Volume 40 Number 3 March 2011

Lagoon Flyer

Jón Baldur Hlíðberg

Buena Vista Audubon Society

March General Meeting

Wednesday, March 16

Conservation and Wildlife in America's Most Endangered County

with

Mike Matherly and Jim Peugh

7 p.m. Social—7:30 p.m. Program

Urban Coyote *—Gary Davis*

Of the world's 25 most endangered biodiversity zones, such as the Galapagos Islands and Amazon rainforest, only one is in North America. That endangered zone is California, and particularly its southernmost region. San Diego County has the dubious distinction of having more endangered plant and animal species than any other county in the United States.

Our March program presents a sobering but still hopeful look at the effects of urban development on one of earth's most diverse ecosystems, and at how it still might be saved. We'll get an explanation of the most pressing conservation issues confronting Southern California and their impact on the quality of life in San Diego. How can we better live in harmony with the remaining wild places and wildlife of our region? What are the planning, conservation, and restoration opportunities that remain? How might community service groups and the citizens of tomorrow, our children, become more involved in changing the fortunes of our local natural world?

Mike Matherly is currently a San Diego Audubon Society Board Member and a past president. He retired in 2005 after 35 years as a geography professor at Grossmont College. Jim Peugh is the long-time Conservation Chair of SDAS.

Come to our March meeting and learn a little more about this special place we call home, and prospects for preserving San Diego's wonderful natural heritage.

Rare and Endangered Birds in San Diego County

We get both rare and endangered bird species in San Diego. Rare birds are those that are generally doing fine in their expected ranges, but are unexpected to occur in San Diego. When they make a surprise visit to San Diego it's big news, and birders rush off to get them for their "county lists". Endangered birds, however, are those species that naturally occur here but are in serious trouble, usually because of loss of critical habitat. Their numbers have declined to a point where experts believe they are in danger of becoming extinct. Their populations are carefully monitored, and experienced birders often know where they can go to see these species. Even the general public has become familiar with the names of many of our endangered species, as they've become iconic representatives of a conservation movement dedicated to preserving the natural heritage of our region. Pictured here are four endangered bird species that breed locally.

Pictured from left to right:
**California Gnatcatcher*
**California Least Tern*
**Western Snowy Plover*
**Light-footed Clapper Rail*

Conservation Matters

Batiquitos Bluffs Project

—Joan Herskowitz

The Batiquitos Bluffs development in Encinitas includes 19 residential lots on property located on the south side of La Costa Avenue, west of El Camino Real, adjacent to Batiquitos Lagoon. It was approved by the Encinitas Planning Commission in July 2009. Because of the project's environmental impacts and inconsistencies with the City's Local Coastal Plan (LCP), appeals were filed with the California Coastal Commission, including a joint appeal by Buena Vista Audubon Society and the San Diego chapter of the Sierra Club, and two additional appeals by individuals. Based on the Commission staff finding of substantial issues, two appeals were also submitted on behalf of Commissioners Kruer and Wan.

The appeal was heard by the Commission on February 10 with a staff recommendation of approval of the appeal and denial of the Coastal Permit. The staff report concluded the project as proposed was inconsistent with resource protection policies of the Encinitas LCP. Staff felt the proposed project: is not a permitted use in wetlands; has inadequate buffers; is not the environmentally preferable alternative; does not avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive habitat; is inadequately mitigated; would cause fragmentation of an important biological corridor; and, would have visual impacts to public trails/roads. The project site is part of a mostly permanently protected system of reserves and corridors associated with the lagoon. After hearing both sides, the Commission unanimously supported the staff recommendation, and denied the Coastal Permit.

Listening to the discussions and deliberations of the Coastal Commission was awe-inspiring. Whether or not one agrees with all of its decisions, we are fortunate to have a forum for oversight of decisions by local governments that affect the coastal environment. The Commission consists of 12 individuals with various interests and occupations who appear serious about their mission to ensure compliance with the Coastal Act. At the end of the hearing on the appeal, a Commissioner stated that it is because of cases like this that the Commission is needed to protect statewide resources.

Coastal Commission Alternate Selected

Also at the February Coastal Commission meeting, **Bruce Reznik** was sworn in as an Alternate to Commissioner **Esther Sanchez**. Bruce served as Executive Director of San Diego Coastkeeper and continues to be a strong voice for clean water and coastal protection in San Diego County. The Coastal Commission meets for three days each month in different parts of the state, and each Commissioner has an Alternate to fill in for them when they are unable to attend a session. —J. H.

Melrose Drive Extension

The proposed Melrose Drive Extension Project in Oceanside involves construction of a six-lane roadway connecting Melrose Drive to North Santa Fe Road, and would result in the loss of parkland (up to eight acres of Guajome County Park), and impacts to wetlands, sensitive habitat, and associated wildlife. On February 14, the Oceanside Planning Commission, after hearing a considerable amount of community opposition, denied the project in a unanimous decision. The City Council has 10 days from the date of that decision to decide whether to appeal the denial and approve the project. We will need to update you on the fate of this project in the next newsletter. —J. H.

Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration

—Andy Mauro

The Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration project has involved over eight years of working group meetings, numerous public briefings and workshops, hundreds of thousands of dollars for biological, hydrological, and engineering studies, and countless letters, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings between consultants, agency staff, and various interest groups. So, where do we stand?

The studies seem to provide indisputable support for a conversion of the lagoon back to a fully functioning salt water estuary and marsh. That scenario would maximize biological values, best handle the issues of mosquito abatement and flood control, best mitigate against future sewer spills, provide the highest levels of water quality, return the lagoon to its historical condition, and provide the only known opportunity for ultimate project funding.

Creating an adequate tidal prism to insure tidal flushing of the lagoon would be a difficult engineering challenge under the best of circumstances. The narrow configuration of the inlet between the lagoon and the ocean, and the complication of developed residences and infrastructure, represent serious challenges. Unfortunately, the problem is further exacerbated by the ownership status of the large sandy parcel of land next to the inlet, and of the western lagoon basin itself. At this point, there seems to be a reluctance by the key stake holders to support conversion back to a salt water estuary and marsh. State resource agencies would like to see a mutually agreeable cooperative agreement between all the parties before a full restoration plan is approved and moved forward. We can still hope, but as of now, it would seem that all bets are off on when, or even if, a restoration project at the lagoon will ever take place.

Perhaps, as ocean levels rise and weather patterns change in the years ahead, it will be Mother Nature herself who performs the ultimate restoration at Buena Vista Lagoon. We don't have to look back far to see what can happen when high tides, storm surges, and flood waters wreak havoc on low-lying roads, weirs, and residences.

Let's Go Birding—Everyone's Welcome!

Whelan Lake Monthly Bird Count

with John Haddock

Saturday—March 5—8 a.m.

Whelan Lake is a bird reserve with a freshwater lake and riparian edge habitat. Scattered oak trees and adjacent grasslands provide additional bird habitat, resulting in an impressive species list in all seasons. **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.

Featured Bird Walk

Encinitas Hot Spots

with Steve Brad

Sunday—March 13—8 a.m.

Encintas has a number of parks and open space areas that are rich with bird life. This month we will explore a few very promising but often-neglected birding locales in Encinitas, including Cottonwood Creek Park, Moonlight Beach, Viewpoint Park, and the riparian area near Home Depot. Some of these places may be new to many of you. Expect rails, gulls, warblers (including the American redstart), riparian birds, and raptors. **Directions:** From the I-5 freeway take Encinitas Blvd. west to Vulcan Ave. Turn right and then take another quick right into Cottonwood Creek Park. We'll meet in the parking lot. Leader: Steve Brad, 760-633-1639; stevebrad1@earthlink.net.

American Redstart

—M. Oiteanu

Buena Vista Lagoon Bird Count

with Joan Fountain

Saturday—March 26—8 a.m.

Join the regular monthly bird survey team and get to know the Buena Vista Lagoon. Have the satisfaction of contributing to the ongoing bird database and knowledge of the birds of our lagoon. We always record a nice assortment of freshwater wetland and marsh species on this easy-paced monthly excursion. **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.

Basic Birding Class at the Buena Vista Lagoon Landing

with Tom Troy

Saturday—March 26—8:30 a.m.

Novice birders are invited to join our monthly class for some informal, no-pressure birding. We'll share friendly tips and help you build your bird identification skills.

Directions: I-5 to I-78 East. From I-78, take Jefferson St. exit and go right to the light on Jefferson St. Turn right again and make an immediate right turn into the BVL Landing parking lot. Leader: Tom Troy, 760-420-7328.

Pelagic Birding Website

Tips, Pics, and Trips

www.socalbirding.com

BVAS Field Trip Info Line

760-688-0660

BVAS Monthly Featured Bird Walks

A Popular Attraction

Steve points out a bird at Guajome Park

For those of you who always seem to find yourself doing mundane tasks like cleaning out the garage or reorganizing your closets on the weekend, we'd like to suggest a more pleasant diversion. The BVAS monthly featured bird walk, led by friendly and knowledgeable Steve Brad, has been attracting a growing band of enthusiastic participants over the months. Steve selects the location of his walk based on the season, recent sightings, and expectations of good birding. Like his scheduled March walk in Encinitas, he loves to occasionally mix it up by introducing his group to sites in the community they may never have visited before, but which hold great potential for some exciting birds. Of course, he always scouts it out ahead of time to make sure the trip will be a success. And people have begun to notice, like the 20 birders who joined Steve at Guajome Park in February. At the risk of embarrassing Steve, we've reprinted below a note the *Lagoon Flyer* received following last month's walk. Maybe it's time you took a little time off and joined Steve for some friendly birding!

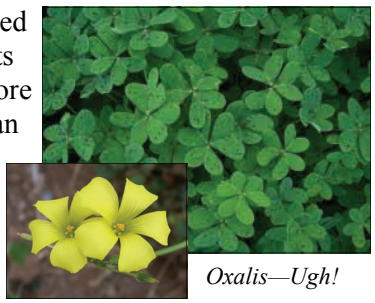
Dear Steve—I had a wonderful time on the Guajome trip today. You have a talent for bringing people together to enjoy nature. Buena Vista Audubon should feel very privileged to have you leading the field trips. You are good! —A.S.

Buena Vista Native Plant Club

Third Sunday of the Month

March 20—2 p.m.—Nature Center

Heed Your Weeds!



Oxalis—Ugh!

Weeds can simply be defined as unwanted plants or plants growing out-of-place. Before our enlightenment, most San Diego gardeners put native plants in that category. Wiser now, we know the joys of native plant gardening, and our definition of "weeds" has changed. Learn the difference between native plants and real weeds. This will be a hands-on meeting as we become experts on certain invaders. Bring gloves and weeding tools.

For basic info and tips about native plant gardening, check out the Native Plant Club site at: www.bvaudubon.org.

For questions regarding the Native Plant Club, e-mail Joan Bockman at: BVNPC@sbcglobal.net , or call the Nature Center at 760-439-2473.

BVAS OFFICERS, BOARD*, AND CHAIRS

President	Dave Billings*	760-753-7925
Vice-President	Dennis Huckabay	760-757-6437
Secretary	Kathy Billings*	760-753-7925
Treasurer	Sandy McMullen*	760-944-5690
Audubon Adventures	Ruth Gransbery	760-729-2240
Center Manager	Annette Schneider	760-945-8891
Christmas Bird Count	Terry Hunefeld*	760-908-3453
Conservation Co-Chair	Danny DiMento*	858-688-6891
Conservation Co-Chair	Joan Herskowitz*	760-942-5167
Circulation	Lisa Hart	760-945-9601
Education Co-Chair	Ellen Kindsvater	760-433-8097
Education Co-Chair	Nancy Miller	760-704-6479
Facilities/Exhibits	Danny DiMento*	858-688-6891
Field Trips	Andy Brumbaugh	760-434-3334
Field Trip Leader	Steve Brad*	760-633-1639
Gift Shop	Rosalyn Dong	760-806-1430
Library	Norma Handy	760-634-2120
Membership	Harvey Hart*	760-945-9601
Native Plant Club	Joan Bockman*	760-433-9401
Native Plant Garden	Joan Bockman*	760-433-9401
Newsletter	Andy Mauro*	760-753-1266
		E-mail: akamauro@cox.net
Pelagic Birding	Terry Hunefeld*	760-908-3453
Programs	Dennis Huckabay*	760-757-6437
Publicity	Kelly Deveney*	760-721-2441
Ruddy Duck Club	Kelly Deveney*	760-721-2441
Volunteers	Bob Crowell	760-967-9393
Webmaster	Larry Spann:	E-mail: larry@spannweb.net

Preschool Nature Storytime

Monday, March 28, 10 a.m.

What is all the chirping about? Busy, busy birds are making nests, looking for mates, foraging for food, and defending their territories. No wonder there is such a symphony of songs in the air! Our Nature Storytime will be Monday, March 28, at 10 a.m. I hope to see you there—maybe we can all practice chirping like a bird! Do you think we might wake up Little Bear?

If you have any questions about Storytime, please contact Mary Ellen at 760-918-6622.

Oceanside Native Plant Tour in April

Save the date! The 2011 Oceanside Native Plant Tour will take place on Sunday, April 17. This popular event features an easy walking tour of native plant gardens in the Oceanside community. More details next month.

Wildlife Extraction

Wildlife Extraction is a service provided by Project Wildlife to assist in the humane removal of unwanted wildlife from around the home. Call 619-692-WILD, or visit: www.WildlifeExtraction.com.

Location: 2202 South Coast Hwy. Oceanside, CA (East side of street on north shore of lagoon)	**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 480 Oceanside, CA 92049-0480 **Phone:** 760-439-2473
Hours: Tuesday-Saturday — 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday—1 p.m.-4 p.m. **Closed Monday**	**Website:** www.bvaudubon.org **E-mail:** bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net **Field Trip Hotline:** 760-688-0660

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. The BVAS Nature Center and its educational programs will receive 100% of my contribution. Minimum donation suggested: $25.

I would like to donate $ 25 ___ $50 ___ $ 100 ___ Other: ___

I'm interested in the BVAS Legacy Donor program ___

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***Send me my newsletter by e-mail.** ☐

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For More Info:
sandiegoaudubon.org
or
ca.audubon.org

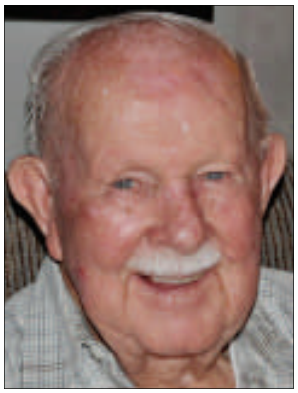
Ruddy Duck Club

This special group of local businesses and organizations support the nature education and recreation programs offered at the Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center with an annual donation of $100 or more. To request your "no obligation" Ruddy Duck Club packet of membership information and benefits, please call Kelly Deveney at 760-721-2441.

Kiwanis Club "Day of Service" Scheduled for Nature Center

BVAS was excited to learn that the Kiwanis Club has selected the BVAS Nature Center and grounds for its 2011 annual "Day of Service". On Saturday, April 2, Kiwanis Club members will be joined by a group of adults, teens, and children to tackle a number of work projects, including trail maintenance and exotic plant removal. As many as 25 volunteers are expected to participate, including seniors and students of middle school and elementary school age. Kiwanis Club member Nancy Green is organizing the work party, which is part of the Kiwanis Club's mission of community service.

Remembering Al Alexander



We were saddened to learn that long-time BVAS member Al Alexander passed away in December, at the age of 91.

For many years, Al and his wife Jane "ruled the roost" at the Nature Center, exemplifying the ideal husband/wife volunteer team. Jane served as BVAS president, was a Nature Guide, wrote a book on the lives of early ornithologists which was sold in the gift shop, and was involved in many other BVAS activities. Al supported all of Jane's endeavors, steadfastly served on the Board, and had a remarkable 10-year-run as the BVAS treasurer. After Jane passed away, Al and son Ken Alexander commissioned the mountain lion and cub sculpture that sits in the children's corner of the classroom as a memorial.

We'll remember Al for his sweet smile and impish wit that was always evident during his many years of service on behalf of BVAS. Our sincere condolences go out to his wife, Alice, son Ken, daughter Terri, and the rest of the Alexander family.

Vernal Equinox — March 21

"Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn."

-Lewis Gizzard

Lagoon Flyer

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Quick Calendar for March

Thur.-Sun. Mar. 3-6—San Diego Bird Festival and Audubon California Assembly (See P. 5.)

Fri. Mar. 4 —Board Meeting—9 a.m.

Sat. Mar. 5—Whelan Lake Walk—8 a.m.

Mon. Mar. 7—Nature Guides Meeting—10 a.m.

Sun. Mar. 13— Encinitas Bird Walk—8 a.m.

Wed. Mar. 16—General Meeting—7 p.m.

Sun. Mar. 20—Native Plant Club—2 p.m.

Sat. Mar. 26—Buena Vista Lagoon Count—8 a.m.

Sat. Mar. 26—Basic Birding at B.V. L. Landing—8:30 a.m.

Mon. Mar. 28—Nature Storytime—10 a.m.

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A Picture is Worth a Thousand Chirps

This photo seems to speak volumes about the trials of parenthood and the limits of patience. Anyone who has watched new fledglings at the bird feeder flapping their wings and chirping incessantly for food from their harried and overwrought parent, all the while standing directly on top of the very bird seed for which they beg, might be able to identify with the adult male English sparrow pictured above.

Hang in there, old chap. There might even be enough time to raise another clutch this season!