



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society
A Chapter of the
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume XXXVI
No. 3

May-June
2021

Editors
Jill & Fred Weber



TheCornellLab 
GLOBAL
BIG DAY 
8 MAY 2021
ebird.org/globalbigday

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* © John C. Mittermeier Macaulay Library

Global Big Day—8 May 2021

On 8 May, will you join birders from more than 175 countries and be a part of Global Big Day? You don't have to commit to birding for 24 hours—even 5 or 10 minutes of watching birds at home makes you part of the team. Last year, Global Big Day brought more birders together virtually than ever before. Help us break last year's records and make this year's Global Big Day bigger than ever before!

Inside this Band Tales

A Bird's Eye View page 2
Conservation Notes page 2
Twitching Tales page 3

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Penny Hernandez, President

Coming soon to your mail boxes. Not only the PCH letter, but the PAS letter.

Our yearly solicitation letter will be arriving soon. I know it seems like we haven't done much this year, but we have. Please look for this letter and donate whatever you are comfortable with.



For those of you who are reading this newsletter but are not members and do not receive THE LETTER, here is what you don't

know. The Chapter, with Tom Trowbridge as designer and builder, has made a wonderful water drip at Daley Ranch. He has planted over 30 native plants that will attract birds and butterflies. The Chapter is looking into getting benches to enable people to sit and enjoy the calming water sounds and view nature taking advantage of the water and plants.

We also participated in the Christmas bird count, January 2, 2021. There were 86 observers and 155 species counted.

Let's not forget the newsletters. Even without field trips and meetings, the Webers have provided us with interesting and informative newsletters including color bird photos taken by PAS members.

Currently, we are working with Friends of Daley Ranch. They have asked us to write a letter to the San Diego Foundation because they are trying to get a grant for a multicultural interpretive trail at Daley Ranch. Besides the letter, we will be helping them identify birds and where they will find them. Thank you Sunny for writing the letter. Now it's up to the Friends.

One last thing before I go. We have heard from Ilene Littlefield's son that there will be a small service on May 13th, at St. Bartholmew church in Rancho Bernardo for Ilene. If you would like more information please call Sunny or me – our phone numbers are on the back of the newsletter.

Here's hoping we can get together soon. Stay healthy.

Penny

CONSERVATION NOTES

Ranger Dave, Conservation Chair

Ethics in the Great Outdoors

I hope everyone is still keeping healthy, safe and staying happy. In February I got the pleasure of co-leading four great workshops about those ever-adorable Rushing Grebes for the San Diego Audubon Bird Festival. Though it was a slightly augmented format due to the persistent circumstances we all still find ourselves in everybody in attendance had a great time. There were a lot of new people that had just taken up birding and bird photography because of the pandemic and it was great to see everyone enjoying themselves outside and having an interest in documenting and viewing all the great wildlife we have here in Southern California. However, frequently during our hikes, I did find myself educating everyone about the need for ethics when doing these activities.

It reminded me that conservation requires us to carry more than our packs and cameras into wild places. A thoughtful frame of mind and understanding of outdoor ethics are also essential. In light of all the new interest in birding and bird photography I wanted to take a little time to go over some of the key points we can all take into the field with us the next time we go out.

- Be aware of sensitive and threatened species that might be vulnerable to disturbance.

- Do not share nest locations of sensitive species except with appropriate wildlife officials or conservation scientists. This happens all too often and birds leave their nests because of it. If a bird is nesting please move on as quickly as possible.

- Stay at a distance where you are not agitating birds or modifying their behavior, especially near nests. A sign that you are too close is if a bird continually moves away from you.
- Leave dogs at home if in an area with ground nesting birds. Shorebirds, such as Snowy Plovers, that nest on beaches and many of our small birds that nest in shrubs are especially vulnerable to dogs. Dogs will flush birds from nests and sometimes trample that nest.
- Limit use of playing back bird songs in order to rouse



birds — Do not use in heavily birded areas or for sensitive species. Continually playing back bird songs can harm the bird. The recorded song may be heard by the bird as a challenge from a competitor, resulting in unnecessary stress on the bird. It can also distract the bird from other activities, such as caring for its young.

- Never bait or flush birds.
- Stay on designated trails, do not trample vegetation. Please at all times stay on trails and follow any regulatory signage for the area you are in. Most of the open spaces in Southern California are set up for the protection of its natural resources and any excursions off trail will automatically impact these fragile ecosystems.
- If leading a birding group, be aware of group size and make sure it is not so large that it is damaging the habitat or interfering with others using the same area.
- Make sure all group members are aware of and practicing ethical birding guidelines
- Do not use flash photography on owls or other nocturnal birds or animals.
- Drive slowly and carefully if birding or photographing by car. They can be useful as blinds.
- Don't point binoculars towards other people or directly into yards or windows.
- Always be polite and courteous to non-birders you encounter, share your knowledge when appropriate.
- If birding with others, be respectful of the ability of all group members, be encouraging and share your knowledge with beginners.

It is a lot of information but fortunately most of it is common knowledge type of stuff. Birding and bird photography for me is a very non-intrusive act. If you approach it with a positive attitude and basic reverence for the outdoors you will be greatly rewarded. Some of the greatest experiences I have had outdoors are the ones I never planned on. Remember that your actions shape others perceptions of the birding community and can have a major influence on those you are birding with.

TWITCHING TALES

By Trysten Loeffke

In the U.K., the term “Twitching” refers to the act of purposefully seeking out a previously reported rare bird. Many of us here in the U.S. engage in such a pursuit as well, although few of us refer to it as twitching. Over the past two months, San Diego County has played host to many rarities. Some continuing birds, others considered “minor rarities”, but a few, in particular, stood out as “serious twitches”.

On the evening of March the 11th, a keen-eyed birder spotted a female Bronzed Cowbird in a small neighborhood park in the southern Rancho Bernardo area. The word went out and before dawn the next morning the vigil had begun. The “twitch” was on. A number of us searched the area for the bird and about an hour after sunrise it appeared, along with about twenty-five Brown-

headed Cowbirds. Male Bronzed Cowbirds are glossy black with striking red eyes, however, female Bronzed Cowbirds are very similar to the ubiquitous Brown-headed Cowbird, except for a few key features. A slightly larger, stockier size, a characteristic hump-like appearance on the shoulders, and generally the presence of red eyes. However, it was later determined that this was a young female, and as such its eyes weren't all that red, especially in the poor light of early morning. Overall, the twitch was a success and no less than twenty birders saw the bird that day. Many more birders were able to see it in the days and weeks that followed, with the last report of the bird being on March the 30th (although the bird may still be in the area, as no one has checked recently).



Photo by Aedyen Loeffke

Now, you may be wondering why only certain birds attract such an immediate and drastic response from the serious “twitchers”, while others seem to go unnoticed. Well, it's all due to the relative rarity of the bird and who needs what species for which of their lists. In general, the rarer the bird, the greater the response. In the case of the Bronzed Cowbird, this was one of only a handful of records of that species in the county. In the U.S., Bronzed Cowbirds are normally found in the Sonoran Desert and Southern Texas, with their range extending all the way down to the northern edge of South America. As such, all but one of the previous county records of this species have been from the desert side of the mountains. As you may have guessed from their name, Bronzed Cowbirds practice an unusual breeding behavior known as brood parasitism, meaning that the female cowbirds will lay their eggs in the nests of other species, leaving the host species to raise the cowbird's chick. This behavior is shared by only a few birds, notably the cowbirds and the Old World cuckoos.

Another notable “twitch” came in the form of a Blue-headed Vireo on April 7th. Again it was a small neighborhood park that produced this rarity, this time in the Carlsbad area. As with the cowbird, the report went out and “twitchers” arrived on the scene. However, unlike the cowbird, this bird became what is known as a “one-day wonder”, being present for only one day before disappearing entirely, never to be seen again. This meant that only the birders who went that searching that very day were able to

see the bird. This bird had a habit of foraging in one particular pine tree and then disappearing for long periods of time, before revisiting the same tree. For us twitchers, this meant that we had to spend several hours standing on a very small patch of grass, waiting for the bird to return. It eventually did return in the late afternoon and a handful of us were able to photograph the bird before it disappeared into history.



Photo by Trysten Loeffe

Blue-headed Vireos are a rather interesting species. They are an East Coast species, breeding in the Appalachians and the boreal forests of Canada, and wintering in the American South and Central America. Its head is more of a steely gray than blue, but I suppose blue has a better ring to it. The Blue-headed Vireo was once considered to be the same species as its closest cousins, the Cassin's Vireo and the Plumbeous Vireo. Together they were known as the Solitary Vireo, until 1997 when taxonomists and geneticists determined that they should be split into the three separate species we know today. The Plumbeous Vireo became the central of the three species, breeding in the Southern Rocky Mountain and Great Basin area and wintering in Southern Arizona and Western Mexico. This species is almost entirely gray and white, and its unusual name is a reference to the Latin word for the color of lead. Plumbeous Vireos are rare in San Diego County as well, but we have records of them on almost an annual basis. The Cassin's Vireo is the westernmost of the three species, only breeding along the West Coast and wintering in Western Mexico; and it is the only one of the Solitary Vireo Complex to occur regularly in the county, breeding in the mountains and foothills. This species is named after John Cassin, an ornithologist from the 19th Century who published the first book on birds of the West. There are several other species named after him, including our familiar Cassin's Kingbird. The Cassin's Vireo is very similar to the Blue-headed Vireo and separating them takes great care.

Not all twitches are quite as successful as these two were, but if we have learned anything from these two stories it is that unusual birds can sometimes turn up in unexpected places. Rare birds are, by definition, uncommon and hard to find, but if you keep your eyes peeled you never know what you may find!

PALOMAR AUDUBON SOCIETY AND THE ESCONDIDO PUBLIC LIBRARY TO PRESENT A VIRTUAL ZOOM EVENT

Tuesday, June 29 @ 2 p.m.

Palomar Audubon Society is teaming-up with the Escondido Public Library to present a virtual Zoom meeting describing our common local birds. This presentation will be given by long-time PAS members, Trysten & Aedyn Loeffe. The brothers have identified about 50 bird species that can be found locally in a your backyard, or at a nearby park or lake. They will show photos of these birds and give some ID tips. Along with the Zoom presentation viewers will be able to download a bird species "Bird Bingo Card" with 25 spaces available to mark off when the selected birds are found. This task is part of the library's Summer Reading Challenge, where the theme this year is "Tails & Tales". In order to view the PAS Zoom presentation you must register before June 29 with the Escondido Public Library.

<https://smartbooking.escondido.org/Events/EventInfo?EventID=253>

Mark your calendars! Don't forget to register!

What's unique about the ruby-throated hummingbird's migration?

Unlike other birds, ruby-throated hummingbirds prefer to migrate alone, rather than in large flocks. By migrating alone, they can take better advantage of available food supplies. They fly during the day, staying low in the air to watch for feeding opportunities, and rest at night.



REMINDER:
DEADLINE FOR THE
July-August ISSUE IS
JUNE 15th.
SUBMIT COPY TO
jillnfred@cox.net



**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 _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

100% of Chapter Membership dues supports projects locally.

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

Gerry & Linda Baade

Dave Cowan

Meredith Dow

Marj Freda

Stephen Gabbert

Gary & Cheryl Grantham

Pat Harrison

Nancy Hattox

Patrick & Mary Jo Hayes

Deborah Lebo

Jack & Constance Lee

Connie Luizzi

Jean Meadowcraft

Carol Merjil

Sharon Nachison

Donna Payton

John & Nan Thomas

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

Gerry & Linda Baade

Meredith Dow

Marj Freda

Gary & Cheryl Grantham

Nancy Hattox

Patrick & Mary Jo Hayes

Mary Kiisel

Deborah Lebo

Jack & Constance Lee

Carol Merjil

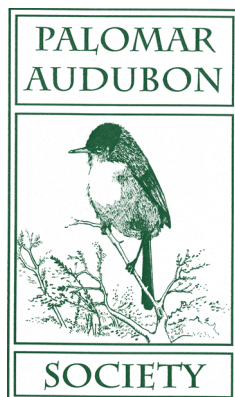
Donna Payton

John & Nan Thomas

Band Tales

May-June, 2021

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.



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

NONPROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 SAN DIEGO, CA
 PERMIT NO. 1515

DATED MATERIAL
Please Expedite

PALOMAR AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, & COMMITTEE CHAIRS 2021-2021

President

Penny Hernandez 760-746-8315

Vice-President

Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

Secretary

Joan Falconer 858-566-7050

Treasurer

Sunny Christiansen 760-297-3096

Directors

Dianne Benham 858-679-7904

Alice Holmes 925-212-8165

Nabih Mansour 858-566-7050

Tom Trowbridge 760-522-8519

Jill & Fred Weber 760-604-3734

Trysten Loeffke 760-749-5898

Dave Hekel 760-855-1418

Committee Chairs

Band Tales Jill & Fred Weber 760-604-3734

Band Tales Mailing... Jan Behrhorst 619-507-3627

Conservation Dave Hekel 760-855-1418

Trysten Loeffke 760-749-5898

Education Alice Holmes 925-212-8165

Field Trips/Programs Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

Hospitality Jill & Fred Weber 760-604-3734

Membership Alice Holmes 925-212-8165

Scholarship Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

Travel Hal & Dianne Benham. 858-679-7904

Web Page: palomaraudubon.org

Webmaster: Jeff Ebright: 858-216-5623

palomaraudubon@gmail.com

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.**