

BUENA VISTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

# LAGOON FLYER



VOLUME 44 / NUMBER 7 / SEPTEMBER 2015

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Photo—Mike Rawlings

## THE RAPTORS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Wednesday, September 23 (4th Wednesday)

6:30 p.m. Social—7 p.m. Program

The BVAS September program will be a special presentation about local raptors, and will include the opportunity to view some live birds up close. The education team from the Raptor Institute will be bringing a few native raptor species to the program. We don't know for sure how many or which of the Institute's animal ambassadors will be able to attend our program. That will be a game-day decision based on how the birds are feeling, but we're hoping for a visit from Buster, the red-tailed hawk, Violet, the American kestrel, and Hart, the barn owl. We'll learn about the habitats, conservation, and natural history of the various species of hawks and owls that can be found in San Diego, and how we can help them in the wild. We hope to see you there.

**Live Birds!**

## Coastal Clean-Up Day in San Diego

**Saturday September 19—9a.m.-Noon**

Sign up today to volunteer at I Love A Clean San Diego's biggest event of the year, Coastal Cleanup Day. On September 19, over 7,000 volunteers will be spending a few hours at 100 countywide locations, including a number in North County. For more information and to sign up to participate, visit: <http://www.cleanupday.org/>.



## BVAS LAND ACQUISITION CAMPAIGN

The effort to acquire the 3.5-acre parcel of land adjacent to Buena Vista Lagoon, and the larger parcel near Whelan Lake, continues to move forward. BVAS has received word that both proposals will be considered for final acquisition funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board during its fall meetings. Should funding be approved as expected, the close of escrow on the lagoon parcel should occur prior to year's end, with the Whelan Lake parcel to follow sometime during the first half of 2016. BVAS hopes to have the lagoon property included within the official boundaries of the Buena Vista Lagoon Ecological Reserve, where it would fall under the umbrella of the lagoon restoration planning and implementation. Following its acquisition and eventual restoration, it is expected there would be some limited public access provided on the parcel in the form of a short nature trail leading to a lagoon-side deck for fishing and bird watching.

To date, 230-plus community members and groups have pledged and contributed over \$220,000 to the Ridgway's Rail Society, the BVAS land acquisition fund. Those funds are being used to attract over \$4 million in funding from state and national agencies, a very significant investment return for BVAS and the local environment. Thank you all for your support.

## NORDSTROM'S CENTER FOREVER?

The Caruso initiative to develop a high-end regional shopping center next to the Agua Hedionda Lagoon was a hot topic of conversation and debate during the summer. Despite the emphasis of the developer's promotional campaign to win support for the project, this project has little to do with preserving natural open space. The BVAS Board discussed the "85/15 Plan" at its June and July meetings, and weighed in on the project with a couple of critical posts on its Facebook page in early July.



BVAS is a member of a coalition of conservation groups expressing concern about the potential environmental impacts of the project, especially given the lack of details provided by the developer. The lack of a more public environmental review of the project by use of the initiative process was also a great concern. Unfortunately, in late August the city council voted to approve the developer's initiative outright and forego a public vote. Hopefully, as the project is reviewed for its coastal development permit in the coming months, more details about the developer's plan will finally be revealed and some of the more egregious environmental impacts will be identified and rectified.

## BUENA VISTA LAGOON RESTORATION DRAFT ENVIRONMENT REVIEW

San Diego Association of Governments released the draft EIR for the Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration Project in July. The document analyzes the potential environmental impacts of various alternative plans for the restoration of the lagoon. BVAS has long advocated the removal of the weir at the mouth of the lagoon and the restoration to a saltwater estuary and marsh. The reasons are numerous, including maximizing habitat for endangered species, maximizing species diversity, providing the estuarine habitat required by numerous marine organisms for portions of their life cycles, improving water quality and flood control, helping control harmful mosquito populations, and providing sand for local beaches. As the BVAS position paper states, coastal saltwater wetlands are among the most endangered habitats in California, with over 90% of their historic acreage lost to development over the last 100 years. It is also important to note that the high cost of a restoration project would most likely be funded through mitigation monies which would only be available for a project that maximized natural habitat values.

The next steps involve collecting and responding to public comments on the draft EIR, and completing a final EIR that includes a recommended alternative. BVAS will be submitting its official comments by the September 1 deadline.



*The weir at the mouth of the lagoon currently prevents ocean tides from entering to clean, cool, and add oxygen to the lagoon's water. If the weir were removed, the open channel would also allow silt and sand to be flushed from the lagoon, and provide an avenue for fish and other marine organisms to follow their natural instincts and needs to freely move between the ocean and the lagoon.*

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## WHELAN LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY WALK

**Saturday, September 5—8 a.m.**

Join BVAS on this regular monthly walk and survey of the birds at this special wildlife sanctuary. The freshwater lake, adjacent riparian forest, and grassy upland hills provide an exciting array of bird species throughout the year.

**Directions:** From I-5, take Hwy. 76 East; turn left at Douglas Dr.; continue to the light at North River Rd.; go left on North River Rd. Pass through entrance gate and follow signs to the lake.

**Leader:** John Haddock, 760-941-7824.

## SECOND THURSDAY SURPRISE WALK

**Thursday, September 10—8 a.m.**

Join our weekday surprise-location bird walk on the second Thursday of each month. Where we go is based on recent reports and Steve's personal surveying. If you'd like to get on the Second Thursday Walk notification list, please send an email with your name, phone number and email address to: stevebrad1@earthlink.net.

**Leader:** Steve Brad, 760-633-1639.

## GUAJOME PARK BIRD WALK

**Sunday, September 13—8 a.m.**

Guajome County Park is home to a wide variety of resident and migratory bird species. It offers a wonderful mix of habitats, including two large ponds, woodlands, chaparral, freshwater marsh, mixed grassland, and a landscaped park.

**Directions:** From I-5, take Hwy. 76 East; turn right on Guajome Lake Rd. Park at entrance to RV park.

**Leader:** Steve Brad, 760-633-1639.

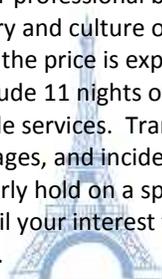
## BVAS MIGRATING BIRDERS

**September trip to Eastern Sierra: FILLED UP!**

We announced tentative plans for this trip in the summer newsletter. All spots on the trip have now been assigned. We apologize to those who missed out, but hope to offer a similarly attractive trip next spring.

**Birding France and Spain—May, 2016**

BVAS will be traveling to Europe next year, and we hope you join us! This will be small group birding, just six birders traveling together in one van. There will be two trips for two separate groups. One group will travel south from Paris to Barcelona. A second group will go northbound from Barcelona to Paris. Both trips will cover the span of 11 nights. We'll stay in small country inns, visiting a variety of different habitats in southern France and northern Spain. Our professional bird guide is equally well-versed in the local history and culture of the region. Details are still being arranged, but the price is expected to be about \$2,800 a person, which will include 11 nights of lodging, food, van transportation, and guide services. Transportation to and from Europe, alcoholic beverages, and incidentals are not included. If you'd like to put an early hold on a spot for this trip pending final details, please email your interest to Andy Mauro at: akamauro1@gmail.com.



## SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK BIRD WALK

**Saturday, September 19—8:30 a.m.**

We'll bird the Lower Crest Canyon trail of the San Dieguito River Park in September, as well as spend some time identifying water birds from the lagoon overlook near the trailhead.

**Directions:** From I-5, take Via de la Valle west; left on Jimmy Durante Blvd.; left on San Dieguito Rd. Drive east about 1 mile to trailhead.

**Leader:** John Haddock, 760-941-7824.

## BASIC BIRDING WORKSHOP AND BUENA VISTA LAGOON BIRD COUNT

**Saturday, September 26—8 a.m.**

Join the BVAS birders for our basic birding workshop and bird count at Buena Vista Lagoon. No experience necessary. We meet at the Nature Center at 8 a.m. and then caravan around the lagoon to a series of selected stops for some friendly, informal, no-pressure birding.

**Directions:** Meet at the Nature Center parking lot.

**Leaders:** Joan Fountain, 760-729-1379; Tom Troy, 760-420-7328.

## BVAS PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP

**Sunday, September 27—7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.**

September is near-peak season for the Craveri's murrelet. Storm-petrels should also be one of the highlights of this trip, with chances for four different species. There are a number of other likely species. The list of possible "goodies" includes black-footed albatross, northern fulmar, flesh-footed and Buller's shearwaters, Leach's and ashy storm-petrels, red-billed tropicbird, south polar skua, long-tailed jaeger, Craveri's and Guadalupe murrelets, and arctic tern.

**Pelagic Birding Information and Trip Registration:**

The September trip will be on board the *Eclipse*, operating out of Seaforth Landing in Mission Bay. Call Pacific Nature Tours (619-534-9249) to make your reservation. BVAS is also offering other pelagic trips this fall, on October 11 and November 7, each with its own list of expected and possible sightings. See the BVAS pelagic website for details about all pelagic birding activities: [www.sandiegopelagics.com](http://www.sandiegopelagics.com). Birders are encouraged to call and sign up early for the trips to insure their spots and to take advantage of significant early bird discount prices.

## BIRDING IN SEPTEMBER



Smaller migrating birds like warblers are flitting through our bushes and trees. For the most part these birds are just passing through on their way south. These smaller birds often migrate at night, coming down to protective habitat at dawn to rest and forage for food. Look for yellow-rumped warblers and white-crowned sparrows, our ubiquitous winter residents, to begin showing up the last week of the month. Most of our migrating breeders, like least terns, black-headed grosbeaks, and orioles, have headed south.



**VOLUNTEER NEWS**  
 For over 25 years volunteers have been working together to enrich the Nature Center experience for our visitors and grow BVAS in the community. Volunteers make it possible for BVAS to offer weekly bird walks, monthly nature programs, Nature Storytime, Endangered Species Day, the Birdhouse Auction, Christmas Bird Count, and many other special activities. To volunteer, please call the Nature Center (760-439-2473), or contact Bob Crowell (760-207-388, email: kbcrowell@cox.net.)

**BVAS OFFICERS, BOARD\*, AND CHAIRS**

|                        |                                   |              |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| President              | Andy Mauro*                       | 760-753-1266 |
| Vice-President         | Dennis Huckabay*                  | 760-757-6437 |
| Secretary              | Judi Wilson*                      | 760-439-3649 |
| Treasurer              | Sandy McMullen*                   | 760-944-5690 |
| Past President         | Dave Billings*                    | 760-753-7925 |
| Bird House Auction     | Kelly Deveney                     | 760-721-2441 |
| Director               | Kathy Billings*                   | 760-753-7925 |
| Director               | Patty Montgomery*                 | 760-931-6678 |
| Director               | Bruce Montgomery*                 | 760-931-6678 |
| Center Manager         | Annette Schneider                 | 760-945-8891 |
| Christmas Bird Count   | Andy Mauro*                       | 760-753-1266 |
| Conservation Chair     | Joan Herskowitz*                  | 760-942-5167 |
| Education Chair        | Fran MacNeel                      | 760-929-9158 |
| Facilities/Exhibits    | Danny DiMento*                    | 858-688-6891 |
| Field Trips            | Steve Brad*                       | 760-633-1639 |
| Gift Shop              | Denise Riddle*                    | 760-439-0256 |
| Library                | C. J. DiMento                     | 760-231-9096 |
| Membership/Mailings    | Janice Osborne                    |              |
|                        | Email: bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net    |              |
| Native Plant Club      | Joan Bockman*                     |              |
|                        | Email: BVNPC@sbcglobal.net        |              |
| Nature Storytime       | Mary Ellen Marquand               | 760-918-6622 |
| Newsletter Editor      | Andy Mauro*                       | 760-753-1266 |
|                        | E-mail: akamauro1@gmail.com       |              |
| Programs               | Dennis Huckabay*                  | 760-757-6437 |
| Publicity/Outreach     | Natalie Shapiro*                  |              |
|                        | Email: bloomingtrillium@yahoo.com |              |
| Ridgway's Rail Society | Andy Mauro*                       | 760-753-1266 |
| Volunteers             | Bob Crowell*                      | 760-207-3884 |
|                        | Email: kbcrowell@cox.net          |              |
| Webmaster              | J.J. Springer                     | 818-859-8244 |

**BVAS DONATION MINI-FORM (Clip and Send)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Amt.: \_\_\_\_\_ Check (enclosed) \_\_\_\_\_ or \*Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_

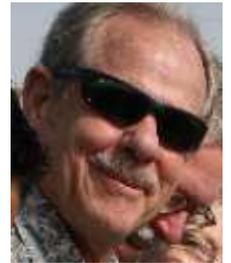
\*Credit Card Info: (#) \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

*Please indicate how you'd like your donation applied.*

Nature Center & Programs: \_\_\_\_; Land Acquisition Fund: \_\_\_\_

Send to: BVAS; P.O. Box 480; Oceanside, CA 92049

**DAVE STEPS DOWN**



The first order of business for the new, 15-member BVAS Board of Directors at its July meeting was to thank out-going president Dave Billings for his years of service. Dave had held the position of "Chief Ruddy Duck" since 2010, presiding over a major surge in BVAS membership and a number of significant advances in programs and facilities. He personally negotiated a new, 30-year lease for the use of the Nature Center, and spearheaded the recently completed \$300,000 remodel of the Nature Center. Kathy Billings (married to Dave), is also stepping down after a long stint as secretary. Dave and Kathy will remain on the Board, having been assured they will have a slightly less demanding set of duties. Also taking a break from the Board after several years of service are Jacques Domercq, Janine Free, and Suzie Martin. We thank them all for their dedication to the cause and countless hours of hard work extended over a number of years on behalf of BVAS.

**NEW DIRECTORS, OFFICERS**—Long-time Board member Andy Mauro will be taking over as president this year. Judi Wilson is returning to the Board after a hiatus of several years, and will be serving as secretary. Former BVAS president and current vice president Dennis Huckabay has agreed to stay on in that capacity for yet another year. Sandy McMullen returns to the somewhat thankless job of treasurer. (Although we DO thank you, Sandy!) New directors elected to the Board for their first terms include Patty and Bruce Montgomery, Denise Riddle, and Natalie Shapiro. See our Directory for a complete list of Board members and committee chairs, along with their contact information.

**LONE STAR WEBMASTER RETIRES**

Larry and Suzann Spann moved from North County back to Texas over a decade ago. It was a big blow at the time since both were very active at BVAS. But good friends stay in touch, and Larry has continued to act as the BVAS webmaster for all these years. It's taken awhile, but BVAS has finally found a volunteer with the skills needed to take over the webmaster responsibilities, J.J. Springer. It is worthy to note that upon investigating issues associated with taking back responsibility for managing the website, we discovered that it involved at least \$200 in annual expenses. Of course, Larry and Suzann had been generously paying those fees for years without bothering to mention it. Thank you Larry and Suzann, for the decades of dedicated service you've given to BVAS. You are true friends.

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BVAS NATIVE PLANT CLUB

NATURE CENTER GARDEN WORK PARTY —Mondays at 10 a.m. Every Monday morning, the garden crew gathers at the Nature Center to do a little maintenance work around the native plant garden and trails. Interested gardeners are invited to join the group for some casual gardening and friendly chatter

SCHOOL GARDENS—BVAS sponsors school gardens with native plants and volunteers. We are at the school for one hour each week. The kids do the work with our help and we all get to have fun with nature and the garden volunteers. Here’s the schedule: Monday—2 p.m. at South Oceanside Elementary ; Wednesday—9 a.m. at Mission Elementary; and Wednesday—10:15 a.m. at Laurel Elementary. If you would like to help at one of these times please contact us by email: BVNPC@sbcglobal.net. We’ll get right back to you!

LAWN BE GONE—This is a great time to get rid of your lawn and move to a better landscape. Bermuda grass is still growing and now is the best time to kill it. If you stopped watering, please be advised that brown Bermuda is not dead and will come back with a vengeance. Here’s a link to an article on how the pros eliminate Bermuda grass naturally: www.sunset.com/garden/earth-friendly/how-to-remove-bermuda-grass.

KID’S CORNER AT THE NATURE CENTER

Joey’s and Johnny’s Clubhouse

Sunday, September 20—1-4 p.m.

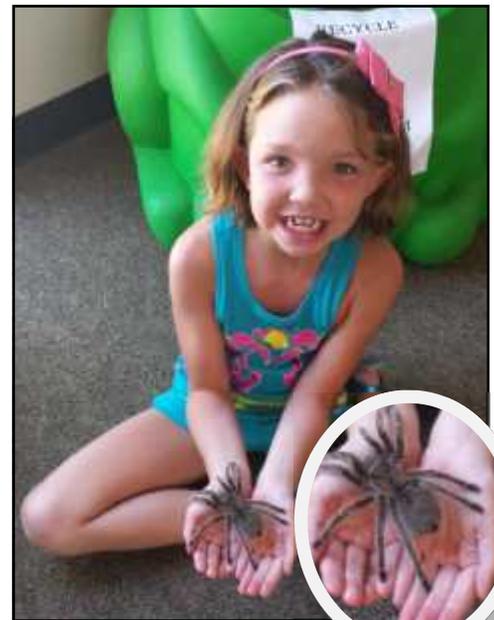
Kids and parents are invited to stop by the Nature Center for some informal nature fun. This is a chance to grab a butterfly net and go catch some bugs, decorate the Nature Center sidewalk with a nature-themed chalk art drawing and message, examine neat stuff under the high-powered microscope in the Nature Discovery Lab, use binoculars to look for birds from the second-story view deck, or maybe just curl up with a good book from the library.

Preschool Nature Storytime

Monday, September 28—10 a.m.

This month we’ll be learning about whales through stories, songs and a take-home craft. See you then!

Questions? Call Mary Ellen: 760-918-6622.



Erelene Uhrig has no problem holding the Nature Center tarantula in July.

SUMMER CAMP WITH BVAS

Nature Summer Camp may be over for this year, but the memories linger on. This special week engaged kids with nature through art, dance, song, and hands-on exploration of local natural habitats. Children acted out plant photosynthesis through dance, pounded leaf chlorophyll into beautiful leaf prints on fabric, watched demonstrations on soil erosion and water pollution, went on a scavenger hunt on the nature trail, and painted ceramic sea life.

Campers viewed aquatic insects, fish, and arthropods collected from the lagoon magnified to incredible proportions on our new, high-powered microscope. Using nets, children collected insects, and identified them with the help of docents and magnifying glasses. And through several bird-themed activities, children learned techniques for drawing and painting birds, explored the characteristics that define a bird, and interacted with live raptors from the Raptor Institute.

A big thank you to Camp Leader Dovie Christianson who has planned, organized, and led Summer Camp for the past couple of years, and the volunteer docents and parents who joined in on all the fun.

—Natalie Shapiro

BUENA VISTA AUDUBON NATURE CENTER

Tuesday-Saturday—10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday—1-4 p.m.

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

Phone: 760-439-2473

BVAS Website: Bvaudubon.org

We are also on Facebook!

E-mail:

# LAGOON FLYER

BUENA VISTA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 480  
Oceanside, CA 92049

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## BVAS QUICK CALENDAR

|                        |   |           |
|------------------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Sat. Sept. 4</b>    | Board Meeting   | 9 a.m.    |
| <b>Sat. Sept. 5</b>    | Whelan Lake Bird Walk                                     | 8 a.m.    |
| <b>Thurs. Sept. 10</b> | Surprise Bird Walk  | 8 a.m.    |
| <b>Sun. Sept. 13</b>   | Guajome Lake Bird Walk                                    | 8 a.m.    |
| <b>Fri. Sept. 18</b>   | Nature Guides Meeting                                     | 10 a.m.   |
| <b>Sat. Sept. 19</b>   | San Dieguito River Park Birding                           | 8:30 a.m. |
| <b>Sun. Sept. 20</b>   | Joey's & Johnny's Clubhouse                               | 1 p.m.    |
| <b>Wed. Sept. 23</b>   | General Meeting<br>"Raptors of San Diego County"          | 6:30 p.m. |
| <b>Sat. Sept. 26</b>   | Basic Birding Workshop<br>& Buena Vista Lagoon Bird Count | 8 a.m.    |
| <b>Sept. 26-27</b>     | Oceanside Harbor Days<br>Visit the BVAS "Roadshow" Booth  |           |
| <b>Sun. Sept. 27</b>   | Pelagic Birding Trip                                      | 7:30 a.m. |
| <b>Mon. Sept. 28</b>   | Pre-School Nature Storytime                               | 10 a.m.   |



## FIRST GRAY THRASHER FOR U.S.

The gray thrasher ONLY occurs in a narrow band of territory in Baja. As of August 1, 2015, it had never been seen in the United States. That all changed on August 2, when Lisa Ruby and two friends arrived at Famosa Slough, a small wetland that connects



to the San Diego River across from Sea World Drive in San Diego. Lisa spotted a bird that just didn't look right. It was an obvious thrasher, but unlike the thrasher species typically found in Southwestern U.S., it had distinctive spots on its breast. Photos of the mystery bird were sent out to the birding community, and soon the news began to spread of the astonishing appearance of a first-ever U.S. sighting of a gray thrasher. It was a Sunday afternoon, and 50 or so birders quickly gathered to catch sight of this extreme rarity. Unfortunately, despite a large and highly motivated search party on subsequent days, the bird turned out to be a one-day-wonder. It most likely is still in the neighborhood, but for now its whereabouts remain unknown. Gary Nunn's clear photo provides the proof that the gray thrasher was here, if only for a day.