



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society
A Chapter of the
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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May-June
2020

Editors
Jill & Fred Weber



Greetings PAS members! We hope you are all well and finding ways to stay engaged with our feathered friends during these challenging times. Some of our members have shared their “quarantine” experiences in this issue. Read about this beautiful Rufous Hummingbird in Alison’s column on page 6. Stay safe everyone!

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A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Penny Hernandez, President

Here's hoping you all are healthy and staying sane in this troubled time. All I can say is thank goodness for birding as a hobby. It's a hobby we can all continue to do from any location. I live in a condo in an older neighborhood with old, big trees. I



have a Cooper's Hawk nesting nearby and the American Crow has baby crows that are calling for mom and dad constantly for food (what a noise). I have White-crowned Sparrows, House Finches, Goldfinches and Black Phoebe. The Mockingbird has been singing and I hear a Nuttall's Woodpecker.

The Bluebirds should be back soon. Hopefully you have also been enjoying at home birding.

Please stay well and stay home, and wear those masks when going out

Penny

Late Breaking News!

2020 P.A.S. PICNIC Scheduled for June 14th has been postponed due to Coronavirus restrictions. Stand by for more information.



CONSERVATION NOTES

Ranger Dave, Conservation Chair

A Grebes Tale

As some of you may know besides being the Senior Park Ranger and Trails Manager for the San Diego River Park, I also work with KS Nature Photography as a workshop leader and location guide for photographers, birders and wildlife/ nature enthusiast in both the US and abroad in the UK.

One of our specialties is working with the Grebe population on Lake Hodges reservoir. While there have been questions on and off about the necessity for conservation of the Grebes on Lake Hodges over the years it wasn't until 2019 that those issues came to the forefront.



Here is the Grebes tale:

For years the Lake Hodges has been home to hundreds of nesting grebes. Once a migratory visitor to the lake in the winter these birds have now taken up permanent residence. The population of the colony has increased steadily over the past years, this in combination with the ease of access to the lake by both shoreline and boat has made Lake Hodges an eco-destination for viewing the Grebes and their myriad of courtship behaviors

The problem concerning the grebes in the past couple of years has occurred when San Diego County receives measurable amounts of rainfall in short periods of time that cause the lake to fill into the shallow mud flat areas. Southern California historically does not receive these types of rains until the winter and into spring, about the same time the grebes the lake are preparing for nesting. The flooding of these areas that are normally dry and full of wetland plants become prime habitat for nesting and when it becomes available the Grebes take full advantage and start to nest which is done as a colony.

(Continued on page 3)



**REMINDER:
DEADLINE FOR THE
JULY-AUGUST ISSUE IS
JUNE 15th.
SUBMIT COPY TO
jillnfred@cox.net**

A Grebes Tale (continued from page 2)

The public utilities department is mandated by the State of California to keep the reservoir at a maintenance level due to the safety of the dam. Because there has been no management plan in place in previous years to address the nesting grebes during these water influxes the lowering of the water levels by the Public Utilities Department has resulted in nest failures throughout the colony, which in turn has caused public outcry.

Myself along with Krisztina Scheeff with KS Nature Photography have an ongoing project to document the varied behaviors of the Western and Clarks Grebes that inhabit the waters of Lake Hodges and to work on a plan with the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department to preserve Grebe nests. Because the waters are a result of a purpose-built reservoir for drinking water it is important to understand these behaviors in order to liaise with the public utilities department that own the lake on ways to effectively manage the water levels during breeding season.

We have been on the forefront for years in talking with the public and government agencies involved on how to address this problem and come to a workable solution that would benefit both the water department and the grebe colony.

Using our photographic documentation along with observational data metrics collected with the grebes throughout the years we have created informational flyers that specify where nesting sites are and have historically been and what to look for in order to better help boaters and other users understand their potential impacts to these sites. These flyers have been done in coordination with the outlying open space agency and lake staff.

We have created and lead workshops on grebe behavior at the lake, independently and as part of San Diego's bird festival for the past four years. This also enables us to bring awareness about the Grebes to many of the local Audubon chapters and photography clubs through a series of informational presentations.

So where are we now?

In Mid-August of 2019 at a meeting with the Public Utilities department I was asked to work with City of San Diego biologists to assist in providing observational data and to help create an observational data recording protocol. The data collected throughout the year gives the Public Utilities Department an idea of the Grebe colony behavior and helps identify when and if they will nest thus avoiding a situation like we had in 2019.

Currently Lake Hodges is at its maintenance level and will more than likely be at this level for some years to come. This level wavers above and below the habitat line that the grebes have used in past years to nest. My early predictions for this year are that the colony will not nest though they will as always go through all the steps it takes to get to that point. That being said the season is not over yet and this tenacious water bird may yet find some suitable nesting habitat somewhere around the lake. It may take some time for the tules/reeds around the lake shore to grow enough to provide any viable nesting habitat for the colony as a whole but with the lake at a constant level with any luck it should happen.

If you would like to be involved in collecting data on the grebes of Lake Hodges when you are out on your birding hikes around the lake feel free to contact me. The city is currently waiting on the final approval of the observational data protocol but once out this will provide a guide for all data collected in the future.



SUNDANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MEETS THE 'BIG MONTH CHALLENGE'

Due to weather oddities, the Sundance Big Month turned into a Big Five Weeks and came to an abrupt end as we all began our shelter-in-place experience. In spite of some hitches our Big Month was very successful.

Seventeen third grade, fourteen fourth grade and five fifth grade students participated. They were assisted by four Palomar Audubon members and three devoted parents. Each student kept a record of the birds that they observed, listing the full name of the bird and observations such as size, color, and behavior. Each observation was verified by an adult birder and noted with a bird silhouette stamp on the record sheet.

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Over the five weeks, 24 bird species were observed by the adults. Highlight species were the California Thrasher, Western Bluebird, Chipping Sparrow, Spotted Towhee and Nuttall's Woodpecker. Everyone became familiar with our regulars: Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Cassin's Kingbird, Mourning Dove, and the American Crow.

To determine the prize winners, each observation was assigned points according to details provided. Our Grand Prize winner was a fourth grade girl who observed and recorded 18 bird species. She will receive a Vortex Raptor 8.5x32 binocular, a bird feeder and bird seed. The top birder in each of the three grades will each receive a Vortex Raptor 8.5x32 binocular. The book, 'Birds of Southern California' by Garret and Dunn will be awarded to four birders. An additional four birders will receive the National Geographic Explorer Field Guide to Birds and four others will receive Paint by Stick-er: Birds.

Prizes have been provided by Palomar Audubon and with funds from a small grant administered by the Sundance Elementary School Principal, Bob Rodrigo. His enthusiasm for birding has driven this program.

I am very grateful to Palomar Audubon for their support and encouragement. Many thanks to the adult birders who helped with this special challenge: Lori Andrews, Eve Martin, Alex Schlacter, Anne Mulford, Rosemean Hussain and Dominic Ramundo. Their love of birds and their enthusiasm made the Big Month Challenge a success.

Alice Holmes



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

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Carolee Caffrey Celeste Cantu
David Cowan Mike and Meredith Dow
Gary and Cheryl Grantham
Eva Harden Nancy Hattox
Jack and Constance Lee
Robin Kohler and William Lee
Connie Luizzi Heidi Marc-Aurele
Beverly Pecunia Jack Peterson
***AND WE APPRECIATE OUR
DONORS VERY MUCH!*****

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Diane Schroeder
Larry and Beth Smith
John & Kate Tilton
Tom Trowbridge
Fred & Jill Weber
Paul Zepf**

BIRDING TEMECULA TO IDYLLWILD

BY DOUG WALKLEY

If you are tiring of self-isolating, then consider this day trip to Idyllwild. Diane and I were in desperate need of an essential food product, namely a delicious cinnamon bun that can only be found at a corner grocery store in Idyllwild. So yesterday we headed out all masked up for this destination. Of course we tired along the way, so by necessity made several stops along the way. The first stop we discovered we had our field glasses along, so called out two rock wrens located in the boulder fields about a mile before Aguanga. The second stop was a pitstop at the closed Stage Coach Inn where, with a little patience, we found our usual ten species, however, this time it included a gorgeous Bullock's Oriole. Off we go again to a newly discovered area about a mile from the crest of 371 where to the left is a cactus field. And what should be there were there: a pair of cactus wrens (and two shrikes). We followed someone into Riverside Lakes Estates as always where we saw a dozen yellow-headed blackbirds and six tri-colored blackbirds together with 28 other species around the lake. Our two final stops were Ramona Trail and the Black & Decker Meadow. The Corona Virus has kept both Hemet Lake and Idyllwild Nature Preserve closed but this still did not keep us from getting a great list of 63 species... and the cinnamon buns were delicious. Try it, you will love it.

Here's our incidental list:

Canada Goose 10	Blue-winged 2
Gadwall 1	Mallard 6
Bufflehead 6	Ruddy Duck 30
California Quail 17	Pied-billed Grebe 6
Western Grebe 6	Clark's Grebe 2
Rock Pigeon 2	Band-tailed Pigeon 3
Eurasian Collared-Dove 8	Mourning Dove 15
Anna's Hummingbird 4	American Coot 106
Killdeer 6	Double-crested Cormorant 1
Great Blue Heron 1	Turkey Vulture 2
Northern Harrier 1	Red-shouldered Hawk 1
Red-tailed Hawk 9	Acorn Woodpecker 4
Nuttall's Woodpecker 2	Hairy Woodpecker 1
Northern Flicker 3	Black Phoebe 3
Cassin's Kingbird 7	Loggerhead Shrike 2
Steller's Jay 15	California Scrub-Jay 5
American Crow 10	Common Raven 14

Mountain Chickadee 1	Oak Titmouse 4
Horned Lark 1	Tree Swallow 15
White-breasted Nuthatch 6	Pygmy Nuthatch 3
Rock Wren 2	House Wren 1
Cactus Wren 2	European Starling 3
California Thrasher 1	American Robin 3
House Sparrow 2	House Finch 6
Lesser Goldfinch 8	Chipping Sparrow 1
Dark-eyed Junco 1	Bullock's Oriole 1
Hooded Oriole 5	Western Tanager 1
White-crowned Sparrow 8	
Yellow-headed Blackbird 12	
Western Meadowlark 4	
Red-winged Blackbird 5	
Tricolored Blackbird 6	
Brown-headed Cowbird 1	
Great-tailed Grackle 9	
Yellow-rumped Warbler 9	
Black-headed Grosbeak 1	

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 - \$25** ☐ **Renewal - \$25**

(payable to Palomar Audubon Society)

☐ **Contribution**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **ZIP** _____

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*100% of Chapter Membership dues supports
projects locally.*

RARITIES REPORT BY ALISON DAVIES

Hello friends,

I hope everyone is safe and well. Due to the current lockdown situation, I have not been birding outside of my own yard for over two months, so this time I will be reporting on my sightings at home.

All of the wonderful rain that we had kept a lot of birds under cover, but just before the last storm, a beautiful male Black-headed Grosbeak show up at my new feeder:



Yesterday afternoon, the female BHGR dropped in for a snack! Here's a poor photo, taken through two sliding glass doors:

Regulars at the feeder include a California Scrub Jay, five White-crowned Sparrows, a Lincoln's Sparrow, Lesser Goldfinches, House Finches, Mourning Doves, California Towhees, and Song Sparrows. Frequently chattering nearby is a territorial House Wren, and occasionally a Bewick's Wren. A Black Phoebe observes the action from a safe distance, and a Spotted Towhee perches on the fence, trying to work up the courage to come in for a meal. Last week, a pair of Lawrence's Goldfinches made a brief stop before they continued on their way.

A couple of weeks ago, a Black-chinned Hummingbird zoomed up to the nectar feeder but sped away before I could grab my camera. Within the same hour, a beautiful male Rufous Hummingbird appeared at the same feeder, and he was a "Lifer" for me!

Two Acorn Woodpeckers, new residents on the block that surely ventured away from nearby Kit Carson Park, are busy drilling holes in our palm trees and stashing acorns away. Last year's Nuttall's

Woodpecker finally showed up today and repeatedly announced his arrival to the entire neighborhood. A pair of Western Bluebirds is busy preparing a nest in a cavity in my neighbor's tree trunk, and I suspect they are the same pair that raised one baby last year in the same spot.

Raptors in the surrounding airspace include Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks (including a Light Morph), Turkey Vultures, and a devoted pair of Red-shouldered Hawks. Although I've seen them mating, I haven't found their nest yet but I'm sure it's nearby. During the night, Great Horned Owls call out from our pine tree and Barn Owls screech as they glide silently through the darkness.

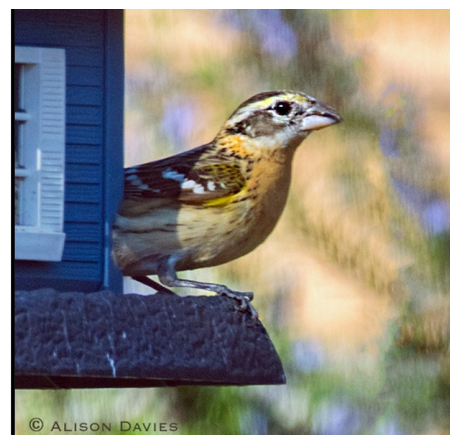
Several Cassin's Kingbirds are still hanging around the neighborhood, and I suspect that a pair may have a nest in a tree across the street. A male Hooded Oriole scolds me incessantly when I wander around out in the yard. He and his mate built a nest in one of our palm trees last year, and I'm hoping they will do so again this year. Both of them were vocalizing and actively moving around together this evening.

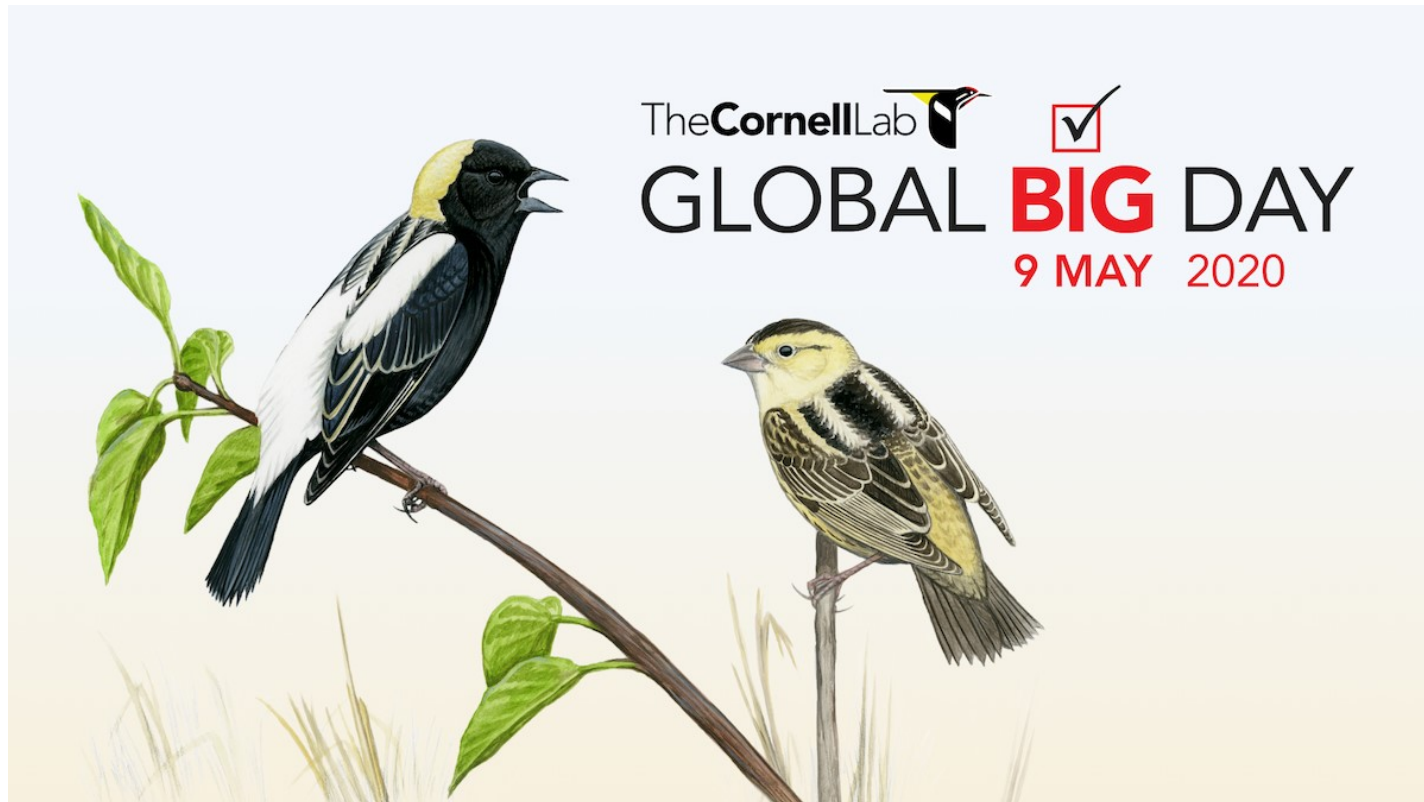
And finally, there are the "sundowners" – the birds that can be seen in the sky after sunset, flying to their overnight roosting destination. As Swallows swirl through the air snapping up insects, Double-crested Cormorants pass overhead in waves, at times numbering more than a hundred every fifteen minutes. American Crows are traveling by the hundreds as well, with single birds interspersed in between, including White-faced Ibis, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Mallards, and a few nights ago, three Canada Geese on their way north.

Where in the world does this plethora of avian diversity exist, you ask? Surely it must be a wildlife sanctuary in a remote wilderness preserve! But no – this is **city** bird life, right here in Escondido, home of Palomar Audubon Society! We are surrounded by an amazing array of wildlife, which we can all enjoy if we just stop...look...and listen.

Wishing you many new and exciting backyard visitors while the "stay at home" orders remain in effect, and hopefully we'll all be out on the trails again soon!

Take care and stay well!
Alison





BIRDING'S BIGGEST DAY IS BACK!

Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you, and this year is no different. While not everyone may be able to leave home to bird this year, Global Big Day is still an opportunity to check in with the birds in and around where you live. Join us on 9 May and be a part of a global birding community by sharing what birds you see with eBird.

Participating is easy. Wherever you are, you can be a part of the global community of birders on 9 May. Please remember to always put safety first and follow all local safety guidelines and closures. You can enjoy birds from inside your home and still be part of Global Big Day. If you can spare at least 5 or 10 minutes, report your observations to eBird online or with our free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit checklists of birds throughout the day at different times. Can you find more birds in the morning, or the evening? You never know what you might spot. Your observations help us better understand global bird populations through products like these animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

This year, Global Big Day will focus on the number of checklists we can collect as a global team. Last year, 35,209 eBirders from 174 countries collected an astounding 92,284 checklists in a single day. Will you join us on Global Big Day to make 2020 the year that we surpass 100,000 checklists of birds in one day? Help us set a new checklist record!

Learn more and prepare with our Global Big Day resources.

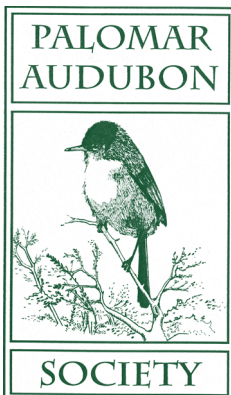
Happy birding,
Team eBird



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May-June, 2020

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 Palomar Audubon Society Chapter membership.



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Board of Director's Meeting

No Meetings for May & June

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.*

QUICK CALENDAR

**NO MEETINGS OR WALKS
 SCHEDULED AT THIS TIME DUE TO
 COVID 19 RESTRICTIONS.**