Many thanks to Palomar Audubon Society for their donation of ten Vortex 6.5 x 32 Raptor binoculars to the Sundance Elementary School Bird Watching Project. This donation has brought birding excitement to Sundance Elementary School in Rancho Peñasquitos. Bob Rodrigo, principal of Sundance, tells me with delight that students come running to him to report that they have seen a particular bird. And he is very pleased to report that, for one student who is reluctant to speak or participate in group activities, using a binocular has allowed that student to join the group and be one of the guys.

How did this project develop? As a retired teacher I still love being in a school so, I have volunteered at Sundance Elementary School in Rancho Peñasquitos where my grandchildren are students. The school has a large garden and wild area beyond the playground. As an avid new birder, Bob Rodrigo asked me to create posters of the birds that the children might see during recess. I said, “Yes, I can do that” and proceeded to panic as I am not a photographer. After a few months of wondering how to meet this challenge, I was fortunate to meet Kristztina Scheeff of KS Nature Photography (www.KSNaturePhotography.com) who, with great enthusiasm, took on the project with me.

In September with student help, we mounted fifteen 12x18 photos of local birds on the cyclone fence surrounding the playground. The posters are in full color and provide information in three areas: field marks, food of choice and fun facts. Ten more bird posters and a poster thanking contributors will be mounted in the next month or two.

Mr. Rodrigo has created a Recess Birding program. The children can check out a binocular and bird with him. I participate in Recess Birding on Fridays and have helped them maintain a “Sundance Sightings” chart. I hope to work with the school librarian to develop a display of books about local birds and birds of the world.

I am most grateful to Palomar Audubon for their donation of the binoculars and to Jerry and Arlene Martin, owners of Wild Birds Unlimited of San Diego, for facilitating the purchase of the binoculars from Vortex Optics.

We “more mature” birders have frequent conversations concerning how to encourage young birders. Hopefully we have begun to create more young birders. Thank you Palomar Audubon.

Alice Holmes (My other volunteer job is PAS Membership)
**PAS FOURTH ANNUAL BIRD CLASS**

Palomar Audubon Society is again offering bird classes on consecutive Tuesday evenings beginning Tuesday April 24th. The first three classes will be for beginners and the last three (starting Tuesday May 15th) will be for intermediate birders. The classes will be integrated for beginners taking both classes. There will be three Saturday field trips, May 12th, May 26th and June 9th.

Classes will start at 6:30 Pm and run for 90 minutes. They will be held at the Glassman Recreational Center at 18448 RB Community Center Drive off West Bernardo Drive (the large Casa De Las Campanas Retirement Home is on the east side of this intersection).

The classes will cover the classification of birds, field markings of local birds, behavior, vocalization, tracking, and the different habitats in San Diego County.

Cost for either class is $60.00 and the cost for both is $90.00.

The course will be led by Phoenix Von Hendy, a long-time birding leader in North County and a certified tracker naturalist. For questions about the course contact Richard Fowler at rcfowl@cox.net. To register complete the form below and send with check to Palomar Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2483, Escondido, Ca. 92033-2483 by April 20th.

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**REGISTRATION FORM**

Name(s): ___________________________ Phone ___________________________

E-mail: ___________________________

___ Beginner/novice $60.00 each
___ Intermediate $60.00 each
___ Both classes $90.00 each

Total enclosed: ______________

Mail form and check to Palomar Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2483, Escondido, CA. 92033-2483 by April 20th, 2018.

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**SALTON SEA TRIP RECAP**

Doug Walkley/Dianne Benham

Dianne and Hal Benham once again organized a very successful birding trip to the Salton Sea area over the January 26-28 weekend. Unlike previous years, we were missing our Chief Bird-finder, Bob Miller, who is still recovering from an accident. In his absence, Hal Benham and Doug Walkley took over the role of Bird Guides. A combination of memories, Google Maps, hardcopy Atlases and Aerial photographs allowed us to successfully negotiate all the desired hot spots we selected for Saturday. A day of reconnoitering on Friday sure helped in keeping us away from road closures and mapping errors. Did I mention Sunday? Sunday was another thing, but we'll get to that later.

This trip had broad appeal, with birders (or wannabe birders) coming from far afield. One of our three "Jims" came all the way from Reno. The club also picked up several new members, attracted by Dianne's enticing trip description. It was all of that and more, for our twenty-seven birders.

The Brawley Inn is always very accommodating for us birders, and so early Saturday morning, just after five, there was a satisfying breakfast waiting for us. We were able to gobble down waffles and scrambled eggs (or other, different cuisines) prior to our early morning departure. Our convoy consisted of eight vehicles, and at 6:45 we were a rollin', just as planned! As daylight broke we approached our first stop. It really is awe-inspiring as the land is laid out in front of us and suddenly on both sides of the vehicles are snow geese-- not ten or twenty, but as we rolled further these turned into ten or twenty THOUSAND! Beyond the geese were the Sandhill Cranes, not quite the vast multitude as the geese, but still in
the thousands. We can thank the state government that owns this piece of land and every year plants the special mix of the geese and crane's favorite food to keep them away from the crops.

We slowly zig-zagged our way east towards the Sunny Bono Wildlife Refuge Headquarters. On several occasions the cavalcade stopped to observe Burrowing Owls near their burrows by the roadside. We arrived just in time for lunch. It is not too often when birders, while consuming their lunch, can spot lifers such as Abert's Towhee and a Common Ground Dove! A stroll towards Salton Sea produced the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, another lifer for many. Other specialties here included the Gambel's Quail, Verdin and a Ladder-backed Woodpecker.

This trip is called "The Salton Sea Trip" but the title is really a misnomer. The Salton Sea is in retreat. Places where just a few year's ago we would call out "Greater Yellow Legs" are now desert. Thank goodness for the five scopes that allowed us to identify some of the shorebirds half a mile out on the shore of the lake. The retreat has also left the Red Hill Marina high and dry: no marina, no campground, no facilities, no nothin'. But no, this is not quite true, as the cavities of this Red Hill produced for us two beautiful Great-horned Owls! Typical of this area, the owls have morphed into a slightly gray color.

We mentioned we had an attendee from Reno. Nearing the end of the day, he just had to email his favorite picture to his wife. Which bird was it, you may ask? It was not a bird at all, but it was a highpoint for many: cows, cows and more cows. In fact, the Brandt Feedlot finishes over 95,000 cattle every year. Finishes? Yes, after being on the range for the rest of the year, at the feedlot these cattle are fattened for slaughter.

As we drove along, just as we thought we'd passed the feedlot, darn, there was another branch of it. Well, in any case, it at least produced Red-winged Blackbirds and Brewer's Blackbirds for us.

Now, just a short recap on the Sunday half-day. Three, high-level Fish and Game staff directed us to a managed wetland area. Nearby we found couple of White-tailed Kites. Kites seem to be in short supply these days, so it was a delight to watch them, for quite a while, doing what they do best. We then headed for Ramer and Finney Lakes, hoping to pick up the Neotropic Cormorant. On Ramer Lake we did find the Clark's and the Western Grebe, plus a Green Heron, but Finney Lake, wherever it was, was to be left undiscovered for this trip, as was the Neotropic Cormorant. In our zest to discover this lake we forged on when we should not have. The road narrowed. The bane of California's natural vegetation is the Tamarisk. As we all know now, it is also the bane of nice cars that are trying to make their way to Finney Lake. We were optimistic as we traveled through this jungle because in the near distance we could see telephone poles, and telephone poles meant a main road (we thought). As the country opened up, rather than a main road, lay an impenetrable railway track! As we retreated back, numerous comments were flung out, like: "I'm always up for an adventure" or from another: "xx!!!##  ## xx...". Oh how we missed our guide! Next time we will scout out all of Sunday's hot spots well in advance.

Our final stop was Cattle Call Park. In the authentic wild west town of Brawley, it is only appropriate to have a rodeo ground, and this was it. It was a gorgeous day for a slow walk in the park. Not just any park, but a productive park giving us the Gila Woodpecker, a Western Bluebird and a Phainopepla.

All in all it was a very successful trip, with lots of lifers for some and just lots of smiles for others.

Total Species count: 94
A BIRD’S EYE VIEW

Penny Hernandez

This is what I call a “Bits and Pieces” letter. I don’t have one single idea to write about so I’m going to give you bits and pieces of other people’s ideas.

Look for an article by Alice Holmes in this Band Tales, about a wonderful school project she is involved in with the support of PAS. The Principle at Sundance Elementary, and Alice have been bird watching with the 4th and 5th grade kids on their lunch breaks. To find out more read her letter. Is this something a school in your area would be interested in? Let us know.

Were you unable to go to the Salton Sea trip this year? Find out what you missed by reading Doug Walkley report and seeing photos. Sounds like a great trip and job well done by Dianne and Hal Benham.

We also had a very successful Christmas Bird Count at the end of December. We saw over 150 species of birds. Some of my favorites were Bald Eagle, Burrowing Owl, Vermillion Flycatcher, and Hermit Warbler. The Escondido count covers lakes, mountains, meadows, and deserts, so we get a good variety of species.

As I have mentioned before, a must read for me is Ernie Cowan’s articles in the Union Tribune on Saturdays. Saturday, February 17th’s article was about the return of the Orioles to San Diego after their migration to Mexico at the end of last summer. Start checking out the palm trees in your area and put out your feeders.

Now another good read is Richard Fowlers conservation letters in the Band Tails. He always shares interesting items about local issues and concerns. I believe he will mention the upcoming birding classes that PAS is offering in April. If you know anyone who is a new birder, perhaps these classes will be of interest.

OK, one last tidbit, PAS annual picnic will be June 10, 2018. Mark your calendars. Location and other information is still in the works, so look for further updates coming your way.

Keep your eyes open for the spring migrants and have fun birding.

CONSERVATION NOTES

BIRDING SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Flying into Fort Myers Florida in late January for another Road Scholar Bird Trip, I wondered how last September's Hurricane Irma had affected the area. Surprisingly, there was little obvious effect. Yes there were blue plastic tarps on some roofs and occasion uprooted trees, but that was all I saw. From a personal standpoint an immediate problem was finding my way around a very rapidly growing urban area where even the car rental staff couldn’t locate the new hotel where I was staying (I was eventually saved by GPS).

Our small group of eleven birders started out early the next day with a trip to Harms Marsh, a 578 acre preserve developed back in 1950’s for water management and later water protection. Tricolor Herons were common as were Mottled Ducks, Glossy Ibises, and Palm Warblers. The latter appears to be as common in the Florida Winter as the Yellow-rumped Warbler in the San Diego Winter. We were fortunate to see and hear a Limpkin and the day was topped off by a Snail Kite perched on a nearby tree. It was the only Snail Kite we were to see.

Our second trip was to Six Mile Slough, a private preserve in Lee County. One may think marsh, slough and swamp are used interchangeably, but that doesn't appear to be the case. The latter two have live trees in the body of water, but a marsh does not. The difference between a slough and swamp is not clear to me, though running water is more characteristic of a slough. Six Mile has an extensive boardwalk through the slough, so you can safely look at the gators as well the amazing diversity of plants and other animal life. For me I was excited to finally see my first Pileated Woodpecker as well as a feral sow hog with several piglets.

The next day we went to Sanibel Island, a remarkable conservation success due to the creation of the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, a 6,000 acre refuge of undisturbed mangrove forest. An amazing story of what one person can do to protect wildlife. Darling was a Des Moines Register political cartoonist and committed conservationist who spent his winters on Sanibel. When there was an effort to build houses on the island, Darling appealed to President Truman who established a refuge by executive order in 1945. It is now managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife. There are plenty of opportunities to bird the shoreline or follow some of the inland trails. It is surely enough to occupy a birder for several days.

Our next stop was Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp, a victory for National Audubon. Conservation efforts to stop the harvest of Snowy Egret feathers date back to the early 1900’s. Later problems were the loss of Panther and Wood Stork habitat as well as the destruction of the Bald Cypress forest, all native to the Corkscrew. Audubon led a fight to protect this area and the establishment of a 13,000 acre refuge in 1954. However threats remain to surrounding areas because of development pressure to drain upland areas for housing, thus interfering with the natural water levels of the area. This continues to be an ongoing battle between developers and conservationists.

The Corkscrew has a 2.5 mile boardwalk which winds through the magnificent Cypress forest. We were treated to Wood Storks flying overhead and a family (four
Band Tales

chicks) of Anhingas nested near the boardwalk. The Wood Storks were also nesting, but their nests were off limits to visitors. We visited the Audubon Nature Center where feeders with millet attracted a pair of Painted Buntings as well as an Indigo Bunting.

Our final birding site was the 70,000 acre Webb State Wildlife area, an upland pine woods that appeared very actively managed by the state. Of particular interest to birders were artificial cavities with PVC openings in large pine trees to attract the endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker. Rangers told us that there were about six breeding pairs in the area, but we were unsuccessful in seeing them.

Our group identified 104 bird species and visited five very different habitats. The leader was a local and an enthusiastic birder. It was my 3rd Road Scholar bird trip and definitely my favorite.

FIEL D TRIPS
Jim Beckman

Whether 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.

Saturday, March 3, 8:30 am.
Santee Lakes
Santee
(1231-A5) Rating: 2
From I-15 go east on Hwy 52. Exit at Mast Blvd. Continue east on Mast Blvd. to Fanita Parkway. Turn right and continue south to the entrance to Santee Lakes on your right. Car entry fee is $5.
OR from Mast Blvd, turn left on Fanita Parkway, and continue north to Lake Canyon Dr. Turn right, park and walk in the open gate for free. Meet in the parking lot by the General Store between lakes 4 & 5.
Leader: Tom Trowbridge
760-743-1052

Saturday, March 17, 8:30 am.
Lake Hodges
Del Dios
(1149-E4) Rating: 2
From I-15 in Escondido exit at Via Rancho Parkway and drive west to Lake Drive. Turn left and drive south about 1/2 mile. Meet at Del Dios Park across from the Country Store. We should see waterfowl, shorebirds and a whole host of local residents.
Leader: Hal Benham
858-679-7904

Saturday, March 24, 8:30 am.
Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary
Oceanside
(1066-F7) Rating: 2
From Hwy 78 west, exit north on El Camino Real and continue to Douglas Drive. From I-5 north exit east on Hwy 76 and continue to the Douglas Drive exit. Take Douglas Drive north approximately 1 mile and turn left on North River Road. Continue west on North River Rd. to the entrance gate at the end. Proceed to the Sanctuary on the dirt road. Disregard the “No Trespassing” Signs. Park at the parking area next to the caretaker's house overlooking the lake.
Leader: Doug Walkley
310-387-8190

Saturday, March 31, 8:30 am.
San Pasqual Agricultural Trail
Escondido
(1151-B1) Rating: 2
Meet at the Ysabel Creek Rd. trailhead at the intersection Ysabel Creek Rd. & Bandy Canyon Rd. This intersection can be reached from Highland Valley Rd. east off of Pomerado Rd & I-15, or from Hwy 78 east of the Wild Animal (Safari) Park. We hope to see local residents, which include Cactus Wren, Greater Roadrunner, and a few raptors, possibly the Zone-tailed Hawk. Bring a lunch for an after-birding picnic. Expect warm weather.
Leader: Jim Beckman
858-205-2819

Saturday, April 7, 8:30 am.
Old Mission Dam
San Diego
http://www.mtrp.org/park.asp
(1230-F6) Rating: 2
Take Highway 52 east to the Mast Blvd. exit in Santee. Turn north/east onto Mast Blvd. and then right at the 1st traffic signal (West Hills Parkway). Take West Hills Parkway to Mission Gorge Road and turn right. Take Mission Gorge Road 0.2 miles and merge right onto Father Junipero Serra Trail. Proceed 0.7 miles down Father Junipero Serra Trail to the Old Mission Dam parking lot, located on the right. Arrive extra early to avoid parking on the street. This should be prime time for spring migrants.
Leader: Jeff Ebright
858-484-3932

See Trips on Page 4
**FIELD TRIPS, from Page 5**

**Saturday, April 14, 8:30 am.**

**Dairy Mart Pond/Tijuana River Valley**
San Diego  
(1350 – D5) Rating: 2

From North County, take the I-15 south and merge with the I-5 south to the Dairy Mart Road Exit. Turn right on Dairy Mart Rd. (south). Continue a very short distance and meet at the dirt parking lot on your right just before the concrete bridge and next to the large “TJRVC County Park” sign with the pond on the west side of Dairy Mart Road. We will also drive a short distance to the TJRV Park Headquarters (public restroom and bird feeders) and then visit the nearby Bird & Butterfly Garden where there is a chance of seeing the elusive Black-throated Magpie Jay.

Leader: Jack Friery  
619-218-7342

**Saturday, April 21, 8:30 am.**

**Wilderness Gardens Preserve**
Pala  
(409-E6) Rating: 2

This small wilderness area represents a fine example of oak woodland habitat. Meet in the Wilderness Gardens parking lot, which is about 10 miles east of I-15 on Hwy.76, on the south side of the highway. Look for the “Wilderness Gardens Preserve” sign. Parking fee required, but free with senior County pass. Bring a lunch for an after-birding picnic. Expect warm weather.

Leader: Jim Beckman  
858-205-2819

**Saturday, April 28, 8:30 am.**

**Big Morongo Canyon Preserve**
Morongo Valley, San Bernardino County  
http://www.bigmorongo.org/  
(SB 616-J5) Rating: 1

This is a Day Trip or an Alternate Friday/Saturday Outing

**Day Trip to Big Morongo: 8:30 am Saturday, April 28, 2018** Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is always a spring hot spot and a favorite PAS field trip. In the caretaker’s yard, several hummingbird and seed feeders will attract many birds for your enjoyment. Birds often found here are Western and Summer Tanagers, Vermilion Flycatchers, Yellow-breasted Chat, and several other more uncommon species. Picnic tables and restrooms are available. Bring a lunch for an after birding picnic lunch at the bird feeders.

**Directions to Big Morongo:** (For GPS users the address is 11055 East Dr, Morongo Valley, CA 92256): From Escondido, proceed north on I-15 for approximately 36 miles to the I-15/I-215 split in Murrieta. Change to I-215 north and continue about 30 miles to Hwy 60 east. Take Hwy 60 east approx.18 miles and merge with the I-10. Then continuing east on I-10 approximately 20 miles to exit 114 from I-10 E and proceed 5 miles North on Tipton Rd. to the Preserve parking lot. Allow 2 hours travel time from Escondido.

**Alternate Outing to Whitewater Canyon Preserve & Big Morongo:**

**Friday & Saturday, April 27 & 28, 2018** NOTE: ROOMS ARE IN HIGH DEMAND IN YUCCA VALLEY SO BOOK EARLY

Friday morning will be spent at Whitewater Canyon Preserve with a 9:30 am arrival and a Class One walking tour around the area looking for local birds, California bighorn sheep, and admiring the huge trout that are stocked in several ponds at this location. Bring a lunch for a picnic at the tables near the trout ponds. Restrooms are available.

We will then make our way to Yucca Valley in hopes of checking in to our hotel.

We are recommending the Best Western Joshua Tree Hotel & Suites at 5652 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley 92284 (760) 365-3555 (NOTE: this is not the Best Western Gardens Hotel in the city of Twentynine Palms). We found last year the Travelodge (760) 365-3311, which we have historically used, was in need of a lot of deferred maintenance, but still is serviceable if you prefer to choose it. The Best Western is a recently built facility that provides a scrumptious buffet breakfast (for birders, it conveniently starts at 6:00 am). We will assemble in the lobby at 3:00 pm on Friday, for a tour to Black Rock Canyon Campground in search of the Scott's Oriole, the Pinyon Jay, and Gambel's Quail. We will return to our motels in time to scrub up for a 5:00 pm happy hour at the pool, followed by a 7:00 pm dinner at La Casita located at 57154 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley, CA 92284, just a 1.5 miles East of the Best Western on the immediate corner of a strip mall. On Saturday morning, plan your day to arrive at Big Morongo at 8:30 am. It is just a ten minute drive from the Best Western. Best to have purchased your picnic lunch the night before at the supermarket in the same strip mall as La Casita. **Directions to Whitewater Preserve:** (For GPS users the address is 9160 Whitewater Canyon Rd, Whitewater, CA 92282): From Escondido, proceed north on I-15 for approximately 36 miles to the I-15/I-215 split in Murrieta. Change to I-215 north and continue about 30 miles to Hwy 60 east. Take Hwy 60 east approx.18 miles and merge with the I-10. Then continuing east on I-10 approximately 20 miles to exit 114 from I-10 E and proceed 5 miles North on Tipton Rd. to the Preserve parking lot. Allow 2 hours travel time from Escondido.

**PLEASE ADVISE DOUG WALKLEY AT dwwalkley@aol.com AFTER YOU HAVE MADE YOUR HOTEL BOOKING**

Leader: Doug Walkley  
310-387-8190
Saturday, May 5, 8:00 am. (Note new earlier Spring/Summer 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/Dixon Lake” signs and turn left on La Honda Drive. Continue north toward Dixon Lake and on to the free Daley Ranch parking area on your left. Meet at the trailhead kiosk.  
Leader: Tom Trowbridge  
760-743-1052

**Programs**

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

**Thursday March 22, 2018**

**The Raptors of San Diego County: Live Birds!**

Back By Popular Demand! New Birds!

This program will be a special presentation about local raptors, and will include the opportunity to view some live birds up close. The educational team from the Raptor Institute will be bringing a few native raptor species to the program. We are hoping for a visit from Celerity, the Peregrine Falcon, Blue, the American Kestrel, and Who, the Great Horned Owl. We will learn about the habitats, conservation, and natural history of the various raptor species that can be found in San Diego County. Don't want to miss this one!

Bring the kids – They will love it!

**Thursday, April 26**

**Christopher Adler**

“DIY Birding In And Around Thailand”

Thailand is one of the most easily accessible tropical birding destinations in Asia for the do-it-yourself birder, even if traveling on a shoestring. The country spans nearly 15 degrees of latitude, with habitat that serves wintering Himalayan and Palearctic migrants, as well as resident Sundaic and Indochinese species. Christopher presents a photographic tour of the mainland Southeast Asian avifauna, drawing on recent trips in the winter and spring of 2013 and the summer of 2016 to central, western, and northeast Thailand with stops in Laos and northern Malaysia. His talk will include discussion of the resources available that make Thailand an easy and productive destination for the independent birder, as well as his observations of local human impacts on birds and habitat.

Christopher Adler moved to San Diego in 1999 to join the faculty at the University of San Diego where he is now Professor of Music and affiliated faculty with the Asian Studies Program. He works as a composer and performer of contemporary chamber music, and researches and performs traditional music from Thailand, Laos and Okinawa. He began birding in 2002 and has traveled extensively throughout Thailand and neighboring countries, appending birding to research trips whenever possible.

Mark your calendars, don't miss this one!

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**Palomar Audubon Society Welcomes These New and Renewing Chapter-Only**

Sharel Andrews  
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Gerry & Linda Baade  
Terry & Lynn Badger  
Linda Canada  
Josephine Daughtery  
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Joe Donner  
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**And We Appreciate Our Donors Very Much!**

Sharel Andrews  
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