

Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society

A Chapter of the

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume XXVIII No. 3 September-October 2013

Editor Arne Christiansen

How to Choose Birdseed Choose the Best Birdseed for Your Backyard Birds

By Melissa Mayntz, About.com Guide

Choose the best birdseed for your backyard birds. Birdseed is the most popular type of food to offer backyard birds, but there are many types of birdseed and not all of them appeal to all backyard birds. Understanding how to choose the best birdseed can help you offer the most desirable foods to your local birds, which can lead to attracting even more species to your feeders.

Choosing Seed With the Birds in Mind

The biggest bird-feeding mistake many novice backyard birders make is choosing birdseed for birds they hope to attract, not the birds already in their yard. Birds are gregarious, social creatures, and they will readily investigate any area of feeding activity. If you only have a few birds already in your yard, it is best to choose seed for those species first – as they get more active at feeding in your yard, other species will join in to see what offerings are at the buffet. Then you can add new types of birdseed and new feeders, gradually building up to a full-service birdseed restaurant.

Different birds have different birdseed preferences depending on their bill shape and nutritional needs. The most popular birdseeds and the birds that prefer them include:

- Sunflower Seeds: All types of sunflower seeds are excellent for backyard birds, and this type of seed is the best choice for beginning bird feeding in a variety of feeder styles. Black oil sunflower seeds are the most common and are great for most songbirds, while the larger striped sunflower seeds are suitable for larger birds with stronger bills. Hulled sunflower kernels and chips are also popular with smaller birds because they are easier to eat. Birds: Chickadees, house finches, titmice, jays, grosbeaks, cardinals, sparrows, nuthatches,
- Nyjer: Small, thin Nyjer seeds are one of the most popular types of birdseed for small clinging finches.
 These seeds are high in oil, making them great for winter bird feeding. Because of their small size,

woodpeckers

however, Nyjer seeds can be light and easily spilled or blown away. Mesh-style or sock feeders are best for this expensive seed, and clinging birds will have no trouble feeding from these unique feeders. Birds: Goldfinches, purple finches, redpolls, pine siskins, quail

- Millet: These small white seeds are a common component of birdseed mixes and can be purchased separately for individual feeding if desired. This seed is useful in hopper and tube feeders, as well as for sprinkling on the ground or in tray or platform feeders.
 - Birds: Doves, sparrows, juncos, quail, buntings
- Safflower Seed: A large, oval seed with a white shell that looks like a white sunflower seed, safflower seed has a thick shell and the birds that prefer it need sturdy bills to crack the seeds. This is a popular seed choice in backyards where squirrels often raid feeders, because squirrels do not favor this seed as readily.

Birds: Cardinals, nuthatches, jays, woodpeckers, house finches

- Cracked Corn: Cracked corn is a less expensive seed often used as filler in birdseed mixes, but its high carbohydrate content makes it suitable for a number of backyard birds, particularly for ground-feeding birds that may have larger appetites. Birds that often feed on grain or are common in agricultural areas may favor cracked corn. Birds: Sparrows, jays, towhees, grouse, quail, blackbirds, ducks, wild turkeys
- Milo: These large, BB-sized red seeds are not the best choice for most backyard birds, and they are often added to cheap birdseed mixes as a filler. While many birds will simply discard milo seed, it can still be useful for many ground-feeding species with

Birds: Doves, ducks, quail

see **BIRDSEED**, Page 2

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BIRDSEED, from Page 6

How to Choose Quality Birdseed

Not all birdseed is created equally, not even of the same type of seed. While birds are not typically picky about the food they eat, higher quality seed will attract more species and will provide better nutrition for healthy backyard flocks. To ensure the seed you buy is a good value and superior quality, look for...

- **Mix Proportions**: If choosing a blend of different seeds, opt for one with a higher proportion of better seeds such as sunflower or millet, with little room for fillers like milo and cracked corn.
- Freshness: Fresh seed will not have excessive dust, empty hulls or inedible debris in the mix. Also investigate the seed for any sign of mold, mildew or insect infestation.
- Quantity: Larger quantities of birdseed are often a better value at a bulk price, but only purchase seed you can feed to birds before it is stale or spoiled to avoid wasting money on seed that won't be used.
- Packaging: Better quality birdseed is often packaged in sturdy plastic or coated paper bags, possibly with easy-to-open tabs or handles for carrying. Look especially for clear packaging that allows inspection of the product before purchase.
- **Ingredients**: Check the ingredient list on every package of birdseed to ensure it has not been treated with pesticides or insecticides that can be toxic to birds. The list may also name the proportions of seeds used in different blends.
- **Price**: Higher prices do not necessarily mean higher quality seed. Sales are a great way to stock up on a supply of birdseed, and bulk purchases almost always are a better value than smaller packages.

Beyond Birdseed

The most important thing to remember when choosing birdseed is that not all birds enjoy seed. Adding other types of bird foods – suet, fruit, nectar and nuts – to your backyard buffet is the best way to attract birds. Many types of birds will sample seeds, and creating feeding stations that offer a range of different seeds and other foods is the most effective way to attract birds to your feeders.



(Photo – Feeding Chickadee © Dawn Huczek)

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Arne Christiansen, Editor

Jeff Ebright has resigned his Presidency of PAS, allowing him to devote more time to one of his true passions, the maintenance of the PAS website. To those of us who know Jeff appreciate his leadership and camaraderie, probably more than he realizes, and wish him well as he continues to keep us all informed online. Look for his article about the PAS website on page 4 of this issue of Band Tales. The site is located at: http://www.palomaraudubon.org. We look forward to still seeing you on walks, Jeff., and you, too, Vicki. Vice-President Jim Beckman has very graciously temporarily assumed leadership of the Chapter.

Vicki Ebright continues as Chair of Membership but has resigned her position as Secretary. Thanks to both of you for your continuing commitment, and may you find every bird you ever wanted to see, and may we frequently see you both .

AMERICAN BIRDS ONLINE

(from California Audubon email)

The first issue of American Birds Online, Audubon's new quarterly citizen science e-newsletter, was



delivered to inboxes this week. The newsletter contains Christmas Bird Count features and results, articles about Audubon's other citizen science programs including Great Backyard Bird Count and Hummingbirds at Home, and great photos. Subscribe to the newsletter

at http://www.audubon.org/citizenscience,

HEY, ALL YOU PAS BIRDERS!

Arne Christiansen, Editor

o you have any "WOW!" moments in your birding life? Maybe a "Wish I could share this!" or "Nobody would ever believe what I just saw!"? The majority of this edition of **Band Tales** consists of articles gleaned from non-PAS sources; most of the rest of the articles are submitted by Board members.

None of us is likely to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism, but—hey, come on, folks—share some of your birding (or for that matter non-birding) experiences with the rest of us. Should you not feel comfortable writing an article just send me whatever you have; we'll fix it up "real purty," making you happy that you have agreed to share with the rest of us.

I took this space because some more copy was needed to fill out YOUR newsletter. It could have been yours to share; **PLEASE!!** I'm here at arnec@juno.com or by mail at 12480 Pomerado Place, San Diego, CA 92128

CONSERVATION NOTES

Richard Fowler

POWAY'S BLUE SKY ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

The Reserve covers over 700 acres east of North Poway and provides direct access to Lake Ramona and Lake Poway. It includes oak woodlands, coastal sage scrub, riparian, and chaparral habitats. These are all included in a narrow valley squeezed between the two lakes. In October 2007 the Witch Creek fire devastated the Reserve. Now, almost six years later, damage to large coastal live oaks and sycamores is still apparent. However, the Reserve has had a remarkable recovery. Most of the oaks and sycamores are back and the riparian area is full of willow thickets. The chaparral and coastal sage scrub are also recovering with the return of Laurel Sumac, White Sage, Scrub Oak, and Chamise. This has been followed by much of the fauna which claims this area as home. The birds are back!

In December 2012 the docents of Blue Sky conducted an informal bird count. The Reserve as well as Lake Ramona and most of Lake Poway were surveyed. A total of 59 species were identified. In addition, birding the past two springs has verified the return of expected migrants such as the Pacific-coast Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. The BSER ranger assures me the California Gnatcatcher is back, though I have yet to hear or see it. Compared to bird counts done by Claude Edwards prior to 1999 the bird species currently seen at BSER appear little changed.

The Reserve remains a vibrant place for people. It attracts a surfeit of dog walkers, joggers, and even fishermen hiking to Lake Ramona. For a quiet bird walk in the Reserve I suggest an early start on weekends or a visit during the week. It is possible to get off the main trail and explore the Creek side trail and oak woodlands. The old campground on the way to Lake Poway is also a great location for birds. A new trail from the amphitheater to the main trail is scheduled for completion this year.

For anyone interested in checking out the reserve, it is located about three miles from the Rancho Bernardo Road exit on interstate 15. Go east on Rancho Bernardo road, which morphs into Espola Road as it enters Poway. About a quarter mile past Old Coach road there is a left turn into the Reserve parking lot.



THINGS YOU MAY OR MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT CROWS

July 2nd, 2013 · by Garrison Frost

Crows are fascinating to both birders and nonbirders alike. In that spirit, we thought we'd pull together some information about the birds. Feel free to add any facts in the comments. Enjoy:

Crows are members of the Corvid family of birds that also includes ravens, jays, magpies, and others.

A group of crows is called a murder.

Studies have shown that crows and other corvids <u>are particularly intelligent</u>, possibly more intelligent than some primates. This may have something to do with having unusually large brains relative to their body size.

Few birds elicit such strong opinions from people – our feelings toward them range from total hatred to rapt inspiration.

Crows are deeply embedded in our culture – references to them abound in literature, movies, and television.

Crows like open habitat with a few trees to roost in. Cities and suburbs are practically ideal.

Crows understand that there is strength in numbers, and are known to mob larger predators, such as owls and hawks, often calling in dozens of crows to join the attack. They also post sentinel crows that call to the rest of the flock when a predator nears.

It is assumed that large-scale persecution during the 19th Century and first half of the 20th Century made crows shy of people. They learned quickly, however, that there is safety from guns in villages and cities and that food is abundant there.

While crows can be wary of people, they can be rough on other birds, predating other species' nests. While some birds have adapted to lay more eggs to compensate for this, nest predation from crows has prompted the populations of some sensitive species to reach perilously low levels.

There are actually more crows in the Lower 48 now than there were when European settlers arrived. This is largely due to clearing of dense forests, as well as the birds' ability to thrive in human cities.

If you've got a lot of crows in your neighborhood, the reason probably has more to do with you than the crows. Crows know how to take advantage of food resources, such as open trashcans, and will breed to exactly the level of available food resources.

Crow families will contain up to 20 birds, including younger birds from earlier breeding years that will help raise chicks.

Crows will also make and use tools.

Crows are omnivorous – they'll eat just about anything.

New Website for PAS

By Jeff Ebright, Webmaster

In early July, we launched a new website for PAS. I invite everyone to visit the invite everyone to visit the new site and check it out. For those that have never been to our website, it is at www.palomaraudubon.org. The first thing you will notice is the new layout and color scheme. The main menu has been moved to the top. A side menu was added that shows upcoming events, recent posts, and a list of post categories for filtering the posts displayed. A weekly photo and the most recent ten posts to PAS Blog will be on the Welcome page. Most days, I search for news stories of interest, review notices from Audubon and other conservation organizations, and pass on information on PAS events.

We have several more enhancements planned for the website. As the changes are implemented, I'll let you know about them in future Band Tale issues. For more timely information check the menu tab for 'Website Changes'.

Differences from the Old Website

➤ Menu:

It has been reorganized and moved to the top of the page. The goal is to group the pages by your interest for visiting the website.

➤ Blog (Posts on Birds, Conservation, and PAS **Notices**):

Entries are part of the website and will no longer link to Google blogspot. For blog posts before June 20th, go to http://palomaraudubon.blogspot.com/.

The new blog has the following categories to make it easier to find the posts that most interest you:

Birds (In the News)

Conservation (In the News)

Take Action

PAS Notices (Bird Walks, Programs, General Information)

Look for the menu on the right side of the screen to make your selection.

We will continue to post the Field Trip reports at Yahoo Group: PalomarBird, but will also post them at the website for those that aren't Yahoo Groups members.

➤ Field Trips:

The information has a new format and in addition to directions, we have added Google maps, link to photos, and a link to a website about the location.

➤ Contact Us:

You can now send an email directly from the website to Palomar Audubon. There is also an option to email Officers, Directors, Committee Leaders, and Field Trip Leaders from the website.

➤ Online Bird Guide:

Under Birding Menu is a link to National Audubon's free online bird guide.

➤ Member Photos:

You can preview the photos for each folder by clicking in the bottom right corner of the Photo ICON.

CROWS, from Page 3

Crows and Ravens are not the same thing. Ravens are slightly larger, and much less common in urban areas than crows (photo below of a Raven by Tom Talbott).

Crows are known to have at least 250 different calls.

Crows mate for life.

Crows know how to have fun. Play is common in this species – alone or in groups – sometimes items they find on the ground.

Crows can recognize human faces and remember whether that face presented a threat or a benefit. Crows will even seek revenge on specific humans that have harmed them in the past. Crows will communicate with other crows about dangerous humans or animals.

Crows have been known to gather around dead family members in a kind of funeral.

Crows, like parrots, can learn and mimic sounds made by other birds, animals, and even humans.

There are more than 40 species of crows known worldwide

PALOMAR AUDUBON SOCIETY **WELCOMES** THESE NEW AND RENEWING CHAPTER-ONLY **MEMBERS:**

Helen and Jack Borchelt Orval Carter Trudy Florence Gail DeLalla Dan Lebeaune Malinda and Lyn Gamelson Doug Paulson Ridgon Currie

AND WE APPRECIATE OUR **DONORS VERY MUCH!**

Grav and Al Church Helen and Jack Borchelt



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PROGRAMS

Please join us for our interesting monthly program and refreshments at the <u>Remington Club, 16916 Hierba Drive, Rancho Bernardo.</u> There is a social period beginning at 7:00 pm with the meeting and program getting under way promptly at 7:30 pm.

Thursday, September 26

Neil Solomon

"Birds of the Falkland Islands"

Well-known local bird photographer, Neil Solomon, will share with us his fantastic photos of some of the birds found on the Falkland Islands. Neil will also discuss the lives of these birds and the techniques he used to photograph them. This is Neil's fifth PAS presentation, and like his previous programs, you can count on it being very interesting and informative.





October 24, 2013

The Adventures of

Kody Fluck

and a

Birding Book Exchange

ome hear about and enjoy the experiences our scholarship recipient, Kody, savored at the ABA's Camp Colorado in July. Kody took lots of pictures, saw lots of birds and made lots of friends. He's looking forward to sharing his good time with the generous members of PAS who support our scholarship program!

Coupled with Kody's talk we will have a book exchange. This will be a perfect place to share your gently used birding guides and books of general interest to birders. Already we have some good titles for the taking. Bring those books that you are ready to pass along!





B-2-B

(BIRDER TO BIRDER)

oug Nail is parting with his Kowa scope and you could be the savy shopper who purchases it...one of the finest scopes on the birding scene. This instrument is a Kowa TSN 883 Angled 88mm Prominar spotting scope with the Kowa 77mm/88mm 20-60x zoom eyepiece and full travel cover.

Comes with instructions, too. Less than 3 years in use and priced to sell at \$1,900.00. Call Doug at 760-451-9370.



SUMMER TIPS FOR BACKYARD BIRD LOVERS

(EXCERPT from NWF email)

ere are a few tips to attract your favorite summer bird species!

Native plants: In addition to providing food and shelter, native plants are critical for birds in another way too. During the breeding season, most birds feed insects to themselves and their offspring—often only particular kinds of insects that eat only particular native plants. In fact, *chickadees and warblers* rely on caterpillars for 90 percent of their diet during spring and summer.

Supplemental feeders: Rose-breasted grosbeaks in the East and black-headed grosbeaks in the West migrate south in winter but are active at feeders in the United States during summer.

Sugar-water feeders: Many *hummingbird and oriole* species—also missing from northern regions in winter—frequent sugar-water feeders during the warmer months.

Birdbaths and ponds: On hot, dry days, water will lure a wide variety of summer-only birds. *Indigo and lazuli buntings, gray catbirds, brown thrashers, red-eyed vireos and red-winged blackbirds* are just a handful of likely bathers that may be hundreds or thousands of miles away later in the year.

FIELD TRIPS

Jim Beckman

Thether a seasoned birder or a beginner, you are welcome to join us. For more information call the trip leader shown below. Heavy rain cancels trips. Locations in Thomas Guide Coordinates are shown in parenthesis as (Page-Column Row). Ratings: 1=easy, suitable for all levels, 2=moderate, a bit more walking and possibly some hilly terrain, 3=challenging, longer hikes and may involve some steep terrain.

Please Note: Summer birding can be very warm so be sure to bring sunscreen and sufficient water on walks.

Saturday, September 7, 8:00 a.m.

Penasquitos Canyon Preserve Rancho Penasquitos

(1189-C7) Rating: 2

We will meet at the Rancho de los Penasquitos Adobe Ranch House parking lot and explore trails through grasslands and riparian woodland. Take I-15 and exit at Mercy Road going west. Turn right onto Black Mountain Road and drive a short distance to Canyonside Park Drive (first stop light.) Turn left and continue west to the Adobe Ranch House parking lot. Expect warm weather.

Leader: Jeff Ebright 858-484-3932

Saturday, September 14, 8:00 a.m.

Batiquitos Lagoon

Carlsbad

(1127-A7) Rating: 1-2

From I-5 in Carlsbad, exit east on Poinsettia Lane. Turn right on Batiquitos Drive, drive about ½ mile to Gabbiano Lane, turn right and continue to the end. We will look for ducks, waterfowl, and riparian birds.

Leader: Michael Beeve 290-247-5237

Saturday, September 21, 8:00 a.m.

Kumeyaay Lake

Mission Trails Regional Park,

Santee

(1230-G6) (32.838987,-117.032139) Rating: 2

While City of San Diego budget restrictions have closed Kumeyaay Lake Campground to overnight use, the wooded lake and campground site remain open for Day Use free of charge. From North County, take I-15 south to CA-52 east. Take exit 13 (Mast Boulevard) and turn left on to Mast. Take the first right onto West Hills Parkway Take another right onto Mission Gorge Road. and then make a very slight right onto Father Junipero Serra Trail. At the 4-way stop-sign, make a right onto Bushy Hill Dr., and turn right just past the campground entry kiosk into the free Day Use parking area. We'll meet in the parking lot, start with a 3/4 mile round-trip on the Kumeyaay Nature Trail, then take a 1-mile round-trip walk around Kumeyaay Lake. Park Restrooms will be available, and

we're welcome to use the picnic tables (but no fires or BBQs). Expect warm weather.

Leader: Jim Beckman

858-205-2819

Saturday, September 28, 8:00 a.m.

Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary

Oceanside

http://www.bvaudubon.org/whelan.htm

(1066-F7) Rating: 2

From I-15 take Highway 78 west and exit north on El Camino Real and continue to Douglas Drive. Or from I-5 north, exit east on Highway 76 and continue to Douglas Drive. Take Douglas Dive north approximately 1 mile and turn left on North River Road. Continue west to the entrance gate at the end. NOTE: Arrive no later than 7:45 a.m. Park and we will wait for the caretaker to open the locked gate. We will then enter the Bird Sanctuary as a group. If the gate is already open when you arrive, continue west on the dirt road to the caretaker's house and parking lot. Disregard the "No Trespassing" Signs.

Leader: Sally Sanderson

760-749-6995

Saturday, October 5, 8 a.m.

Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve & Huntington Central Park

Huntington Beach, Orange County (O.C. 857-C3) Rating: 1-2

Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve is the largest coastal salt marsh preserve in the Los Angeles/Orange County metropolitan region. Its 300 acres are a vital oasis for resident shorebirds and millions of migrating birds traveling between the Arctic and South America along the Pacific Flyway. At Huntington Central Park we will see locals and possibly vagrant migrants. We will bird at the Reserve first and then drive to Huntington Central Park. Directions: Take I-5 north past San Juan Capistrano and then take Highway 73 (toll road), north to I-405. (Or continue on I-5 to I-405). Take I-405 north (towards Long Beach). Exit on Warner Ave. West. Continue west approximately 6 miles to Pacific Coast Highway. Turn left (south) and drive about 1 mile to the Reserve parking lot on the left. It's about 70 miles from Oceanside and should take about 75 minutes. Meet at the boardwalk entrance. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy at the Park picnic

Leader: Doug Nail 760-451-9370

FIELD TRIPS, from Page 6

Saturday, October 12, 8:00 a.m.

Lake Hodges Del Dios

(1149-E2) Rating: 2

From I-15 in Escondido exit at Via Rancho Parkway and drive west to Lake Drive. Turn left and drive about ½ mile. Meet at Del Dios Park across the street from the Country Store. We should see waterfowl, shorebirds and a whole host of local residents.

Leader: Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

Saturday, October 19, 8:00 a.m.

La Jolla Coastline La Jolla

(1227-E6) Rating: 1

From Highway 52 driving west exit at La Jolla Boulevard West (formerly Ardath Road). Continue on this road, which will merge with Torrey Pines Road for about ¾ mile, then turn right on Prospect. Continue on Prospect to Coast Boulevard Meet in front of the Bridge Club and restrooms. Parking is all along Coast Blvd and adjacent residential streets. Arrive extra early for the best parking spots. We will be looking for shorebirds, gulls, and seabirds.

Leader: Jack Friery 619-218-7342

Saturday, October 26, 8:30 a.m.

(Note Fall/Winter Start Time)

Daley Ranch Escondido

(1110-C3) Rating: 2-3

From I-15 in Escondido exit at El Norte Parkway and drive east approximately 3 miles. Look for the "Daley Ranch" sign and turn left (north) on La Honda Drive. Continue toward Dixon Lake and on to the Daley Ranch free parking area on your left. Meet at the trailhead kiosk.

Leader: Sally Sanderson

760-749-6995

Saturday, November 2, 8:30 a.m.

Mission Bay Flood Control Channel & Famosa Slough

San Diego

(1268-C4) Rating: 1

Take I-15 south to I-8. Go west on I-8 and exit north on I-5. Take the first off-ramp, Sea World Drive west to South Shores Park Drive (stop light). Turn left and proceed to our meeting place along the frontage road adjacent to the Flood Control Channel. We will be looking for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds in the channel and bay areas and then drive to Famosa Slough.

Leader: Penny Hernandez

760-746-8315

Palomar Audubon Society Chapter-only Membership

Mail your application to:

Palomar Audubon Society P. O. Box 2483 Escondido, CA 92033-2483

Membership in the Palomar Audubon Society includes a subscription to **Band Tales**, Palomar Audubon's bimonthly newsletter, and an invitation to our monthly programs and weekly field trips.

□ New Member - \$20	□ Kenewal - \$20
□ New Family Member -	\$25 \(\sigma\) Renewal - \$25
(payable to Palom	ar Audubon Society)

□ Contribution

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100% of Chapter Membership dues supports projects locally.





Band Tales

September-October, 2013

The Band Tales is an official publication of the Palomar Audubon Society; it is issued bi-monthly and sent to all members as a part of their National Audubon Society membership or Palomar Audubon Society Chapter-only membership.

Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society P.O. Box 2483 Escondido, CA 92033-2483

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	Scholarship	Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

Web Page: http://www.palomaraudubon.org

Webmaster: Jeff Ebright:

palomaraudubon@gmail.com

Board of Director's Meeting Wednesday, September 4th

Wednesday, October 2nd 7:00 p.m. at the Remington Club 16916 Hierba Drive Rancho Bernardo

Note: All Palomar Audubon Society members are welcome at all Chapter Board meetings.

OTHER CALENDAD

		QUICK CALENDAR
September	4	Board Meeting
September	7	Penasquitos Canyon Preserve Walk
September	14	Bataquitos Lagoon Walk
September	21	Kumeyaay Lake Walk
September	<i>26</i>	General Meeting: - "Birds of the Falkland Islands"
September	28	Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary Walk
October	2	Board Meeting
October	5	Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve & Huntington Central
		Park Walk
October	<i>12</i>	Lake Hodges Walk
October	19	La Jolla Coastline Walk
October	24	General Meeting - Kody Fluck & Book Exchange
October	<i>26</i>	Daley Ranch Walk (Note Fall/Winter Start Time)
November	2	Mission Bay Flood Control Channel & Famosa Slough
		Walk