San Diego County birders can perhaps be excused if they’ve become a little spoiled. Consider the avian riches that abound within steps or short drives of their homes. Our lagoons, foothills, mountains, and deserts are all within easy reach and are often-birded. Some may even have even grown a little frustrated in their search for new venues and possible additions to their life lists. Well, no more excuses! The BVAS January program and birding excursion have been designed with all of those birders in mind. January is the perfect month to focus on a fast-growing new specialty for San Diego birders looking to spice up their passion with a new challenge, a little excitement, and the chance for a new life bird on every excursion. It’s time to go pelagic!

Tom Blackman is the program chair for the San Diego Field Ornithologists, an organization dedicated to furthering birding skills among its members and spreading knowledge about the presence, distribution, and behavior of bird species throughout our county. Tom also happens to be an expert birder and excellent bird photographer. Tom will share his vast knowledge about the birds and mammals of San Diego’s near shore waters, as well as his eye-popping photos of ocean wildlife.

Our January program will get us all primed for the BVAS pelagic boat trip out of Oceanside Harbor coming up at the end of the month. (See article below.) It’s time to break loose from those birding doldrums and get the new year off to a fresh start. Is everyone ready for a few new life birds? Do we have to ask?

**January General Meeting**

**Wednesday, January 20**

**Ocean Birds off Oceanside**

with

Tom Blackman

7 p.m. Social—7:30 p.m. Program

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**Saturday, January 30**

**Seabirds, Dolphins, and Whales Trip**

Join BVAS and a team of expert guides as we embark on a 4-hour ocean birding cruise out of Oceanside Harbor on Saturday, January 30. This family-friendly boat ride (suitable for children) always delivers memorable sights like diving auklets, skimming shearwaters, marauding jaegers, migrating whales, and jumping dolphins.

Cost of the trip is $40 in advance, or $50 at the dock. This trip generally sells out, so advance ticket purchase is recommended. Order your tickets by calling Helgren’s Sportfishing at 760-722-2133 and requesting a spot on the Audubon birding boat trip for January 30 at 8 a.m. Arrive at the dock by 7:30 a.m. to sign in and board. Free parking is available next to the docks. More info at: www.socalbirding.com.

**Children’s Nature Activity Book**

Young visitors to the Nature Center can pick up a free nature activity book full of games, coloring pages, and interesting facts about the plants and animals found at the lagoon. A big “Thank You” to The Printery in Carlsbad, for its generous donation of the cost of materials and printing for the book. Bring your young naturalist down to the Nature Center soon and pick up your copy!
A Kinship with Bluebirds  
by Sandy McMullen

I have felt a kinship with bluebirds since I was one myself – before I “flew up” to be a Campfire Girl. However, I really became hooked on bluebirds after watching a pair raise a family in my nest box this last year. This little couple were my constant neighbors for a few months, and all I had to do to make them appear as if by magic was to approach the box. Father bird would watch from a high spot while mother fluttered around my head making clicking noises. I started putting out trays of mealworms and enjoyed watching the parents take turns transferring beakfuls of worms to the nest box. Because of this experience, I was excited last November to hear BVAS would host a program by the Southern California Bluebird Club.

Headquartered in Orange County, the Bluebird Club’s mission is preserving and protecting the western bluebird and other cavity nesters in Southern California. To this end, members of the Bluebird Club install and monitor nest boxes in trees along greenbelts, golf courses and in parks. Last year, 11,000 fledglings were counted in California, up from 3,000 in 1996, attributable mainly to the additional availability of nesting sites because of these boxes.

The Bluebird Club would like to see this project expanded into San Diego County, and so brought their presentation to BVAS. We saw a slide show with some amazing pictures of bluebirds (and their enemies), accompanied by some interesting facts and stories. We learned that even though the bluebird is considered a part of our popular culture through songs and sayings, many Americans have never seen one. Bluebirds eat insects and like to nest near large grassy areas, but need a cavity in which to raise their young. Finally, we had a demonstration of how SCBC members make boxes and install them in trees with a special basket and pole. The enthusiasm of the SCBC team was contagious, and many of us in the audience asked how we could get involved. If you’re interested too, check out the Club’s website: www.socalbluebirds.org.

BVAS Joins Western Bluebird Recovery Program

BVAS President Dennis Huckabay is leading a team that will install and monitor as many as ten bluebird nest boxes on the grounds of Eternal Hills Memorial Park in Oceanside this year. (Updates to follow.) The bird boxes were handmade by BVAS member Bill Jones following simple plans available at the two websites referenced in the articles on this page. Build your own bluebird box and join the fun!

Enticing the ‘Bluebird of Happiness’ to Your Garden  
by Carol Killebrew

For the past four years, my husband and I have watched western bluebirds raise families in a nest box we put up near our kitchen window. Observing the wing waves and listening to the vocalizations of the male during courtship is great fun, as is the nest-building by the female. We find it fascinating to monitor the box and track the hatchlings as they’re growing. The show never ends from April to August, as the parents bring food all day long for their first and second broods. Later we enjoy watching the fledglings and their parents frolic in the birdbath and forage for insects and berries.

The western bluebird is common in pine and oak woodland in the inland valleys, foothills, and mountains of San Diego County. Recently the species has turned an evolutionary corner and is becoming an urban adapter in our area. The San Diego Natural History Museum first noticed this as it began field work for the San Diego County Bird Atlas in 1997, and the trend has accelerated ever since. The birds are apparently following in the wake of Nuttall’s woodpecker, an earlier urban adapter that took advantage of the extensive planting of trees over what was once treeless sage scrub.

Western bluebirds are fascinating, lovely songbirds. To attract them you will need to put up a nest box specifically designed for western bluebirds in the appropriate location. You may also need to supply water and protect the birds from pests. More information can be found on the Bluebirds of San Diego County website at: http://members.cox.net/bluebirds/.

“The bluebird carries the sky on his back.”
Birding in January—Everyone’s Welcome!

Sat.—Jan. 2—8 a.m.—Whelan Lake Monthly Bird Count. Whelan Lake is a reserve with a freshwater lake and riparian edge habitat. Directions: I-5 to Hwy. 76 East, left at Douglas and continue to light at North River Rd., left on North River Rd. Meet at the cul-de-sac at the end of the road by the entrance gate. Leader: John Haddock, 760-941-7824.

Sat./Sun.—Jan. 9-10—Cibola NWR and Blythe. SOLD OUT! Our two-day birding trip to the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge and birding hotspots around Blythe is fully subscribed. For participant information or to be placed on the waiting list, please contact trip leader Andy Brumbaugh at andybbirder@yahoo.com or 760-434-3334.

Sun.—Jan. 10—8 a.m.—Oceanside Harbor, Jetty, and Pier. We’ll explore our own little neighborhood for an assortment of sea birds, rocky shore birds, ducks, sandpipers, and gulls, with always a good chance for a few unexpected species. Meet at the Nature Center at 8 a.m. for directions and carpooling. (Parking by the pier is $5 a car.) After our morning of birding, you might opt for an early lunch at Ruby’s Diner at the end of the pier, or Jolly Roger Restaurant in the harbor. Leader Steve Brad, 760-633-1639.

Sat.—Jan. 30—8 a.m.—Buena Vista Lagoon Bird Count. Freshwater wetland. Directions: I-5 to I-78 East, take Jefferson St. exit, turn right and make another right turn onto Lagoon View Dr. Leader: Joan Fountain, 760-729-1379.

Sat.—Jan. 30—8:30-10:30 a.m.—Basic Birding Class at the Buena Vista Lagoon Landing. Novice birders are invited to join our monthly class for some informal, no-pressure birding. Your leader will share some friendly tips and help you practice your bird identification skills. Directions: I-5 to I-78 East, take Jefferson St. exit, turn right and go to stoplight, turn right and park in Landing parking lot on the right-hand side of road. Leader: Tom Troy, 760-967-6915.

Sat.—Jan. 30—8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Oceanside Pelagic Birding Trip. (See Page 1 article.) Join BVAS and our team of expert pelagic birders for our family-friendly, Seabirds, Dolphins, and Whales Trip out of Oceanside Harbor. This is a great opportunity to add exciting new birds to your life list and see migrating gray whales and other marine mammals. Ticket price: $40. For reservations, call Helgren’s Sportfishing at 760-722-2133. For more information on this and other BVAS-sponsored pelagic birding trips, as well as bird lists, trip reports, pelagic birding tips, and photos, visit www.socalbirding.com.

Bird Trip Info Line: 760-688-0660.

Winter Birding at San Elijo Lagoon

MiraCosta College Lecture Series —Friday, January 29, at 1 p.m. MCC San Elijo Campus, 3333 Manchester Ave., Encinitas

During the first few months of the year, casual birders at our North County lagoons have an opportunity see a much greater variety of birds than can be found during the summer. Which birds can we look for during the winter months, and why don’t they stay all year? What are some of their interesting behaviors, and why do they do the things they do? BVAS’s Andy Mauro will present this free program on the special aspects of winter birding at North County lagoons, and share a variety of dramatic photos taken by some of San Diego’s best bird photographers.

Every Saturday in January and February

Ramona Hawk Watch

Wildlife Research Institute is again offering its popular Hawk Watch program each Saturday during January and February from 9 a.m. to noon. This free event allows visitors to see many of the raptor species that use the grasslands and wooded areas around Ramona for breeding or wintering grounds. Join guides on a raptor field trip, see a hawk banding operation at close hand, and view displays in the WRI nature center. Location: WRI headquarters, 18030 Highland Valley Rd., Ramona.

March 4 through 7
Marina Village Conference Center
Mission Bay

Birding trips, workshops, talks, trade show
Over 250 species seen during 2009 Festival

For more information and registration materials: www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birdfest
Preschool Nature Storytime

Monday, January 25—Brrr … winter is here! Mama Bear needs to teach Baby Bear how to sleep in the cave through the long winter months. Does Baby Bear want to go to sleep for the winter? Come find out the answer at our January storytime on January 25 at 10 a.m. We will enjoy songs and a craft, and also learn a new word for sleeping through the cold months. Can you think of some other animals that do that, too? If you have any questions about Storytime, please contact Mary Ellen at 760-918-6622.

Attention Albertsons’ Shoppers!

Have you signed up to have a percentage of your food purchase dollars automatically donated to BVAS? It doesn’t cost you a penny, but it helps support the Nature Center. Simply log in at city.aubertons.com/ep, type in your Albertsons’ Preferred Card number, and enter the special BVAS donation ID # 4900 1021 728. That’s it!

Beloved Nature Center Ambassador

Petunia the Skunk Retires

A long time ago, a cute little orphaned skunk was adopted by an Oceanside family. She was named “Petunia”, and quickly became a beloved family pet. When Petunia finally passed away, her family missed their special pet, and decided to have her body preserved by a taxidermist.

Petunia first arrived at the Nature Center about 20 years ago, when BVAS member Pat Brown arranged to have her donated to the Nature Center to serve as a special animal ambassador to all the children. Even though she was only a mounted specimen, Petunia’s personality still seemed to shine through, and she became a favorite friend for many children who regularly came to visit. Over the years, Petunia’s coat, once lustrous and shiny black with a distinctive white stripe, slowly began to fade to a dusty brown. New children who saw her wondered why she didn’t look like a regular skunk. The Nature Guides would regularly try to field the questions and comments about Petunia as they led school classes on tours of the Nature Center.

Last month a brand new mounted skunk, all shiny black and white, arrived at the Nature Center. It now sits near the mountain lion display in the classroom, waiting to delight new young visitors who will nervously take their first close-up looks. Professionally mounted animal specimens are expensive, but an anonymous Nature Guide was happy to donate the cost. The new skunk doesn’t have a name—there’s only one skunk that gets that honor at the Nature Center. Petunia will long be remembered with a special fondness.
FRIENDS OF BUENA VISTA AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

As a Friend of BVAS, I will receive the chapter newsletter, be invited to special events just for Friends and receive a discount on BVAS Gift Shop purchases. 100% of my contribution will go to support the BVAS Nature Center and its educational programs. Minimum donation required: $25.
I would like to donate $25 ___ $50 ___ $100 ___ Other: ___

Name____________________________
Address__________________________
City, State, Zip ___________________
Phone___________________________
E-mail___________________________

Send me my newsletter by e-mail.

Create Your Special Legacy
Join many of our founding members and make BVAS a part of your estate plan. Your legacy gift goes directly to the Endowment Fund, providing lasting support for our Nature Center. Please call Dennis Huckabay at 760-757-6437 for more information.

Please Bill My Credit Card:
Card #______________CRN___

Make Checks Payable to:
Buena Vista Audubon Society
P.O. Box 480
Oceanside, CA  92049

Our January meeting will focus on native plant propagation, an economical way to add to our native garden landscapes. Native plant propagation can be complicated and frustrating, especially for certain species. But it can also be quite simple and rewarding. It all depends on your choice of species, understanding of a few basic principles, and level of perseverance! We'll try some different techniques, fill the BVAS nursery with potted cuttings, and set you on your path to enlightenment! For basic info and tips about native plant gardening, check out the Native Plant Club site at: www.bvaudubon.org.

Jimbo’s Markets has selected BVAS for its “In the Bag” program this quarter. Every time shoppers use a recyclable bag when shopping at Jimbo’s, they receive a wooden nickel to place in the jar of one of four charitable organizations. Every wooden nickel translates to a 5-cent donation from Jimbo’s at the end of the quarter. Jimbo’s prides itself on offering the highest quality organic and natural foods, and BVAS is all about wonderful natural experiences—what a match! Make sure you put your wooden nickels in the BVAS jar the next time you stop by Jimbo’s. Stores are located in Carlsbad/Encinitas, Carmel Valley, 4S Ranch, and Escondido. Thank you!

The National Audubon Society has awarded a fellowship to Amy Trujillo, a biologist with the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy. Amy was one of a select group of applicants, chosen by the Audubon/Toyota “TogetherGreen” program, who took part in a week-long land conservation workshop in Virginia. She was also given a $10,000 grant to help implement her fellowship project. Her project involves engaging the Escondido Creek community in a dialogue about issues and concerns associated with owning land and living adjacent to a protected nature reserve. The goal will be to develop appropriate land management strategies to help create mutually agreeable solutions—benefiting the San Elijo Lagoon, Escondido Creek, and neighboring landowners. Amy hopes the process will stimulate neighbors into becoming caring stewards of the watershed.

BVAS Receives Cal Audubon Grant
BVAS has received $2,000 through the Audubon California Collaborative Grant Program to help enhance the Nature Center exhibits. The funding will be used to purchase several new mounted display specimens, including an adult coyote. BVAS Hosts and Nature Guides get lots of questions about coyotes, which are frequently seen and heard in our canyons and urban reserves. The display will help visitors learn more about our native canine.
Quick Calendar for January

Mon. Jan. 4—Nature Guides Meeting—10 a.m.
Wed. Jan. 6—Board Meeting—9 a.m.
Sat. Jan. 2—Whelan Lake Walk—8 a.m.
Sat./Sun. Jan. 9-10—Cibola NWR and Blyth Bird Trip
Sun. Jan. 10—Oceanside Harbor Bird Walk—8 a.m.
Wed. Jan. 20—General Meeting—Pelagic Birds—7 p.m.
Fri. Jan. 29—Winter Birding Talk at MCC—1 p.m.
Sat. Jan. 30—B.V. Lagoon Count—8 a.m.
Sat. Jan. 30—Basic Birding at B.V. Landing—8:30 a.m.
Sat. Jan. 30—Seabirds, Dolphins, and Whales Boat Trip out of Oceanside Harbor—8 a.m.

Rare Birds in San Diego

Steve Brad found and photographed this juvenile tundra swan at one of the ponds at the Aviara Golf Resort in Carlsbad on November 23, 2009. California’s Central Valley is the southern end of the main wintering range of the tundra swan. According to the San Diego County Bird Atlas, the tundra swan has always been rare in San Diego County, and its frequency is on the decline. In recent years, individual swans have shown up only about once every five years or so.

—I heard a bird sing in the dark of December
A magical thing and sweet to remember.
—Oliver Herford, “I Heard a Bird Sing”
Saturday, January 30, Oceanside Harbor
Buena Vista Audubon's 4th Annual Seabirds, Dolphins & Whales Trip

Few sights are more breathtaking than a breaching whale, a cavalry of hundreds of dolphin leaping all around the boat, or a feeding frenzy of thousands of seabirds brawling over bait fish. These are all sights seen regularly by ocean-loving birders and nature enthusiasts just a few miles off shore.

Please join us on the Fourth Annual Buena Vista Audubon Seabird, Dolphin & Whale Trip out of Oceanside Harbor. We’ll spend a fun morning at sea in search of jaegers, shearwater, other seabirds, sea lions, dolphin and whales.

DATE AND TIME: Saturday, January 30, 2009 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

WHERE: Helgren’s Whale Watching and Sportfishing, 315 Harbor Drive South, Oceanside, CA. There’s plenty of free parking adjacent to the docks.

TICKETS: All ticket sales will be handled by Helgren’s Sportfishing this year (not BVAS). Tickets are $40 in advance or $50 the day of the trip. Phone Helgren’s Whale Watching and Sportfishing at (760) 722-2133. Tell them you wish to register for the “January 30 Pelagic Birding Trip” with the Buena Vista Audubon Society. You do not need be a member of BVAS to participate.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN: This 4-hour trip is appropriate for children.

ARRIVAL TIME: Please arrive at Helgren’s between 7:15 and 7:30 a.m. for an on-time departure at 8 a.m. Time and tide waits for no late arrivals.

QUESTIONS: All questions about the boat, parking, reservations, or the weather should be directed to Helgren's Whale Watching and Sportfishing at (760) 722-2133.

2007 TRIP REPORT: Two years ago participants were treated to a tremendous feeding frenzy of dolphin, gulls, shearwater and jaegers. Thousands of birds were soaring, diving, screaming, brawling and gorging themselves on bait fish chased to the surface by dolphin.

2008 TRIP REPORT: One of the highlights last year was great views of a short-tailed shearwater, a "lifer" for many on board. Among other species, we saw northern fulmars, Bonaparte’s gulls, rhinoceros and Cassin’s auklets, at least two species of jaegers, and common murre.

EXPERTS will be on board to help you find and identify seabirds, whales and other marine mammals. The BVAS meeting on January 22 at 7 p.m. is open to all and will offer a seabird ID class. (See Page 1 for more info).

WHAT TO BRING: Binoculars, camera, favorite field guide, sunscreen, lip protection, sunglasses, pen, notebook, hat, water, non-greasy snacks like saltines, pretzels, granola bars, etc. Our boat will have a full galley.

MARINE MAMMALS: Each of our trips in recent years have rewarded us with a variety of marine mammals. Common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, gray whale, and sea lions have been regularly seen. In short, it’s a fun morning of birds, marine mammals, and friends.

WHALES: Gray whale migration runs from mid-December to mid-March. During mid-January, as many as 200 whales have been seen off the San Diego coast.

Long-tailed Jaeger —by G. Tepke

Short-tailed Shearwater

Common Dolphin —by T. Blackman

Pelagic Birding “Trips, Tips, and Pics”
www.socalbirding.com

Call for Reservations: Helgren’s Sportfishing
760-722-2133
January 30, 2010
Audubon Pelagic Birding Trip