



# HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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## THIS UNKNOWN PENINSULA Dilemma

By Jess Morton

**T**he mockingbird's squawk, a harsh cry of indignation and defiance, came from just over the lip of the bluff by the Point Vicente Interpretive Center. It was loud. Continuous. And I could guess its cause, for I had seen a young peregrine falcon disappear around that corner of the bluff face moments before. It was one of the three freshly fledged chicks the pair there had raised this year. Like all youngsters, it probably was hungry.

Whether or not it was hungry, it was clear the mockingbird was not happy with it. I hurried over. I wanted to see what was going to happen, perhaps get some interesting photos if the birds were visible from inside the fence lining the bluff. I was not about to emulate the horde of photographers I had just left, all standing on the cliff's edge outside the fence — a bad example for children — and I did not want to test whether my insurance covered the results of a fall onto the boulders far below.

A long rib of rock ran down the cliff, irregularly knuckled with ledge and precipice. There the two birds were. The mocker perched a good 20 feet above the hawk, decrying its presence. The peregrine was looking up at it, perhaps wondering what all the fuss was about. It had, of course, seen mockingbirds before during its short few weeks of life. Some had been flying around or singing up above and out of sight from its nest. Some had been eaten, gray and white feathers gulped down along with flesh and bone. To peregrines, other birds are food, and this young bird had already consumed birds of many species greedily; all fuel making possible its rapid growth.

The scene before me by itself was full of drama, a confrontation between predator and outraged potential prey. It was not clear what the peregrine thought of all this, whether it



**Mockingbird has a weighty choice to make when confronted by a peregrine falcon**

*Photo by Jess Morton*

recognized that the bird above could make a meal or whether the fact that it was not being brought to it in mom or dad's claws transformed the living bird into a different category of being. Whatever the hawk perceived, I thought it was clear what the mockingbird had in mind. But I was wrong.

**A** closer look showed that the mockingbird had a dilemma. Held firmly in its bill were a caterpillar, an army worm perhaps, and a hunting spider. There may have been one or two other creatures along with them, but the photo only shows those two clearly. Had these been meant as a meal for the mocker, it would have consumed them as they had been gleaned from under a leaf or stone where they had been hiding during the day waiting for night to come, their time for foraging. No, this was food for its own young somewhere in a nest nearby. And that made for the dilemma.

The mockingbird knew the peregrine to be a predator, perhaps had seen what I had heard about from the whale-watch folks two weeks before when right above them a peregrine

*See Dilemma, Page 2*

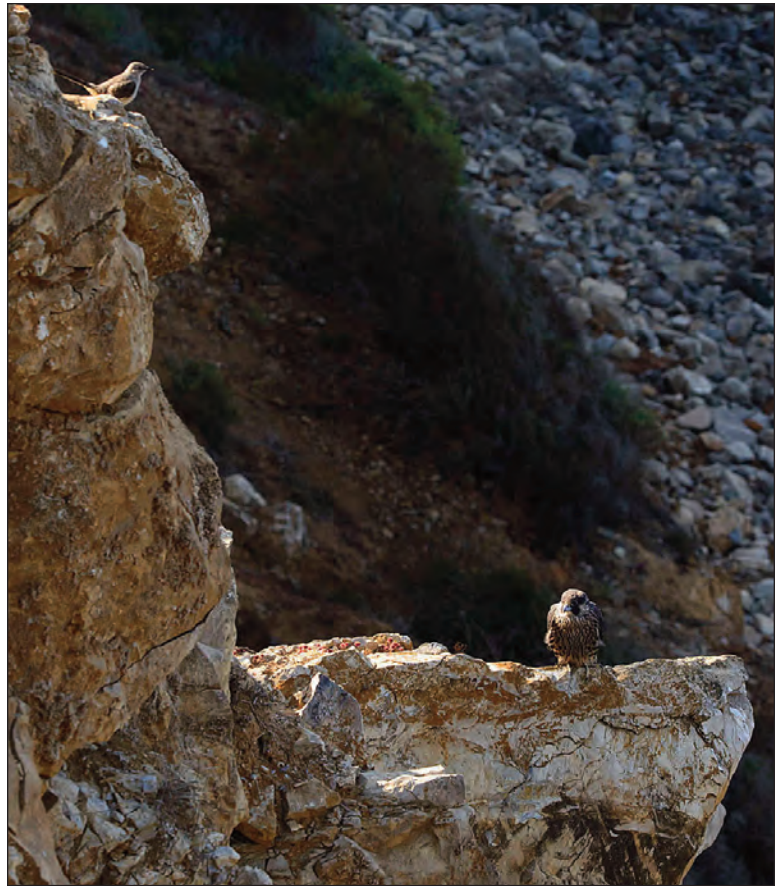
*DILEMMA, from Page 1*

had taken a flying mockingbird in an explosion of feathers — just another meal for one of the nestlings. That might have been the fate of the mocker I was watching had either parent been close by, but the young bird below was not yet a fully fledged hunter, as it was still being fed by its parents.

**T**he mockingbird could not know this for certain, nor would it know that peregrines are not nest robbers, as ravens, crows and jays are. Thus the dilemma:

How can it transport the food held in its bill to the nest without jeopardizing the young it had to feed? And squawking did not appear to be working, eliciting nothing from the falcon but quizzical looks. So let's try something else! The mocker flew across to a bare branch not far away, then gathering its nerve, swooped at the enemy, feathers splaying out in flight for maximum effect. Not too close, though. Several feet away, in fact. Even a young falcon's claws are long and formidable.

But the falcon just looked on bemusedly, swiveling its head to follow the mocker's flight back up onto the ledge above. Again and again the mocker flew at the falcon, each time coming a bit closer, attempting to chase off the peregrine. One dive came in so close the hawk ducked,



**Initially, the mockingbird was very vocal in its annoyance as it perched above the young peregrine. After a standoff, the falcon swooped down.**

*Photos by Jess Morton*

albeit with a look that conveyed, "What is this idiot up to?"

By this time, I could see that the mocker no longer had the food it had been carrying. Had it eaten it? Perhaps not. A few minutes before, a second mockingbird had flown to the fence railing above. The one below had flown at it, appearing to attack and chase it away.

Could the second have been its mate, with a quick food transfer, rushing back to the nest? Dilemma solved? The young got fed and the aggressive flights at the falcon could continue unhindered until it finally flew away.

# Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim  
CSU Dominguez Hills

S. Mountain Monardella  
*Monardella australis*

As the record drought stretches into a fifth year, our appreciation of backyard habitats continues to grow. Conditions are dire in the wilds — there's little for birds, insects and others to eat and drink. So, they come to our gardens.

At times like this, gardens provide critical habitat; they



may even help to save species from extinction. And so it's even more important to *consider the habitat value of the plants we choose*. We must also *share our wisdom with others*, who may not understand the key role of native plants in home gardens. So get out and talk to your friends and neighbors; we're all in this drought together.

We've recently been reminded of the importance of plants in the Mint family (*Lamiaceae*) as nectar sources for butterflies. Among the best right now are the Coyote Mints or Monardellas. And one pretty member hails from the local San Gabriel Mountains.

Southern mountain mint is a 1 to 2 feet tall and wide part-woody perennial. Formerly lumped with other Mountain Monardellas, it is now considered a separate species. While it rarely grows below 4500 feet in nature, it does just fine in local, sea-level gardens. An amazing plant!

Like other Mints, the small flowers of *Monardella australis* are grouped in ball-like clusters around the stems. The flowers, which occur from late spring into summer, are a pastel pink-lavender that contrasts beautifully with the pale green foliage. The flowers attract a wide range of butterflies including Gulf fritillary, the Ladies, the swallowtails, the Hairstreaks and all of the local Skipper species. Butterflies sometimes fight for space on the flowers!

*Monardella australis* grows in most local soils. It takes full sun, but looks a bit better with some afternoon shade. Be sure to give supplemental water in dry winters. While very drought tolerant, this plant looks better with occasional summer water — perhaps weekly in very sandy soils or every other week in clay. Taper off water in late August. Prune back by about one-third in the fall (don't cut back into old wood).

We like the flavor of the leaves for tea or as an extract to flavor baked goods, candy, etc. This is a nice plant for a deep pot on a partly sunny porch.

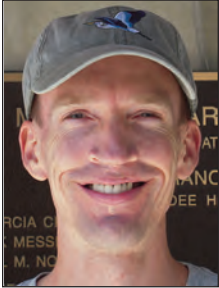
For details, please see: <http://mother-natures-backyard.blogspot.com/2016/07/plant-of-month-july-southern-mountain.html>

To learn more about growing this plant, visit the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. Also learn about local native plants at the "Out of the Wilds and Into Your Garden" series on the first Saturday of each month at the center.



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## Fun Counting Butterflies, Planning Projects



By David Quadhamer

**O**ur Annual Planning Meeting is set for Saturday, Aug. 13, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Madrona Marsh

Nature Center. Every year our chapter holds an Annual Planning Meeting to give everyone an opportunity to talk about what we would like to accomplish in the next year. If you would like to get involved with our chapter, this is an excellent opportunity.

For starters, construction has begun at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center and will be completed in 2017, thanks to funding by a California State Parks and Recreation Department Proposition 1 Grant. The Nature Center will remain open, so please continue to visit.

The room where we meet for our monthly meetings, however, will be closed during construction. So we will try holding a meeting in the lab room at Madrona Marsh. If this room proves too small, we may have to temporarily relocate: Two possible meeting places are the Torrance Library and the South Coast Botanic Garden. If we change venues, we may also need to change our meeting time. September is likely the first month to be affected. Check our website and newsletter for updates on where and when our monthly meetings will occur.

Our 36th annual butterfly count was held on July 9. The count takes place in the same 15-mile diameter circle covered in the Christmas Bird Count. Due to the drought, butterfly numbers have been down the past few years.

Stacy Herman and I covered Torrance Beach, Terranea and Trump National Golf Course. We started out at Torrance Beach. The dune habitat there

is a great place to look for El Segundo blue butterflies — and we found them. After that, we headed over to Terranea, where we also found El Segundo blue butterflies. Finally, we went to Trump National Golf Course, where we found a Western Tiger Swallowtail, some Mourning Cloaks and a Funereal Dusky-wing, among others. The weather started out overcast and nice but by the time we reached the golf course, it had gotten hot. Stacy and I didn't find many butterflies, but we did find El Segundo blue butterflies, which we always enjoy.

This local butterfly was federally listed as endangered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in 1976. Seacliff buckwheat is its only food source. After fewer than 500 butterflies were counted in 1976, the El Segundo Blue Butterfly Preserve, west of LAX, was set aside and restored for the butterfly. Now, they are only found here and in a few other places here in the South Bay. The numbers have significantly increased since 1976 thanks to all of the work that was done to restore the coastal dune habitat that the butterflies rely on. Work to restore habitat for the El Se-

gundo blue butterfly continues today.

Approximately one inch in size, the adult blues have a relatively short life span, lasting only a few days. Their flight season is during the summer when the seacliff buckwheat blooms. Loss of habitat and declines in their host plant remain areas of concern, however.

Thank you to Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magamma for coordinating the count — and to everyone who helped this year. If you'd like to learn more about identifying butterflies, we will be counting butterflies again next year. No experience is required. All you need is enthusiasm and comfortable shoes!

Our next monthly meeting will be in September. Dave Weeshoff from the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will give a presentation about how birds are affected by climate change. In October Michael Friedman from the Point Vicente Interpretive Center will present about the history of Palos Verdes and the PVIC. Dr. Randy Harwood will provide our November presentation on some of the amazing birds, reptiles and marine creatures that can be found in Florida. Please join us!

AVIANTICS

By Evi Meyer



## CONSERVATION CORNER

# Health & Environmental Harms of Food Production



By Lillian Light

The food industry is highly concentrated with the top few companies controlling most of production. Because of farm policies and the rise of GMOs and industrial machinery, most of our food is grown in vast monocultures that rely heavily on fertilizers and pesticides that lead to health risks in humans and deplete bee and monarch butterfly populations. We need to remake our food system into one that brings healthy and sustainable food to everyone.

A GMO is a plant or meat product that has had its DNA artificially altered by genes from other plants, animals, viruses or bacteria. An example of one GMO product is corn that contains the insecticide Bt toxin inside itself. The concern is that there are no long-term studies proving that genetically engineered foods are safe. But there have been several studies indicating that rats who were fed GMO corn suffered liver and kidney damage.

GMO products on the market offer American consumers no clear benefits.

Since GMO foods are pervasive, largely untested and unlabeled, a broad range of consumer, environmental and health advocates favor labeling genetically engineered foods. They point out that 50 other countries require labeling of genetically engineered food — including Australia, Japan, China and all of Europe.

While controversy has arisen about whether GMOs are safe to ingest, there appears to be a lot of evidence they are not safe to grow. As industrial farming and its arsenal of powerful pesticides have come to dominate American agriculture, the very future of our nation's food supply is in jeopardy. The proliferation of Monsanto's Roundup GMO crops has fueled the intensive use of toxic weed killers.

Even as the population of monarch butterflies has plummeted more than 90 percent since the mid-1990s, the EPA has ignored the massive evidence linking this die-off to Big Ag's use of the herbicide glyphosate (marketed as Roundup by Monsanto). Recently, the World Health Organization an-

nounced that glyphosate probably causes cancer in humans, which raises alarming questions about the impact that its widespread use may be having on agricultural communities.

## 'Neonics' Impacting Habitat

Meanwhile, the skyrocketing use of a class of insecticides called neonicotinoids, or "neonics," is causing massive declines in America's populations of honeybees and wild bees. Some areas of the country have reported a wintertime collapse of 50 percent of bee colonies. Bees play a vital role in pollinating most of our foods — but they are now in crisis, awash in a dangerous tide of pesticides. Environmentalists have been trying to ban neonics in the United States, following an urgently needed step already taken by the European Union. They are also working to promote the labeling of GMO foods, ingredients and animal products.

Consumers have the right to know if their food is produced using genetic engineering. This is not a radical new idea. It has been standard practice in all the European Union countries for years. The latest published research shows that 61 countries have some form of mandatory labeling for foods containing genetically modified crop ingredients.

The GMO labeling movement has been trying to pass this kind of legislation in several states. Monsanto has poured millions of dollars into opposition, and has managed to sell GMO support to the public at large. Two states have taken action to requiring the labeling of GMOs: Maine and Vermont.

The Biotech industry has managed to pass the DARK Act in the House of Representatives and the Stabenow/Roberts Bill (S2609) in the Senate. The latter would kill the Vermont law that labels GMO foods and exempts nearly all GMOs from labeling. The DARK act was even more restrictive.

In order to raise awareness about GMO products and how this type of food is grown, concerned citizens should contact President Barack Obama and urge him to veto the legislation that deprives Americans of the right to know whether the food they eat has been genetically engineered: Please call the Comment Line at 202-456-1111 or e-mail a letter to: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov).



## MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

# Chapter Calendar

### Events

**Saturday, Aug. 13, 9–12 p.m.:** **PV/South Bay Audubon Strategic Planning Meeting** at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

**Tuesday, Sept. 20, 7 p.m.:** **Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers.** The guest speaker is Dave Weeshoff (see opposite page). Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize while enjoying the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

### Field Trips

**NOTE: Due to construction at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park, all second Sunday bird walks there are cancelled indefinitely.**

**Tuesday, Aug. 2, 8:30 a.m.:** **“Tour de Torrance.”** Join Audubon leader Ron Melin and friends on a ramble around a great local birding area. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

**Wednesday, Aug. 3: Birding with Bob.** Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit [www.torrance.wbu.com](http://www.torrance.wbu.com).

**Wednesday, Aug. 10, 8 a.m.:** **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh** with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

**Saturday, Aug. 13, 9 a.m.:** **PVPLC Natural History Walk to Vicente Bluffs/Vanderlip Park.** Traverse the cliffside trail along Terranea’s grounds to Vanderlip Park. Explore habitat that is home to the rare El Segundo blue butterfly with beautiful views of Catalina Island. Strenuous. For details, visit [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org).

**Sunday, Aug 14, 8 a.m.:** **Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** Audubon leaders Steve Dexter, Manuel Duran and Ed Griffin will lead this walk at the garden, located at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes.

**Tuesday, Aug. 16, 8:30 a.m.:** **“Tour de Torrance.”** See Aug. 2 for details.

**Saturday, Aug. 20, 10 a.m.:** **Natural History Walk to PV Lighthouse, PVIC & Vicente Bluff Reserve.** Join us for a tour of the Point Vicente Lighthouse grounds, the PVIC museum, the native plant garden and more. Easy. For details, visit [www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm](http://www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm)

**Sunday, Aug. 21, 8 a.m.:** **Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands** with Bob Shanman. Visit [www.torrance.wbu.com](http://www.torrance.wbu.com).

**Saturday, Aug. 27, 8:30–10:30 a.m.:** **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh** with Audubon leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magamma. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

**Tuesday, Aug. 30, 8:30 a.m.:** **“Tour de Torrance.”** See Aug. 2 for details.

**Tuesday, Sept. 6, 8:30 a.m.:** **“Tour de Torrance.”** See Aug. 2 for details.

**Wednesday, Sept. 7: Birding with Bob.** Bob Shanman leads bird walks every first Wednesday of the month. Visit [www.torrance.wbu.com](http://www.torrance.wbu.com).

**Saturday, Sept. 10, 9 a.m.:** **PVPLC Natural History Walk to Alta Vicente Reserve.** Follow North Spur Trail to visit a restoration area for native Cactus Wren and California Gnatcatcher and listen to their distinct calls. Visit the new recognition site for Golden



Great Egret

Photo by Evi Meyer

Poppy Heritage Circle members. Strenuous. Visit [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org).

**Sunday, Sept. 11, 8 a.m.:** **Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** See Aug. 14 for details.

**Wednesday, Sept. 14, 8 a.m.:** **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh.** See Aug. 10 for details.

**Saturday, Sept. 17, 9 a.m.:** **Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Abalone Cove Shoreline Park.** It’s International Coastal Clean-up Day! Bring family to help restore the beach. Gloves and trash bags provided. For details, visit [www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm](http://www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm).

**Sunday, Sept. 18, 8 a.m.:** **Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands** with Bob Shanman. Visit [www.torrance.wbu.com](http://www.torrance.wbu.com).

**Tuesday, Sept. 20, 8:30 a.m.:** **“Tour de Torrance.”** See Aug. 2 for details.

**Saturday, Sept. 24, 8:30-10:30 a.m.:** **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh** with leaders Tracy Drake and Dinuk Magamma. See Aug. 27 for details.

# 'AUDUBON AND GLOBAL WARMING'

**Presented by Dave Weeshoff  
San Fernando Valley Audubon  
Society's Conservation Chair  
Tuesday, Sept. 20, 7 p.m.  
Madrona Marsh Nature Center**

"The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming."  
— Gary Langham, Audubon Chief Scientist

**D**ave Weeshoff, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society's conservation chair, will review the background and contents of the critically important 2014 National Audubon Report regarding Birds and Climate Change, including the report preparation, contents, results, and ways each of us can help protect our birds locally and nationally.

Using decades of Christmas Bird Count observations and Breeding Bird Surveys, the Audubon Science Team created a database of birds and their ranges, forecasting the results of various long-term climate change scenarios into the future. The results are disheartening given current estimates of warming in the next few decades.

Of the 588 bird species examined in the study, 314 are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and a further 188 species face the same fate by 2080, with numerous extinctions possible if global warming is allowed to erase the havens birds occupy today.

Climate is the most fundamental factor that determines birds' ability to thrive. While there are other factors (over-hunting, habitat loss, etc.) that affect the health of bird populations, they can bounce back if the conditions are changed. But if the climate changes so much that the birds can no longer survive, they cannot ever come back. This includes changes in either their summer or winter ranges, or both.

Come hear the facts and the details, and make up your mind as to how you want to help mitigate the effects and change the prognostications.



**Dave Weeshoff, conservation chair for the SFV Audubon Chapter.**

*Photo courtesy of Dave Weeshoff*

## About the Speaker

Weeshoff graduated from Utah State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Experimental Psychology in 1968. Immediately after graduation he joined the IBM Corporation, and retired in 2004.

Post-retirement from IBM he became a volunteer and docent with the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education Center, San Pedro, managed by International Bird Rescue. He was in the Board of Directors for seven years and chairman

for three of those years. While working with sick, orphaned, oiled and injured aquatic birds, he saw firsthand how the water quality in the local area affected the health of the animals. In response to this, Dave joined the Speaker's Bureau of Heal the Bay, an environmental organization dedicated to improving the water quality off the California coast.

As an extension of this world view, in July 2008 he joined the Speakers' Bureau of the Algalita Marine Research Institute, which studies and educates the public on the causes and consequences of plastic in the world's oceans.

Dave joined San Fernando Valley Audubon Society in 2006, was president and is currently the conservation chair and chair of the Classroom Education Program of the chapter. He is a frequent guest speaker to adult and children's groups on avian and environmental issues for International Bird Rescue, Heal the Bay (an organization concerned with

improving the water quality off the Southern California coast), Algalita, as well as Audubon.

He has been keenly interested in the topic of avian habitats and especially of biodiversity and climate change for many years, and is quite familiar with the National Audubon Society's Climate Change initiatives.

Dave travels frequently in search of interesting aquatic birds and mammals, including trips to the Antarctic, Arctic, Estonia, Iceland, Greenland, Arctic Canada, Galapagos, New Zealand, Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), Chilean Patagonia, and Midway Atoll, as well as various destinations in the United States.

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