



# Chaparral Naturalist

A Publication of  
Pomona Valley Audubon Society

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

SPRING 2024 | MARCH - MAY

## Vagrants, Magnets and Storms

By Scott Marnoy, MD

It's the rarities, usually vagrants, that will push some of us to travel far and wide at the first hint of a rare bird. Vagrants are those birds that show up somewhere far from their expected range. News of their appearance can be gleaned from the abundant information now available in eBird reports, listservs, rare bird alerts, social media and general scuttlebutt. I was standing on the corner of a street in Claremont, determined to get a good photo of a vagrant Green-tailed Towhee, when a Black-and-white Warbler landed not more than 10 feet from me. How it got there, so far from its Central American wintering grounds, sent me down this rabbit hole.

Vagrancy can occur for a variety of reasons and some species are uniquely prone to this phenomenon. Of course, migration errors are the greatest risk factor for vagrancy. One wouldn't expect a California Quail to end up as a vagrant in Great Britain. Hatch-year herons and raptors often disperse after they leave the nest and may simply end up outside their normal range. Storms can cause drift both from the high winds that physically displace birds as well as by obscuring celestial cues and geographic landmarks. It is well established that nocturnal migrants, raised in a planetarium, can be forced to re-orient when a different star pattern is projected, proving that celestial cues are important. Mirror-image migration errors can cause birds that ordinarily migrate from the northwest to the southeast to instead migrate to the southwest, following the wrong coastline. Interestingly, some vagrants make the same mistake year after year. For years, a Thick-billed Kingbird showed up every winter at Horsethief Canyon Park on the Christmas Bird Count.

Perhaps the most interesting cause of migration errors is due to magnetoreception. The ability to navigate by magnetic fields is seen in many species. That homing pigeons use magnetic fields was proven experimentally when magnets attached to their heads were shown to disrupt homing ability. Magnetic receptors have been identified in avian brain tissue.

A recent study is one of the most extensive to look at magnetic field disruption as a cause of vagrancy.<sup>1</sup> This study used years of banding data and eBird abundance maps to create mathematical models to test the correlation of vagrancy with changes in the earth's magnetic field. Solar flares shower the earth with radiation that affects the earth's magnetic field. The researchers looked at records for over 150 species spanning 60 years and involving 2 million captures. They found that magnetic field disruptions did indeed correlate with increased episodes of vagrancy. Hatch-year birds were involved more often, perhaps because naïve juveniles depend more on intrinsic magnetic signals before they gain real world migration experience. Diurnal birds were more affected than



PHOTO BY SCOTT MARNOY

Black-and-white Warbler photographed in Claremont, December 2023.

nocturnal migrants. The researchers noted that the sunlit side of earth experiences more electromagnetic radiation in daytime than at night, so more magnetic disruption would be expected. Whatever the reason, a lot remains to be explained. It is nice to know that the eBird lists we upload have helped scientists understand these vagrants a bit better. Consider joining the Christmas Bird Count or other PVAS outings this year, no matter your level of experience. It's a great way to bird and make real contributions at the same time.

1. Tonelli, B.A., Youngflesh, C. & Tingley, M.W. Geomagnetic disturbance associated with increased vagrancy in migratory landbirds. *Sci Rep* 13, 414 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-26586-0>



PHOTO BY JENNY ANTONIAK

### Eagle Scout Project Brings Improvements to the Dan Guthrie Bird Oasis on the Thompson Creek Trail

Next time you're at our bird oasis, check out the new pathway and bench, the result of an Eagle Scout project by Connor Gale coordinated through PVAS and the City of Claremont. The bench gives visitors good views of birds visiting the water feature and several of the feeders. Great job Connor!

# 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](mailto:gwrencaps@gmail.com)) and others will lead the walks. Please RSVP using these links to the Botanic Garden's reservation site:

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

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/42jVv8q>

**March 3, 2024**

**April 7, 2024**

**May 5, 2024**

**June 2, 2024**



## 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, March 24, 2024

Contact Walk Leader: Ken Burgdorff [gwrencaps@gmail.com](mailto:gwrencaps@gmail.com)

#### Sunday, April 28, 2024

Contact Walk Leader: Keith Condon [catbird117@yahoo.com](mailto:catbird117@yahoo.com)

**Sunday, May 26, 2024 –  
Cancelled due to Memorial Day  
Weekend**

## 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**

**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.)

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

# 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.

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## Saturday, March 9, 2024

### Field Trip to Prado Regional Park

16700 Euclid Ave., Chino, CA 91708 - *Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (up to 3 miles.)*

Entry Fee: \$10 per vehicle. So close, yet so diverse, this popular 2,000-acre park in Chino is one of the most reliable places to see and photograph Vermilion Flycatchers, as well as a variety of raptors (Bald Eagle, Peregrine, Harrier), waterfowl, wintering vagrants and sometimes Long-tailed Weasels! Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park in Claremont. (Est. driving 35 mi.)

**Trip Leader:** Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or [DanRCRenee@verizon.net](mailto:DanRCRenee@verizon.net)

## Thursday, March 21, 2024

### Visit to the Moore Laboratory of Zoology at Occidental College **New for 2024!**

799 American Way, Los Angeles, CA 90042 - *Difficulty: Easy*  
Visit the Moore Lab for a behind-the-scenes firsthand tour of their extensive (>60,000) bird skin collection and see their famous murals. Meet at Memorial Park by 09:15 AM. Anticipate a one-hour tour followed by lunch at a nearby hot spot with the opportunity to bird there. Bring lunch, binoculars, walking shoes and water. Limited to 25 participants. Free with a donation to the lab suggested. Mileage: 64 miles roundtrip. Contact trip leader Scott Marnoy [gopherus2@gmail.com](mailto:gopherus2@gmail.com) to reserve a spot.

## Saturday, April 6, 2024

### Field Trip to Hahamonga Watershed Park

4550 Oak Grove Dr, Pasadena, CA 91103 - *Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (walking up to 3 mi.)*

This 1,300-acre park in the Arroyo Seco of Pasadena extends north from the Devil's Gate Dam and boasts an extensive Coast Live Oak forest and riparian area, conducive to a nice variety of migrant and resident birds. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park in Claremont. Bring snacks, water, and lunch for a half-day trip. **Contact Trip Leader:** Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or [DanRCRenee@verizon.net](mailto:DanRCRenee@verizon.net)

## Friday, April 19, 2024

### Field Trip and Survey of the North Etiwanda Preserve

4890 Etiwanda Ave, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739 - *Difficulty: Strenuous (rocky, uneven terrain, 3.5 miles, 800+ ft elevation gain)*  
*New: A shorter moderate option to survey the gentler south border will be available.*

Twice a year we gather bird population data for the County of San Bernardino by doing what we love - birding! Join us for all or part of the day. Specialties include Bell's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and other open-country species. We will be taking our usual counterclockwise route on the main trail making us easy to find, so feel free to join us at any time. Meet at Beryl Park at the West Parking Lot, 6501 Carnelian St, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730 for a 7 AM departure to the preserve. This is a hike and not a walk. Please bring sturdy footwear, a portable lunch, water, snacks, and layered clothing for about 6-7 hours in the field. (Est. driving 30 miles.) **Please RSVP with Trip Leader:** Mike Brossart: [mjbrossart@gmail.com](mailto:mjbrossart@gmail.com)

## Saturday, April 27, 2024

### Field Trip to Prado Wetlands with David McMichael

14980 River Rd. Corona, CA. 92880 - *Difficulty: Moderate (up to 4 mi.)*

Orange County Water District biologist, David McMichael, will once again conduct a private tour for PVAS. Shallow ponds provide ideal habitat for wading shore birds, waterfowl, raptors, and a large population of endangered Least Bell's Vireo. Trip limited to 12 people. Contact trip leader to reserve your spot and to discuss the need for carpooling. **Leader:** Tina Stoner: 909-292-3900 or [tinastoner@earthlink.net](mailto:tinastoner@earthlink.net)

## Saturday, May 4, 2024

### Field Trip to Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

11055 East Dr, Morongo Valley, CA 92256 - *Difficulty: Moderate (up to 4 mi. but optional feeder watching only.)*

A famous desert oasis at the height of western migration with lots of local nesting activity too. Great photo ops during our lunch stop at the bird feeders. Meet at 6:00 a.m. (note earlier start time) at Memorial Park in Claremont. We'll also visit Covington Park next door. Bring snacks, water and lunch for a full day trip. (Est. driving 167 mi.)

**Trip Leader:** Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or [DanRCRenee@verizon.net](mailto:DanRCRenee@verizon.net)

Remember this tip – If the trip name is “Big” (Big Morongo and Big Bear) we start at 6:00 a.m.

## Saturday, June 8, 2024

### Field Trip to the Big Bear Lake Area

*(multiple locations - Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous (up to 4 mi.)*

Beat the summer heat and head up to the mountains with us. Enjoy birding the Big Bear Lake area and Bluff Lake during the breeding season of montane species. Meet at 6:00 a.m. (note earlier start time) at Memorial Park in Claremont. Bring snacks, water and lunch for a full day of birding. (Est. driving 150 mi.)

**Trip Leader:** Dan Gregory (909) 456-4994 or [DanRCRenee@verizon.net](mailto:DanRCRenee@verizon.net)

Remember this tip – If the trip name is “Big” (Big Morongo and Big Bear) we start at 6:00 a.m.

## Sunday, June 23, 2024

### Field Trip to see Black Swifts in the Claremont Hills

4031 N Mills Ave #1406, Claremont, CA 91711 - *Difficulty: Strenuous (Fire Road, 0.91 miles, 243 ft elevation gain)*

Search for Black Swifts in the Claremont Hills Wilderness Preserve with leader Tom Miko. The Wilderness Park is unique as a reliable spot to see Black Swifts as they return to their mountain roosts, deep in the San Gabriel Mountains. Plan on a one-mile walk with appropriate foot wear, ample water for afternoon heat and insect repellent. The trail ascends through a canyon shaded by ancient Coast Live Oaks, reaching the overlook where a bench is conveniently located. Black Swifts may be seen with cliff swallows as they pass above the overlook. In addition, the usual suite of chaparral birds and other creatures are expected. Meet at the gate on Mills Ave at 5:00 PM. Parking is free in the South lot for Claremont residents with the new license-based permits available by signing up here: <https://www.ci.claremont.ca.us/CHWP>. Metered parking for non-residents is \$9, no cash, credit card only. **RSVP to trip leader** Tom Miko [tmiko@gmail.com](mailto:tmiko@gmail.com)



# Meetings

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



**Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 7 pm**

***Tom Ryan – “The Status of the Least Tern in California and Northwestern Mexico – a Cross-border Collaboration”***

It's been several years since we've had an update from Tom Ryan on the Least Terns that he has been studying in California since 1997 and managing colonies since 2004. Tom uses geolocators and GPS as well as alphanumeric bands to study Least Tern movement and population ecology.

Tom Ryan is a local birder and ornithologist who grew up in Claremont with the Pomona Valley Audubon Chapter. Founder of Ryan Ecological Consulting, he specializes in general biological surveys, focused surveys for threatened and endangered avian species, endangered species recovery and restoration. He completed his master's degree at Long Beach State and in 2021 began his doctorate with Eduardo Palacios at CICESE in Ensenada, Baja California.



**Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 7 pm**

***Nina Karnovsky and Students – “Research Results from Pomona College Poop and Puke Lab”***

In the Karnovsky lab at Pomona College students investigate the bird world through examination of regurgitated food, boluses and guano. This research allows them to answer questions such as: How much plastic and what types of plastic are Laysan albatross chicks getting fed by their parents? Do Laysan albatross chicks at different colonies consume different types of plastic? Does plastic consumption vary from year to year? Do different species of penguins breeding at the same location feed their chicks the same prey? Do penguins of the same species at different colonies feed their chicks the same prey? How do prey parts in the guano of South Polar skuas indicate times of poor feeding conditions?



**Thursday, May 2, 2024**

***Christopher Clark, PhD – “The Ghost of the North Goes Hunting: How Great Gray Owls Catch Voles Under Snow”***

In winter, aerial predators like Great Gray Owls perform a remarkable feat: they catch voles hidden under a layer of snow that can be nearly 20 inches deep with a hardened crust strong enough to hold a person's weight. But snow is not just a visible barrier; it absorbs and refracts sound creating an 'acoustic mirage' that owls must overcome. Come learn about the acoustics of snow and the physical and behavioral adaptations that allow owls to catch their prey without seeing them.

Christopher Clark is a professor of biology at UCR where he and his students use wind tunnels, high speed video, acoustic cameras and other technology to study courtship displays and how feathers produce sound with a focus on hummingbirds. More recently, he has also begun to unravel the mysteries of quiet flight in owls. This fun mix of bioacoustics and biomechanics is used to study the relationship between sound and behavior. Dr. Clark attended Washington State University, UT Austin and received his doctorate from UC Berkeley.

**Thursday, June 6, 2024**

Annual June Meeting and Party. Enjoy the silent auction, beautiful photography of your fellow chapter members, awards, elections, and good food!

## Did You Know?

California now has an official state bat: the pallid bat, *Antrozous pallidus*. Its journey to official state animal was championed by a conservationist, and Naomi D'Alessio, a 12-year-old bat enthusiast.

The pallid bat's "golden fur color is perfect for our Golden state," D'Alessio said during a state Legislative hearing on SB 372, signed by Gov. Newsom last fall.

The pallid bat is fond of open, dry habitats near rocky roost areas and is locally common throughout much of California. All bats provide \$1 billion in pest control to California's crops, according to the bill's authors.



## Bird Photography Workshop Fund Raiser a Success

PVAS hosted a unique learning experience and fundraiser this fall with photographer, author, and professional speaker, Steve Kaye. For a donation of \$100, eight lucky participants received a comprehensive tutorial on the basics of bird photography on Zoom. Then on Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023, they had a chance to practice what they learned on a "Photo Walk" with Steve at Tri-City Park in Placentia. The third and final portion of the workshop was another Zoom session where participants shared their photos, asked lots of questions and received feedback. The workshop was a sell-out and thank you emails included comments like, "Thank you for this wonderful workshop" and, "It was very helpful" and, "I am thankful for the photo class." Steve Kaye has said he'd be willing to do it again if there is enough interest. Please email [tinastoner@earthlink.net](mailto:tinastoner@earthlink.net) if you would like to participate later this year.



## Fall in the Farm – A New Event for PVAS

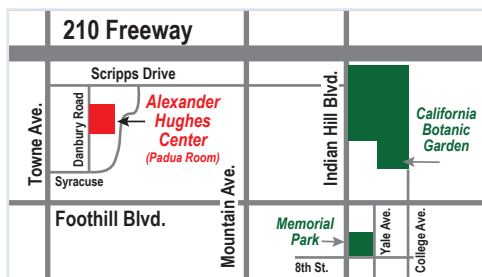
This fall PVAS was invited by the Fairplex in Pomona to participate in a special event called "Fall in the Farm," a celebration of all things agricultural, horticultural, environmental, and healthy living. On Saturday, November 18, 2023, we partnered with the San Dimas Canyon Nature Center, and with side-by-side booths, we shared information about the dangers of rodenticides and encouraging raptors for natural pest control. SDCNC staff brought Pickles, their female American Kestrel, an education ambassador bird, so visitors could meet one of the many raptors we are trying to protect.

Despite the threat of rain, we had a great day in our booth. Suzanne Thompson organized some wonderful outreach materials including a jar of 100 plastic mice to illustrate owl rodent consumption in a month and a free chance drawing for a life-size Great Horned Owl plush animal. We hope this becomes an annual tradition.



And we have a winner!! Luckily, the family who won the Great Horned Owl had not left the fairgrounds and was able to pick up their plush toy just before closing time.





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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 | SPRING 2024



Join in the fun for a meeting that's not like a meeting!

### Annual June Meeting and Party

Thursday, June 6, 2024  
Social Hour  
and Refreshments 6-7  
Board Elections  
Flock Leader Award  
Photo Showcase and  
Photo Challenge

## 2023 Christmas Bird Count Summary

By Seth Thompson

On Saturday, December 16, some 80 PVAS members in 23 small teams covered designated areas from Mt. Baldy Village to Chino, Glendora to Ranch Cucamonga, with binoculars around their necks and the eBird app on their phones. Some were veterans of decades of CBC; others were new this year. We counted 140 species and a little over 8,000 individual birds during the day. That is a puzzling result. The number of species is in line with the numbers from the last few years, but the number of individuals is markedly smaller. There is some speculation that the prolonged drought led to lower rates of nesting success for several years, but we won't have a good idea until the state-level data is available from National Audubon. Many thanks to all our participants! We look forward to seeing you in the field on December 14, 2024!



## NEW PVAS Stickers are Here!

PVAS stickers featuring our mascot bird, the Acorn Woodpecker, are now available for \$1 each. They are 3 inches square and can be purchased at meetings and our public outreach (booth) events. The quality inks are UV resistant making them ideal for your car window as well as water bottles, laptops and more.

## PVAS Board of Directors

**PRESIDENT** - Tina Stoner - [tinastoner@earthlink.net](mailto:tinastoner@earthlink.net)

**VICE-PRESIDENT** - Seth Thompson - [sthompson@lmu.edu](mailto:sthompson@lmu.edu)

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**TREASURER** - Patty Anis - [pattyanis@gmail.com](mailto:pattyanis@gmail.com)

**MEMBERSHIP** - Suzanne Thompson - [sthompson@pomona.edu](mailto:sthompson@pomona.edu)

**PROGRAMS** - available (Tina Stoner)

**EDUCATION** - Laura Jaoui - [ljaoui01@gmail.com](mailto:ljaoui01@gmail.com)

**COMMUNICATIONS** - available (Tina Stoner)

**CONSERVATION** - Brian Elliott - [brianelli@aol.com](mailto:brianelli@aol.com)

**FIELD TRIPS** - Scott Marnoy - [gopherus2@gmail.com](mailto:gopherus2@gmail.com)

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR** - Sam Atwood - [twoatwoods@gmail.com](mailto:twoatwoods@gmail.com)

Pomona Valley Audubon Society

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