When did you last experience that moment of excitement and delight as you suddenly spotted a burrowing owl stoically staring back at you from the entrance to its burrow? Pretty neat memory. Now imagine being tasked with monitoring over 20 pairs of burrowing owls each year, representing nearly half of the breeding population in San Diego County. Pretty neat assignment!

Colleen Wisinski is a Research Coordinator in the Applied Animal Ecology Division of the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research. She has worked with golden eagles and cactus wrens over the years, and is currently the field team leader on a burrowing owl project. Her team has examined survivorship, parental care, reproductive success, diet, foraging movements, and burrow microclimate at both natural and artificial burrows. They use remote cameras to document prey deliveries, predation events, and hunting success, as well as other high-tech devices to record foraging locations of food-gathering males and to measure and record temperature and humidity inside and outside of burrows. The research is designed to gain a better understanding of local factors that may influence productivity and survival, and to ultimately provide a scientific framework to help make informed wildlife management decisions in the region.

Colleen’s program will provide an overview of the project team’s results thus far, and explore the implications for the future management of burrowing owls and their habitat. As a extra treat, we will see numerous photos of one of our favorite species of native owls.

Birdhouse Builders—Start Your Engines!

2016 BVAS BIRDHOUSE AUCTION—MARCH 19!
Students Visit Snowy Plover Wintering Grounds

On two mornings in early December, over 140 fourth-grade students from South Oceanside Elementary School visited South Cardiff State Beach as part of Audubon’s “Share Our Shores” program. For 2 hours, the nine-year-old scientists rotated among seven stations designed to familiarize them with the western snowy plover and its fragile habitat. The theme of the day was how the students and their families could enjoy the shore while protecting this threatened species.

The children’s program began in November with presentations in the classrooms. BVAS Nature Guides shared information about the plover, its nesting behavior, and the ways in which the bird is threatened and can be better protected. Each child built a sample of the plover’s minimal nest, a simple divot in the sand called a ‘scrape.’ The kids then designed posters to be placed later at nesting and roosting sites on Southern California beaches.

At South Cardiff State Beach, a team of nature guides and a state park interpreter addressed such topics as species identification, erosion, food chains, habitat protection, and adaptation. In teams of ten, the children, parents, and teachers learned to use binoculars to identify both the endangered snowy plovers and the more common shore birds, and were able to view 50 to 100 snowy plovers that were roosting on the sand. All the adults helping out agreed, based on the children’s enthusiasm and respect of nature, the future of our coast and wildlife seems a bit brighter.

Last spring, San Diego Audubon partnered with BVAS in bringing the “Share Our Shores” snowy plover education program to the North County. That initial program was such a success, BVAS Nature Guides decided to make it available to more students by offering both a winter and a spring session. Next spring, third-graders from Louise Foussat Elementary will participate by visiting a nesting site at one of the North County lagoons.

Citizens’ Initiative Forces Vote in Carlsbad

The “Let the People Vote” petition campaign, spearheaded by Citizens for North County late last summer, was able to obtain the required number of signatures from Carlsbad voters to force a vote on a controversial shopping center overlooking the Agua Hedionda Lagoon. As a result, the fate of developer Caruso’s so-called “85/15” project in Carlsbad now rests on the results of a special election to be held on February 23. Were it not for a grassroots, all-volunteer effort by a group of local residents to force a public vote on this project, the bulldozers would be lining up today.

Caruso had previously convinced the city and signers of his initiative to allow him to bypass the normal development review process. Nothing has changed on that score—there will be no independent review of the potentially significant environmental impacts of this development. The public will only be able to vote “Yes” or “No” on the regional shopping center plan as it is proposed by the developer—no revisions are possible.

The Carlsbad City Council set the vote for a special election to be held on the earliest possible date. The February election will cost the city an estimated $500,000 over what it would have cost had it been included in next November’s regular general election. Special, one-issue elections typically attract a much smaller voter turnout than regular elections. The anticipated smaller voter turnout, as well as a shortened election campaign period, are both expected to favor the developer.

The out-of-town developer has already spent over $5 million to saturate Carlsbad households with promotional brochures and expense-paid tours to convince city officials and residents of the benefits of his proposed regional shopping center. Caruso’s massive marketing apparatus will likely overwhelm the citizens’ low-budget education campaign during the abbreviated special election campaign. This question remains: Will voters have a chance to learn about the largely unexplored negative impacts of the development before they must cast their ballots?

—Andy Mauro
**WHELAN LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY WALK**

*Saturday, January 2—8 a.m.*

Join BVAS for our regular monthly walk and bird survey. The freshwater lake, adjacent riparian forest, and grassy upland hills provide an exciting array of bird species throughout the year, making this a favorite place to go birding.

**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.

**Leaders:** Gretchen Nell; John Haddock, 760-941-7824.

**OCEANSIDE HARBOR BIRD WALK**

*Sunday, January 10—8 a.m.*

January is a great month to check out the gulls, terns, shorebirds, waders, and rocky-shore birds that hang out on the beach, shoreline, and rock jetty at the harbor, and the marshland near the mouth of the San Luis Rey River.

**Directions:** Access the free public parking lot east of Joe’s Crab Shack by driving through the tunnel under the RR tracks, then walk back through the tunnel to join the group. We’ll meet along the sidewalk near where the North Pacific Street bridge crosses the San Luis Rey River.

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

**SECOND THURSDAY SURPRISE WALK**

*Thursday, January 14—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: stevanbrad@gmail.com.

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

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK BIRD WALK**

*Saturday, January 16—8:30 a.m.—Lower Crest Canyon*

We’ll be looking for the many waterfowl and shorebirds that come to spend the winter at North County’s coastal wetlands.

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

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

**BASIC BIRDING WORKSHOP AND BUENA VISTA LAGOON BIRD COUNT**

*Saturday, January 30—9 a.m.* (Note new start time.)

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 9 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; Tom Troy, 760-420-7328.

**PELAGIC BIRDING WITH BVAS**

*Pelagic Birding Information and Trip Registration*

BVAS offers five or six pelagic birding trips out of San Diego every year. The trips are scheduled throughout the year to take advantage of the seasonal movements of pelagic birds off San Diego’s coastline. Trips generally range from 6-12 hours, primarily depending on how far off shore the target birds tend to congregate at various times during the year.

The 2016 Pelagic Birding Schedule is now posted online.

Visit the BVAS pelagic website at www.sandiegopelagics.com for details about all pelagic birding activities, including trip schedules, charter boats and landing locations, prices, targeted birds, prior trip lists, and photos. For those trips scheduled on the Grande, phone Point Loma Sportfishing (619) 223-1627, and tell them you wish to make a reservation for a birding trip on the Grande. Check the website for info on other boats. Birders are encouraged to call and sign up early for the trips to ensure their spots and to take advantage of often significant early bird discount prices.

**BVAS MIGRATING BIRDERS**

*Cape May Birding Trip—May 15-20, 2016 with ROAD SCHOLAR*

Are you interested in possibly joining a few other BVAS members who are going on this trip to one of America’s best birding locales next May? For more details, contact Dennis Huckabay at jdhuckabay@sbcglobal.net or at 760-757-6437.

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**JANUARY BIRDING IN SAN DIEGO**

Winter during a predicted El Niño year—what impact will it have on our wintering bird populations? Birds hunker down and are difficult to find during the rain, but often get quite active as soon as the sun peeks through. Our regular winter stalwarts, yellow-rumped warblers and white-crowned sparrows, will be ever-present. Look for species like hermit thrushes, robins, mockingbirds, and waxwings in any bush sporting red berries. January is a good month to observe many species of wintering shorebirds and ducks at our coastal lagoons.

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**2016 SAN DIEGO BIRD FESTIVAL**

*“SEA, SAGE, & SAND”*

*March 3-6, 2016*  
*Marina Village Park—San Diego, CA*

Field Trips / Workshops / Optics Displays / Pelagic Birding / Family Events / Special Guest Speakers / Banquet

Register online at: www.sandiegoaudubon.org
**ELECTRONIC RECYCLING AND PAPER SHREDDING**

**NATURE CENTER—January 23-24—10 a.m.-4 p.m.**

Bring us your outdated electronics and help raise funds for BVAS. All those old computers, monitors, TVs, cell phones, etc. can be quickly recycled at this drive-through event. Paper shredding will also be available for a small fee. It's a great way to de-clutter and support BVAS. A flyer with more info is available on the BVAS website or at the Nature Center.

**BVAS Membership and Newsletter Policy**

**NEWSLETTER GOING DIGITAL**—For those of you still comfortably living in the era of printed media, BVAS would like to begin the process of weaning you from your mailed hardcopy of the monthly newsletter. Our goal is to have a majority of our members receive the newsletter as an electronic document, produced at no direct cost to BVAS and delivered via email directly to the member’s home or business each month. The digital edition comes in full color and often includes supplemental features. We hope to make a major push on this conversion during 2016. Switching to the digital newsletter makes perfect sense—both economically for BVAS and environmentally for our planet. We thank those who have already chosen to receive the digital edition of the newsletter. You are helping BVAS save money, and a forest of trees!

**ANNUAL DUES AND FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP**—BVAS is simplifying the way a donor qualifies as a BVAS Friend member. A monetary donation of $25 or more will now result in a BVAS Friends membership for the remainder of that current calendar year. In addition, donations received in November and December will also provide the donor full membership status for the following calendar year. Donors who contribute to a designated fund, such as the BVAS Ridgway’s Rail Land Acquisition Fund, will also qualify for BVAS Friends membership status under the same guidelines.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Andy Mauro*</td>
<td>760-753-1266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>Dennis Huckabay*</td>
<td>760-757-6437</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Judi Wilson*</td>
<td>760-439-3649</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Sandy McMullen*</td>
<td>760-944-5690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past President</td>
<td>Dave Billings*</td>
<td>760-753-7925</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bird House Auction</td>
<td>Kelly Deveney</td>
<td>760-721-2441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Kathy Billings*</td>
<td>760-753-7925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Patty Montgomery*</td>
<td>760-931-6678</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Bruce Montgomery*</td>
<td>760-931-6678</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center Manager</td>
<td>Annette Schneider</td>
<td>760-945-8891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Chair</td>
<td>Joan Herskowitz*</td>
<td>760-942-5167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Chair</td>
<td>Fran MacNeel</td>
<td>760-929-9158</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities/Exhibits</td>
<td>Danny DiMento*</td>
<td>858-688-6891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>Steve Brad*</td>
<td>760-633-1639</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift Shop</td>
<td>Denise Riddle*</td>
<td>760-439-0256</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>C. J. DiMento</td>
<td>760-231-9096</td>
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<td>Membership/Mailings</td>
<td>Janice Osborne</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net">bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Plant Club</td>
<td>Joan Bockman*</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:BVNPC@sbcglobal.net">BVNPC@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>Dennis Huckabay*</td>
<td>760-757-6437</td>
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<td>Publicity/Outreach</td>
<td>Natalie Shapiro*</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:akamauro1@gmail.com">akamauro1@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ridgway’s Rail Society</td>
<td>Andy Mauro*</td>
<td>760-753-1266</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Bob Crowell*</td>
<td>760-207-3884</td>
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<tr>
<td>Webmaster</td>
<td>J.J. Springer</td>
<td>818-859-8244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Become a BVAS Nature Guide, and Go Wild!**

Contact Bob Crowell (see above) for more info.

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☐ I would like to become a member. ☐ I’m already a member, but want to help out more.

Friends of BVAS automatically receive the chapter newsletter and special notices of upcoming chapter activities. The BVAS Nature Center and its programs will receive 100% of all contributions. Minimum suggested donation: $25

How would you like your donation used? Nature Center & Programs ☐ or Ridgway’s Rail Society Land Acquisition Fund ☐

Amount $_______ By Check ☐ or Credit Card ☐ Credit Card # ___________________________ Exp. Date______ CVR___

Make checks payable to: Buena Vista Audubon. Mail to: BVAS; P.O. Box 480; Oceanside, CA 92049.

*Full-color newsletters are normally distributed by email attachment as a conservation measure and to save printing and mailing costs. Please check this box if you have no internet access, or would prefer a mailed copy of the monthly newsletter. ☐

Name: ___________________________ Mailing Address: ___________________________

*Email: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________

☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities.
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.

TOYON IS THE PLANT FOR THE HOLIDAYS—Nature’s calendar doesn’t always agree with ours, but all around San Diego this December one could see bushes with holly-like leaves festooned with bright red berries. It’s the native toyon plant, sometimes called California holly. If you have a toyon in your yard, cut a few branches for decorations around the house or outside your windows. Toyon is part of our local Coastal Sage Scrub plant community. It is a very versatile small tree that can grow throughout the county. It can also be espaliered along a wall or sheared into a hedge, if that is your style. Many species of birds are attracted to the berries. If you’re lucky, you’ll find a few volunteer sprouts popping up around the yard from time-to-time. If they’re not growing in the best place, dig up the seedlings with plenty of soil and replant at least 3-5 feet away from any wall or building.
Early settlers in Los Angeles looked up at the toyon-covered hills and dubbed the area “Hollywood.” It was much later that it also became known as “Tinseltown,” another name that might evoke images of the holiday season.

KIDS’ CORNER AT THE NATURE CENTER
Joey’s and Johnny’s Clubhouse— Sunday, January 17—1-4 p.m.
Kids and parents are invited to stop by the Nature Center for some informal nature fun. There’s always lots of stuff to do, both inside and out. Put on your thinking caps and come help us invent some nature fun.

Preschool Nature Storytime— Monday, January 25—10 a.m.
Brrr! It’s a little cold outside, especially at night. Have you seen Bear? Where could she be? We’ll look around the Nature Center to see if we can find any clues. We’ll have stories, songs, a take-home craft, and a look into our surprise box. Questions? Call Mary Ellen: 760-918-6622.

2015—What a Year!
It was just before Christmas, twelve months ago, when the doors to the BVAS Nature Center were finally reopened. The remodeling project had taken 6 long months, and the first group event in the renovated Nature Center was the year-end Christmas Bird Count. Over 130 people participated in the count that day, and then gathered at the Center for a bowl of chili and a look at the exciting new view deck. The 192 different bird species tallied on the count was the 12th-highest total in the nation. Starting the new year in a beautiful new facility, the Nature Guides quickly made up for the time lost when the Center was closed. They entertained and educated more classes and students in the first six months of 2015 than in any previous 12-month period. They expanded almost all programs, took the nature education show on the road to area classrooms, and led field trips to special nature venues.

The spring Birdhouse Auction and the Endangered Species Day Open House set new records for attendance. There were almost weekly BVAS-led bird surveys and walks. The BVAS-sponsored pelagic birding trips out of San Diego took hundreds of people out to sea to experience a new world of seldom-seen birds. BVAS is truly an organization run by volunteers. Over 320 members volunteered in at least one BVAS activity this past fiscal year, helping the chapter fulfill its mission of promoting a love and appreciation for nature throughout the community. Overall BVAS membership grew to over 2,200 households in 2015. Perhaps one of the most exciting developments of the year was the purchase and conservation of a 3.5-acre parcel of land on the shore of the Buena Vista Lagoon. Over 270 individuals contributed funds to help BVAS become a landowner for the first time. While 2015 was indeed a year to remember, the year ahead has promise to be even more remarkable. While we won’t give it all away quite yet, look for some great new programs and a major announcement about an exciting new initiative in the months ahead.
We’re for the birds, and a lot more!
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. Jan. 2</td>
<td>Whelan Lake Bird Walk</td>
<td>8 a.m.</td>
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<td>Fri. Jan.  8</td>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sun. Jan. 10</td>
<td>Oceanside Harbor Bird Walk</td>
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<td>Thurs. Jan. 14</td>
<td>Surprise Bird Walk</td>
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<td>Fri. Jan. 15</td>
<td>Nature Guides Meeting</td>
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<td>Sat. Jan. 16</td>
<td>San Dieguito River Park Birding</td>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sun. Jan. 17</td>
<td>Joey’s &amp; Johnny’s Clubhouse</td>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
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<td>Wed. Jan. 20</td>
<td>General Meeting</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sat./Sun. Jan. 23-24</td>
<td>Electronic Recycle/Paper Shred</td>
<td>10 a.m.-4 p.m.</td>
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<td>Mon. Jan. 25</td>
<td>Pre-School Nature Storytime</td>
<td>10 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. Jan. 30</td>
<td>Basic Birding Workshop/B.V. Lagoon Bird Count</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sat. Jan. 30</td>
<td>Ridgway’s Rail Society Member Event</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lagoon Land Acquisition Celebration—We Did It!</td>
<td>4-7 p.m.</td>
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**“Burrowing Owls of San Diego” with Colleen Wisinski**

Sat./Sun. Jan. 23-24  Electronic Recycle/Paper Shred   10 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Wintering Bullock’s Oriole**

This Bullock’s oriole is spending the holiday season at the Seaside Apartment complex in Carlsbad, and he’s not alone. At least one other Bullock’s oriole has also been spotted in the eucalyptus trees around the apartments, as well as an orchard oriole. Both species were seen at this location last year in December, as well as a Baltimore oriole. It’s likely the same birds are returning for another holiday stay, just in time to be included in this year’s Oceanside Christmas Bird Count on December 27. This lovely photo was taken by Tito Gonzalez on December 13, 2015.