



California Least Tern

Newsletter of the El Dorado Audubon Society
Founded 1969

Vol. 41 No. 5

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Thoughts from the President:

El Dorado Audubon Society 1969-2009

By Donna Bray, Chapter President

The mission of the El Dorado Audubon Society is the conservation of native birds and their habitats. The society provides leadership in conservation and educates its members and the community, so that they may appreciate birds and participate in the society's conservation efforts.

El Dorado Audubon Society is a California chapter of the National Audubon Society serving the communities of Artesia, Avalon, Bellflower, Carson, Cerritos, Cypress, Hawaiian Gardens, La Palma, Lakewood, Long Beach, Los Alamitos, Paramount, Rossmoor, San Pedro, Seal Beach, Sunset Beach, and Wilmington.

Forty years.

The year 2009 marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Chapter. Where were you in 1969?

Well, if you were to ask Charlie Collins, Barbara Massey, James Bourett, Charlie Jenner or Gene Folley, they were spending their free time being founding members and officers of this chapter. I have heard from retired CSULB Professor Charles Collins (who prefers Charlie), and he provided me with those names. Were you an early member?

This is a call to any of you who were

involved then, to remember and to contact any Board Member or me. We would love to hear from you. Please think about writing your thoughts as a Past President about the Chapter's formation or about your current projects. Any other events or celebrations are just in the 'germ of an idea' stage, but start dusting off any old photos or scrapbooks. Perhaps Member's Night in June would be a good time to gather again. Like we said in 1969: Peace.

Conservation News:

Year-End Conservation Reflections

By Mary Parsell, Conservation Chair

As I write this article in early December, I am thinking about the words of John Muir, "go to the woods and get their glad tidings, nature's peace will flow into you like sunshine into trees...." Yosemite remains one of the most peaceful and inspiring places for me since the first time I saw it.

Yet my "trees" are not always trees but plants like pickleweed and cordgrass and views of sunsets over the ocean. I have spent many a peaceful vacation in Morro Bay, around Santa Barbara and San Diego and often, as part of a hectic life, I've stopped by Bolsa Chica for a

while to "re-create" my sense of peace.

In recent years, I have spent many a happy hour in Gum Grove Park overlooking the Los Cerritos Wetlands, enjoying nature, enjoying the richness of one of Southern California's most treasured gems. Raptors soar, Canada Geese fly over and land, Song Sparrows and Common Yellowthroat sing, hummers buzz by at lighting speed and butterflies flutter by.

I think of the subtle beauty of the nearby

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SPOTLIGHT ON....

Birding by Ear
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Chapter Happenings

Program: January 15, 7:30 P. M.

The Dominican Republic

By Mary Parsell, Program Chair

John Fitch will give our program this month on his & Lindsay's 2007 trip to the Dominican Republic.

In addition to some wonderful birds (about 18 endemics), they also took in the colonial section of Santo Domingo, which included the oldest church in the Americas dating from the late 1500s. They also birded briefly in Haiti, maybe the poorest country in the world.

Join us for a look at this little visited piece of the Caribbean.

The meeting starts at 7:30PM on Thursday, at the El Dorado Nature Center, 7550 E. Spring St., Long Beach (between Los Alamitos Bl. and Studebaker Rd.) Parking is free for the meeting and refreshments will be served. Remember to bring your recyclable aluminum cans and plastic bottles to support chapter activities.

Join us.

Refuge News

By John Fitch, NWR Liason

This fall has seen a good variety of birds at the refuge, some migrants, some arriving for the winter.

Winter arrivals include Ferruginous Hawks, Short-eared Owl, Cackler, Snow & Greater White-fronted Geese, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows & Large-billed Savannah Sparrows, Common Loon, & the Reddish Egrets that share time with Bolsa Chica.

Migrants (or probable migrants in some cases) include Tropical King-bird, male Hooded Merganser & Canvasback, Bald Eagle and White-faced Ibis.

Field Trips:

Los Cerritos Wetlands and Coal Canyon

Weekend Field Trip

Los Cerritos Wetlands

By Mary Parsell, Conservation Chair

Sat., January 10, 8:00 a.m.

Sun., January 18, 8:00 a.m.

Check out Los Cerritos Wetlands from Gum Grove Park which overlooks the wetlands from the Orange County side. Enjoy raptors, songbirds, hummingbirds and more!

Meet at Gum Grove Parking lot (Avalon St. entrance) in Seal Beach. From Long Beach, take PCH to Mar Vista, turn left on Mar Vista, left on Coastline, right on Catalina, left on Avalon, Avalon dead-ends into the parking lot.

Weekend Field Trip

Coal Canyon

By John Hlavac, Editor

We'll meet at the El Dorado Branch Library parking lot (on Studebaker Rd. just South of Spring St.) at 7:30 A. M. on Sunday, 25 January.

We'll investigate unburned Coal Canyon which is accessed from Gypsum Canyon by walking along the recently burned Santa Ana River. Plan on walking about 6 miles total. Rain cancels this field trip.

Classroom

Heard Birds Count too

By Clarann Levakis, Wells Fund Chair

Do you ever find yourself wondering what bird you hear singing in your neighborhood or at a local park? I am trying to determine if there is sufficient interest in taking an introductory course in birding by ear. I am thinking of approximately a four week course with

a weekly classroom session and practice in the field. We would confine ourselves to birds commonly found in El Dorado Nature Center. If you would be interested in taking such a course, please send me an email at tanager2@earthlink.net.

Please note the emphasis would be on learning the vocalizations of local birds and having a good time in the process. This is not intended to be a rigorous course such as those offered by other chapters. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Recycling Report

by Eleanor Palmer, Membership Chair

Since September your donations of aluminum cans and plastic bottles have enriched our treasury to the tune of \$145.25! Congratulations to all of you who have brought redeemables to meetings. This is no small feat since the price of aluminum has fallen over the summer. I believe this is happening because so many folks are collecting and redeeming to supplement their incomes. Additionally the market for aluminum has been depressed. World conditions have also impacted the corrugated cardboard and waste paper companies driving their prices down as much as 75% in the last six weeks. According to a recent article the LA Times business section, a firm in Bellflower was paying up to \$2.00 a pound for cans in July but now pays little more than the standard redemption of \$1.57/lb. Thanks again to all of you and especially to Eleanor and Mickey Beland who have helped bring those bags and more bags to my house.

(Continued from page 1)

Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge and remember that it wasn't always a National Refuge. Its protection came about as a result of hard work of people who cared.

I think of the fact that Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) is negotiating for 100 acres of the property I am looking out on. The funding is coming from the Wildlife Conservation Board. I remember that LCWA already owns 66 acres on either side of the San Gabriel River, known as Phase I. Since 166 acres would be a large enough area to restore initially, feasibility studies would proceed once the Hellman purchase is completed. This in and of itself is good.

In addition, last month I heard some more promising news: that the City of Long Beach is working on a land swap where the City would swap several city-owned parcels for 175 acres of Los Cerritos Wetlands. Long Beach would then sell the 175 to the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority and use some of the proceeds of the sale to acquire open space along the Los Angeles River.

On December 9, a transaction that was expected to be part of the complicated deal did not take place -- the Press Telegram reported that though the Amerigas deal did not take place the city is still negotiating a land swap with Tom Dean to allow the preservation of the former Bixby property. Our chapter has concerns about the hilltop property (Willow/Spring Gulch). The currently owned City properties to be swapped include the city-owned site of the proposed sports park with the exception of 18 acres, which would be kept by the City for open space. The 18 acres is located directly behind the cemetery on Willow between Orange and California. It is the highest spot in Long Beach and natural resource in and of

itself, currently used by raptors, grassland birds like Meadowlarks indicators of the web of life that exists there. A spring, the source of the first water supply in Long Beach and wetlands are in the portion of the parcel that the city would trade away in a swap.

The news is promising, indeed! We will continue to post links to articles at: www.eldoradoaudubon.org.

In the New Year, I hope that each of you have a chance to enjoy nature, that nature's peace will flow into you, whether it be in your backyard, or in some other place near or far from home.

Book Review – **Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson**

By John Hlavac, editor

Natural history renaissance man Roger Tory Peterson is the subject of the book, "Birdwatcher", by Elizabeth J. Rosenthal. Roger Tory Peterson is known primarily for developing the modern field guide, where differentiating characteristics of organisms, such as birds, sea shells and insects are clearly pointed out to the average person, all in a pocket-sized book. Rosenthal delves into lesser-known aspects of what Peterson did with his fame. It turns out that he worked behind the scenes on bird and habitat conservation issues, not only all over America, but also around the world. He also had no compunction about mentoring a whole raft of budding biologists and bird lovers, including people who would go on to become his competition.

Peterson was one of the fortunate few people who knew what he wanted to do at a very early age. He was blessed with a schoolteacher, Blanche Hornbeck, who was excited about birding herself. She had her students join the Junior Audubon Club, an early program of the Na-

tional Audubon Association. It sounds like our current Audubon Adventures. Furthermore Miss Hornbeck encouraged young Peterson's artistic talents by having him copy and interpret other bird artists. In time Peterson would show his art at ornithological conventions and to the very artist that he had originally copied. Upon graduating from high school he worked in a furniture factory decorating cabinets, until he moved to New York City to take classes at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design. Other than art instruction, Peterson was self-taught. He worked on improving other skills that would serve him in his career path, photography, lecturing, and of course birding. This quote from Clarence Allen gives a feel for the Peterson experience:

"The party (of birdwatchers) was somewhat more than mildly surprised to see the famed leader of the walk lie right down on the ground and close his eyes just as soon as the party reached the appointed place..... Just as those in charge began to feel some explanation was in order for this embarrassing behavior, Roger got up and then and there reported on a score of birds he had identified by their chips and chirps as they flew overhead. Later, for the rest of the walk, he led the party to spots where they found exactly the birds he had picked out of thin air."

But Peterson's real strength was that he viewed his primary job as creating more conservationists. It was a task that he applied himself diligently to all of his life. Quoting from one of his letters to a friend:

"I am just beginning to surface again after the last several weeks of adventure and travel to such disparate places and meetings as Long Point, Ontario where I spon-

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Happenings

(Continued from page 3)

sored the fundraising Birdathon,"

Imagine having a Roger Tory Peterson come to town to sponsor the chapter's Birdathon.

Peterson's Field Guides were the base from which all his energies flowed. He clearly understood the effect that they had on people:

"In spite of his renowned prominence and huge work output; Peterson was always extremely generous with his time. Dr. Peterson spent the afternoon in a tiny bookstore meeting birders, swapping stories and signing copies of his Field Guides. I was flabbergasted when I noticed a lady with a whole box of her field guides for signature. I thought Dr. Peterson would "blow his top"; but to everybody's surprise, he welcomed her with a big smile and signed every last one of them and commented on many that were obviously old and well worn from much use."

The book is **Birdwatcher - The Life of Roger Tory Peterson**. It is by Elizabeth Rosenthal and is available for \$34.95. This book is very well written and enjoyable to read. This book is extensively researched. The author conducted interviews of 116 people that knew Peterson. This research is the source of the many strong points and also the weak points of the book. The strong points include the numerous lessons that a modern birder and/or conservationist can pull out of this book. The Peterson stories just keep coming and they are just fun to read. The main weak point is that the author takes sides in the Peterson marital follies to the detriment of the book. Dr. Peterson was married three times. Only the second spouse survived to be interviewed. The reader can well imagine which one is lionized, while the other two

are diminished. It makes for rather dreary reading, especially when one realizes that Dr. Peterson shared writing credit primarily with the third spouse. He probably loved them all in turn. In spite of this weakness, I recommend this book to anyone interested in birds and conservation.

Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Classes

The Long Beach Water Dept. will be having free residential landscape classes starting in January. These classes are aimed at assisting these in the Long Beach area in converting their grass lawns to drought-tolerant landscaping. For information, go to www.lbwater.org, then click on landscaping information, landscape classes or call (562) 570-2300.

Upcoming Events

Audubon Calif. Assembly

The Audubon California Assembly will be held March 15-17, 2009 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove. This year's theme is "The Future of Conservation." See the Audubon CA website for details and registrations forms.

Upcoming Events

San Diego Bird Festival

The 2009 San Diego Bird Festival will be held on March 4 to 9. Keynote speaker will be David Allen Sibley who will also lead a trip and conduct a drawing workshop. Details of the events--times, cost, leaders, and full descriptions--are posted on the San Diego Audubon Chapter's website, linked to the Audubon CA site.

Upcoming Events

Woodland Birds of Starr Ranch

Spend an early spring weekend at Audubon California's beautiful 4000-acre Starr Ranch Sanctuary. We will

use a variety of survey techniques to compare bird species and diversity found in upland oak woodlands vs. riparian woodlands. Participants will also learn about the importance of riparian woodlands for rare breeding birds and Neotropical migrants.

Woodland Bird Monitoring - After an introduction to the identification of woodland birds by sound and sight, you will learn how to survey for birds using point counts, playback survey and evening owl survey. We will visit many beautiful sites within oak and riparian woodlands throughout Starr Ranch.

Date and Times: Saturday, March 7, 8 am - 8 pm

Cost: \$80 for day only, \$85/if tent camping (BYO lunch, dinner provided).

Woodland Bird Banding - After a short introduction to bird banding, we will use mist nets to survey for woodland birds. Once data collection is complete, we will summarize and discuss our data.

Date and Times: Sunday, March 8, banding begins at 7 am - noon Cost: \$37.50

Reservations & Questions: Stephan Lorenz 949-858-0309, slorenz@mail.com

Photo Contest Winners

After considering more than 4,000 photos submitted during this year's Great Backyard Bird Count, judges from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society are pleased to announce winners in six categories, along with runners-up and honorable mentions.

Find the winning photos at: www.birdsource.org/gbbc/2008-photo-contest-winners

Our Chapter

Is Your Bird Feeder A Weed Seeder?

From the Weed Science Society of America website (Thanks to Carolyn Vance for the tip)

Bird enthusiasts are encouraged to take simple steps to protect lawns and gardens

Are weeds sprouting beneath your backyard bird feeder? If so, researchers say the type of feed you use may be to blame.

In studies at Oregon State University, scientists examined 10 brands of wild bird feed commonly sold in retail stores. The samples contained seeds from more than 50 weed species - including 10 ranked among Oregon's most noxious weeds. Each brand tested contained weed seeds, with six different weed species found in half or more of the samples.

"Once a weed seed drops from the feeder to the ground and sprouts, it has the potential to flower and spread," said Dr. Jed Colquhoun, associate professor at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, formerly with Oregon State University. "In fact, when we informally questioned landowners and farmers to investigate the spread of a relatively new weed in the Pacific Northwest - velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*) - we found it is growing in the soil beneath backyard bird feeders." In a short-term study of what happens when stray bird feed drops to the soil, about 30 weed species sprouted in just 28 days. Between three and 17 weed species grew from each of the 10 brands of feed tested.

So how can you minimize the spread of new or invasive weeds that originate in bird feed? There are several simple strategies to consider:

- Use a tray attachment under your feeder to keep seeds off the ground.

- Select foods that won't sprout, such as sunflower hearts, peanuts, peanut butter, raisins, mealworms and plain suet cakes.
- Look for treated wild bird food mixtures. Many manufacturers are now baking their products to kill weed seeds, using guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. So read product labels carefully to make certain you buy a treated brand.
- Keep an eye out for weeds under your feeder and pull them before they can flower and spread.
- If you use a wild bird food blend that contains a variety of seeds, contact the producer or talk to your local retailer to discuss what measures are taken to ensure the product is free of invasive weed seeds.

Ten Noxious Weeds Commonly Found in Bird Seed

Buffalobur (*Solanum rostratum* Dunal)
Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)
Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
Common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)
Dodder (*Cuscuta* spp.)
Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)
Jointed goatgrass (*Aegilops cylindrica*)
Kochia (*Kochia scoparia*)
Puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*)
Velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*)

Jed Colquhoun was lead researcher for the bird feed study in cooperation with Carol Mallory-Smith, a professor at Oregon State University. The work was funded by the Agricultural Research Foundation at Oregon State University.

Birdwatch Radio

By John Hlavac, Editor

Like Birds? If you have some spare time and want to listen to podcasts on your computer of a "radio show" of birding topics, then set your browser to: www.birdwatchradio.com and listen to Steve Moore discuss a wide variety of birding topics. It's a great way to make your computer work time go by.

Join El Dorado Audubon Society!

Every membership supports Audubon's vital efforts to protect birds, wildlife and natural habitats. There are two choices:

1. As a Chapter Only member, you will become an important part of our local chapter and receive a 1-year subscription to the **California Least Tern**. Your entire membership fee stays with our chapter.
2. As a National Audubon member, you also receive automatic membership in our local chapter PLUS you get a 1-year subscription to **Audubon**, the award-winning national magazine, admission to Audubon Centers across the country, and a 10% discount at select Audubon Nature Stores.

Yes! I want to join El Dorado Audubon!

- __ \$20 - 1 year Chapter Only
- __ \$15 - 1 year Chapter only Student/Senior
- __ \$20 - 1 year National Audubon
- __ \$15 - 1 year National Student/Senior
- __ \$30 - 2 year National Audubon

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone: _____

Please make your check out to El Dorado Audubon for a Chapter Only Membership or to National Audubon Society for a National Audubon Membership. Mail your choice of tax-deductible check to:

El Dorado Audubon Society
Attn: Membership Chair
P.O. Box 90713, Long Beach
CA 90809-0713

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January Calendar of Events

- 8 Thursday, **Board Meeting**, 7:30 PM, at John & Lindsay Fitch's home.
- 10 Saturday, **Bird Walk at Gum Grove Park**, 8 AM. Meet at Gum Grove Park. See page 2 for details and directions.
- 11 Sunday, **Bird Walk at El Dorado Nature Center**, 8:00 AM. Meet in the parking lot. (\$7.00 parking fee).
- 15 Thursday, **Chapter Meeting**, 7:30 PM. El Dorado Nature Center. Free parking and refreshments. Bring your recyclables to the meeting so that we can turn them into chapter funds. (See page 2 for details).
- 18 Sunday, **Bird Walk at Gum Grove Park**, 8 AM. Meet at Gum Grove Park. See page 2 for details and directions.
- 25 Sunday, **Field Trip to Coal Canyon**, 7:30AM. Meet at the El Dorado Branch Library parking lot (on Studebaker Rd. just South of Spring St.). See page 2 for details.
- 31 Saturday, **Refuge Tour**, 8 AM. Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge. Reservations required no less than 48 hours in advance by calling (562)598-1024 and leaving your name and the number in your party. Identification (adults only) will be required for admittance. A \$5 donation to the Friends of the SBNWR is asked.

El Dorado Audubon Society holds its monthly meetings in the El Dorado Nature Center, 7550 E. Spring Street, Long Beach. The public is welcome to attend meetings and field trips.

El Dorado Audubon Society, Inc., assumes no responsibility for injuries, personal or otherwise, incurred while attending meetings or field trips sponsored by the society.



El Dorado Audubon Society

Web: www.eldoradoaudubon.org
 Email: eldoradoaudubon@gmail.com
 El Dorado Nature Center: 562-570-1745
 Seal Beach NWR: 562-598-1024
 Bird Rescue (IBRC): 310-514-2573

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Birdathon	(Open)
Bluebird Boxes	Roger & Joan Kneeland Ted Koopman
Christmas Bird Count	Rich Sonnenberg 562-597-3476
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California Least Tern, the newsletter of the El Dorado Audubon Society, is produced monthly, September through June. The deadline for all submissions is the second Thursday of each month. The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions to meet space or deadline requirements.

Persons who are not members of the National Audubon Society, or who are from chapters other than El Dorado, may receive this newsletter. Simply submit your name, address, and a yearly fee of \$10.00 to the treasurer at the chapter address.

If you need to check your membership status or request changes to your name or address with the National Audubon Society, please call 800-274-4201.

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