Band Tales March-April, 2023



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society

A Chapter of the
NATIONAL AUDUBON
SOCIETY

Volume XXXVIII no. 2 March-April 2023

Editor Arne Christiansen

SALTON SEA!!

Such a misnomer. Salton Sea is certainly the birdiest place within several hours' drive of San Diego. Most common people (unlike Birders who are uncommon) know where Salton Sea is, so this is the unjustified moniker used to identify the tremendous birding location in and around Brawley's ponds, lakes and farmers' fields.

A limit of 30 birders was advertised for the trip. This redhot location was quickly filled with 32 eager participants. Now imagine 16 vehicles driving almost bumper to bumper driving the backroads like a lost funeral procession. "How to make this work safely and in some sort of semi-relaxed fashion", Dianne Benham, being the chief organizer for the trip, said to herself? Dianne had envisioned a limit no more than 20! For starters then, let's cram at least three birders per car. That cuts the procession down to 10 cars. Nope, still too many. Then let's create two lead cars and divide the group in two. Ah, that's better, with only 5 cars for each lead car to manage. Phew!

We raced from spot to spot! Quickly the binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras tumbled out of the cars with extremely enthusiastic owners behind them. Many of our group were newbies. As such, there were lots and lots of lifers to be found. Consequently, there were lots and lots of excited and happy faces. To me this was as gratifying as the birds we saw.

So, what did we see of particular interest? We saw two, not just one, Great-horned Owls in the rock crevices of Red Hill located just before Red Hill Marina. By the way, Salton Sea has receded half a mile from the marina, so you have to be particularly good in backing up your boat trailer. We also saw the cousins to the Great-horned. In fact, most saw over half-a-dozen Burrowing Owls mainly poking their heads out the burrows. On day-two, our first stop was Alamo Lake and as we approached it looked like the trees around it was covered with snow, but no, a couple hundred Cattle Egrets endowed their branches. Our second stop was sort of a throw-in since it was an unnatural worn-out county park primarily for fishers to put in their boats: Weist Lake. Low and behold, however, there was several interesting species to be found: Vermillion Flycatchers, a White-throated Sparrow, four Inca Doves, a lost Yellow Warbler... and I could go on. But, so what, most importantly it was a bathroom stop! In the reservoir, the flock of sixty or so White-fronted Geese was also fun. I could go on about these exciting finds, but, instead, click on the link below to see them all listed together with so many professional syle photos taken by our own experts.

In closing, I should mention at our final stop before lunch and goodbyes, we went looking for the infamous Jailbird. While we did not see any of these peeking through their narrow ten-foot-high slotted windows that each were provided in Calipatria State (Park) Prison, we did see other species in the pond below such as the Redbreasted Merganser and Canvasback Duck.

Once more, if you want to see our complete list of 116 SPECIES, meticulously documented and recorded by Steve Ellis, then click here: <u>Palomar Audubon Bird Salton Sea Birding trip - eBird Trip Report</u>

Until next time... Flyin' high Doug Walkley







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Programs

Please join us for our interesting monthly program and refreshments which,

Due to construction, presentations will be at the Remington Club #1 at 16925 Hierba Drive, Rancho Bernardo, which is close-by and southeast of our usual location.

There is a social period beginning at 6:30 p.m. with the meeting and program getting under-way promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Thursday March 23, 2023 6:30 pm

Char Glacy

"Exploring Ghana and the birds of the Upper Guinea Forests"

West Africa is a great place to see a variety of birds. Ghana has six National Parks and twelve conservation areas. The avifauna of Ghana includes a total 15 of the 18 Upper Guinea endemics. The Upper Guinea forests are one of the world's 25 most biologically diverse and faces considerable environmental challenges. Many of the endemic birds are considered vulnerable. This presentation will also address the concerns today over forest degradation due to agriculture, charcoal production, mining and illegal logging.

Char Glacy is a local birder, a long-time member of the Palomar Audubon Society, and a former PAS Board member. This is her fourth PAS presentation.

Mark your calendars. Don't miss this one!

Thursday April 27, 2023 6:30 pm Neil Solomon

"The Woodpeckers of North America"

There are 217 woodpecker species worldwide. The Picidae family of Woodpeckers, Flickers, and Sapsuckers contains 23 species known to live and breed in North America. The 23 species live in habitats ranging from the desert to the mountain forests. Although these species share many of the same characteristics, each is unique in its own way. During this presentation, you will learn more about these characteristics and see images of these amazing birds.

This is Neil's 13th PAS Presentation. Neil has been photographing birds for 20+ years. His travels in search of birds to photograph, have taken him from Patagonia and the Falklands in the South, to Alaska and Arctic Norway in the North, and many locations between. His favorite shooting locations are probably the far North and Central/South America. During the last few years he has been concentrating on photographing birds in flight. You can see his images on his website:

www.nsolomonphoto.com.

Mark your calendars! Don't miss this fantastic presentation!



(Gola malimbe)



{Great Spotted Woodpwcker}



(Green Woodpecker)



(Nimba flycatcher)



(spot-winged greenbul)



(Red-naped Sapsucker)

If you have access to PBS TV and have not seen the Nature: Woodpeckers: The Hole Story segment it is well worth the viewing time. You may also see more information online at:

woodpeckers-hole-story/27853



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Doug Walkley, President

This will (may) be the last I write on this topic or any such related topic, I promise. Birding is fun. It makes one relax, breath fresh air, takes one's mind off anything and everything and provides comradery. And so, I will try to make these articles the same, but for now...

There were about twenty very disappointed birders who,



almost at the last minute, did not have the opportunity to see 100+ species of birds during our foray to Morro Bay. Cancelled at almost the last hour due to "Weather". Were we bummed, disappointed. But could we say "Angry"? Possibly.

This early January period of Sunny California "weather" in certain locations

was described as being caused by an "Atmospheric River", which is a narrow corridor or filament of concentrated moisture (hydrosphere) in the atmosphere, also known as a tropical plume, tropical connection, moisture plume, water vapor surge or cloud band. In the USA, this was unheard of, to my knowledge, until very recently.

And why all of a sudden does California have to experience this? Well, man-made climate change! Even the most ardent naysayers are silent on this topic these days. So should we be angry about our misfortune of not being able to go to Morro Bay. No, we should be angry because of the resulting devastation to habitat and deaths to wildlife that is never ever considered in the news. In December of 2021, for the first time (of many to come, I am sure) my home Province of British Columbia was hit by an Atmospheric River that quickly tore out a long string of massive bridges fording what were otherwise just melodic creeks and rivers. But again, it's not the human stuff that is of my concern, it is uncounted loss to everything living that makes me angry. We do know that 630,000 chickens died over those two days in BC. What does this translate to in terms of other birds? And what was lost recently along the California coast.

I am too old to be a Greta Thunberg, but there may be some of you who can carry the flag of the environmentalist in an attempt to STOP what it is happening on this earth of ours. And if not you, then your child or grandchild. Think about it!



CONSERVATION NOTES

Trysten Loefke, Conservation Chair

Today I'd like to talk a little bit about the importance of wetland habitats; in particular, our coastal estuaries and marshland. Here in Southern California, we are privileged to live close to several coastal estuaries and I'm sure we each have our favorite lagoon that we look forward to visiting on our Saturday PAS field trips. We all know how important this habitat is for birds—one only



needs to look at the species total from our most recent San Elijo Lagoon field trip to see that (75 species!)— but what else are coastal wetlands important for? From an ecological standpoint, wetlands are one of the most important filters in the natural world. Wetlands play a critical part in filtering our water supply as it makes its way to the ocean. The pollutants and sediments found in runoff water are

methodically filtered out as the water makes its way through the dense filtration system that is a coastal wetland. Wetlands also provide important areas of flood control during storms, and they are the only truly effective way to prevent coastal erosion. Wetland habitats have the unique ability to absorb the massive amounts of energy created by the ocean—energy which in the absence of wetlands would simply erode the shoreline away. In short, the ecological services provided by coastal wetlands are valued at billions of dollars. Coastal estuaries and wetlands are also hugely important to the lifecycles of many fish species that use them for shelter and spawning, as well as many marine invertebrates. Locally, we have several threatened species that rely entirely on wetland habitats, such as Ridgway's Rail and Belding's Savannah Sparrow. I hope that by now you are getting the idea of why these habitats are so important, and that is why our sister chapters, San Diego and Buena Vista Audubon, are currently spearheading two projects to restore coastal wetland habitat in our area: One is called ReWild Mission Bay and aims to restore important wetland habitat in the Mission Bay Estuary, which was historically all marshland; the other is restoring vital habitat in and around Buena Vista Lagoon. I would encourage you to look more into these projects to see the exciting progress that is being made. So next time you visit the Tijuana River Estuary or Batiquitos Lagoon, or any of the other wonderful coastal wetlands in our area, I would suggest pausing for a moment to reflect on just how important these habitats are, not just for birds, but for the myriad of other species as well, including humans!



FIELD TRIPS

Jim Beckman

Whether a seasoned birder or a beginner, you are welcome to join us. Our field trips are free and open to the public. For more information call the trip leader shown below. Heavy rain at the meet-up location cancels trips. Locations in Thomas Guide Coordinates are shown in parenthesis as (Page-Column Row). Ratings: I=easy, suitable for all levels, 2=moderate, a bit more walking and possibly some hilly terrain, 3=challenging, longer hikes, and may involve some steep terrain.

Saturday, March 4, 8:00 am. Santee Lakes Santee

(1231-A5) Rating: 2

From I-15 go east on Hwy 52. Exit at Mast Blvd. Continue east on Mast Boulevard to Fanita Parkway. Turn right and continue south to the entrance to Santee Lakes on your right. Car entry fee is \$5.

OR from Mast Blvd, turn left on Fanita Parkway, and continue north to Lake Canyon Drive. Turn right, park, and walk in the open gate for **FREE**. Meet in the parking lot by the General Store between lakes 4 & 5.

Leader: Tom Trowbridge

760-743-1052

Saturday, March 11, 8:00 am.
San Jacinto Wildlife Area
Riverside County
(RC 749-B4) Rating: 2

From San Diego County take I-15 north through Temecula and take the I-215. Continue north on the I-215. Exit at the Ramona Expressway right (east). Continue east to Lakeview (a small town.) At the stoplight, turn left (north) on Davis Road. Proceed on the asphalt and gravel road for two miles to the SJWA headquarters parking lot on the right. From Escondido allow 75- minute drive time. **Bring a lunch.** Always a PAS favorite!

Leader: Sally Sanderson

760-638-9913

Saturday, March 18, 8:00 am.
Batiquitos Lagoon
Carlsbad

(1127-A7) Rating: 1-2

From I-5 in Carlsbad, exit east on Poinsettia Lane. Turn right on Batiquitos Drive, drive about ½ mile to Gabbiano Lane, turn right and continue to the end. We will look for ducks, waterfowl, and riparian birds. Expect warm weather.

Leader: Dave Cowan 858-437-4101

Saturday, March 25, 8:00 am.
Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary
Oceanside
(1066-F7) Rating: 2

From Hwy 78 west, exit north on El Camino Real and continue to Douglas Drive. From I-5 north exit east on Hwy 76 and continue to the Douglas Drive exit. Take Douglas Drive north approximately 1 mile and turn left on North River Road. Continue west on North River Road to the entrance gate at the end. NOTE: The caretaker has again offered to have the gate open at

7:30 am for Early Birds and leave it open until 8:45 to accommodate latecomers. From the gate proceed straight ahead on the less traveled road to the Sanctuary. Disregard the "No Trespassing" Signs. For those interested in lunch, we will be dining at "The Pitstop", located beside the police station, at 3825 Mission Avenue, Oceanside 92058, just a couple of blocks west of Douglas Drive. It's loaded with 50's atmosphere, automobile memorabilia, and serves at least twenty different styles of sandwiches, all at reasonable prices.

Leader: Doug Walkley

310-387-8190

Saturday, April 1, 8:00 am.
San Pasqual Agricultural Trail
Escondido
(1151-B1) Rating: 2

Meet at the Ysabel Creek Road trailhead at the intersection Ysabel Creek Road & Bandy Canyon Road. This intersection can be reached from Highland Valley Road east off of Pomerado Road & I-15, or from Highway 78 east of the Wild Animal (Safari) Park. We hope to see local residents, which include Cactus Wren, Greater Roadrunner, and a few raptors, possibly the Zone-tailed Hawk. Bring a lunch for an after-birding picnic at the close-by SD Archaeological Center. Expect warm weather.

Leader: Jim Beckman 858-205-2819

Saturday, April 8, 8:00 am.
Old Mission Dam
San Diego

http://www.mtrp.org/park.asp (1230-F6) Rating: 2

Take Highway 52 east to the Mast Boulevard exit in Santee. Turn north/onto Mast Boulevard and then right at the 1st traffic east signal (West Hills Parkway). Take West Hills Parkway to Mission Gorge Road and turn right. Take Mission Gorge Road 0.2 miles and merge right onto Father Junipero Serra Trail. Proceed 0.7 miles down Father Juniper Serra Trail to the Old Mission Dam parking lot, located on the right. Arrive extra early to avoid parking on the street. This should be prime time for spring migrants.

Leader: Jeff Ebright 858-484-3932

Saturday, April 15, 8:00 am. Wilderness Gardens Preserve Pala (409-E6) Rating: 2

This small wilderness area represents a fine example of

oak woodland habitat. Meet in the Wilderness Gardens & parking lot, which is about 10 miles east of I-15 on Hwy.76, on the south side of the highway. Look for the "Wilderness Gardens Preserve" sign. Parking fee required, but free with senior County pass. Bring a lunch for an after-birding picnic. Expect warm weather.

Leader: Jim Beckman

858-205-2819

Saturday, April 22, 8:30 am.

Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

Morongo Valley, San Bernardino County http://www.bigmorongo.org/

(SB 616-J5) Rating: 1

From Escondido, proceed north on I-15 for approximately 36 miles to the I-15/I-215 split in Temecula. Change to I-215 north and continue north to Highway 60 east. Take Hwy 60 east then continuing east on I-10 approximately 40 miles to Hwy 62. Go north on Highway 62 about 12 miles to Morongo Valley (a small town.) About a mile or two into town, look for signs for Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Turn right (south) on East Drive, a dirt road, to the Preserve. The parking lot is just beyond the caretaker's house. Picnic tables and restrooms are available. In the caretaker's yard, several hummingbird and seed feeders will attract many birds for your enjoyment. This location is always a spring hot spot and a favorite PAS field trip. Bring a lunch

for an after birding picnic at the bird feeders. Allow 2 hours travel time from Escondido.

Leader: TBA

Saturday, April 29, 8:00 am.

Daley Ranch Escondido

(1110-C3) Rating: 2-3

From I-15 in Escondido, exit at El Norte Parkway and drive east approximately 3 miles. Look for the "Daley Ranch/Dixon Lake" signs and turn left on La Honda Drive. Continue north toward Dixon Lake and on to the free Daley Ranch parking area on your left. Meet at the trailhead kiosk.

Leader: Gerry Baade

858-231-9876

Saturday, May 6, 8:00 am. Dairy Mart Pond/Tijuana River Valley San Diego (1350 - D5) Rating: 2

From North County, take the I-15 south and merge with the I-5 south to the Dairy Mart Road Exit. Turn right on Dairy Mart Rd. (south). Continue a very short distance and meet at the dirt parking lot on your right (at the Camino De La Plaza intersection), and next to the large "TJRV County Park" sign with the pond on the west side of Dairy Mart Road. We will also drive a short distance to the TJRV Park Headquarters (public restroom and bird feeders) and then visit the nearby Bird & Butterfly Garden where there is a chance of seeing the elusive Blackthroated Magpie Jay.

Leader: Hal Benham 858-679-7904

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.

(payable to F	Palomar Audub	on Society)	
□Contribution			_
Name			
Address			
			_
City	State	ZIP	
Telephone			

100% of Chapter Membership dues supports projects locally.



E-mail

FIELD TRIP CHECKLIST

- Comfortable shoes or hiking boots
- Hat, sunscreen, insect repellent
- Road map, Full fuel tank
- Drinking water, snacks and lunch
- Binoculars/Scope, field guide and notebook
- Call leader for last minute cancellations or changes

Palomar Audubon Society welcomes these new and renewing Chapter-only Members

Linda Canada Harold Dunn Ed Hall Susan Newlin/Larry Jobson Lorretta LaBianca Barbara Orr/Mark Mercer Denise Riddle

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

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hank you Palomar Audubon Society members. Your generous response to our solicitation for donations has been terrific. We will be working hard to find ways to spend this money locally to enhance our members' birding experiences. If you haven't yet donated and wish to do so there is still time to make a difference.

KKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKK

REMINDER: DEADLINE FOR THE **MAY-JUNE ISSUE IS** APRIL 15. **SUBMIT COPY TO:** arnec@juno.com

WHY WE NEED A STRONG EPA TO **Combat Environmental Poisons**

(from National Audubon)



(Photo: Seney Natural History Association)

hese two eagles, found dead in 1963, were sent to a lab to test for harmful pesticides like DDT.

In the 1960s, birds became potent symbols of the way human industry infiltrated the environment and threatened human health. After World War II, the use of the pesticide DDT became widespread in U.S. agriculture. Rainfall washed the pesticide from fields into streams, where it was absorbed by plants and fish, and then consumed by raptors and other birds. Bald Eagles that ingested DDT laid eggs with shells so weak that parents crushed them just by sitting on the nest. By 1963, less than 500 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles survived.

After environmental scientist Rachel Carson publicized the effects of DDT in her 1962 book Silent Spring, it wasn't hard for Americans to imagine the myriad health problems caused by blindly consuming the offerings of industry. Soon, research proved that **DDT** causes cancer in people and persists in ecosystems for decades. In 1972, the EPA banned the pesticide. And within a few decades, Bald Eagle populations (and those of other affected species, such as pelicans and falcons) recovered.

The EPA has worked to reduce levels of other environmental toxins, too. Some of these—such as lead and mercury—occur naturally, but are dangerous in high doses. Lead was used as an additive in paint, gasoline, pipes, and other materials, and causes brain damage, developmental delays, and even death in high doses in both people and birds. Meanwhile, the neurotoxin mercury, which is released to the air when fossil fuels are burned, accumulates in muscle tissue—allowing it to be passed up the food chain—and can kill birds and wildlife (and people, too).

After the EPA phased out leaded gasoline, the number of American children with elevated lead levels in their blood dropped from 88% in the late 1970s to less than 1% today. And, in 2011, the EPA published new standards to reduce mercury emissions from coal plants. The standards are expected to prevent 11,000 premature deaths, 4,700 heart attacks, and 130,000 childhood asthma attacks each year.

Escondido Christmas Bird Count December 23, 2022

n December 23rd, 85 birders counted 157 different species of birds within the Escondido Christmas bird count circle, which also includes the San Pasqual Valley and parts of Valley Center, Poway, and Ramona. The total number of individual birds on our annual 38th count was 19,298. See *www.palomaraudubon.org* for full details.

Three things stand out from the count. 1) we did really well in finding nearly every single species that could be reasonably expected, 2) rarities were, well, just plain rare this year (few mountain birds or overwintering "summer" birds), and 3) many species were in unusually low numbers, especially water birds, raptors, and flocking passerines like crows and blackbirds.

Countdown of rarities. Here is our list of species from this year's count with ten or fewer previous records:

Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Whitewinged Dove, White-throated Sparrow, Townsend's Solitaire, American Redstart, Swainson's Hawk and Lazuli Bunting

More rarities. The following species are not quite as scarce in the count circle as all have occurred on more than ten but fewer than fifteen previous counts. They include a Gray Flycatcher, a Band-tailed pigeon; California Gull and two Vermilion Flycatchers.

A few facts. Only two species were reported by all 29 teams, Red-tailed Hawk and Yellow-rumped Warbler

Record high numbers. This only applies to two species on this year's count, Mountain Quail and American Robin.



San Diego Natural History Museum

ave you seen them?? American Robins have invaded southern California on a massive scale this winter! If you see a flock of birds flying overhead and hear a high, cheeping call (https://xeno-canto.org/361931) —it's the robins.

In decades past, American robins reached San Diego as irregular visitors, but their numbers here have dwindled since 1985—until now. Judging by the raw numbers from the annual San Diego Christmas Bird Count, this robin invasion is the third largest since we started counting in 1953!

Where are they coming from? —Likely the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain states.

Why this year? A lot of snow in those regions may be making life harder. Robins love to eat berries. Did some key plants back home fail to fruit?

Now that the robins are here in San Diego, they are eagerly gobbling down fruits of both ornamental trees and native shrubs like the Toyon, which was probably their major winter food here before urbanization.

Before long, these nomads will move on, so enjoy them while they last.

Michelle Reilly



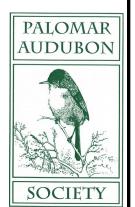
Phil Unitt, curator of birds at the S.D.Natural History Museum, says it's the largest Robin incursion on record in 50 years. The last time such giant Robin flocks were sighted locally was in 1972-73 and in even greater numbers in 1961-62 and 1957-58.

A Christmas Bird Count in Escondido on Dec.23 recorded 695 Robins and a Dec.27 count in Rancho Santa Fe logged 3,789! Paul Lehman has reported seeing 1500 Robins taking flight at dawn from trees at the S.D. Zoo where they had roosted overnight.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS TBA

Note: All Palomar Audubon Society members are welcome at all Chapter Board meetings.

OTHER CATENDAR

QUICK CALENDAR				
March	4	Santee Lakes Walk		
March	11	San Jacinto Wildlife Area Walk		
March	18	Batiquitos Lagoon Walk		
March	23	General Meeting: "Exploring Ghana and the birds of the		
		Upper Guinea Forests"		
March	25	Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary Walk		
April	1	San Pasqual Agricultural Trail Walk		
April	8	Old Mission Dam Walk		
April	15	Wilderness Gardens Preserve Walk		
April	22	Big Morongo Canyon Preserve Walk		
April	27	General Meeting: "The Woodpeckers of North America"		
April	29	Daley Ranch Walk		
May	6	Wilderness Gardens Preserve Walk		