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For Nature Education and the Conservation of Wildlife

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April / May 2026

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.



SFV Audubon is honored to be a Founding Partner of the long-overdue California Breeding Bird Atlas! Sign up today for their newsletter and find out how your eBird lists for the next five years will count towards this decade-long citizen science project. Here's a [LINK](#) to information about the project on our website and how you can participate.

—SAVE THE DATE—
JOIN US FOR OUR
ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON AT FRANKLIN CANYON ON SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026, NOON. TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE BEGINNING IN MAY.

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

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ZOOM PROGRAMS

April

Title: The Genetic Rescue Toolkit

Speaker: Ben Novak, Program Manager for Revive & Restore

Thursday, April 23, 2026, 6:45 p.m. Zoom site opens, 7:00 p.m. meeting begins

Revive & Restore is a non-profit organization that uses biotechnology for their Bird Conservation Program. Climate change and habitat loss have led to declines in many bird species. The Bird Conservation Program is geared towards restoring genetic diversity to dwindling bird populations, provide immunity to invasive disease, and use biotechnologies to provide adaptive traits to allow birds to overcome climate change. Their work centers around "the Genetic Toolkit." The toolkit is an integrated platform of genomics (study of genetic data of a population), and reproductive technologies to enhance existing conservation measures, and create new opportunities to save species.

Ben Novak, the lead scientist, is working to use these technologies for the de-extinction of the passenger pigeon, as well as innovations leading to conservation of all living endangered birds. Born in western North Dakota, his childhood immersion in the wilderness, witnessing reintroduced herds of bison and bighorn sheep sparked his passion for conservation. Ben earned degrees in Ecology and Evolution at Montana State University and UC Santa Cruz. He manages over 20 projects developing Artificial intelligence genomics tools and reproductive technologies. He has led genetic rescue for the black-footed ferret and the de-extinction effort to restore the passenger pigeon.

[CLICK HERE](#), to signup and receive a link prior to all events.



May

Title: The Bird Genoscape Project: A full annual cycle approach to avian ecology, evolution, and conservation

Speaker: Erica Robertson

Thursday, May 28, 2026, 6:45 p.m. Zoom site opens, 7:00 p.m. meeting begins

Erica Robertson, a graduate student from the University of Colorado, will be discussing the **Bird Genoscape Project**. She will talk about how the Project and its partners are studying the genetic markers of migratory North, Central, and South American birds to enhance species conservation. In 2009, the Bird Genoscape Project was created with the goal of developing connectivity maps of at least 100 species of North American migratory birds to understand population-specific trends. The Project partners with National Audubon Society, Institute for Bird Populations, and the University of California, Los Angeles.

A genoscape is a map of genetic variation across a breeding range of a species. The Project uses a single feather to scan for the genome of the bird in a geographic population. So far, they have completed genoscapes for 19 species and are working on 17 more at this time.

Erica graduated with a B.S. in Molecular and Cellular Biology. After graduating, she moved to Jackson, Wyoming to climb in the alpine area of the Teton Range. During one trip, she encountered the Black Rosy-Finch that breeds above 12,000 feet. She was inspired to pursue research on alpine birds in graduate school. She joined the Ruegg Lab and Bird Genoscape Project to study these birds.



BIRDATHON



By Richard Davis – Email: birdathon@sfvaudubon.org

It is our tradition to hold “Birdathon,” our major annual fund-raising event for the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) during the months of April and May. Once again, we will 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 or, in the case of John Willis, the Pacific Northwest. **CHOOSE YOUR TEAM & DONATE NOW!!**

You can 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 birds spotted. And, that’s in addition to a great outdoor experience with friends and experienced birders. OR, you can just make a general donation to our drive. Use link at right.



THANK YOU VERY MUCH. WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT

SCHEDULE OF BIRDATHON EVENTS 2026

Date	Leader(s)	Location	Time	Species	Contact	Directions	Details
4/1/26	Rod Rodriguez	Sheldon Arleta Park	8:00 AM	25	rodthebirder@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
4/11/26	Alexander deBarros	Lake Balboa	8:00 AM	40	alexanderdebarros@yahoo.com	G-Map	Details
4/18/26	Kris Ohlenkamp	Harmon Canyon Preserve	7:30 AM	45	kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net	G-Map	Details
4/18/26	Paula Orlovich & Jolene Herz	Serrania Park, WH	8:00 AM	30	RSVP 1(747)237-3720	G-Map	Details
4/19/26	Katheryn & David Barton	Malibu Creek State Park	8:00 AM	35-40	katheryn.barton@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
4/21/26	Paula Orlovich	O'Melveny Park	8:30 AM	30	RSVP 1(747)237-3720	G-Map	Details
4/25/26	Pat Bates & Hansen Harriers	Hansen Dam	8:00 AM	40	batesbird@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
5/2/26	Charlie Wilken	Aliso Canyon Park	8:30 AM	30	cswilken@gmail.com	G-Map	Details
5/3/26	Alexander deBarros	Sepulveda Basin	8:00 AM	60	alexanderdebarros@yahoo.com	G-Map	Details
5/9/26	Bruin Birding Club & Junco Grad Students	Glendale Narrows	8:00 AM	35	jfdiliberto@ucla.edu	G-Map	Details
5/17/26	Natalie Beckman-Smith	CSUN Campus	8:00 AM	30-35	nataliebeckmansmith@yahoo.com	G-Map	Details
TBD	Allan & Muriel Kotin	Malibu & Nearby		50			
TBD	John & Andrew Willis Lori Willis Mem Fund	TBD					



If you have questions or concerns you may email us (birdathon@sfvaudubon.org) or the Team Leader to clarify any details. If an outing shows no contact information, the Leader has chosen to do their outing alone or with a personal team. 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.

Also, you will notice that there are several new walks on our list: Lake Balboa with Alexander deBarros, and Sheldon Arleta Park with Rod Rodriguez. Especially exciting: We have two new team walks: Joey Di Liberto is leading a team from the Bruin Birding Club at UCLA and Natalie Beckman-Smith is representing CSUN.

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

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

Where your Money Goes: Birdathon is the major support for our Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program (SBEEP), carried out in partnership with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Monica Mountains (RCDMM) 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.



NEW this year: An exciting new way to support Birdathon: For a limited number of supporters, we are offering a two day raptor photography workshop led by wildlife photographer Ryan Carter, one of our directors with incredible numbers of his works appearing on magazine covers. **Don't miss your chance!** Please see our website, SFVAudubon.org for additional details. SCAN or CLICK the QR code to sign up for Ryan Carter's workshop. Space is limited.



Birdathon Fundraiser Event

RAPTOR WALK **& PHOTOGRAPHY** **WORKSHOP**

A two-day immersive raptor photography experience

Guided by
Wildlife Photographer
— Ryan Carter —
Author of *Birds Prey Too*
Whose work has appeared on 300+ magazine covers

Raptor Walk – Field Experience May 16, 2026 Start Time: 6:00 AM	Classroom Workshop May 17, 2026 Private Location (TBA)
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Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve



Join wildlife photographer **Ryan Carter** for a guided field experience focused on observing and photographing birds of prey. Participants will learn how to identify raptors, understand their behavior, and improve wildlife photography techniques.

Suggested Donation: \$100
All proceeds support
Audubon Birdathon & SBEEP

Limited Group Size
San Fernando Valley
Audubon Society



San Fernando Valley
Audubon Society



San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

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

Website: <http://www.sfvaudubon.org/>
E-mail: info@sfvaudubon.org
Address: P.O. Box 7769
Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769

For nature education and the conservation of wildlife

PROXY: ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

PLEASE **VOTE ONLINE** OR RETURN YOUR COMPLETED AND SIGNED PROXY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

You may also e-mail a photo of your signed Proxy to sfvaudubonsociety@gmail.com.

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.

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.

Office	Candidate
President	Patricia Bates
Vice President	Charlie Wilken
2nd Vice President	Natalie Beckman-Smith
Director-at Large	Ari Cuellar
Director-at-Large	Aviva Saadatfar

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 28, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. If you are unable to attend the Zoom meeting, 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 6:00 p.m. on May 28, 2026. 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 28, 2026, 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:

Office	Candidate	Yes	No	Withhold
President	Patricia Bates	_____	_____	_____
1st Vice President	Charlie Wilken	_____	_____	_____
2nd Vice President	Natalie Beckman-Smith	_____	_____	_____
Director-at-Large	Ari Cuellar	_____	_____	_____
Director-at-Large	Aviva Saadatfar	_____	_____	_____

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.

ABOUT OUR CANDIDATES

Name	Position	What is your vision for working with the SFV Audubon or why do you want to participate with the board?	What is your experience with other local environmental groups in LA?
Patricia Bates	President	To continue and expand our environmental programming and advocacy. This would include working with government agencies and other NGOs, ensuring that the SFVAS remains involved and relevant. It would also involve combatting threats to habitat and birds within our territory and beyond, regardless of the source. We need to keep what's working, think about changing what isn't, refine goals and means, and ensure succession planning for the SFVAS.	Representative to the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee for approximately 10 years for both Encino NC and SFVAS. Active member of CNPS and the Xerces Society.
Charles Wilken	1st Vice President	I currently chair the SFV Audubon outreach committee and wish to start attending the required executive committee meetings of the elected officers. I am interested in continuing to grow the participation of environmentalists with our group by expanding outreach. My websites: www.outdooreducationla.org vegan95.com	I do outreach tabling for SFV Audubon as well as classroom visits with our taxidermy bird collection
Natalie Beckman-Smith	2nd Vice President	I have been a member of the board as a Director for several years, and have recently become chair of the Bird Box Committee and co-chair of the Youth Services Committee. I would like to continue participating on the board now that my directorship is ending, especially as I've become more involved in my committees.	I work for the RCDSMM in their educational department. I am also a founding member and director-at-large for the Simi Hills Wildlife Observatory. I have been a volunteer for the LA Raptor Study and Project Phoenix. Although outside of LA, I do restoration work on the Channel Islands.
Ari Cuellar	At-Large Director	I would love to help bring new ideas to the board, be aware of what issues are being discussed, and hopefully impact some change, especially in regards to the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve.	I work with the CNPS to weed invasive plants and help restore biodiversity in the SBWR, and with FoLAR to help lead other volunteers in what to do and how to do it.
Aviva Saadatfar	At-Large Director	I would like to be involved with SFV Audubon to help support local conservation efforts and contribute to its educational outreach to local communities. I believe community education is essential to meaningful conservation and when people understand and connect with the natural world around them, they become invested in protecting it. As a wildlife biologist with a deep passion for conservation, I would love to share my love of birds with the community in a meaningful way. I believe my background and enthusiasm would make me a valuable asset to SFV Audubon's mission of conserving and celebrating birds.	I was born and raised in Los Angeles and have been involved in various aspects of environmentalism in the area. For the past two years, I have participated in naturalist training put on by Santa Susana State Historic Park, focusing on a different topic each week related to the local natural environment. I also volunteer doing restoration work in the San Fernando Valley, including with Friends of the LA River and the California Native Plant Society at Sepulveda Basin. Additionally, I volunteer with TreePeople, helping plant narrowleaf milkweed to support the recovery of monarch butterfly populations.

Scholarships 2026

By Marianne Davis

This year we have five excellent finalists who will receive \$1,000 to support their education costs, a membership in SFVAS and a seat at our Annual Luncheon. We look forward to seeing them at our events this year. Please welcome them to our flock!



Lord Forde, MS Student, Biology CSUN, is studying ecomorphology and wants to go on to a PhD program, doing research and teaching.



Ashlie Munoz, (undergraduate) is in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, CSUN, and wants to become a wildlife welfare manager.



Alex Fu, is an undergraduate at UCLA (Biology), and has worked in the Yeh Lab, on their junco studies. He's been very active in Bruin Birding Club, is interested in MOTUS, has worked at SBWR to plant natives, Christmas Bird Count, and is an avid birder. He wants to go to law school to become an environmental lawyer.



Em Richter, MS student, is in Sustainability in Ecology / E B Department, CSUN. She's focused on studying the birds on campus and is planning on doing campus signage to ID birds, including an ArcGIS StoryMap (creating a guided tour).



Anastasia Shimek, is an MS Student in Biology, CSUN. Her topic is a little different, as she is studying trait evolution for Channel Islands lizards. BUT she is very active in birding (does eBird, iNaturalist, and Zooniverse), and has been working to study if wildfire smoke affects birds. She volunteers at the Annenberg Wildlife Crossing, and wants to become a community college instructor...maybe pursue a PhD.

Calendar of Events

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

APRIL 2026

Wednesday, April 1. Sheldon Arleta Park. BIRDATHON EVENT.

8:00 a.m. Sheldon Arleta Park is located where the 5 and the 170 meet. Meet in the parking lot on Sheldon St. This is the only parking lot. Leader: Rod Rodriguez, rodthebirder@gmail.com.

Sunday, April 5. 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@sfvadubon.org.



Thursday, April 9. 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@sfvadubon.org. Co-leader: Mary Lou Sharp.



Saturday, April 11. Lake Balboa. BIRDATHON EVENT. 8:00 a.m.

Directions: From Balboa Blvd (North of Burbank Blvd and South of Victory Blvd), turn east on Lake Balboa drive. Follow Lake Balboa for about 1 mile to Wheel Fun and its associated parking lot. Meet at Wheel Fun Rentals/Lake Balboa Boat Rentals in Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area. Leader: Alexander deBarros, Alexander.deBarros@sfvadubon.org.

Saturday, April 18. Harmon Canyon Preserve. 7:30 a.m.

BIRDATHON EVENT. 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. kris.ohlenkamp@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, April 18. Serrania Park. BIRDATHON EVENT. 8:00 a.m.

Leaders Paula Orlovich and Jolene Herz will meet at the parking lot for Serrania Park at 20726 Wells Drive, Woodland Hills. See the Google MAPs link for detailed directions by GPS. RSVP [1\(747\)237-3720](tel:7472373720).

Saturday, April 18. Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve Habitat Restoration. 8:00—11:00 a.m.

SFVAS is continuing to work with our partners, the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) on the ongoing Habitat Restoration efforts in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (SBWR). This group gathers every Fourth Saturday morning to work and weed. If you would like to get involved and get your hands dirty, this is for you! SFVAS offers an Audubon guided walk after the work. (Volunteer Walk Leaders always needed.) What is this all about? Please check the FoLAR website for latest details and sign up before attending this event.

Sunday, April 19. Malibu Creek State Park. BIRDATHON EVENT

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

Reminder: RAIN CANCELS birding events.
Groups of six or more, please contact the leader.

Hwy. Entrance fee is \$12 per car. Leaders: Katheryn Barton and David Barton. kathy.barton@sfvadubon.org.

Tuesday, April 21. Weekday Wander at O'Melveny Park, Granada Hills. BIRDATHON EVENT. 8:30 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](tel:7472373720).

Thursday, April 23. Zoom General Membership Meeting. Title: The Genetic Rescue Toolkit. Speaker: Ben Novak, Program Manager for Revive & Restore.

See page 1 for more information. To join the Zoom [click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to event.

Saturday, April 25. Hansen Dam Birding. BIRDATHON EVENT.

8:00—11:00 a.m. 10965 Dronfield Ave., Pacoima. 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@sfvadubon.org.



Sunday, April 26. 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 leave a message at our chapter number, [\(747\) 237-3720](tel:7472373720). Leader: Paula Orlovich.

MAY 2026

Saturday, May 2. Aliso Canyon Park. BIRDATHON EVENT. 8:30

a.m. Meet at the parking lot for Aliso Canyon Park, 11518 N. Hesperia Ave., just north of the intersection of Hesperia Ave. and Rinaldi Blvd. in Granada Hills. See the Google MAPs link for detailed directions by GPS. Leader: Charlie Wilken, cswilken@gmail.com.

Sunday, May 3. Sepulveda Basin. BIRDATHON EVENT. 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@sfvadubon.org.

Saturday, May 9. Glendale Narrows. BIRDATHON EVENT. 8:00

a.m. Meet the Bruin Birding Club & Junco Grad Students at 300 Paula Ave., Glendale, CA 91201. There is a parking lot at the Riverwalk but there are additional spaces on the pullout outside of the tiny lot. We will meet around the parking lot area and then walk towards the path on the river. We tentatively plan to walk to the Mariposa bridge and back (~2.25mi). If there is interest/it's not too hot we'll go further or cross the river. Leader: Joey Di Liberto, jfdiliberto@g.ucla.edu.

Monday, May 11. Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 14. 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.

Sunday, May 17. 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.



Sunday, May 17. CSUN Campus. BIRDATHON EVENT. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the CSUN Duck Pond. Free street parking surrounding the campus and paid visitor parking in campus lots. Walk will be a 3-hour loop around the campus, ending where we started. Leader: Natalie Beckman-Smith, nataliebeckmansmith@yahoo.com.

Tuesday, May 19. 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.

Sunday, May 23. Hansen Dam Birding. 8:15–11:00 a.m. 10965 Dronfield Ave., Pacoima. 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, May 23 Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve Habitat Restoration. 8:00–11:00 a.m.

SFVAS is continuing to work with our partners, the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) on the ongoing Habitat Restoration efforts in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (SBWR). This group gathers every Fourth Saturday morning to work and weed. SFVAS offers an Audubon guided walk after the work. (Volunteer Walk Leaders always needed.) NOTE: Start time may be subject to change. Please check the [FoLAR](#) website for latest details and sign up before attending this event.

Sunday, May 24. 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 leave a message at our chapter number, (747) 237-3720. Leader: Paula Orlovich.

Thursday, May 28. Zoom General Membership Meeting. 6:45–8:00 p.m.

Title: The Bird Genoscape Project: A full annual cycle approach to avian ecology, evolution, and conservation. Speaker: Erica Robertson. See page 1 for more information. To join the Zoom [click here](#), to sign up and receive a link prior to event.



Where Eagles Gather: Ranking the West's Greatest Winter Migrations

BY: RYAN CARTER MEDIA TV

Winter Bald Eagle migrations out West are not measured by distance, but by opportunity. As food sources shift and northern waters freeze, eagles respond with precision, converging on locations where survival is efficient and predictable. Over time, a handful of places have emerged as winter strongholds, drawing not just eagles, but photographers, researchers, biologists, and birders willing to invest thousands of dollars for the chance to witness them.

Among these, three regions consistently rise to the top: **Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; coastal British Columbia; and Alaska.** Each produces exceptional numbers, but each offers a very different experience depending on how and why you observe eagles.



Coeur d'Alene, Idaho (Lake Coeur d'Alene System)

Coeur d'Alene has become one of the most productive inland Bald Eagle wintering areas in the Lower 48. From late November through February, kokanee salmon runs and persistent open water draw eagles into tight, observable concentrations.

Why Eagles Come

Historically, Bald Eagles in the Inland Northwest tracked seasonal fish availability. As kokanee populations rebounded in Lake Coeur d'Alene, eagles followed. Ice conditions funnel birds into bays and shorelines, creating repeated opportunities to observe both adults and juveniles at close range.

Record Numbers

- Typical peak winters: 250–350 Bald Eagles
- Strong years include 300+ adults and 90+ juveniles during mid-winter counts

Key Viewing Locations

- Higgins Point – A long-standing eagle concentration zone with shoreline and flight views
- Wolf Lodge Bay – Particularly productive during cold snaps when ice compresses feeding areas

Why It Stands Out

Coeur d'Alene offers something rare: high numbers combined with proximity. Eagles are not distant silhouettes—they are present, active, and often close enough to observe fine behavioral details.

Photography Rating: ★★★★★

Birdwatching Rating: ★★★★★½

Overall Rating: ★★★★★

Vancouver, British Columbia (Lower Mainland & Squamish River)

British Columbia's Lower Mainland represents one of the most ecologically important Bald Eagle winter systems in the world, driven by salmon-rich river networks and coastal estuaries.

Why Eagles Come

For generations, eagles have followed Pacific salmon runs along the Fraser River and its tributaries. Post-spawn salmon provide an abundant winter food source that sustains large numbers of birds across multiple sites.

Historical Context

Indigenous communities recognized eagle congregations here long before modern counts. By the late 20th century, this region became internationally recognized for winter eagle concentrations tied directly to salmon cycles.

Record Numbers

- Regional winter totals often reach 1,000–3,000 Bald Eagles
- Individual sites regularly host hundreds during peak runs

Key Viewing Locations

- Boundary Bay—A coastal estuary offering reliable eagle activity tied to tidal movement
- Squamish River/Brackendale Eagles Provincial Park—One of the most famous eagle viewing areas on the continent

Even outside peak season, 40 adult eagles and 5 juveniles have been observed in this area, underscoring its year-round value.

Why It Stands Out

British Columbia offers sheer density and ecological context. While eagles may be farther from the observer than inland sites, the numbers and habitat richness are undeniable.

Photography Rating: ★★★★★

Birdwatching Rating: ★★★★★½

Overall Rating: ★★★★★½

Alaska (Coastal Southeast & Interior Rivers)

Alaska represents the upper extreme of Bald Eagle winter migration. While many eagles move south, large numbers remain in Alaska, supported by late-season salmon runs and ice-free coastal waters.

Why Eagles Come

Southeast Alaska's maritime climate keeps rivers open longer than inland regions. Combined with massive salmon returns, this creates feeding conditions unmatched elsewhere.

Historical Context

Places like the Chilkat River near Haines have hosted documented winter gatherings of 3,000–4,000 Bald Eagles, making them some of the largest known concentrations on Earth.

Key Viewing Locations

- Chilkat River (Haines)—The benchmark for global winter eagle counts
- Cook Inlet coastal zones – Consistent winter presence along river mouths and tidal flats

A Different Approach

Alaska remains the one major western stronghold not yet visited in this research—not due to lack of interest, but intention. Many Alaska trips rely heavily on guides and structured access. My approach has consistently favored independent research, firsthand discovery, and entering locations without tips or escort, a method that has led to repeated success elsewhere.

Why It Stands Out

From a birding perspective, Alaska is unmatched. From a photographic standpoint, distance and structure can limit close-range opportunities.

Photography Rating: ★★★★★

Birdwatching Rating: ★★★★★

Overall Rating: ★★★★★

Honorable Mention: Northwest Washington

While not included among the top three, Northwest Washington consistently supports visible winter eagle populations and offers strong access for both birders and photographers.

Overall Rating: ★★★★★

Why People Follow These Migrations

Each winter, people spend thousands of dollars traveling to these locations—not just for images or lists, but for insight. Eagle migrations reveal:

- Age structure and survival rates
- Feeding hierarchies
- Habitat reliability
- Ecosystem health

Eagles do not gather randomly. Where they concentrate, systems still function.

Final Takeaway

Each location excels for different reasons:

- **Best Overall Experience:** Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- **Best Balance of Numbers & Ecology:** Vancouver / Brackendale, British Columbia
- **Best Pure Birdwatching Numbers:** Alaska

Understanding those distinctions matters more than chasing a single destination.

Where eagles gather, clarity follows for those willing to look closely.



Sepulveda Basin Trees - An Unfortunate Headline

By Pat Bates, Conservation co-chair

In 2020 most of our precious Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve was incinerated, with loss of life and a major threat to the surrounding communities. The multiple fires in the basin are intolerable and dangerous, and are mostly a result of encampments—endangering park users, the surrounding community, and wildlife alike. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society has taken a no-nonsense approach to addressing these hazards, working hand-in-hand with the City of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) and other partners to help reduce the fire risk in our Sepulveda Basin, while at the same time ensuring that wildlife including birds and native vegetation are protected. A recent ABC News segment “City Officials Hoping to Reduce Fires in the Sepulveda Basin by Cutting Down Trees” with Chief Jaime Moore and Chief Robert Barna is a good report describing the problem and one way it is being attacked. Unfortunately, there is unwarranted concern in the community over trees being cut due to the headline. A significant point which was missed in the excellent reporting is that thinning and removal of trees was done only after environmental review, and only involved removal of invasive species or some limited pruning of native specimens.

Three specific areas were addressed in the vegetation management program begun in 2025. The first was the area south of Burbank Boulevard along Encino Creek, an area which has been choked with debris and encampments and subject to frequent dangerous fires. That corridor ought to be prime riparian habitat as it contains a spring-fed creek. Unfortunately over the years it has become a sterile overgrown monoculture of invasive and fast growing evergreen Shamel Ash with interspersed invasive and highly flammable Mexican Fan Palms. The photo shows such an area, which is nearly impenetrable even after thinning. The area under the tree canopy contained virtually no native trees or shrubs, and received little to no sunlight, and not surprisingly, hosted virtually no birds. Prior to any cutting, native trees and shrubs which were mostly on the perimeter of the area were tagged and the Los Angeles Fire Department did a great job preserving these. In addition, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society assisted the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains in doing a breeding bird survey of the area. Going forward, objectives will be to maintain and increase the reduction of the invasive ash and palm trees and re-introduce appropriate riparian shrubs and trees. With the area opened up a bit we are seeing egrets, herons, kingfishers and more frequenting the creek.

A second area which was addressed by the LAFD was a roughly 50 acre portion of the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve north of Burbank Blvd. and east of Woodley Avenue. This field had completely burned on the morning of January 8, 2025 threatening the adjacent community, and had already experienced several fires in the summer of 2024. San Fernando Valley Audubon Society again assisted the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains in doing a breeding bird survey of the area. The area was then mowed by LAFD, and many of the introduced oak trees were pruned to reduce concealed locations for encampments and illegal activities. In addition, access and perimeter roads which had been impassable for many years were opened. There were no subsequent fires in the area. That field has hosted Mountain Bluebirds and many other species this winter—so appears to be doing well. Future objectives will be to increase the amount of native plants in the area as well as introducing some larger trees and employing strategies to reduce the amounts of invasive plants. Projects are already under way to achieve this goal.

The third area that was addressed in the news coverage is the Los Angeles River bottom between Balboa Blvd. and the Orange Line bridge. This was a long planned operation of the United States Army Corps of Engineers



(USACE), and it accomplished its objective of removing all the non-native vegetation (mostly Shamel Ash and Mexican Fan Palm) and massive amounts of encampment debris from the river bottom (including several cars). As with all USACE projects it was preceded by exhaustive environmental review. This has opened up the area and will make it possible for more of our native willows, cottonwoods, and sycamores to expand. The field north of the river was also cleared of encampments by the City, and now is a safe place to walk and go birding! It teems with many species including Vermilion Flycatchers, Merlins, and Red-Shouldered Hawks.

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will continue monitoring our precious Sepulveda Basin habitat! Invasive Shamel Ash is a serious issue in the basin, but it will be mitigated in an environmentally sensitive manner.



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Why Dam Removal Matters for California’s Wildlife

Author: Judi Uthus, Public Engagement Specialist, California Trout
juthus@caltrout.org

California has thousands of public and private dams, ranging from small earthen structures to massive reservoirs rising hundreds of feet high. Built largely during the early 20th century, these dams were once considered engineering feats providing electricity, water storage, and flood control. Today, however, many have exceeded their intended lifespans and are part of a rapidly aging infrastructure. Research from the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences shows that dams also come with significant environmental costs—degrading watershed ecosystems, harming wildlife populations, and even posing risks to public safety. As a result, the ecological and economic benefits of removing outdated dams outweigh the costs of keeping them in place.

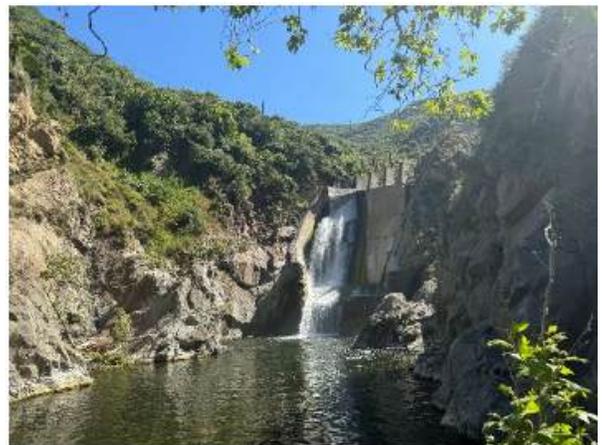


Photo courtesy of Moffatt & Nichol Engineering.

Nowhere is this more evident than with the sharp decline of anadromous salmon and steelhead populations. For decades, dams and other barriers have fragmented aquatic migration corridors, preventing fish from reaching the spawning grounds they depend on for survival. Southern California steelhead were once abundant in local rivers including Malibu Creek and served as a keystone species across the Santa Monica Mountains, holding deep cultural significance for local tribes. Although federally listed as endangered since 1997, their numbers have continued to fall, prompting California Department of Fish & Wildlife to add the species to its own endangered list in 2024 for additional protection. Restoring free-flowing waterways is now considered essential to ensuring the survival and recovery of this iconic species.



Southern California Steelhead Photo credit: Mark H. Capelli



Rindge Dam photo credit: R.J. Van Sant, State Parks

The Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project

One local dam impacting the Santa Monica Mountains is in the process of removal. Located three miles upstream from the Pacific Ocean in Malibu Creek State Park, is the 100-year-old Rindge Dam. Built in 1924–26 by Malibu’s Rindge family, the dam filled up with sediment by 1947 and was abandoned in 1967. For over a century, the 100-foot-tall concrete wall has been an insurmountable barrier for local wildlife, particularly, for southern steelhead that cannot get upstream to their ancestral breeding grounds. Rindge Dam has also prevented 800,000 cubic yards of natural sediment from flowing downstream to replenish Santa Monica Bay beaches.

After two decades of study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project (MCERP) has entered into the pre-construction, engineering, and design phase. California State Parks (State Parks) is leading a team of consultants, stakeholders, and Tribal partners to determine how best to remove the dam, manage the trapped sediment, and address eight additional upstream barriers to fully reconnect the 18-mile waterway. *(Continued next page)*



Picture Caption: With Malibu Canyon's narrow and severely limited access, a Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopter was needed to transport special equipment into the dam site to conduct Geotech studies. Among the supplies air dropped in were a drill rig, small excavator, front end loader, metal bridge, side-by-side ATV, tools and other supplies.

Photo courtesy of Moffatt & Nichol Engineering

“The removal of the dam will not only support habitat restoration and species recovery but also creates opportunities to reuse the sediment trapped behind the dam to nourish local beaches. This is sediment that would have naturally made its way to the coast if the dam had not blocked it. Additionally, by repurposing the material and avoiding landfill disposal, we anticipate significant cost savings for the project,” said R.J. Van Sant, project lead for State Parks.

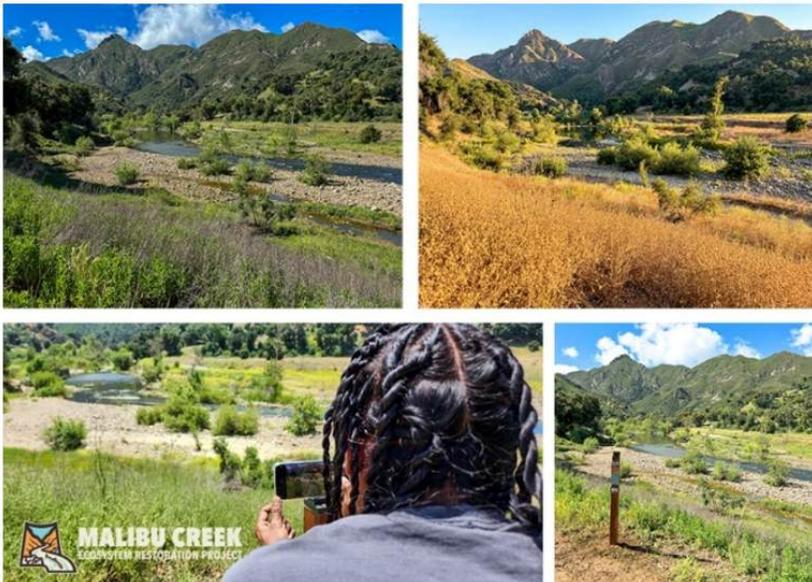
Slated for completion in 2035, the MCERP will restore a key watershed and wildlife corridor of the Santa Monica Mountains. This restoration effort is expected to help not only Southern California Steelhead return to their native waters, but also benefit the populations of Western Snowy Plovers, California Least Terns and Least Bell’s Vireo among many other species in this remarkably biodiverse watershed that is largely under public ownership.

With a landscape-scale restoration project taking place within urban Los Angeles, the MCERP provides exciting opportunities for public outreach and education on protecting urban rural environments. CalTrout is leading the public engagement effort featuring a Community Science Program. Along Malibu Creek are seven photo monitoring sites where the public can help capture the changing physical conditions during the watershed’s transformation. This documentation will help establish a robust database throughout the restoration process and continuing stewardship of the watershed.



Least Bell's Vireo from Audubon Field Guide

Community Science Program



Community Science monitoring site at Malibu Creek State Park

At the photo-monitoring site on Craggs Road in Malibu Creek State Park, you can see the confluence of Malibu Creek and Las Virgenes Creek. The center of the camera frame captures a groundwater-fed pool, which provides a year-round habitat for aquatic species. Upstream on Las Virgenes Creek, eight barrier-removal projects will also help restore natural water and sediment flow. As these improvements take effect, the photos collected at this site will begin to show changes in the creek conditions and habitat for fish and other wildlife.

How do we know dam removal is worth the investment? With the removal of four dams along the Klamath River in 2024, the monitoring results just after one year show thousands of Chinook salmon pushing deep into newly reopened habitat—some reaching more than 360 river miles from the ocean into their Upper Klamath Basin breeding ground for the first time in over a century.

To learn more about the Malibu Creek Restoration Project and the Community Science Program, visit restoremalibucreek.org.



Raptors in the Burn Zone: What Southern California's Wildfires Reveal About a Changing Sky *By Ryan Carter*

In the days after a wildfire passes through Southern California, the land often feels suspended between endings and beginnings. Hillsides are stripped bare, the air still carries the trace of smoke, and the silence is punctuated only by wind and the occasional movement overhead. It is often here, above blackened slopes and exposed ground, that raptors appear.

To the casual observer, the presence of hawks or eagles in recently burned landscapes can seem like a sign of resilience. But for those who spend time watching birds of prey closely, these moments tell a more complicated story—one about short-term opportunity, long-term loss, and the limits of adaptation in an era of increasingly intense fire.

Southern California's raptors have evolved alongside fire for thousands of years. Low-intensity burns once refreshed ecosystems, maintaining open hunting grounds and renewing plant communities that supported prey populations. What has changed is not the presence of fire, but its scale, frequency, and severity.



Photo: Western Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis calurus*) are among the most adaptable raptors in Southern California, often remaining in fire-altered landscapes even as nesting sites and prey availability shift.

Raptors are among the first to reveal the consequences.

A Temporary Advantage

In the immediate aftermath of a wildfire, species such as Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels are often quick to exploit altered terrain. With vegetation removed, small mammals become more visible, and hunting efficiency can increase dramatically. Hawks may be seen perched on surviving snags or utility poles, scanning open ground that was once inaccessible.

For a brief period, fire creates clarity.

But this advantage is fleeting.

As weeks turn into months, the costs of severe burns become evident. Prey populations decline as cover disappears and food sources vanish. Invasive grasses may replace native plants, altering the structure of the ecosystem in ways that no longer support the same prey base. What begins as an opportunity often ends in scarcity.

Nesting Loss and Site Fidelity

Perhaps the most significant impact of wildfire on raptors is not what they eat, but where they live.

Many Southern California raptors exhibit strong site fidelity, returning year after year to the same nesting territories. Species such as Red-shouldered Hawks, Great Horned Owls, and Cooper's Hawks rely on mature trees, dense riparian corridors, or stable woodland edges to breed successfully. When these structures are lost to high-intensity fire, relocation is not always an option.

Raptors do not simply move to the nearest available tree. Suitable nesting habitat must meet specific criteria—proximity to prey, elevation, shelter, and relative safety from *(Continued next page)*

disturbance. When these conditions are no longer present, breeding attempts may be delayed or abandoned entirely.

The absence of a nest is rarely dramatic. It is quiet, incremental, and easy to miss, yet it can have lasting consequences for local populations.

Smoke, Movement, and Migration

Fire alters more than landscapes; it reshapes movement.

Extended smoke events interfere with visibility and respiration, particularly for species that rely on keen eyesight and sustained flight. During periods of heavy smoke, raptors such as Swainson's Hawks and Prairie Falcons have been observed altering flight paths, reducing hunting activity, or vacating areas altogether.

For migratory species, timing matters. Delayed movement through fire-affected regions can ripple outward, affecting arrival times on breeding grounds or reducing overall fitness during migration. These shifts are subtle, but when repeated year after year, they accumulate.

Juvenile raptors are especially vulnerable. With less experience and lower hunting efficiency, young birds navigating burned landscapes face steeper survival challenges than adults.

Adaptation Has Limits

Some raptors demonstrate remarkable flexibility. Turkey Vultures, for example, often continue to exploit fire-altered landscapes, using thermals over open terrain to travel efficiently. Red-tailed Hawks may adapt their hunting strategies, shifting perches or prey selection.

Others are less adaptable.

Specialist species those dependent on intact woodland, riparian systems, or specific prey are disproportionately affected by repeated, severe burns. Their decline is not always immediate, but it is measurable over time through reduced nesting success and lower juvenile recruitment.

These differences matter. Raptors function as ecological indicators precisely because their success depends on the health of entire systems below them.



Caption: An active wildfire burns through Southern California terrain, reshaping habitat and airspace that raptors depend on for hunting, nesting, and migration.

Reading the Sky

Wildfire is not inherently destructive. In balanced systems, it plays a regenerative role. But Southern California's modern fire regime, driven by climate, land use, and human pressure, has pushed many ecosystems beyond their historical limits.

Raptors respond accordingly.

To watch a hawk circling above a burned hillside is not simply to witness survival. It is to read a signal one that reflects the state of the land, the future of prey, and the stability of habitats yet to recover.

If we pay attention, birds of prey are telling us not just what has burned, but what may no longer return. 🦅

Goats In the Basin

Article and photos by Pat Bates



San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (SFVAS) is proud to have funded the 35 acre, 1000 goat grazing pilot project in the Sepulveda Basin, employing goats provided by Fire Grazers, Inc. The SFVAS board has enthusiastically supported such an endeavor for many years. Our Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve was totally incinerated in a fatal fire in 2020 and the entire basin has experienced hundreds of fires annually, resulting in injuries to firefighters, damaged habitat and threats to



wildlife, the surrounding community, and park patrons. Expected results of this project include reduced fire risk as well as an opportunity to evaluate the effect on reemergence of native flora.

The location that was grazed is part of a 75 acre environmentally degraded field which from time to time is consumed by dramatic and dangerous fires. The subject area is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and is leased to the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), and is adjacent to the Apollo XI Model Airplane facility. Obtaining permission for the project was a complex multi-jurisdictional process, and tremendous credit goes to the Los Angeles Mayor's office—especially Senior Advisor to Mayor Karen Bass, Larry Frank, Robert W. Clark, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, and Deputy Chief of Staff, Jenny Delwood. The project also hinged on support from Councilmember Padilla, RAP, USACE, and the LAFD. A biological survey was commissioned by RAP prior to the graze, and the area was monitored throughout the process.



This precedent-setting project represents the first time goat grazing for fire suppression has been used on property controlled by RAP or by the USACE Los Angeles district which stretches from the New Mexico border to the coast. We are hopeful that goat grazing can become a tool in our City's fire-fighting arsenal.



After: Grazed plot. Clump in center are native plants which were mostly left alone.



Birds & Beer Outing

A large group attended the March B&B getting a glimpse of the Great Horned Owls in their new nest at Woodley Golf Course, followed by a lively social hour. Watch your e-mails to sign up for the April B&B where we will be checking out the birds around Lake Balboa. *Photos: Marianne Davis*

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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.

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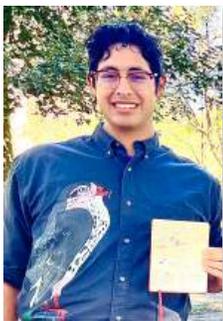
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Bird Sit Bulletin by Mary Lou Sharp



"I wonder," "I hear," "I notice," "I see." These are some of the ideas nature journalists think about as they sit quietly and observe the area around them. Bird sitters take in the sky, the weather, the trees, the flowers. They look closely at the birds, animals and insects - how they look, what they're doing, the sounds they make, how they interact, what they're eating. They draw and write some of their observations in nature journals. During our January bird sit, Adam Ordaz journaled his observations, questions and musings about the birds and other wildlife he noticed. He included the birds' and squirrels' sounds, interactions and behaviors,

and added questions he wondered about. Join us at the next bird sit and give nature journaling a try. Discover the joys of nature journaling for yourself!

No birding or nature journaling experience is necessary, just your curiosity and sense of wonder. You can find more information in the Events Calendar. Contact Teri Carnesciali at teri.carnesciali@sfvaudubon.org, to reserve your spot.

