Pelagic Birding in San Diego

with Stan Walens

Pelagic (ocean) birding trips can seem daunting—a moving vessel with distant dots zooming past. Identifying anything seems nearly impossible. How does one go about pelagic birding? Most of us have figured out how to sort out crows from ravens, but what about Northern Fulmars from Pomarine Jaegers? What should we look for and how can we improve our odds of successful identification?

Fortunately, our May presenter will provide a simple primer on all we need to know about pelagic birding. Noted San Diego County pelagic bird expert Stan Walens will talk us through a virtual pelagic birding trip, showing us the birds found off the coast of San Diego. He will teach us the sometimes subtle clues that lead to a positive identification, offering tips on what to wear, what to bring, and where to position ourselves on the boat. The evening promises to be an informative look at the challenges and rewards that await the San Diego birder who is willing to cast off in search of new birds and new adventures.

Stan Walens has been birding since college, participating in many birding surveys and tracking bird migration. He became an avid seawatcher after moving to San Diego about 40 years ago. On many mornings you can find him at La Jolla Cove, scanning for seabirds from shore.

Come join us as Stan helps us take the first step in expanding our birding horizons. After his talk, if you are inspired to embark on a pelagic birding trip out of San Diego, see the schedule listed on page 3 or visit sandiegopelagics.com.
Happy as a Lark…Believe Me

A Horned Lark resembles a large, grayish brown, ground-hugging sparrow with a rakish facial pattern, a somewhat flattened and ovular body (as if the bird has been slightly stepped on), and a long tail. The “horns”—actually feather tufts on the top of its head—can be raised or lowered. The adult male can be readily identified by his black face mask and broad black “necklace.” In some areas, the throat is a bit yellow, just to add a splash of color. The female has a similar pattern, but the colors and contrasts are duller and she rarely raises her feathery “horns.” Except when alert, its posture is generally horizontal and crouched.

Living primarily in open, barren country, Horned Larks prefer areas with bare ground and vegetation only a few inches high. The barer the ground, the more Horned Larks like it. When flushed, a low-flying flock flows in a ground-hugging sheet. They breed in a variety of these drab, harsh areas, from deserts to alpine habitats. This range of breeding preferences is perfectly reflected in their scientific name: *Eremophila* (from Greek, “desert-loving”) *alpestris* (from Latin, “belonging to the mountains”).

The Horned Lark’s patchy distribution in San Diego County shows the fragmentation of its preferred habitat here. Major populations centers include the coastal strand, including salt flats around the coastal lagoons; arid grasslands in the Warner Valley (e.g., Lake Henshaw); and sandy desert floors and dry lake beds in the Anza-Borrego Desert.

Horned Larks are famous for their flight songs, delivered high in the air during a floating, fluttering display flight. The song is an ethereal and somewhat ventriloqual tiny-bell-like jingle. Two or three breathy chirps are followed by a compressed string of clear, high-pitched notes that climb the scale as they accelerate. This singing in flight presumably arose as a way to defend a territory in open habitat with no elevated perches. Indeed, their musical, tinkling songs ring out unhindered—a lovely contrast to their rather desolate surroundings.

To learn more about the Horned Lark, visit https://bvaudubon.org/news.
RANCHO CARRILLO TRAIL (Carlsbad)
Friday, May 6 — 7:30 a.m.
We will remain along the Rancho Carrillo Trail going west to the bridge and then returning.
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 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, May 7 — 8 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)

SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK (Del Mar)
Saturday, May 21 — 8:30 a.m.
FYI: The location 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 for one mile to the trailhead.
Leader: John Haddock (760-941-7824)

EL CORAZON GARRISON CREEK
(Oceanside)
Wednesday, May 11 — 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: Eve Martin will sub for Denise.

COASTAL 101 BIRDING (Oceanside)
2202 S Coast Highway
Saturday, May 28 — 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 Hwy.
Location: Buena Vista Nature Center, 2202 S. Coast Hwy., Oceanside. Meet in the parking lot.
Leader: Tom Troy (760-420-7328)

SAN DIEGO PELAGIC TRIP
Sunday, Apr 24 — 5.5-6 hrs
Saturday, May 14 — 10-12 hrs
Sunday, Jun 12 — 10-12 hrs
Saturday, Jul 16 — 10-12 hrs
Saturday, Aug 13 — 10-12 hrs
Sunday, Sep 11 — 10-12 hrs
Saturday, Oct 1 — 10-12 hrs
Saturday, Oct 22 — 5.5-6 hrs

All trips start at 7:00 a.m. and are on board the 80-foot "Legacy" (a whale-watching boat) out of Seaforth Sportfishing Landing in Mission Bay. Trip details, lists of expected and possible species for each trip, and past trip reports can be viewed at www.sandiegopelagics.com. Trips may be booked anytime online at www.sdwhale.com or call Seaforth Sportfishing Landing (619-224-3383) during regular working hours (7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.).

Sooty Shearwaters - Jane Mygatt
Executive Director’s Corner
with Natalie Shapiro

I groaned and struggled with a 200-pound clump of cattails; at the other end of the clump were two tired men, waist-deep in water. "Heave-ho!" we shouted, yanking the clump from the duck pond onto the shore. It was a warm Saturday afternoon, and a group of stalwart volunteers was assisting BVAS board member and landscape contractor Danny DiMento and his crew in a large and daunting project — removing floating cattail clumps that had overtaken the duck pond by the BVAS trail. Using two small boats, rope, and a team of strong volunteers, the crew cleared four dumpsters of cattails from the pond. The result is amazing — birds have access to new areas for foraging and nesting and human visitors have enhanced viewing opportunities. Thank you to our volunteers, Danny and his crew, and the Malk Nature Fund for generously funding the project!

Buena Vista’s Auction Returns!

Calling all artists! We encourage you to create nature-inspired artworks for our annual fundraiser. Items may include bird houses, bird feeders, bee houses, paintings, sculptures, quilts, or other masterpieces. We ask that you donate no more than two items of a kind in order to keep these treasures special.

This year the event will be indoors and outdoors (weather permitting) on Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Due to storage concerns, we need to limit the drop-off dates. Please bring your contributions to the Nature Center between September 10 - October 1.

We look forward to seeing your latest creations!
Endangered Species Day

Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center
2202 S. Coast Hwy., Oceanside

Saturday, May 21 – 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Free for the whole family!

Parking is limited. Please park on the side streets near the center.

Buena Vista Summer Camp Returns!

This camp focuses on outdoor education and conservation. Campers will have fun participating in nature lessons, arts and crafts, music, and games. Come join us!

Sign up and register by July 1 at the Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center. Enrollment is limited.

Dates: July 18-22
Ages: 6 - 9 years
Cost: $125

KIDS’ CORNER AT THE NATURE CENTER

Phoebe and Sonya’s Clubhouse
Sunday, May 8 from 10:00 a.m.-noon.
Create a paper plate bird nest.
All materials will be provided.

Preschool Nature Storytime
Monday, May 23 from 10:00-10:45 a.m.
Preschoolers will read, sing, and learn about the life cycle of frogs this month. We also plan on walking to the lagoon to listen and look for frogs. Bring your mask and a towel to sit on.
Questions? Call Sally, 760-525-2351
(Reminder: This program is held on the 4th Monday of each month which is not always the last Monday.)
**BVAS QUICK CALENDAR**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon. May 2</td>
<td>Garden Crew</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. May 6</td>
<td>Rancho Carrillo Trail</td>
<td>7:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Nature Guide Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sat. May 7</td>
<td>Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary</td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sun. May 8</td>
<td>Phoebe &amp; Sonya’s Club.</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Mon. May 9</td>
<td>Garden Crew</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Wed. May 11</td>
<td>El Corazon Garrison Creek</td>
<td>7:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sat. May 14</td>
<td>SD Pelagic Trip (see p. 3 for times)</td>
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<td>Mon. May 16</td>
<td>Garden Crew</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. May 18</td>
<td>Program on Zoom: Pelagic Birding in San Diego with Stan Walens</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Fri. May 20</td>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sat. May 21</td>
<td>Endangered Species Day</td>
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<td>Garden Crew</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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For **Steve Brad’s Twice-Monthly Bird Outings**, join his notification list by emailing stevanbrad@gmail.com.

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**Buena Vista Audubon**

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
2202 S. Coast Highway  
Oceanside, CA 92054  
760-439-BIRD = (760-439-2473)  
email: bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net  
website: www.bvaudubon.org

![Black-vented Shearwater by Jane Mygatt](image)

Learn how to identify these and other pelagic birds in our monthly program. See page 1. Hope to see you on the open water! (Page 3)

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**Nature Center Hours:**  
Tuesday - Sunday 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Buena Vista Audubon Society and Preserve Calavera are hosting

**Endangered Species Day Spring Open House**

Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center  
2202 S. Coast Hwy., Oceanside

Saturday, May 21, 2022  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Meet a tortoise  
Dissect an Owl Pellet... create a Bug Hotel... take a Scavenger Hunt!

Free! Fun for the whole family!

Parking is very limited. Please walk, carpool, or find nearby street parking.
Ecuador with Buena Vista Audubon Society

Birding the Chocó-Andes Region: Western and Eastern Slopes of Ecuador

10 DAYS | October 16-25, 2022

$3,295 per person plus airfare, based on 8 participants  Info/Register: http://holbrook.travel/buenavista-ec22

An extraordinary abundance of bird life inhabits the forests of northwestern Ecuador. Amid cloud forest, rainforest, páramo, and the eastern and western slopes of the Andes Mountains, you’ll seek out as many of the country’s 1,640-plus species as possible with assistance from your expert guide on this 10-day adventure. In particular, much of the avifauna you’ll encounter is endemic to the Chocó region, while other species are more easily found here than any place else. Along the way, visit the workshop of a famous Ecuadorian ornithologist and artist, view the snow-capped Antisana Volcano, and straddle the equator at the Middle of the World Monument.

Program Highlights

- Explore diverse habitats at varying elevations in national and private reserves, including Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve, the subtropical rainforest at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, páramo ecosystem at Antisana Ecological Reserve, and more.
- Seek out some of Ecuador’s approximately 130 hummingbird species, including the Giant Hummingbird, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, and Glowing Puffleg.
- Identify other target species like the Andean Condor, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Toucan Barbet, Chocó Trogon, and dozens of tanagers.

What’s Included?

- Bilingual birding guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals

Contact Stan Walens stan.walens@gmail.com or Debbie@holbrooktravel.com

holbrooktravel.com | 800-451-7111