



# Chaparral Naturalist

A Publication of  
Pomona Valley Audubon Society

[www.pomonavalleyaudubon.org](http://www.pomonavalleyaudubon.org)

WINTER 2023-24 | DECEMBER-FEBRUARY

## Birds and Berries

By Scott Marnoy, MD

As our toyon berries ripen to a bright orange, we look forward to the flocks of Cedar Waxwings that will descend into our yard this winter in their annual migration to Southern California. Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) is a native tree that is easy to grow and a real show stopper with its eye-catching clusters of berries. Twenty species of birds have been documented to feed on the fruits of this tree that gave Hollywood its misnomer. Last winter the waxwings were joined in the toyons by hundreds of American Robins which irrupted into Southern California.

Waxwings arrive here around November from their breeding grounds in the boreal forest. After breeding, their diet switches from insects obtained by flycatching, to an entirely fruit-based diet.<sup>4</sup> In addition to toyon, other natives provide berries including mistletoe, juniper, California

fan palms and madrone. Ornamental plantings of *Pyracantha*, Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), Pepper Trees (*Schinus sp.*) and Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) are among the many others exploited. More about *Nandina* later.

The exquisite yellow and orange colors in Cedar Waxwing plumage are derived from carotenoid pigments in their diet. This was discussed at our October meeting by Whitney Tsai Nakashima. Waxwings are named for the unusual waxy deposits of astaxanthin that form on the tips of the secondary feathers. Immature birds have no wax tips and successively larger and more numerous tips develop in birds as they mature.<sup>1</sup> It is thought to serve as a signal of breeding fitness as older birds with more wax tips breed earlier and raise more young.

Waxwings form tight flocks that fly rapidly in a characteristic pattern. They will land in a tree but refrain from moving, all the while emitting a high-pitched monotonous whistle. Finally, one bird will break ranks and descend to feed or drink and the entire flock will then follow.

It has been known for a long time that waxwings can become

intoxicated from the alcohol in the fruit that they eat.<sup>3</sup> It is said that Audubon collected waxwing specimens simply by picking up intoxicated birds on the ground that were unable to fly. Many kinds of fruit have been implicated. Particularly in fruit that has been repeatedly frozen and thawed, alcohol levels can rise. It has been alleged that toyon, in contrast to *Pyracantha*, does not lead to intoxication though the literature for this assertion is scarce. Alcohol intoxication will resolve, providing the bird is safe from collisions and predators.

*Nandina* is another story. These ubiquitous red berries, widely used in ornamental plantings, have been implicated in fatal cyanide poisoning in flocks of waxwings with necropsy studies documenting characteristic findings.<sup>2</sup> Waxwings are almost guaranteed to turn up this winter on our Pomona Valley Audubon fieldtrips. Enjoy them on our walks, consider removing out the Heavenly Bamboo from your yards and plant toyons!

1. <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/cedwax/cur/introduction>
2. Woldemeskel M, Styer EL. Feeding Behavior-Related Toxicity due to *Nandina domestica* in Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). *Vet Med Int.* 2010 Dec 9;2010:818159. doi: 10.4061/2010/818159. PMID: 21197466; PMCID: PMC3005831.
3. Fitzgerald SD, Sullivan JM, Everson RJ. Suspected ethanol toxicosis in two wild cedar waxwings. *Avian Dis.* 1990 Apr-Jun;34(2):488-90. PMID: 2369387.
4. Witmer MC. Nutritional Interactions and Fruit Removal: Cedar Waxwing Consumption of *Viburnum opulus* Fruits in Spring. *Ecology.* 2001 Nov 01; 82(11):3120-3130. [https://doi.org/10.1890/0012-9658\(2001\)082\[3120:NIARFC\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1890/0012-9658(2001)082[3120:NIARFC]2.0.CO;2)



PHOTO BY SCOTT MARNOY



PHOTO BY SCOTT MARNOY



PHOTO BY WOUTER HAGENS

Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*).

# Bird Walks

## First Sunday Family-Friendly Bird Walk

### California Botanic Garden

1500 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711

#### Difficulty: Easy

Meet at the entrance at 8:00 AM for free admission. This family-friendly bird walk is approximately 2 hours long and is perfect for beginners and experienced birders alike. No binoculars? No worries! Loaner binoculars are available (limited number so first come first served.) You will receive instructions on their use as well. PVAS volunteer Ken Burgdorff (gwrencaps@gmail.com) and others will lead the walks. Please RSVP using these links to the Botanic Garden's reservation site:

#### Sunday, December 3, 2023

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/49s0rLp>



#### Sunday, January 7, 2024

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/49rP6uJ>

Reservation links will become active one month prior to the walk date.



#### Sunday February 4, 2024

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/49o5Fb9>

Reservation links will become active one month prior to the walk date.



## Fourth Sunday of the Month

### Frank G. Bonelli Regional Park

San Dimas, CA 91773

#### Difficulty: Moderate

Enjoy the fall migration at one of the richest birding sites in Southern California on our fourth Sunday of the month Bonelli Bird Walk. We meet in the parking lot of Brackett Field (airport) at 1615 McKinley Ave., La Verne, CA 91773 (better known as the Norm's Hanger Coffee Shop parking lot.) To reach the parking lot, take McKinley Ave. west from Fairplex Drive to the parking area at the end of the road on the right. Meet at 7:45 AM to caravan into the park for free entrance and an 8:00 AM walk. 2-3 hours. Don't forget your binoculars and comfortable shoes. RSVP with walk leader.

#### Sunday, December 24, 2023

Contact Walk Leader: Brian Elliott

[brianelli@aol.com](mailto:brianelli@aol.com)

#### Sunday, January 28, 2024

Contact Walk Leader: Dan Stoebel

[dstoebel@mac.com](mailto:dstoebel@mac.com)

#### Sunday, February 25, 2024

Contact Walk Leader: Keith Condon

[catbird117@yahoo.com](mailto:catbird117@yahoo.com)

## Field Trip Levels

### PVAS Field Trip Difficulty Levels –

Trips rated Easy through Strenuous involve walking and standing for several hours.

**Minimal** – Little or no walking, option to exit car and walk short distances over relatively level terrain.

Example: Drive-through wetlands.

**Easy** - Walking on relatively level terrain, paved or maintained dirt roads (many locations wheelchair accessible.) Example: Artificial wetlands and botanic gardens.

**Moderate** – Some elevation change, stairs, walking on sloped grass, rolling hills, open fields or groomed hiking trails with mild trip hazards (tree roots, rocks, etc.) Example: Regional Parks with lakes and hiking trails.

**Strenuous** – Irregular or rocky terrain, > 500ft. elevation change, some off-trail walking. Example: Natural areas and preserves (North Etiwanda Preserve.)

*Our Mission: To promote the protection, appreciation and enjoyment of birds and other wildlife through recreation, education and conservation.*

## NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY (NAS) AND POMONA VALLEY AUDUBON (PVAS) MEMBERSHIP

We invite you to become a member of both NAS and PVAS. You also have the option of joining just PVAS. For either option, a yearly individual or family membership is \$20.

Check one:

- JOIN  Join both NAS and PVAS ONLINE. . . . . On the PVAS website, click on "Membership" and then on link to NAS. Make a \$20 donation to NAS. Check Chapter Code: C08
- Join both NAS and PVAS BY CHECK. . . . . Make out a \$20 check to NAS. Mail to NAS with address slip below.
- Join PVAS only, not NAS. . . . . Make \$20 check to PVAS and send to PVAS with address slip below.

- RENEW  Renew your joint membership in NAS and PVAS ONLINE. . . Use the renewal notice you receive from NAS or make a \$20 donation to NAS on the NAS website. \*Use the same name as your membership.
- Renew your joint membership in NAS and PVAS BY CHECK. Make \$20 check to NAS and send to NAS with address slip below.
- Renew your PVAS only membership. . . . . Make \$20 check to PVAS and send to PVAS with address slip below.

NAS mailing address: **NAS, PO Box 97194, Washington DC 20090**

PVAS mailing address: **PVAS, 2058 N. Mills, PMB 426, Claremont, CA 91711**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter Code C08

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Meetings

Meeting details, location and a map can be found on the back page.



**Thursday, December 6, 2023 at 7 p.m.**

## ***Brian Elliott – “Polar Bears to Penguins and Ivory Gulls to Albatross - Journeys to the North Atlantic and the Southern Ocean”***

PVAS member Brian Elliott traveled to Longyearbyen, Svalbard and beyond to the Greenland Sea in June 2002. The cultural and wildlife cruise went as far north as 82° N into the Greenland ice pack, placing him only ≈ 500 miles from the North Pole. Polar bears, Ivory Gulls, walrus, and a pupping ice area for harp seals were some of the wildlife highlights of the trip. As a counterpoint to the north, Brian went south a few months later to Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego joining a birding cruise chartered by Rockjumper. He cruised the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, the Weddell Sea and the Antarctica Peninsula before returning across the Drake Passage to Ushuaia. Eight species of penguins were encountered (including Emperors) and the sea birds were excellent throughout the trip. One special highlight occurred on South Georgia when Brian and fellow travelers hiked the last miles of Shackleton’s great rescue voyage over a mountain pass to reach a whaling station.

Brian will discuss the adventures along with video and images that he took on the voyages.

Brian worked as a geologist before teaching high school physics and environmental science. Retirement has allowed him to travel the globe but not just birding. An accomplished rock climber and wilderness adventurer, he has enjoyed these activities in 21 different countries around the world. He also serves as the chair of the Los Serranos Sierra Club group.



**Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 7 p.m.**

## ***Lauren Simpson – “Bats in Our Backyard: Exploring Local Species, Myths, and Conservation Challenges”***

Lauren Simpson is a Claremont native and local wildlife biologist who specializes in southern California bat species. In her presentation, Lauren will provide insights into our local bat species, their natural history, prevalent myths, and the pressing issues in bat conservation.

Lauren earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology with a concentration in Biodiversity, Ecology, and Conservation Biology from CSU Fullerton in 2013. During her academic tenure, Lauren undertook research on bat activity in the San Gabriel Valley. Her senior thesis was titled “Patterns of Activity and Diversity of Bats at the Urban-Wildland Interface in Southern California”. Currently, as a consulting wildlife biologist, Lauren studies our local bat species and prepares bat management plans to ensure consideration and protection of bats within the environmental review process for construction projects. Bats aren’t the only flying creatures that Lauren studies, she is also an avid birder with experience conducting focused surveys for sensitive and listed bird species in California. On the weekends you might catch her at her favorite local birding spot, Bonelli Park!



**Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 7 p.m.**

## ***Andrew Birch – “Flycatcher Identification in Southern California”***

Empidonax flycatcher identification is one of the toughest challenges in North America. In this talk, Andy will hopefully pull back the curtains on empidonax flycatcher identification in southern California. By looking closely at plumage, structure and status and distribution, a correct identification is within any birders’ reach.

Andy is a lifelong birder who originally hails from the UK. He has been living in Los Angeles for the past (almost) 30 years where he birds around Glendale and Los Feliz. He has illustrated numerous identification articles and books both in North America and Europe. He has recently completed work on Flycatchers of North America vol 1 empidonax and Pewees by Princeton University Press and volume 2 myiarchus and Kingbirds is due out in April 2024.

## **Did You Know?**

PVAS will be hosting its Fifty-First annual CBC (Christmas Bird Count) on Saturday, December 16th this year. Anyone can join a counting team for this fun event. All levels of birding experience are welcome because the more eyes in the field the better! (And you’ll be joined by experienced fellow members.) There is also an option to count from your home or nearby park on your own. For more information or to join a team, contact Seth Thompson at polpsych@gmail.com.

# Field Trips

COVID Considerations: You have the option to meet at Memorial Park in Claremont and carpool or caravan to the site or you can meet us at the site. Based on your comfort level (and possible guideline changes in the future) please have a facemask available.

## Saturday, December 16, 2023, is the Christmas Bird Count!

(Multiple Locations in our "count circle") For more information or to join a team, contact Seth Thompson at polpsych@gmail.com.

## Saturday, January 6, 2024

### Coastal Big Day (multiple locations)

*Difficulty: Moderate (walking up to 5 mi.)*

Start your new year off with a big list from a tour of multiple coastal migrant traps and hot spots for wintering specialties. Possible sites include Bolsa Chica, the San Joaquin Marsh, Dana Point Harbor, and more. Meet at Cabrillo Beach Park at 8:00 AM 3720 Stephen M. White Dr., San Pedro, CA 90731. Bring snacks, water, and lunch for a full day trip. Est. driving 175 mi.

Contact Trip Leader: Eric Smith (661) 372-8946 or bird4life28@yahoo.com

## Saturday, January 13, 2024

### Whittier Narrows and the San Gabriel Spreading Grounds & the San Gabriel River Spreading Grounds -

750 S. Santa Anita Ave., South El Monte, CA 91733 and Off Mines Avenue, Pico Rivera.

*Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (up to 4 miles.)*

Dan will lead us in search of wintering waterfowl, sparrows, flycatchers and more. Both locations are great places to find winter vagrants. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park in Claremont. Bring snacks, water, and lunch for a full day trip. Est. driving 70 mi.

Contact Trip Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or DanRCRenee@verizon.net

## Thursday, January 25, 2024 - New for 2024

### Birding the Newport Back Bay by Pontoon Boat!

1931 W Coast Hwy, Newport Beach, CA 92663

*Difficulty: Easy*

This is our Pelagic Trip for Landlubbers with excellent opportunities to see and photograph shorebirds, waterfowl, herons, ospreys and more from a covered pontoon boat. Meet at Memorial Park in Claremont by 08:30 AM or be at the Newport Sea Base by 10:00 AM. Anticipate 2-2 ½ hour trip. Attendance limited to 15 participants with sign up no later than January 8, 2024. Cost \$15.00 per participant. Mileage: 86 miles roundtrip. Contact trip leader Scott Marnoy gopherus2@gmail.com to reserve a spot. Additional details to follow.

## Friday, February 9, 2024

### San Jacinto Wildlife Area

17050 Davis Road. Lakeview, California 92567

*Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (walking up to 3 mi.)*

An excellent site for waterfowl, Golden Eagles, shorebirds and more. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife requires all visitors to purchase a Lands Pass for admission unless one is in possession of a fishing or hunting license. Day passes can be obtained for \$5.40 (for 2023) online at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/licensing> or by calling (800) 565-1458, or in-person wherever fishing and hunting licenses are sold. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park in Claremont. Bring snacks, water, and lunch. Est. driving 110 mi.

Contact Trip Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or DanRCRenee@verizon.net

## Saturday, February 10, 2024

### Lake Perris

Lake Perris 17801 Lake Perris Dr., Perris, CA 92571

*Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (walking up to 3 mi.)*

We'll take a walk at Lake Perris for wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, sparrows and raptors including Peregrine Falcon, osprey and Bald Eagle. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park in Claremont. Bring snacks, water, and lunch. There is a \$10 vehicle entry fee (\$9 if 62+) at Lake Perris State Recreation Area. Est. driving 110 mi.

Contact Trip Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or DanRCRenee@verizon.net

## Thursday, February 22, 2024

Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area -15501 E. Arrow Highway, Irwindale, CA 91706

*Difficulty: Moderate (walking up to 3 mi)*

Ken will lead us on this mid-week trip for year-round as well as over-wintering species. Carpool from Memorial Park in Claremont at 7:00 a.m. or meet in the first parking lot at the SFDR near the restrooms at 7:45 a.m. Bring snacks, water, and lunch if you'd like to stay in the park to eat after birding. No vehicle entry fee on weekdays this time of year. Est. driving 31 mi.

Contact Trip Leader: Ken Damon (909) 263-1875 or spsanah@yahoo.com

## Field Trip Basics

**Pomona Valley Audubon Field Trips** are offered at no cost (unless otherwise specified) and are open to all. ALWAYS call the trip leader if you plan to attend and to verify time, location and trip status. In case of rain, call the trip leader the night before. Driving mileage estimates are round-trip from Memorial Park in Claremont. For your comfort and enjoyment, participants should plan to bring the following suggested items:

- **Binoculars/spotting scope/ camera** (as desired)
- **Water**
- **Snacks/Lunch**
- **Walking/Hiking shoes**
- **Sunscreen/Repellent**
- **Appropriate clothing** (Dress in layers and be ready for unexpected weather changes.)
- **Hat**
- **Full tank of gas**

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# A Few Thoughts About Bump in the Night

By Juliet Kane

This year my husband, Kelly, and I felt privileged to be trained to handle the education ambassador birds from Wild Wings of California for Things That Go Bump in the Night. For us, this was an experience like none other. It was thrilling to feel the weight of the birds on my glove—whether it was a feather-light Saw-whet or a surprisingly hefty Great Horned Owl. While handling the birds, I got the opportunity to really admire their coloration and feathers. I could examine the lacy white feathers that cover the Barn Owl's beak and admire the size of the Great Horned Owl's talons. I needed to remain vigilant of the birds' movements and moods and help them to stay calm and comfortable. There are very few people who ever get to be that close with one of these magnificent birds. It was an honor to get to be one of them.



PHOTO BY JACKIE LEGAZCUE

At Bump in the Night, we had the joy of sharing our knowledge of owls with families, including many of our children's friends and classmates. Several of my son's classmates from Oakmont Outdoor School in Claremont proudly told me how their school's mascot is an owl. It was wonderful to see how their experience at school gave them a sense of kinship with the owls. The children enjoyed sharing with me the owl facts they had learned from books, television, and from school.

Sometimes when a family came to learn about owls,

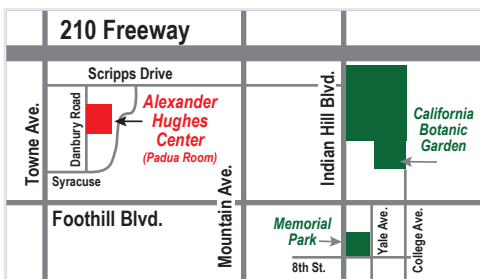


PHOTO BY JACKIE LEGAZCUE

it was the children who were most excited to see the birds. At other times, the parents were the ones who seemed almost giddy to be that close to a real live bird of prey. In both cases, being up close to a live bird gave me the opportunity to teach about the importance of avoiding deadly rodenticides, and to help people identify the owls they have heard or seen in their own backyards. Those messages would not have been as impactful were it not for the presence of the educational ambassador birds.

I am so glad that my husband and I had the opportunity to continue this tradition at Bump in The Night, so other families could learn to love these birds as we do.





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 Claremont, CA 91711  
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### General Monthly Meetings

**Date:** First Thursday in Sept.-June

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Room:** Padua Room

**Address:** Alexander Hughes Center  
 1700 Danbury Drive  
 Claremont, Ca 91711

**Directions:** From Foothill Blvd., head north on Mountain Ave. or Towne Ave. and turn onto Scripps Drive. Turn south on Danbury, the Alexander Hughes Center will be on the east side.

**Meetings begin with a bird identification session, followed by refreshments, a short business meeting, and our evening program.**

## PVAS CHAPARRAL NATURALIST | WINTER 2023-24

### Another Thought About Bump

Bump in the Night volunteer Adrianna Elihu (a Cal Poly Pomona grad student) had this to say about her experience.

*“I had a great time and I’m discovering more and more how much I love outreach and informal education. It’s so fun to talk to strangers about science. Especially when they’re interested in it.”*

**Thank you to all our Bump in the Night Volunteers!**



Elizabeth observing Burrowing Owls in the Chaffey Fields.

PHOTO BY ROBIN IKEDA

## PVAS Burrowing Owl Ambassadors

By Suzanne Thompson

We are pleased to be continuing the Burrowing Owl Ambassador Program for selected Chaffey College students. Our new ambassadors, Emerald Kolb and Elizabeth Soto, have already been out with their mentor, Robin Ikeda, scanning open fields for the little owls. Over their time in the program, they will participate in scientific research to assess habitat quality for owls, do habitat improvement work, and engage in public outreach to educate others about Burrowing Owls. Both ambassadors are eager and curious, have lots of ideas, and are looking forward to upcoming projects. And we are very much looking forward to working with them!

### PVAS Board of Directors

- PRESIDENT** - Tina Stoner - [tinastoner@earthlink.net](mailto:tinastoner@earthlink.net)
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- FIELD TRIPS** - Scott Marnoy - [gopherus2@gmail.com](mailto:gopherus2@gmail.com)
- MEETING LOGISTICS** - Kimberly Hardison - [hardlykim7@gmail.com](mailto:hardlykim7@gmail.com)

### Committees & Contacts

- WEBMASTER** - Seth Thompson - [sthompson@lmu.edu](mailto:sthompson@lmu.edu)
- OWL PELLETS FOR EDUCATORS** - Kathy McPherson - [kathleenamc@yahoo.com](mailto:kathleenamc@yahoo.com)
- NEWSLETTER EDITOR** - available (Tina Stoner)

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