Piute Ponds and finish at Apollo Park in Lancaster where we have seen Lesser Nighthawks the previous two years. Leader: Jim Moore. Please advise Jim by e-mail, JimMoore@socal.rr.com if you plan to join him.

Thursday, April 23. 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, Larry Arbanas will talk about birds from Alaska to Florida. See "Program Notes", page 1, for more information.



Monthly Field Trip Carpool

Members are encouraged to carpool to all field trips. Recommended contribution to the driver is \$5. Morongo Valley Carpool Directions: Meet at 5:45 a.m. at the Park-n-Ride lot on the southeast corner of Balboa and Victory Blvds.

Saturday, April 25. Monthly Field Trip to Morongo Valley. 8:00 a.m. A BIRDATHON EVENT. Probable Species: 65–70. This desert oasis offers great birding in the spring. Warblers, flycatchers, hummingbirds and orioles are among the birds expected. At least one pair of Vermilion Flycatchers has been seen every April in memory. Directions: Allow 2.5 hours to drive from the San Fernando Valley. Take Interstate 10 east to Route 62, which is past the Palm Springs turnoff. Go north to the tiny town of Morongo Valley and turn right on East Drive to the Big Morongo Preserve. Bring lunch and drinks. In the afternoon we will drive to Joshua Tree National Park to look for wildflowers, Scott’s Orioles, Pinyon Jays, Brewer’s and Black-throated Sparrows. Leader: Richard Barth, (310) 276-0342.
Sunday, April 26. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See April 12 for details.

Saturday, May 2. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. See April 4 for details.

Saturday, May 2. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See April 4 for details.

Sunday, May 3. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See April 5 for details.

Future Field Trips: (Details later)
May 9. Walker Ranch/Placerita Canyon (second Saturday)
June 13. Rancho Sierra Vista Preserve (second Saturday)

Audubon at Home

by Alan Pollack

Audubon-at-home Mailbox

In this now and then column, Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, will answer your questions about gardening for wildlife and sustainable gardening practices.

Reader Diana asks...

When adding native plants to my backyard, is it better to plant one each of many different plants (shrubs, small trees, etc), or plant several of just a few species? How much “mass” is required to attract a new bird or butterfly?

I would appreciate your insight!

Diana,

It is probably better to add a few or more of each species to make them more attractive to wildlife. However, I would start with only a few, perhaps two or three, to begin with to make sure the species will do well in the spot in your garden you have put them in before purchasing and planting any more.

It’s hard to quantify “mass”. What wildlife uses for shelter and for nest building is “dense” foliage, so bunching plants (with similar needs) together rather than spacing them wide apart is what gives that density. Also, providing cover at all elevations means incorporating tall trees and smaller trees, tall shrubs and smaller shrubs, and ground cover into your landscape. —Alan

Do You Have a Question About How to Create a Wildlife-Friendly Garden?

Alan Pollack would love to hear from you. Please e-mail him with any questions you have regarding creating a wildlife friendly garden that can be used for publication.

Alan also offers free consultation/landscape design to help you make your yard wildlife friendly. He also gives a free, PowerPoint slide show/lecture to community groups, high school and college classes on attracting wildlife to your garden and sustainable gardening practices. He can be reached at alpat62@aol.com or (818) 340-2347 or at www.sfvaudubon.org. ♣



PART 2: A LIFETIME OF RECOLLECTIONS CONCERNING NATIVE BIRDS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY By Don Mullally, Edited by Art Langton

During my youth in West Hollywood, mockingbirds nested in shrubs five to seven feet tall located on property lines. Over time the behavior of mockingbirds changed. Until 1950 older nestlings screamed loudly and frequently for food. Nests are now ten to twenty feet high and the young birds living near my present Granada Hills home create only barely audible and less frequent hunger calls and are less common than they once were in West Hollywood. Predation by cats and crows may have caused this change in behavior. A 1970 observation of mine was that of a mockingbird diving to the ground to pick up a very young alligator lizard, about four inches long, and resembling a light-colored worm. Mockingbirds are not usually thought of as predators on lizards.

Scrub Jays were abundant to say the least. Jays could be solitary or social. Groups of them frequently assembled and traveled from one backyard to another searching for food and scolding cats and whatever else they did not like. Each spring a pair of jays nested in a dense old Mexican elderberry tree located in a neighbor's backyard. Solitary jays at peace in a quiet environment were occasionally noted to quietly sing songs to themselves for several minutes. Once one found a Mourning Dove nest in a jacaranda tree and knocked a naked young into the street, tore it open, picked it up and flew away. Jays are part-time predators when opportunity presents itself.

Kestrels roosted and multiplied among the top fronds of tall, thin, and otherwise naked trunks of palm trees. Screech owls also used these trees for the same purpose. On two occasions dead young owls were found beneath one of these palms. A pair of owls was also observed one morning roosting fifteen feet above ground under the dead, thick fronds I discovered one morning while walking to Gardner Street Elementary School. Thanks to the owls I caught hell for being late to school that day. At night these owls occupied street trees and hooted until spring. The screams of flying Barn Owls were occasionally heard at night. A colony of Brewer's Blackbirds roosted and multiplied a block south of our Hollywood home. They subsisted on worms and insects found in front lawns. The colony has since disappeared.

After 1970 one or two Red-shouldered Hawks and Cooper's Hawk were observed in nearby Plummer Park. A pair of Red-shoulders finally nested for each of two spring seasons in a large coastal redwood in my parents' backyard.

Some species of birds seem to be newcomers. Up to about 1960, I don't recall ever seeing Mourning Doves or Starlings around my parents' house. American Crows were also infrequent. When present they seemed subdued and malnourished and seemed to spend much time and energy searching for food. One day I gave attention to five birds as they walked in front yards and on sidewalks, gutters and streets looking for something to eat. I was surprised to discover the crows were eating crushed snails. By turning their heads sideways they managed to scrape up crushed dead snails I had left on the driveway. In contrast, before West Nile virus disease decimated the crow population, my Granada Hills neighborhood teemed with the birds.

While pruning a tree one day I accidentally exposed a dove nest which had two young birds. Unknown to me, a crow was perched forty or so feet away. The crow perceived the exposed nest and young doves I had moved aside and without hesitation the crow flies to the nest and snatched one of the young doves and flew off with it. Within an hour its sibling had disappeared. I now believe I understand the purpose of patrolling; crows are searching for eggs and young birds in nests to eat. ♪



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 To get started with your membership,
 use the following form and mail to:
 SFV Audubon Society
 Attn: Membership
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 Make all checks payable to SFV Audubon.

SFVAS Membership

Regular 1-yr Chapter Membership....\$20 \$ _____
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New Member Renewal School

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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 3rd 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 Rose Leibowitz at (818) 990-5405 or e-mail her at rose.leibowitz@sfvaudubon.org.

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For Chapter leaders email addresses, see our web site:

www.SFVAudubon.org

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Phainopepla

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Membership

SFVAS is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope you will get involved with our many field trips and activities. Please contact Rose Leibowitz, Membership Chair, with any questions.

New National Members:

Yonus Abedi	Stanley Garrett
Susan Aigner	Pauline Gates
Francis Alascano	John Gracie
Virginia Arnold	Carol Hahn
Diane Babko	Corinne Hardy
Penelope Blackburn	Elaine Hoffman
Robert & Marilyn Burman	Emile Hoffman
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Sarah Schutter
Thomas Scully
John Seal
Robert Stern
Renate Strelau
Mark Sutter

Joel Teplinsky
Dave & Diane Townsend
Suellen Wagner
Joyce Welton

New local members:
Joanne Millius (student member)
Don Mullally