



# HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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## Natural Reserve Can Thrive With Our Help

By Jess Morton

Nearly 20 years after its doubtful start as a holding piece of legislation, the Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) has fully matured, providing the funding mechanism through which a 1,500-acre natural reserve has been completed on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Driven by the listing of the California gnatcatcher under the Endangered Species Act and steered by the diligent work of dozens of conservation-minded individuals, especially those connected with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy and city of RPV, a dozen properties along the south side of the Peninsula have been melded into a habitat reserve that will serve the needs of both wildlife and people for decades to come. For the visionaries who brought both the NCCP and reserve to fruition, this is a dream come true.

Longtime readers of *Hummin'* will remember some of the ups and downs in the development of the NCCP itself, as reported in a score of articles over the years, and in the battles to save open space and the rare habitat ours contains. Among the bright spots are the establishment of trails and natural buffer zones on the bluffs at Ocean Trails and around Point Vicente, and parcel acquisitions that have eliminated potentially disastrous developments from the books.

These properties have now all been incorporated into a single overall reserve. Equally important has been the

shift of attitude within the RPV City Council to one that has fully embraced the idea of open space preservation, with actions to match.

While the reserve lands have now been set aside, there is still a huge amount of work to do within them to fulfill the requirements of the NCCP. Decades of work! Over the coming years, it will be our duty to see to it that habitat for wildlife is restored and that the birds and animals dependent on this habitat flourish. No mean feat that, though the results of the last few years of preliminary work are encouraging.

California gnatcatchers seem to be doing very well, especially along the bluffs where new revegetation has allowed numbers to increase dramatically. I'm cautiously optimistic about El Segundo blue butterflies, too. In the NCCP reserve and elsewhere along the coast, restoration work has brought new colonies of these little blue gems into existence. One day we may even host the majority of this species.

Will the NCCP reserve grow further? I believe it will, but only incrementally in size now that the backbone of the system is in place. The real growth will come with its adoption by all local residents and organizations. Embedded as it is in our human-oriented landscape, the reserve cannot survive as functional habitat without our active intervention. It is up to all of us in Audubon and elsewhere to provide the funding and volunteer hours that will keep the reserve



The Lazuli Bunting, above, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher may be found on natural reserves on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Photos: Laurie Szogas



going and let it fulfill its mission of preserving something of the past for future generations.

To view a current reserve map, visit the city of RPV's web site at: [www.palosverdes.com/rpv/planning/NCCP](http://www.palosverdes.com/rpv/planning/NCCP).

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# An Invitation to Meet Birders, Explore Nature



By **John Nieto**

**S**ome of the best birders are not born that way; they develop over years of practice, exploring their favorite habitats winter, spring, fall and summer. The Board of Directors and the bird walk leaders of our chapter are no exception. After years of practice most of us have developed a special relationship with a favorite birding habitat. Some of us have an inner need to visit wetland, sage scrub or riparian habitats that is unexplainable, except to say that it feels so natural to visit a particular location. Some of us feel very comfortable exploring any or all habitats as they come along in our daily journey through life.

I have a favorite place that does feel like a good pair of slippers. That good feeling starts as I enter the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge. The peeps are in their place at low tide, the Harriers are sweeping low over the marsh and the turkey vultures are soaring high overhead. Depending on the season, the variety of birds can be almost overwhelming. The refuge serves as a critical migration stopover and wintering habitat for thousands of birds that migrate up and down the Pacific Flyway each year. The refuge is open to the public just once a month on the last Saturday and only for a few hours of guided lessons on the micro-habitats found in the tidal wetlands.

The real birding takes place only if you to sign on with a birding group tour, and then you will have the morning opened up to you, riding in a van through various locations in the 965 acres of salt-water marsh in the Anaheim Bay estuary. The real treat is composed of the various volunteer opportunities that allow for in-

depth exploration of this fantastic bird habitat: predator surveys, clapper rail call surveys, tern colony predator watch and on and on. Yes, a good pair of slippers.

After a few years of birding with the same individuals, you find out where it is they prefer to spend their waking hours. Our past president has a special relationship with the Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park and Machado Lake that could give his wife concern, except that she is right there with him. Eileen Byhower is an extraordinary birder; she is patient and has a gift of recognizing details that escape mere mortals.

A walk with them along the perimeter of Machado Lake and in and out through the willows or the upland habitat is a real treat and a great lesson in birding. If you like hard work, then the habitat restoration the second Saturday of each month should fulfill your need. Perhaps the restored habitat will someday support a population of Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly.

**T**ake a tour of the Gardena Willows Wetland Preserve, and you'll see why our vice president, Connie Vadheim, feels so passionate about this remnant of the vast Dominguez Water Shed. This was a wetland that once extended out to Machado Lake. As is true of all other vestiges of the ancient wetlands, the Willows attracts migratory birds and ducks of all kinds throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities, such as restoration work days on the third Saturday and the public "Stroll the Preserve" every second Sunday, can give the visitor a feeling of awe and discovery of this special place in the South Bay. When you visit, you will notice the calm and perhaps understand why the Willows preserve has been recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Board member Evi Meyer has a special place she visits, with an eye on the

effects of habitat restoration on the native bird population. She is part of a survey team that meets twice a month to monitor the effects of habitat restoration in the 98-acre Three Sisters Reserve in Rancho Palos Verdes, an effort that started in the summer of 2008. The team members are conducting a 5-year scientific research study that will give the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy a description of the bird population in the restored cactus scrub and sage scrub habitats. The intense methodology of this survey offers the right amount of critical thinking mixed with the fun of birding that Evi enjoys. If scientific study and good birding interest you, then let Evi know that you would like to become a team member.

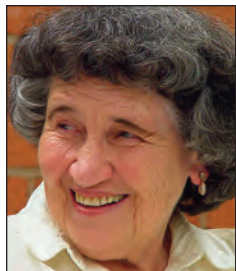
**C**hapter walk leader Stephanie Bryan visits one of the South Bays unique bird habitats twice each month. Stephanie leads our Chapter walks every first Sunday and third Wednesday of each month at the South Coast Botanic Garden. Because this special place has so many nonnative plants and water features, numerous rare sightings have taken place there over the years. A birder never knows what will be in store on visits to this beautiful 87-acre park with 2,500 different species of plants from all over the world, where over 200 species of birds are seen annually. Stephanie has an eye and ear that enable her to identify birds almost instantly and make the average birder envious of her talents but willing to learn and come back again.

The Bixby Marshland in Carson is a unique place that has been brought back to life from a polluted backwater of the Wilmington Drain into a wonderful, mature wetland habitat rich in native flora. One of our chapter's founding members, Jess Morton, has adopted this newly preserved wetland habitat and committed that our Audubon chapter will have a presence there once a month during the

*See Nieto, Page 9*

## CONSERVATION CORNER

### *Improving Water-Use Efficiency Reduces Costs and 'Footprints'*



By Lillian Light

**W**hy is an aggressive water conservation program so vitally necessary at this time? Why must we radically reduce water and energy consumption here in Southern California? One problem is that less than 1% of all water on earth is accessible for consumption. Although ocean levels are rising because of global warming, supplies of fresh water are declining. In the Western United States and here in California, the 7-year drought has depleted available water.

The overriding dilemma is that California is growing rapidly, but its water supply is not. Imported water from Northern California and the Colorado River currently provides 66% of the water used in our Southern California communities. The Sacramento–San Joaquin Bay Delta provides much of this water, but it is broken and vulnerable to earthquakes. A court has ordered a 30% reduction in pumping to Southern California to protect the Delta's failing ecosystem. California has already lost its surplus water from the drought-stricken Colorado River, and climatologists are predicting a climate change there that is similar to the 1930s Dust Bowl.

In the absence of concerted efforts to save water, the combination of population growth and climate change could create devastating scarcities far and wide, as well as rapidly increasing water prices. Moving water around our state and over our mountains uses 18% of our electricity and 30% of natural gas, so improving our water stewardship also saves energy and reduces global warming emissions.

The city of Manhattan Beach has implemented a "tiered rate" structure in its water bills to encourage conservation. The tiered rate applies increasing unit costs for increasing levels of usage. In 2010, the Tier 1 cost is \$2.00/unit (0 to 15 units), the Tier 2 cost is \$2.77/unit (16 to 60 units) and the Tier 3 cost is \$4.38/unit (61 plus units). A unit represents 100 cubic feet of water, or 748 gallons of water. If you are paying for water in tier 1, your cost is 0.0026 cents per gallon. In Manhattan Beach, the median usage is 16 units per 2-month billing cycle, so about half of these customers will be charged tier 1 rates. Customers who use much more water will have a strong incentive to lower their bills by reducing water usage.

Let us explore ways to lower those water bills. On average,






50% of the water delivered to homes is used outside to keep lawns green and flowers blooming; thus, the best way to lower water usage (and bills) is to create a lush-looking landscape of drought-tolerant native plants. For help in planning such a garden and selecting plants, contact Elizabeth Sala at [Elizabets@westbasin.org](mailto:Elizabets@westbasin.org) or 310-660-6276. She can also arrange for you to get a low-flow toilet to replace your old water guzzler. The installation of Energy Star dishwashers, washing machines and hot water heaters will result in a marked reduction in water and energy usage. You can find out about rebates that lower prices on these appliances by contacting the South Bay Environmental Services Center at 310-371-7222, [marilyn@sbesc.com](mailto:marilyn@sbesc.com) or [www.sbesc.com](http://www.sbesc.com).

This center can also help you to install drought-tolerant plantings, water-efficient irrigation and high-efficiency toilets. In addition, other organizations can provide you with weather-

based sprinkler controllers to conserve water and reduce runoff to the ocean, along with water brooms, low-flow showerheads, faucet aerators and compact fluorescent light bulbs. It is estimated that if every American home replaced just one light bulb with a compact fluorescent, we would save \$600 million in annual energy costs and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars!

Make 2010 the year to conserve water and energy in an effort to help your city, your state, your nation and your planet.

#### Ways to Be Water Wise

-  **Water your yard only in the morning or evening to reduce evaporation**
-  **Use a broom, instead of a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks**
-  **Repair leaky faucets, plumbing and sprinklers**
-  **Install a solar-powered drip irrigation system in your garden and**
-  **Use mulch to allow maximum absorption**

#### Chapter Seeks a Publicity Coordinator

As of January, the Palos Verdes/South Bay Chapter of the Audubon Society is in need of a new Publicity Coordinator. This individual would make sure that chapter field trips and other activities are announced in the local newspapers, such as *The Daily Breeze* and *Peninsula News*. These local media are familiar with such requests and have a format they use for calendar listings and announcements.

This role would require using the computer and telephone approximately six hours per month. A successful Publicity Coordinator should be friendly, professional and well-organized. Do you have what it takes? If so, please contact the current president, John Nieto, at 310-544-2714 or [johnnieto@pvpsb-audubon.org](mailto:johnnieto@pvpsb-audubon.org).



# This Unknown Peninsula: Rare Birds Come and Go

By Jess Morton

The discovery by David Ellsworth of a king eider munching mussels from the pilings under the Cabrillo Beach fishing pier is a reminder that rare birds are to be expected around here. True, this particular species is new to scores of local birders, but over the course of a year those same birders have several opportunities for rarities: for example, the Mississippi kite at the Botanic Garden a couple of years ago, the thick-billed kingbird feeding on bees at Banning Park or the various boobies along the coast. Everything shows up in southern California eventually. And that is no accident.

Over the millions of years birds have been around, they have developed superb mechanisms for dispersal. While many species are considered resident in a given location and others migrate huge distances, there is enough variation built into their physiological mechanisms to assure continuance of a species should something dire happen. The home ranges of birds do dry up, burn up, get flooded or buried from time to time, so there has to be a built-in process that allows for recovery from such disasters. Within each species' normal pattern of dispersal, whether by young birds driven from the nest by parents or through migration, there is enough variation to take into account the unaccountable.

We tend to think of migration, for instance, as an amazing and infallible ability of a bird (or other creature) to move from Point A to Point B and back again—a means to utilize two or more habitats during the normal course of life. Actually, that *is* how it works. Bird-banding data do show that a bird will migrate thousands of miles away from a specific nesting site at the end of breeding season, only to return exactly there in time to begin the next brood. The same goes for wintering grounds. Birds like regularity as much as we do. Find a spot that works and use it year after year. We just call it home—or the summer cottage.



**King Eiders are considered rare in these parts.** Photo: David Ellsworth

There is a percentage of birds, though, for which that precision does not hold. The internal migratory compass is off just a bit, or a fledgling once driven away to find its own place in the world can enter the “wrong” habitat, or one just a bit too far away, because its instinct is not the same as that of other fledglings in its generation. It is these individuals, the ones for whom instinct does not follow the normal pattern, that assure the continuance of a species when disaster strikes.

If there are enough of them, and it

may not take all that many, these birds will establish a new population center when the old one fails through natural disaster or even human intervention. Of course, the old population may well continue, while these young odd birds explore new places and expand the existing range of the species. The spread of cattle egrets to the Americas from Africa are one example, and another is the arrival of giant swallowtail butterflies here from the Southeast. These creatures went out of range once upon a time, and they are rarities no longer.

A look at a map shows that it does not take much error along a migration track from northern Canada for an “eastern” bird to arrive along the coast here. Fly south through one of the passes of the Rocky Mountains, instead of southeast, and an ovenbird will end up at Madrona Marsh. Fly an extra thousand miles south along the coast, and a king eider ends up under the fishing pier at Cabrillo Beach. Rare birds? Sure, but it's all part of how the great pattern of life fits together.

## Could Oil Drilling Alter the Local Landscape?

By Jess Morton

Recent legislative proposals, heavy industrial lobbying and our governor's new budget suggest it is time for local residents to imagine our coastline enhanced by a view of oil drilling rigs! Of course, that is not what we are being told is planned, nor if current plans around Santa Barbara are carried out, what would happen here. We are told that, wonder of wonders, the revenue from drilling up north would solve the budget problems of our state parks.

The governor's final budget includes cuts to the state parks budget of \$140 million that would be replaced by new oil revenues. Sadly, these are not revenues from a severance tax, which if implemented, would place us on par with every other oil-producing state in the nation, but rather from

breaking our 40-year moratorium on offshore drilling. To do this, he has proposed bypassing the rightful jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission, which approves oil and gas leases off California's coast, for a newly created Tranquillon Ridge (PXP) offshore oil drilling project in Santa Barbara.

Susan Jordan, who directs the California Coastal Protection Network, a coalition of 100 statewide groups, says, “He would rather reverse 40 years of bipartisan California state policy against offshore oil drilling to push through a pet project—rather than require oil companies extracting oil from our state's sea beds (to) pay a severance tax—their fair share to taxpayers for doing business in California. We are the only oil-producing state in America that does not tax

See *Drilling*, Page 7



# Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance M. Vadheim  
CSU Dominguez Hills

## Thin Grass *Agrostis pallens*

**O**ur weather is less predictable now. After a long stretch of unseasonably dry weather, we soon may face the opposite problem. These are challenging times for backyard habitats! You may be considering getting rid of your lawn. Many non-native lawn grasses require too much water and provide less-than-optimal habitat. Their short roots are suited to climates with plenty of regular rain—or frequent watering in Southern California. In contrast, California native grasses have long roots (up to 6 feet or more), so they are better equipped to thrive under both dry and rainy conditions. If you like the looks of grass, consider a native.

Thin Grass (*Agrostis pallens*) is native to most of California, growing from the coastal strand to mountain forests. Thin Grass has characteristics of both bunching and spreading grasses. This means it can be used as a mounded ground cover, a mixed prairie or a native lawn (even mowed). Best of all, its wide water-tolerance range means you can water it

in the home garden.

Like all native grasses, Thin Grass produces seed that is relished by seed-eating birds. If you choose to not mow, or to mow only a portion of your native lawn, you'll provide an important source of natural seed. You may be surprised at the number of birds you see! The grass blades are larval food for Skipper butterflies, whether you mow or not.

Thin Grass is cool-season grass, which means that its primary growth season is from late fall through early summer.



occasionally (every couple of weeks) in the summer to keep it green—or water it less and let it go dormant in late summer. Either way, Thin Grass is a fine-textured grass that looks nice

With a little summer water, it can stay green through August, then it needs a few months' rest. It will green up, and new seedlings will sprout as soon as the winter rains begin. This grass is a good re-seeder and is easy to grow from seed. You can start plants from seed now for a cost-effective lawn you plant this spring.

Use Thin Grass wherever you need as lawn substitute or groundcover. It takes full sun to partial shade and does great on slopes. It does well in all but the heaviest of clays and needs only an occasional light fertilizer.

Thin grass makes a good basis for a mixed grass and wildflower prairie. Pair it with other native grasses like the Needlegrasses (*Nassella* species), native Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*) and native wildflowers to provide habitat for birds, butterflies, native pollinators and even lizards.

For information on growing and purchasing this plant, visit the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. Learn about local native plants at the "Out of the Wilds and Into Your Garden" series the first Saturday of each month at the center.



# Birds of the Peninsula

## November and December 2009

By Kevin Larson

**F**all landbird migration slowed to a nearly imperceptible trickle by the first week of November and a rare late vagrant wave never materialized. A nice variety of winter waterfowl and passerines was found during November and December. Birding excitement flared late in the day on 27 Dec. with the discovery of mega-rarities such as a King Eider and a Lesser Black-backed Gull during the Palos Verdes Peninsula Christmas Bird Count (CBC). A nice list of lesser rarities boosted our unofficial CBC total to 162 species during count day, with an additional six species found during count week.

November's weather was dry and uneventful with generally near-normal temperatures. An unusually cool first half of December was followed by a warm spell during the third week of the month. A rainy period 7–12 Dec. brought nearly 2 inches of precipitation to LAX and nearly 3 inches to Downtown Los Angeles. Seasonal (July–June) rainfall totals were running a little below normal at LAX and above normal at Downtown Los Angeles by the end of the year, but much more is needed in the coming months for a normal rainfall season to materialize.

Up to two Greater White-fronted Geese were at Harbor Park 3 Oct.–27 Dec. (Martin Byhower) and six were at Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook 22 Oct.–14 Dec. (Richard Barth). A Snow Goose at Harbor Park 21–27 Dec. was at a location where there are few recent records (Ed Griffin). A Ross's Goose was in the Playa Vista Riparian Corridor on 21 Nov. (Russell Stone). Cackling Geese were numerous, with one of the "Aleut-



Nearly a dozen Brant visited Cabrillo Beach this winter.

*Photo: Jess Morton*

ian" subspecies photographed in the Portuguese Bend area 4–9 Nov. (John Blandford), one "Aleutian" at Seaside Lagoon in Redondo Beach on 25 Nov. (David Moody), three—of which at least one was an "Aleutian"—at Harbor Park through the end of December (MB), and one of the minima race at Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area 28 Nov.–14 Dec. (RB). Rare in winter here, up to 11 Brant were at Cabrillo Beach 27 Dec.–6 Jan. (Tom Miko et al.), and another was at King Harbor on 27 Dec. (DM).

A male Eurasian Wigeon was reported from the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on 29 Nov. (Vic Warren). The discovery of a young male **King Eider** at the Cabrillo Beach Pier on the 27 Dec. CBC was astonishing (David Ellsworth, TM). It was learned that this bird had been present earlier, since a photo of it was taken on 25 Dec. Numerous observers came to see this vary rare duck through at least 6 Jan. It is potentially the second record endorsed by the California Bird Records Committee in this article's coverage area and third for Los Angeles County. A few other

records of this species in the county were probably valid but were not submitted to the CBRC.

White-winged Scoters made a good showing, with at least eight individuals recorded at Dockweiler State Beach 11 Nov.–4 Jan. (RB); three were at Torrance Beach on 28 Dec. (KL, Leo Ohtsuki). Black Scoter sightings involving at least five individuals at Dockweiler State Beach 11 Nov.–4 Jan. were more than expected (RB). A Long-tailed Duck was reported at Dockweiler State Beach on 29 Nov. (Dana Quincey). Barbara Johnson reported a Common Goldeneye at

Del Rey Lagoon on 13 Dec. A Hooded Merganser at Harbor Park on 27 Dec. was a nice find for the CBC (MB).

An immature **Brown Booby** feeding off Torrance Beach on 28 Dec. was a surprise find the day after the CBC (KL). An American Bittern was at Harbor Park 12–29 Nov. (John Thomlinson). The only Cattle Egret report came from Harbor Park on 8 Nov. (MB). A Ferruginous Hawk returned for its third winter to the dune area along the southwest corner of Playa del Rey 11 Nov.–3 Jan. (Jonathan Coffin). A convincingly described adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Torrance Beach on 27 Dec. would constitute the first record for this article's coverage area (DM). RB spotted a Common Murre from Dockweiler State Beach on 22 Nov..

A Burrowing Owl continued at the Ballona Salt Pan 28 Sept.–15 Nov. (JC) and another was at White Point Nature Preserve in San Pedro 12 Nov.–28 Dec. (John Nieto). The remains of a Common Poorwill were found in Cathy Nichols's backyard in Rolling Hills on 10 Nov.

*See Peninsula Birds, Page 7*

### Peninsula Birds, from Page 6

A report of an unusually late male Black-chinned Hummingbird at a feeder in Palos Verdes Estates 16–24 Nov. seemed credible since the observers were familiar with this species at their feeders in the spring and summer months (Jim and Michele Gabelich).

A Red-naped Sapsucker continued at Harbor Park 10 Oct.–27 Dec. (Chris Boyd). The Nuttall's Woodpecker found at Harbor Park on 24 Oct. was last seen on 29 Nov. (MB). Single "Western" Flycatchers were at Banning Park 1–28 Dec. (RB) and at the South Coast Botanic Garden on 30 Dec. (KL). A Tropical Kingbird at the Dominguez Gap Wetland on 24 Nov. (Karen Gilbert) was found the same day as another at the community garden in Mar Vista (Dan Cooper).

The only Loggerhead Shrike reported in the PV count circle was at the Navy Fuel Depot in San Pedro on 27 Dec. (MB). John Ivanov found a Plumbeous Vireo at the Gardena Willows on the 27 Dec. CBC.

A White-breasted Nuthatch at Chadwick School 18–27 Dec. was a notable species for the CBC (MB). A Rock Wren in the Playa Vista area 2–9 Dec. is one of few records for the Ballona area (DC). At least four Golden-crowned Kinglets were in Rolling Hills on 19 Dec., six to eight were at Ridgecrest Intermediate School in RPV on 28 Dec. (MB), and four were at the South Coast Botanic Garden on 30 Dec. (KL). Unusual for the location, up to 15 Western Bluebirds at Madrona Marsh 28–29 Nov. were transients (Tracy Drake); four in Rolling Hills on 19 Dec. were likely part of our small, but growing resident population (MB).

A good showing of Mountain Bluebirds included five at Madrona Marsh

on 17 Nov. (DM), six at Harbor Park on 29 Nov. (EG), and six at the Torrance Airport on 27 Dec. (Ann and Eric Brooks). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was an outstanding find in Rolling Hills 26–27 Dec. (Rusty Scafl, MB). A Varied Thrush at Wilderness Park on 14 Dec. was the only report (DM).

Two Phainopeplas were tallied in the canyon below Peck Park on the 27 Dec.



Mountain bluebird

Photo: Jess Morton

CBC (TM, DE). Single wintering Yellow Warblers were at Bixby Marsh, Harbor Park and the Gardena Willows on 27 Dec. (KL, MB, John Ivanov). A migrant Palm Warbler was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on 6 Nov.

(Chris Lord, Don Sterba). The Black-and-white Warbler found by Tommye Hite at Charles Wilson Park on 6 Oct. remained to be tallied by Lisa Fimiani on the 27 Dec. CBC.

Nine Wilson's Warblers found on the 27 Dec. CBC were divided between Harbor Park and Palos Verdes Estates (MB, Jim Pike). A Summer Tanager at DeForest Park 10 Nov.–19 Dec. was evidently the same individual that spent the past three winters there (KG, Jeff Boyd); another was in Palos Verdes Estates on 27 Dec. (JP).

Lark Sparrow sightings included four at Hesse Park on 16 Nov. (Sally Moite) and one at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on 16 Dec. (DS); five at the Navy Fuel Depot in San Pedro on 27 Dec. were the only ones tallied on the CBC (MB). A Swamp Sparrow at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on 15 Nov. broke a long absence of this species in our area (Jon Fisher); one there on 3 Oct. 2005 was the last record for this article's coverage area. Remarkably, a White-throated Sparrow at DeForest Park 10 Nov.–19 Dec. had returned for its fifth winter (KG, JB) and another was photographed at the Ballona Freshwater

Marsh on 26 Nov. (David Haake). A "Gray-headed" Junco was a rare find in Rolling Hills 19–27 Dec. (MB). A calling **Lapland Longspur** flew over Dockweiler State Beach on 17 Nov. (DC).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak at DeForest Park on 10 Nov. was late (KG, JB). Also late was a Hooded Oriole at the Palos Verdes Estates residence of Jim and Michele Gabelich on 22 Nov. A Baltimore Oriole was with four Bullock's Orioles at the South Coast Botanic Garden on 30 Dec. (KL). Other Bullock's Oriole sightings included singles at Harbor Park 8 Nov.–27 Dec. (MB) and in Palos Verdes Estates on 27 Dec. (JP). Purple Finches were recorded at the golf course adjacent to Harbor Park on 29 Nov. (MB) and in Rolling Hills on 27 Dec. (Rusty Scafl).

Thanks to all who reported sightings during the period. Please send your sightings to me at [cbirdr@ca.rr.com](mailto:cbirdr@ca.rr.com) for the Palos Verdes/South Bay and vicinity, including areas east to the L.A. River, north to about the 105 freeway, and along the coast up to Marina del Rey.

### Drilling, from Page 4

extraction of gas and oil on lands owned by the state. This would bring in more than \$1.5 billion annually to the state's general fund."

There are other and better ways to fund state parks than PXP. The simplest way would be to pay for their operation out of general revenues, a solution now virtually impossible to achieve given the broken political process that now determines the California budget.

A solution that Audubon endorses is a vehicle license fee dedicated to state park funding. Later this year, we will see a ballot initiative to establish such a fee. As to the PXP revenues, we are assured that the drilling will be limited to a single project and no others would be allowed. However, as Coastal Commissioner Sara Wan observes, such a limitation would be unenforceable. So if PXP goes forward, get ready to walk the trails along our coastal bluffs, watching for whales spouting among the oil platforms.

# MEET, LEARN, ENJOY, RESTORE

## Calendar

### Events

**Wednesday, February 3, 7 p.m.:**  
**PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting** at Madrona Marsh. Audubon members and friends are welcome to attend.

**Thursday, February 4, 7:30 p.m.:**  
**Environmental Priorities Network Meeting.** Explore the desalination issue at the next meeting, held in the library of the Pacific Unitarian Church, 5621 Montemalaga Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes. Ivana Medved, a member of the Coastal Restoration Advocates, will discuss water efficiency measures that would decrease the need for desalination. Enjoy meeting with people who are taking action on the most important environmental issues of the day. Contact Lillian Light at [llight@verizon.net](mailto:llight@verizon.net) or 310-545-1384.

**Saturday, February 6, 8 a.m.–12 p.m.:** **Natural history walk at Bixby Marsh.** Audubon leaders Jess Morton and John Nieto will lead this walk. The Bixby Marshland, a 17-acre property restored by the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, is located on Figueroa Street, just south of Sepulveda. It will be open to the public during this walk. For details and special appointments, visit [www.lacsd.org](http://www.lacsd.org) or e-mail [rsoni@lacsd.org](mailto:rsoni@lacsd.org).

**Thursday, February 11, 8:15–10:15 a.m. Bird survey on a habitat restoration site.** In collaboration with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC), our chapter will be monitoring the bird population on the Three Sisters habitat restoration site as a long-term project (see Ann Dalkey's article in the August/September 2009 *Hummin'*). Volunteers are needed. They will be trained in identification and the methods used in the survey. To join this important project, contact Dalkey at [adalkey@pvplc.org](mailto:adalkey@pvplc.org) or 310-541-7613, ext. 208.

**Saturday, February 13, 9–11 a.m.:**  
**Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at KMHRP.** Led by Gefen Oren, Martin Byhower and others, the cleanup and restoration of the Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park offers a hands-on opportunity to learn about invasive species removal, native planting, effective debris removal and much more while earning community service credit. Wear closed-toe shoes and long pants. Bring water, a snack, sunscreen, bug repellent and work gloves. The park is located at 25820 Vermont Ave., west of the Harbor Freeway. Please contact Martin at 310-541-6763, ext. 4143.

**Tuesday, February 16, 7 p.m.:**  
**Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers.** Our speaker for the evening will be Guy Commeau, presenting "California Wildlife, Part II." Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

**Saturday, February 20, 8–10 a.m.:**  
**Bird survey on a habitat restoration site.** See February 11 for details.

**Saturday, March 6, 8 a.m.–12 p.m.:**  
**Bixby Marshland open to the public.** See February 6 for details.

**Thursday, March 11, 8:30 a.m.:** **Bird survey on a habitat restoration site.** See February 11 for details.

**Saturday, March 13, 9–11 a.m.:** **Second Saturday Habitat Restoration at KMHRP.** See February 13 for details.

**Tuesday, March 16, 7 p.m.:**  
**Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers.** This month's speaker is yet to be announced. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

**Saturday, March 20, 8:15 a.m.:** **Bird survey on a habitat restoration site.** See February 11 for details.

**Saturday, March 27, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.:**  
**Torrance Environmental Fair.** Visit this local fair at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center in Torrance to check out various city and community exhibits and conservation-oriented presentations. For details, call 310-618-5930.

### Field Trips

**Tuesday, February 2, 8:30 a.m.:**  
**"Tour de Torrance."** Join Audubon leader Dave Moody and friends on a ramble around a great local birding area. Meet at Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

**Sunday, February 7, 8 a.m.:** **Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** Audubon leader Stephanie Bryan will lead this walk through the garden, located at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes. There is a minimal charge for nonmembers of the SCBG Foundation, or you can join there.

**Wednesday, February 10, 8 a.m.:**  
**Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh** with Audubon leader Bob Shanman.

**Saturday, February 13, 9–11 a.m.:**  
**PVPLC Natural History Walk to**



**White Point Nature Preserve.** Admire ocean views, grassland restoration and impressive coastal sage scrub where the Conservancy has planted over 80,000 native plants on this former military missile site. Check out the location of a new Nature Education Center and demonstration gardens. Moderate. For details, visit [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org).

**Sunday, February 14, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP.** Join Audubon leaders and explore this important wildlife area. See the February 13 KMHRP listing for directions.

**Tuesday, February 16, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance."** See February 2 for details.

**Wednesday, February 17, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** See February 7 for details.

**Saturday, February 27, 1 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Tour to Abalone Cove Shoreline Park.** Tour the tide pools teeming with fascinating marine life. Moderate. Call 310-377-5370 or visit [www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm](http://www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm).

**Tuesday, March 2, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance."** See February 2 for details.



The egrets have found Bixby Marsh—have you? Come join Audubon leaders for the first Saturday nature walks offered at Bixby Marsh. This is the green space and lake just east of the 110 Freeway at Sepulveda. Walks begin at 8, 9 and 10 a.m. and are free to the public.

*Photo: Jess Morton*

**Saturday March 6, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Whale of a Day at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center.** Bring family and friends for some seaworthy fun, education, food and entertainment. Please call 310-377-5370 or visit [www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm](http://www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm).

**Sunday, March 7, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** See February 7 for details.

**Wednesday, March 10, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh.** See February 10 for details.

**Saturday, March 13, 9-11 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Portuguese Point Reserve.** Follow the Ishibashi Trail after the rainy season to witness the changes in habitat following the August fire, with a chance to view rare wildflowers—many not seen for decades. Moderate. For details, visit [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org).

**Sunday, March 14, 8 p.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP.** See February 14 for details.

**Tuesday, March 16, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance."** See February 2 for details.

**Wednesday, March 17, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden.** See February 7 for details.

**Tuesday, March 30, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance."** See February 2 for details.



For more information on local events, please visit the Chapter Web site at [www.pvsb-audubon.org](http://www.pvsb-audubon.org). For a complete list of events at Madrona Marsh, visit [www.southbaycalendar.org](http://www.southbaycalendar.org) and click on Friends of Madrona Marsh. For a list of activities for Audubon's Youth Environmental Service program, visit [www.AudubonYES.org](http://www.AudubonYES.org).

### *Nieto, from Page 2*

marsh's public open house. This wetland habitat has seen ducks, herons, egrets, warblers and hawks rediscover a habitat that is all theirs but one day a month. They do tolerate us visiting just a few hours that day from 8 a.m. until noon on the first Saturday. Jess and I will visit the marsh each month and make an effort to share this beautifully restored wetland with the birds and other visitors.

Finally, Madrona Marsh is a world of its own, a wonderful natural habitat, the last remaining vernal pools and a back dune remnant of the El Segundo sand dune system—all resurrected from a derelict oil field. The Chapter has the good fortune to use the Madrona Marsh Nature Center as our headquarters. Three of our officers/leaders conduct tours here several times a month, so there is plenty of opportunity to explore the 42 acres of restored habitat with a birding expert.

Dave Moody starts out here the first, third and fifth Tuesday of the month on his "Tour de Torrance." As he searches for rarities, he teaches birders of various experience levels the joy

of discovery. Bob Shanman leads a walk there that is fun and invigorating every second Wednesday of the month. Bob has a unique way of cajoling, with laughter, the beginning and experienced birder into finding a comfortable pace at walking and looking through binoculars. He makes a beginning birder feel that holding an observation instrument up to your eyes is completely natural.

The Mistress of Ceremony at Madrona Marsh is manager Tracy Drake, who is an extraordinary naturalist. Taking a tour, class or walk with her can be an eye-opening natural history experience for anyone. Walking with Tracy through the Marsh is a joy to experience because of her observation skills.

We have an extraordinary mix of personalities and experience levels on our board, and all are willing to share the fun of birding with no strings attached. If you are curious about any birding location or have any questions, call us. We would love to share with you all that we can and arrange a visit together with just you and the birds. Contact information for board members and committee chairs appears on the back cover.

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