



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society
A Chapter of the
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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November-December
2020

Editors
Jill & Fred Weber



Glossy Ibis photographed by Trysten Loeffke June 2020
Read about this rare bird sighting in Trysten's article on page 6.

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A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Penny Hernandez, President

I hope you all did your civic duty and voted. I also hope you recycled all those political ads. I pity the poor mail person this time of year.

As you read through this newsletter you will see a note from Jim Beckman about the Christmas bird count. We will be doing the count in accordance with National Audubon's rules for a healthy and safe count. Let Jim know if you have any questions or would like to participate in the count. Sad to say there will be NO CBC lunch.



Most of my birding lately has been up at Sunny's house in Valley Center.

The White-crowned Sparrows have shown up. She always has Spotted Towhees (at least 3-4), we even saw juveniles this year. I'm amazed how fast the baby quail grow up. It's hard to tell them from the adults now, there's at least one family of seventeen. I saw a Junco (Oregon) with the really black head, I'm sure more are on the way. Sunny has a long list of yard birds, ask her next time you see her. She provides everything the birds, coyotes, deer, and squirrels want or need.

I want to thank the Board for working during this pandemic. We had a meeting in September in a backyard setting, sitting six feet apart. We also voted via email to have the Christmas bird count. Jim has worked with Ken Weaver on the count. Ranger Dave and Trysten are still working on giving us conservation information (see elsewhere in newsletter). I mentioned last time that Sunny is still doing our banking and Joan and Alice has kept up on their jobs. Of course, since you are reading this newsletter, you know that Fred and Jill are doing a great job too. Now to the President, she has done as little as possible.

Once again, stay safe, good birding, and hopefully we can get together soon.

Penny



CONSERVATION NOTES

Ranger Dave, Conservation Chair

The Fly By: Conservation Updates

I hope everyone has been enjoying my conservation stories over the past year and have possibly even visited some of the areas and birds I have highlighted within the San Dieguito River Park. I have had a really fun time putting all these great projects and stories into words for all of you. I wanted to take this time to share with everyone the things that myself and the Palomar Audubon Society have been busy with in regards to conservation efforts.



You may have noticed that there is a common theme to my stories and that theme unfortunately is loss of habitat. Due to California's propensity for development loss of habitat has become a key factor in many species fight for survival. Earlier this year the Endangered Habitat League reached out to me and the Palomar Audubon Society for support on some of the environmental bills that are in the works around the state. I wanted to share these with you and let you know of a local conservation issue that you can be a part of.

The first bill that the Palomar Audubon Society supported this year was SB474. This bill seeks to reign in unwise development in state-mapped "Very High Fire Hazard Severity" zones and in areas where firefighting costs are shifted to the taxpayer-at-large. The benefits are numerous: Safer and easier to evacuate communities, targeted to high risk zones, saves the taxpayer money and most importantly lessens wildlife habitat loss due to development encroaching into wildlands.



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The second bill that we supported this year was AB3030. This bill seeks to protect 30% of California's lands and waters by 2030. There is currently approximately 22% of land area in permanent protection leaving an additional 8% to protect. All in all, it would improve protection of California's already unparalleled biodiversity, increase climate resilience, promote collaboration, increase opportunities to sequester carbon through natural measures, and enhance public access for all people in the state. During a recent meeting with the SoCal Audubon Chapter Council we learned that the bill quickly passed the Assembly in June and was sent onto the Senate Appropriations where it was held for a couple of reasons. One of those reasons being money in an uncertain time. Unfortunately that marks the end of the line for this bill in 2020. Hopefully next year will be a better year to try again.



Last but certainly not least an update on the continuing story of the Grebe colony at Lake Hodges. Things did not go as planned this year concerning

the Grebes. Despite many warnings to the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department regarding water levels during the nesting season this year's entire colony of nests were lost. In preparation for next year the Palomar Audubon Society will be forming a Citizen Science Group in accordance to City of San Diego guidelines to help better inform and hopefully have a greater impact for response. This group of volunteers will help monitor and coordinate action regarding the Grebe colony at Lake Hodges. While monitoring can take place anytime the key times will be around that time of the year breeding traditionally takes place, usually between February to April. I am currently awaiting the proper forms for approval and will be seeking able volunteers to help monitor. If you are interested please do not hesitate to contact me. The Palomar Audubon Society was crucial in getting the Lake Hodges area designated as a Globally Important Bird area in the past. I believe we can have a big impact again regarding the Grebes.

Book Review by Jill Weber
THE LIFE HISTORY OF A TEXAS BIRDWATCHER
 by Karen Harden McCracken

This wonderful book was recommended to me by a fellow PAS member who was lucky enough to have met Connie Hagar and to have become her friend in the 1950s.

Connie Neblett Hagar, a tiny lady who became to be known as the "bird woman of Rockport" developed a love of nature as a child and young adult in Corsicana, TX. She moved to the Texas coast in 1935 to be closer to the hundreds of species of birds that regularly reside and migrate through. To occupy his time while Connie was birding, her very understanding and supportive husband, Jack Hagar, bought and ran a set of 8 cottages for visiting birders.

Connie birded almost every day, completing more than 35 years of "nature diaries" that listed every bird that she saw along with other flora and fauna she encountered. These diaries were eventually donated to Texas A & M where they are still studied by naturalists and conservationists today.

Although the male birders of her era always questioned her findings, she would just sweetly invite them to come to Rockport and stay in one of the cottages. She would then take the current skeptic out and repeatedly prove to him that her sightings were correct. Overtime she earned their respect and made coastal Texas a mecca for all serious birders.

This is a fascinating account of the power of one person—a dedicated woman who so loved nature that there is now a Connie Hagar Wildlife Sanctuary and The Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary in the Rockport area. Oh, by the way, Connie always birded in a dress. She felt that "dungarees" were just too unflattering and not very ladylike.

The author of this book, Karen Harden McCracken, was a personal friend of Connie Hagar and acquired her birding skills from Connie.

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This is not just an in-depth biography; it is also a tribute to a dear friend. The forward was written by Roger Tory Peterson. He met Connie in 1948 when she had already made a name for herself and he too became an admirer and lifelong friend. There is so much more in this wonderful book than I can possibly convey here. It is just an engrossing and inspiring read! Although long out of print, used copies can be found at Amazon.com.

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**Palomar Audubon Society
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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.

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

RARITIES REPORT

Alison Davies

Hello friends,

Migration season is underway and there have been many exciting rare birds passing through San Diego County recently! Fan favorites include:

American Redstart	Hooded Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler	Lucy's Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler	Mountain Plover
Bobolink	Palm Warbler
Broad-billed Hummingbird	Plumbeous Vireo
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Prairie Warbler
Calliope Hummingbird	Prothonotary Warbler
Canada Warbler	Red-eyed Vireo
Chestnut-collared Longspur	Tennessee Warbler
Clay-colored Sparrow	Tricolored Heron
Dickcissel	Virginia's Warbler
Grace's Warbler	Yellow-green Vireo

Hope you've been able to see most (if not all) of these beautiful birds, and there will be many more to come so keep those binoculars handy!

Happy birding!
Alison



Tricolored Heron photographed at the Tijuana River Estuary by Fred Weber

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Jim Beckman

ESCONDIDO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 2021

Each year between December 14th and January 5th, thousands of birders and nature enthusiasts participate in one or more of the 2000+ Christmas Bird Counts held annually in the United States, Canada, and many other Western Hemisphere countries. This year will mark the 121st year for this event.

This holiday season please join with the other birders for this important citizen science effort sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The one-day bird counts provide valuable data about the number of bird species and numbers of each species occurring within a set geographical area.

Palomar Audubon Society would like to extend an invitation to all birders to participate in the annual **Escondido Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, January 2, 2021**. The count circle incorporates mostly rural areas near Escondido, Valley Center, Ramona, and Poway. Fantastic birding skills are not a requirement – an extra pair of eyes is always helpful.

Due the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Audubon Society has put in place new rules for this year's CBC's: **1.** All after-birding compilation meetings are canceled. **2.** Social distancing and masking are required at all times in the field. **3.** Carpooling may only occur within existing familiar or social "pod" groups. **4.** All activities must comply with all current state and municipal COVID-19 guidelines.

After November 15 2020, for additional information and/or team assignments, contact the Escondido CBC senior compiler, Ken Weaver by phone at (760) 723-2448 or by email at gncatch-er@sbcglobal.net.

Again this year, Palomar Audubon Society is making a concerted effort to have more of it's members participate in this important event. Sign up after November 15, and join the fun!

GLOSSY IBIS STORY

By Trysten Loeffke

An Ibis, a Dairy, and the Making of San Diego Birding History

Back in late June and early July of this year, San Diego County birding accomplished something that is becoming increasingly infrequent. The addition of another species to its list of recorded birds. This latest addition was a long awaited Glossy Ibis.

In San Diego County many of us will be familiar with the large, dark wetlands bird with a russet-colored body and shimmering iridescent wings known as the White-faced Ibis. It's long, decurved bill and habit of hanging out in groups or flying in V-formation makes it a particularly noticeable bird. But here on the West Coast we are much less familiar with its uncommon Eastern cousin, the Glossy Ibis.



At first glance Glossy Ibis are almost indistinguishable from their cousin the White-faced. But with a bit of practice and some good views the one and only distinguishing feature can be identified: the small dark region around the face and eyes. On White-faced the eyes are pink, in the Glossy they are dark. Adult White-faced have a thin white line that borders the facial skin, on the Glossy this line doesn't quite make it around the back of the eye and it has the faintest blue tinge to it. The differences are slight. The minute details that distinguish this species makes a close view and good lighting essential for I.D., two conditions that are seldom associated with most birding excursions. But nonetheless, in June San Diego County finally got it's first record of a Glossy.

It all started with an interesting bit of I.D. confusion. An ibis was photographed near Lake Hodges that got reported by the photographer on the 22nd of June as Glossy Ibis. After review by some of the local experts, the bird in the photos was determined not to be a Glossy, but rather an expected White-faced Ibis. This little event prompted several local birders to pour through old photos of ibis in the county looking for any that might contain a hidden Glossy. And lo and behold, that very same day a photograph from early 2019 turned up of an ibis from the wild population living in the Safari Park that looked like a Glossy. A species never before seen in San Diego County, but discovered a year to late, meaning that no one would have the opportunity to see it. Or would they?

Early the next morning some of the county's most preeminent birders decided to trek out to the San Pasqual Valley and have a look at the local ibis population in search of a Glossy. And sure enough they found one. From the edge of a road they spotted it feeding on a small hill just inside a dairy with small flock of White-faced Ibis.



The call went out that there was indeed a Glossy in the county, but the trouble was that the bird was on private dairy property with a strict no visitors protocol enforced. A few birders attempted to find the bird again from the road, but with no shoulder, blind corners, and speeding traffic the safety of such a venture was dubious. The unlikelihood of success was compounded by the fact that the bird seemed to spend most of its time in parts of the dairy property that were not even visible from the road.

Later that afternoon, after an unsuccessful search for the ibis from the road, I reached out to the dairy owners, a family who's ancestors have been dairy farmers for generations. I explained the situation and the significance of this ibis to the owner and he was very gracious and understanding.

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By late that evening I had secured permission for a group of birders to enter the property at dawn the next morning.

Just after sunrise on the 24th of June, we lead a group of birders and were allowed onto the dairy property by the owner, who showed us where he knew the the White-faced Ibis liked to hang out in the cow pens. It only took a very few minutes of searching before the cry went out that there, in all it's glory, was the first confirmed record of a Glossy Ibis for San Diego County right in front of us. The trip was a success! The dairy owner enjoyed the birders and explaining the inner working of his facility.



Because of how well the first trip went, I was able to arrange a second trip for that coming weekend. This time word had more time to travel around and by Saturday morning, again at sunrise, some 52 birders had assembled to see the Glossy. It was quite a spectacle to see: A vast congregation of birders all



with binoculars, high-powered scopes, and telephoto camera lenses trained on an even larger quantity of cows, muck, manure, and an ibis that on the surface look just like all the rest.

This trip would become the largest organized group of birders ever assembled to see a single rarity at a single site in San Diego County birding history!

In total, three separate organized groups were able to enter the dairy property between the 24th of June and the 11th of July, with approximately 114 birders from all over Southern California getting to see the Glossy. We all enjoyed each trip to see the Glossy and it was all thanks to a very gracious dairy farmer.

And now the search is on. What will become San Diego's next new species?

--Trysten Loeffke

To all of our PAS members

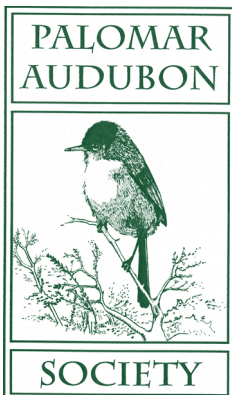


Social Distancing Bird Style!

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November-December, 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 November-December

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.**