Buena Vista Audubon Society

LAGOON FLYER

VOLUME 55 / NUMBER 8 / October 2026

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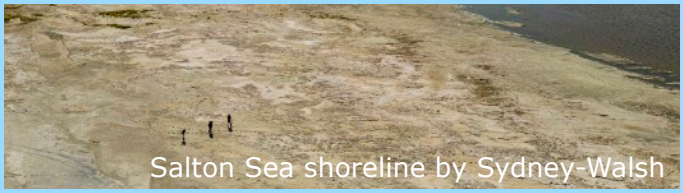
Protecting the Birds, People and Habitats of the Salton Sea

Lauren Elachi
Wednesday, October 21
Social: 6:45 p.m., Program: 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

Lauren Elachi is the Southern California Program Director at Audubon California, where she leads on-the-ground, community-based conservation efforts that support birds and their habitats, protect public health, and expand access to nature for communities across the Southland. With a focus on California's desert landscapes and the Salton Sea, she brings her background in landscape architecture to develop and advocate for solutions at the intersection of ecology, community resilience, and infrastructure.

Snowy Plover by Sydney-Walsh

The Salton Sea – California's largest lake by surface area – is an irreplaceable ecosystem with a rich history and unique role within the lives of migrating shorebirds. This presentation will give an overview of the history of the Salton Sea and Audubon California's restoration, education, and advocacy work on this special place. It will also cover the latest trends in shifting habitat conditions and shorebird populations at the Sea and saline lakes across the Intermountain West, putting the work in context of broader issues of continued drought and uncertain water supplies. Come learn about one of the most important places for birds in California!



Salton Sea shoreline by Sydney-Walsh

RSVP for the program: We've moved to an online form! To join our Zoom program, please click here to RSVP by Monday, October 19, at 9:00 a.m. and fill out the Google form. You will receive the event link via email a few days before the program begins.

LET'S GO BIRDING!

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Grab your binoculars and join one or more of our free guided birding tours. New birders are always welcome!

Black-footed Albatross by Nancy Christensen

WHELAN LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY (Oceanside)
Saturday, Oct 3 — 8:00 a.m.
Gate is only open 7:45 - 8:00 a.m.; please be on time!
Join us as we explore various areas around the lake. Easy to moderate 2+ miles, some steep areas. Restroom.
Location: 3850 N River Road.
Leaders: Denise Riddle (driddle1855@att.net), Patti Langen (patti.langenzoo@gmail.com)

SEEKING NEW BIRDERS!
Eve Martin is hosting a small, friendly group to introduce newcomers to the world's best hobby—birding! The class is designed for first-time birders. Binoculars will be available for your use. Locations vary.
To join Eve's First-time Birders event, sign up on Meetup.com for The San Diego Beginning Birders group at https://www.meetup.com/the-san-diego-beginning-birders/.
Location: Varies.
Leader: Eve Martin (message via meetup.com)

PELAGIC BOAT TRIPS
Go to **www.sandiegopelagics.com** for information and to make reservations. Ten-hour day trips are scheduled through October 2026.

EL CORAZON GARRISON CREEK (Oceanside)
Wednesday, Oct 14 — 7:30 a.m.
Easy flat trail, ~1+ mile.
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. No restrooms.
Leader: Denise Riddle (driddle1855@att.net)

STEVE BRAD'S BIRDING TRIPS
Join Steve for these surprise-location offerings that include a good dose of education on bird identification. When and where we go is Steve's choice! 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)

BIRDING WITH BARBARA
Saturday, Oct 17 — 8:00 a.m.
San Dieguito County Park in Solana Beach
This month we will explore the west side of San Dieguito County Park. Mostly flat areas with shade and one small hill; about 1 mile.
Location: Meet just inside the parking lot gate, located on the east side of Highland Drive, just north of Lomas Santa Fe Drive. There is free parking along the east side of Highland Drive, or if the gate is open, park inside for a small fee. Restrooms.
Leader: Barbara Swanson
(baswanson100@hotmail.com)

COASTAL 101 BIRDING (Oceanside)
2202 S Coast Highway
Saturday, Oct 31 — 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. Easy 1.5 miles.
Location: Buena Vista Nature Center, 2202 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside. Meet in the Nature Center parking lot.
Leader: Tom Troy (760-420-7328)

Kids' Nature Clubhouse

Sunday, Oct 11, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

October's clubhouse will be something to crow about! Come and celebrate this clever corvid and make a crow mask. Then join us on the nature trail to listen for crow caws and explore nature along the lagoon pond.

Questions? Call Sally, 760-525-2351

Lending Library

If you are looking for a nature-themed book, check out the lending library, located in the room on the west side of the Nature Center.

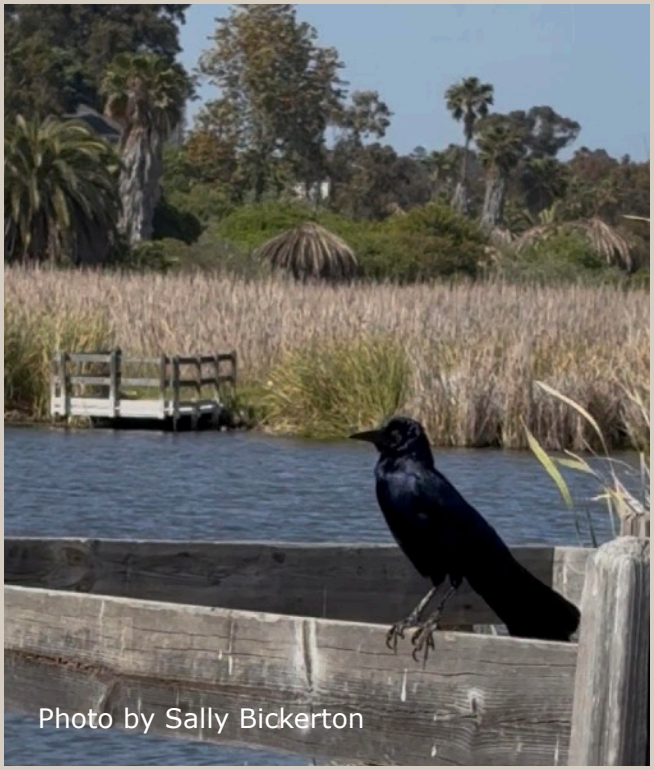


Photo by Sally Bickerton

Preschool Nature Storytime

Monday, Oct 26, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Theme: CROWS! Come read, sing, and learn about the American Crow this month at the Nature Center. After creating a paper crow to take home, we will walk the nature trail to see if we can spot any in the trees or flying by. Questions? Contact Sally at 760-525-2351.

Photo by Sally Bickerton

Nature Center Garden Crew

Join the Garden Crew every Monday from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. to help maintain the grounds and to learn about native plants. Our regular group of 10 volunteers would love to hear about your yard and answer your questions.

Joan Bockman, BVAS Garden Crew

Baccharis pilularis by Barbara Swanson

Nature Journaling

Sunday, Oct 18, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Join us for October's Nature Journaling at Cottonwood Creek Park in Encinitas, located at 95 North Vulcan Avenue in Encinitas. We will meet at the parking lot. This park has many native plants and a riparian area and is often a good place for birds and fall flowers. There are benches and restrooms.

Please bring your art supplies, a hat, and a portable chair. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara (baswanson100@hotmail.com) or Jane (jmushinsky@gmail.com).

Journal page by Barbara Swanson

Best Time to Prune to Avoid Nesting Birds: October and November

By Margot Lowe

So, your trees and bushes need pruning but you don't want to disturb your local birds. Generally speaking, to avoid nesting birds and summer heat, October and November are the best months for pruning.

Most of our native bird species nest in spring and summer, between February and August. This includes our year-round species as well as those that migrate and are only here to breed before returning to their wintering grounds.

However, a few species can nest outside of this spring-to-summer timeframe. When winter rains start early, like last year, Anna's Hummingbirds may take advantage of this and will start nesting in December and January. Raptors (e.g., hawks, owls) start nesting early in the year and often re-use a nest. Scaly-breasted Munia (non-native) will breed in the late summer and early fall, including September.

So, now is your window of opportunity to prune trees and shrubs. Go prune!

Birdability: Birding for Everybody and Every Body

By Patti Langen

The term "birdability" was coined by Virginia Rose, who began the movement in 2018 with the idea that birding is for everyone, regardless of ability level. Its mission is to "share the joys of birding with people who have disabilities, and ensure birding is accessible for everybody."

Buena Vista Audubon strives to provide a welcoming, inclusive environment for all. We have added more information on our website detailing accessible locations around North County. Please go to https://bvaudubon.org/bvas-and-birding/ for a list of accessible hotspots in Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Vista, and San Marcos (please note, the link will have the information after October 1).

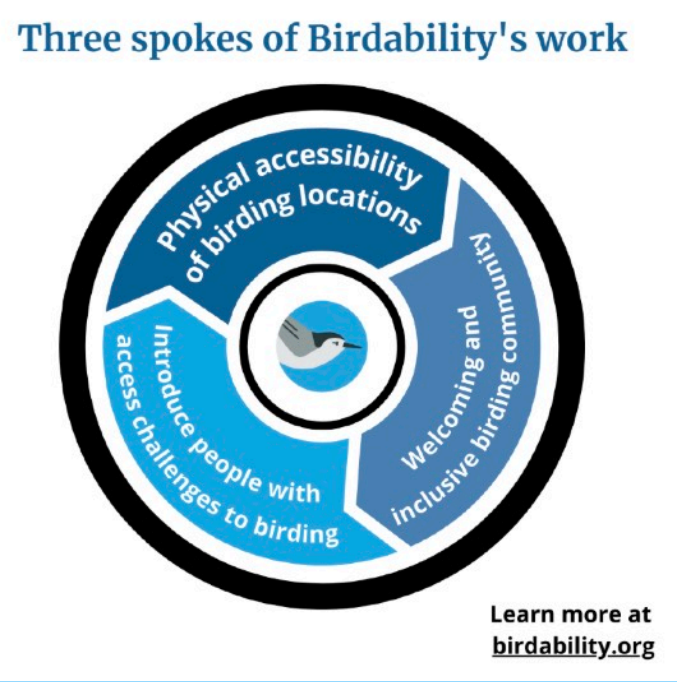
This year's Birdability Week takes place from October 19 through October 26. The theme for Birdability Week 2026 is "Bird Where You Are" and invites everyone to take note of birds around them, however it works best! There are many ways to bird and many different experience levels among birders.

Buena Vista Audubon is hosting a Birdability Week event this year

Location: Poinsettia Park, Carlsbad
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 8:00 a.m.
Sign up (limited space): Click HERE to fill out a registration form
Leader: Patti Langen
Registered participants will be provided with more detailed information about the meet-up.

If you are interested in leading Birdability walks or starting a Birdability group through Buena Vista Audubon Society, please email plangen@bvaudubon.org.

For more information about the Birdability movement, visit their website: https://www.birdability.org/



American Kestrel

By Tina Mitchell

My husband worked as an enumerator (a.k.a., a counter) at a Spring hawk watch in Colorado, along a ridge where raptors of many shapes and sizes passed by on their way to their northerly breeding grounds. One day when I had stopped by, streams of American Kestrels were passing through. The head enumerator pointed out that lots of dragonflies were in the area and he suggested we keep an eye on them as well. Lo and behold—a number of kestrels were adeptly snatching dragonflies in midair, pulling their talons to their beaks to munch as they winged past. Voilà—fast-food on the go, kestrel-style.

Range

North America's smallest, most widespread, and most numerous falcon, the American Kestrel breeds across most of North America, with a carve-out along the Gulf Coast, which lacks the open foraging grounds and suitable tree cavities the birds prefer for nesting. Of the 13 kestrel species throughout the world, this one is the only one found in the Western Hemisphere. American Kestrels occupy habitats in open country with short vegetation and scattered trees, frequently perching instead on utility wires along roadsides. The American Kestrel is widespread in San Diego County but most numerous in valley floors and broad canyons on the coastal slope. It is a year-round inhabitant here, but winter migrants from the north swell the numbers seasonally.

Female American Kestrel by Barbara Swanson

Identification

This colorful falcon is sexually dichromatic. The male's slate-blue head and wings contrast elegantly with his rusty-red back and tail with a single broad subterminal black band, while the wings and tail of the female are rufous with black bars. Both sexes show chests that are pale and lightly spotted below. Both sexes also display vertical slashes across a pale face—one below each eye and one further back on the head. Unlike most other raptors, the kids' juvenile plumage, acquired shortly before fledging, is very similar to the adults—so males and females can be distinguished early on. As with all birds of prey, the female is larger and more aggressive than the male; but even she weighs little more than four ounces. The kestrel is roughly the same size and shape as a Mourning Dove—but its larger head and slightly shorter, blunt tail make it easily distinguishable. A kestrel is slenderer and more delicately proportioned than its very similar, stockier, slightly longer, gray-brown cousin, the Merlin. But it is more colorful than the Merlin with a strong facial pattern, which can be easily distinguished in good light. Its call is a distinct, shrill, excited chatter, often heard before you've located the bird: kee-kee-kee-kee! (*Continued p. 7*)

Foraging and Nesting

The American Kestrel primarily feeds on insects and other arthropods and invertebrates (mainly in the summer) as well as on small mammals and a few birds during the winter. For a century, American Kestrels masqueraded as "sparrow hawks" (the same name used for a small European accipiter), despite the fact that birds constitute a meager 5% of their diets. Where no perches exist, kestrels can hover 20-30 feet above the ground (called "kiting"), facing into the wind, flapping subtly, and adjusting their long tails to stay in place to scan for prey.

The American Kestrel is an obligate cavity nester (nesting only in cavities). But they lack the ability to excavate their own cavities, making them "secondary cavity nesters." Instead, they rely on old woodpecker holes, natural tree hollows, rock crevices, and nooks in human-built structures. And they readily take to appropriately sized nest boxes. In San Diego County, though, where fan palms and Canary Island date palms have been planted, kestrels like to nest in the crevices among the frond bases or under the skirts of dead fronds. The female lays a clutch of typically 4–5 eggs; incubation lasts 26–32 days; and nestlings tend to fledge after 28–31 days, sometimes across several days. Adults continue to care for the young for 12–14 days post-fledging.

People can help kestrels specifically by installing appropriately-sized nest boxes in safe, pesticide-free areas and adding predator guards to the boxes to protect incubating adults and their young. Reducing or advocating against the use of rodenticides can also benefit kestrels and other raptors that can eat poison-laced rodents.

Naming

American Kestrel's scientific name is Falco sparverius. Falco comes from Latin falx—an agricultural implement with a curved blade like a sickle, referring to the bird's hooked beak. The species name, sparverius, derives from early Modern English (sparver) for a sparrow-hawk, reflecting the belief that this little falcon relied on sparrows and other small birds as prey (although, as noted above, birds make up very little of this predator's diet). In the common name, "American" differentiates it from the Eurasian Kestrel. And finally, "kestrel" originates from French crecelle, that language's name for this type of bird. Crecelle means a noisy bell, thought to refer to this bird's ringing "kee-kee-kee" call.

Conservation

In recent years, the American Kestrel has gained foraging habitat through the clearing of chaparral but lost it through the paving and landscaping of open ground. Overall, though, it is one of many grassland-nesting species that share a troubling trend: widespread population declines across North America since the mid-1960s. Researchers found that the American Kestrel population declined by 29% between 1986 and 2019. Over these three decades, the average annual brood size—about 2.84 young, including failed nests—did not show a corresponding decline. Instead, adult survival rates had a stronger influence on population growth than breeding-related factors did. Factors likely affecting adult survival include declines in arthropod prey, the use of rodenticides, exposure to neonicotinoid insecticides, and predation pressure.

BIRDHOUSE AUCTION FUNDRAISER

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BUENA VISTA AUDUBON SOCIETY'S ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT

BIRD HOUSE AND NATURE-THEMED ART SALE AND AUCTION

Saturday, October 17, 2026, 4:00-6:30 p.m.
Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center

- Bird houses, art work in many media, and more!
- Silent auction
- Live auction at 6:00 p.m.
- Troubadour Tom and others on guitar
- Appetizers, desserts, and a variety of drinks, including wine and beer

$20 per person (children under 18 free). Tickets go on sale Sept. 26 at BVAudubon.org

Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center 2202 S. Coast Highway, Oceanside (760) 439-2473

All proceeds benefit the Buena Vista Audubon Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to fostering an appreciation for the plants and animals of our community. *Consider alternate transportation as parking is limited.

MEMBERSHIP

Least Sandpiper by Patti Langen

Nature Center Quick Calendar

Evening Program – 3rd Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Garden Crew – Mondays, 9 – 11 a.m.
Nature Guides – 1st Friday, 10 a.m.
Birding – Pages 2 and 5
Kids' Nature Clubhouse – Page 3
Preschool Nature Storytime – Page 3
Birdhouse Auction – Page 8
Nature Journaling – Page 4
Membership – Page 9
BVAS Board Meeting – 3rd Friday

Please update Your Contact Information
Many email providers, such as Roadrunner, Gmail, Yahoo, Apple, Outlook, and others, either have or will be canceling or changing their services. Please ensure your email address is up-to-date. This will help us ensure you receive your Lagoon Flyer. Please contact Summer Gray at sgray@bvaudubon.org to make any changes in your contact information.

Newsletter Editors

Editor: Barbara Swanson

Copy Editor: Tina Mitchell

Become a Member!

Help support our work and become a member of BVAS. All donations of $25/year or more qualify as membership dues. As a BVAS member, you will receive the chapter newsletter, have voting privileges at our Annual Meeting and other member meetings, and enjoy the satisfaction of belonging to a group that supports nature in North County. All donations are tax-deductible.

https://bvaudubon.org/donate/

Our Mission: Conservation through education, advocacy, land management, and monitoring.

Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center
2202 S. Coast Highway
Oceanside, CA 92054 (760-439-2473)

Nature Center Hours
Monday - Sunday: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Closed on major holidays
Website: https://BVAudubon.org

BVAS honors and respectfully acknowledges the Payómkawichum (also known as the Luiseños), who are of the land on which the BVAS Nature Center stands. The Tribal Nations of San Diego County are the Payómkawichum, the Kumeyaay, the Cupeño, and the Cahuilla.