



HUMMIN'

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Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

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THIS UNKNOWN PENINSULA

Ripples

By Jess Morton

Two ripples, diverging threads of shining silver, unzipped the night pool's slate surface as the full moon, risen now above the trees lining the salt marsh shoreline, looked on. High tide filled the small lagoon with its dark burden of life. No breeze ruffled the leaves, but somewhere, a mullet leaped into the night, splashed down. A tree frog called. There was the distant hum of traffic, artifacts of a busy harbor. But here was silence.

And again over the dark well of tidewater came a ghostly apparition, speeding like some enormous butterfly. The black V of its wings moved along the water's surface, echoing the spreading moonlit ripples marking its wake. The bird was all but invisible under the night sky, its arched back and dipping bill glimpsed briefly as it crossed the reflected moon. But otherwise, only the ripples and faint flashes of white along the trailing edges of Black Skimmer's wings betrayed its presence.

The bird circled the small island at the far end and then the waters opened swiftly toward me as the bird came on, its bill slicing into the peacefulness of the lagoon. But the bird? The bird had no time for sound. Only the faintest of hisses could be heard as the bird turned and its bill again slid down into the chill evening water. The ripples widened anew, silver moments of moonlight weaving themselves into the darkness.

I had seen a Black Skimmer on the sand early that morning, but it had spooked, chased by a lifeguard vehicle racing over the beach on its rounds. And, of course, I had seen many of these birds fishing before, but always in daylight, even dawn light photos showing the frozen silhouette of a bird in the blaze of low sun. But never at night. Yet here a skimmer



Black Skimmer

Photo by Jess Morton

was, unperturbed by the low level of light, the full moon enough to make out the surface through which the tip of its lower mandible angled down into the water, the upper ready to snap down on any fish or crab the bird happened upon.

The moment was one of those that sets it far apart from the quotidian almost ho hum of full moon over water, makes one aware again of how special the world can be when one's view is forced into a new angle. Not that this event was ever rare. No, it was simply that I had missed this particular drama. Maybe drama is too strong a word for such ordinary things. I have no doubt this Black Skimmer had fished this way many times, as had generations of its kin going back into antiquity. But it was news to me, one more reminder of how glorious our world is when we take a moment to notice, to ask again, how is it that I have missed this for so long? What new marvel will chance my way tomorrow to ripple thorough an enchanted imagination?

Great News (Mostly) Regarding Harbor Park



By Martin Byhower
avitropic@sbcglobal.net

Greetings from Georgetown, Texas to all my old friends and fellow PV/South Bay Audubon members! Gone but not forgetting, perhaps to the chagrin of the City of Los Angeles, I remain vigilant in monitoring the

progress at my former, decades-long personal project and favorite local birding patch, Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. I'm writing this message to you on a computer powered by 100% renewable wind energy, but from a state that is, well, Texas. Thus, I am familiar with great delight tempered with queasy apprehension.

Nevertheless, I am thrilled to announce the grand re-opening (in my lifetime, no less!), after three years of closure and \$111 million of "renovation" of Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. By the time you are reading this, the park may have already opened (June 17), with a lot of local fanfare and celebration. I am wondering why, even though the guest list includes Reggie the Alligator (who will attend, albeit tethered to a very strong leash). I was not invited to attend, let alone speak.

Perhaps being overlooked for the Grand Reopening event has something to do with my perpetual nagging of both the L.A. Department of Recreation and Parks and the local Council Office (District 15, councilmember Joe Buscaino). Let me take a moment to thank Frank O'Brien, David Sundstrom, David Quadhamer and John Thomlinson for their active and insightful efforts, as they (along with me) have remained vigilant in monitoring the progress of the renovation of the park, and especially the plans for management and maintenance once this Proposition O project has been completed.

Concerns that we share include the types of activities they will be permitting in the Park and whether these will be compatible with the primary and overarching objectives of this Prop. O-funded project in particular: improving water quality as well as preserving natural values, especially habitat for wildlife. Picnicking, fishing, birding, and even 5K and 10K runs on some of the trails in the park are among the many activities that will be permitted. However, the presence of snack bars, pedal boats and canoeing concessions, and other activities that would be incompatible with the site-specific Prop. O goals would not be allowed (even though until very recently Councilman Buscaino was suggesting that some of these were still possibilities).

In the past, as some may recall, the park was a "free for all" for motorcyclists tearing through the trails, drug dealing and use, homeless encampments, and more that I won't mention. The park was overgrown with nonnative vegetation,

crowded with feral and dumped waterfowl that were fed by the public, full of trash from storm drains that emptied into the park, and polluted and silted with years worth of toxic discharges in the sediments in the lake. All of these problems are now addressed with the removal of invasive plants, trash diversion and water filtering systems, and a lot more.

Now, I think it will be a constant battle to keep the homeless out of the Park. I have heard no mention of removal of feral animals (which, to my knowledge, still reside in large numbers at the Park), nor how feeding them will be prevented. The water filtering and trash capture systems are state of the art; monitoring and repairing them as needed is the responsibility of the city, but budget cuts and firing of personnel without replacement has been the pattern there for years. The restoration of habitat in the Harbor City Greenway (formerly, Wilmington Drain) upstream has been severely marred by the reappearance of nonnative vegetation. Will invasive vegetation be recognized and removed regularly, so that the native plants that are required by the indigenous wildlife will recolonize the park? It appears that the majority of trees that have been planted in the public area are nonnative, whereas native species would require less maintenance and support native wildlife. Is this a harbinger of other problems to come?

I am greatly encouraged by some recent remarks by Recreation and Parks director Mike Shull in a *Daily Breeze* article. He announced the long-overdue re-implementation and expansion and restaffing of the city's Park Rangers. There will actually be a station for them in the park at the old "boathouse" area. The article states that rangers offer a lot more than law enforcement — they're trained as paramedics as well as firefighters and environmentalists.

I am trying to determine whether this means the rangers will be cognizant of and willing to enforce measures such as illegal feeding or capture of wildlife, activities harmful to the native plants and animals, and so on — and if they are (hopefully) knowledgeable of the park ecosystem to the extent that they will play a public interpretative as well as enforcement role.

In any case, I am hoping to crash the party and show up at the event, maybe even lead a bird walk there for old time's sake. Afterwards, during the years of recovery and establishment of healthy ecosystems there, I hope you will enjoy the new park. Please go there often! Go on the monthly bird walks there, led by Manuel Duran, Steve Dexter and Ed Griffin. Let me know if and when you see some good birds there. And help me, David S., David Q., Frank, and John to monitor the progress and recovery at the park: If and when you see something there that isn't right, let us, the local press, the L.A. Recreation and Parks Department, and Council Office 15 know about it (contacts on back page). Hope to see you there!

Gull chicks ain't no dull chicks

By Evi Meyer

In mid-May I had a chance to visit Anacapa Island, one of the four northern Channel Islands off of the coast of Ventura. It is surrounded by high cliffs and its plateau offers spectacular trails and views. But the main attraction for me was thousands of nesting Western Gulls, who at this time of year, were either sitting on eggs or tending to their hatchlings. I could not see this on the mainland, as these gulls only nest on islands. So off I went on a gull island adventure.

The early morning trip from Oxnard to eastern Anacapa Island started with a mid-channel Humpback Whale sighting, providing close views of the whale's arched back and flukes. The Captain throttled down the engine and we had a chance to watch the behemoth dive next to us several times. Each time the passengers' screams of excitement grew louder much like at a ball game when the home team scores again. But just as the whale seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, it slipped away again. It was time for us to sail on.

Once we reached Anacapa the boat docked at the ladder leading to a 157-step metal staircase, the only access onto the island. All 50 passengers disembarked single-file in a slow and tedious process, which was made more interesting by Pigeon Guillemots zipping in and out of openings in the black cliff next to the staircase. These birds are jet-black with a couple of white wing patches and outrageously bright red feet. As they flew by, their bodies were perfectly camouflaged, making their wing patches and



From cracked eggs, at left, emerges a newly hatched chick, which begins drying off. *Photos by Evi Meyer*



Adult Western Gull standing over hatchling

feet stand out like butterflies approaching or leaving the cliff. It was a superb way for waiting one's turn to climb the ladder.

Up on the plateau of Anacapa one is immediately greeted by the sight of thousands of very loud nesting Western Gulls stretching as far as the eye can see. Though this bird species is often seen on the mainland, only islands free of terrestrial predators and rich in low vegetation provide nesting grounds. Anacapa fulfills those requirements, and thus has the largest breeding population of Western Gulls of any of the Channel Islands.

Western Gulls make their nests in scrapes on the ground that they fill with vegetation. The nest sites are carefully chosen next to a rock or higher plant that provides shelter from the often strong prevailing winds. Both males and females participate in nest building and feeding of the young. The female lays two to three olive green eggs speckled with black blotches. These eggs are just slightly larger than chicken eggs and need to be incubated for 30 days.

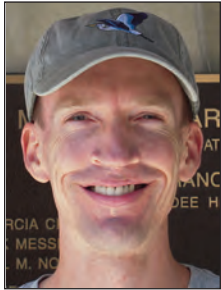
Some six days prior to hatching, fine web-like cracks appear on the surface of the egg, and two days later the pipping hole is perforated by the egg tooth on the bill of the chick still inside. Through this small hole peeping sounds can be heard, or could if the adults ever stopped their loud territorial vocalizations that dominate the island during breeding season.

Freshly hatched chicks are covered in thick grey down with black speckles over the entire body, which makes them blend in well with eggs that have not hatched yet. They remain motionless in the nest for several hours after hatching while they are drying. Within 24 hours they leave the nest and within a week they run around freely in close vicinity to the nest. They stay on the nesting territory for about 50 days, which coincides

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

YES Awards, Birdathon & Harbor Park Updates



By David Quadhamer

Congratulations to our Audubon YES award winners! The awards ceremony for our Youth Environmental Stewards was held on Sunday, April 23, at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. Twenty-one students earned awards this year including: Ashley Jung,

Wesley Park, Mandy Snyder, Jeong Ho Lee, Hannah Hodor, Andrew Buchanan, Kieran Blood, Grant Ho, Jacob Heisler, Jacqueline Hoot, Jared Nachman, Eugene Greg Moon, Eliana Choi, Joanna Choi, Allen Chun, Changhyun Kim, Jisung Lee, So Yeon Lee, Sooyon Lim, Won Jun Seok and Elliott Shin. The students attend South High, Palos Verdes High, Palos Verdes Peninsula High, Chadwick School and Troy High School.

I would like to thank the International Environmental Services Club and James and Teresa Choi for their continued support of Audubon YES, as well as the YES Club for their continued support of Audubon YES. The YES Club is restoring habitat for the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly in the Linden H. Chandler Preserve in Rolling Hills Estates. For details, visit <http://bluebutterflyproject.wixsite.com/bluebutterflyproject>

I would also like to thank Bob Shanman and Debbie Shewfelt for hosting a fundraiser for the Palos Verdes/South Bay Chapter of Audubon at Wild Birds Unlimited in Torrance. Bob and Debbie set aside a two-hour period one Sunday afternoon for PV/South Bay Audubon members and customers during which 20% of proceeds were donated to our chapter. Bob and Debbie held an opportunity drawing for those who stopped by and supported our fundraiser, and they also donated \$170 themselves. Thank you, Bob and Debbie!

Our annual birdathons have come and gone. Jess and his team found 100 species of birds. Stacy and I found 69 species. As it turns out, Stacy and I found 69 species last year as well. We certainly didn't plan it that way! Stacy and I got off to a good start at Madrona Marsh. Next we went to Alondra Park and Sand Dune Park, which were relatively quiet. We planned on going to Ballona Creek, but couldn't find parking, so we headed up to the Ballona Freshwater Marsh. There was a lot more bird activity there. Next we headed to the South Coast Botanic Garden and picked up a few new species there. Finally, we headed to Cabrillo Beach to look for shorebirds. It was a long but worthwhile day. Next year perhaps we will try the Los Angeles River instead of Ballona Creek.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our birdathons. We appreciate your continued support. If you haven't made a donation yet, please consider doing so. The money raised will



2017 Audubon YES award winners

Photo by Stacy Harman

support our chapter, Audubon YES program and the new Palos Verdes blue butterfly habitat restoration partnership with Rolling Hills Preparatory School. Donations can be made at a flat rate or on a per-species basis, perhaps \$1 per species. Please contact either Jess (jmorton@igc.org) or me (dquadhamer@yahoo.com).

After a long wait, Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park will finally reopen on Saturday, June 17. A number of organizations including Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon will be hosting tables at the opening festivities from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. We will be having a bird walk that day. At this writing, a schedule of events has not been finalized. (Please check our website for updates.) Monthly bird walks at Harbor Park will resume on the first Sunday of each month. The first will be Sunday, July 2. Led by Ed Griffin, Manuel Duran and Steve Dexter, the walks are from 8 to 11 a.m., starting in the parking lot between Anaheim Street and Vermont Avenue. Please join us for the reopening and monthly bird walks!

Our annual planning meeting will be held in August at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, and it takes the place of our August board meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend. If you would like to get involved in your chapter, this is an excellent opportunity. The time and date will be determined at our June board meeting; it will be held on a Saturday morning. Check our website and the next newsletter for more details.

We have some interesting presentations coming up in addition to Bob Shanman's presentation in June. Our July presentation features Bob Carr and Tracy Drake discussing the latest research about the history of dinosaurs in flight. We don't have a monthly meeting in August. Dave Weeshoff from San Fernando Valley Audubon will talk about International Bird Rescue in September. Dr. Randy Harwood will present on Peru in October and Emile Feisler will present our November program.

Snowy L.A.

By Jess Morton

Harry Truman gleefully flaunted that infamous Chicago Tribune announcing “Dewey Elected” around the last time it snowed in Los Angeles. Well, sort of snowed, anyway. I have seen said powdery white stuff on the ground a couple of times since then. No, I’m referring to snow as in Snowy Plover, a little bird that has not nested in Los Angeles County for nearly 80 years.

Snowy Plovers are birds of beach and sand. They cannot make a living in your garden, the neighborhood park or montane forest, however beautiful a place you may find those to be. If they have a use for trees, it is less in the driftwood they produce than in the kelp and beach wrack piled up under it, where they find the invertebrate food they require. They need no leaves, grasses, flowers or twigs for their nests. A simple depression in the sand will do very nicely. Ah, but there lies a difficulty, doesn’t it?

Consider how we Angelenos (and other Californians, Oregonians, etc.) use the beach. We walk on it. Drive on it. Let our dogs run loose on it. Collect sea shells. Rake it. Scrape it. Search it with metal detectors for dropped change, valuables, buttons, combs, etc. Name it and that is something we do on or with beaches. All of them, all the time and for many decades.

In the last few years, though, there has been a slight shift of social attitude toward our beaches. Maybe not everyone, but I think we as a society are more willing now to keep beaches cleaner, and to share them just a little with creatures other than ourselves and our pets. We have allowed a few small areas to be set aside for birds, Least Terns and Snowy Plovers locally, and rare plants in other places. After a long, long wait, Snowy Plovers have found the roped-off spaces at Dockweiler Beach and elsewhere in Los Angeles County to be acceptable places to raise a family.



Snowy Plover at the Malibu Lagoon

Photos by Jess Morton

Malibu Lagoon is one of four sites now known to be in use by the snowies. I visited on May 19, getting photos of the single nest and the birds as they incubated their three eggs. The area set aside for the birds was quite extensive, set well back from the tide line and roped off with some nice signage by kids explaining why the rope was there. None of the many beach goers minded, preferring the beach closer to the water anyway. However, a small cage had been placed over the nest to protect it from gulls, crows, ravens and other potential predators.

The eggs are enormous in compari-

son with the plovers themselves. It seems incomprehensible that a small bird could have produced one of them, let alone three. But there they were, speckled miracles blending perfectly with the sand. Indeed, until I saw the third clearly shadowed in one of my photos, I thought there were just two eggs.

The eggs will have hatched by the time you read this, the young up and running almost as soon as out of the egg. Their perilous adventure of life will have begun. Let’s wish them well so that they can come home again next year to another very snowy L.A.!

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with the time of their first flight. Like many young birds, they do return to the nest to be fed for as long as the parents play along, which for Western Gulls is in the three-month range. After that they are on their own.

This gull island adventure has definitely changed my perception of Western Gulls. I have to admit that I used to think of them as sandwich stealing nuisances along the shoreline, barely worthy of a photo. But after spending a day on their breeding grounds and reading up on their biology, I have come to understand they are actually a species of

conservation concern, as their population size is smaller than that of any other North American gull species due to their limited distribution. Oil spills, the effects of pesticides on reproduction and extensive hybridization with Glaucous-winged Gulls reduce the population size even more. Islands like Anacapa are an absolute necessity for Western Gulls to survive as a species.

All of this I understand intellectually now, but what really made the case emotionally for me was the cuteness and beauty of the freshly hatched chicks with their determination to survive. Nothing dull about the Western Gull!

MEET, LEARN, RESTORE, ENJOY

Chapter Calendar

Events

Saturday, June 3, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.: PV Blue Butterfly Habitat Restoration. Please join us to restore habitat for the PV blue butterfly. Meet in the parking lot of Rolling Hills Prep, 1 Rolling Hills Prep Way, San Pedro. Bring gloves and water. All Audubon members and friends welcome

Saturday, June 17, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.: Grand Reopening of Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Come and enjoy this beautifully restored park that attracts more bird species than any other place in Los Angeles County. Check our website for the exact time of Audubon-led bird walks in this sanctuary. Also note that beginning in July, our first Sunday bird walks through KMHRP will resume (see Field Trips).

Tuesday, June 20, 5:30 p.m.: PV/South Bay Audubon board meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome.

'Birds & Dinosaurs'



Tracy Drake (above) and Bob Carr will examine the history of the relationship between birds and dinosaurs and flight. They will present the latest findings and theories, especially regarding color. Are birds living dinosaurs? What is true flight? Learn about the new discoveries.

Tuesday, June 20, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speaker will be Bob Shanman delighting us with his presentation "The Joy of Birding." Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Tuesday, July 18, 7 p.m.: Audubon Third Tuesday Get-Togethers. Our speakers will be Bob Carr and Tracy Drake, who will present "Birds and Dinosaurs: The Latest Discoveries." Come to Madrona Marsh to socialize with friends and to enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Field Trips

Saturday to Sunday June 3 – 4, 8 a.m.: Annual Trip to Big Bear with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Sunday, June 4, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC First Sunday Bird Walk at George F Canyon Nature Preserve. This is a naturalist guided nature walk for beginners. Free binoculars are provided. For details, visit pvplc.org.

Tuesday, June 6, 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 Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Wednesday, June 7: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks to different destinations every first Wednesday of the month. For details,



Eared Grebe

Photo by Evi Meyer

visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on "Birding with Bob."

Saturday, June 10, 9 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to Alta Vicente Reserve. Explore 15-acre restoration site with cactus wren and gnatcatcher habitat. Moderate to strenuous. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday, June 11, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Audubon leaders Steve Dexter, Manuel Duran and Ed Griffin will lead this walk through the garden, located at 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes. There is a minimal charge for nonmembers, or you can join there.

Tuesday, June 13, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 6 for details.

Wednesday, June 14, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Bob Shanman. Meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Saturday, June 17, 10 a.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to Ocean Trails Reserve. Walk the public trail system and enjoy the vistas and summer blooming habitat. Moderate. For details, visit www.losserenos.com/pvic.htm

Sunday, June 18, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com.

Tuesday, June 20, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 6 for details.

Wednesday, June 21, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Third Wednesday Bird Walk at White Point Nature Preserve. For details visit pvplc.org.

Saturday, June 24, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon Dinuk Magamma. Meet at Madrona Marsh Nature Center.

Sunday, June 25, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to the San Gabriel Mountains with Eric and Ann Brooks. For details, e-mail motmots@aol.com or call 323-295-6688.

Wednesday, June 28, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Fourth Wednesday Bird Walk at George F Canyon. This walk is led by Wild Birds Unlimited. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Sunday July 2, 8 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Bird Walk through Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. Join Audubon leaders to explore the newly restored Harbor Park and witness the birds return to this sanctuary in the middle of our metropolitan area. Meet in the parking lot closest to Anaheim and Vermont.

Sunday, July 2, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC First Sunday Bird Walk at George F Canyon Nature Preserve. See April 2 for details.

Tuesday, July 4, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 6 for details.

Wednesday, July 5: Birding with Bob. Bob Shanman leads bird walks every first Wednesday of the month. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com and click on "Birding with Bob."

Saturday, July 8, 9 a.m.: PVPLC Natural History Walk to La Rotonda / South Shores. Walk through impres-

sively restored habitat on top of an ancient slide area with spectacular bluff-top ocean views. Moderate. For details, visit www.pvplc.org.

Saturday, July 8, 10 a.m.: Los Serenos de Point Vicente Natural History Walk to PVIC, PV Lighthouse & Abalone Cove Shoreline Park. Join us for a tour of the Point Vicente Interpretive Center, the native garden and a walk along the spectacular bluff top at the Vicente Bluff Reserve. followed by a tour of the Point Vicente Lighthouse hosted by the Coast Guard Auxillary. Easy. Visit www.lossserenos.com/pvic.htm.

Sunday, July 9, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. See June 11 for details.

Wednesday, July 12, 8 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. See June 14 for details.

Sunday, July 16, 8 a.m.: Bird walk at Ballona Wetlands with Bob Shanman. Visit www.torrance.wbu.com.

Sunday, July 16, 8 a.m.: Fieldtrip to Mt. Pinos / Mt. Abel / Condor Preserve with Eric and Ann Brooks. For

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

Tuesday, July 18, 8:30 a.m.: "Tour de Torrance." See June 6 for details.

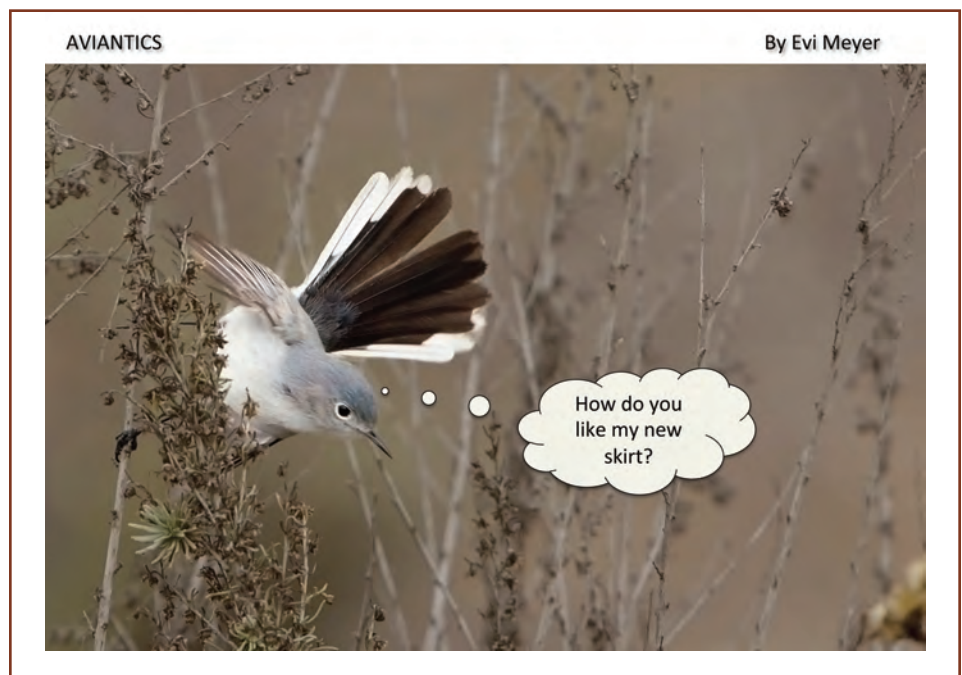
Wednesday, July 19, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Third Wednesday Bird Walk at White Point Nature Preserve. See June 21 for details.

Saturday, July 22, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Audubon leader Dinuk Magamma. See June 24 for details.

Wednesday, July 26, 8:30 a.m.: PVPLC Fourth Wednesday Bird Walk at George F Canyon. See June 28 for details.



NOTE: PV/South Bay Audubon field trips are generally free, but donations are much appreciated to support programs of the chapter. Please visit the Chapter website at www.pvsb-audubon.org or www.southbaycalendar.org. Area youth and their families are encouraged to visit [www.pvsb-audubon.org/Audubon YES.html](http://www.pvsb-audubon.org/AudubonYES.html).



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The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and National Audubon Society, of which PV/SB Audubon is the local chapter, are dedicated to the understanding and preservation of our natural heritage.

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NOTE: Send corrections to David Quadhamer at the above email address.

KMHRP, from Page 2

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