An Evening with Guy McCaskie
Formation, Functioning, and Accomplishments of the California Birds Records Committee

On May 27, legendary birder and field ornithologist Guy McCaskie recorded his 500th species in San Diego County, a Hudsonian Godwit spotted on the tidal mudflats at the mouth of the San Diego River. Five hundred! Everyone was amazed but no one was surprised. After all, Mr. McCaskie is credited with transforming California (and eventually North American) birding from spotting the expected to seeking the unexpected. And he’s been doing so in the Golden State for over 60 years with scientific precision and undiminished enthusiasm.

Along the way, Guy McCaskie has authored or co-authored several books and hundreds of articles and inspired or initiated numerous conservation or ornithological projects and organizations. Central to his role as leader, and the topic of the evening program, is the California Birds Records Committee (CBRC), which Guy co-founded and has helped lead since 1970. The CBRC is the final authority on records of rarities and vagrants in the state, and the keeper of the state’s official bird list, which now numbers 673.

It’s seldom that we get to rub shoulders with a man of Guy McCaskie’s stature. Join him for a walk through history and into the future of California birding.

Wednesday, September 18
Social: 6:30 p.m.
Walk & Trip Information: 6:45 p.m.
Program: 7:00 p.m.
He May Not Be Pavarotti, But…

Anyone who enjoys bird song dreads summer’s end as a bit of an auditory desert. But if you live near California Thrashers, you can take heart. These songsters will actually begin ramping up their voices again in late August.

Slightly larger than a California Scrub-Jay, a California Thrasher features a long, heavy, and distinctly downturned bill; dark eyes; and a lengthy, slightly wilted tail. Except for a whitish throat, the bird appears, to the naked eye, basically dark. A look through optics in good light, though, reveals subtle coloring: grayish brown above, slightly paler and warmer brown below, a buff-tinged belly and undertail, and a streaky triangular face mask. This thrasher flies reluctantly, usually preferring to scurry for cover with its head down, wings partially opened, and tail raised.

Coupled with his sickle-shaped bill and dramatically long tail, the California Thrasher’s exceptionally creative song endows him with the distinction that his overall drab plumage does not. The male vocalizes much of the year, frequently from the highest point available—a tree, a tall shrub, a fencepost—making him easy to spot. His song offers a series of lazy phrases sprinkled with a mix of buzzy, trilled, and harsh-sounding notes as well as calls, alarm notes, and mimicked phrases of other species in the area, each generally repeated two or three times. (Note that a Northern Mockingbird, another talented mimic with an extremely varied song, usually repeats its sweeter-sounding phrases four to seven times.)

Eating primarily insects during the breeding season, California Thrashers locate their arthropod prey by digging energetically in leaf litter and soft ground with those decurved bills (not with their feet, as towhees or other sparrows do), usually near cover. They can be conspicuously noisy when foraging, vigorously swiping loose duff and leaves aside (the eponymous “thrashing”) or even tossing clods and twigs and then probing with their bills. From late summer through winter, thrashers feed extensively on soft fruits (e.g., berries from poison oak, toyon, manzanita, and mistletoe).

As summer winds down, a hush falls over the avian symphony hall. Yet lurking off-stage, warming up his syrinx, the California Thrasher clears his throat and begins his mixtape aria anew. At the end of this year’s breeding season, he reminds us that the next breeding season lies just over the horizon.

To learn more about this California specialty, go to https://bvaudubon.org/news/.
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BIRDING LEO CARRILLO
Thursday, September 5 — 8 a.m.
We will be walking the Rancho Carrillo trails and exploring inside Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park.
Location: Park along the trailhead near 2925 Via Conquistador.
Leaders: Eve Martin, Patti Koger, and Jane Mygatt (jane.mygatt@gmail.com)

EL CORAZON GARRISON CREEK BIRD WALK
Wednesday, September 11 — 7:30 a.m.
Denise will be birding along El Corazon’s Garrison Creek Trail. There is a nice variety of hawks, songbirds, and waterfowl to be seen.
Directions: From the intersection of El Camino Real and Oceanside Blvd., go east on Oceanside Blvd., turn left (north) into the first gate. Park to the left.
Leader: Denise Riddle (driddle1855@att.net)

WHELAN LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY WALK
Saturday, September 7 — 8 a.m.
Join John and Denise for our regular monthly walk and bird survey at this beautiful sanctuary for resident and migratory waterfowl.
Directions: From I-5, take Hwy 76 east; turn left at Douglas Drive; continue to the light at North River Road; go left on North River Road. Pass through entrance gate and follow signs to the lake. Feel free to contact the leaders for directions.
Leaders: John Haddock (760-941-7824) and Denise Riddle (driddle1855@att.net)

STEVE BRAD’S TWO MONTHLY WALKS (DATES AND TIMES WILL VARY)
Join Steve for these surprise-location walks. When and where we go is based on recent reports and Steve’s personal surveying. Starting times and days will vary, so send Steve an email if you are interested in being on his notification list!
Leader: Steve Brad (stevanbrad@gmail.com)

SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK BIRD WALK
Saturday, September 21 — 8:30 a.m.
(Lower Crest Canyon)
We’ll be looking for various species of waterfowl, songbirds, and shorebirds.
Leader: John Haddock (760-941-7824)
FYI: The location of this walk alternates every month between Lower Crest Canyon and San Andres Drive.
Directions for Lower Crest Canyon— From I-5, take Via de la Valle west; left on Jimmy Durante Blvd.; left on San Dieguito Road. Drive east 1 mile to trailhead. (JAN, MAR, MAY, SEP, and NOV)
Directions for San Andres Drive— From I-5, take Via de la Valle east; go right on San Andres Drive to end of road. (FEB, APR, JUN, OCT, and DEC)

COASTAL 101 BIRDING
Saturday, September 28 — 9 a.m.
Please join us for this walk along Buena Vista Lagoon. We visit Maxton Brown Park, walk to the ocean and weir, and return to the Nature Center along Coast Highway.
Location: Buena Vista Nature Center, 2202 S. Coast Highway, Oceanside. Meet in the parking lot.
Leader: Tom Troy (760-420-7328)

BVAS LIAISON FOR HOLBROOK TRAVEL
Stan Walens is our new liaison for international travel with Holbrook Travel. Stan will be much more than a chaperone. With 40+ years of birding experience, and a special love of sea birds, Stan brings his expertise in birding to enhance our Migrating Birder Program.
Holbrook Travel combines birding itineraries with beautiful destinations and unique cultural experiences.
Holbrook Travel is a supporting partner in Audubon’s conservation work to strengthen bird-based tourism as a conservation and sustainable development tool. The tours developed from this initiative are designed to help protect key target areas along the flyways for migratory and local species.

UPCOMING PELAGIC TRIPS!
Sunday September 22 (7 a.m. to 7 p.m.)
Sunday Oct. 13 (7 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
Fall migration will be underway!
Visit https://sandiegopelagics.com/ for registration and details.
Call to Action....

The Wild after Wildfires

At the BVAS June meeting, Maya Khosla showed her film about forest rejuvenation after wildfires. The title “Searching for the Gold Spot” refers to the beautiful yellow crown patch on the male Black-backed Woodpecker. This species and a variety of flora and fauna thrive in charred forests and help to start the natural process of forest recovery. However, the film also shows forest management practices that allow logging in northern California after wildfires—based on the unsubstantiated belief that taking out scorched trees will facilitate forest restoration and reduce future fire damage to surrounding communities.

Governor Newsom, the Department of House and Urban Development (HUD), and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy plan to undertake destructive logging in the Stanislaus National Forest in a project misleadingly called “Rim Fire Restoration.” This effort will use $70 million of taxpayer money meant to assist communities affected by wildfires.

Action Needed: Please contact Gov. Newsom’s Natural Resources Secretary, Wade Crowfoot (secretary@resources.ca.gov), or the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (sierranevada.ca.gov/contact-info) and urge them to withdraw the Rim Fire clearcut scheme. Encourage them instead to use the allocated $70-million HUD-disaster-relief grant to help the town of Paradise recover from the Camp Fire.

Why Do Birds Matter?

Six years ago, Audubon asked people to chime in with their thoughts about why birds matter to them. Now we are asking our readers. Be it poetry or prose, we hope you’ll share your ideas. Send your quote, in 50 words or less, to the email address at the bottom of this page.

Please type “BVAS: Birds Matter” on the subject line of the email.

Who knows? You may read your words in a future Lagoon Flyer.

mr.leakey@gmail.com
Notes From the Garden Crew

Some of our native plants are truly amazing since they flower after the rains and keep on blooming through the worst of our annual drought months.

Goldenbush grows all around the Nature Center. Just when it is so hot and dry nothing could be happy, it blooms all yellow and bright.

Another late summer star is the buckwheat. It has been blooming all along but as the flowers fade, they turn into beautiful dried bouquets that stay on the plant into the fall.

Hopefully, you saw the purple blooms of Marsh Fleabane along the trail out in the lagoon in August. Beautiful!

Ironically, keeping the trail wild takes a dedicated team of volunteers. They can always use your help.

Please consider joining the Garden Crew on Mondays at 10:00 a.m.

KIDS’ CORNER
AT THE NATURE CENTER

Joey and Johnny’s Clubhouse
Sunday, Sept. 15 from 1-4 p.m.
Create your own natural bird feeder using yummy ingredients and a little creativity.

Preschool Nature Storytime
Monday, September 23 at 10 a.m.
Bring your little ones (ages 3-5 years) to our monthly program. The focus for September will be birds.

Questions? Call Sally at 760-525-2351.
BVAS QUICK CALENDAR

Mon. Sept. 2     Garden Crew     10:00 a.m.
Thurs. Sept. 5    Birding Leo Carrillo     8:00 a.m.
Fri. Sept. 6     Nature Guides Meeting     10:00 a.m.
Sat. Sept. 7      Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary     8:00 a.m.
Mon. Sept. 9     Garden Crew     10:00 a.m.
Wed. Sept. 11    El Corazon Garrison Creek     7:30 a.m.
Sun. Sept. 15    Joey & Johnny’s Clubhouse     1:00 p.m.
Mon. Sept. 16    Garden Crew     10:00 a.m.
Wed. Sept. 18    Program     6:30 p.m.
       “An Evening With Guy McCaskie”
Fri. Sept. 20    Board Meeting     9:00 a.m.
Sat. Sept. 21    San Dieguito River Park     8:30 a.m.
Sun. Sept. 22    *Pelagic Trip (12 hours)     7:00 a.m.
Mon. Sept. 23    Preschool Nature Storytime     10:00 a.m.
Mon. Sept. 23    Garden Crew     10:00 a.m.
Sat. Sept. 28    Coastal 101 Birding     9:00 a.m.
Mon. Sept. 30    Garden Crew     10:00 a.m.

Save the date:
Sun. Oct. 13    *Pelagic Trip (10 hours)     7:00 a.m.
*Must be signed up. See page 3.

For Steve Brad’s walks, days and times will vary. If interested, send Steve an email: stevanbrad@gmail.com

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Photo by Nancy Christensen.
Cassin’s Auklet, seen on a 2018 pelagic trip. Sign up for this year’s trip. See page 3.

Center Hours
Sunday: 1 - 4 p.m.
Monday: CLOSED
Tuesday - Saturday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.