



HUMMIN'

PALOS VERDES/SOUTH BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY OCT/NOV 2005 Vol. XXVII No.5

Chapter Launches New Series of Get-togethers

At an August 6 retreat held in the Madrona Marsh Preserve education center, the Board of Directors of the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society voted to resume monthly meetings. Beginning on November 15, meetings will be held every third Tuesday in the month, with the exception of August and December. Meetings will begin at 7:00PM and will be held at the Madrona Marsh Preserve. These chapter get-togethers will feature guest speakers, bird quizzes, and raffles prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

For the first Chapter Get-Together on November 15, we are happy to announce that Tim Anderson will provide a presentation on the birds and wildlife of the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge. The Seal Beach refuge hosts many endangered and rare bird species, and Mr. Anderson is an expert in the area's bird life and many other aspects. On the following Sunday, Mr. Anderson will guide a visit to the refuge, which generally is off-limits to the public.

For December, the Chapter leadership is planning a holiday party on December 7 at 7:00PM at the Madrona Reserve.

The line-up of speakers in 2006 is as follows:

·January 17: Tracy Drake, Manager/Naturalist of the Madrona Marsh Preserve, will discuss the history and workings of the last remaining vernal pools in the South Bay.

·February 21: Dr. William Ailor, Founder/President of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, will discuss next steps in the preservation of the Portuguese Bend nature area, and beyond.

·March 21: Ann Lynch of the South Bay Wildlife Rehab will bring birds and discuss the activities of this group.

The board created a program committee that will oversee publicity and outreach, contacting guest speakers, hospitality, hosting, and preparing bird quizzes. Members of the committee include John Nieto, Tracy Drake, Martin Byhower, Bob Carr, Eileen Byhower, and Bob Shanman.

ALLIGATORS, ECOSYSTEMS AND IRONY

By Martin Byhower

(This article is adapted from a longer article written for Random Lengths.)

Reggie the elusive alligator may be the best thing that ever happened to Ken Malloy/Harbor Regional Park (KMHRP). Technically an invasive species, he will help restore habitat nevertheless. Publicly considered a safety threat, he will do more to improve park safety than anything that has been done in the 20 years that I and others have been working to improve the quality of the Lake and Park for humans and wildlife.

In terms of maintenance, monitoring, facilities, and protection of habitat, the Park is the abandoned child of the LA Recreation and Parks System. It is Siberia, remote from City Hall and lacking a vocal, influential, and economically empowered constituency. It has a self-fulfilling reputation as a place beleaguered by trash, vandalism, and illicit behavior.

The presence of an "officially unofficial" day labor center as well as unauthorized car rallies and the like in this (ostensibly) Regional (family) Park sends a mixed message as to who is welcome, or at least who would be comfortable, visiting there. The degraded, overgrown habitat shelters homeless, criminals, and stagnant-water mosquitoes. The particular vector control district assigned to the Park, frustrated with the City's past history of lack of dredging and vegetation management, and empowered by the media-whipped frenzy of fear about

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Alligators, continued from page 1

the wetland vegetation and chemically assaulting the lake, where a managed program of habitat restoration and water management would do the job more permanently and with ecological benefits rather than collateral damage.

For nearly 20 years, a core group of local activists, spearheaded by the PV/South Bay Chapter of the Audubon Society, and with the assistance of such groups as the CA Coastal Conservancy and such legislators as (now State Senator) Debra Bowen, has been working to develop a KMHRP Master Plan (once again, that process is on hold due to budgeting battles). Now going on its fourth round, we have followed this course in hopes of realizing the dream of Ken Malloy, whose tireless efforts on behalf of the Izaak Walton League saved the lake from continued dredging for oil-drilling muds, being used as a trash dumpsite, etc., and ultimately led to the creation of the Park.

More than 350 species of birds have been documented at the Lake, more than nearly any area of comparable size in the state (or nation, for that matter.) Many species still at least pass through periodically, some prospecting for what was once suitable habitat. For many species, the Park is virtually their last bastion in the region. Yet I have watched as one species after another has been quietly snuffed out.

The uninformed often illegally dump unwanted pets, especially ducks and geese, into the lake, either dooming the animals themselves or dooming the native species with which the intruders will compete. Some park visitors take it upon themselves to dump huge quantities of food for the "poor starving creatures." This leads to the dumping of more animals and the attraction of numerous nuisance invasive birds and rodents, which spread disease and compete with or prey on the native species. It is a vicious cycle.

I and others have been trying for years to encourage the city and local administrators and elected officials to seek funding for grants in order to improve both the facilities and the habitat at the Park. To be fair, mild progress has been made, albeit usually following a mass botulism kill, but it always seems like two steps forward, two steps back. Several truly dedicated park activists have long since given up on the Park, moving out of the area, taking on other battles, or simply passing away.

A well maintained Park, with the facilities comparable to any park in Torrance, and wildlife management comparable to that in LA's own Sepulveda Basin park, would create an environment that would actually attract



American Alligator
(Dick Bailey, USFWS)

large number of park visitors from a wide local constituency in this exceptionally park-poor neighborhood. But I envision even more. The Park may never again have bears and wolves, but it can once again host a spectacular diversity of wildlife and scenic beauty. It can still be the crown jewel of LA parks, accommodating outdoor activities for children and adults, camper and photographer, picnicker or walker. A Natural Heritage Center at the Park could celebrate the Native American and Spanish Land Grant periods as well as the natural history of the Park.

Reggie the alligator may have initiated the first step. First, he seems to be getting local officials, as well as the public, down to the Park. Maybe people will take a good long look at what is there, and what is not there. Secondly, Reggie has attracted rangers and police to the park, for a few weeks at least, on 24-hour patrol. The park has suffered because no one watches it after hours or on holidays or weekends, when fires are set, fences and the campground are vandalized, animals are dumped, and ORVs rip up the walking trails and plants.

Reggie is also doing a bang-up job of removing other invasive species. He is likely eating the Natrix water snakes, bullfrogs, snapping and red-eared slider turtles, non-native fish, and perhaps even a feral duck or two. Since there are no longer ANY native reptiles, amphibians, or fish in the lake, perhaps he will help reduce the numbers of the invaders that have wiped out the natives.

Since the water is polluted and anoxic in the summer, Reggie (or rather, the yellow plastic caution tape put up on his account) is keeping people away from the water's edge, so they can't as easily feed the ferals (i.e., pollute the lake even further at the most critical time of year.) They also can't come in contact with the polluted water. It is ironic that we hear officials claim that we need to remove Reggie in order to make the lake safe for the people once again. With his presence, the lake has never been safer!

PALOS VERDES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

This year the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Chapter is hosting its 40th Annual Christmas Bird Count. The chapter CBC Committee, whose members include Dave Moody, Kevin Larson, Eric and Ann Brooks, and Martin Byhower, has taken steps to update and improve many aspects of the count. We have compiled more user-friendly lists and introduced some state-of-the-art procedures to make our count what we hope will be one of the nation's foremost, in terms of coverage, accuracy, scientific validity, and (the fun part!) number of species sighted.

The 2005 count will be on Monday December 26, sun up to sundown, with an optional potluck and tally at the end. We may even have some pre-dawn Owling. We average 159 species a count. The high count was 185 species in 1994. We have tallied a total of 318 species over the last 39 years. Several exotic species a year are noted in addition. Almost every year something totally unexpected has been discovered. Whether a Laughing Gull, a Gray Catbird, a Blackburnian Warbler, or a Clay-colored Sparrow—all are unusual species in the winter here in L.A. County.

You don't need to be a top-notch birder to help out, but it helps if you are a competent one, interested in improving your skills as well as furthering the goals of using field science to further conservation. There are orientation classes coming up at Madrona Marsh on Dec 10 (Martin Byhower) and 17th (Bob Shanman). You might wish to attend our chapter's monthly walks at SCBG, Ken Malloy/Harbor Regional Park, and Madrona Marsh if you wish to freshen up on local bird life (see Calendar.)



*Encroachment on Gnatcatcher Habitat
(Claire Dobert, USFWS)*

SUMMER PROGRESS AT WHITE POINT PRESERVE

Slowly but steadily, the White Point Nature Preserve at the end of Western Avenue in San Pedro is being transformed from a barbed-wire-fenced, trash-strewn and weed-covered expanse into an inviting mix of coastal sage scrub, grassland, and riparian habitat for wildlife—and for human enjoyment and education.

Since its designation as a natural preserve in 2000, thousands of volunteer hours—including many hours from Audubon Yes! students and other Audubon volunteers—have been devoted to clearing the site in preparation for planting native vegetation. Through fund raising drives like the now-annual “Spring for White Point” event, along with direct donations and institutional grants, several million dollars have been raised to pay for necessary services and supplies. Tens of thousands of native plants have been installed during each of the past three years, and birds and other wild fauna—including at-risk species like the California gnatcatcher—are gradually discovering the preserve.

The 102-acre site has been used for several years for environmental education programs, geared to state science standards, for the local elementary schools. This Summer has brought two milestones for expanded public access and education. First, August 11 marked the official opening of the network of trails—including handicapped-accessible routes—that were built by the California Conservation Corps. Second, work has begun on development of on-site interpretive materials that will illuminate the natural history, ecology, and human history of the site. The Acorn Group, a Southern California enterprise, has begun a series of public workshops to fine-tune site interpretation to serve the needs of local schools and other visitors to the preserve.

The preserve is officially a Los Angeles city park, but through a creative partnership with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, the costs of converting the one-time military site to a natural area have been greatly reduced, and the local community has been given greater control over the “re-purposing” of the site. For more information on the site—including volunteer and donor-support opportunities—contact White Point Project Manager Andrea Vona at the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy office at (310) 541-7613, or avona@pvplc.org.

—Allen Franz

BIRDS OF THE PENINSULA

July and August 2005

by Kevin Larson

When spring migration becomes no more than a fond memory at the end of June, birders are looking to replace its excitement and dynamics. Fall shorebird migration is the spectacle to turn to during the months of July and August. One would imagine that a coastal wetland would be the best place to go, but coastal tidally-exposed mud that attracts many shorebirds only occurs on a few channels and small lagoons in our area. It is an inland, seven-mile stretch of the concrete-bottomed Los Angeles River in Long Beach and Paramount that is the premier fall shorebirding spot in our area, and arguably in all of Los Angeles County. The thousands of sandpipers stopping at the river each fall prove this location's value as a precious habitat for migratory shorebirds. Excellent birder coverage this year significantly increased our knowledge of what can occur there. Special praise goes to Richard Barth, who logged many miles along the hot river bike path on a near-daily basis. His find of an adult Stilt Sandpiper was enough to make a brilliant highlight of this shorebird season, but his adult Curlew Sandpiper—an extremely rare vagrant from the Old World—was truly astonishing.

Very few species of migrant land birds began to appear in our area during July and a slowly increasing number came during August, when many Western Kingbirds were moving through by mid-month. A few of the migrant warbler species and other passerines were noted during August, but their numbers were low. Seabird action from Pt. Vicente was exciting for shearwaters and some unexpected alcids in July, but was generally unremarkable during August.

Inland areas were brutally hot at times during July and August. A prevailing monsoonal flow brought vigorous thunderstorms to the mountains and deserts 20 July-15 August. Weather near the coast was completely different. The strong marine influence seemed to put up a barrier against the effects of this inland weather. The daily presence of marine layer clouds near the coast made most of mid-summer feel like a slightly warmer version of May or June. The relatively cool coastal weather was temporarily replaced by heat and humidity from the interior's monsoonal flow 20-26 July, and by a heat wave that



Wood Duck
(Edward Wagner, USFWS)

affected the region 25-30 August.

The adult Greater White-fronted Goose at Del Rey Lagoon remained through summer. A migrant Wood Duck was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh (BFM) on 25 Aug (Richard Barth-RB). The arrival of an adult male American Wigeon in eclipse plumage at BFM on 31 July was much earlier than expected; it was present through at least 2 Sep (Kevin Larson-KL). A male Northern Pintail in eclipse plumage at the L. A. River (LAR) near Willow St. 2-6 Jul was a rare summer record (RB). A Red-breasted Merganser on the lake at Harbor Park (HP) on 16 Jul was doubly unusual since they are rare in summer and unexpected inland (Martin Byhower-MB).

Summering loons included two Red-throated at Abalone Cove on 14 Jul (MB), one Common at Pt. Vicente (PtV) on 17 Jul (Brian Daniels), and one Pacific at PtV on 23 Aug (KL). A Northern Fulmar flying south past PtV was unusual for the date of 9 Jul; it was the first seen locally since 13 Nov (KL). A Black-vented Shearwater flying north past PtV on 9 Jul was the first seen locally since 21 May (KL); more than fifty were recorded there on 21 Jul, but only a few more were seen before the end of August.

Juvenile Least Bitterns seen at BFM on 10 Aug and 23 Aug appear to finally confirm nesting at this location (RB, Don Sterba). Unlike last year, Least Bitterns were seen or heard continuously there through spring and summer; up to two singing individuals were heard 22 Mar-21 May. Five Cattle Egrets at LAR near Del Amo Blvd. on 23 Jul were the only ones reported (KL). Up to five White-faced Ibises were present at LAR 13 Jul-5 Sep (many observers); thirty-two flying over PtV on 29 Aug was a remarkable number for our area (Carol

Selvey, KL). A juvenile White-tailed Kite in the Ballona area fields on 3 Jul was the first seen there since 27 Feb, roughly fitting their arrival and departure timing in recent years (Jonathan Coffin-JC); unlike recent years, none were reported there in late July or August. A migrant Virginia Rail at LAR north of Willow St. 29-30 Aug was unusual for the location (KL).

Solitary Sandpipers were recorded only at LAR: one was south of Wardlow Rd. on 6 Aug (RB), and up to two were present north of Willow St. 17-29 Aug (Thomas Miko et al). A juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper found at LAR on 26 Jul was the first of the season (RB). Two more found that day and another on 30 Jul constituted the first wave of this species at LAR (KL). Additional sightings from 13 Aug-3 Sep indicate that a minimum of ten individuals visited LAR in Long Beach 26 Jul-3 Sep (KL, RB). The first juvenile Baird's Sandpiper of the year was found at LAR in Paramount on 6 Aug (KL). An estimated seventeen juvenile Baird's visited LAR in Long Beach and Paramount 6 Aug-1 Sep; the highest single-day count was seven on 21 Aug (RB, KL et al). A Pectoral Sandpiper at LAR near Willow St. 9-11 Aug was a rarely-found adult (RB); the first juvenile arrived at LAR on 29 Aug (KL). A Dunlin in basic plumage with an injured leg at LAR south of Del Amo Blvd. on **18 Aug** was very unusual since fall migrants have not been noted here prior to mid-September (RB); it likely never reached the breeding grounds this year. RB's astounding find of an adult **Curlew Sandpiper** at LAR in Long Beach 13-14 Aug was the bird event of the period. This Siberian breeder is an extremely rare stray to California; it is the second record for Los Angeles County. An **adult Stilt Sandpiper** at LAR north of Willow St. 19-20 Jul was a spectacular shorebird find; adults are very rare along the



Red-throated Loon
(Dave Menke, USFWS)

coast of California (RB). A **Stilt Sandpiper** at LAR north of the 405 freeway crossing 24 Aug-1 Sep is the fifth juvenile found along the river channel since 1996 (KL). Remarkably, a **third Stilt Sandpiper** was found at LAR on 29 Aug (RB); this briefly-staying individual was nearly in basic plumage and difficult to age with certainty.

Two Black Skimmers flying upriver at LAR near Willow St. on 16 Jul were inland, where rare (MB). Five alcid species recorded in our area this summer were much more than expected. Two Common Murres in breeding plumage flew by PtV on 9 Jul—one heading south, the other north (KL). Sightings of adult Pigeon Guillemots continued at PtV (see the last issue of Hummin'); five were seen there on 9 Jul (KL). A moribund **Xantus's Murrelet** of the nominate Guadalupe Island race (*S. h. hypoleucus*) was picked up on Redondo Beach on 12 Aug and delivered to Kimball L. Garrett, the Ornithology Collections Manager at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County; this southern-breeding subspecies is unexpected along our coast. Northbound Cassin's Auklets observed from PtV included five on 21 Jul (KL, Mike San Miguel), and one on 30 Jul (KL); northward movement in summer has been noted from this location in the two previous years. Another Cassin's Auklet was on the water just off PtV on 23 Aug (KL). Unexpected in summer, a Rhinoceros Auklet flew south past PtV on 9 Jul (KL).

MB saw a Eurasian Collared-Dove at HP on 9 Jul. A White-winged Dove was at Madrona Marsh (MM) on 14 Aug (David Moody-DM); another visited Nancy Harris's yard in Manhattan Beach on 17 Aug (fide Bob Shanman). Rarely recorded in fall locally, an adult male Rufous Hummingbird was at MM on 27 Aug (DM). A rare visitor to our area, a male Nuttall's Woodpecker was at DeForest Park (DP) 6 Aug-5 Sep (KL). An adult male **Vermilion Flycatcher** at MM 4-7 Jul—likely the same bird that was singing there on 2 Jun—was evidently summering locally (DM). A Loggerhead Shrike in the Ballona area on 9 Jul was the first reported in this article's coverage area since 27 Feb (JC). A migrant or dispersing Hutton's Vireo was at DP 19-20 Aug (KL). A Warbling Vireo at MM on 6 Jul is difficult to categorize (DM); a singing bird in upper George F Canyon on 16 Jul was either on territory or was a very early migrant (KL). Fall migrants of this species do occasionally sing; one was heard at MM on 2 Sep this year (DM).

A Purple Martin at BFM on 31 Jul was an early migrant (KL). A Bank Swallow at LAR in Long Beach on 21 Aug was the only one reported (KL). After the many Red-breasted Nuthatches from last winter's invasion

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CONSERVATION CORNER

by Lillian Light

As you view the havoc and heartbreak caused by Katrina in the New Orleans area, are you aware that human tragedies of this magnitude are closely related to our refusal to protect our environment?

Science author, Ross Gelbspan, wrote, "The hurricane that struck Louisiana yesterday was named Katrina by the National Weather Service. Its real name is Global Warming". We have known about the potentially devastating impact of global warming for several years. As the planet warms, the World Meteorological Organization has predicted more violent and extreme weather. The AP



recently reported on a Massachusetts Institute of Technology analysis indicating that "major storms spinning in both the Atlantic and Pacific...have increased in duration and intensity by about 50% since the 1970's, trends that are closely linked to increases in the average temperatures of the ocean surface and also correspond to increases in global average

atmospheric temperatures during the same period". Several commentators have suggested that the high temperature of the Gulf water increased the ferocity of the Louisiana hurricane.

We know that global warming is occurring because people burn oil that produces a heat-trapping blanket of carbon dioxide around the globe. The answer to curbing global warming is simple; reduce our use of oil and make our cars, SUVs, and trucks average 40 miles per gallon. This would save more oil than we could get from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge combined with what we import from the Persian Gulf.

Yet just when Katrina was gathering steam and looming over the Gulf, the Bush administration announced plans to weaken the nation's most successful oil-saving law, the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard. Instead of strengthening the standard, the new proposal abandons the concept of a fleet-wide

fuel economy standard in favor of a size-based system that would create 6 classes for light trucks and SUVs. Automakers would be encouraged to build larger, less fuel-efficient vehicles in order to qualify for weaker fuel economy requirements.

Buried in the same proposal by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is the following admonition: "We reaffirm our view that a state may not impose a legal requirement relating to fuel economy, whether by statute, regulation, or otherwise, that conflicts with this rule. A state law that seeks to reduce motor vehicle carbon dioxide emissions is both expressly and impliedly preempted". This is an attempt to block California's landmark regulation requiring carmakers to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from cars and light trucks by 2009. The Bush administration had previously challenged California's zero-emission requirement as well as the South Coast Air Quality Management District's mandate that operators of truck and bus fleets buy cleaner diesel vehicles. Because the Clean Air Act gives California the right to adopt tougher anti-smog rules than the federal government, these issues will be settled in courts.

Not only has our government refused to sign on to the Kyoto Treaty on Climate Change, but it is opposing any attempt by any state to reduce global warming pollution. Meanwhile 52% of all vehicles owned in America are SUVs spewing record amounts of carbon dioxide into the earth's atmosphere, while heating up our planet and producing ever more catastrophic hurricanes as well as other unpredictable disasters. Another deplorable statistic is that we Americans who represent 5% of the world's population devour more than 25% of the fossil fuel energy produced each year. We must do more to minimize the chances that storms like this will become a regular occurrence!

One important reason that New Orleans was so vulnerable to hurricane destruction is the disappearance of the wetlands that were a natural buffer between the city and storms approaching from the sea. When he came into office, President Bush pledged to uphold the "no net loss" wetland policy initiated by his father. He did not keep his word; he ordered federal agencies to stop protecting as many as 20 million acres of wetlands as well as an untold number of waterways throughout the nation. If wetlands continue to vanish, New Orleans and other Gulf cities may be in great danger from even weak and moderate storms and hurricanes.

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The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society Chapter announces

The First of our New Monthly Chapter Get-Togethers

***The Birds and Wildlife of the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge
and the National Wildlife Refuge System***

A remarkable multimedia presentation by

Tim Anderson, Wildlife Expert and Boat-tour operator

When: Tuesday, November 15, 2005, 7 p.m.

Where: Madrona Marsh Nature Center,
3201 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance 90503



Come, meet your fellow Audubon members and other great folks, and enjoy

- some great **goodies and drinks** during our social half-hour
- a special **bird quiz**, fun for folks of all ages and levels of birding prowess!
- **raffles** and **door prizes** wonderful **exhibits, comfort, and accessibility** of our new venue at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center

This is the first of our new series of Monthly Chapter Get-togethers, which we will hold the third Tuesday of the month, except August and December.

The **Seal Beach Naval Weapon Station/National Wildlife Refuge** is only accessible to the public by special permission. PVSBAudubon has scheduled a field trip there on November 20. (Go to Calendar at birdingsocal.com for details.)

Whether you can visit now or later, or just want to learn about this incredible refuge and its wildlife, you won't want to miss this presentation! Many endangered and rare bird species, not easily observed in Southern California, are regularly at the refuge.

While sharks and rays bask in the channels, birders can find Clapper Rails, Peregrine Falcons and **fourteen** other species of raptors, Short-eared Owls as well as three other species of owls, White Pelicans, thousands of Canada Geese, abundant shorebirds, terns, and waders, and rarities like Nelson's Sharp-tailed and Large-billed Savannah sparrows.

Our speaker spends a lot of time working as a volunteer at the Refuge and is an expert on every aspect of it. Please come support your Audubon Chapter, get acquainted and re-acquainted with friends, and enjoy the show.

For more information, contact chapter co-president Martin Byhower, avitropic@sbcglobal.net.

Birds of the Peninsula, continued from page 5

departed, one in Rolling Hills on 16 Jul indicated that the small resident population noted in recent years in higher-elevation portions of the peninsula is still hanging on (KL). A juvenile Rock Wren below the Fishing Access parking lot at PtV on 4 Jul suggests local breeding; adults were in this area through last winter (KL). The Swainson's Thrush found on territory in upper George F Canyon on 12 Jun (MB) was still singing on 16 Jul (KL). A Lucy's Warbler at Sand Dune Park (SDP) from 9 Aug until at least 6 Sep was joined by a second individual 28-29 Aug (KL). Another Lucy's Warbler was found at MM on 29 Aug (DM). South Bay Wildlife Rehab received a dazed Northern Waterthrush that struck a window in El Segundo on **16 Aug**—a surprisingly early date for this vagrant warbler (photo, Ann Lynch). Another Northern Waterthrush was at MM 30-31 Aug (KL).

Since fall migrant Chipping Sparrows are not expected until after mid-August, singles in Palos Verdes Estates on 29 Jul, and in Redondo Beach on 4 Aug were unusual (KL); others—seen on typical arrival dates—included one at MM 23-30 Aug, one at BFM on 24 Aug (KL), and up to five at DP 26-30 Aug (KL). A Brewer's Sparrow along the bluffs in northern Westchester on **7 Aug** shattered our earliest fall record by two weeks (KL). A juvenile Lark Sparrow at White's Point Nature Preserve in San Pedro on 5 Aug was early (DM). Other Lark Sparrows included one at LAR south of Del Amo Blvd. on 13 Aug (KL), two at Entradero Park 14 Aug (KL), up to two at MM 18-30 Aug (DM); and one at LAR near Wardlow Rd. on 27 Aug (RB). A juvenile **Black-throated Sparrow** in Playa del Rey on **24 Jul** is the first known record for the Ballona Valley; only a few of these vagrants have been recorded as early as July along the coast of Southern California (KL). The only Yellow-headed Blackbird was an immature male at LAR south of Willow St. on 2 Aug (David Bell).

Following are the earliest dates on which these fall migrants were noted this year: Northern Shoveler (3)—19 Aug LAR (KL); Virginia Rail—24 Aug BFM (RB); Sora—7 Aug BFM (KL); juvenile Black-bellied Plover—24 Jul Ballona Creek (KL); adult Semipalmated Plover—14 Jul LAR Long Beach (RB); juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs—**27 Jul** LAR Willow St. (RB); juvenile Willet—24 Jul Ballona Creek (KL); juvenile Wandering Tattler—24 Aug Ballona Creek (RB); juvenile Spotted Sandpiper—20 Aug LAR (KL); juvenile Surfbird—24 Aug Ballona Creek (KL); juvenile Sanderling—12 Aug



LAR Long Beach (RB); juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher—6 Aug LAR Long Beach (KL); adult Long-billed Dowitcher—10 Jul LAR Long Beach (KL); juvenile Wilson's Phalarope—19 Jul LAR Long Beach (RB); juvenile Red-necked Phalarope—**30 Jul** LAR Willow St. (Mark Scheel, KL, RB); juvenile Western Gull—24 Jul Marina del Rey (KL); Belted Kingfisher—25 Jul Ballona Creek (RB); Western Wood-Pewee—20 Aug SDP (KL); Willow Flycatcher—**9 Aug** SDP (KL); Ash-throated Flycatcher—15 Jul SDP (KL); Western Kingbird—25 Jul BFM (RB); House Wren—7 Aug MM (DM); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher—7 Aug Westchester (KL); Nashville Warbler—11 Aug Wilderness Park (DM); Townsend's Warbler—19 Aug DP (KL); Hermit Warbler—**14 Aug** Alondra Park (DM); Wilson's Warbler—5 Aug Westchester (Barbara Elliott); Western Tanager—14 Jul lower George F Canyon (MB); Savannah Sparrow (northern/interior race)—10 Jul LAR Long Beach (KL); Lazuli Bunting—24 Jul Playa del Rey (KL).

Thanks to all who reported sightings during the period. Please send your sightings to me at cbirdr@comcast.net 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.

Acronyms in Birds of the Peninsula

BFM: Ballona Freshwater Marsh

DM: David Moody

DP: DeForest Park

HP: Harbor Park

JC: Jonathan Coffin

KL: Kevin Larson

LAR: Los Angeles River

MB: Martin Byhower

MM: Madrona Marsh

PtV: Pt. Vicente

RB: Richard Barth

SDP: Sand Dune Park

THE ETERNAL FRONTIER

by **Tim Flannery**

Reviewed by Allen Franz

Perhaps it's human nature to wonder where we came from and how things got to be the way they are. For those who look for answers to these sorts of questions in the natural sciences, Tim Flannery's *The Eternal Frontier: An Ecological History of North America and its Peoples* (Grove Press, 2001) is an entertaining and informative read. Flannery takes as his starting point the KT (Cretaceous/Tertiary) stratigraphic boundary—dated to 65 million years ago, when an asteroid impact effectively wiped the North American continent clean and extinguished dinosaurs and many other creatures world wide. Tim Flannery recounts the present state of knowledge on the geological, biological, and cultural history of our continent, interjecting frequent intriguing details and colorful anecdotes relating to “the history of natural history” in North America.

Flannery's discourse is presented as a drama in five acts, with a cast of millions—animal, vegetal, and mineral. Act I sets the stage by summarizing evidence for the asteroid impact that abruptly terminated the Cretaceous period. As many readers will know, the KT asteroid—a massive object at least six miles in diameter—struck in the shallow waters of the Carribean, near the northwest corner of the Yucatan Peninsula. Due to the object's trajectory—approaching from the south southeast—its impact propelled a mass of collision debris, and accompanying heat blast and tsunamis, toward the North—at North America. Aside from a few sheltered locations in the far north and perhaps in the lee of mountain ranges near the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, the continent was virtually sterilized. Flannery's first act concludes with an overview of the initial conditions of life's recolonization of the North American continent, a dire struggle in a barren landscape.

Acts II and III describe the pathways by which life forms from Europe, Asia and elsewhere arrived in North America, reinforcing the few survivors of the disastrous KT impact. Thirty million years after the impact, though, the recovery was

impressive. Flannery describes the flowering of life in North America, the continuing interchange with other continents, and the impact of geological processes and climatic changes from the early/middle Eocene (roughly 50 million years ago) through the Pleistocene (the Ice Ages, the most recent episode of which ended about 10,000 years ago). Flannery's telling of the story is enlivened by an extraordinary parade of oreodonts, camelids, and other organisms that played roles in the relentless evolutionary transformation of North America.

Acts IV and V, which together make up half the book, address the arrival and subsequent impacts of humans, beginning toward the end of the Pleistocene epoch. In Act IV, Flannery reviews the evidence for the earliest appearance of Native Americans, and their roles in reshaping the New World—from hunting megafauna to domesticating crop plants. The final act covers North America since Columbus, with an emphasis on the emergence of a fundamentally new relationship between humankind and the natural world (and its resources) characterized by intensified technological control and wholesale consumption. He summarizes impacts on mineral resources, soil, water, and wildlife in modern times, with an array of illustrative examples.

The Eternal Frontier is a compelling story, and provides a valuable corrective to those who assume that North America was a placid and unchanging place prior to the

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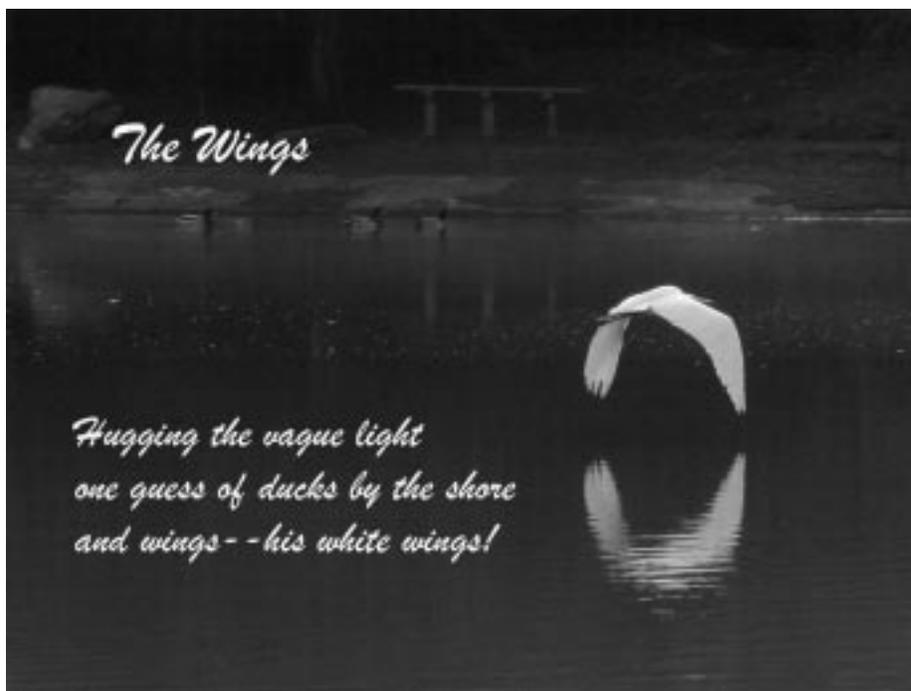


Photo and verse by Jess Morton

Conservation Corner, continued from page 6

The magnitude of the suffering that is occurring in the Gulf area should move us to do more than send charitable contributions. We must all become environmentalists and take action to protect planet earth that is also crying out for help. Write to Senator Feinstein and demand that our Senate pass a resolution to support the Kyoto Protocol. Demand that the senate pass a stringent fuel economy standard. Let us make sure that in the future no other city in the world will become a morass of loss and desolation!

Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, D C 20510
senator@feinstein.senate.gov
202 – 224 3841
310 – 914 7300

The Eternal Frontier, continued from page 9

arrival on the scene of Europeans and other non-Indians. Flannery makes a persuasive case that the natural history of the continent has been the interactive product of a vast crew of contributors—animal, vegetable, and mineral—but also presents clear evidence that modern humankind wields unparalleled power over the present and future conditions of our home continent—and the planet as a whole.

For those interested in comparable perspectives on the natural history of planet Earth taken as a whole, paleontologist Richard Fortey's *Life: Natural History of the First Four Billion Years of Life on Earth* (Random House/Vintage, 1999) and *Earth: An Intimate History* (2004) are recommended. For loosely similar approaches focusing on California, see Elna Bakker's *An Island Called California: An Ecological Introduction* (UC, 1984) or Allan Schoenherr's more formally structured *A Natural History of California* (UC, 1995).

**Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival,
January 13-16, 2006**

MORRO BAY, CALIFORNIA – Come to where the birds are and join Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for our 10th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers. This year's festival will feature presentations by Kenn Kaufman and Nigel Marven.

For more information about the Festival, check out our new website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call (805) 772-4677.

Hummin' is published six times per year by the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society. Authors' opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Society. Send articles and suggestions to MLEoWeber@aol.com.

Editor.....Michael Weber, 310-316-0599

Hummin' subscriptions for non-PV/SB Audubon members are \$7.50 per year.

For back issues and chapter info, go to www.LMconsult.com/pvaudubon

GIFT & NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

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MEMBERSHIP (*chapter only* or *national--circle one*).....\$25
GIFT\$20___\$50___\$100___Other___

TOTAL ENCLOSED..... _____
(all contributions are tax-deductible)

Please send me information on how to make a bequest to PV/SB Audubon.

MAKE CHECK TO: AUDUBON SOCIETY
MAIL TO: P.O. BOX 2582, PALOS VERDES, CA 90274

7XCH/C43

Meet Learn Enjoy Restore

Sunday, Oct. 2, 8:00AM: **Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden**, 26300 Crenshaw Bl., Palos Verdes. Leader: Ollie Coker. Charge for nonmembers of the SCBG Foundation, and you can join at the entrance. (Also Nov. 6.)

Wednesday, October 5, 7:00PM: **Audubon Board and Members meeting**, Whole Foods Community Room, Crenshaw & PCH.

Wednesday, October 5, 7:00PM: **BIRD CLASSES by Eric and Ann Brooks**, South Coast Botanic Garden, 26300 Crenshaw Bl., Palos Verdes. Full field trip schedule available by contacting motmots@aol.com.

Saturday, Oct 8, 3-5PM: **Land Conservancy Nature Walk** at Bluff Cove in Rolling Hills Estates. For up-to-date information, call 310-541-7613.

Sunday, Oct. 9, 11:30AM – 3:30PM: **PVP Land Conservancy Mile Long Picnic**, Celebrate the Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve, the view and music. Call 310-541-7613 for more information.

Wednesday, Oct. 12, 8:00AM: **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh**. Leader: Bob Shanman. 3201 Plaza del Amo (west of Madrona Ave.) in Torrance.

Saturday, Oct. 15, 8:00AM: **Nature Walk at Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park** with Martin Byhower. Meet in parking lot between Vermont and Anaheim St. above the boathouse, about 1 mile west of 110 Freeway on Anaheim St.

Wednesday, Oct. 19, 8:00AM: **Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden**. Leader: Georgene Foster. (See Oct. 2 for directions.)

Saturday, Oct. 22, noon-3:00PM: **AUDUBON YES!** organizing meeting at Madrona Marsh (See Oct. 12 for directions). Plenty of pizza for everyone. For more information, contact jmorton@igc.org.

Sunday, Nov. 6, 8:00AM: **Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden**, 26300 Crenshaw Bl., Palos Verdes. Leader: Ollie Coker. See Oct. 2 for directions.

Wednesday, Nov. 9, 8:00AM: **Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh**. Leader: Bob Shanman. (See Oct. 12 for directions.)

Friday, Nov. 11, 6:30PM (reception), 7:30PM: **Talk on "Dangers of Nuclear Electricity" by Rochelle Becker**, Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility; sponsored by Environmental Priorities Network, Pacific Unitarian Church, 5621 Montemalaga Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes. Donation of \$5 requested.

Saturday, Nov. 12, 9-11AM: **Land Conservancy Nature Walk-Sunken City**, landslide area by the sea. Call 310-541-7613.

Sunday, Nov. 13, 9:00AM: **Volunteer Weeding at Forrestal Nature Preserve** sponsored by the Palos Verdes

Land Conservancy. Call 310-541-7613.

Tuesday, Nov. 15, 7:00PM: **AUDUBON MONTHLY GET-TOGETHERS** at Madrona Marsh featuring Tim Anderson, Wildlife Expert on the **Birds and Wildlife of the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge**, socialize with friends, bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited. (See Oct. 12 for directions.)

Wednesday, Nov. 16, 8:00AM: **Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden**. Leader: Georgene Foster. (See Oct. 2 for directions.)

Saturday, Nov. 19, 8-10:30AM: **Nature walk at Madrona Marsh** with Martin Byhower. (See Oct. 12 for directions or check birdingsocal.com to confirm.)

Sunday, Nov. 20, 8AM-12PM: **Rare Birding opportunity** at Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station with Martin Byhower. Contact Martin (avitropic@sbcglobal.net) for details.

Wednesday, December 7, 7:00PM: Madrona Marsh: **Audubon Board Holiday Party**. Open to all to meet the Board. RSVP frances@monolake.org.

CALENDAR

Central Valley Birding Symposium

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the Ninth Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium November 17-20, 2005 at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton, California.

There will be field trips, workshops, and a Birding Nature Fair and Art Show with over 25 vendors selling nature-related items. Keynote speakers include:

· "The Birds of the Central Valley" by naturalist Jules Evens, using master photograph Ian' Tate's photos.

· "Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker" by Bobby Harrison and John Tochet.

· "The History of California Birding" by Don Roberson.

Workshops include:

· "Parts is More than Parks: Boning up on Bird Identification" by Kimball Garrett, and

· "Shorebird ID Workshop" by Joe Morlan.

For more information, consult <http://cvbs.org>, or call Frances Oliver at (209) 369-2010.

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The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and the 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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HELP NEEDED!

Audubon YES!: Contacts with South Bay schools and teen youth groups are wanted. If you are a teacher looking for extra-credit opportunities for your students, or if you are an adult advisor to a teen group looking for volunteer activities, become an active part of Audubon YES!, our Youth Environmental Service program. Audubon wants to work with you and your kids! For more information, call Jess Morton at 310 832-5601 or visit us online at www.AudubonYES.org

The Chapter also would welcome a **volunteer** to assist in talking with participants in our various outings regarding **membership** in the local Audubon Chapter. If this opportunity seems attractive to you, please contact Frances at 310-316-0041.

Pick up postage-paid envelopes at Wild Birds Unlimited at PCH and Crenshaw to **recycle your HP or Lexmark Inkjet cartridges**. For each cartridge sent in these envelopes, \$2.50 is donated to our Chapter or to South Bay Wildlife Rehab. This is a great way to reduce waste and to support your favorite organizations.