

Phainopepla



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PROGRAM NOTES

**David Weeshoff to speak at Thursday, December 3,
SFVAS General Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m.**



Topic: Svalbard: Land of Polar Bears, Walruses, and Birds

Svalbard is an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean north of mainland Europe, about midway between mainland Norway and the North Pole. The archipelago is the northernmost part of Norway. Dave will present us with a photographic journey of his trip to the Arctic complete with fascinating descriptions and anecdotes of a land seldom seen.

Please see the Calendar for directions. ♣

IMPORTANT! Please NOTE: Due to the Thanksgiving/Christmas holidays our normal meeting schedule has been changed. We have scheduled a combined November/December General Membership Meeting for Thursday, December 3, 7:00 p.m.

Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, will answer your questions about gardening for wildlife and sustainable gardening practices. Please e-mail him with any questions you have regarding creating a wildlife-friendly garden that can be used for publication. Alan also offers free consultation/landscape design to help you make your yard wildlife friendly. He also gives a free, PowerPoint slide show/lecture to community groups, high school, and college classes on attracting wildlife to your garden and sustainable gardening practices. He can be contacted at (818) 340-2347 or at alan.pollack@sfvaudubon.org. ♣



BEGINNERS/FAMILY BIRD WALKS RESUME



On Saturday, October 10 the first Beginners and Family Bird Walk of the season was held at Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve. Among the participants were several docents from the nearby Japanese Garden. Leaders were Muriel Kotin, Linda Jones, Kris Ohlenkamp and Donna Timlin. Also present were new board members Diana Keeney as observer and Mathew Tekulsky who took photographs. Among the birds seen were Osprey, three species of hawk, hummingbirds, and many kinds of herons and egrets. The participants also learned about native plants and their interactions with the animals in this riparian habitat. Everyone had a great time. It

was a very open and friendly group showing enthusiasm for seeing things they had never noticed before.

This series of bird walks will continue at 9:00 a.m. on the second Saturdays of the month through March. They are planned for adults who have never been on a bird walk and families with school-age children, but everyone is welcome. Please see the following for more information.

—Submitted by Linda Jones, Photo by Mathew Tekulsky

Second Saturday Bird Walks for Families and Beginners, 9:00–11:00 a.m. (FREE)

San Fernando Valley Audubon will lead **FREE, second Saturday of the month, bird walks for families and beginners, Now thru–March 2010.** (Saturdays, Nov. 14, Dec. 12, Jan. 9, Feb. 13 and Mar. 13.)

Stroll through the lovely Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, enjoying its trails and lake. Many birds come here in winter. Learn about the birds and why they come here.

These walks are designed for

- People trying their first bird walk
- Beginning birdwatchers
- Families with school-age children

Time and Meeting Place: The Wildlife Area entrance and amphitheater are in the southeast part of Woodley Park. Meet at the amphitheater at 9:00 a.m. sharp.

Directions: Turn north from Burbank Blvd. onto Woodley Ave., which is one-half mile west of the San Diego Freeway (I-405). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn and turn east (right) at the sign for the Wildlife Reserve. Bear right at the fork in the road and go east one-half mile to the Wildlife Area parking. Walk south past the monumental rocks and restroom building to the amphitheater.

Equipment and Clothing: Wear sturdy shoes and layered clothing. A cap or hat with a brim is suggested. We have binoculars to loan or you can use your own.

More Information: Muriel Kotin at (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones at (818) 831-6061. Reservations are not needed except for large groups. **Rain cancels.** Please visit our website www.sfvaudubon.org. ♣



Notes on Red-shafted Flickers

by Don P. Mullally

November 25, 2008. For the first time in years a Northern Flicker, Red-shafted, appeared at my house in southern Granada Hills. Its target was an ant-infested Fuyu Persimmon tree bearing ripe fruit. Equally important was the presence near my home a few days later of an adult male Red-tailed Hawk. This species of hawk is rarely seen in this neighborhood. It perched for at least fifteen minutes on the top of a Canary Island pine. However, the number of Cooper's Hawks appearing in my yard is low this fall; as are the numbers of White-crowned Sparrows, juncos, and wrens.

I believe the nearby wildfires of November 2008, account for the unusual sightings and decreases of some native birds. Fires have consumed nearly all plant tissue above ground level on low vegetation on the south facing slopes of the nearby Santa Susana Mountains and a major part of the western end of the Angeles National Forest in Los Angeles County. Many shrubs will produce new sprouts from roots and bud bearing basal crowns. Fortunately the trunks and large limbs of most large sized Coast Live Oak trees and a few large trees of other kinds survive local fires and produce sprouts. Dead leaves on trees don't always indicate dead trees.

The flicker caused me to reflect on past sightings of this bird. One of which occurred during early June of 1966. During a hike in Sullivan Canyon, Santa Monica Mountains, a noisy family of Red-shafted Flickers directed my attention to a nest of young birds in an old woodpecker hole. The hole was within the dead trunk of a mid-sized Sycamore tree. The flickers' nest was six to eight feet above the ground and approximately sixty feet from the trail in the bottom of the canyon. Parent birds were emitting loud and frequent calls. The parents were not made noticeably shy or alarmed by my presence on the trail.

Thinking of the value of demonstrating a young flicker in my high school biology classes, one

young bird was taken from the cavity. Using tweezers, it was fed bits of shredded lean beef. Occasionally the beef was mixed with small amounts of hard boiled egg yolk, liquid vitamins, and powdered bone meal. The bird preferred pure meat. It adjusted quickly to captivity, ate voluntarily, and accepted handling.

By late June I was employed as a seasonal naturalist at Castle Crags State Park located on the upper Sacramento River. At this location the fledgling was able to climb vertically up trunks of young pine and fir trees for a distance of at least two feet. When placed on narrow lines or trails of small brown ants, the flicker caught and ate them. Ant eating is apparently instinctive. Since the trees were located in the backyard of my park home, the ants may not have been a native species of the forest.

Of particular interest to me was the behavior of vertically oriented lines of ants and wandering ants several inches from the climbing flicker. Most of them close to the bird released their holds on bark and fell to the ground. Presumably odor or other chemicals on the flicker activated an innate response in the ants causing them to fall to the ground. Doing so is obviously an escape mechanism. Whether the ants were communicating with each other is unknown.

Apparently the described behavior of the ants reveals the reason flickers change location on trees quickly and are also prone to often move to other nearby trees. They may be trying to find masses of ants not escaping by dropping so that more can be consumed per unit of time.

The classroom demonstration and unplanned experiments were a success, and possibly new scientific information was obtained. However, under ordinary circumstances I don't advise taking and raising immature native birds—too many problems, too much work, uncertain results (and now illegal.) Moreover, hand-raised young birds have not gained the parental education necessary for survival in the environment and usually soon perish after being released into the wild. ♪



Calendar of Events



Sunday, November 1. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Directions: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about one-half mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about one-half mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Reminder: Daylight Savings Ends. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. For more information contact him at (818) 986-7785 or kris.ohlenkamp@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, November 7. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. Directions: Exit the Ventura Freeway (U.S. 101) at Las Virgenes Canyon Road and proceed north to the trailhead parking area at the end of the road. Please bring plenty of water and wear proper shoes. No toilets are available on site. Leader: Jim Hardesty (818) 346-6712, jim.hardesty@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, November 7. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Take closest freeway to I-5 North and exit at Parker Road. Turn right and proceed to stop sign (Castaic Road), proceed to next stop sign (Lake Hughes Road), proceed to next stop sign (Castaic Lake Drive) and turn right. Entrance to the park is on the right. Parking is in Lot 4, so make a right turn after the kiosk, then an immediate left turn into the lot, parking to the left. Leader: Roger McClure. For information, contact the staff of LA Co Parks at (661) 257-4050.

Sunday, November 8. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Meet at the first wide place after entering the gardens. Admission is free for early birders. Located at 1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada. Leader: Karen Johnson or Nancy Herron Knode. For more information, contact Karen at karen.johnson@sfvaudubon.org or (818) 790-1687.

Saturday, November 14. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 9:00–11:00 a.m. Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! The White Pelicans should be back. Why don't you come down and see for yourself? These popular walks, designed for beginning birders and school-age children, are resuming for the current cool season. Directions: Exit the San Diego Freeway (I-405) on Burbank Blvd. Go west about one-half mile to Woodley Avenue and turn right (north). Travel about one-half mile to the second possible right turn (at sign for the Water Reclamation Plant and Japanese Garden). Turn right and go east about one-half mile to Wildlife Area parking at the end of the road. Meet across the road from the parking lot at the low buildings. Leader(s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796 or Linda Jones, (818) 831-6061. Reservations are not needed except for large groups. Rain Cancels. Please visit our Website www.sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, November 14. Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docents' Bird Walk. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Take the 405 or 5 Freeway north to the 14 Freeway. Exit the 14 at Placerita Canyon. Turn right at the end of the off ramp and continue about 1.5 miles to the park entrance. Turn right and park at the Nature Center. Leader: Bob Fischer. For more information, call the Nature Center at (661) 259-7721.

Sunday, November 15. Malibu Creek State Park Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. Meet at the second (lower) day-use parking lot. Entrance to the park is on the west side of Las Virgenes Road, just south of Mulholland Hwy. Entrance fee is \$12 per car. Leader(s): Muriel Kotin, (310) 457-5796, muriel.kotin@sfvaudubon.org and/or Art Langton, (818) 887-0973.

Tuesday, November 17. O'Melveny Weekday Walk at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Take the 118/Ronald Reagan Freeway and exit at Balboa Blvd. Turn north, driving two miles to Sesnon, turn left going west 0.6 miles, turn right at park entrance. Meet in the parking lot. RAIN CANCELS. Contact Carolyn Oppenheimer at, (818) 885-7493, with any questions (before 7 p.m.) or carolyn.oppenheimer@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, November 21. Monthly Field Trip: Ventura Harbor and Water Treatment Ponds. 8:00 a.m. Directions: From the San Fernando Valley, take the 101 Freeway to the city of Ventura, exit Seaward Avenue, turn left over the freeway, then immediately left (south) on Harbor Blvd. to Spinnaker Drive and proceed to the end. Look for birders in the last parking lot on the left. Leader: Richard Barth (310) 276-0342.

Saturday, November 21. Santa Monica Mts. Conservancy Bird Walk at Towsley Canyon. 8:00–10:00 a.m. Directions: Go north on I-5 through Santa Clarita, exit Calgrove and turn west (left) under the freeway and then left again on the Old Road. Watch for the sign, "Ed Davis Park at Towsley Canyon." Turn right and park in the back lot. Meet at the kiosk. Leader: Roger McClure. For further information, call (661) 255-3606.

Sunday, November 22. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See November 8 for details.

Monday, November 23. SFVAS Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Balboa Mission Town Hall, 16916 San Fernando Mission Blvd., at Balboa (southeast corner) in Granada Hills.



Thursday, November 26. No General Membership Meeting. Happy Thanksgiving!

IMPORTANT! Please NOTE: Our normal meeting schedule has been altered. We have canceled the normal November and December meetings and scheduled a combined Nov/Dec meeting for Thursday, December 3, 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 1. Antelope Valley Audubon Committee will hold its Quarterly Meeting and 2nd Annual Holiday Potluck. 6:00 p.m. The Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in the Elyze Clifford Interpretive Center, at 43201 35th Street W., in Lancaster. Bring a food item to share and join in the festivities as Pam Stones explains the Annual Christmas Bird Count and how we might participate locally. Also enjoy a DVD titled "Watching Sparrows" which explores the lives and breeding habits of 46 species. We are looking forward to a strong turnout! Contact Bob or Bonnie Weatherman (661) 269-2051 for more information.

Thursday, December 3. General Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd., Encino. Located between Moorpark and Ventura Blvd., on the west side of Balboa, just south of the Presbyterian

Church. Come early for social hour. Our speaker will be Dave Weeshoff who will speak on: Svalbard: Land of Polar Bears Walruses and Birds. See "Program Notes" on page 1.

Saturday, December 5. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. See November 7 for details.

Saturday, December 5. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See November 7 for details.

Sunday, December 6. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See November 1 for details.

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, December 26, for the San Fernando Valley Annual Christmas Bird Count. Details in the next issue.

**Future Field Trips: (Details later)
(No field trip in December due to Christmas Count)
January 16. Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary
February 20. Private Game Preserve** †

Monthly Field Trip Report

by Richard Barth

September 19 marked our annual trip to Huntington Central Park and the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, two excellent Orange County birding venues.

A previously-reported Prothonotary Warbler was our target bird at HCP and we were successful in getting great looks at it. This beautiful species nests in the wooded swamps and floodplain forests of the Midwest and southeast, and is a rare vagrant to the west coast.

At Bolsa Chica we were hoping to see at least one of three Reddish Egrets reported during the week. We were lucky enough to find all three individuals in separate spots on the west side of the reserve. Reddish Egret nests along the Gulf of Mexico and in Baja and only occasionally wanders post-breeding into California.

Huntington Central had an early migrant Ruby-crowned Kinglet, the first one of the fall for all of us. Expected but somewhat notable there were Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, Western Wood-Pewee, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler and Common Yellowthroat. Some of our birders described a brief look at a possible Virginia's Warbler!

Bolsa Chica produced good numbers of Red Knots, Long-billed Curlews, Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plovers, a Brant, an Osprey, lots of Green-winged Teal, a large flock of Sanderlings, two Ruddy Turnstones, a Belted Kingfisher, many "Belding's" Savannah Sparrows and a small flock of Black Skimmers. Four tern species were present. At Harriett Wieder Park (a Bolsa Chica overlook park) we had a Say's Phoebe, a Pacific-slope Flycatcher and two American Kestrels. †





San Fernando Valley Audubon announces the formation of the College Student Conservation Committee

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES in

Organizational leadership

Community outreach

Habitat restoration

Wildlife surveys

Environmental clean-up

Certificates of recognition will be awarded for participation and leadership!

HELP PROTECT LOCAL WILDLIFE

Schedule of Activities

November 22: Presentation by Alan Pollack on creating a backyard wildlife habitat followed by a tour of his garden in Woodland Hills. Sandwich lunch. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. RSVP for attendance to alan.pollack@sfvaudubon.org. Directions will be sent. Rain cancels.

December 12: Habitat Improvement Project at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area, supervised by Kris Ohlenkamp, 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. RSVP for lunch to carolyn.oppenheimer@sfvaudubon.org. Rain cancels.

For directions and more information visit the San Fernando Valley Audubon Website at www.SFVAudubon.org.

SFVAS is a certified chapter of the National Audubon Society. Learn more about Audubon on the national Website: Audubon.org.

E-mail questions to: Carolyn Oppenheimer, College Student Conservation Committee Chairperson at carolyn.oppenheimer@sfvaudubon.org. ♣

Observations from Lake Wohlford, Escondido, California by Remi Bresnan

It's midnight, the stereo is off and the lights are dimmed. There's no sound of electric buzz coming from my direction and when there are no autos driving by the road, it's stone silent. I sit on my patio before I walk to the lake. The grebes are out in the lake singing greeeeeb, greeeeeb! They gather in the middle of the lake and hunt for the shad. Oh, by the way, they are birds that migrate here. The funny thing to watch is they can't take flight from land. Some friends and I found one floundering just off the shore one day. We pondered in jest, "Is it good eating?" noting there wasn't enough for all of us. So we blanketed the grebe and brought it back to the water. It swam or paddled its feet back to the lake herd. Boy, did it have a story to tell. Just in time, I might add, the moon had risen to a pleasant height for the coyotes to start their hoot and howling. Land buzzards of the night they are; I don't want to seem uncompassionate but I hope the coyotes take out every stray cat. People feed them but don't take responsibility of neutering and shots and so forth. Every year they produce fifteen to thirty or so, just in our small section. The kittens are so cute but I'm not going any further with that, amen.

A bit later the hoot owls are a hooting; there's a pair here to be drawn to. I believe it's mating calls, they hoot and the other hoots back. I forgot to tell you about the skunk that traveled across my feet while sitting here; no problem, I was just on his highway for grubs. As long as I don't annoy him, he or she won't spray me with their favorite perfume. It's getting later now and I can't wait—what is next?

I'm going back to my place and break the silence of this night even though it's not over. Yikes, just before I get home, I got too close to a rattlesnake. It shook and rattled and rolled. I didn't know I could jump and move so fast.

It's getting closer to morning, I know because a neighbor put up a chicken coop and there's a rooooooster; he goes clacking about one hour before light. I laugh, find it funny and when the sun rises, that rooster goes way off. I love it. This morning I'm going to give the rooster something to ponder about—a whistling teapot for my Earl Grey tea with honey. I want the rooster to wonder what kid of animal is getting tortured with the high whine of my teapot going off. I wish I could see his face.

I'm going back to the lake with some camera equipment, second shift is about to start. All the flying predators come out, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and White-tailed Kites, also White Pelicans. Hopefully the Osprey too; every once and awhile a Bald Eagle (rare.) There are many others that make pit stops here during their migrating travels. Oh oh, I see Turkey Vultures, "Buzzards" up the road; maybe one of the nocturnals didn't make it. It's hard to catch these fine feathered friends on camera. I'll try for awhile before I go home and take a nap. ♣



JOIN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON
To get started with your membership,
 use the following form and mail to:
 SFV Audubon Society
 Attn: Membership
 P.O. Box 7769
 Van Nuys, CA 91409
 Make all checks payable to SFV Audubon.

SFVAS Membership

Regular 1-yr Chapter Membership....\$20 \$ _____
 Student 1-yr Chapter Membership....\$10 \$ _____
 Optional First-Class Postage.....\$5 \$ _____
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New Member ____ Renewal ____ School ____
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 How did you learn about SFVAS? _____

Save a tree! I DO NOT want to receive a hardcopy of the *Phainopepla*; I'll get my news online

The PHAINOPEPLA, published ten times a year, is the newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409, 818-347-3205. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, a non-profit conservation/education organization, and is dedicated to "the conservation of wildlife and natural resources."

Articles, letters, drawings, and photographs concerning conservation, the science and ecology, birding, chapter activities, and articles of interest to the membership are welcome for publication in the PHAINOPEPLA.

Material from other newsletters or newspaper should include the source and date. Copy for the PHAINOPEPLA should be in the hands of the editor by the 3rd of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter.

An introductory membership to the National Audubon Society is \$20 and should be sent separately to:
 National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center
 P.O. Box 52529, Boulder, CO 80322. Be sure to write "C12" on the form to assure assignment to our chapter. For renewals, use the form in the National Audubon magazine, "Audubon".

If you have any questions about membership, renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Rose Leibowitz at (818) 990-5405 or e-mail her at rose.leibowitz@sfvaudubon.org.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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President:	Jim Moore	(661) 298-1130
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Descanso Bird Walks:	Nancy Herron Knode	unpublished
Descanso Bird Walks:	Karen Johnson	(818) 790-1687
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For Chapter leaders email addresses, see our web site:

www.SFVAudubon.org

CHAPTER PHONE (818) 347-3205

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Dated Material

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Membership

SFVAS is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope you will get involved with our many field trips and activities. Please contact Rose Leibowitz, Membership Chair, with any questions at rose.leibowitz@sfvaudubon.org.

Local:

Nicholas Lister
National:
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L. Benest
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Aura M. Bustos
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