



HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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Amazing Butterflies

By Jess Morton

What has always amazed me is how specific the assemblage of species of a given sort can be to the Palos Verdes Peninsula — birds and plants for example. I learned about both in the 1970s when I first became interested in wildlife. So I was not at all surprised to discover that this specificity also applied to butterflies. The process of finding that out though, is a story worth the telling.

When we formed the PV/South Bay Audubon chapter back in 1978, local birders had been running annual Christmas Counts for a dozen years, and Audubon as a whole had been Christmas Counting since 1900. Sufficiently interesting and challenging as these were in themselves, Audubon's counts had never gone beyond birds. Thus, in 1981, when I found out that some entomologists (bug folks) had gotten together to do the same for butterflies, starting in 1975, I thought this would be a great thing for us to adopt locally.

At the time there were a few dozen counts scattered across the vast expanse of North America, hardly enough to give more than a glimpse of what was really going on with butterflies. What Audubon had to offer the world of entomology was an organization that knew how to run counts — lots of them. What Audubon did not have at the time was people who knew enough about butterflies to lead the counts. Enter the Lorquin Entomological Society!

Lorquin, based at the L.A. County Natural History Museum, had formed in 1919 to give a community connection for local people interested in bugs. Mostly these fell into two groups, lepidopterists (butterfly folks) and coleopterists (beetle folks), with a scattering of others with wider ranging fields of study. One of the members was John Snider, a San Pedro resident teaching at Harbor College, whose specialty was fritillaries, one of the more spectacular families of but-



Pair of El Segundo blue butterflies on host food plant at Terranea.

Photo by Jess Morton

terflies. Though a world-renowned entomologist, John turned out not to have a really clear idea of what butterflies could be found on the Peninsula. Still, John thought forming a butterfly count here was a great idea, and he helped enlist a few others from Lorquin to lead the groups our Audubon chapter would pull together.

Thus, in 1981, we held the first Palos Verdes Fourth of July Butterfly Count. It was a huge success, and by the end of the day, we knew far more about butterflies here than was known before. We had established records for more than two dozen species, a few of which were unexpected, including a then-unknown population of square-spotted blue butterfly whose relationship to other southern California relatives is still not settled. Almost as important, there were several common Southern California species not found, and to this day, these remain so.

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Not Your Ordinary Wren

By Evi Meyer

As I have become a more active birder in recent years, I have spent many hours observing some of the most amazing winged creatures. Among my favorite birds have always been the wrens.

Perhaps this goes back to childhood memories of growing up in Switzerland and frequently seeing and hearing the only species of wren found in Europe, the “Zaunkönig” or Winter Wren. The literal translation of its German name means “King of the fence,” which was the place it could be found most often. But that was a long time ago...

I have been able to observe almost all of the wrens found here in California. For most of them I did not have to go very far. House Wrens hang around my yard all year, and Rock Wrens can be found at RAT Beach, a five-minute walk from my house. I have had some very private photo sessions with Cactus Wrens along the hillside above the Point Vicente lighthouse, and seen and heard Marsh Wrens at the ponds at Terranea. Bewick’s Wrens are often encountered during the bird surveys at Three Sisters Reserve above Abalone Cove. All of these birds have pretty scolding vocalizations. They are little chatterboxes.

But there is a wren that is very different from all the other wrens in this respect. This wren’s song makes every birder’s heart stop. It is a beautiful cascading series of clear whistles, slowing down as they fall in pitch. I am of course talking about the Canyon Wren, a bird that is very uncommon in our area today. I had wanted to see, and more importantly hear, one of these for a long time, but had no idea where to find them. Then something important happened.

This past April, there was a report of a nesting Canyon Wren at Malibu Creek State Park. This coincided with a field trip planned to that area led by Eric and Ann Brooks. This was a trip I had to

join, as it might be my first chance to encounter this bird.

We started birding at 8 a.m. from the parking lot at the State Park and slowly worked our way up towards the bridge by the nature center. It was in that area where the Canyon Wren had been reported and everyone in our group of about 10 birders was eager to see, or at least hear it. So we positioned ourselves at the reported spot, on top of some cliffs used for sport climbing. We stood still and listened quietly for the desired bird for a long time. But no matter how much we wanted to encounter it, it did not make itself known. Finally, the group leaders decided to move on and explore other areas of the park.

It was at that time that I signaled to my friend and frequent birding partner Bill Cullen that I was not done with this yet. One of the participants of our field trip had mentioned that whenever she had seen Canyon Wrens in the past, they had been close to water. We did not want to leave this possibility unexplored and let the rest of the group move on while we descended to the creek. It seemed an unlikely place for a rare bird, since it was buzzing with sport climbers trying to scale the bolted rock wall.

But, to our great surprise, this was exactly where we heard the sweet descending cascades of whistles, and almost simultaneously also saw the bird putting on a show like only wrens do. This all happened on a ledge of the sport climbing wall complex, probably the busiest place in the entire canyon. We just stood there, closed our eyes and soaked up the beautiful music. After a while I picked up my camera and started taking pictures of this gorgeous bird.



Canyon Wren

Photo by Evi Meyer

Veni, vidi, vici!

After we had watched and listened to the bird for a good long time, it flew off towards the creek and disappeared from view. We decided to catch up with the rest of our group and offer to show them the place we finally saw the bird. As we reached them about 20 minutes later, everyone was eager to go back for the wren. Bill and I felt some “birding pressure,” but wanted to at least give it a try. As we reached the trail down to the creek, and turned the corner towards the climbing wall with heightened expectations, everyone in our group heard and saw the Canyon Wren immediately. It was exactly on the same ledge where it had been before.

We stood still and just listened, and the people with cameras clicked away. What a treat this was, and how happy Bill and I were that we could share this incredible experience with the group. It was the high point of the trip, and made for a very happy group of birders.

What's Happening With YES

By Marcos Trinidad

Congratulations to all of the Audubon YES awardees! On April 29, we had 44 YES members receive Audubon YES awards and one student earn the Youth Conservation Award of the Year. A special thanks to Madrona Marsh for hosting yet another one of our ceremonies at their center.

South Bay's youth are really making a difference in their communities, and the number of awardees clearly demonstrates the dedication of our youth and gives us all inspiration to commit to serving the environment within our own capacity. In order for students to receive an award, students must be an Audubon Society member and actively volunteer with local environmental organizations in their community. When a student volunteers their time, each hour earns them Audubon YES points. When they reach 100 points, they are eligible for the YES award. Students volunteer to do a wide

variety of events with various organizations: Anything from bird walks at Madrona marsh, tree plantings and tree care with the El Segundo's Tree Muskeeter's, to invasive plant removal with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy.

The YES members are an integral part of these organizations' success in habitat restoration and conservation and these organizations play a vital role to our members by providing the hands on training and outdoor education. This symbiotic relationship has helped hundreds of our South Bay youth gain valuable awareness of the nature around them.

Stephanie Chou is the 2012 recipient of the Youth Conservation of the Year award. Last fall, Stephanie received an Audubon YES award and did not stop there. As a junior at Palos

Verdes High School, Stephanie has been able to accomplish a great task by implementing a native garden beautification project at her school. She gained the confidence of her principal, vice principal, the Palos Verdes City Hall and the Palos Verdes Home Association to explore the various ways she could connect the students, school and community through environmentally friendly landscaping.

With the support of the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and the guidance of Martin Byhower, Stephanie has been able to transform her campus into an example of a bird friendly habitat/beautification project. The area that she transformed was an eye sore for students and the community along Cloyden Road in front of PV High. The area consisted of



Stephanie Chou shows off her award with PV High Principal Dr. Stephany and Sam Gong.

weeds, dirt patches and a wall in desperate need of paint. Stephanie and other YES club member's at PV High planted and mulched the area, painted the wall and raised funds to have solar lighting and pavers installed.

Stephanie has clearly gone above and beyond what is expected from a junior in high school. She has demonstrated leadership, organizational skills and dedication to our environment by taking this task on. On behalf of the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society, I congratulate Stephanie on her project and encourage her to continue to inspire her peers to make a difference.

"The greatest reward is seeing my vision of the garden coming alive by the end of the summer, and receiving continuous praises and appreciation from the school and surrounding neighbors throughout the development phase. The positive encouragement further boosts our confidence that we are doing something good for the community," said Stephanie.

Audubon YES is open to all student Audubon Society members and their families. If you know of any organizations or areas in need of volunteers please feel free to contact Marcos Trinidad, YES Director at 323-945-4346 or marcos@pvsb-audubon.org.



Shown above is Stephanie's project, before & after. Photos by Marcos Trinidad

My First 'Green' Birdathon – All on Foot

By Jose Sandoval

The time of day was 4:02 a.m., the streets were empty, houses were quiet, a full moon was out, and I was just entering the southernmost region of Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park on our all-walking, or “green,” Birdathon. Although the sun was not quite up yet, I could still hear several species of birds calling all around me, and I rapidly ticked species off my list; a Pied-billed Grebe sounded off in the distance, a common Yellowthroat chattered in the reeds next to me, a northern Mockingbird sang in a nearby tree and a Black-crowned Night Heron squawked loudly just a few feet above my head.

It was a start, but I hurried towards the main lake to try for the more difficult species: Sora, Virginia Rail, Great-horned Owl, Barn Owl, and whatever else might happen to show up. A few minutes after walking down the bike path, my first Harbor Park owl popped into view; a large female Great-horned Owl just perched on a snag about 15 feet away from me, checking me out. Unfortunately, this was the only owl I was able to find that morning, and neither Sora nor Virginia Rail bothered to show up either. I decided I'd try for them in the evening if I had the time or the energy.

6:47 a.m. A familiar figure made his way towards me from across the park; it was Martin Byhower; teacher, environmentalist, and birder extraordinaire, not to mention my birding mentor for the last two years. We exchanged our greetings and started scanning the lake care-

fully, spotting a few ducks, Cormorants, but nothing out of the ordinary. We tried calling up a Sora, but got no response. Just as we began to pack up our things for our next location, I heard a familiar booming noise from across the lake — an American bittern. We located the bird, snapped a picture and made our way to Banning Park, a migrant hot-spot during spring migration.

8:16 a.m. After meandering through Harbor Park and making our way across Wilmington, we finally made it to Ban-



A Hermit Warbler spotted the day of the Birdathon.

Photo by Steve Wolfe

ning Park. I climbed into a tree and sliced a piece of twine in half, and my “stashed” bottle of water and two granola bars fell to the ground — way to plan ahead. Banning park wasn't as birdy as we hoped; we had to work for every species of bird we obtained: a Black-headed Grosbeak there, a Swainson's Thrush here, an Ash-throated Flycatcher and a Hermit Warbler. After about three hours of hard birding, we had a decent list of birds, so it was time for a quick break.

11:01 a.m. Finally, it was our turn in line at McDonald's, but we just missed

breakfast ... woe is me.

11:34 a.m. Feeling fresh, feeling energized, we decided it was time to continue birding. We did our final lap around Banning Park, adding only peafowl to our list, and later continued on to the L.A. River — a considerably long walk through urban sprawl and some sketchy neighborhoods.

12:30 p.m. The L.A. River! Red-winged Blackbirds flew and called amongst the reeds, egrets and herons dotting the shore, Caspian Terns splashed into the water, and a few Western Grebes floated lazily in the river. We started working our way up the L.A. River, scanning the reeds for Bobolinks and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and the skies for Bank Swallows or Swifts other than White-throated. No such luck. We continued working our way upwards looking for shorebirds, avocets, and stilts.

1:07 p.m. We finally made it to Willow Street, a well-known spot for migrant birds and as reliable a spot as any for various species of shorebirds. We were disappointed to find only a lonely pair of Gadwall, Black-necked Stilts and a couple of American Avocets. So much for shorebird central.

1:25 p.m. Our first shorebirds of the day (besides Killdeer), a small flock of Long-billed Dowitchers came into view. We continued down the L.A. River toward Del Amo.

2:10 p.m. Finally, we got some relief from the hellish heat! We approached a small grove of trees with a view of some small ponds by a few horse stables. Here

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Our knowledge of local butterflies has grown greatly as a result of 30 years of counting and other research, much of which has been driven by the counts. Most of our other knowledge has come from work on two local endangered species, the El Segundo and Palos Verdes blue butterflies. Since then, and often as a result of PV/South Bay Audubon's example, many other Audubon chapters have taken up counting butterflies, and many birders have become just as adept at looking at them.

On July 14, we will hold our 31st count, now one of the 10 oldest continuous counts in North America. It is also quite frequently the count with the largest number of participants. Most will be like me and the other Auduboners were back on that very first count, with little knowledge of bugs, but a great enthusiasm to learn. If you would like to take part, please e-mail me at jmorton@igc.org.



A Palos Verdes blue butterfly

Photo by Jess Morton

we found Cinnamon teal, shovelers, marsh wrens and a good assortment of things for such a small area in midday.

3:02 p.m. Just as we feared, Del Amo was just as devoid of birds as Willow Street. Our only consolation was a lone turkey vulture. We decided to take a water break in the nearby shade of some trees as well as tally off species for the day. We were doing well, but not as well as we hoped. We decided that we might as well walk all the way to Deforest Park.

3:17 p.m. After crossing the river via some train tracks, I found myself in a place I'd never been before. A short trail that goes along the edge of some Boy Scout camp right by the Dominguez Gap wetlands and Virginia Country Club. Just a few short steps along this trail and I knew what two words most accurately described this place: birding paradise.

The concentration and variety of birds for such a small place was enormous. The trees were nearly dripping with tanagers, grosbeaks, buntings, warblers, and thrushes. Past the fence I could see some Chipping Sparrows foraging on the ground, Martin spotted a Black-chinned Hummingbird, and we see our

first Townsend's Warbler of the day.

We must have spent well over an hour circling this place again and again, milking it for all its worth (unfortunately, we couldn't go inside the facilities due to it being for "Boy Scouts only" who, by the way, probably only use it a few times a year). We left there feeling content and made our way towards Deforest Park.

5:14 p.m. We finally reached our last destination, Deforest Park. We decided to do one thorough loop around the park before calling it quits. Here we found many good birds, but nothing we needed for the day: a robin here, a Hermit Warbler there, even a Black-chinned Hummingbird, but nothing new. Then, finally, in the thickly wooded region in the back end of the park, a single Red-shouldered Hawk flew silently through the trees. That made 86 species in total — all on foot.

6:01 p.m. Being 15 miles from home and all, we decided that taking the bus back home was an eco-friendly alternative to walking the whole way back (the bus would have run anyway with or without us on it). The bus didn't leave for half an hour, and we decided to celebrate with some Mexican food.

6:34 p.m. Our first bus arrived, we purchased two transfers and we made our way down to Anaheim and Pacific to transfer onto the 232.

7:09 p.m. Our second bus arrived, and to say it was crowded would be an understatement — we were packed like sardines.

7:47 p.m. I got off the bus, and realized there was no time to lose. My whole body was sore, and I was pretty sure I had a few blisters on my feet, but somehow I managed a light jog. I was quickly running out of time.

8:09 p.m. I got to Harbor Park right on time, the sun had just gone down and it was almost entirely dark. A Great-horned Owl perched on a palm tree. I waited patiently until I heard the sound I came in such a hurry to hear.

8:16 p.m. A shrill raspy screech pierces through the night, and a cream-colored owl flew over my head shortly afterward. Bird #87: Barn owl.

9:00 p.m. I got home, took out the trash, washed the dishes, did my homework, brushed my teeth and dropped dead for the night.

CALENDAR

Meet, Learn, Enjoy, Restore

Events

Saturday, June 2, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Natural history walk at Bixby Marsh. Explore the new 17-acre Bixby Marshland after a half-hour introductory walk with Audubon leaders Jess Morton and John Nieto. Walks begin on the hour at the parking lot welcome table. Learn how the marsh originated and view the many birds that live there. Located in Carson, Bixby Marshland is on the west side of Figueroa Street, just south of Sepulveda Blvd. The marsh is managed by the Los Angeles County Sanitation District: www.lacsd.org/education/.

Wednesday, June 6, 7 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. Audubon members and friends are welcome.

Saturday, June 9, 9 – 11 a.m.: Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park (KMHRP). Come take part in Audubon's important partnership with the Chadwick Ecommunity and the City of Los Angeles to restore habitat in KMHRP. This is a hands-on opportunity to learn about invasives removal and native species planting. Students earn community service credits. Wear closed-toe shoes, long pants and a hat. Bring water, a snack, sunscreen and work gloves. KMHRP is located at 25820 Vermont Ave., west of the Harbor Freeway. Call Martin at 310-541-6763, ext. 4143.

Thursday, June 14, 7 – 9:15 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. Volunteers are

needed. They will be trained in identification and the methods used in the survey. To participate, contact Ann Dalkey at 310-541-7613, ext. 208, or adalkey@pvplc.org.

Saturday, June 16, 7:05 – 9:15 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See June 14 for details.

Saturday, June 16, 9 – 11 a.m.: The Stories of Birds, a beginner's guide to birds, bird life and bird behavior at Madrona Marsh. Tracy Drake will give a short presentation in the Nature Center about magnificent migrations. She will feature the incredible journeys some of our local birds make on a yearly basis. The second part of the program will be outdoors, using the newly learned skills at the marsh. No prior birding knowledge required.

Tuesday, June 19, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our program for the night will be an evening walk at Madrona Marsh led by Tracy Drake. Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the last vernal marsh in the area. Bring your binoculars.

Wednesday, June 27, 7 p.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' birding class (Early, early migrants) at South Coast Botanic Garden (SCBG). Walks in the garden before class start at 6 p.m. as long as daylight permits. The fee for this four-week course is \$22.50 for SCBG Foundation members, \$27.50 for nonmembers. For details, call 323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Saturday, July 7, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Bixby Marshland open to the public. See June 2 for details.

Thursday, July 12, 7 – 9:15 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site.

June						
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July						
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See June 14 for details.

Saturday, July 14, 9 – 11 a.m.: Second Saturday Habitat Restoration Project at KMHRP. See June 9 for details.

Saturday July 14, 8:30 a.m.: 31st annual Palos Verdes Butterfly Count. This survey of the regional diversity and abundance of butterflies is part of the national survey conducted by the North American Butterfly Association. Participants will meet in the parking lot at Rolling Hills Estates City Hall, at Crenshaw and PV Drive North. To participate, call count compiler Jess Morton at 310 832-5601 or e-mail him at jmorton@igc.org. The count will be conducted within a 15-mile diameter circle centered at the PV Reservoir, covering coastal bluffs, canyons, marshes, parks, fields and wetlands.

Tuesday, July 17, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. The program for the night will be a joint photo presentation by chapter members who love to take bird pictures. We could see anything from digiscoping, to point and shoot to serious SLR photography. Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes

from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Saturday, July 21, 7:15 – 9:30 a.m.: Bird survey on a habitat restoration site. See June 14 for details.

Saturday, July 21, 9 – 11 a.m.: The Stories of Birds, a beginner's guide to birds, bird life and bird behavior at Madrona Marsh. Tracy Drake will give a short presentation on birds along the oceans edge, highlighting Sanderlings, Marbled Godwits, Western and Least Sandpiper. The second part will be outdoors, using new skills at the marsh. No prior birding knowledge required.

Wednesday, July 25, 7 p.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' birding class at South Coast Botanic Garden. Walks in the garden before class start at 6 p.m. as long as daylight permits. For details, see June 27.

Field Trips*

Sunday, June 3, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Audubon leader Jess Morton will lead this walk through the garden, at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes. There is a minimal charge for nonmembers of the SCBG, or you can join there.

Tuesday, June 5, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." Join Audubon leader Dave Moody and friends on a ramble in a great local birding area. Meet at Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, June 6: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on Birding with Bob.

Saturday & Sunday, June 9 – 10, 8 a.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' annual fieldtrip to Big Bear. For details, call



Working together, coastal Audubon chapters are monitoring Black Oystercatcher nests to gauge the population dynamics.

Photo by Jess Morton

323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Saturday, June 9, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Three Sisters Reserve. Enjoy a challenging three hour hike in the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve to view the successful 21-acre habitat restoration work and both common and rare birds that are now using the new habitat. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, June 10, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP. Join Audubon leader Martin Byhower and explore this important natural area of the South Bay. See KMHRP listing on previous page for directions.

Tuesday, June 12, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 5 for details.

Wednesday, June 13, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Sunday, June 17, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on Birding with Bob.

Tuesday, June 19, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 5 for details.

Wednesday, June 20, 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.

Saturday, June 23, 10 a.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Oceanfront Estates. Join us for a tour of the museum, the native garden and a walk along the spectacular bluff top at Oceanfront Estates. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Sunday, July 1, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See June 3 for details.

Sunday, July 1, 8 a.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' fieldtrip to Coastal Palos Verdes. For details, call 323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Tuesday, July 3, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 5 for details.

Wednesday, July 4: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details, visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on Birding with Bob.

Sunday, July 8, 8 a.m.: Second Sunday Walk at KMHRP. See June 10 for details.

Wednesday, July 11, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See June 13 for details.

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Saturday, July 14, 4 – 6 p.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to South Shoreline Park. Join this afternoon walk through impressively restored habitat on top of an ancient slide area with spectacular bluff-top ocean views that are well worth the visit. Moderate. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, July 15, 8 a.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' fieldtrip to Mt. Pinos/Mt. Abel/Condor Preserve. For details, call 323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Sunday, July 15, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on Birding with Bob.

Tuesday, July 17, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 5 for details.

Wednesday, July 18, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See June 20 for details.

Sunday July 22, 3 p.m. – 4 p.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Ocean Trails at Trump National Golf Course. Walk the public trail system and enjoy the vistas and summer blooming habitat. Easy. Visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Sunday, July 29, 8:30 a.m.: Eric and Ann Brooks' fieldtrip to Ventura Harbor/McGrath State Park. Call 323-295-6688 or e-mail motmots@aol.com.

Tuesday, July 31, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 5 for details.

***Donations are appreciated and help to support chapter programs.**

NOTE: PV/South Bay Audubon field trips are generally free, but donations of any amount are appreciated and support our programs. For more information, visit the Chapter website at www.pvsb-audubon.org or www.southbaycalendar.org. Area youth can also visit www.AudubonYES.org.

Chapter Supports DOI Letter on Wind Energy

In March, the PV/South Bay Chapter of Audubon signed a letter in support of the Department of the Interior's just-adopted federal guidelines for minimizing bird and wildlife impacts from land-based wind development in the United States.

The guidelines were developed with the assistance of a 22-member Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee, which included experts from the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, Massachusetts Audubon and Bat Conservation International as well as representatives from the wind industry and state fish and wildlife agencies. The committee, created under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) in 2009, worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop workable, science-based guidelines to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to birds and their habitats from wind energy facilities.

While the guidelines are not mandatory, as some environmental groups prefer, they are the first widely accepted guidelines to be developed. They are certainly better than nothing, and anyone hoping for mandatory guidelines has a long, long wait in store. What is most encouraging about these guidelines is that all of the major wind developers have signed on, largely at the urging of Audubon's Washington, D.C. policy office. As a result, from now on wind developers will be expected to thoroughly analyze the impacts of their projects on habitat values and avoid and minimize approaches that cut up and divide important habitats like forests and grasslands, making them less suitable for wildlife.

The guidelines also give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a place at the table for siting decisions and a sound basis for recommending measures needed to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts of wind projects. Importantly, wind developers that fail to incorporate Fish and Wildlife Service recommendations risk prosecution under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and other applicable wildlife law.

Three Unique Fairs in One Place on June 9

Exciting news, this year the City of Torrance presents the City Yard Open House & Car Show, Disaster Preparedness Expo and Environmental Fair on Saturday, June 9, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The consolidation of the three fairs will provide an opportunity to gather a wealth of information in one convenient location. Information will be available on energy conservation, emergency preparedness, energy efficiencies, natural landscaping techniques, water conservation and much more. There will be demonstrations and displays of city vehicles and equipment, including buses, refuse trucks, high-rangers, dump trucks and skip loaders. Kids are welcome aboard to have their picture taken. Also, there will be energy efficient vehicles on display.

For car enthusiasts and those looking to reminisce about the past, come and enjoy classic, custom and modified cars and motorcycles. Free recycling drop-off will be available for paper shredding, shoes and clothing, electronics and used oil and filters. There's a free mulch give-away too. Visit www.torranceca.gov/24306.htm for more information on the recycling event. Fun-filled activities for all ages, food, displays, games, prizes and much more will be there for everyone to enjoy. In honor of the city's 100th Birthday, there will be a Centennial booth with promotional items and event information. Workshops on composting, green building and electric cars will also be available. Come enjoy, learn, explore and have a great time!

Your Backyard Habitat



By Dr. Constance Vadheim
CSU Dominguez Hills

California Coffeeberry *Frangula (Rhamnus) californica*

We're heading into the dry season after an unusual spring. Our thoughts turn to

summer fruits and flowers as grasses turn brown and local native plants prepare for the heat. One plant that provides good summer color — and cool-looking evergreen foliage — is the California Coffeeberry.

California Coffeeberry grows throughout western U.S. from Oregon to Arizona. Locally you can see it in the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains, usually below 3,500 ft. This shrub inhabits coastal sage scrub, chaparral, local woodlands and even the coastal strand in Northern California. It often is found in places that are a little more moist and shady than the surrounding areas.

Coffeeberry is a member of the *Rhamnaceae* (Buckthorn Family), which also contains the genus *Ceanothus*. The Buckthorn



family consists mainly of evergreen shrubs and trees — most of which produce fleshy fruits. Members of the family are sources of green and yellow natural dyes. They are also important habitat plants, providing nectar and fruits as well as dense cover and nesting sites. Many members also make wonderful,

water-wise trees and shrubs for home gardens.

California Coffeeberry is a large, evergreen shrub, usually growing 6 to 10 foot tall and wide. There are several smaller cultivars including 'Mound San Bruno,' 'Salt Point,' 'Leatherleaf,' 'Eve Case' and 'Bonita Linda' that are slightly smaller (6 to 8 foot) and well-adapted to garden conditions. All are dense, woody shrubs with simple leaves, making them good choices as background shrubs, hedges or screens.



Coffeeberry flowers are small, green and not very noticeable. But the fruits are another matter entirely! They start out green in spring, turning to yellow, red and finally dark purple in late summer/fall. The ripe berries have a sweet flesh that was eaten by Native Californians. They also are hugely popular with fruit-eating birds (robins, mockingbirds, towhees, etc.).

Coffeeberries like part-shade (morning sun) in most local gardens. They do best in well-drained soils, whether sandy or clay, and require no soil amendments. They do need occasional summer water (let soil dry out, then water deeply) and a good organic mulch (i.e., wood chips or bark).

Widely available at native plant nurseries, Coffeeberries make easy-to-grow, tough shrubs on hillsides, at the back of beds — even on wide parking strips (berries do stain concrete). My favorite use is in hedges and hedgerows, where they provide color and excellent habitat value.



For more 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 on the first Saturday of each month at the center.

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