Enriching Your Birding Experiences

With Smartphone Technology

with Gautam Apte

Observing wildlife can be magical. For many of us, the memories are woven in time or place and punctuated by a special person who guided or shared the experience. But there is also a personal, Sherlock-Holmesian thrill to both the mystery and the chase. And in that quest, birders want the best tools. Enter the smart phone, smarter apps, and the information explosion.

October’s speaker is our guide to using these tools and resources selectively and effectively. A variety of apps are available; e.g., data recording apps like eBird, various field guide and bird identification, weather apps that can be used to predict migration movements and even help find vagrant rarities. We will learn how to use some of these apps and their corresponding web versions. You can improve your skills, target specific species, observe more birds, and generally get more enjoyment out of your birding experience.

Gautam Apte comes to us via Zoom from the state of Ohio, where he began birding at a young age. He is currently a student at The Ohio State University in Columbus, where he is the Vice President of Conservation for the Ornithology Club. He also serves as an eBird reviewer for several counties in Ohio. In addition to managing the avian window collision monitoring program at OSU, he conducts research on influences of migratory behavior in Song Sparrows. In the summers, he has worked as a field biologist collecting data for various research studies across the country. In his free time, he enjoys flight photography, good food and beer, and birding with friends wherever he can.

Grab your phone, put on your thinking cap, and join us on Zoom. Novice or expert, you’ll be glad you did.
Duck? Duck? Coot!

Easily North America’s most aquatic and most widely distributed member of the rail family, the American Coot ranks as one of the continent’s most familiar wetland inhabitants. The plump, dark-gray bird, with its black head and neck and distinctive white bill and frontal shield, vaguely resembles a charcoal gray teapot with a white spout. Fiery red eyes signal its pugnacious nature. This raucous and querulous bird often announces its presence by loud grunting and croaking calls from deep within cattails, reeds, and bulrush. One call comically brings to mind an old-fashioned bicycle bugle horn.

People often think a coot is a duck, but this aquatic rail has a number of differences. One of the most interesting differences comes with the feet. A duck has webbed feet while a coot’s foot features lobed toes. These fleshy lobes fold under as the foot lifts; as a result, they don’t interfere with walking or running on dry land. When the coot hits the water, they then unfold and function as webbed feet, letting it swim as true web-footed birds do and to dive to six feet or more to pull up the aquatic vegetation.

Coots inhabit San Diego County year-round. They breed in freshwater marshes and ponds that offer both stands of emergent vegetation and open water for foraging. In fact, abundant cattails and the lack of tidal influx at the several basins of our very own Buena Vista Lagoon make them the best coot habitat among the county’s coastal wetlands. Beginning as early as mid-August, large numbers of coots arrive to winter here too, congregating in floating flocks (“rafts”) numbering in the hundreds or even thousands.

Wintering coots depart in April for their breeding grounds, so catch them now while they offer easy spotting.

To learn more about this water-loving rail and other ways it differs from ducks, go to bvaudubon.org/news.
RANCHO CARRILLO TRAIL  
(Carlsbad)  
Friday, Oct 1 — 8:00 a.m.  
**Note: There are a few changes.**  
We will meet on the first Friday of the month and remain along the Rancho Carrillo Trail (not venture into Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park).  
**Location:** Park along the trailhead near 2955 Via Conquistador.  
**Leaders:** Eve Martin, Kathy Aldern, and Jane Mygatt (jane.mygatt@gmail.com)

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

WHELAN LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY  
(Oceanside)  
Saturday, Oct 2 — 8:00 a.m.  
**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 John for directions.  
**Leaders:** John Haddock (760-941-7824) and Denise Riddle (driddle1855@att.net)

COASTAL 101 BIRDING  
(Oceanside)  
Saturday, October 30 — 9:00 a.m.  
We start along the Buena Vista Lagoon, visit Maxton Brown Park, travel 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)

SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK (Del Mar)  
Saturday, Oct 16 — 8:30 a.m.  
FYI: The location alternates every month between Lower Crest Canyon and San Andres Drive.  
**Directions for San Andres Drive**— From I-5, take Via de la Valle east; go right on San Andres Drive to end of road.  
**Leader:** John Haddock (760-941-7824)

EL CORAZON GARRISON CREEK  
(Oceanside)  
Wednesday, Oct 13 — 7:30 a.m.  
**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)

Light-footed Ridgway’s Rail (Rallus obsoletus levipes) are usually secretive, living most of their lives concealed in dense vegetation. This one came out in the early morning to forage. As omnivores feeding primarily on crustaceans, they will take a variety of other invertebrates, fish, and seeds. Much of its prey is swallowed whole, and pellets of indigestible materials are later regurgitated.  

SAN DIEGO COUNTY AVIAN RECORDS  
Paul Lehman’s extensive data file that includes avian records from late 2002 to mid-July 2021 is available on the BVAS website.  
https://bvaudubon.org/birding-resources/

BVAS HAS A YOUTUBE CHANNEL  
We highlight some of the birds seen in North San Diego County under the playlist “San Diego County Birds.” A second playlist, “Around Buena Vista Lagoon,” focuses on the lagoon’s nature center trail in six episodes of “On the Trail with Tina” for all age groups and a longer video designed for elementary-aged students called “Animals of the Lagoon.”  
We invite you to subscribe to our channel!
Piercing the Smoke Screen, Exposing the Truth, and Seeing the Possibilities

To save Oceanside’s farmland and protect the environment, the Buena Vista Audubon Society (BVAS) has joined a coalition of local conservation groups that support the revision of the Oceanside Draft South Morro Hills Community Plan (SMHCP). The Plan currently states that it protects farmland. But in actuality, it promotes sprawl development that would cause an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and a burden on taxpayers. A PowerPoint presentation has been prepared to help residents understand what is in the SMHCP and how it can be revised to preserve farmland and reduce environmental impacts. This will be presented to BVAS members on Tuesday, September 21, at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom. To receive the link please RSVP to Bob Crowell at kbcrowell1@att.net. The link will be sent to you just ahead of the presentation.

If you are unable to participate, there will be another opportunity to learn more about this issue. Preserve Calavera will host a separate Zoom meeting on Wednesday, October 13 at 7:00 p.m. You will need to register for this event in advance at the link below.

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtcuqrDkvH9zY1PFstlDjclxZQaKbJru5

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

Name:_______________________________________ Email:____________________________________

Address:______________________________________________________________________________

Gifts of $25 or more qualify for an annual membership.

Amount:_______________ Choose payment type: Check (enclosed) _____ Visa _____ MC _____

*Credit Card Info: #__________________________________________ Expiration date: ___________

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

Or donate online at bvaudubon.org and click on Donate/Join.

Buena Vista Audubon Society is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are tax-deductible.
**BVAS Art Sale Fundraiser**

There’s still time to order a free-standing animal silhouette sculpture, created by local artist Paul Weber! Choose an animal in the pose of your choice, either to be painted or left natural metal. These sculptures can be yours for a $200 donation to Buena Vista Audubon Society. Just email us at bvlagoon@gmail.com to start the ordering process.

Examples are pictured to get you started. Your piece of art may take 1-3 months to be completed. Hurry, order now!

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**It’s Time to Plan Your Native Garden**

Spring planting starts with the rains that are right around the corner! Here’s a simple way to create your plan.

1) Draw a shape that looks like your yard. Label the 4 directions. (The compass on your phone can help.)
2) Drop some balls to see where the high and low points are. Label your diagram.
3) Next, label where rain spouts come off the roof. Connect them with a wavy line to the low points.
4) Dig some holes and fill them with water. If the water remains for more than 15 minutes you’ve got clay.
5) Go to [https://gardenplanner.calscape.org/](https://gardenplanner.calscape.org/) and enter your address. It will offer you a starting plant list.
6) Place your selected trees, bushes, and ground covers around according to soil type, moisture (near those wavy lines and irrigation) and sun exposure (e.g., south and west versus north and east sides of the house). If you already have a sprinkler system, keep it and just put higher heads on it.

Bring your drawing and questions to the Garden Crew. We meet every Monday from 9:00-11:00 a.m. outside the Nature Center.

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**POTPOURRI**

**PRESCHOOL NATURE STORYTIME**

**Monday, October 25.**

**10:00-10:45 a.m.**

This month’s theme is “Amazing Spiders.” We will walk along the trail looking for spiders and their webs. Bring a towel or blanket to sit on. Meet in front of the Nature Center. Masks are required if you use the indoor facilities.

We look forward to seeing you.

Questions?
Call Sally Bickerton,
760-525-2351.

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BVAS QUICK CALENDAR

Fri. Oct. 1  Rancho Carrillo Trail  8:00 a.m.
Fri. Oct. 1  Nature Guide Meeting  10:00 a.m.
Sat. Oct. 2  Whelan Lake Bird Sanct.  8:00 a.m.
Mon. Oct. 4  Garden Crew  9:00 a.m.
Mon. Oct. 11 Garden Crew  9:00 a.m.
Wed. Oct. 13 El Corazon Garrison Creek  7:30 a.m.
Fri. Oct. 15 Board Meeting  9:00 a.m.
Sat. Oct. 16 San Dieguito River Park  8:30 a.m.
Mon. Oct. 18 Garden Crew  9:00 a.m.
Wed. Oct. 20 Program on Zoom  7:00 p.m.
    “Enriching Your Birding Experiences With Smartphone
    Technology” with Gautam Apte  7:00 p.m.
Mon. Oct. 25 Preschool Nature Storytime  10:00 a.m.
Mon. Oct. 25 Garden Crew  9:00 a.m.
Sat. Oct. 30 Coastal 101 Birding  9:00 a.m.

For Steve Brad’s Twice-Monthly Bird Outings, join his notification list by emailing stevanbrad@gmail.com.

Masks are still required inside our nature center. Please visit responsibly.