

Phainopepla



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MONTHLY PROGRAMS:

Thursday, January 27, 2011

Walter Sakai presents: Bird Banding in Zuma Canyon-An Update

Walter Sakai is a Master Bird Bander who has been banding birds in Zuma Canyon since 1995. Bird banding allows us to learn about migration patterns, population changes, mortality, longevity, feeding behaviors and territoriality of birds. Walt's emphasis is on teaching students how to band birds. Thus, most of his help comes from Santa Monica College where he teaches biology, but he has other volunteers as well. Because Walt's emphasis is on teaching, his banding covers a wide variety of habitats. Walt and his students generally band 60-80 species each year, including 1000-1500 individual birds. If you Google Walter Sakai you'll find some very interesting information on his homepage.



Walt was recently awarded \$1000 from Los Angeles Audubon Society and \$500 from Santa Monica Bay Audubon to start and operate a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivalship) bird banding station, in Solstice Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains. ♪

Adult Lazuli Bunting banded in Zuma Canyon, spring 2009

Thursday, February 24, 2011

**Dave Weeshoff presents:
Vertebrates of the Galapagos
and One Invertebrate**

Dave will be presenting information from his own recent trip to the Galapagos along with material from other SFVAS members as well. Join us to view those fabulous stars of these unique islands: Galapagos Penguins, Flightless Cormorants, Blue-footed Boobies and other specialties. Please let Dave know if you have photographs from your own trip. Are there any underwater camera specialists among us? Stay tuned for an update in next month's *Phainopepla*. ♪

Friday, March 11, 2011

**SFVAS Annual Awards Banquet
Featured Speaker: Mel White, Author
Send in your reservation form found on back page TODAY!**

San Fernando Valley Audubon's monthly General Meetings and Program Presentations are held on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. We meet at the Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd. Encino. See January 27 under Calendar of Events for directions.



President's Message by Dave Weeshoff

I'm just two days back from an amazing week in the Galapagos Islands, recovering from jet lag, but even more from an over-abundance of joy and awe. I know some of you have been there, but, like me, find it hard to describe the magnificent wildlife and habitat that is there for our appreciation and enjoyment. Penguins, finches, frigate birds, albatrosses, flightless cormorants, sea lions, tortoises, iguanas, whales, and many other species are abundant and thriving to the extent the natural resources provide for their needs.

Ecuador is attempting to preserve the natural resources of the Galapagos through careful monitoring and managing their eco-tourism industry and, I would observe, has done a reasonable job. While one may feel constrained to keep on the hiking paths, avoid disturbing the animals and respect their habitat, everyone in my travel group felt the restraints were clearly in the best interest of the critters and are reasonable for the conservation of the entire biosphere.

(San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is planning a special General Meeting in February 2011 to focus on the Galapagos and to provide an opportunity for folks who have visited there to share their favorite photos and reminiscences—see elsewhere in this issue.)

As I was reflecting on the conservation issues and efforts of the Ecuadorian government, I was reminded of our local responsibilities as citizens of Southern California (and the Earth) to preserve our natural resources. I pondered the conscientious and selfless efforts of our SFVAS Conservation Committee and their allies to fight the good fights, and to keep our underfunded local, county and state conservation entities focused on the best available science to manage and protect what we, as Audubon members, find so dear. I applaud Kris Ohlenkamp and his team for both their long term commitments and continuing efforts. Let's support them all we can. ♪

Mel White to Speak at Friday, March 11, 2011 SFVAS Awards Banquet

Mel White is a freelance writer who lives in Little Rock, Arkansas, and specializes in travel and natural history. He has written more than 40 articles for National Geographic Traveler magazine and more than a dozen for *National Geographic*. He has covered destinations including Australia's Great Barrier Reef, New Zealand, Borneo, the Amazon River, Mount Kilimanjaro, Madagascar, Socotra Island, and the Swiss Alps. He has written or contributed to more than 25 guidebooks and nature-related publications. He wrote *A Birder's Guide to Arkansas*, *Exploring the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail*, *the National Geographic Guide to Birdwatching Sites*, and *National Geographic Complete National Parks of the United States*.

For his program, Mr. White will discuss an expedition to the rainforest of the remote Foja Mountains of western New Guinea, where he accompanied only the second group of scientists to explore an area that has been called "*the new Garden of Eden*." Several new species of animals and plants were discovered in the Fojas, including the endemic Wattled Smokey Honeyeater. ♪





Monthly Field Trip Report by Richard Barth

November 20 marked our field trip to Ventura Harbor and Water Treatment Ponds. Probably as the result of a threatening weather forecast (80% chance of rain), no participants made the trip to join me. The weather was rough early, but backed off mid-morning and I got in some productive birding. I also stopped by Ormond Beach (Perkins Rd.) and at the Laguna Tams on the way home.

My highlight sighting was a recently-reported Red-necked Grebe at the harbor. The day produced ten species each of shorebirds and ducks, and seven species of gulls. Northern Harrier, Common Moorhen,

Elegant Tern (late) and American Pipit were nice finds. Special on my duck list were Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Lesser Scaup and Northern Pintail. Gulls of note were Mew, Herring and Glaucous-winged. American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, Black Oystercatcher, Surf-bird and Black Turnstone headed my shorebird list. Interesting at this date were Yellow Warbler and Wilson's Warbler (late migrants or wintering) in my mix of six warbler species. Western Meadowlark is always a treat. I saw five heron species and all three of the expected cormorants. Eurasian Collared-Dove is common in coastal Ventura County; easily found in the Port Hueneme/Oxnard area. ♪

Audubon-at-Home Mailbox by Alan Pollack

Please e-mail Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, with any questions you have with regard 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. ♪

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@sfvaudubon.org. ♪

Local:

Wendy Barsh
Nina Carder
Maryann Cormier
Gerald Minear

National:

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Debra Anderson
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Melinda Smith
Lee Spada
Janet Stokes
Gerald Sunshine
Riko Tagashira
Stuart Thull
Sharon Trudgeon
Mrs. Ulrich
Matt Walker
Mary Ward
Joyce Welton



Calendar of Events

January

Saturday, January 1. 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, January 2. 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, January 8. High Desert Bird Prowl. 8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Here is an opportunity to seek out wintering hawks, owls, Mountain Plovers, Mountain Bluebirds, longspurs, sparrows, etc. Directions: Take the 405 or 5 Freeway north to the 14 Freeway. Exit the 14 at Avenue S south of Palmdale and drive to the Park-Ride Lot just east of the off-ramp. We will meet at the west end of the lot and carpool for the morning. Bring snacks and beverages. Scopes and FRS radios will be helpful. We will return to the meeting spot about 1:00 p.m. No fee, no reservation. Leaders: Jim Hardesty, (818) 346-6712, and Jim Moore, (661) 298-1130.

Saturday, January 8. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 9:00–11:00 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. 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, January 8. 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, January 9. 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 Dottie Ecker, (818) 790-0659.

Saturday, January 15. Monthly Field Trip: Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary. Meet at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch and drinks. Allow about 1.5 hours driving time from the San Fernando Valley. Directions: Take the 405 Fwy. south into Orange County; exit Jamboree Road in the city of Irvine. Turn right (south) on Jamboree Road and proceed about 4 miles to San Joaquin Hills Road, turn right and drive down to the bay. Park on San Joaquin Hills Road just before the dead end. In the afternoon we will bird the nearby San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary. Leader: Richard Barth (310) 276-0342.

Saturday, January 15. 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, January 16. 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, January 18. 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@sfvaudubon.org.



Sunday, January 23. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See January 9 for details.

Monday, January 24. SFVAS Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Balboa Mission Town Hall, 16916 San Fernando Mission Blvd., at Balboa (southeast corner) in Granada Hills.

Thursday, January 27. SFVAS 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. Our speaker, Walter Sakai presents: Bird Banding in Zuma Canyon—An Update. See Monthly Programs on page one.

February

Saturday, February 5. 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, Jim.Hardesty@sfaudubon.org.

Saturday, February 5. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See January 1 for details.

Sunday, February 6. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See January 2 for details.

Future Field Trips: (Details later)

February 19. Private Game Preserve in Ventura County

March 19-20. Morro Bay Weekend †



GALAPAGOS TRIP REPORT: JUNE 1—8, 2010

Article and photos by Chris and Jim Van Beveren



learned a lot that might be of help, if and when you decide to make the trip.

Our trip was planned to be foremost a comfortable, relaxing vacation experience, by choosing to sleep in a nice hotel on land, rather than on a boat. The hotel we chose was the Finch Bay Hotel, a five minute walk by trail from the Puerto Ayora harbor area on the south shore of Santa Cruz Island. The hotel owns two gorgeous yachts, in which the guests are taken out on day trips to the best local sites for wildlife viewing and snorkeling. The typical seven night stay will include four days on these boat excursions, and two days on your own, one of which you do a long hike to a beautiful bay with other wildlife, and the other to kick back or go into town for a bit of shopping. The packages

Hi Birders, Jim and I were able to travel to the Galapagos Islands in early June this year. We enjoyed the trip very much, and

include transportation from the airport at Baltra, off the north shore of Santa Cruz, with interesting stops en route, and the last day you get a tour of the Charles Darwin Research Station.

The Finch Bay boats are extremely comfortable and fast (visions of Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous). Guests are taken ashore to a spot to view birds and iguanas with the guide, then later to a snorkeling spot. Staying on land meant we were restricted to birding at relatively nearby areas, but other than a few endemics which are only found on islands far from Santa Cruz, we got most of the species we came to see.

Life Birds included: Galapagos Penguin, Galapagos Shearwater, White-vented Storm-petrel, Red-billed Tropicbird, Blue-footed Booby, Nazca Booby, Great Frigatebird, White-cheeked Pintail, Striated Heron, Galapagos Hawk, Lava Gull, Swallow-tailed Gull, Brown Noddy, Galapagos Dove, Smooth-billed Ani (invader analogous to European Collared-dove down here) Galapagos Flycatcher, Galapagos Mockingbird, and Darwin's Finches (probably 9 or 10 of the 13 species—see discussion below.) Continued on next page



Galapagos Trip Report –continued from page 5



Other birds seen: Black-necked Stilt, Brown Pelican, Cattle Egret, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Magnificent Frigatebird, Ruddy Turnstone, Semi-palmated Plover, Whimbrel, and Yellow Warbler (different race than in California—has a lot of Rufous on the head, but not as much as the Mangrove race in parts of the U.S. This is the only warbler on the islands.)

As you know, it is not just seeing these endemics that make the Galapagos unique; it is that the birds allow you to approach closely without any fear of humans. It's a wonderful experience.

Some of these birds were seen on the boat trips, but many were also seen on the grounds of the hotel and in town. The pelagics were ID'd for us by the guide, and I am not fully confident all of those IDs were correct. You might think this is a fairly short species list for a place considered a birders paradise. But in fact, we did see almost all of the species present in the Galapagos. We also saw several kinds of iguanas, and Manta Rays leaping out of the water! Birds we could not see were Flightless Cormorant, Red-footed Booby, Waved Albatross, plus some inland species requiring time and patience to find: Galapagos Rail, Painted Crane, and Dark-billed Cuckoo.

Regarding the Darwin's Finches, our guides were reluctant to try to separate the species for us. All the males of all 13 species are black; all the females are drab brown-grey with heavy streaks. Some are larger than others but within a small range. The difference is the shape of the beaks. At first I was quite annoyed that these professional guides could not confidently differentiate the species. They said the differences were really subtle, the birds move very fast, and many are hybrids of two species. I wish I had known about a fabulous book called "*The Beak of the*

Finch" by Jonathan Weiner, before going on the trip. The book details the careers of a couple of research ornithologists working in the Galapagos, measuring beaks, observing changes from generation to generation depending on climactic conditions, which cause changes in available food for the birds. I would have had much more realistic expectations had I done so. If you want to try to identify these species yourself, the best reference we found is a laminated folder sold at the Darwin Research Center. It shows all the finches and all the others species living in the islands. But, do yourself a big favor and read "*The Beak of the Finch*" before your trip.

You may decide that finding ALL the endemics of the Galapagos is more important to you than having a comfortable trip. If so, you must go with a birding specialist company such as VENT or WINGS, among several others. You will live, eat, and sleep on a boat, stop at least twice a day to see birds and maybe get a swim, and at night the boat will travel far and wide to the places the endemics live. Depending on the season, you may have rough seas, or VERY rough seas, and/or a lot of rain and humidity. Your guides will be more confident at dividing out the finch species as well as the pelagics. Prices will vary but will be much higher than our trip cost.

It is also possible to do a Galapagos trip for a much lower budget than either version above. We found over a dozen family run lodges in Puerto Ayora at perhaps 1/3 the nightly rate. The lodges do not have boats, so you must go to the dock and find a day trip going the next morning. There will be a guide but he will not be used to the expectations of avid birders like us, and the quality of the boats will not compare. But, you will see some great birds, and also some around the town. Comparing the three approaches, the birding company trip will see 99% of the species, the land based trip with its own boats will see 90%, and the small hotels in town option will get 80%.

That's it for the basic report. Contact me with questions, as there is more to tell and I can advise anyone considering this trip. When time allows, I will write a report on the Ecuador mainland birding we did just before coming out to the Galapagos. ♪



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 To get started with your membership,
 use the following form and mail to:
 SFV Audubon Society
 Attn: Membership
 P.O. Box 7769
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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

CHAPTER PHONE (818) 347-3205



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San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
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Dated Material

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to see this issue in full color!
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Phainopepla January 2011



INSIDE THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

President's Message, Mel White Bio—pg. 2 ♪ Field Trip Report, Audubon-at-Home, Membership—pg. 3
Calendar of Events—pgs. 4–5 ♪ Galapagos Trip Report—pgs. 5–6 ♪ SFVAS Chapter Info.—pg. 7

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society Awards Banquet
Friday, March 11, 2011 □ 6:00 p.m. No Host Bar □ 7:00 p.m. Dinner
Airtel Plaza Hotel, 7277 Valjean Avenue, Van Nuys

Featured Speaker: Mel White, Author, Explorer
Conservation Award Recipient: TBA

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

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Enclosed is my check (\$50.00/person, \$35.00/student) for \$ _____

Additional Names _____

Please make check payable to: San Fernando Valley Audubon Society.

Mail to: Jeanne Polak-Recht, 11002 Garden Grove Avenue, Northridge, CA 91326

The buffet-style dinner will also include selections for vegetarians. The cost is \$50.00 (\$35.00 for college students) including tax and tip. Reservations must be made in advance. Please list names of all guests in your party and mail in this form by March 4, 2011. THERE IS NO RESERVED SEATING. Reduced parking fee at Airtel or street parking is FREE. You will not receive a confirmation of your reservation. Reservations will be held at the door.