Birding the Eastern Sierra with Steve Brad

Rumor has it that John Muir left his boyhood home in Dunbar, Scotland to walk the Sierra Nevada with Steve Brad. Each certainly left his mark, holding both land and its residents in reverential esteem. A key difference? Only Steve Brad will delight our May audience with tales and images of the birds that call the Eastern Sierra home.

When not at elevation, Steve is a fixture at Buena Vista Audubon and throughout San Diego County, leading a variety of popular bird walks and trips. Torn between the mountains and the shore, he created www.seatosierrabirds.com, showcasing the birds of each region as only a masterful photographer can.

Steve’s loyal followers describe him as unassuming, charming, and witty. But it is his combined knowledge and eagerness to share that knowledge that set him apart.

It’s Steve Brad. Best arrive early!

Need more? Steve will lead 15 lucky birders on a four-day trip to the Eastern Sierra, July 27-30. Beginning May 22, contact Steve at stevanbrad@gmail.com to sign up. $50 contribution to BVAS.

Eared Grebe

Steve and Bradford

Clark’s Nutcracker

Wednesday, May 17
Social 6:30 p.m.  Program 7:00 p.m.
A Most Successful Bird House Auction!

Atop Your Shoulders!
Buena Vista Audubon Marches Forward

The list of BVAS project accomplishments over the last few years has been truly amazing, but there is still important work to do. **Land Acquisition**—BVAS is working to line up the final $100,000 it needs in its $3 million campaign to acquire and restore the 31-acre parcel of land near Whelan Lake. **Stewardship**—With land ownership now a reality for BVAS, attention turns to restoration and land management responsibilities. On the list are new monument signs for the two properties and the Nature Center and development of a detailed restoration plan for the Whelan Lake property. **Nature Endowment**—BVAS only needs to raise another $40,000 to finish funding this $500,000 endowment to provide a lasting source of support for the Nature Center and BVAS nature education programs for generations to come. **Nature Center**—Projects rising on the priority list at the Nature Center include repairing and weatherizing the north exterior, repainting and updating the lighting in the classroom, and developing a master plan for the exhibits. **Nature Trails and Gardens**—Needed improvements to the nature trail include repairs to the view decks and bridge, solving the problem of trail accessibility during high-water conditions, adding additional interpretative signage, completion of the kiosk-refurbishing project, and repair and improvement to the garden trail bridges and fencing.

**March Came in Like a Lion!** Once again, Buena Vista is receiving help from a lot of friends as it works on accomplishing the projects on its list. In March, Audubon California approved a $25,000 grant to help on the final push to purchase the Whelan Lake property. BVAS will be kicking in $25,000 from its Ridgway’s Rail Fund, and a potential major donor has been approached for a $50,000 matching grant. A number of generous donations were received in March, including a $5,000 grant from the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians and a $1,000 gift from the North County Community Foundation. Approximately 250 friends attended the Bird House Auction, generating more than $9,000 to be double-matched and added to the Nature Endowment.

**Malk Nature Fund.** Endowment Fund benefactor, Mr. Brian Malk, has invited BVAS to participate in the trial year of a new grant program, designed to provide annual support to selected non-profit conservation groups operating in North County. In June, Buena Vista will be submitting a grant request to the Malk Nature Fund under this new program. Once the grant projects have been approved by the Malk Nature Fund, BVAS will be eligible to receive up to $30,000.

**Working Together!** The BVAS Board has asked a lot of its members, volunteers, and friends over the last few years. Direct donations for the land acquisition and nature endowment initiatives alone have been extremely generous, totaling more than $300,000 to date. These donations have been leveraged to attract grants totaling close to $5 million — enough to purchase the last remaining parcel of open space along the Buena Vista Lagoon, to purchase and to restore 31 acres of potential gnatcatcher habitat next to Whelan Lake and Camp Pendleton, and to establish a $500,000 Nature Endowment. Congratulations, everyone!
PELAGIC BIRDING WITH BVAS — 12-HOUR TRIPS!
SAN DIEGO COUNTY WATERS TO THE 9-MILE AND 30-MILE BANKS

SPRING MIGRATION
Sunday, May 21 — 6 a.m. until 6 p.m.
Early Bird Registration: $95 through April 30

EARLY SUMMER
Sunday, June 11 — 6 a.m. until 6 p.m.
Early Bird Registration: $95 through May 31

Full details at www.socalbirding.com

WHELAN LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY WALK
Saturday, May 6 — 8 a.m.
Join BVAS for our regular monthly walk and bird survey. Whelan Lake is a sanctuary for resident and migratory waterfowl. Whelan Lake is always a favorite place to go birding!
Directions: From I-5, take Hwy 76 east; turn left at Douglas Drive; continue to the light at North River Rd; go left on North River Rd. Pass through entrance gate and follow signs to the lake. Feel free to contact the leader for directions.
Leader: John Haddock (760-941-7824)

STEVE’S SURPRISE THURSDAY WALK
Thursday, May 11 — 8 a.m.
Come along on 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. It is always great fun!
Contact Steve to get on his notification list.
Leader: Steve Brad (760-633-1639) stevanbrad@gmail.com

POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY, SAN DIEGO
Sunday, May 14 — 7:30 a.m.
May is migration time and Point Loma is on the Pacific Flyway! We should see various species of warblers, tanagers, orioles, parakeets, and parakeets.
Location: 3900 Lomaland Drive, San Diego. Drive past the kiosk and park in the lot on the right. Since it is Sunday, we can park on campus. Look for folks with their binoculars!
Leader: Steve Brad (760-633-1639) stevanbrad@gmail.com

FEATHER CARE AND PREENING

Feathers function for flight, insulation, and waterproofing. Properly caring for feathers is a priority for birds and an essential activity for their overall health. Therefore, birds spend considerable time and effort to keep their feathers in excellent condition. They do this by preening, which includes feather manipulation and conditioning. Feather manipulation returns feathers to their proper position and form. Birds can be observed stroking and nibbling their feathers with their bills, ensuring that all feathers are interlocked in place and lying flat. Conditioning involves the transfer of a secretion, using their bill and head, and rubbing the secretion over their bodies and wings.

In most bird groups, preening involves a special gland called the uropygial gland or preen gland. The preen gland is located toward the end of the tail. Uropygial oil, or preen oil, is composed of fatty acids, fat, and wax. Preen oil has a number of beneficial functions, depending on the bird family, ecology, and behavior. Waterfowl and sea birds require more waterproofing than chickens have, and their preen glands are, in general, larger. Preen oil is used primarily for waterproofing feathers and for the maintenance of feather structure from one molt to another. Preen oil also maintains the structure and glossiness of the bill and conditions the feet.

Several bird groups, including flightless birds, doves, and pigeons, do not have functional preen glands and have evolved other mechanisms and behaviors to condition their feathers.

SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK BIRD WALK
Saturday, May 20 — 8:30 a.m.
Lower Crest Canyon
A number of duck and shorebird species continue, but most will have migrated north. Herons, egrets, stilts, avocets, and killdeer should be seen.
Directions: Lower Crest Canyon— From I-5, take Via de la Vallee east; go right on San Andres Drive to end of road.
Leader: John Haddock (760-941-7824)

COASTAL 101 BIRDING LOOP
Saturday, May 27 — 9 a.m.
Join Tom and Susie for a casual combination birding workshop and bird count around Buena Vista Lagoon. We visit Maxton Brown Park, walk to the ocean and weir, and return to the nature center along Coast Highway. We should see wading birds, songbirds, and shore birds. After the walk, we tally the birds and finish by 11:30 a.m.
Join the fun!
Location: Buena Vista Nature Center, 2202 S. Coast Highway, Oceanside. Meet in the parking lot.
Leaders: Tom Troy (760-420-7328) and Susie Martin
The Un Sung Hero

At a mere 4½ inches long, the California gnatcatcher is a slender, gray bird with a white eye ring and a long, black tail narrowly edged with white. During the breeding season, the male sports a distinctive black cap. Females look gray overall, with brownish overtones. Their wheezy, kitten-like mewing calls often provide the easiest way to locate these birds.

Commonly found throughout coastal sage scrub habitats in most of Baja California, California gnatcatchers reach the northern edge of their range along the coast from San Diego to Ventura counties. But explosive land development and agricultural conversion during the last 50 years have reduced the species' coastal sage scrub habitat in California to roughly 10% of its historical range, leading in 1993 to listing this northernmost subspecies as Threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

One ESA-listed species can and does protect other imperiled species dependent on this shrinking, specialized sage-scrub habitat. Indeed, for a quarter-century, this small gray songbird has made the difference between conservation and land development on some of the priciest, most coveted coastal lands in California. Extolled by conservationists for its ability to stop a bulldozer in its tracks, hated by land developers as their worst enemy, the diminutive California gnatcatcher carries the burden for fellow sage-scrub-obligate species—a lot of pressure for such a tiny bird. Yet at least for now, this sprite continues to protect one of the planet’s most endangered habitats, as well as its web of flora and fauna, from further human encroachment. The California gnatcatcher’s persistent “mew” calls ring as powerful as any lion’s roar.

(Refer to www.bvaudubon.org for a more detailed version of this article.)
Buena Vista Lagoon Nature Camp 2017

If you know a child who loves to learn about nature, you may want to get him or her signed up for Summer Camp at the Buena Vista Nature Center. Leader Dovie is planning daily activities that include walks, talks, games, crafts, and music. Visitors this summer include a professional botanist who will assist children with plant experiments. There will also be a guest from Project WILD who will be bringing a real live bat! Register now at Buena Vista Nature Audubon Center.

**Dates**: June 12 - 16  
**Time**: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
**Ages**: 6 - 10  
**Class size**: 18 kids  
**Cost**: $100 (members of Buena Vista Audubon: $89)

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Endangered Species Day  
Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center

**Saturday, May 20 — 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

- Crafts!  
- Live Animals!  
- Bio Blitz!

**FREE!**  
**FUN FOR ALL AGES!**

Additional parking on residential side streets.
BVAS QUICK CALENDAR

- **Mon. May 1**: Garden Club at 10 a.m.
- **Fri. May 5**: Board Meeting at 9 a.m.
- **Sat. May 6**: Whelan Lake at 8 a.m.
- **Mon. May 8**: Garden Club at 10 a.m.
- **Thurs. May 11**: Steve's Surprise Walk at 8 a.m.
- **Fri. May 12**: Nature Guide Meeting at 10 a.m.
- **Sun. May 14**: Pt. Loma Nazarene Univ. at 7:30 a.m.
- **Mon. May 15**: Garden Club at 10 a.m.
- **Wed. May 17**: General Meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- **Sat. May 20**: Endangered Species Day at 10 a.m.
- **Sun. May 21**: Pelagic Birding w/BVAS 12 hrs. at 7:30 a.m.
- **Sun. May 21**: Joey & Johnny’s Clubhouse at 1 p.m.
- **Mon. May 22**: Garden Club at 10 a.m.
- **Mon. May 22**: Preschool Nature Storytime at 10 a.m.
- **Sat. May 20**: San Dieguito River Park at 8:30 a.m.
- **Sat. May 27**: Coastal 101 Birding Loop at 9 a.m.
- **Mon. May 29**: Garden Club at 10 a.m.

**Birds of the Eastern Sierra with Steve Brad**

- **Sat. May 13**: Come see Steve Brad’s photos of the birds of the Eastern Sierra. See page 1.
- **Center Hours**
  - Sunday: 1 - 4 p.m.
  - Monday: CLOSED
  - Tuesday - Saturday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Once again, BVAS invites you as novice, casual and life-list birders to our Second Costa Rica trip! We have teamed up with Costa Rica Sun Tours to bring to you a trip designed to hit at least 3 key birding hot spots (different from our January 2017 Program).

While birds are our main aim, with a little more time at each destination, we will be able to explore the biodiversity of each area. Our goal is to explore the waterways of the Caribbean lowland (Tortuguero) to the Caribbean foothills (Rancho Naturalista) to the cloud forests of Monteverde. Along the way, we will see orchids, frogs, turtles (maybe), monkeys, iguanas, butterflies, sloths, bats and crocodiles. Summer is a great time see hummingbirds up close and personal.

We have arranged to have an excellent local Costa Rica birding guide with us on all of our adventures. He/she will have a scope available. In addition, at critical places like Tortuguero, we will be joined by a resident guide who knows the terrain well and can explain more about the National Park, its rich biodiversity,(which is one of the most complex ecosystems in Tropical Americ) and the research taking place. Of course our guide will help us to find some cool birds.

The itinerary includes most meals, all park entrance fees, boat tours and, of course, hotels. With a bit more time in each place, we will have time to relax, shop and connect with the rich biodiversity of Costa Rica.

**Itinerary – July 10-22**
For the next 12 days our group will be accompanied by one of the top birding guides to ensure a memorable trip and a great list of birds. We will be traveling in our own comfortable bus. The cost includes all indicated transportation and guide services, accommodations and meals as indicated:  **B**=breakfast, **L**=lunch,  **D**=dinner.

**July 10**- arrive in Costa Rica. There will be a representative from Costa Rica Sun Tours to welcome you after you clear customs and get your luggage.
Hot Spot Birding Costa Rica Itinerary – July 10-22

July 10 B
1 night at the Don Carlos Hotel  http://doncarloshotel.com/
  • This is our arrival hotel. Located in the historic area of San Jose, this hotel provides all the basics for our arrival in San Jose and departure to Tortuguero the following morning.
  • Open spaces are an art gallery of Costa Rican artists.

July 11-12 BLD
2 nights at Laguna Lodge  http://www.lagunatortuguero.com
  • Early morning departure
  • On our way to Tortuguero we will enjoy a scenic drive through Braulio Carillo National Park and make our way to the river boat that will take us to Laguna Lodge
  • Laguna Lodge is built on a small strip of land between Tortuguero’s main canal and the Caribbean Sea.
  • **Excursions:** private Boat tour, afternoon visit to the town of Tortuguero, frog pond on site, Optional Sea Turtle nesting tour.

July 13-16 4B, 3L 4D
4 nights at Rancho Naturalista Lodge  http://ranchonaturalista.net
  • Rancho is a world-class birding site with plenty of activities and lots of birds. And the food is outstanding.
  • **Excursions:** Guayabo National Park combines birding and a bit of archeology. LaMina river walk, morning moth sheet, hummingbird pools and much more.

July 17-BLD
1 night at Hotel Chayote Lodge  http://www.chayotelodge.com/chayote.html
  • To break up the long day from Rancho to Monteverde, we are excited to have this overnight stop along the way. With its scenic views of the central valley and great food, it's a terrific stopover.
  • **Excursions:** Bajos Del Toro Waterfall and Zarcero Town.

July 18-20 BL
3 nights at Monteverde Hotel Fonda Vela  http://www.fondavela.com
  • With some great hikes we will be rounding out our bird lists.
  • Santa Elena, the town close by the reserve is great for last minute shopping.
  • **Excursions:** Selventura Walkways, Curi Cancha Reverse, Monteverde butterfly gardens, Monteverde Reserve walk.

July 21 DB
1 night at the Hotel Bougainvillea-  http://www.hb.co.cr/en/
  • Over 10 acres of gardens, ponds and home to over 60 species of birds.
  • Wake up to a chorus of bird song with the Clay-colored Thrush, Blue-gray Tanager and with a little luck the resident Blue-crowned Motmot.

**Rate based on a maximum group size of 8 trip participants and double-room occupancy, $2970. Single-room supplement is $545.**

For further information or to sign up, please contact me at:

  Marilyn Hendron
  Phone: 760-730-1966
  Email: mhendron@pacbell.net