

Phainopepla



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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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MONTHLY PROGRAMS:

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, December 22, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

Papua New Guinea: Birds and People with Chuck and Lillian Almdale



Papua New Guinea is a land of huge diversity, in terrain, birds and people. Almost half of its 750 avian species are endemic. Of its 830 indigenous languages, half have fewer than 1,000 speakers. In 2008, the Almdales visited six locales in three weeks.

Their multi-media presentation features many endemic birds, especially the birds-of-paradise as well as the fascinating people of New Guinea, including the Huli Wigmen of the central highlands and the Yukoim cannibal-headhunters of Konmei village on the Karawiri River in the east Sepik lowlands. Come and remind yourself why you really want to go there.

Chuck & Lillian Almdale have been active in the Audubon Society for over 25 years. When not birding internationally, they lead local field trips, maintain records of Malibu Lagoon birds, census Snowy Plovers, comment on local and national bird blogs and chat lines, and have been on the board of Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society for over 20 years. They both are retired accountants. (Photos: Huli Wigman and a Blyth's Hornbill)



Thursday, January 26, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

"Pelagic Birding off Southern California: What You See When You Go to Sea"

by David Pereksta



The waters offshore of southern California are one of the last birding frontiers in the state. An exciting mix of local breeders, arctic nesting migrants, an austral migrants that are rarely if ever seen from land can be found at sea if you know when, where,

and how to look for them. A limited number of trips, unpredictable weather, and challenging viewing conditions make pelagic birding trips an adventurous way to explore this frontier. Birders wishing to see these special birds must find some of the few scheduled trips each year, get a reservation before they sell out, and hope that the weather and birds cooperate. David Pereksta will show us what experiences southern California pelagic birding trips offer. David has spent over 100

days at sea off southern California and will describe the species that occur off our coast, where local pelagic trips go and how they operate, and how to best schedule a trip to see the birds (and marine mammals) you are looking for. Bring your soda crackers, Dramamine, and binoculars for this program that is richly illustrated with the best of the thousands of birds and marine mammals David has taken at sea.

David is an Avian Biologist with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, where he studies and analyzes the effects of offshore oil and gas, and renewable energy development on birds off the Pacific coast. (Continued on page 2)

San Fernando Valley Audubon's monthly General Meetings and Program Presentations are held on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. (except July and August). We meet at the Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd. Encino. See December 22 under Calendar of Events for directions.



(Continued from page one) Throughout his career with various Federal and State agencies, he has studied several imperiled bird species including Snowy Plovers, Piping Plovers, Least Terns, Ospreys, Northern Goshawks, Brown Pelicans, Spotted Owls, and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. An avid birder for over 30 years, he has birded throughout North America and the American tropics, including leading trips to Belize, Costa Rica, and Peru. He is also a regular pelagic trip leader for Los Angeles Audubon, Buena Vista Audubon, and Shearwater Journeys. He has seen over 1,500 species in his travels in the Americas; photographing nearly 1,000 species along the way.

PHAINOPEPLA Photo of the Month



Our photo of the month is by Bruce Simen. The peacock was shot at the Leo Carillo Ranch on July 1, 2011 @ F3.5 for 1/200th sec. The zoom lens was set to a focal length of 44mm. It was taken with a Canon Power Shot S3IS.

Please submit your photos to Lynn.Maddox@sfvaudubon.org. Only one picture per photographer per month please! Ideally, the picture will be taken within our area and the information will include the location and the date it was taken, what camera and lens was used, a short account of how the picture was taken, and profile of the photographer. Good shooting! Thanks, Lynn.

The Big Year by *Rosemary Leibowitz*

I was a little reluctant to see the birder movie "The Big Year" as the trailers seemed to emphasize slap stick humor, which is not my taste. However, in the true spirit of a birder after a rare species, I went and I thoroughly enjoyed it! The humor is gentle and warming and the glimpses of extreme birding and the settings are too good to miss. If you have not seen it yet, do go.

It made me think about my (and possibly your) move into birding. Starting with one of SFVAS's monthly bird walks in Sepulveda Basin I was captured and hooked by the view through a scope of an Osprey eating a fish and the white pelicans herding fish into the shallows to feed. (Sadly they have not returned for a few years). As the months went by, many weekends became dominated by half-day birdwalks. The Christmas Bird Count was my next adventure... a busy day, but such fun, spreading out with a group of birders trying to do a census of what we saw. This was not only how many species but also how many of each species.

There is so much to learn that I feel I have embarked on a hobby that will last me the rest of my life and I will still be learning! I still have a long way to go but now I can say when a bird glimpsed is a "life bird" (the most recent was a poorwill in the dark early in the morning in the Chatsworth area). However I am not yet keeping a list and often take photographs so that I can go home and try to identify the bird in the privacy of my home.

Our Big Year will be a Big Month in the spring. There will be a few weeks when many of us will be participating in our Birdathon event when we spot species. This may involve participating in one of our regular walks or going on your own "Big Day", a long intensive day with a lot of driving, or even a "Big Sit", finding a beautiful spot known for a variety of birds and enjoying a leisurely time with friends there. Whichever you choose, it is great fun and may capture a little of the feeling of the movie "The Big Year."





2011 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT INFORMATION

Sunday, December 18, 2011



In place of the Chapter's usual monthly field trip, The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will once again join chapters across the country and in North and South America, Hawaii, and the Caribbean and take part in the National Audubon Society's 112th annual Christmas Bird Count. Count totals and data collected are forwarded and analyzed by interested researchers in cooperation with the NAS and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

The bird count provides a measure of the nation's early winter bird populations including species composition, distribution, and population trends. Bird count numbers are often the only long-term, comprehensive information regarding local wintering bird populations. As this chapter continues into its second half century of bird counts, some trends are clearly evident. While the skill level of counters continues to improve and field guides are upgraded, some of our once common birds continue to decline in numbers while others, once considered rarities, are now common.

Members and friends of the chapter are encouraged to save the 18th and join one of the count groups listed below as numbers of participants are crucial to the success of our count. The more eyes that take to the field, the more birds will be seen in both variety and number. Several of our count areas are underserved and can use all the help they can get. Extensive birding experience is not a prerequisite, only a willingness to come out and count—wind, rain, or shine. Those unable to join one of the count groups may assist by noting species and numbers of birds at backyard feeders, local parks and neighborhoods provided such counts take place within a 7.5 mile radius circle from the count center at the intersection of Balboa and Nordhoff. Please report all such counts along with the time spent observing to the compiler by post, phone, or e-mail (Art.Langton@sfaudubon.org) no later than and preferably before December 31, 2011.

While count participation is free and open to all, a \$5/person donation to offset the chapter's payment to NAS will be greatly appreciated and accepted.

Hansen Dam and Vicinity

Meeting time: 7:00 a.m.

From the intersection of Osborne and Glenoaks, go north on Osborne to Dronfield (signal), turn right on Dronfield and enter park. Proceed downhill to large parking lot. Look for counters with binoculars. Bring lunch, drink, and be prepared to walk. Leader: Jim Moore

Bee Canyon and O'Melveney Park

Meeting time: 1:00 p.m.

From the intersection of Balboa and Rinaldi, go north to Balboa and Sesnon. Turn left (west) on Sesnon and continue .5 miles. Park is on the right. Meet in the parking lot. Leader: Ron Melin

Sepulveda Wildlife Basin & Lake Balboa

Meeting time: 7:30 a.m.

Meet in the parking lot east of Woodley Avenue, north of Burbank Blvd. and south of the Tillman Water Treatment Plant. Bring lunch, drink. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp

LA Pierce College

Meeting time: 8:00 a.m.

Enter the campus from Winnetka Avenue and meet by the flagpole in front of the Administration Building. Bring drinks, snacks. This large area needs several counters. Leader: Aurelio Albasisa

Limekiln and Aliso Canyons, Porter Valley Country Club

Meeting time: 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the sign for "Limekiln Canyon Lower Trail" on the south side of Chatsworth Street one-half block west of Tampa Ave. Leaders: Donna Timlin and Carolyn Oppenheimer

Chatsworth Nature Preserve

A part of our count circle since the beginning of the Valley Christmas bird count, this area may no longer be open and available to us due to changes in DWP personnel, policies, and management goals. Check with the compiler before even thinking about counting this area.

Arthur Langton, compiler
818-887-0973



Calendar of Events-December

Saturday, December 3. 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, December 3. 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.

Sunday, December 4. 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. Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. Contact him at (818) 986-7785 or kris.ohlenkamp@sfvaudubon.org.

Tuesday, December 6. Antelope Valley Audubon Committee will hold its Quarterly Meeting and 4th 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. Contact Bob or Bonnie Weatherman (661) 269-2051 for more information. Program posted on www.avaudubon.com.

Saturday, December 10. Beginners and Family Bird Walk. 9:00–11:00 a.m. Come on out for a fun bird walk at Sepulveda Basin! 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, December 10. Placerita Canyon Nature Center Docents' Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. NOTE: New start time.

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. Various leaders. For more information, call the Nature Center at (661) 259-7721.

Sunday, December 11. 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 Dottie Ecker, (818) 790-0659.

Saturday, December 17. 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) 252-6187.

Saturday, December 17. NO Monthly Fieldtrip due to the Christmas Bird Count.

Sunday, December 18. Christmas Bird Count. Join us to count birds for the 112th Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. See page 3 for times, locations, and more information.

Sunday, December 18. 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: Muriel Kotin, muriel.kotin@sfvaudubon.org, (310) 457-5796.

Tuesday, December 20. 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.

Thursday, December 22. General Membership Meeting. 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. Chuck and Lillian Almdale will discuss the Birds and People of Papua New Guinea. For more information see Monthly Program, page one.

Sunday, December 25. Descanso Gardens Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See December 11 for details.



Calendar—January

Sunday, January 1. Sepulveda Basin Bird Walk. 8:00 a.m. See December 4 for details.

Saturday, January 7. Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Bird Walk. 8:00–11:00 a.m. See December 3 for details.

Saturday, January 7. Castaic Lake Bird Walk. 8:00–10:00 a.m. See November 5 for details.
Future Field Trips: (Details later)

FUTURE FIELD TRIPS(Details later)
January 21. Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary

February 18. Ventura County Game Preserve

March 17–18. Morro Bay Weekend

Monthly Fieldtrip Report by Richard Barth

On October 15 we visited El Dorado Park in Long Beach, and experienced beautiful weather but not a great abundance of birds.

Olive-sided Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Western Kingbird were notable, running a bit late on their particular migration schedules. The raptor contingent consisted of Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk and Turkey Vulture. Not many ducks had arrived yet but our list included Ring-necked, Ruddy, American Wigeon and Gadwall. We found only five warbler species: Black-throated Gray, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Townsend's and Common Yellowthroat. Brown Pelicans were seen overhead, wandering inland from their coastal haunts. Western Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow and Hutton's Vireo are always nice finds here. Nuttall's, Downy, and Northern Flicker represented our woodpecker sightings. Other species of interest for the day were Eared Grebe, Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Hermit Thrush (heard), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (heard), Say's Phoebe, Cassin's Kingbird, Western Bluebird, House Wren, Song Sparrow, Lesser Goldfinch and American Goldfinch.

13th Annual SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL of the Pacific Flyway

- Over 65 fieldtrips & workshops
- Fun, FREE kids activities
- Pacific Flyway Art Exhibit
- Saturday night banquet with

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: GREG MILLER

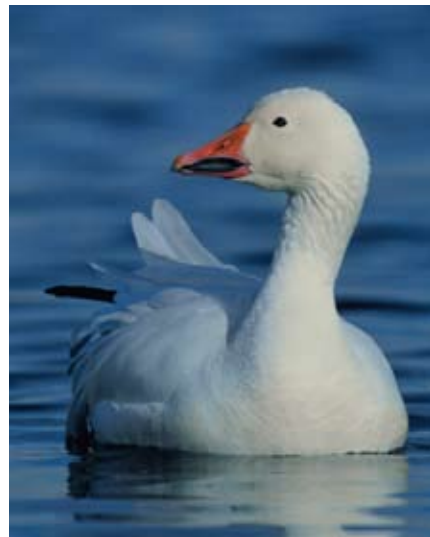
The Big Year

Online registration begins in December

January 26-29, 2012 • Chico, CA

info@snowgoosefestival.org • snowgoosefestival.org • (530)345-1865

Photo by Mike Peters





2012 San Diego Bird Festival March 1—4, 2012

The San Diego Audubon Society invites you to San Diego for the 16th annual San Diego Bird Festival, being held at the Marina Village Conference Center. This year's banquet keynote speaker is Kenn Kaufman. He is a field editor for Audubon magazine and a contributor to every major birding magazine and author of *Kingbird Highway*, *Flights Against the Sunset*, and *Lives of North American Birds*. To register go to: <http://sandiegoaudubon.org/index.php/events/bird-festival>

BIRD BANDERS AT MONO LAKE by Mathew Tekulsky

It was 7:00 a.m. on May 30, 2004, and I was on the shore of Mono Lake in the eastern Sierra Nevada—just by Lee Vining Creek. I was here to watch the indomitable River Gates and her associate Heidi Black of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) engage in their bird banding activities in order to assess the condition and breeding status of the birds in this area.



This was my second visit to the bird banders (my first had been the previous August at the Devils postpile, and there was that fold out table complete with serially numbered alumbered bands, pliers, a scale, and a copy of Peter Pyle's identification to *North American Birds*.

Suddenly, River appeared with a Red-breasted Sapsucker in hand, and we were off to the races. For the next three hours, a constant stream of birds were weighed, measured, checked for body fat and other characteristics, banded, and released. River spread out the wings of the sapsucker to analyze the wear to the primaries and secondaries. Then she pushed the bird headfirst into a cardboard cylinder and placed the whole thing on a tiny scale. The bird's rump stuck out of the container in

a comical fashion, but the bird didn't move. River released the bird and headed toward the creek to inspect the mist nets that had been placed in strategic positions in order to capture the birds in the first place.

She returned with a Spotted Towhee, the same species that I see in my yard in the Brentwood Hills all the time. It was strange to see one of my towhee's cousins up in the mountains like this. Next, she caught a House Wren, which I see in the canyon behind my house on a regular basis. I got a good close-up view of its pointed bill—all the better for grabbing insects out of the fallen leaves.

Next was the House Finch (another of my backyard species), followed by the Yellow Warbler, Bewick's Wren, American Robin, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Song Sparrow. And then we had the piece de resistance—a Willow Flycatcher, which is a California State Endangered Species. River held the bird in her hand, and I had a chance to take a few digital photographs, which I cherish. Now, the Willow Flycatcher has a dark upper mandible and an orange lower mandible, but to really appreciate the power of this bird's bite (at least from the point of view of one of its insect victims), you have to view the entire bill from below. So River tilted the bird on its back and I saw this V-shaped weapon, wide at the base and narrow at the tip. It's hard to imagine any insect caught in the Willow Flycatcher's beak being able to break free. At one point, the flycatcher caught River's pinky between its upper and lower mandible, and I could sense by the look in its dark eye that it was displeased with being a captive. But it was free soon enough, another volunteer in the scientific effort to keep man from totally disrupting his environment.

After the Willow Flycatcher, we caught a Wilson's Warbler, and then Heidi arrived with a Yellow Warbler egg in her hand. The egg was grayish white with brown and gray speckles on it, and it had a small hole poked in it, as it was likely "peeped" by a House Wren.

We caught another robin, and I had one last chance to watch the captivating routine of spreading the wing feathers, measuring the bill, weighing the bird, and then watching it fly off to freedom.

Just another day in the life of the PRBO bird banders!



Photo: *Willow Flycatcher* by Mathew Tekulsky

Audubon-at-Home Mailbox by Alan Pollack

Please e-mail Alan Pollack, our Audubon-at-Home Chair, with any questions you have with regard to creating a wildlife-friendly garden that can be used for publication. Alan 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.



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 \$ _____

Contributions to SFVAS..... \$ _____

Total..... \$ _____

New Member ____ Renewal ____ School ____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Be sure to write "C1ZC120Z" 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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Youth Activities:	Muriel Kotin	(310) 457-5796

For Chapter leaders' email addresses, see our web site:

www.SFVAudubon.org



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Phainopepla December 2011

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
PO Box 7769
Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769

Please visit our website
to see this issue in full color!
www.sfvaudubon.org



Dated Material

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Save the Date! SFVAS Annual Awards Banquet Friday, March 2, 2012

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:

Peter Burash

Bruce Gridley
Louise Heide-Chick
Denys Hemen

Ms. Janice E. Neenan

Karen O'Reilly
Ruth H. Osias

National:

William H. Bashar
Lorna Bausch
Rodney A. Bennett
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Todd Bowers
Christie Carpenter
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