



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society
A Chapter of the
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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2021

Editors
Jill & Fred Weber



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A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Penny Hernandez, President

T'was the night before the deadline, as I was writing this note, to go in the newsletter to all you great folk. Here's hoping we all see great changes this year, with a new U.S. President, and a Covid19 cure. Hopefully our kids will be going back to school and I can get together to meet and bird with you.



I'm afraid I don't have much to write about. A few things have been happening with P.A.S. Ken Weaver and Jim Beckman worked on the Christmas Bird Count. The

count went on as usual but without the lunch. Thank you to all who participated. I heard from Tom Trowbridge. He has been talking with the President of Friends of Daley Ranch. Tom has visions of a water feature up by the Ranch House that will bring in the birds and other creatures, for visitors to sit and enjoy. I Hope he and the chapter can make it happen this coming year. Another member called and said she and a friend had been out birding. She was wondering about gathering a couple more non-birders and teaching them what they are missing out on. I'm hoping they will join us on our field trips when we can start again. It is wonderful how you, our members, want to share your love for nature with others.

I really miss our meetings and seeing all of you. Stay healthy and happy and good birding as always.

Penny

A NEW KIND OF BIRDING

During the 19th century, the Christmas "Side Hunt" was a shooting competition—whoever shot the most birds won. Then, in 1900, an ornithologist named Frank M. Chapman had an idea. Instead of hunting birds, why not count them? The Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count continues today!

CONSERVATION NOTES

Trysten Loeffke, Conservation Chair

Those of us who have been with PAS for a while will remember that back in the day, when the world was normal, we used to sponsor field trips out to the Salton Sea on almost an annual basis. The Salton Sea is well known in the birding community for being one of the most unique birding spots in the country. Despite its location in the center of what would seem like an inhospitable desert, the Salton Sea is a major stopping point for many a migrating bird along the Pacific Flyway. In winter, the Sea can host numerous large and charismatic birds such as Sandhill Cranes and thousands of Snow and Ross's Geese. In the late summer, the Sea becomes the only place in the United States that the range-restricted Yellow-footed Gull can be found. This unique environment, an oasis at the transition of worlds, makes this an excellent place to spot rarities. This year alone, the Salton Sea has hosted such rarities as a Roseate Spoonbill- normally a resident of the Gulf Coast and South America, and a Garganey- a small duck that breeds in Europe and winters in Africa and Asia. But all of this is threatened to change, or at least it was...

With recent changes in the past few years to Southern California water management, the decision was made to limit the supply of water that flows into the Salton Sea. Today, the Salton Sea is shrinking at a rapid pace. The drying seabed is exposing vast expanses of toxic, salty dust that now blows across the Salton Sea basin. Not only has this decision negatively impacted the birds that rely on the Sea, but also the humans who call the Imperial Valley home. No one, human or bird, would like to have their



home suddenly inundated with clouds of toxic dust. But just recently, a glimmer of hope shone through the dust clouds in the form of two projects. One of these rays of hope is a piece of federal legislation, The Salton Sea Public Health and Environmental Protection Act, which was introduced into Congress at the end of 2020. This bill calls for federal support and funding in both dust suppression and habitat restoration projects at the Salton Sea. It will call federal attention to the issue at Salton Sea and expedite projects to ensure that the Sea is sustained in a way that is safe for both humans and birds.

The other ray of hope has been spearheaded by Audubon. Audubon California has been working on a project to restore crucial wetland habitat in the Bombay Beach area on the Sea's eastern shore, and in the last quarter of 2020 the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation granted Audubon California a \$700,000 grant to put towards the continuation of this project to restore vital wetlands in the area. This project will benefit birds such as the elusive and near-threatened Ridgway's Rail. Audubon California's project will work towards stabilizing these habitats as well as dust mitigation which is essential to keeping the Salton Sea habitable.

With projects and funds such as these underway, there is once again hope on the horizon for the Salton Sea, its birds, and also its humans. If you have ever wanted to explore a true migration hot-spot, take frame-filling photographs of a Burrowing Owl, or wondered what it was like to see 8,000 geese fly overhead, then the Salton Sea is a must-visit place for you; and thanks to projects like these, it will still be there for us and the birds to enjoy.



ILENE LITTLEFIELD – IN MEMORIAM

Ilene Littlefield, a longtime friend and member of Palomar Audubon Society passed away November 17, 2020, in Sacramento, California, after a stroke. She was 94. She and her husband Ed became interested in birding when their son Mark began working on his bird study merit badge in the Boy Scouts and discovered a large nest in the Blue Sky Ranch in 1971. The nest was identified as a nest of a Golden Eagle by experienced birder Harold Wells who introduced the family to birding. Later Ilene joined Buena Vista Audubon Society where she met Alice Fries and Jane McNeil. She spent many hours birding with Jane and traveling around the United States, Costa Rica, Thailand, Greece, and Mexico with her husband and friends in search for that ever-elusive new bird. In 1993, Ilene and Ed Littlefield, Jane McNeil, Ken Weaver and Paul Bergford and others decided to break away from Buena Vista Audubon and start a chapter in Escondido. Palomar Audubon Society was incorporated in 1994. Ed, Ken and Paul all served as President in the early years of the chapter. Ilene spent countless hours conducting the Chapter's main fundraiser for years which was a full blown parking lot sale. Ilene washed and stored donations in her bath tub and on every surface in her home for weeks in advance of the sale. She also cooked up huge batches of chili to serve at the Christmas Count lunches. Ilene served as Historian and assembled books with the chapter's accomplishment in great style. Ilene was a good friend, a terrific birder and will be greatly missed.

How does a hummingbird's vision differ from a human's?

It can see ultraviolet light. Hummingbirds rely on excellent vision to fly and find food, and their sensitivity to ultraviolet light allows them to see some colors that humans can't. We humans have three types of color receptors in our retinas, called cones that allow us to see blue, green, and red light, respectively. Hummingbird eyes have been shown to have four types of cones—the fourth allows them to see distinct colors by blending UV light with the other lights to create entirely new ones.

BIRDING IN A PANDEMIC

By Doug Walkley

To all the lonesome home-locked birders, it's time to get out and enjoy the great outdoors and see a bird or two. Many of you, independently may be doing this already. If so, we would love hear from you as to where you went and what you saw. Don't know where to go nor when to go? Jim Beckman does an excellent job of arranging our Saturday Bird Walks for almost 52 weeks of the year and although the club as a whole is not currently sponsoring any walks, the birds are still there for you to see. If you click on <http://palomaraudubon.org/category/pas-notice/bird-walks/> you will find the history of where Jim has taken us (the second page gives you balance of the year) and what we have seen there. So look at this website to find out what has been historically hot right for when you want to get out and GO. Good chance you will run into Diane and I on the trail.

As for us, we have been a couple of different places that we will report on sometime later. But on Sunday, November 28, we social distanced with a couple of others and hit up San Jacinto Wildlife Reserve. One exciting sighting was seeing the Sora and the Virginia Rail just ten yards apart from each other at the beginning of the B5 trail. We saw a total of 63 birds species.

We look forward to your email of your adventures.

Happy New Year, Doug & Diane Walkley

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* _____

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

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

*Barbara Anderson
Barbara Bury
Joan Comito
Jo Daugherty
Judith Doebke
Eve Martin/Robert Farber
Eva Harden
Tracy Henchbarger
Susan Newlin
Marilyn Schmitz
Lydia Vogt
Ken Weaver
Paul Zepf*

AND WE APPRECIATE OUR DONORS VERY MUCH!

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Tracy Henchbarger
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Michael Wittmer**



Cactus Wren by Ranger Dave



Feeding hummingbird by Ranger Dave



Phainopepla by Ranger Dave



Snow & Ross's Geese by Aedyen Loeffke



Burrowing Owl & Geese by Aedyen Loeffke



Are you enjoying the color pages in this issue?

If you would like to see more in the future send us your best photos. Remember you can always view the newsletter in full color at the P.A.S. website.

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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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Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

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Treasurer

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Directors

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Alice Holmes 925-212-8165

Nabih Mansour 858-566-7050

Tom Trowbridge 760-743-1052

Jill & Fred Weber 760-604-3734

Trysten Loecke 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 Loecke 760-749-5898

Education Alice Holmes 925-212-8165

Field Trips/Programs Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

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Membership Alice Holmes 925-212-8165

Scholarship Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

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Web Page: palomaraudubon.org

Webmaster: Jeff Ebright: 858-216-5623

palomaraudubon@gmail.com

Board of Director's Meeting

No Meetings for January-February

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.**