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For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife

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April / May 2025

General Membership Programs

We hope you will join us for our informative programs.

CLICK HERE, to signup and receive a link prior to all events.

Birdathon is ON!

TIME TO COUNT BIRDS AND RAISE MONEY TO SUPPORT SBEP. JOIN ONE OR MORE OF THE BIRDATHON EVENTS LISTED IN THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS, AND/OR DONATE TO SUPPORT YOUR FAVORITE TEAM LEADER(S).

DONATE ONLINE AT
WWW.SFVAUDUBON.ORG
Thank you for your support!

—SAVE THE DATE—

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE OUR
ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON
AT BRAEMAR COUNTRY CLUB ON
JUNE 14, 2025, NOON.
HONORING MURIEL KOTIN
AND
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT
SOCIETY
TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON
OUR WEBSITE BEGINNING IN MAY

IMPORTANT
VOTE! ALL MEMBERS:
PLEASE **VOTE ONLINE** OR
FILL OUT THE FORM ON PAGE 6

Become a member
Go to SFVAudubon.org



To reach an event leader or board member call our
Chapter Phone Number
(747) 237-3720
Number is a Message Forwarding Service

April

Zoom Program: Morning Rush Hour on the Feathered Highway: Bird Migration Monitoring, Training, and Outreach at Bear Divide

Speaker: Lauren Hill

Thursday, Thursday, April 24, 2025, 7:00–8:30 p.m.



Lauren Hill, co-founder of The Bear Divide Banding Station, will provide a presentation on the research done for migration studies, banding training, and collaborative projects that serve as a hub for comment, outreach, and avian conservation.

Every spring millions of birds migrate along the Pacific Flyway from their wintering grounds to their breeding grounds. Few places highlight the spectacle of migration in western North America quite like Bear Divide. It is a low-elevation pass in the San Gabriel Mountains of Los Angeles County, and provides an unequalled opportunity to study a vast number of migratory landbirds.

Lauren Hill is a local avian biologist and current graduate student in the M.S. Environmental Biology program at California State University Los Angeles, where she conducts research in the Wood Lab of Avian and Urban Ecology. Her primary focus is avian migration ecology, and her thesis investigates the migratory population. 🐦

May

In-Person and Zoom Program: Birding for Boomers – and Everyone Else

Speaker: Sneed B. Collard III, Author

Thursday, May 22, 2025, 7:00–8:00 p.m.

VENUE CHANGE! NEW Location: Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd., Encino. Doors open at 6:00 and Zoom opens at 6:45 p.m. We will also be holding our Annual Board Elections.



On Thursday, May 22, award-winning author and birder Sneed B. Collard III will share the often humorous journey that led to him becoming an avid birder later in life. After graduating with a degree in Marine Biology from UC Berkeley, Collard embarked on a career of writing for children, focusing on scientific and environmental topics. While always interested in birds, he didn't fully embrace birding as a passion until working on his children's book *Fire Birds – Valuing Natural Wildfires and Burned Forests*, when he and his ten-year-old son began learning more about the birds of western Montana. Since then, Collard has birded extensively both in the U.S. and abroad and wrote the bestselling book *Birding for Boomers – and Everyone Else Brave Enough to Embrace the World's Most Rewarding and Frustrating Activity*.



Braden and Sneed

Sneed B. Collard III is the author of more than one hundred books for children and adults, including the award-winning picture book *Border Crossings*. As well as his degree in Marine Biology, he earned a Master's in Scientific Instrumentation at UCSB. His favorite topics include natural wildfires, invasive species, and habitat restoration. He is a regular contributor to *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Montana Outdoors*, and other magazines and speaks widely to birding groups, educators, and students of all ages. He and his son Braden are co-authors of the birding blog FatherSonBirding.com. 🐦

Burnt-out with Wildfire Worries? Overwhelmed by Political Turmoil? Get Some Relief with a Nature Bath

Come Join US for Birdathon 2025!

By Richard Davis – Email:
birdathon@sfvaudubon.org



It is our tradition to hold “Birdathon,” our major annual fundraising event for the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) during the months of April and May. Once again, we have a dedicated team of leaders who will ask for our pledges of support based on the number of bird species they can spot during a single day’s outing at popular birding destinations throughout Southern California. You may simply pledge donations to any of the team leaders and, for most of these outings, you can also join as a team member. As a team member you help, not only by making pledges but also by joining the event to increase the numbers of species spotted. That is in addition to a great outdoor experience with friends and experienced birders.

If you have questions or concerns you may email us (birdathon@sfvaudubon.org) or the Team Leader to clarify any details.

See the schedule of Birdathon events below. Use the G-MAP links to plan your path there by Google Maps

SCHEDULE OF BIRDATHON 2025 EVENTS

Date	Leader(s)	Location /Time	Species Estimate	Contact	Directions	Details
April 15	Alexander deBarros	O'Melveny Park – 9am	30	alexanderdebarros@yahoo.com	G-Map	Details
April 26	Pat Bates	Hansen Dam – 8:15am	40	batesbird@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
May 3	Paula Orlovich & Jolene Herz	Serrania Park, Woodland Hills – 9am	30	54warbler@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
May 4	Alexander deBarros	Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve – 8am	60	alexanderdebarros@yahoo.com	G-Map	Details
May 4	Charlie Wilken	Aliso Canyon Park – 8:30am	30	cswilken@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
May 10	Kris Ohlenkamp	Harmon Canyon Preserve — 7:30am	65	Kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net	G-Map	Details
May 18	Katheryn & David Barton	Malibu Creek State Park – 8am	35-40	Katheryn.barton@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
TBD	Allan & Muriel Kotin	Malibu and nearby	50			
TBD	John & Andrew Willis Lori Willis Memorial Fund	San Gabriel Mountains foothills	30			

If an outing shows no email address, the Leader has chosen to do their outing privately. Make no mistake, these team leaders have worked tirelessly over decades to support SFVAS in its environmental conservation and education efforts. They richly deserve your support.

All our leaders have shown long-term support for Audubon and for our conservation and education goals. Please show your support for them by pledging generously. SFVAS members and supporters will receive an introductory email containing links to the Birdathon section of our website where you will be able to make your pledges.

Feel free to lead your own Birdathon outing and solicit support from your friends. (Email me too (birdathon@sfvaudubon.org)). I will make a pledge to your event!

Come join us in these events, support our worthy causes and, have fun on some great days outdoors.

We need YOU to support our conservation / education programs. Join Birdathon 2025

Traditionally, Birdathon has been the major support for our Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP), carried out in partnership with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM) to provide teacher training and field trips to the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve for sixty classes, nearly 2000 children from the Los Angeles Unified School District, largely from Title 1 schools that most need our help.

It is your support that makes these important field trips and learning opportunities possible. [Learn More About SBEEP.](#)

Updates to details of these Birdathon events including team leaders and the location, date and time of their treks will be distributed to members and supporters by email and on our [website](#).

Look for it !!

If you are ready, you can make your pledge or donate **NOW**: Click [HERE](#), Or scan the QR code



Thank you for your support!

Sepulveda Basin Update: Appeal to the Mayor, Cameras, and Homeless Count

Thank you SFVAS members and friends for your amazing response to our request for letters to Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass regarding the unacceptable and dangerous conditions in the Sepulveda Basin. We partnered with the Encino Property Owners Association and other groups to demand action, generating hundreds of letters, and have been told that a response from the Mayor's office will be forthcoming by the end of March 2025. Stay tuned.

Good news: Funding for a high tech camera surveillance system in the basin has been approved and progress on installation is starting right away. This should be a big help in catching fires early, illegal dumping, and other illegal activity. Thank you to Councilmember Padilla for expediting City Council approval of her motion.

At the urging of SFVAS and community activists, the first-ever formally-sanctioned homeless count was done in the entire Sepulveda Basin as a part of the 2025 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Thanks are owed to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, the LAPD, Offices of Supervisor Horvath, Councilmember Padilla, the Mayor, the LAFD, and citizens including some of our SFVAS members for their support. As we await formal results, it is clear there is a serious issue with encampments in basin areas which has been grossly underestimated in past reported figures. This illegal activity is resulting in hundreds of fires, danger to park users and illegally-camped residents alike, and massive damage to habitat. We hope this will help emphasize to all our public officials the need for decisive action to protect park users, our wildlife and their habitat, and surrounding communities. —Pat Bates

CITY PARK NEEDS ASSESSMENT - IT'S ABOUT TIME!!

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks is in the initial phase of preparing a Park Needs Assessment (PNA) for the first time since 2009. In this early phase, they aim to find out from residents what needs they and their families have when it comes to parks and recreation and how well they think the current system is meeting those needs. Please see our SFVAS website "In The News" article for a description of the project and links to questionnaires, public meetings, and the City website which provides much more information. —Pat Bates

Calendar of Events

To reach an event leader call our message forwarding service at
(747) 237-3720

APRIL 2025

Sunday, April 6. Sepulveda Basin. 8:00—11:00 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. Park in the lot and walk past the low, rock-faced buildings to our meeting place on the other side of the buildings. Leader: Alexander deBarros, Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org.

Thursday, April 10. Bird Sit with Nature Journaling, O'Melveny Park. 10:00—11:45 a.m. If you would like to mindfully connect with birds and all of nature, join us at O'Melveny Park—at the picnic tables near the bathrooms. (Rain cancels and moves it to the 3rd Thursday.) What to bring: a cushion or a comfortable chair, a beverage/snack, binoculars, a journal, and something to write/draw with. This event is limited to 10 people. To reserve a spot, contact Teri Carnesciali at teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org. Co-leader: Mary Lou Sharp.



Tuesday, April 15. BIRDATHON EVENT. Weekday Wander at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 9:00—11:00 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. Leader: Alexander deBarros, Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org.

Sunday, April 20. Malibu Creek State Park. 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. Leaders: Katheryn Barton and David Barton. kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org.



Thursday, April 24. General Membership Zoom Meeting. 7:00—8:30 p.m. Program: **Morning Rush Hour on the Feathered Highway: Bird Migration Monitoring, Training, and Outreach at Bear Divide** Speaker: Lauren Hill. To join via Zoom [click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to event.



Saturday, April 26. BIRDATHON EVENT. Hansen Dam Birding 8:00—11:00 a.m. 10965 Dronfield Ave., Pacoima, CA. Dronfield Ave. intersects Osborne St. approximately ½ mile south of Foothill Blvd. Turn into the park on Dronfield, and meet near the ranger station. Accessibility is good for this site which is mostly on a packed dirt road. Leader: Pat Bates, pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org.

Saturday, April 26. Earth Day Habitat Restoration. Sepulveda Basin. 8am—12pm. Join Friends of LA River for their Habitat Restoration Day & Earth Month Celebration. Volunteers will join FoLAR to remove 15,000+ gallons of invasive vegetation, restoring 1 acre of land at the Reserve. Volunteers will then participate in educational activities like a nature walk, making native seed balls, hopping aboard their River Rover mobile museum, and exploring informational tables from community partners. Earth Day Habitat Restore & Renew is free and open to the public and will foster both immediate and long-term health in the LA River Watershed. [Register Here!](#)

Reminder: RAIN CANCELS birding events

Sunday, April 27. Eagle Eyes Young Birders Club. 9:00—11:00 a.m. Join us and become part of a fun, supportive community where your passion for nature and birds can soar. We will have binoculars to loan and journals available for children who sign up. We will meet at a different location each month. Check out our website for more information and to secure your spot.

MAY 2025

Saturday, May 3. BIRDATHON EVENT. Serrania Park. 20726 Wells Drive, Woodland Hills. 8:00 a.m. Directions: Take 101 N to DeSoto Ave., turn south onto DeSoto, continue straight onto Serrania Ave., approx. .6 miles to Wells Drive. Turn right into parking lot. Leaders: Paula Orlovich 54warbler@gmail.com, and Jolene Herz.

Sunday, May 4. BIRDATHON EVENT. Sepulveda Basin. 8:00—11:00 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. Park in the lot and walk past the low, rock-faced buildings to our meeting place on the other side of the buildings. Leader: Alexander deBarros, Alexander.deBarros@sfvaudubon.org.

Sunday, May 4. BIRDATHON EVENT. Aliso Canyon Park. 11518 N Hesperia Ave, Granada Hills. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Exit 118 Fwy. at Reseda Blvd., Go N. On Reseda, turn right on Rinaldi Ave., then left on N. Hesperia Ave. Leader: Charlie Wilken. cswilken@gmail.com.

Thursday, May 8. Bird Sit with Nature Journaling, O'Melveny Park. 10:00—11:45 a.m. If you would like to mindfully connect with birds and all of nature, join us at O'Melveny Park—at the picnic tables near the bathrooms. (Rain cancels and moves it to the 3rd Thursday.) What to bring: a cushion or a comfortable chair, a beverage/snack, binoculars, a journal, and something to write/draw with. This event is limited to 10 people. To reserve a spot, contact Teri Carnesciali at teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org. Co-leader: Mary Lou Sharp.

Saturday, May 10. BIRDATHON EVENT. Harmon Canyon Preserve 7:30 a.m. Directions: Access Harmon Canyon Reserve (7511 Foothill Rd, Ventura, CA 93003) at the corner of Foothill Road and McVittie Place. Immediately after turning onto McVittie Place, there is a dirt road on the right leading to the parking area. Meet leader, Kris Ohlenkamp, in the parking area at 7:30 a.m.

Sunday, May 18. BIRDATHON EVENT. Malibu Creek State Park. 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. Leaders: Katheryn Barton and David Barton. kathy.barton@sfvaudubon.org.

Tuesday, May 20. Weekday Wander at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. 9:00—11:00 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. Leader: Paula Orlovich, (747) 237-3720.

Thursday, May 22. Hybrid General Membership Meeting. 6:00p.m. (for in-person social time) 7:00—8:00p.m. (Zoom Presentation) Program: **Birding for Boomers—and Everyone Else.** Speaker: Sneed B. Collard III.

VENUE CHANGE! NEW Location: Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd., Encino. We will also be holding our election for Officers and Directors for the 2025-2026. To join via Zoom click [here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to event.

Saturday, May 24. Hansen Dam Birding. 8:15—11:00 a.m. 10965 Dronfield Ave., Pacoima, CA. Dronfield Ave. intersects Osborne St. approximately ½ mile south of Foothill Blvd. Turn into the park on Dronfield, and meet near the ranger station. Accessibility is good for this site which is mostly on a packed dirt road. Leader: Pat Bates, pat.bates@sfvaudubon.org.

Sunday, May 25. Eagle Eyes Young Birders Club. 9:00–11:00 a.m. Join us and become part of a fun, supportive community where your passion for nature and birds can soar. We will have binoculars to loan and journals available for children who sign up. We will meet at a different location each month. Check out our website for more information and to secure your spot.

Upcoming Event: Saturday, June 14. Annual Awards Banquet. Braemar Country Club, Tarzana. Honoring Muriel Kotin with our Service Award and California Native Plant Society with our Conservation Award. Tickets available on our Website in May.

PLANS, PLANS, AND MORE PLANS Sepulveda and Hansen Dam Master Plans *by Pat Bates*

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) will submit comments to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) suggesting changes they wish to see in revised master plans for the Sepulveda and Hansen Dam basins. You may want to submit comments as well.

The Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and Regional Planning and Environmental Center are revising the Sepulveda and Hansen Dam Master Plans. Master Plans are intended to serve as comprehensive land and recreational management schemes with life spans of 25 years. They guide the stewardship of natural and cultural resources and the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities to ensure sustainability of federal lands associated with these flood risk management basins. The existing 2011 Master Plans, as well as much more information may be found in the USACE [website](#). Comments will be accepted through late March on the two plans. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will be submitting comments, but any individual may also submit comments using information in the USACE website for each project by March 26 (Sepulveda) and 25 (Hansen), 2025.

The plans are being revised at this point as a result of regulatory changes as well as possible desired modifications to land use classifications and management objectives. To paraphrase from the plans, a Master Plan describes and identifies: (1) an inventory of lands, resources, and uses; (2) a summary of the public participation input; (3) a summary of resource and ecosystem use objectives; and (4) the recommended land use plan. It is important to realize that the recommendations and land use requirements stipulated in the Master Plans are for the most part aspirational and tend to be unenforced and unfunded. They are “wish lists” of best practices. The hard work is finding funding sources and building alliances with governmental and nonprofit partners to meet the objectives.

The major concern of SFVAS is with preserving, restoring, and enhancing the natural resources, habitat and wildlife in these dam basins, while ensuring that the public has adequate and safe access to enjoy the facilities. Unfortunately, many of the recommendations in the 2011 plans have not been implemented, in some cases resulting in damage and unsafe conditions. SFVAS will be commenting on this fact as well as making additional recommendations. We will emphasize the need for strict enforcement of park regulations to prevent severe damage to environmentally sensitive areas which is occurring. Although the USACE is not the party responsible for enforcement in most areas, including the requirement can encourage compliance.

Additional factors to evaluate include the following: Mandate the use of CA native plants throughout both basins to the degree possible. This will include shade trees as well as connectivity buffers of native shrubs and restored vegetation appropriate to the location. SFVAS will recommend that the Encino Creek area be added as a formal reserve and that buffer areas around all streams be expanded. Consideration should be given to additional environmentally sensitive areas in the basin, for example, ponds in golf courses which are breeding and feeding grounds for birds and other wildlife. Wayfinding in both basins but especially the Sepulveda Basin has been a persistent problem. We will recommend naming established roads and trails and request clear mapping of each basin and responsibility boundaries. That would include providing current leases and easements and indicating the areas covered.

You may question how the revised Sepulveda Dam Master Plan relates to the much-discussed Sepulveda Basin Vision Plan. The short answer is it doesn't. The Vision Plan is an aspirational and mostly unfunded design for possible future modifications to basin features and amenities for consideration by the City of Los Angeles. USACE approval and environmental studies will need to be obtained for most activities planned under the Vision Plan to ensure they are in accordance with USACE policies and its flood risk reduction mission. [USACE](#) 🐾



San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
Incorporated as California Audubon Society 1913

For nature education and the conservation of wildlife

Website: <http://www.sfvaudubon.org/>

E-mail: info@sfvaudubon.org

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Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769

PROXY: ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED AND SIGNED PROXY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

The Board of Directors of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (whose formal legal name is the California Audubon Society), recommends a vote "FOR" the Election of Directors and Officers. We know that many members cannot attend the May meeting when the voting will take place, so we have attached a proxy form below.

The following candidates have been nominated by the Nominating Committee of the Board of Directors. No other candidates have been nominated, so none of the seats is contested.

Candidate	Office
Paula Orlovich	Treasurer
Pat Bates	Recording Secretary
Barbara Heidemann	Corresponding Secretary
Susan White	Director-at-Large
Ryan Carter	Director-at-Large

Officers are elected for two-year terms, with a limit of four continuous years in one office. The term of a director-at-large is three years.

INSTRUCTIONS

The election of Officers and Directors will take place at the Annual Meeting on May 22, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., at the Tarzana Community & Cultural Center, 19130 Ventura Blvd., Tarzana. If you are unable to attend the meeting in person, you may VOTE ONLINE or complete the Proxy below to submit your vote. Please indicate your vote for each candidate in the space provided, write your name and sign the Proxy in the place indicated, and return the Proxy as soon as possible. You may return your completed Proxy to the Society by mailing it to: San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, PO Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769, or by scanning or photographing your completed and signed Proxy and sending it by e-mail to sfvaudubonsociety@gmail.com. Your Proxy must be received by the Society prior to the meeting in order to be counted. Once your Proxy is received by the Society it cannot be revoked.

Please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of the election of each candidate. Check "Yes" if you approve, or "No" if you do not approve. Alternatively, you may indicate that you withhold your vote rather than approving or disapproving a candidate. Only votes approving a candidate will be counted in the election.

Withholding your vote means that you abstain from voting – you would still be participating in the election, but no vote would be recorded on your behalf for or against the candidate.

If you have any questions, please e-mail the Society at sfvaudubonsociety@gmail.com

APPOINTMENT OF PROXY

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

The undersigned, a member of California Audubon Society, a California nonprofit public benefit Corporation also known as the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (the "Society"), hereby revokes any previous proxies and appoints the Secretary of the Society, with full power of substitution, as the undersigned's proxy to attend the annual meeting of members on May 22, 2025, and to vote, execute consents, and otherwise represent the undersigned in his/her/their capacity as member in connection with the election at such meeting of the following candidates for office of the Society, in the same manner and with the same effect as if the undersigned were personally present at such meeting:

Candidate	Office	Yes	No	Withhold
Paula Orlovich	Treasurer	_____	_____	_____
Pat Bates	Recording Secretary	_____	_____	_____
Barbara Heidemann	Corresponding Secretary	_____	_____	_____
Susan White	Director-at-Large	_____	_____	_____
Ryan Carter	Director-at-Large	_____	_____	_____

Signature

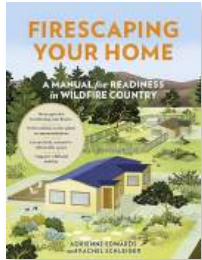
Name (please print)

Date

ALL PROXIES MUST BE SIGNED AND DATED. PLEASE SIGN AS YOUR NAME APPEARS ON THE MEMBERSHIP RECORDS OF THE SOCIETY.

Book Review by Marianne Davis

FIRESCAPING YOUR HOME by Adrienne Edwards and Rachel Schleiger



I got this book and another (*CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE LANDSCAPING*, by Maureen Gilmer) from LAPL. Haven't finished Gilmer yet, but since everybody has been wondering WHAT DO WE DO NOW, I'll hit the highlights.

There have also been a couple of excellent webinars recently that gave us the same points—Beverly Hills and the Neighborhood Sustainability Alliance hosted good speakers—the wise Dr. Jon Keeley (USFW), and Landscaper and activist

Stephanie Bartron, as well as Dr. Travis Longcore. They all emphasized the same things:

Non-native grasses and plants (like fan palm and black mustard) have rapidly invaded open spaces and are great fire fuel.

"Brush clearance" is not the panacea that the insurance industry claims. It leads to more invasives gaining footing and causes erosion in many cases. Plus it's just darn ugly. The finger-pointing that some politicians have been doing recently, blaming some of our wildlife reserves for not doing brush clearance is just nonsense. Native chaparral is hearty and fire resistant.

Urban fires spread through embers and radiant heat. Having a five foot "ember free" zone around your house has merit—no dead material there, try for non-flammable mulch (rock and granite, not wood chips, and certainly not the rubber chips). Avoid hazardous plants near your house that will go up fast, like Italian cypress or eucalyptus.

Both Dr. Keeley and Dr. Longcore emphasized that trees around your yard are NOT the problem (and so does this book). Choosing the RIGHT trees is very important. As shown prominently at a couple of houses that survived the recent fires, oaks and native trees serve as ember-catchers, and if you have a stand of them may even redirect wind-carried embers up and over your house. The key thing is that, if you have a tree windbreak, make sure it's porous (got holes in it) so the wind and embers get stuck in it and just don't fly over onto the home. Whatever plants you have around your house, make sure they are well watered to help them stand up to the heat. Trees should be "limbed" (cleared off) at 6 feet, so that they do not provide a ladder up to your house.

Hardening your home starts with your roof. You want CLASS A roofing, which resists flames. That's your best bet. Single-pane windows can't handle the radiant heat from a fire, and blow out, feeding the flame. Double pane is superior. Wood piles are a big problem and should be eliminated. Keep your roofs CLEAN and free of leaf debris, no limbs hanging over your house. I was so scared by the fires that we had our tree specialists come and trim back our trees, remove the roof debris and clear the deep mulch I had collected over the years.

FIRESCAPING YOUR HOME has a lengthy section on good versus poor choices for plants to discourage fire hazard. It was an interesting read all by itself. And there is a fire recovery section with resources, and predictions for future fires (yes more). We must be ready. 🌲

"Save the Date!
San Fernando Valley Audubon's
Awards Luncheon will be held at
the Braemar Country Club on
June 14."



We will be honoring
Muriel Kotin with the Chapter Service Award
and
The California Native Plant Society with our
Conservation Award

Tickets will be available on our website in
May

IS YOUR HOME VULNERABLE TO WILDFIRE?

The terrifying fires of February have caused many SoCal homeowners to wonder if their homes are vulnerable to wildfire, and what they can do to mitigate the risks of a catastrophic loss of their homes. If this sounds like you, there is a valuable service offered by one of our strategic partners, the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, called the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Program, available to homeowners in Los Angeles County and Simi Hills. The evaluation will alert you to the vulnerability of your home and landscape to wildfire and ember-ignition. The evaluators will identify specific risk factors and suggest ways to mitigate. Evaluations are performed by trained volunteers and Resource Conservation District staff and take about an hour to complete. You will receive a summary of all the recommendations, and resources and materials to aid you in moving forward. The evaluation is currently free of charge until the grant monies run out.

Click here to register for your home evaluation: [Home Evaluation](#). —Submitted by Katheryn Barton

Scholarships



The UCLA Bruin Birding Club continues to respond strongly to our scholarship program. This year we have two UCLA students:

Sylvia Zhang has been very active in the Club, and has worked on restoration at Hummingbird Canyon, Sage Hill, and Ballona Wetlands. She wants to be a conservation biologist, with a focus on habitat restoration.



Emma Hwang is the Educational Events Director of the Club, planning birding tours and career-related outings. She is now in the UCLA Yeh Lab, studying the evolution of Dark-eyed Juncos and is working on a banding permit for her research study. She is interested in conservation rehab medicine and is applying for summer internships. She has participated in the CBC and avidly birds. —Submitted by Marianne Davis



Join our San Fernando Valley Audubon Eagle Eyes Young Birders Club

Join us and become part of a fun, supportive community where your passion for nature and birds can soar. Our next birding event will be a walk on Sunday, February 23, 2025 at King Gillette Ranch, 9 - 11am. We will have binoculars to loan and journals available for children who sign up. Check out our website www.sfvaudubon.org for more information and to secure your spot.



Bird Sit Bulletin by Mary Lou Sharp

In our monthly Bird Sit with Nature Journaling, participants scatter around the park and sit quietly for about an hour. We look, listen, and focus our attention on the birds and nature around us. Sometimes everyone chooses different subjects, but occasionally a single species dominates the day. In the December 2024 Bird Sit, two colorful Cassin's Kingbirds perched on bare branches near us, flycatching and calling to each other. Their cheery and insistent "Chi-beer! Chi-beer! Ch-beer-beer-rr! -beer-beer!" seemed to be proclaiming "Choose us!" Several bird sitters answered the Cassins' cheerful call, and each captured the kingbirds in their own unique way.

Newcomers and beginning birders are always welcome, and no artistic experience is needed. See the Calendar of Events for information on joining the next Bird Sit with Nature Journaling.



David Yanowitz's journal



Mary Lou Sharp Journal Page



Steviann Kagan's journal page

We are saddened to acknowledge the passing of two stalwart members of the SFVAS community. Remembrances follow:

In Loving Memory Our Friend Jim Houghton

By Pat Bates



My Encino, CA neighbor Jim Houghton leaves a larger-than-life legacy of achievement, and our SFV Audubon community is honored to remember Jim as one of us. We were saddened to learn of his death in August 2024, which was recently announced. His achievements as an Emmy-winning TV writer and actor are innumerable. From the Hollywood Reporter: “James Houghton, who starred as Seaview Circle resident Kenny Ward on the first four seasons of Knots Landing and received four Daytime Emmys as a writer on The Young and the Restless, has died. He was 75.” One only needs to Google ‘James Houghton’ to learn about the achievements of this legendary TV star.

Jim was a champion for our environment and our birds. After hearing about the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) bluebird nest box project, he came to one of our general meetings and volunteered to help. He joined the SFVAS board as a director in mid 2014, and undertook overhauling and modernizing our website. He served as Web Coordinator, officially or unofficially until May 2022 and also the curator of the Backyard Birds identification page. Jim served a four year term as Treasurer from 2017 to 2021, and throughout his years as a SFVAS board member helped with advocacy and financial projects alike.

I have fond recollections of him helping me with a Christmas Bird count in Reseda Park on a cold wet morning, pulling shopping carts full of debris out of Haskel Creek during a cleanup, and generally pitching in everywhere! This was a man who undertook the mission to preserve and protect our habitat with passion and without reservation.

During some election or another I remember being invited to Jim’s residence with many other like-minded citizens to make phone calls promoting an environmental legislative agenda. This was my first introduction to his amazing bird-friendly landscaping! It also underlines his support for environmental and community causes. September 2017 Jim was the featured presenter at our monthly meeting discussing birds in our homes and apartment balconies, and what we can do to support them. Jim’s home in our Los Angeles wild-urban interface area is habitat for a fabulous array of goldfinches, hummingbirds, sparrows, lizards, and more! It inspired me and undoubtedly many other people to repurpose their landscaping.

From Scott (past SFVAS Board Member) and Bonnie Logan of Wild Wings Ecology: Jim was very honest and open with his opinion, but was quick to admit when he was wrong - the second quality is difficult to come by these days. Jim always threw his support behind things he believed in and he always went above and beyond when it came to Wild Wings. He was one of our biggest supporters and cheerleaders. Both Bonnie and I truly miss him - he was a good friend and fine human being.

Paula Orlovich, past President and current Vice-President commented: Jim was so kind to me and always listened to me when I needed some advice. I am so grateful for having known him. All of us at SFVAS join with Paula, saying may his memory be a blessing. 🙏

A Fond Farewell to Our Friend, Arthur “Art” Langton Jr.

By Carolyn Oppenheimer

No individual ever had deeper ties to San Fernando Valley Audubon than Arthur Langton Jr.. Art grew up with this chapter. His parents, Art Sr. and Irene, were chapter volunteers starting in the 1950s. Irene was our treasurer starting about 1958 and Art Sr. was leading chapter field trips by 1960.

Art held various positions in the chapter throughout his life including several terms as President. He was a long time compiler of the Christmas Bird Count and also a champion for the preservation of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve, advocating against any destruction of its natural habitat. He led regular field trips there in the years before severe restrictions to public access were imposed. He also led walks to Malibu Creek State Park for many years. SFVAS honored Art with its annual Conservation Award in 1999.

When I first joined SFVAS in 1998, I would clip newspaper articles about chapter members and paste them into an album. I found an article written about Art

in the December 1998 *Los Angeles Times*. The article was a column titled “Personal Best-A Close Look at People Who Matter.” Art was a person who mattered. That article centered on his influence on his students from Sutter Middle School where Art spent his career as a science teacher. Art introduced his students to the wonders of nature by taking them on field trips into the Chatsworth preserve to view the wildlife. Art was quoted as saying “My greatest pleasure in life is working with young people.” He went on to say, “Sometimes they can drive you nuts, but when the light shines through, well, that’s the intangible pleasure of teaching.”

Even after he retired from teaching at Sutter Middle School, Art continued to teach young people about nature by working as a docent in SFVAS’s Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program. Art also had a long history with the Boy Scouts, leading their ocean sailing program, among other activities.

On the recent news of Art’s passing many of our current board members expressed their remembrances of Art and their feelings about his loss.

Katheryn Barton, current chapter president, noted that Art was active in teaching and demonstrating a love of nature up until the end. On behalf of the chapter, he had recently presented a program about swallows at Santa Monica College-Malibu for their community education project, and was in the midst of preparing a program about finches for this coming April. The swallow presentation was a major hit, and received glowing reviews from attendees. Katheryn noted that Art had never prepared a PowerPoint presentation before, so he taught himself to do it. “I so admire his willingness to learn new skills and push himself to stay current. He did so much for our chapter, and he never said no to my requests. I will miss him”

Charlie Wilken, who chairs our Outreach Committee, appreciated Art’s volunteering his time to communicate with the public at local events about our chapter’s mission. Art was the keeper of the chapter’s large collection of taxidermied birds and brought his collection to many events. They always attracted the public to our presentation tables. People loved looking at them. Charlie provided a picture of Art and his birds for this article.

Alexander DeBarros, Field Trip Leader, commented that SFVAS lost a wealth of knowledge and experience with Art’s passing. He added, “He was a great birder to the end and he will be missed. He left some big shoes to fill.”

Dave Weeshoff, “Art was so generous with his time and talents, including the many taxidermy birds he contributed to the Pennington Marine Science Center at Camp Emerald Bay on Catalina Island, other nature centers, as well as birds in his care for local viewing at schools and tabling events throughout Los Angeles. He was a real champion for birds.”

What I will remember most about Art is his big deep speaking voice. When Art spoke it sounded to me like God was calling down to me from heaven. Art was a big man in all respects and losing his presence in this world is a great loss for all he left behind. 🙏



SAN FERNANDO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Chapter Phone Number

To reach a board member or event leader you may call our forwarding message service at **(747) 237-3720**

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1 st Vice President:	Rebecca LeVine
2 nd Vice President:	Paula Orlovich
Treasurer:	Patricia Bates
Corresponding Secretary:	Teri Carnesciali
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It is fast, secure, saves time, and paper!

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Van Nuys, CA 91409

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How did you learn about SFVAS?

If you want to join or renew by check, please be sure to include your e-mail address if you want to receive an acknowledgment. We can no longer thank you by regular mail. If you do not have an e-mail address, please know how much we appreciate your involvement with, and support of, SFVAS.

The *PHAINOPEPLA*, published six times a year, is the newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 7769, Van Nuys, CA 91409. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is a non-profit chapter of the National Audubon Society, and is dedicated to "Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife."

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

Material from other newsletters or newspapers 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.

Membership to National Audubon is separate and can be initiated on the website www.Audubon.org.

If you have any questions about membership, renewals, change of address or any other membership concerns, please contact Bill Lepler at (747) 237-3720 or e-mail him at membership@sfvaudubon.org.

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For Chapter leaders' e-mail addresses, see our Website:
www.SFVAudubon.org



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Phainopepla

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
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Book Review: *Unnatural Habitat: the Native and Exotic Wildlife of Los Angeles*, by Craig Stemford (2024)



This fun book is divided into chapters dedicated to local wildlife, all kinds, and is very entertaining as well as full of good information. For example, the Palms chapter talks about where they came from why they are symbolic for us (green in a dry desert). Our California fan palm lives best in a real desert climate. But the most popular palm is the Mexican fan, and they are the iconic ones all over the city. They are very thirsty, harbor problem insects, and their heavy fronds are a big hazard.

The six species of hummingbirds in LA thrive on our feeders, but flowers are better for them as the natural sucrose is a better fit. There's a fascinating discussion on all our butterflies and their cycles—not just Monarchs are important to our environment. There is the obligatory chapter on peacocks, and on coyotes, and cats as bird killers. Interestingly, LA is the second most “ratty” city in the country (Chicago is #1, New York is #3). There are brown rats, roof rats, and billions are spent every year on ridding our properties of them. It won't work. And while we're talking about rodents, our local snakes are pretty talented hunters, but we don't tolerate having them around, so they don't help much. And we've got 200 species of spiders.

Oaks and their struggles to survive take up another long chapter. Oaks shelter hundreds of key insects that birds need to feed and raise their young, something no exotic tree can provide. Planting native plants helps control many of the exotics insects that get out of control, and support our native bees, which are having a hard time making a go of it.

Which brings me to squirrels. We have ground squirrels (native), gray squirrels (native), and eastern fox squirrels (invasive). Eastern fox squirrels out-reproduce our locals 3 to 1, they eat everything in sight and can be destructive to property. Yet they are so darn cute. Even the California Wildlife Center rehabs them and puts them right back where they were found. How did they get here? The myth that Civil War Veterans who were convalescing at the VA West LA managed to import some (maybe as pets) looks to be true. Benjamin Franklin had a pet squirrel; Harry Truman had one as a pet in the White House. Griffith Park seems to be the last stronghold for our native grays, as well as the Santa Monica Mountains. Hope we get to see one.

The rest of the chapters cover bears and raccoons (Calvin Coolidge had a pet one). Unfortunately, our raccoons have been exported to Europe in the last century and have caused massive amounts of damage. Opossums and skunks are discussed, and a big chapter on our native plants, with lots of recommendations. The chapter on native tortoises is fascinating and talks about the ups and downs of their population out in the Mojave (lots of human intervention and harm, as you can imagine). And the last chapter on all kinds of worms, snails, and slugs reveals that most of them have been introduced. Stemford closes out advocating peaceful coexistence. Maybe. —Borrowed from LAPL. *Marianne Davis*