



Band Tales

Palomar Audubon Society
A Chapter of the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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May-June
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Editor:
Jack Peterson

PALOMAR AUDUBON'S ANNUAL PICNIC IN THE PARK SUNDAY, JUNE 14th



(Adams Park)

LOCATION: ADAMS PARK in VALLEY CENTER

ADDRESS: 28751 Cole Grade Road, Valley Center

TIME: 1:00 to 4:00 PM

PRICE: FREE TO MEMBERS, \$10.00 FOR NON-MEMBERS

(membership includes spouses)

MENU: Italian Sub Sandwiches, (veggie subs, too) Italian Soups (veggie and meat choices), Caesar Salad, Pasta Salads and more. Beer, Wine and soft drinks.

Note: Guests are welcome to bring a dessert to share.

This year we have Beth Edwards, the owner of a boutique winery in Ramona, coming to speak to us about various San Diego wines and how wine is affected by different soils, different weather, etc. There will be wine tasting during her talk for anyone interested in doing so. The event starts at 1:00.

RSVP: sunnybirder2@gmail.com or phone/text 619-417-1265 or pennybirders@juno.com.
Please reply by June 10th so we know how much food to prepare.

Directions: Take Valley Center Road to Cole Grade Road. Turn left to Valley Center School Road (first stop light) and turn right into the Adams Park parking lot.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!!

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A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Beth Pearson, President

Letter from the President

I'm writing this in the week leading up to Earth Day, and it has me reflecting on how I first became involved with the Palomar Audubon Society. My connection began somewhat serendipitously at the Tijuana Bird and Butterfly Garden, where I met a small group of birders gathering informally during the social distancing days of the pandemic. What started as chance encounters grew into friendships, shared adventures, and eventually an invitation to join the board.



My connection began somewhat serendipitously at the Tijuana Bird and Butterfly Garden, where I met a small group of birders gathering informally during the social distancing days of the pandemic. What started as chance encounters grew into friendships, shared adventures, and eventually an

invitation to join the board. At the time, my plate was already more than full, overflowing, if I'm being honest. But this opportunity hit a spot in my heart. I had always wanted to be involved more meaningfully in local conservation, and Palomar Audubon seemed to find me at exactly the right moment.

Like many of us, I had been feeling overwhelmed by the steady stream of environmental news. One statistic in particular is hard to ignore: since 1970, North America has lost nearly 3 billion birds, about one in four. It's a staggering figure. But rather than dwell on what feels insurmountable, I've found it more helpful to focus on what we *can* do. I once came across a quote, one I wish I could find again, that essentially said: when it all feels overwhelming, find something you believe in, get behind it and help push.

That idea has stayed with me.

In addition to the upcoming Earth Day, this article was inspired in part by a recent email from a birding friend highlighting bird-friendly coffee options. It reminded me how small, thoughtful choices can ripple outward in meaningful ways. In that spirit, here are a few simple, impactful actions you can take to support birds locally and beyond:

1. Make Your Windows Bird-Safe

Window collisions kill up to one billion birds annually in the United States. Applying decals, patterned films, or external screens can break up reflections and make glass visible to birds. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers excellent guidance at All About Birds.

2. Keep Cats Indoors

Domestic cats are the leading human-related cause of bird mortality in North America.

Keeping cats indoors protects both birds and the cats themselves from injury and disease.

3. Plant Native Species

Replacing portions of lawn with native plants provides food, shelter, and nesting habitat for birds and the insects they rely on. CalScape is a fantastic resource for selecting species suited to your area.

4. Reduce Pesticide Use

Insecticides and herbicides don't just eliminate pests, they also reduce the insect populations that many birds depend on and can directly harm birds through exposure.

5. Turn Off Exterior Lights

Artificial light disorients migratory birds, increasing the risk of fatal collisions. During migration seasons, like right now, dimming or turning off outdoor lights can make a real difference. The San Diego Bird Alliance runs the "Lights Out San Diego" program to address this issue locally.

6. Choose Bird-Friendly Coffee

Shade-grown, bird-friendly coffee preserves forest canopy habitat essential for migratory birds. Sun-grown coffee often replaces these habitats with monocultures. Brands like Birds & Beans Coffee and certified producers through the Smithsonian National Zoo support more sustainable practices.

None of these actions alone will solve the challenges birds face, but together, they form a steady push in the right direction. And that push matters.

Happy Trails,

Beth Pearson

President, Palomar Audubon Society

CONSERVATION NOTES

Mary Jo Hayes

Oak trees are widely recognized as an iconic part of California's landscapes. They are considered a keystone species because they support more forms of life than any other tree in North America. There are approximately 435 species of oaks globally, 91 species in North America, and California is home to about 20 species of native oak trees as well as several natural hybrids and varieties. Native oaks are found in 52 of 58 counties in California. San Diego County has at least 10 of these species and a few varieties and hybrids. This is more oak taxa than any other county in California. Here are some main San Diego County species, genus *Quercus*, and their general locations:

Coast Live Oak (*Q. agrifolia* and varieties) – coast to desert fringe

Interior Live Oak (*Q. wislizeni*) – inland valleys to desert fringe

Scrub Oak (*Q. berberidifolia*) – coast to desert fringe

Canyon Live Oak (*Q. chrysolepis*) – mountains to desert fringe

REMINDER:

**DEADLINE FOR THE
JULY –AUGUST ISSUE IS JUNE 15.
SUBMIT COPY TO:**

Jack Peterson at jackdpete@gmail.com

California Black Oak (*Q. kelloggii*) – mountains
 Engelmann Oak (*Q. engelmannii*) – coast to desert fringe

A little over a decade ago, it was estimated that 10% of California was home to oak woodlands which arise from a collection of elements all working together. Water sources, terrains, soils, mixtures of vegetation living and dead/decaying, to rocks and cliffs all influence this habitat. The collaboration supports an extraordinary diversity of life. Oak woodlands are among the most wildlife-rich habitats in North America. Hundreds of species depend on oak trees at some point in their life cycle. Oak woodlands support over 300 species of vertebrates and 5,000 species of invertebrates, in part because oak woodlands provide a variety of vertical and horizontal habitat layers such as grassland understories for burrowing animals, fallen logs for reptiles and insectivorous mammals, and shrubs for foraging herbivores. Leaf litter creates microhabitats for countless insects and microorganisms, standing snags for nesting raptors, and riparian areas for aquatic species, high tree canopies and cavities for roosting birds and bats. In fact, in Southern California, the Western Bluebird breeds primarily in open oak woodlands and coniferous forests using cavities formed in aging trunks for nesting sites.

Acorns produced by oaks are a high-protein food source that sustains birds, other mammals, and even some reptiles. They are a primary food source for the Acorn Woodpecker and California Scrub-Jay which extensively caches acorns in autumn, which are then used primarily when conditions render insects and other food unavailable. For thousands of years, indigenous people of California have stewarded oak landscapes, relying on acorns as a dietary staple and using traditional ecological knowledge to maintain healthy woodlands. Practices such as controlled burning helped sustain oak regeneration and biodiversity.

Beyond biodiversity, oak woodlands provide essential ecosystem services. The effect on the watershed is profound; their shade canopy, leaf litter, and deep root systems stabilize soil reducing erosion, and help replenish and filter groundwater. Oaks also play a role in mitigating climate change; they capture carbon from the atmosphere, store the majority in their wood and roots, and convert the rest into oxygen which is released into the air through photosynthesis. Shade also moderates ground temperatures and transpiration creates cooler microclimates. Leaves enrich soil and encourage the growth of mycorrhizal fungi which improves soil health. Despite their importance, oak woodlands face mounting pressures. Urban development, agricultural expansion, invasive species, and climate change all threaten their health and regeneration. In many areas, young oaks are failing to replace older trees, a phenomenon known as *Oak Recruitment Failure*; plus, approximately 80% of oak grove land is privately owned and used for livestock to graze freely ultimately destroying oak saplings. Also, *Sudden Oak Death*, caused by a fungus-like plant pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*), first recognized in the mid-1990s, has impacted oaks, mostly the Coast Live

Oak altering forest composition and increasing fire risk through accumulated dead wood.

Conserving oak trees and woodlands requires both large-scale land protection policies, restoration projects, and sustainable land management practices as well as local action. As residents, we can make a difference by considering:

- Planting or protecting oak trees on our property
- Avoiding overwatering near oaks which can harm roots
- Planting native understory species
- Supporting local conservation organizations
- Learning about and advocating for responsible land-use policies

Oak woodlands are resilient, but they still are vulnerable. Their future depends on informed stewardship, collaborative conservation, and a shared commitment to protecting California's natural heritage. Without intervention, long-term declines in woodland cover are imminent and much of the life that is supported will collapse.

Species Profile: Osprey

Tsaiwei Olee

Key Features for Field Recognition: A very large bird with wingspans ranging from 4.5 to 6 feet. It is brown above and white below, with a distinctive brown mask that extends through the eyes toward the back of the head. In flight its wings are bent in a characteristic M-shape. At a distance, it can resemble a large gull more than a hawk.



Similar Species: Bald Eagle and Red-Tailed Hawk



Osprey are found worldwide except for Antarctica. As the only species in the family **Pandionidae**, the **Osprey is a truly unique raptor, distinct from other hawks and eagles**. In Taiwan, where I grew up, it is known as the "Fish Hawk," a fitting name for a bird whose diet consists almost entirely of fish (over 99%). Several physical adaptations have evolved, making the Osprey a
(Continued on page 5)

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: 1=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.

May– June 2026 Field TripsSaturday, May 2, 8:00 am.**La Jolla Coastline**

La Jolla

(1227-E6) Rating: 1

From Hwy 52 driving west exit at La Jolla Blvd. West (formerly Ardath Road). Continue on this road, which will merge with Torrey Pines Rd for about ¾ mile, then turn right on Prospect. Continue on Prospect to Coast Blvd. Meet on the ocean-side in front of the Bridge Club and restrooms. Parking is all along Coast Blvd and adjacent residential streets. **Arrive extra early for the best parking spots.** Park at the first available parking space located. Don't pass up any available parking spot! We will be looking for shorebirds, gulls, and seabirds.

Leader: Jim Beckman, 858-205-2819

Saturday, May 9, 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 Black-throated Magpie Jay.

Leader: Beth Pearson, 760-716-6675

Saturday, May 16, 8:00 am.**San Pasqual Agricultural Trail**

Escondido

(1151-B1) Rating: 2

Meet at the Ysabel Creek Rd. trailhead at the intersection Ysabel Creek Rd. & Bandy Canyon Rd. This intersection can be reached from Highland Valley Rd. east off of Pomerado Rd & I-15, or from Hwy 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: Mary Jo Hayes, 760-505-6675

Saturday, May 23, 8:00 am**Ramona Grasslands County Preserve & Rangeland Road**

Ramona

Rating: 2

This is a new location for PAS. Located southwest of Ramona and west of Hwy 67, the Preserve is located at 17278 Highland Valley Road, and just west of close-by Rangeland Road. There is a large parking lot here and restrooms.

Expect warm weather.

Leader: Gerry & Linda Baade, 858-675-9875/858-231-9500

Saturday, May 30, 8:00 am**Kitchen Creek Rd. and Cibbets Flat Campground (New Location)**

Cleveland National Forest

Rating: 2

Drive east on I-8 to the Kitchen Creek Road exit, which is the second exit after the Sunrise Highway (S1) exit. Go north on Kitchen Creek Rd. a short distance and meet up with our group on the road. This is one of the only places in San Diego County to see the Gray Vireo. We will then continue north about 2 miles to the Cibbets Flat Campground. We should find both mountain and chaparral birds at this location. **Expect warm weather.**

Leader: Steve Ellis, 619-380-3981

Saturday, June 6 8:00 am.**Palomar Mountain State Park**

San Diego County

(409-G7) Rating: 2

This field trip will start from the parking lot at Doane Pond. Leave the Escondido area before 6 am. From I-15, take Highway 76 east to Highway S6, then north to Palomar Mountain. Or from Escondido, take Highway S6 to Palomar Mountain. At the mountaintop, at the S7 intersection stop sign, turn left and continue northwest for 3 miles on State Park Rd. to the Palomar Mountain State Park entrance. **Note: The State of California has recently increased the day-use parking fee.**

Carpooling is highly recommended. After paying the parking fee, proceed 1.5 miles to the Doane Pond/School Camp Area parking lot. Bring a lunch for an after-walk picnic. **Expect warm weather.**

Leader: Sally Sanderson, 858-638-9913, vwillow@aol.com

Saturday, June 13, 8:00 am.**Daley Ranch**

Escondido

(1110-C3) Rating: 2-3

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. **Expect warm weather.**

Leader: Tom Trowbridge, 760-743-1052

Saturday, June 20, 8:00 am.

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park

Julian

(429- L3) Rating: 2-3

From San Diego, take I-8 east and exit north on Hwy 79. Continue approximately 12 miles to the Paso Picacho Campground on the left. From the North County, take Hwy 78 (or Hwy 67) to Ramona, and then continue east on Hwy 78 to just past Julian, to Hwy 79. Take Hwy 79 south approximately 10 miles to the campground on the right where we will meet. **Note: The State of California has recently increased the day-use parking fee. Car-pooling is highly recommended. Bring a lunch for an after-walk picnic. Expect warm weather.**

Leader: Beth Pearson, 760-716-6675

Saturday, June 27, 8:00 am.

Agua Dulce Creek

Laguna Mountains

(430-B5) Rating: 2-3

We will meet at the old parking area for Agua Dulce Creek Group camp. Driving east on I-8, and after Pine Valley, look for signs indicating the Sunrise Highway (S-1) Exit and Laguna Mountain Recreation Area. Go north on Sunrise Hwy. (S-1) approx. 8 miles to Wooded Hill Road, the first road on the left and directly across the S-1 Hwy from Morris Ranch Road. Continue on Wooded Hill Road to the very end. Restrooms, and picnic tables are available here. A Forest Service Adventure Pass is required for day-use parking, and is available locally in San Diego County at major sporting goods stores and at the Laguna General Store. Bring a lunch for an after-walk picnic. Expect warm weather.

Leader: Gerry & Linda Baade, 858-675-9875/858-231-9500

Saturday, July 4, 8:00 am

Mile 19 Pull-Out

Laguna Mountains

Rating: 2-3

From San Diego/Poway/Lakeside areas take the I-8 freeway east to the Sunrise Highway(S1) exit and turn left/north. Park between the the Meadows Information Kiosk/Observation deck and the Sunset Trailhead. There are Porta potties by the Kiosk. From the Ramona or Julian areas take the 79 hwy south out of Julian and turn left on the Sunrise Hwy (S1). Continue past the town of Laguna. Continue on the Sunrise Hwy south past the turn to Agua Dulce trailhead (Wooded Hills Rd.) drive a little further, until you see the sign for Sunset Trailhead on the right and the porta potties and the Observation deck on the left. **Expect warm weather.**

Leader: Steve Ellis, 619-380-3981

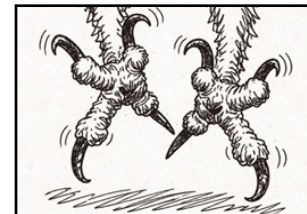
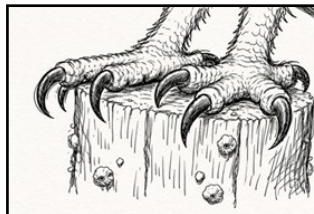
FIELD TRIP CHECKLIST

- ◆ 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

(Species Profile Continued from Page 3)

highly efficient fishing specialist:

- Its feathers are exceptionally dense and have a thick, oily, waterproof coating, a feature not found in the other raptors.
- The nostrils shut tight when diving into the water.
- The toes are lined with short, stiff spikes, providing extra grip on slippery fish.
- It possesses four toes with long, curved talons, and remarkably, its outer front toe can swivel to the rear when fishing, effectively giving it two grasping talons in the front and two in the back. Please see the following AI-generated illustrations.



Ospreys dive feet first into the water and can snatch fish from up to 3 feet below the surface. Once a fish is secured in their talons, they will align it headfirst to improve aerodynamics during flight back to the nest or a nearby perch to consume their catch (see photo below).

In our area, similar species include the Bald Eagle and

Red-tailed Hawk. The Osprey's

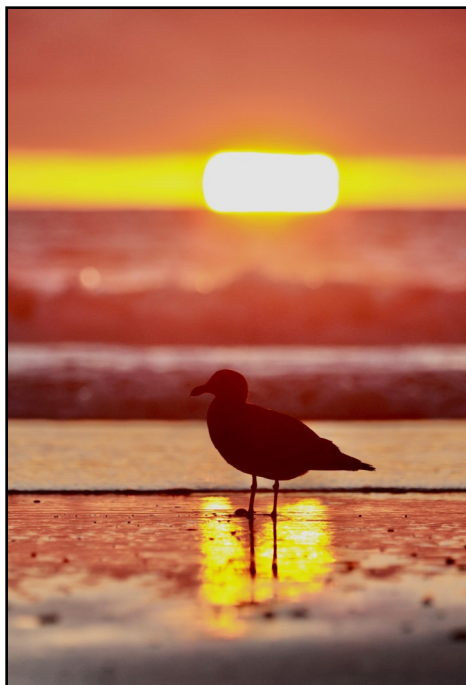


clean, white underpart is a helpful identification marker. As Bald Eagles have dark underparts, and Red-tailed Hawk, while sometimes whitish, exhibit brown streaks. Another distinguishing characteristic is the distinct M-shape formed by the Osprey bent wrists in flight

when viewed from below.

The Osprey's conservation status is currently listed as least concern, largely due to the 1972 ban on DDT in the US, followed by similar actions in many other nations. DDT, developed as a modern synthetic insecticide in the 1940s, accumulated in ecosystem, particularly in fish, a major component of the Osprey's diet. This contamination led to the laying of thin-shelled eggs, causing a significant decline in Ospreys population. Furthermore, the recent installation of artificial nesting platforms on poles, in areas where natural nesting trees have been lost, has provided safety from ground predators and human disturbance, contributing to the Osprey's substantial population recovery.

2026 PAS PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



We invite all PAS members, ages 12 and older, at the date of submission, to participate in our 2026 PAS Photography contest. The guidelines are outlined below.

To be eligible to win a Prize, all submitted photographs must be taken during the calendar year 2026, must depict birdlife (i.e., contain at

least one bird or bird part) and accurately reflect the subject matter as it appeared in the viewfinder (a "Photograph").

Photographs taken with a mobile phone are allowed, including photographs captured by digiscoping. (Entrant should use the RAW setting if available when capturing a Photograph with their phone.)

AI-generated images are not eligible.

Normal processing of the original file is acceptable. You will be required to provide PAS with original image files (RAW, jpg, etc.) in the timeframe provided upon request (generally within 7 days). Judges will determine whether changes to an image are significant enough to disqualify an entry.

Photographs that have been digitally or otherwise altered beyond standard optimization will be disqualified.

Judging will be conducted by photography experts to be appointed by PAS. Judges will score eligible Photographs using the following criteria: a) Technical Quality (33 percent); b) Originality (33 percent); and c) Artistic Merit (34 percent). Prizes will be awarded as follows:

Prizes are:

First Place—\$100.00

Second Place—\$75.00

Third Place —\$50.00

Fourth Place—\$25.00

Entries are to be submitted by 1:59 PM, Oct 15, 2026 at palomaraudubon@gmail.com

See the Palomar Audubon Society Website (<https://palomaraudubon.org>) for further details.

Photo by Justin Hartsell

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Please join us for our very interesting monthly programs and refreshments at the Remington Club II Retirement Center, 16916 Hierba Drive, Rancho Bernardo. There is a social period beginning at 6:30 pm with the meeting and program getting underway promptly at 7:00 pm.

Thursday, May 28, 2026 6:30 pm
Rustom Jamador
"Birds Down Under"

In September 2023, Rustom birded in Australia and will share his birding adventures from Cairns in the NE to Perth and surrounding regions in the SW. Calling all PAS mates to come and enjoy the evening. Most of you have met Rustom, either at one of his presentations or on a bird walk. He has been a member of PAS and the neighboring Audubon groups for over a decade.



Mark your calendars for this very special and entertaining presentation!

Note: There are no monthly presentation during the summer months of June, July and August.

Book Corner

Some books that you may find enjoyable if you have not already:



- *The Social Lives of Birds: Flocks, Communes, and Families* by Joan E. Strassman This broad and readable overview of the meaning and importance of birds' social lives—from migrating in flocks to roosting together to communal nesting and group child rearing—stresses its multiple functions and benefits, but also its negative aspects, such as increased competition
- *The Birding Dictionary* by Rosemary Mosco is a tongue-in-cheek guide for people who find themselves obsessed, against all logic and reason with birds.

Donor Appreciation Event Dianne Benham

On a Sunday afternoon that started out with rain, April 12, 2025, Palomar Audubon Society held its second donor appreciation event, to recognize and honor those members who have made a significant contribution to our organization. Members donating at the “Gold Level” or above, and members who have made generous donations of their time, energy and personal resources, were invited to attend. The PAS Officers and the Board of Directors hosted the event, which was held at Dianne and Hal Benham’s home, in Poway, from 4:00-6:00 pm. Guests were given PAS caps as a sign of appreciation to all they have given to PAS. Attendees enjoyed delicious hors d’oeuvres and beverages while socializing and getting to know one another. PAS President, Beth Pearson, gave a short talk highlighting the many activities that our organization is involved in, made possible by the donations of our generous donors. Thank you to all who participated.



PAS THANKS OUR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS AND OUR DONORS SO VERY MUCH!

Larry & Kathi Alameda, Stephen Aldern, Shannon Alves, Walt & Sandra Bates, Thomas & Denise Boren, Chris Chan, Gale Chan, Gordon Comeau, Kim Cruz, Teresa Dominguez, Judy Doebke, Linda Dugdale, Paul Edstrom, Oscar Euserbio, Randi Feinberg, Max Furimsky, Gilbert Fung, Harlynn Geisler, Judy Gendreau, Mary Jo & Patrick Hayes, Cathy Jain, Kenneth Kayser, Cheryl Knapp, Min Young Kwon, Loretta La Bianca, Heidi Marc-Aurele, Jeanne Marmalefsky, David Mayes, Kathleen McHorney, Mark Mercer/Barbara Orr, Joan Miller, Lisa Needle, Tsaiwei Olee, Brad Parkinson, Janet Peyton, Vince Plourde, Ann Potenzzone, Charles Rance, Rosa Romero, Aubrey Saucier, Chris Saucier, Rebecca Scheible, Akshay Sharma, Janelle Schitz-Winbray, Maria Smirnov, Carolyn Soltero, Laurie Taylor, Margaret Yorio, John & Ruth York, Lisa Christine Waters, Arleen Webster, Adam Weiner, Carissa Williams, Mike Wittmer

Note: A bit of helpful information on how to tell when your renewal is due is that there is a date on the mailing label of the newsletter that lets you know.

BIRDS IN FOCUS

Linda Baade

Palomar Audubon Society is excited to host its second annual Photo Contest. You will find all the details on page 6 in this issue of Band Tales. Reflecting on last year's standout entries, this short guide offers a few ideas to consider as you choose, or create, a photograph to submit.

Great images rarely happen by accident. They are created with intention, the choices you make shaping the story or emotion you want the viewer to feel. It is less about the species and more about the moment. Are you aiming for an artistic close-up, a serene scene, a burst of motion, or an exchange between predator and prey? When your photograph becomes a narrative, and visually compelling, the viewer is drawn in.

Light is your strongest storytelling ally. Use it to shape mood and guide attention. Early or late light can add warmth and drama; backlight can separate the subject from the background and create a dynamic glowing effect; soft overcast light can reveal detail.

Whatever the conditions, use light to create compelling imagery.

In bird photography, the eyes are the emotional anchor. Sharp focus on the eyes—especially when the bird is looking toward the viewer—creates an instant connection. If the eyes are soft, the image loses impact, no matter



Mark Edstrom- 2025 PAS Contest, Adult Grand



Cindy Fortner- 2025 PAS Youth 1st

how strong the moment or composition may be. Taking the time to ensure the focus point of the image is crisp and clear can elevate your photograph.

Composition is key to a stand-out photograph. Uncluttered backgrounds, clean lines that guide the viewer's eye,

and elements that support, rather than compete with, the subject all work together to strengthen your image. As you frame your shot, watch for distracting elements. Often a slight shift in position is all it takes to create separation between the bird and its background and to ensure nothing extraneous pulls attention away from the subject. Last, careful and purposeful editing can make a huge difference in the result. Proper exposure and accurate white balance, or a thoughtful color shift, can make or break an image. Cropping for dramatic effect, or simply to draw the viewer's attention more directly to the subject, can add impact and elevate a good photograph into a compelling narrative.

With story, light, focus, composition, and thoughtful editing working together, a good shot can become a captivating image that stands out and lingers in the viewer's mind.

Escondido Christmas Bird Count Dec. 27, 2025 Summary

By Ken Weaver

Seventy-nine birders in twenty-five teams participated in the Escondido CBC on December 27. We logged a total of 137 species, a rather low count for this circle (we recorded our high count of 160 species just three years ago). Key gaps in our list were waterbirds, especially sandpipers (not a single one!), owls (got to get more folks out for the nightbirds), and very few "write-up" birds. I'll use initials for observers in the account that follows which may be matched with the list of participants. A checklist of birds observed on the count will follow some nice photos courtesy of Tim Burr (I'll let you guess the identity. Shouldn't be hard).

New species. A very out-of-season Rufous Hummingbird at Kit Carson Park in south Escondido (PL) is a first for the count circle, now running for 41 years. This sighting boosts the cumulative total list for this circle to 237 species, exactly one hundred additional species than recorded this year!

Another rarity. Our only other real rarity, a Northern Rough-winged Swallow flew over Dixon Lake in northeast Escondido for only its third count circle appearance (LR, JW).

Not so rare anymore. Three White-winged Doves showed up near Black Canyon Road north of Ramona (TB, KW). This is the ninth straight year that we have recorded this "desert" dove. Is it a year-round resident or only-present in winter? Maybe participants in the California Atlas Project, which just began, will discover the answer.

The Vermilion Flycatcher has long been a rather local bird within the count circle, but this year we hit a record high of eleven individuals recorded by five teams. Locations include singles near Rangeland Road in Ramona (KH, SH), Bandy Canyon (BO, KC, OE) and Old Milky Way roads in the San Pasqual Valley (JB, JC, JH, LT), the Safari Park (SW, CMa, JC, JM, LW), two at Kit Carson Park in Escondido (PL), and a whopping six at the Vineyard (golf course) in

Escondido (BM, MF) appropriately observed from a golf cart!

Fairly frequent but “iffy” birds. Two Ross’s Geese disappeared from the Ramona Pond the day before the count only to reappear near Rangeland Road over five miles to the west on count day (PV, BC, DP, DR, MR, DT; 16th CBC record).

Mountain Quail are present in a number of locations north of Ramona, but, are hard to detect until they begin calling in spring or when the rains come. Well, the rains came and one started “talking” near Black Canyon Road for our 14th record (KWi, TB).

North Pamo Valley produced a single Dark-eyed Junco of the gray-headed race (CA, SA). Slate-colored and more especially, Oregon are the typical subspecies of this count circle. (13th record).

Local “specialties.”

Two species are more likely to be observed in winter within the Escondido count circle than any other location in coastal San Diego County. The easiest to observe is the Zone-tailed Hawk (27th record), most readily seen at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, where two individuals were present (SW, JC, GD, EL, CMa, TS, LW).

As frequent as the hawk, but much less accessible is Scott’s Oriole which regularly winters in tall, extensive prickly pear patches which for some strange reason aren’t often traversed by birders. A bright male “stake-out” bird failed to appear in the morning on the day of the count, but thanks to a persistent team, it was finally spotted in the afternoon near Summit Drive in south Escondido (TH, JJ, VN, EP, SMc).

Introduced species. Ninety-seven Wild Turkeys and eighteen Scaly-breasted Munias represent the more recent exotic bird life that “somebody” thought would be a good idea to release. We had our first report last year of Swinhoe’s White-eye, now numerous on the coast, but not observed this year.

Trends. Sadly, we are still seeing low and often dwindling numbers of nearly all waterbirds (ducks, grebes, herons, shorebirds) as well as flocking songbirds (blackbirds, corvids) within the count circle. We can speculate that drought, changing farming practices, and/or bird flu may be behind this, but I haven’t seen anything definitive yet. Let’s hope the numbers improve.

Thanks. A big thank you to all participants; to Jim Beckman, the Palomar Audubon Society vice-president and field trip chair; to our chapter’s hospitality team; to Angie Ray of the San Diego Zoo Alliance - Safari Park for providing transportation, access to behind-the-scenes areas, and knowledgeable staff (Eric Lutomski, Catie Masterson, and Tiana Skrivseth); and to James Cassidy of the Maderas Golf Club for providing access for our Poway team.

Hope to see you on the next count. Please continue to support the protection of our country’s wildlife which is under very serious and totally unnecessary threats.

Ken Weaver
Count Compiler

Participants:

Chris Adler, Supeena Adler, Stephanie Aldern, Gerry Baade, Linda Baade, Dave Batzler, Tim Burr, James Cassidy, Joni Ciarletta, Kate Clever, Beth Cobb, Jim Colby, Marie DeGomez, Gail DeLalla, Laura Dominguez, Patti Ellis, Steve Ellis, Oscar Eusebio, Cindy Fortner, Dave Fortner, Rick Groves, Ken Hartman, Siew Bee Hartman, Justin Hartsell, Mary Jo Hayes, Tracy Henchbarger, Cathy Jain, Chris Jain, Helen Jenney, Jenny Johnson-Patel, Tina Kafka, Max Leibowitz, Jill Laughlin, Paul Lehman, Greg Lillian, Aedyn Loeffke, Eric Lutomski, Clark Mahrtd, Donna Mancuso, Dotti Marron, Susie Martin, Catie Masterson, Stacy McCline, Gary Meredith, Jessica Murany, Jane Mygatt, Veronica Ness, Susan Newlin, Dawn Nowlin, Tsaiwei Olee, Barbara Orr, Egan Patel, Beth Pearson, Steve Perry, Jack Peterson, Tom Pietuch, Vince Plourde, Dede Puaio, Christine Rideout, Cindy Rippee, Dave Rose, Mary Rose, Lisa Ruby, Tuck Russell, Sally Sanderson, Tom Simpson, Tiana Skrivseth, Robert Sommers, Lea Thai, Dave Thompson, Phil Unitt, Phoenix Von Hendy, Stan Walens, Jon Watterson, Peggy Watterson, Mac West, Lindsay Willrick, Kirsten Winter

Checklist:

Snow Goose (2) Ross’s Goose (2) Cackling Goose (2) Canada Goose (481) Wood Duck (1) Gadwall (47) American Wigeon (631) Mallard (418) Blue-winged Teal (2) Cinnamon Teal (5) Northern Shoveler (89) Northern Pintail (46) Canvasback (23) Ring-necked Duck (253) Lesser Scaup (36) Bufflehead (95) Hooded Merganser (16) Ruddy Duck (110) Mountain Quail (1) California Quail (198) Wild Turkey (97) Pied-billed Grebe (31) Eared Grebe (5) Western Grebe (44) Clark’s Grebe (13) Double-crested Cormorant (106) American White Pelican (57) Great Blue Heron (4) Great Egret (11) Snowy Egret (44) Cattle Egret (11) Green Heron (1) Black-crowned Night-Heron (18) White-faced Ibis (72) Turkey Vulture (225) Osprey (2) Sharp-shinned Hawk (1) Cooper’s Hawk (18) Bald Eagle (4) Northern Harrier (2)

Presentation-San Diego: An Environmental History by Phil Unitt on April 23, 2026

Phil Unitt’s talk was very well received and as one attendee stated “Phil’s talk was superb! Engaging! Fascinating! Educational! “.



Field Trip Report: PAS Costa Rica Birding Adventure Steve Ellis

Eleven members of the Palomar Audubon Society recently returned from a delightful 12 day birding adventure through the region north of San Jose, Costa Rica guided by Diego from Flyway Birding Tours.

Everyone seemed to have had a lovely time on this trip even though it was a little hot in the lowlands. A total of 323 bird species were found, seeing most of them and only hearing just a few. Terrific looks at our target birds were had of the Jabiru and the Resplendent Quetzal. Also seen were many Trogons and Toucans. Good fortune was had when seeing a Potoo with a baby perched on its basically nonexistent nest high in a tree.

There were quite a few animals also that were seen and heard from time to time. Howler Monkeys made a lot of noise to announce their presence. Insects were not too bad, and bug spray was only needed a few times. There was a bit of a scare when Cathie Canepa noticed a large scorpion in the bathroom with her but thankfully she survived to tell the story. Many wonderful memories were made with lots of comradery, and with many tales to tell.

All in all it turned out to be a great trip.



I Found a Baby Bird! ...Now What?

START
HERE

Is the bird injured?

NO

YES

Contact a licensed bird rehabilitator.



Does the bird have feathers?

It's a nestling.

NO

YES

It's a fledgling. Remove dogs, cats, and people from the area. Give the bird space.



nest-ling (n)
a bird that is too young to leave its nest.

fledg-ling (n)
a bird that has intentionally left the nest but still needs parent care.



Can you find the nest intact?

NO

Make a nest and hang close to original nest location. Put baby in nest and observe for 1 hour.

YES

Put the baby in the nest and observe for 1 hour.



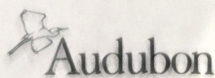
Are parents returning and attentive?

Contact a licensed bird rehabilitator.

NO

YES

Leave the area, the baby bird is now safe!



Donations & Membership in Palomar Audubon Society (PAS)

All donations of \$30 or more qualify for membership in PAS

Membership benefits include:

- Bi-monthly newsletter – Band Tales
- Monthly Programs and Presentations on birds around the world
- Invitation to Birding Trips outside our region, including International
- Invitation to Annual Summer Picnic and Christmas Bird Count Picnic
- Invitation to bird classes

Note that PAS membership is separate from membership in National Audubon, and we rely on donations from our members to offer the benefits.

Donation Levels: Member (includes spouses) \$30
 Supporter \$60 Silver \$125 Gold \$250 Platinum \$500
 Legacy \$1000

Palomar Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit and an all-volunteer organization. Your donations are tax deductible.

Donations and/or Payments can be made using a check or by using Zelle.

Checks: When mailing a check, fill in your details below and send via USPS to Palomar Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2483, Escondido, CA 92033

Name: _____
 Donation amount: \$ _____
 Address: _____

Email: _____ Tel: _____

Please indicate if you would prefer a paper copy of Band Tales: Yes ___ or No ___
 (Band Tales is available on our website: www.palomaraudubon.org)

Zelle: Make your donation to palomaraudubon@gmail.com

In the memo line indicate: "Donation from *your name address, and email*"
 Also indicate if you would prefer a paper copy of Band Tales: Yes or No

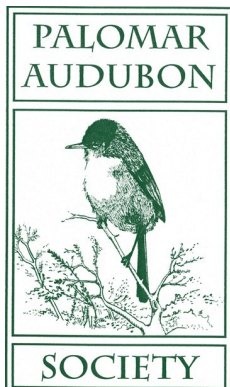
For Payments other than Donations such as trip costs or classes.

These can also be made via Zelle or USPS Mail as above. Please be sure to indicate the reason for the payment in the memo line of your check or Zelle submission.

Band Tales

May-June, 2026

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-only membership.



Palomar Audubon Society

Band Tales

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Note: Members may contact any of the PAS officers or Directors at the email address below.

Web Page <http://www.palomaraudubon.org>
palomaraudubon@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Saturday, May 16th at 12:00 PM

Location: Remington Club II, 16916 Hierba Drive, Rancho Bernardo, CA 92128

QUICK CALENDAR

May	1-5	Eastern Sierra Birding Trip
May	2	La Jolla Coastline Walk
May	9	Dairy Mart Pond/Tijuana River Valley Walk
May	16	San Pasqual Agricultural Trail Walk
May	16	Board Meeting (see above)
May	23	Ramona Grasslands County Preserve & Rangeland Road
May	28	“Birds down Under” Presentation
May	30	Kitchen Creek Rd. & Cibbets Flat Campground Walk
June	6	Palomar Mountain State Walk
June	13	Daley Ranch Walk
June	14	Annual Picnic
June	20	Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Walk
June	27	Aqua Dulce Walk
July	4	Mile 19 Pull-Out