Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary: Protecting and Promoting Southern California Wildlands

with Sandy DeSimone

The National Audubon Society’s Starr Ranch Sanctuary, located in Southern Orange County, is one of the few places in Southern California that still looks as it did hundreds of years ago. Containing coastal sage scrub, native grasslands, oak woodlands, chaparral, and riparian woodlands, the land was purchased in 1927 by millionaire Eugene Grant Starr to be used as a secluded and rustic hunting retreat. As a result, 4,000 acres of open space was preserved as a wildlife sanctuary and ecological research station.

Today, access to the sanctuary is limited, keeping the land wild for the benefit of the plants and animals that thrive there. Additionally, Starr Ranch has become a Mecca for land managers from all over Southern California who visit to hear about its research-based, sustainable land management practices.

Our speaker, Sandy DeSimone, has a passion for native plants. After completing doctoral research on coastal sage scrub and working at the Sharon Audubon Center in Connecticut, she found her way to Starr Ranch. There she directs the education, research, land management, and volunteer programs. She and her husband Peter live on-site, where he acts as Manager and both act as caretakers. At the sanctuary, Sandy has developed the Field Ecology Programs that integrate ecological research and education. People of all ages participate in the program, providing a hands-on experience in field research.

Please join us for this uplifting introduction to Starr Ranch Sanctuary and the wonderful work being done there.
Small but Mighty—
The Northern Saw-whet Owl

At a mere eight inches tall, the Northern Saw-whet Owl shows a distinctive white V stretching above its eyes. With a chunky body, stubby tail, and round tuftless head, its overall shape and size recall a large avocado (narrow end pointing down). The Northern Saw-whet Owl inhabits all of San Diego County’s mountains with coniferous woodlands but is more common on Palomar and Hot Springs mountains than farther south. Indeed, in the coniferous forests on these mountains, it is the most numerous owl species. Far less frequently seen (or heard) than a screech-owl, this is nevertheless the only small tuftless owl likely to be encountered over most of North America.

As with most owls, this nocturnal predator shows a strong preference for small mammals, particularly *Peromyscus* mice (e.g., deer mouse, California mouse, brush mouse), as their primary food source. From low perches, they spot their prey with superb hearing and low-light vision then dart forward on silent wings to make the catch. Like many other owls, they have asymmetric ears, which allows them to accurately triangulate their prey’s location by hearing alone.

This tiny owl with a catlike face and bright yellow eyes is practically bursting with attitude and adorableness. If you’re ever lucky enough to see a Northern Saw-whet Owl, you might be tempted to slip it into your shirt pocket and take it home with you. If you’re a little mammal moving around at night, though, you most definitely won’t feel so warmly toward this small, winsome, and ferocious tiger of an owl.

Northern Saw-whet Owls nest in tree cavities but will also use nest boxes. To follow a season spent monitoring a nesting Northern Saw-whet Owl and her brood in a nest box, go to [www.bvaudubon.org/news](http://www.bvaudubon.org/news).
SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK (Del Mar)
Third Saturday of the month — 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.
Directions for Lower Crest Canyon— From I-5, take Via del la Valle west; left on Jimmy Durante Blvd.; left on San Dieguito Road. Drive east 1 mile to trailhead.
Leader: John Haddock (760-941-7824)
Note: Call John to find out if these outings will be offered this summer and where to meet.

COASTAL 101 BIRDING (Oceanside)
2202 S Coast Highway
Note: Canceled for the summer. Tom will resume the walks in September.

SAN DIEGO PELAGIC TRIP SCHEDULE
Sunday, June 12 — 10-12 hrs
Saturday, July 16 — 10-12 hrs
Saturday, August 13 — 10-12 hrs
www.sandiegopelagics.com
During breeding season, **SNOWY EGRETS** develop long, wispy feathers on their backs, necks, and heads.

**GREAT BLUE HERONS** have specialized feathers on their chest that continually grow and fray, creating a “powder down.” Herons comb this powder with a fringed claw on their middle toes to remove fish slime and other oils from their feathers.

Adult **YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS** have yellow crowns and bold head patterns, although it may take 3-4 years to attain the full coloration of their plumage.

This second- or third-year **BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** has not attained the long occipital plumes or the uniformly glossy greenish black back and scapular feathers of an adult.

Pictured below are only a few of the various herons, night-herons, and egrets that can be seen during summer around the lagoons and waterways throughout the county. Perhaps no single feature sets birds apart as much as their feathers. A bird’s plumage (array of feathers) is one of the most intricate and complex body coverings in nature.

Need an escape? Ecuador | Birding the Chocó-Andes Region: Western and Eastern Slopes with Buena Vista Audubon

October 16 — 25, 2022
holbrooktravel.com

Andean Condor, Holbrook stock photo
**The Library is Open!**
The lending library at Buena Vista Audubon has reopened, thanks to volunteer Jean Booth. Members of BVAS are welcome to come visit our little nature-based library. Most books may be checked out for a month. Reference books may be used while at the library.

**Buena Vista Audubon is touched by the generosity of the friends and families who give in the name of their loved ones.** In memory of David Rodrick — Thank you.

**Buena Vista’s Auction Returns**
**Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**
We encourage you to create nature-inspired artwork for our annual fundraiser. Items can include bird houses, bird feeders, bee houses, paintings, sculptures, quilts, or other works of art. We ask that you donate no more than two items of a kind in order to keep these treasures special.

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.

**Calling All Green and Brown Thumbs**
Every Monday morning from 9:00-11:00, 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.

**Buena Vista Audubon**
**Summer Camp Returns!**
It’s time to sign your child up for Buena Vista’s camp. This camp focuses on outdoor education and conservation. Campers will have fun participating in nature lessons, arts and crafts, music, and games. Sign up and register by July 1 at the Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center. Enrollment is limited.

**Dates:** July 18 - 22  
**Time:** 9:00-12:00  
**Ages:** 6 - 9 years  
**Class size:** 18  
**Cost:** $125  
**Questions?** Call Dovie at 760-723-0915.

**KIDS’ CORNER**
Phoebe and Sonya’s Clubhouse  
**Sunday, June 12 from 10:00 a.m.-noon.**
Come learn how to make origami cranes. Once you master this folded bird, you'll be making them out of every scrap of paper in your home!

**Preschool Nature Storytime**  
**Monday, June 27 from 10:00-10:45 a.m.**
Preschoolers will read, sing, and learn about ducks. We’ll walk around the lagoon and look for ducks. Bring a towel to sit on.
**Questions?** Call Sally, 760-525-2351.
**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>Fri. June 3</td>
<td>Birding Leo Carrillo</td>
<td>7:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Fri. June 3</td>
<td>Nature Guides Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. June 4</td>
<td>Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary</td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Mon. June 6</td>
<td>Garden Club</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Wed. June 8</td>
<td>El Corazon Garrison Creek</td>
<td>7:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Sun. June 12</td>
<td>Pelagic Trip</td>
<td>See p. 3 for details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. June 12</td>
<td>Clubhouse</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. June 15</td>
<td>General Meeting “Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary”</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Fri. June 17</td>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. June 18</td>
<td>San Dieguito River Park</td>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Mon. June 27</td>
<td>Preschool Nature Storytime</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Mon. July 18</em></td>
<td>BVAS Nature Camp begins</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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* Must be signed up ahead of time.

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

*Whooo is looking at you?* Read about the Northern Saw-whet Owl on page 2.
Photo by Harry Colquhoun

**Nature Center Hours:**
Tuesday - Sunday 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.