



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society
A Chapter of the
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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November-December
2021

Editors
Jill & Fred Weber

Happy Holidays



Roadrunner photo by Aedyn Loeffke

Roadrunner profile and more
photos on page 6

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A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Penny Hernandez, President

Hello from Valley Center. I have made a move from Escondido to Valley Center in just the last couple of weeks. I also have a new roommate, my brother Al, from Northern California. We now reside at Hide Away Lake Mobile Estates. What a change.

We have a wonderful pond with some great birds. The pond is a little low (actually a lot low), but the birds don't seem to care. I have seen the Canada Geese that live there all year around, about thirteen of them, three white Pelicans, a couple of Cormorants, Ruddy Ducks, Mallards, Coots, and a Kingfisher. Of course I can't forget the Egrets, Great and Snowy, plus the Great Blue Heron.



We have some nice green areas with big trees, which have lots of Western Blue Birds. The neighbor feeds the birds and has lots, and lots of House Sparrows, White Crown Sparrows, Mourning Doves, Scrub Jays, and on and on. I can't wait to discover what other winter birds we'll get.

Once again I'm sorry we can't get together yet. Hopefully the first of the year. We do have the Christmas Bird Count coming up. See the article from Jim Beckman on the date, time and other important information on page 3.

Take care, stay healthy and keep birding.

Penny



CONSERVATION NOTES

Trysten Loeffke, Conservation Chair

As the year winds down and we move into the ever anticipated holiday season, I think we could all do with a healthy dose of good news. While this year has presented us with an incredible array of controversies and unique challenges that I'm sure we would all prefer to forget, there are many successes that have come out of this year that should be celebrated. I'd like to share a few of the conservation-related success stories that came out of this year to brighten your last few months of 2021.



Our first story comes from the deserts of Arizona, where a critically endangered bird is making its first steps towards recovery. Formerly considered a distinct species, the Masked Bobwhite is now considered to be a subspecies of Northern Bobwhite. By around the turn of the century, the Masked Bobwhite was considered to be extinct in the U.S., and only a few years later it was thought to be extinct in Mexico as well. That was it. Never again would a Masked Bobwhite walk the face of the earth, or so we thought. The Masked Bobwhite was rediscovered in Mexico in the 1960s and within a decade reintroduction projects had begun attempting to bring the bird back from the brink of extinction. Despite decades of these conservation efforts, including habitat preservation and captive breeding programs, the Masked Bobwhite has shown no sign of recovering anytime soon. That is, until this past year. Now only critically endangered, the Masked Bobwhite is finally making its first real steps towards a comeback. Reintroduction projects have finally been gaining some ground and there is now thought to be around two hundred Masked Bobwhites in the wild-- a painfully small number, but a huge improvement from once being considered extinct. And some of these birds are breeding! It will still be an uphill struggle, but a foothold has finally been made and this is the first promising sign that the birds may yet be able to once again inhabit their former range.

We now move to Louisiana where, due to a coastal restoration project, Black Skimmers have nested and successfully fledged chicks for the first time in a decade! (Continued on page 3)

The Black Skimmer is a large and charismatic relative of the terns, known for its incredibly unique bill shape and foraging habit. The Black Skimmer's lower mandible is considerably longer than its upper mandible and it uses this unique adaptation to "skim" the surface of the water, feeling for fish, all while in flight! All of the recorded skimmer nests on the Louisiana mainland have failed since 2011, but this year chicks were successfully raised and fledged. One of the reasons for this success is a conservation project that included the restoration of the dune habitat needed by many nesting shorebirds.



These incredible stories of conservation in action show us just what can be achieved if we truly put our minds to it. And while these stories that I have shared come from other parts of the country, my hope is that they can inspire you with a vision of what can be done here in our local area. There are many species here in San Diego County that need our help, and it is because of people like you that we can help to restore areas vital to their existence. If we work together and find ways to lead and inspire, perhaps in 2022 the next great conservation success story will come from right here in Southern California.



ESCONDIDO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2022

By Jim Beckman

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 122nd 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 Sunday, January 2, 2022. 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 to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Audubon Society has put in place new rules for this year's CBC's: 1. Social distancing and masking are required at all times with unvaccinated participants. 2. Carpooling may only occur within existing familiar or social "pod" groups. 3. All activities must comply with all current state and municipal COVID-19 guidelines.

After December 1 2021, 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 gncatcher@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 December 1, and join the fun!

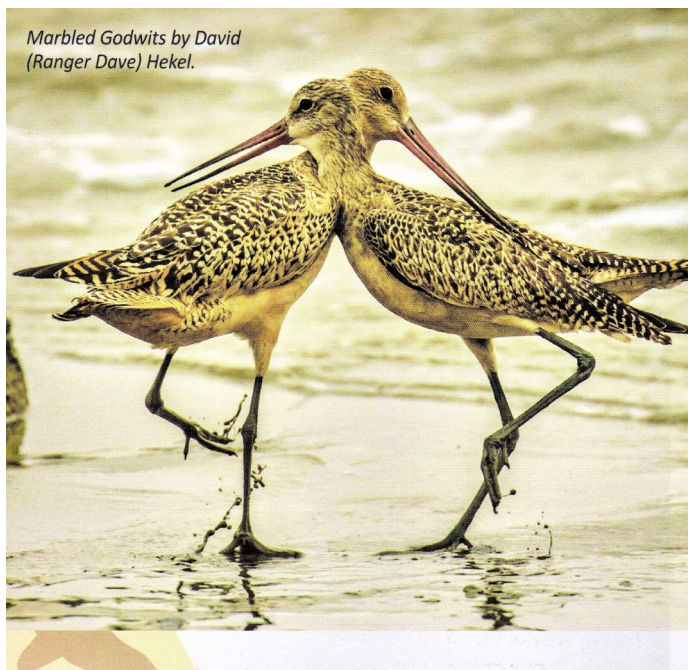
Congratulations !

Five PAS members recently received certificates of recognition from San Diego County Supervisor Joel Anderson in honor of their volunteer work with the Volcan Mountain Foundation. The mission of the Volcan Mountain Foundation is to strive with intention to conserve and acquire land and practice respectful stewardship through education, public outreach, and resource management to preserve Volcan Mountain in its natural state for future generations. You can learn more about this worthwhile organization on their website at volcanmt.org.

Hal Benham, Alison Davies, Gail DeLalla, Richard Fowler and Paul Jeffs participate in VMF's quarterly bird surveys at the Volcan Mountain Nature Center. Each birder enters their count onto Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology bird app and Susan Meyer, VMF's Engagement Coordinator, creates a list of the entire survey. Unfortunately, the group has been unable to meet during the pandemic, but they are planning to meet again to resume the quarterly bird counts in the fall.

San Diego Bird Festival 2022

Birds of ALL feathers, come flock together!



Marbled Godwits by David
(Ranger Dave) Hekel.

The 2022 San Diego Bird Festival will be presented February 16-20, 2022. It will be returning to the live and in-person format this year after 2021's virtual event due to the pandemic.

This year's event will include guest speakers from the world of birding, field trips covering San Diego County, pelagic trips, birding by kayak and bike and trips for people with access challenges. Numerous workshops and lectures are planned. The exhibit hall will offer the opportunity to see the latest in optics and gear.

More information about all of the programs can be found at sandiegoaudubon.org under the "Birding" tab.

**Registration begins
November 11, 2021**



NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS.

Please start using fred17hmr@gmail.com or
jillweber55@hotmail.com. The
jillInfred@cox.net will be going away at the
end of the year.

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

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Richard Blair
Monica Border
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Ty Jacobson
Anna Marie Lea
Joan Miller
Patricia Pawlowski
Gail Smith
Margaret Yorio*

AND WE APPRECIATE OUR DONORS VERY MUCH!

*Richard Blair
Monica Border
Julie Kitterman
Iris Sparks*

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*

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*100% of Chapter Membership dues
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SPECIES PROFILE

GREATER ROADRUNNER

(*GEOCOCCYX CALIFORNIANUS*)

By Aedyn Loeffke

An uncommon bird of the arid Southwest, the Greater Roadrunner is a bird that many of us are familiar with due to its long-held fame in popular culture. However, something that many people may not know is that roadrunners are actually a member of the cuckoo family. In fact, their scientific name, *Geococcyx californianus*, translates to mean “ground cuckoo of California”. As their common name suggests, roadrunners are often found running along the edge of roads and other open areas searching for prey. Roadrunners can reach top speeds of around 20 miles an hour, making them the fastest that any flying bird can run; and although it is rarely seen, roadrunners are indeed capable of flying short distances. Roadrunners are also unique in that they have what is known as zygodactyl feet. This means that they have two toes pointing forward and two toes pointing backwards, giving them a distinctive X-shaped footprint. This relatively unusual toe alignment is something that Roadrunners share with other species such as woodpeckers and toucans. People often ask, “if they’re called Greater Roadrunners,

Perhaps one of the roadrunner’s most famous traits is its occasional habit of eating rattlesnakes. They often achieve this daring act by hunting in pairs, one roadrunner will distract the snake by jumping about and flapping its wings, while the other roadrunner sneaks up from behind and bites the snake on the back of the head to avoid being bitten, just like modern-day Velociraptors. And it’s not just reptiles that they eat, in fact, roadrunners are a great pest control! They eat everything from pocket gophers, rats, and mice to grasshoppers, snails, and even scorpions! Although it is rarely heard, roadrunners have a distinctive song, a plaintive, dove-like coo that is really quite beautiful. So whether they are chasing lizards in your back yard or you happen to spot one disappearing down the trail while out birding, take a moment to think about what a beautifully unique species the roadrunner is.



BIRDS VS. TURBINES

Norwegian researchers say that simply painting one blade of wind turbines black can cut the number of bird deaths the spinning devices cause by up to 70 percent. Collision of birds, especially raptors, is one of the main environmental concerns related to wind energy development. The contrast of the black blade against the sky and other blades appears to help make the turbines more visible to passing birds. Other tests are planned around the world to make sure that the Norwegian success isn’t unique to the region.



does that mean that there are other species of roadrunner?”, and the answer is yes! The Lesser Roadrunner is a slightly smaller lookalike found in Central America, and they have other, more colorful relatives known as Ground-Cuckoos.

RULES TO BE DRAFTED TO HOLD INDUSTRY LIABLE FOR DEATHS

The Biden Administration announced on 9/29/21 that it will draft rules to govern the killing of wild birds by industry and begin enforcement actions against companies responsible for bird deaths that could have been prevented.

Conservation groups, which have urged stronger action to protect wildlife, said the planned rules are urgently needed to hold companies accountable for bird deaths.

Federal officials pledged to be judicious in prosecuting violations of the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Enforcement will be reserved for cases where companies could have foreseen bird deaths but did not take steps to avoid them.

The American Bird Conservancy said a permit program would compel companies to take measures such as installing screens to keep birds out of oil pits and turning off or altering telecommunication tower lights to reduce collisions. The new rules will be prepared over the next year.

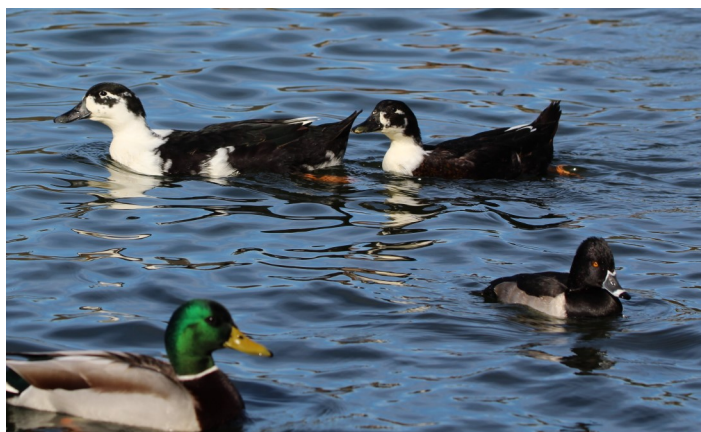
MORE DOMESTIC DUCKS LIVING HAPPILY AT KIT CARSON PARK



Kit Carson Park's newest resident is a white Crested duck! The Crested is a breed of domestic duck that probably originated in the East Indies with subsequent development in Holland. Crested ducks are seen in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings by artists such as Jan Steen. Crested ducks have a wonderful regal air about them with their fluffy puff of feathers on their heads. These feathers cover the fact that there is no skull underneath. Due to a genetic mutation, there is only fatty tissue under the crest. This is a breed that lacks a complete skull, which can cause problems for the duck.

Cresteds are dual purpose ducks, good for meat or eggs, but most are raised as pets due to a good temperament, quiet disposition and adorable appearance.

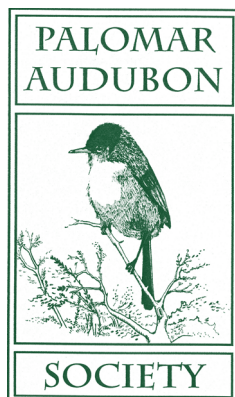
We will probably never know how this Crested came to join the other domestics at Eagle Scout Pond. The Rhones, Indian Runners, Pekins and a beautiful pair of black and white Calico ducks are all thriving. Drop by to visit them along with the usual assortment of wild residents that are returning in large numbers to winter on the pond.



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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.**