



HUMMIN'

PALOS VERDES/SOUTH BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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GNATCATCHERS AND MEADOWLARKS RETURN TO WHITE POINT

by David Moody and Ann Dalkey

Before 2001, the area now known as the White Point Nature Preserve was a derelict parcel of land, dominated by non-native annual grassland, and acres of invasive non-native and ornamental plants that provided little in the way of habitat for birds and other animals. Since 2003, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy has been restoring the property, adding 28 acres of grassland, 2.3 acres of woodland, and 49 acres of coastal sage scrub to the property. Curious about the kinds and numbers of birds now using the new habitat, David Moody decided to conduct regular surveys for an entire year.

The data were summarized and included in the Conservancy's White Point Nature Preserve Annual Monitoring Report for 2006 (available at www.pvplc.org/land/white_point/). In addition to describing the bird diversity using the Preserve, the data can be used as a comparison base against future surveys when restoration efforts are complete and the habitat has matured. Also, the data have been used to develop educational materials at the site to help visitors learn more about the bird fauna in the White Point Nature Preserve.

The surveys were conducted four times per month October 2005 through September 2006. A total of 115 species were observed and recorded throughout the year, 19 were observed every month. The most commonly observed birds were primarily native coastal sage scrub inhabitants, but were numerically dominated by marine (Western Gull, Brandt's Cormorant, and Brown Pelican) and exotic species (European Starling and Rock Pigeon). Interestingly, the Western Meadowlark was observed in the greatest numbers, even though it was less frequently observed due to its absent from the Preserve during the summer (May – July).

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UPCOMING CHAPTER GET-TOGETHERS

The Chapter has organized Third Tuesday Get-Togethers for February 20, March 20, April 17, and May 15 at 7:00PM at the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Besides listening to the speakers, you can participate in a bird quiz and raffle, with prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Our March speaker is Fred Heath author of [An Introduction To Southern California Butterflies](#). His book identifies 89 species of Southern California butterflies along with their favorite habitats and food plants from Santa Barbara and Kern Counties in the north to San Diego and Imperial Counties in the south. Fred will share his adventures and the photographs of his contributor Herb Clarke.

Our April speaker is Tony Baker. Tony is a well known South Bay landscape designer who uses native plants in magnificent ways. His handy work can be seen in the native plant garden surrounding the Madrona Marsh Nature Center and in the care he takes in tending the Native Plant Garden at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center in Rancho Palos Verdes. He will provide us with details on "Water Wise" gardening at home.

Our May speaker is our own Martin Byhower. Martin is a talented Science teacher by profession and a renowned South Bay birder by avocation. He will enthrall us with stories and photos of his birding adventures in Eastern Europe. His 2005 trip to Hungary assisting in a banding program is the focus of our May presentation.

(The President's Column will return in the next issue of Hummin'.)

Gnatcatchers and Meadowlarks, continued from page 1

We were pleased that the California Gnatcatcher was observed every month, in numbers ranging from one to seven individuals. Before the restoration, these birds were not recorded at the Preserve due to the lack of habitat, but were viewed as having the potential to occur at the site. During 2003 and 2004, over 77,000 natives were planted to create over 49 acres of new coastal sage habitat. This was a successful effort for, by summer 2004, the new habitat exceeded the restoration goal with a measured coverage greater than 43%. Perhaps a more meaningful measure of success is having special-status species utilize the new habitat. It was quite gratifying when individuals of California Gnatcatcher were first observed in September 2004, their presence attributed to dispersal from an adjacent breeding population (*Hummin'* Vol 26, #6). Knowing that the birds are present, we expect that with continued expansion of the habitat, more California Gnatcatchers will make the Preserve their home.

A few years ago, Mitch Hiendel lamented the loss of Western Meadowlark breeding pairs in the Palos Verdes Peninsula and adjacent areas, wondering how the bird would survive (*Hummin'* Vol 26, #6). He was concerned that management of extant grassland habitat used by the birds was the cause, specifically mowing to reduce fire hazards. Then, natural grassland habitat was installed at the Preserve to benefit species such as the Western Meadowlark. Previously absent from the area, the bird was first observed in the Preserve's grassland in fall 2004. Efforts are continuing to improve the quality of the restored grasslands, now highly impacted by exotic forbs and grasses, that we hope will encourage the Western Meadowlark to use the areas for nesting.



California Gnatcatcher
(USFWS B. Moose Peterson)

We have yet to observe either the cactus wren or California Quail. As a state-listed species of special concern, care was taken to insure cactus habitat was restored for the cactus wren by planting 2.5 acres of three cactus species (coast prickly pear, tall prickly pear, and cholla). At present, the cactus habitat is too immature to support Cactus Wren, but eventually we anticipate that cactus stands will mature to sufficiently large stands for the Cactus Wren to repopulate the Preserve.

The California Quail, once common on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, but now rare, is absent from the Preserve. Fortunately, a small, breeding population of the bird has been noted at the nearby Forrester Reserve in the Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve during recent years (*Hummin'* Vol. 20, #5, Vol. 27, #3, and Vol. 28, #5). Some consider these quail may be a remnant population of the original Peninsula population and could be biologically distinct from other mainland quail (*Hummin'* Vol. 20, #5) while others believe they have been reintroduced. Regardless of origin, the continued success of this population will increase the likelihood of some offspring migrating to the White Point Nature Preserve. If so, that will, indeed, be exciting news.

The Preserve continues to attract new species of birds. In mid-October, a Burrowing Owl was seen in the woodland area. It is events such as this that boost our optimism that the Preserve will be home to both the Cactus Wren and California Quail in the future. And thanks to the David Moody's extensive study, we now have an excellent benchmark for use in tracking future additions to the newly restored White Point Nature Preserve.

David Moody was the 2006 recipient of the Chapter Conservation Biology Award. Ann Dalkey is Director of Science Programs for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy.

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BIRDS OF THE PENINSULA

November and December 2006

by Kevin Larson

A good late wave of vagrant land birds, along with our hopes of finding a few of the rarer warblers this year, never materialized. Few lost birds from the east were found this fall. On the bright side, a Brown Thrasher, a Summer Tanager, and three Clay-colored Sparrows were among the vagrants found in the first half of November, and a Tennessee Warbler occurred later in the month. The big news of November was the first Rock Sandpiper found in Los Angeles County in forty years. By mid-December, with staked-out birds such as a Thick-billed Kingbird, the Brown Thrasher, a Northern Parula, and an Orchard Oriole, the prospect of recording a high number of species on our Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was good. A large improvement over the 158 species recorded in 2005, our faithful crew of counters tallied 172 species on the Palos Verdes Peninsula CBC held on 23 December. Fifteen additional species contributed to a satisfying total of 187 recorded during the 20-26 December count week period. It is not hard to think of thirteen more species that were likely within our count circle. With additional observers, a 200 count week seems within reach. In 1994, with fifty-eight observers and few rarities present, we recorded 196 during the count week period. The biggest surprise this year were two Western Screech-Owls heard in Palos Verdes Estates on the morning of the CBC—a first for the count. Two White-faced Ibises, a Long-eared Owl, a Dusky Flycatcher, a Western Kingbird, and the Orchard Oriole were also CBC firsts.

We had a very good year in this article's coverage area, which includes areas north to Marina del Rey and east to the Los Angeles River. A total of 306 species recorded during the 2006 calendar year was an increase over our totals of 302 or 303 in the last three years. This increase is surprising given the low number of eastern vagrant passerines found during the spring and fall seasons, but a well-rounded list with no bad misses made up for it. Formerly rare but regular, Chimney Swifts are unrecorded since 2004. The rarer eastern warblers were virtually unrecorded. The Swamp Sparrow, recorded in the previous three years, was missed this year.

High pressure was the dominant weather influence

during November and December. Offshore flow and dry, skin-chapping humidity prevailed, broken only by short periods of low pressure or maritime influence. Unusually warm weather during these offshore flow periods broke high temperature records on some days in November. Five weather fronts between 27 November and 27 December produced only small amounts of precipitation. Seasonal rainfall totals were running well below half their normal values at the end of December.

A Greater White-fronted Goose continued at Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area (EMJRA) in Willowbrook 25 Oct-27 Dec (Richard Barth-RB), and two were at Trump National Golf Club in RPV 10-23 Dec (Mike San Miguel). Very rare in our area over the years, a windfall of Snow Geese included one at Madrona Marsh (MM) 18-28 Nov (Ron Melin-RM), one that flew past Pt. Vicente (PtV) on 10 Dec (Kevin Larson-KL), and up to three at the Los Angeles River (LAR) in Long Beach from late November through mid-December (Jeff Boyd). Remarkably, a Ross's Goose at Polliwog Park in Manhattan Beach 10-18 Dec was the sixth species of goose recorded in the area since late October (RB).

A female Wood Duck was at Averill Park in San Pedro 13 Nov-24 Dec (Mary Forgione). I counted 6090 Surf



Burrowing Owl
(Jack McGee)

Scoters flying south past PtV on 16 Dec; this impressive movement came after a very strong storm in the Pacific Northwest. Two White-winged Scoters flew by with Surf Scoters that day. Four different White-winged Scoters were seen on the water at Dockweiler State Beach (DSB) 22 Nov-3 Dec (RB). RB also recorded up to two Black Scoters at DSB 13 Nov-2 Jan. A female Long-tailed Duck was at DSB 2 Dec-2 Jan (KL), and another flew south past PtV with scoters on 16 Dec (KL). A female Common Goldeneye was at Ballona Lagoon 23 Nov-2 Dec (David Bell); it is unclear whether a female flying past the lagoon on 27 Dec was the same bird. Other Common Goldeneye sightings included an adult male at DSB on 3 Dec (Mark Conrad), three flying past PtV on 25 Dec (KL), and four at LAR south of Willow St. 30 Dec-1 Jan (KL). Up to six Hooded Mergansers were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh (BFM) 8 Dec-1 Jan (KL, Dan Cooper); singles were found at the Spencer St. Sump in Torrance and Alondra Park (AP) on the 23 Dec CBC (Tracy Drake). The third record for the CBC, and first since 1977, a **Common Merganser** at the South Coast Botanic Garden (SCBG) 23-24 Dec is only the third seen in the PV count circle since 1995 (Stephanie Bryan, Ray De Long).

An American Bittern was at BFM on 10 Nov (KL). One Cattle Egret flew north over LAR at DeForest Park (DP) on 5 Nov, and two were seen on 27 Dec at EMJRA, where this species has wintered for the last four consecutive years (KL). Surprising was the discovery of two **White-faced Ibises**—the first ever in the forty year history of the CBC—at the Walteria Sump 23-24 Dec (Ann and Eric Brooks); it remains to be seen if these are late-lingering migrants, or are remaining for the winter. Single Northern Harriers were at BFM on 8 Nov and 27 Dec (DS), over Rolling Hills on 12 Nov (KL), and at Harbor Park (HP) on 13 Nov (Martin Byhower-MB).

A Lesser Yellowlegs at LAR in Long Beach 25 Nov-30 Dec was an unexpected winter visitor (Andrew Lee). November's big event was the discovery of the first **Rock Sandpiper** in Los Angeles County since the winter of 1966-7 (Jon Fisher, Barbara G. Johnson); present on the jetties at the mouth of Ballona Creek (where the last one occurred) from 22 Nov through at least 2 Jan, it thrilled birders from around the region. A female Ruff, apparently in first-basic plumage, at LAR in Long Beach 5 Nov-9 Dec was the third or fourth recorded at the river this fall (KL); it was not seen after rain flooded the river on the night of 9-10 Dec. A calling Short-billed Dowitcher along Ballona Creek on 3 Dec was late (KL). Three first-winter Thayer's Gulls among



Mountain Bluebird
(Jess Morton)

thousands of gulls at Cabrillo Beach on 29 Dec was a good total (Bernardo Alps). A roving **second-winter Glaucous Gull** found at LAR in Long Beach 21-30 Dec (Jeff Boyd, Karen Gilbert) was seen a few times at the Dominguez Channel near the dump in Carson (KL). Black-legged Kittiwake sightings included one at PtV on 16 Dec (KL), and two at King Harbor during a strong onshore blow on 27 Dec (David Moody-DM).

Alcids flying south past PtV included one Common Murre on 10 Dec, eight Rhinoceros Auklets on 16 Dec, and single Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets on 25 Dec (KL). A Eurasian Collared-Dove was perched in the Portuguese Bend area of RPV on 25 Dec (KL). Two **Western Screech-Owls** heard early on the morning of 23 Dec in the area between Via La Selva and the Palos Verdes Golf Club in Palos Verdes Estates was jaw-dropping news at the CBC tally since they are not known to be resident on the peninsula (DM, Tracy Drake). A Burrowing Owl was at White's Point Nature Preserve (WPNP) 16 Oct-27 Nov (DM); others were found near the harbor in Wilmington on 15 Nov (Dianna Ettl), near the cruise terminal in San Pedro on 29 Dec (Jack McGee), and a returning bird was in the Ballona Wetland area 16 Nov-30 Dec (Chuck Almdale).

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CONSERVATION CORNER

By Lillian Light

Our old growth forests are being decimated with the cooperation of our federal government, specifically the US Forest Service! One of the most egregious acts of the timber industry is the destruction of the last few sequoia trees in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Less than 5% of these ancient forests remain, and they are being cut down at the rate of 185 acres per day.



Trees that took 1000 or more years to grow are being destroyed in a few minutes.

In their Fall, 2006 newsletter, the Native Forest Council reported that each year, enough old-growth trees to fill a convoy of log trucks 20,000 miles long are taken from Northwest forests alone! When you travel in Oregon and Washington you will be

appalled at the large numbers of logging trucks you see and at the massive diameters of the tree trunks that these trucks carry.

The Forest Service has a long history of logging in the area. A decade ago, a particularly devastating logging project dismayed a local resident who described it thus, "There were, out of 20 logged acres, maybe two giant sequoias left standing". Environmental lawsuits were mounted, and in 2000 President Clinton created the Giant Sequoia National Monument to protect about three dozen groves in the Sequoia National Forest.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service, which manages this monument, cannot be trusted to protect it from the local timber and off-road-vehicle interests, since it profits from the logging. Citing the excuse of pre-2000 timber sales, logging operations are continuing years after they were supposed to end. A monument management plan that called for still more logging, including the removal of young sequoias, was recently thrown out by a federal judge, who called it "incomprehensible".

Sequoias can reach an age of 3,000 years, and can measure 100 feet around at their base. They can tower 20 stories or more above the western slopes of the

Sierra Nevada, the only place in the world where they grow in clusters along with fir and tall pine trees that buffer them. When lumber companies cut down these firs and pines, the sequoias often succumb to wind and root problems that destroy them. It is a tragic sight to see miles and miles of tree stumps amid big piles of branches and debris after large swaths of our ancient forests have been logged.

Not only must we keep our ancient trees for their rarity, spectacular size and beauty, we need them to absorb the carbon dioxide that is causing global warming.

The National Aeronautical and Space Administration has stated: "Human beings add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere mainly by burning fossil fuels like coal and oil. Deforestation is the second major way we increase atmospheric carbon dioxide. Felled timber releases carbon dioxide as it burns or decays, and disturbed soils produce carbon dioxide from burned organic matter."

It is unfortunate that such logging is occurring in our national forests, but the fact that logging can continue in a national monument established to protect its thousand year old trees is an abomination. Our senators and representatives must pass legislation that will stop the looting of our national monuments and will give permanent protection to our ancient forests. The best solution is to transfer control of our national monuments from the Forest Service to the National Park service, which has a much better record of protecting our forests and our wildlife. Please contact the following legislators and demand action.

Congresswoman Jane Harman
229 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-8220 or 310-643-3636.

Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3841 or 310-914-7300

Senator Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3553 or 213-894-5000
senator@boxer.senate.gov

YOUR BACKYARD HABITAT

Chia Sage
(*Salvia columbariae*)

by **Dr. Connie Vadheim**



This time of year, when winter rains are (usually) a sure bet, is a good time to plant annual wildflowers. Native wildflowers perk up the spring/summer garden with their brilliant colors. In addition, most produce nutritious seeds – good food for birds and humans alike. Chia Sage, one of two local annual sages (the other is Thistle Sage, *Salvia carduacea*), is an excellent

addition to your backyard habitat.

South Bay annual wildflowers complete their entire life cycle in the period between the fall/winter rains and the summer drought. They tend to germinate quickly after the winter rains begin (1-3 weeks is common), and grow rapidly in spring. The shorter species (1-2 feet) generally bloom in early- to mid-spring, while many of the taller-growing species (2-4 feet) bloom in late spring to summer. All species develop seeds soon after blooming to insure the next generation.

Chia Sage grows 1-2 feet tall and wide. It has attractive gray green foliage – mostly at the base – and pretty little purple-blue salvia flowers in ball-like clusters above the foliage. Like most of our native wildflowers, Chia Sage needs plenty of sun and well-drained soil. Other than that,



most annual wildflowers are simplicity itself to grow. Just sprinkle the tiny seeds on bare soil, rake lightly, and insure that seeds and seedlings get enough water in the first several months. During dry winters like the current one, you may need to provide a little extra water. I like to plant my annual seed right before a good rain, thereby avoiding birds' eating it all. I then hand-water as needed with a gentle spray.

One benefit of annual wildflowers is their versatility. You can grow them in wildflower 'prairies' with other local wildflowers and grasses, tuck them in around shrubs, and even grow them on a patio in large pots at least 12 inches deep. As long as you have a little patch with sun/bright shade for 4-6 hours per day you should definitely try some annual wildflowers.

Most native wildflowers reseed themselves on bare ground, making native annuals a good investment. Withhold water after plants flower to insure a good seed crop. Then let the plants reseed naturally or collect the seeds and store them in a cool, dry place. You'll have plenty of seed for next year!

So buy a few packets of native wildflower seeds. The Theodore Payne Foundation will send them by mail. I suggest trying them first in pots. Be sure to plant species native to the South Bay for the best results. You'll have a good time while helping to bring back our heritage southern coastal prairies and grasslands.

For more information on growing and purchasing annual wildflowers visit the Madrona Marsh Nature Center . You can also learn about local native plants at the "Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden" series the first Sat. of each month at the Center.

Birds of the Peninsula, continued from 5

A **Long-eared Owl** photographed in the Portuguese Bend area of RPV on 23 Dec is the first winter record for the count circle (Holly Gray et al); the three other records are of fall migrants.

An immature male Costa's Hummingbird present at SCBG since 8 Oct was last seen on 17 Dec (KL); one in Rolling Hills on 23 Dec was the only other report (Rusty Scalf et al). A Red-naped Sapsucker was a nice find at Polliwog Park 17 Nov-18 Dec (RB). Rare in our area, Nuttall's Woodpeckers were at Loyola Marymount University on 26 Nov (Russell Stone), and at AP on 21 Dec (DM). A **Dusky Flycatcher** photographed on the 23 Dec CBC in RPV was outstanding (Curtis Johnson, Jerry Tolman, Jim Pike); it will read as the first record for the CBC, though a bird found on the 1994 count at the north end of HP was not identified as this species until later that winter. Single Western Flycatchers were at SCBG 17 Dec-1 Jan and at DP on 30 Dec (KL). Returning for its third winter, a female Vermilion Flycatcher was at EMJRA 25 Oct-10 Dec (RB); it appears the male Vermilion Flycatcher did not return to Columbia Park in what would have been its fourth winter. A **Thick-billed Kingbird** at Banning Park 4 Nov-1 Jan had returned for its second winter (KL). Very rare in winter, a **Western Kingbird** was found at the PV Landfill on the 23 Dec CBC by Ann and Eric Brooks. Returning for its fourth winter, a Bell's Vireo continued at DP 24 Sep-30 Dec (RB). Single Plumbeous Vireos were at the El Segundo Library 14 Oct-10 Dec (RB), and at the north end of HP 10 Dec-1 Jan (David Bell). A Cassin's Vireo was at SCBG 9-17 Dec, but eluded us



Brant
(Bernardo Alps)

during the count week period (KL). A wintering Hutton's Vireo was at Wilderness Park (WP) 29 Aug-14 Dec (DM); one was at AP on 19 Nov (MB), and resident birds were noted in Rolling Hills and the Malaga Creek area during the period.

Four Horned Larks flew over LAR in Long Beach on 5 Nov (KL), and up to seventeen were on the ground at WPNP 6-7 Nov (DM). About twenty-five Tree Swallows were over AP on 5 Dec, but were not seen after; three Northern Rough-winged and three Barn swallows were found there on 21 Dec (DM). A rare find on the peninsula, a **Mountain Chickadee** was tallied for the 23 Dec CBC in Rolling Hills (Rusty Scalf et al); two were found there on 31 Dec (KL). A Red-breasted Nuthatch at WP through 23 Dec was apparently a returning winterer; one in RPV on 10 Nov may have been part of the small resident population noted on the hill in recent years (KL). A White-breasted Nuthatch in Rolling Hills 29-31 Dec was part of an invasion that occurred mostly outside of our area this winter (DM, KL). Mary McIntyre found a Brown Creeper at her residence in Redondo Beach 15-17 Nov; another was in Rolling Hills on 29 Dec (DM). A Winter Wren near the southwest corner of the Palos Verdes Golf Club on 23 Dec (Jim Pike), and one in Rolling Hills on 31 Dec (KL) were at locations where individuals were found last winter. A few Golden-crowned Kinglets were noted in Rolling Hills, Palos Verdes Estates, and at SCBG during the period (KL, RM, Rusty Scalf).

Six Western Bluebirds in the Malaga Cove area 7-8 Dec (RM), two in Torrance near El Retiro Park on 14 Dec (DM), and four at AP (DM) were apparently moving through, but our resident birds at Ridgecrest Intermediate School in RPV were tallied on the 23 Dec CBC (Curtis Johnson, Jerry Tolman). Mountain Bluebird sightings at MM included up to three 19-21 Nov (MB, DM), and two 27 Dec-1 Jan (RM). A good showing of Varied Thrushes this winter included three or more at SCBG 3 Dec-1 Jan (Stephanie Bryan), one at Polliwog Park on 18 Dec (RB), one at the Palos Verdes Golf Club on 23 Dec (Jim Pike), and another in Rolling Hills on 23 Dec (Ross Landry). A **Brown Thrasher** at the north end of HP 4 Nov-1 Jan is our first local record in fifteen years (KL); the last area sighting was at Banning Park 10-13 Nov 1991. Three Phainopeplas were at SCBG on 12 Nov (KL).

A Tennessee Warbler at AP 19 Nov-1 Dec was apparently a late migrant (MB). A Northern Parula at Wilson Park in Torrance 7 Dec-1 Jan had returned for a



Thayer's Gull
(*Bernardo Alps*)

second winter (KL); several birders attempting to find it on the day of the CBC were frustrated. A Hermit Warbler at WP since October was still present on 14 Dec (DM); another was found in Palos Verdes Estates by Mariam Porter on the 23 Dec CBC. Two Palm Warblers were at MM 1 Nov-1 Jan (DM); a third bird seen on 3 Nov only was entirely yellow below and may have been of the eastern race *D. p. hypochrysea* (RM). A very good accumulation of Palm Warbler records included one at HP on 20 Nov (MB), one at King Harbor 7-23 Dec (DM), one at WPNP on 19 Dec (DM), and another at the Walteria Sump on 24 Dec (KL). I received late word of an Ovenbird photographed by David Ellsworth in San Pedro on 1 May 2006; it easily qualifies as the rarest warbler found in the PV count circle this year. Summer Tanagers were located at DP 4 Nov-1 Jan (KL) and at SCBG 9 Dec-1 Jan (MB).

Three Clay-colored Sparrows at MM on 2 Nov were late migrants (DM). Approximately **fifty** Lark Sparrows in the Malaga Cove area on 8 Dec was an astonishingly high count for our area (DM); six were at Green Hills Memorial Park on 17 Dec (KL), and a few were at MM in December (DM). A good number of White-throated Sparrows was found: one was at DP 29 Oct-30 Dec (Carol Selvey); one was at BFM 3-8 Nov (DS); up to two were at Sand Dune Park 17 Nov-3 Dec (RB); one was at Stephanie Bryan's residence in San Pedro 1-3 Dec; and another was found in Palos Verdes Estates on the 23 Dec CBC (Mariam Porter). Very rare along California's coast, a genuine "**Pink-sided**" Junco (*J. h. mearnsi*) photographed at Loyola Marymount University 31 Oct-5 Dec was an exceptional find (RB). Similar-appearing juncos from the "Oregon" group of the Dark-eyed Junco com-

plex, probably all immature females, have been frequently misidentified as this subspecies. Jim Pike worked his usual magic on the CBC, finding a **Black-headed Grosbeak** at the Palos Verdes Golf Club on the 23 Dec. A female or immature **Orchard Oriole** at SCBG 9 Dec-2 Jan was the first ever recorded on the CBC (KL). An adult male Baltimore Oriole was at Banning Park on 3 Dec (John Afdem), and a young male was at SCBG 17 Dec-1 Jan (KL). Bullock's Oriole sightings at SCBG during December included a high winter count of at least six on 26 Dec (KL). A few Purple Finches were recorded at MM, at SCBG, and in Rolling Hills during the period. Seventeen Pine Siskins at MM on 11 Nov were the only ones reported this fall (RM).

Thanks to all who reported sightings during the period. Please send your sightings to me at cbirdr@ca.rr.com for the Palos Verdes/South Bay and vicinity, including areas east to the L.A. River, north to about the 105 freeway, and along the coast up to Marina del Rey.

Acronyms in Birds of the Peninsula

AP: Alondra Park
 BFM: Ballona Freshwater Marsh
 CBC: Christmas Bird Count
 DM: David Moody
 DP: DeForest Park
 DS: Don Sterba
 DSB: Dockweiler State Beach
 EMJRA: Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area
 HP: Harbor Park
 KL: Kevin Larson
 LAR: Los Angeles River
 MB: Martin Byhower
 MM: Madrona Marsh
 PtV: Pt. Vicente
 RB: Richard Barth
 RM: Ron Melin
 RPV: Rancho Palos Verdes
 SCBG: South Coast Botanic Garden
 WP: Wilderness Park
 WPNP: White's Point Nature Preserve

This Unknown Peninsula

A DAY AT THE BEACH

by **Jess Morton**

They're invisible. Even when you see them, you scarcely notice their presence. Just another sandpiper, birds working the fringes of the sea. Part of the landscape. Hardly significant.

Yet snowy plovers are special. Not just in the way in which all creatures are special, but in their particular mode of living. Ever on the beach. They run in short spurts over the sand. Or fly up the strand, but only just far enough. Sometimes, undecided about what to do, they stand on one leg, stretching out the other under an extended wing.

Often, I find them standing beside kelp and other beach wrack, or hunkered down in the sand above the tide line in a slight depression left by a passing heel, gull or just the wind. Like the purloined letter, snowy plovers hide in plain sight, for they are creatures of the sand, sheltering always under the open sky.

This morning, I stood at the edge of the outer parking area by Cabrillo Beach. It was a beautiful morning, cool with a bright sun still casting long shadows and, far off the beach, the early fog lifting from a placid sea. From this spot I knew I could see the snowys, monitor how this one small population of a federally threatened species was doing.

As usual, it took a few minutes to spot them—all of forty yards away. Six birds now, up from five a week ago. I wondered where the new bird had come from. For the last several years, there has been a core group of five birds on this beach. Birds that seem at ease (mostly) with one another, perhaps related by more than just where they

spend the non-breeding season.

For snowy plovers do not nest at Cabrillo. There is far too much activity for that. Runners, sunbathers, fishermen, dogs off leash, whatever. The birds can manage here as long as they are free to move. But a nest, a place in the sand undisturbed for a period of weeks, will not work here. Nor on so many other beaches up and down the West Coast. This is why snowy plovers are listed federally. People use open beaches heavily. Even isolated ones are not exempt, what with the prevalence of off-road vehicles.



Snowy Plover
(Jess Morton)

GIFT & NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP (*chapter only* or *national--circle one*).....\$25

(your contribution supports local programs)

and/or

GIFT\$20__\$50__\$100__Other__

TOTAL ENCLOSED..... _____

MAKE CHECK TO: AUDUBON SOCIETY
MAIL TO: P.O. BOX 2582, PALOS VERDES, CA 90274

Please send me information on how to make a bequest to PV/SB Audubon.

7XCH/C43

Meet Learn Enjoy Restore

(See Calendar Locations and Information Box for directions.)

Sunday, Feb. 4, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden, 26300 Crenshaw Bl., Palos Verdes. Leader: Stephanie Bryan. Charge for nonmembers of the SCBG Foundation; you can join at the entrance.

Wednesday, Feb. 7, 7:00PM: PV/SoBay Audubon Board Meeting at Madrona Marsh. All Audubon members and friends are welcome to attend.

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh with Bob Shanman.

Sunday, February 18, 8:00AM: White's Point Nature Preserve and Royal Palms Beach with Martin Byhower. This is a remarkable PV Land Conservancy restoration site, and grassland restoration is particularly important for the South Bay. Hiking will be leisurely. Take Western until it dead ends at Paseo del Mar, go left (east) a bit more than two miles and park opposite the inconspicuous gated entrance. If the gate is open, pull inside and park. Afterwards, as the super-high tide forecast for that day starts to ebb, we will use a scope to find Black Oystercatchers, Wandering Tattlers, and much more.

MEETING LOCATIONS AND INFORMATION SOURCES

Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park: Harbor City, parking lot near the intersection of Anaheim St. and Vermont, west of the 110 Fwy.

Madrona Marsh Preserve: 3201 Plaza del Amo, Torrance. Between Maple and Madrona Avenues.

South Coast Botanic Garden: 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes.

Eric and Ann Brooks organize birding classes in the South Bay and field trips throughout the region and statewide. Contact them directly for details: motmots@aol.com.

Martin Byhower also provides guided field trips. For updates and details on all trips, go to www.birdingsocal.com and click on "updated calendar of events."

Palos Verdes Land Conservancy sponsors walks and other activities on the peninsula. For information, consult their website at <http://www.pvplc.org/>, or contact them by email at info@pvplc.org or by telephone at 310-541-7613.

Tuesday, Feb 20, 7:00PM: AUDUBON THIRD TUESDAY GET-TOGETHER: Carol "Kiwi" Donovan will speak of her extraordinary achievement sighting all bird families in the world. She will show photos of 18 years on the road and a confirmed budget birder. Come to Madrona Marsh and socialize with friends, enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Wednesday, Feb. 21, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Leader: Stephanie Bryan.

Sunday, Mar. 4, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Leader: Stephanie Bryan.

Wednesday, Mar. 14, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. Leader: Bob Shanman.

Sunday, Mar. 18, 8-11AM: "Best of the South Bay" PV/Audubon birding/natural history trip at Forrestal Canyon and Ocean Trails. Leader: Martin Byhower. The Canyon in RPV is consistently one of the best birding spots on the Peninsula with nesting CA Gnatcatchers, Rufous-crowned sparrows and much more. Beautiful ocean vistas can be enjoyed at both sites, but there will be moderate to strenuous hiking at Forrestal. From the intersection of PV Drive East and PV Drive South, go West on PV Drive South .7 miles to Forrestal Rd. and turn right. Go up the hill and park just below the gate at the end of the residential area road, opposite the entrance to Ladera Linda. Park here even if the gate is open.

Tuesday, Mar. 20, 7:00PM: AUDUBON THIRD TUESDAY GET-TOGETHERS featuring Fred Heath, author of *An Introduction to Southern California Butterflies*. He will share his adventures and the photographs of his contributor Herb Clarke. Come and socialize with friends, enjoy the bird quiz, raffle and prizes from Wild Birds Unlimited. At Madrona Marsh Preserve.

Wednesday, Mar. 21, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Leader: Stephanie Bryan.

Sunday, Apr. 1, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at South Coast Botanic Garden. Leader: Stephanie Bryan.

Wednesday, Apr. 4, 7:00PM: PV/SoBay Audubon Board Meeting at Madrona Marsh. Members and friends are welcome to attend.

Wednesday, Apr. 11, 8:00AM: Bird Walk at Madrona Marsh. Leader: Bob Shanman.

CALENDAR

PALOS VERDES/SOUTH BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2582
PALOS VERDES, CA 90274

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The Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, of which PV/SB Audubon is the local chapter, are dedicated to the understanding and preservation of our natural heritage.

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Frances Spivy-Weber, 316-0041

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Outreach: Candy Groat.....541-4932

HELP NEEDED!

Audubon YES!: Contacts with South Bay schools and teen youth groups are wanted. If you are a teacher looking for extra-credit opportunities for your students, or if you are an adult advisor to a teen group looking for volunteer activities, become an active part of Audubon YES!, our Youth Environmental Service program. Audubon wants to work with you and your kids! For more information, call Jess Morton at 310 832-5601 or visit us online at www.Audubon YES.org

The Chapter also would welcome **two volunteers** to assist the outreach chair for the Chapter. If this opportunity seems attractive to you, please contact Frances at Frances.Weber@gmail.com.

Pick up postage-paid envelopes at Wild Birds Unlimited at PCH and Crenshaw to **recycle your HP or Lexmark Inkjet cartridges**. For each cartridge sent in these envelopes, \$2.50 is donated to our Chapter or to South Bay Wildlife Rehab. This is a great way to reduce waste and to support your favorite organizations.