

Phainopepla



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PROGRAM NOTES: Mike Prather to speak at Thursday, October 28

SFVAS General Membership Meeting. 7:30 p.m.

TOPIC: "Owens Lake—A Globally Significant Shorebird IBA in the Making"

An enormous wildlife resource has returned to Owens Lake, once a migration stopover for tens of thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl that was lost nearly 100 years ago. The lake was dried as a result of water gathering by the City of Los Angeles, but now is receiving careful application of water by LADWP to control the regional dust storms born with the lake's death. Roughly 40 square miles of Owens Lake playa are covered with shallow ponds or sheet flooding resulting in thousands of acres of rich feeding habitat for sandpipers, Snowy Plovers, ducks, and geese.

In 2001 Bird Life International designated Owens Lake a nationally significant Important Bird Area (IBA.) Creation of a collaborative lake-wide conservation action plan was begun by Eastern Sierra Audubon and Audubon CA in partnership with LADWP, Department of Fish and Game and the State Lands Commission. This process has grown into a larger effort to design an Owens Lake 'Master Plan' that would seek to save water for the City of Los Angeles in return for large tracts of designated habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl.

Today birders and wildlife watchers are visiting the lake on guided field trips to see this amazing migratory spectacle. Snowy Plovers (the largest in-

land nesting site in California), large flocks of Least and Western Sandpipers, thousands of American Avocets, Peregrine Falcon, White-faced Ibis, and more are all observed on tours of the lake. Now the challenge is to determine how much of this rare resource can be protected in perpetuity. Can a balance be found between the need for water by Los Angeles and need to protect wildlife for the citizens of California?

Mike Prather has been residing in Inyo County since 1972 when he and wife Nancy moved to Death Valley to teach in a one room school house. Mike has been actively working on land and water issues in the Owens Valley since 1980 with the Owens Valley Committee (past president), Eastern Sierra Audubon (past president) and Sierra Club (past chapter chair). The re-watering of 62 miles of the Lower Owens River and the massive wildlife return to Owens Lake as a result of the Los Angeles Owens Lake Dust Control Project have been the center of Mike's conservation focus since the early 1980s. The enhancement and protection of the Owens River and Owens Lake IBA's attract most of his current efforts and he invites everyone to join in the fun. See Calendar Section for directions. ♪



Second Saturday Bird Walks for Families and Beginners, 9:00—11:00 a.m. (FREE)



**October—March
Sepulveda Basin Wildlife
Reserve**

San Fernando Valley Audubon will lead **FREE, second Saturday of the month, bird walks for families and beginners, October 2010—March 2011.** (Saturdays, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11, Jan. 8, Feb. 12 and Mar. 12.)

Stroll through the lovely Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, enjoying its trails and lake. Many birds come here in winter. Learn about the birds and why they come here.

These walks are designed for

- People trying their first bird walk
- Beginning birdwatchers
- Families with school-age children

Time and Meeting Place: The Wildlife Area entrance and amphitheater are in the southeast part of Woodley Park. Meet at the amphitheater at 9:00 a.m. sharp.

Directions: Turn north from Burbank Blvd. onto Woodley Ave., which is one-half mile west of the San Diego Freeway (I-405). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn and turn east (right) at the sign for the Wildlife Reserve. Bear right at the fork in the road and go east one-half 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 or you can use your own.

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. Please visit our website www.sfvaudubon.org. ♣

Monthly Field Trip Reports by Richard Barth

July 17 marked our visit to Mt. Pinos on the Kern County/Ventura County border. We parked at the Iris Meadow lot and birded extensively at the 8300 ft. level, then hiked to the summit at 8800 ft. Just four participants accompanied me on the walk but we found a nice selection of birds. “Thick-billed” Fox Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee, Mountain Chickadee, White-headed Woodpecker, Cassin’s Finch, Brown Creeper and Pygmy Nuthatch are always special treats here. Pine Siskin was a very good find, and we did exceptionally well with Clark’s Nutcrackers this year. Hairy Woodpecker and Mountain Quail were spotted along the road on the way up the mountain. Also of interest were Purple Finch, Western Wood-Pewee, Pacific-slope Flycatcher (heard only), White-breasted Nuthatch (heard only) and Chipping Sparrow. Expected and abundant were Violet-green Swallow, Western Bluebird and House Wren. We saw Cooper’s Hawk, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Robin, Orange-crowned Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Female selasphorus hum-

mingbirds were seen—Allen’s (northern race) and Rufous are both early migrants through the mountains. Dusky Flycatcher, one of our target birds here, did not make an appearance.

On August 21 Jim Moore, Nate Barkley and I birded along the Angeles Crest. Our stops were Chilao, Buckhorn, Dawson Saddle and Grassy Hollow. Birds of interest observed were Cooper’s Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, California Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Acorn Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Steller’s Jay, Violet-green Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Western Bluebird, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, MacGillivray’s Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Spotted Towhee, “Thick-billed” Fox Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Black-headed Grosbeak, Cassin’s Finch, and Lawrence’s Goldfinch.

Audubon-at-Home Mailbox by Alan Pollack

Please e-mail Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, with any questions you have with regards to creating a wildlife-friendly garden that can be used for publication. Alan 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 contacted at (818) 340-2347 or at alan.pollack@sfvaudubon.org. ♣



Bull Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project by Muriel Kotin



Photo by: Alexander Viduetsky.
California Thrasher, August 1, 2010

SFVAS will lead its first public nature walk at the Bull Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project on Saturday, October 30, at 9:00 a.m. We are hoping to lead similar walks there several times a year.

The Bull Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project is a small new nature reserve within the Sepulveda Basin.

Bull Creek itself is a major tributary of the Los Angeles River. It begins in the Santa Susana Mountains near the I-5 and I-14 freeways, flows along the west side of the Los Angeles Reservoir, and then, encased in a concrete flood control channel, travels south from Granada Hills through the San Fernando Valley. It enters the Sepulveda Basin at Victory Boulevard. At the Orange Rapid Bus Line, the creek reverts to a free-flowing stream and joins the Los Angeles River near Lake Balboa.

Once a lovely riparian ecosystem, this free-flowing 3,000-foot section of Bull Creek gradually became highly disturbed. Dominated by invasive exotic plants, it became unable to support much native and migratory wildlife. Around 20 years ago, members of the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee began working on a project to restore the artificially steep sided ditch, infested with *Arundo donax*, the "giant reed" that looks like bamboo. Finally Congressman Brad Sherman was able to procure federal funds to restore the free flowing section of the creek.

Construction of the ecosystem restoration project was a project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE.) Construction was completed in the spring of 2009. Congressman Sherman is working to get funding to restore the short section of Bull Creek between the park road and the LA River that was not included in the project.

The Project developed 28 acres of aquatic, riparian, and native upland habitat to enhance and restore wildlife resources along the creek. Features include a one-acre island, low hills, and bridges connecting trails. Thousands of native plant cuttings were planted and acres of land were hydroseeded with native grass and wildflower seeds. An oxbow was dug, so that the creek bed splits into two, surrounding the new island. A line was installed to supply the northern end of the free-flowing creek section with reclaimed

water from the nearby Tillman Water Reclamation Plant in dry weather.

Soon after installation, irrigation lines broke, causing areas of erosion. Then, major erosion occurred during last winter's rains. The east bank of the creek was eroded so severely that the nearby path had to be diverted. The oxbow channel filled with tons of silt and stopped carrying water except during heavy rain, so that the island is no longer an island. The USACE is investigating whether the erosion was due to engineering or installation error. It has also been suggested that the extensive siltation may have been caused by ash and bare soil from last fall's Station Fire washing into Bull Creek, the headwaters of which are in the area of the fire.

The upside of last winter's heavy rains is that they allowed the native plantings to grow well. The new willows, mulefats, cottonwoods and sycamores planted near the creek now look like shrubs and small trees. On the fields are stands of various native grasses and wildflowers. On the hills are native trees and shrubs such as walnuts, toyon, sumacs, mallow, and sages.

Always underfunded, Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks has been very hard hit by staff reductions. Citizen efforts are especially crucial to controlling invasive weeds before they overwhelm the new native plants. Steve Hartman of California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has advised Recreation and Parks on managing maintenance of the restoration and leads a group of dedicated volunteers in removing invasive weeds. To volunteer, email volunteer@SepulvedaBasinWildlife.org. CNPS and the Consortium of the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee have helped pay for environmentally sensitive application of herbicide by Bill Neill of Riparian Repairs at Bull Creek and other areas of the Sepulveda Basin.

Located next to the very popular Lake Balboa, the Bull Creek Project has the potential to be a lovely, small wildlife reserve. It should be a good spot for bird watching. It will take much continued effort, additional work, and ongoing maintenance by the USACE, the city, and volunteers for the Bull Creek Project to achieve its potential. More information about wildlife areas in Sepulveda Basin, including Bull Creek and the Wildlife Reserve may be found at www.SepulvedaBasinWildlife.org. ♡

Correction. The Photo of the male Phainopepla on the front page of the August/September issue was taken by Alexander Viduetsky, SFVAS member, at Canada Larga Rd. in Ventura, May 07, 2010.



Calendar of Events



October

Saturday, October 2. Season Opener! 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, Jim.Hardesty@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, October 2. 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.

Sunday, October 3. 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) 986-7785 or kris.ohlenkamp@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, October 9. Season Opener! Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 9:00–11:00 a.m. Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! Are the White Pelicans back yet? Come check it out. 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. Leader(s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones, (818) 831-6061. Reservations are not needed except for large groups. Rain cancels. Please visit our website www.sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, October 9. Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. SFVAS and the Santa Susana Mountain Parks Association are jointly sponsoring a bird walk in Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

This is the first time an organized bird walk is being held in this under-studied park, so unusual observations are very possible. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Larwin St. gate. Directions: From Topanga Canyon Bl. and Devonshire St., take Devonshire St. west until just before it ends. Turn left on Larwin St. and park under the overhead power lines. There will be a short car shuttle available to the end of the loop at the Andorra gate. Wear sturdy boots, and bring water. Some trails along the loop may be steep but are in good condition, and we will follow an easy pace. For further information, e-mail the leader, mark.osokow@sfvaudubon.org. (Meeting location and detailed directions will be posted at www.sfvaudubon.org and at www.ssmpa.com.)

Saturday, October 9. 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, October 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: Olga Clark or Nancy Herron Knode. For more information, contact Dottie Ecker, (818) 790-0659.

Saturday, October 16. Monthly Field Trip to 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 \$7. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot. Leader: Richard Barth (310) 276-0342.

Saturday, October 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) 252-6187.

Sunday, October 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 \$12 per car. Leader (s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796, muriel.kotin@sfvaudubon.org and/or Art Langton, (818) 887-0973.



Tuesday, October 19. O'Melveny Weekday Walk at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Take the 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway and exit at Balboa Blvd. Turn north, driving two miles to Sesnon, turn left going west 0.6 miles, 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.) or carolyn.oppenheimer@sfgvaudubon.org.

Sunday, October 24. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See October 10 for details.

Thursday, October 28. 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. Our speaker Mike Prather will discuss "Owens Lake—A Globally

Significant Shorebird IBA in the Making." See "Program Notes" on page one.

November

Saturday, November 6. Upper Las Virgenes Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. See October 2 for details.

Saturday, November 6. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See October 2 for details.

Sunday, November 7. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See October 3 for details.

Future Field Trips: (Details later)

November 20. Ventura Harbor and Water Treatment Ponds

(No Field Trip in December due to Christmas Count)

In Remembrance of Mike San Miguel

I, like the rest of the Southern California birding community, was saddened and grieved by the accidental and untimely death of Mike San Miguel from a fall while on a Spotted Owl survey in the San Gabriel Mountains. I knew Mike mainly through his e-bird postings and occasional chance encounters at well known Southern California birding spots. After the usual pleasantries, discussion would quickly get down to the truly important and serious questions of the day, "What's around?," or "What good birds have you seen?" I inevitably came out the winner in these exchanges as he frequently pointed out birds I had overlooked, or missed, or sent me in a direction where a good bird could be found, advice which was always much appreciated.

In September 2001 we encountered each other at Galileo Hill. In answering the questions birders greet each other with, I mentioned a Palm Warbler between the campground and petting zoo. Mike was definitely interested as he ran off the statistical likelihood of this bird being in this location at this time of year. Little did I realize I was speaking to a member of the California Records Committee and the author-to-be of *Rare Birds of California*. Nevertheless I thought his chances of seeing the bird were quite good as it had made repeated appearances and seemed in no great rush to move on. In exchange Mike directed me to an Eastern Kingbird perched on the fringes of the park. A more bedraggled, feather-worn specimen I have never seen, barely recognizable or identifiable. The poor bird must have been fighting turbulence or fighting off predators all across the continent. It hardly resembled the nice, neat drawings or photos that adorn the pages of the better known and popular field guides. One must be, nevertheless, appreciative and grateful to any sighting which adds a species to one's state list. The Palm

Warbler identification was confirmed and reported by Mike several months later in the appropriate issue of *American Birds* (or was it *Audubon Field Notes* back then?) adding one more small statistic to the understanding of vagrant species in California.

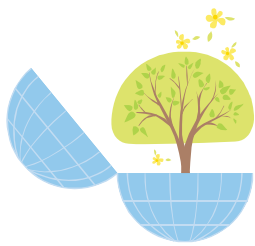
At another chance meeting at Galileo, Mike pointed out a location being visited by a waterthrush. I watched and waited and no waterthrush. This past spring while eating lunch and watching Spotted Sandpipers probe that same area one mysteriously turned into a waterthrush. Mike said it would be there, and so it was several years and many trips later, undoubtedly a different individual, but one never knows for sure.

During this spring's Los Angeles Audubon Society's 100th anniversary birdathon, I joined Mike's group birding Paiute Ponds, the eastern Antelope Valley south to Valyermo and vicinity. Pleasant weather, companions, and leadership plus over 100 birds made the day most enjoyable and memorable. The omission of a couple of targeted species simply was a reminder that even the best of birders can't find what isn't there or can't be seen and did nothing to detract from the pleasure of a grand experience.

Mike's tragic death should remind us that all the mountains of transverse ranges including the San Gabriels are steep, unstable, and unforgiving to even the most competent and experienced of outdoorsmen. The line between prudence and disaster can be so fine as to be nearly invisible. Our birding hours are limited. Let's resolve to enjoy them, the birds, and our fellow birders to the fullest for these are unique experiences we all can share. I will miss Mike, his friendly and pleasant demeanor, birding insights, observational acuteness, and willingness to share, all this and more at our next unscheduled rendezvous.—Arthur Langton Ψ



Environmental Educator Training



Do you like working with students? Do you like being outside interpreting nature? Would you like to be part of a local community of life-long learners and educators? Let the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCD) train you to become an Environmental Educator this fall.

RCD Environmental Educators lead the fieldtrips for 4th, 5th and 6th graders funded by San Fernando Valley Audubon at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area. Training is also available for other RCD outdoor venues and grade levels.

For more information visit the RCD website at: rcdsmm.org/education. To receive the new training schedule e-mail rcdsmm.edu@gmail.com or call: (818) 597-8627 x103. ♣

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 at rose.leibowitz@sfaudubon.org.

Local:	Eugene Choy	Joan Hogan	Dagmar Mirate	Carol Sayles
Pamela Folgert	Sylvia Christoffersen	Sheila Horwitz	Robert Mollett	Jean Schroeder
Judy Matsuoka	R. Clegg	Ida Housden	Joseph Money	W. Seaman
Cathryn Novak	Helen Colvig	Richard Hribar	Janet Moore-Leary	Grace Serizawa
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Anna Bohnhof	Yvette Genovese	Robin McGlynn	Chessa Roth	Patricia Walker
Kristin Borella	Charlotte Gerson	Mary McGrew	Robin Roth	Mitch Walters
James Botz	Gretchen Gesell	Patricia Meacham	Laurent Rouleau	Jean Wardlow
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Tom Brittan	Susan Hayes	Phyllis Migala	Sue Sain	Billie Wells
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Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park Bird Walk

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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	\$ _____
Student 1-yr Chapter Membership....\$10	\$ _____
Optional First-Class Postage.....\$5	\$ _____
Contributions to SFVAS.....	\$ _____
Total.....	\$ _____

New Member ____ Renewal ____ School ____

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How did you learn about SFVAS? _____

Save a tree! I DO NOT want to receive a hardcopy of the *Phainopepla*; I'll get my news online

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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Phainopepla

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14th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

It's time to get ready for the 14th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium to be held at the Hilton in Stockton, CA, Nov. 18–21, 2010.

This year's evening programs feature dynamic photographer and author Paul Bannick giving a program based on his research on "Owls and Woodpeckers of the West." Also author and award-winning photographer Moose Petersen will give a presentation on "California's Threatened and Endangered Birds." Workshops include Jon Dunn on sparrows and Joe Morlan's shorebird ID workshop focusing on loons and grebes. There are many others, ranging from Central Valley Raptors to Beginning Birding and digiscoping to bird sketching.

Our field trips always turn up exciting birds. Add in the always entertaining and educational Bird ID Panel, the wonderful display of art and gifts for yourself or others at the Birder's Market, and the camaraderie of hundreds of like-minded folks, and you know you'll have a good time! For more information or to register visit our website at www.cvbs.org, or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net. See you there!

Thank you! Karin McElhatton of Castaic, who did her own family/friends birdathon and sent details, including a list of each bird seen, but too late to be included in the last edition of the *Phainopepla!*—Rosemary Leibowitz