



San Diego Bird Alliance  
4010 Morena Blvd. Ste. 100  
San Diego, CA 92117



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# Sketches

## SAN DIEGO BIRD ALLIANCE

Celebrating 75 Years of Protecting Birds

FALL 2024 • VOLUME 76 • NUMBER 1



### A Life List Is More Than a Number—It's a Journey



It's a life full of stories, of moments of wonder, and life-enriching experiences. Come join us on the trail—there is so much to see.

*Eye to eye with a Yellow-crowned Night Heron*  
DS/24

When you become a **San Diego Bird Alliance member** and discover all the ways to enjoy our region's more than 400 bird species, other wildlife, and their habitats, you'll find yourself caught up on a journey that can last a lifetime! At any level, your membership helps us achieve our mission—and helps protect our natural heritage.

**Join or Renew as a Member.** Make monthly or yearly contributions, meet other bird enthusiasts, and enjoy member benefits, too.

**Leave a Legacy.**

Make plans today for a gift tomorrow and become part of our esteemed Golden Eagle Legacy Club.

**Make a Donation.** Make a tax-deductible gift to support our initiatives, our many programs, and both of our sanctuaries.

**Volunteer.**

There are many ways to contribute your time and talents.



*We encourage you to become a member of San Diego Bird Alliance, especially if you are already a National Audubon member.*

**To become a member, visit:**  
[sandiegebirdalliance.org/joinourflock/become-a-member.html](http://sandiegebirdalliance.org/joinourflock/become-a-member.html)

## Sketches SAN DIEGO BIRD ALLIANCE

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*San Diego Bird Alliance is a chapter of the National Audubon Society*



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Together we defend our region's birds, unique biodiversity, and threatened habitats through advocacy, education, and restoration.



**75 Years Working for Birds, for People, and for the Planet**





# Loving a Future Filled with Birds

by Travis Kemnitz, Executive Director

In these trying times, the future can feel like a place of anxiety. There are, undeniably, real challenges that we must act on—to make a local impact for good and to champion a vision for what we want our world to look like. What future do we want for ourselves, our communities, and yes, our planet? That’s a rather imposing list. But in thinking about



our organization’s first 75 years of good work and enduring achievements that have helped shape our present, I think our Audubon founders would have loved the future they helped form—and what we are all, at this writing, continuing to accomplish together.

I am honored to lead our organization as executive director, knowing that we are committed to critical

work that ensures we will have a brighter and birdier tomorrow. We have amazing staff, board members, volunteers, donors, and community partners with us today—plus the legions who will join us over the coming 75 years—all remaining focused on a future for birds and the natural world we can all love. What will that future look like? Ours will remain the most biologically rich county in the nation. We will see places like Mission Bay rewilded—habitats that are now degraded for both wildlife and humans transformed into thriving, biologically rich environments. And we will see a majority of San Diegans cherishing nature and acting to protect it both locally and beyond. What’s not to love about that? That’s powerful!

We do our work because our livelihood is deeply interconnected with the environment and the future we are working to create. We want to save the wildlife and wild spaces because we value them and know that we need them. We do our work because we want thriving habitats that we can marvel at and that make San Diego healthier for all who call it home.



Our work is exciting but also critical, and we need many more who will feel inspired, engaged, and who will identify with our vision.

To help prepare us for the opportunities ahead, we have officially changed our name: **We are now San Diego Bird Alliance.**

A diving California Least Tern. Photo by Bruno Enrique Struck

With this change, we move into a new era, an era of dramatic potential and serious challenges. We know we must plan wisely if we are to help build a passionate and powerful community of birders and environmentalists that continues the good work for birds, for people, and for the planet. With our network of community naturalists, birding ambassadors, and strategic partners, we care for birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through advocacy, education, and restoration. We will build on the strong 75-year legacy of San Diego Audubon.

*What will that future look like? Ours will remain the most biologically rich county in the nation. We will see places like Mission Bay rewilded—habitats that are now degraded for both wildlife and humans transformed into thriving, biologically rich environments. And we will see a majority of San Diegans cherishing nature and acting to protect it both locally and beyond.*



Travis Kemnitz, Executive Director

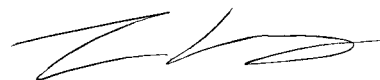
We remain committed to the same mission, the same vision, and the same love for a future filled with birds. As we look to the future, committed to accomplishing our goals, we’ve chosen a name that is clear, inclusive, and visionary. Incorporating a diversity of people is integral to fulfilling our mission, and we want everyone to know that they are invited and will be gratefully included. Our new name is just one of many steps we have been taking and will continue to take as we work to ensure a place for all in a growing alliance. Birds are for all to enjoy—and need everyone’s efforts to thrive.

We join dozens of other newly named Bird Alliances across the country, including Golden Gate Bird Alliance, Bird Alliance of Oregon, NYC Bird Alliance, Chicago Bird Alliance, and Detroit Bird Alliance.

We anticipate that many more chapters will join in the coming months. Additionally, we remain strong allies with many other organizations, agencies, and communities. Our ReWild Mission Bay Coalition is powerful evidence of the growing environmental network of which we are a key part.

Thank you to all who have helped launch our new journey as San Diego Bird Alliance, and thanks to all who are joined with us today. I can’t wait to meet all of you and all those who will join us moving forward.

*As this 75th Anniversary draws to a close, we envision trees, skies, and waterways filled with birds of all kinds and in strong numbers—and an ever-growing community of watchers and protectors enjoying nature’s grand show. Let’s make it happen.*



A Brownie studiously placing tern decoys



“What a privilege it was to be San Diego Audubon Society’s first paid staff person. It was my first full-time job after finishing my thesis under the guidance of my committee chair, Phil Pryde, a SDAS board member. The board at the time was determined to turn the group, perceived mostly as a birding club, into a professional advocacy organization. Jim Peugh was my conservation guru, and Laura Hunter was the sage guide who taught me how to assist the organization through a strategic planning effort. As we made progress toward our vision, Kathy Satterfield led our move from two rooms in a converted motel, to an actual office with multiple rooms, including a conference room. I sat proudly at a desk donated by the exceedingly kind Mel Hinton, with an impressive, framed set of David Stump masterpieces on the wall behind. As I reflect, I remember the long hours we dedicated together and the openness the board members had toward me and the willingness with which they adapted to changes in approach on almost every level. The board members were passionate and donated massive amounts of personal time, creating an organization that could effectively advocate for the protection of birds, other wildlife, and their habitat. I am beyond grateful to have been involved and to have been mentored by such a remarkable group of people.”

Allison Rolfe, Conservation Manager, 2005-2006



Snowy Egret chick by Parrish Nnambi



This sleepy Burrowing Owl held court daily along the Robb Field cycling path for several weeks. Photo by Parrish Nnambi.

“San Diego Audubon’s vitality has always come from the people who have been drawn into the organization by their love of the natural world.

I first glimpsed this vitality when I walked into our old office on Pacific Highway for my job interview and was greeted by the friendly face of volunteer Lisa Heinz staffing the front desk. Then-president Wayne Harmon led the committee that hired me, and I was struck by the glimmer in his eyes as he proudly proclaimed that SDAS had a ‘sterling reputation’ in the local conservation community. It was easy to see myself fitting into such a warm and enthusiastic group. Over 14 years, SDAS became so much more than a job to me. It felt more like a second large, extended family.

Serving as SDAS’s executive director was one of the most satisfying professional experiences of my career. During my time with the organization, SDAS grew substantially as it attracted the energy of many conservation-minded people, including a vibrant community of volunteers, a generous group of members and donors, a dedicated board of directors, talented and hard-working staff, and funding partners who were drawn to the vitality and impact of the organization. Together, we worked with passion and focus to expand the mission to defend our region’s birds, unique biodiversity, and threatened habitats.

I couldn’t be more proud of SDAS’s tremendous growth since my departure in early 2020. In celebrating 75 years of conserving San Diego’s birds, wildlife, and habitats, we have so much to be grateful for. I’m personally grateful for everyone who has made and is currently making SDAS [now renamed San Diego Bird Alliance], the vibrant, inclusive community it is today, and for the opportunity I was given to be a part of it all.”

*With best wishes and deep appreciation,*  
Chris Redfern, Executive Director 2006-2018



# The First 50 Years: Building the Foundation and Charting the Course

Broadly sourced from Service and Silverwood, written by Mary Bryant Mosher, chapter historian, and Phil Pryde, former SDAS President



George Marston statue at Founder's Plaza, steps away from the very first Audubon bird walk in San Diego

## First, Some Pre-History

More than 30 years prior to the formation of San Diego Audubon Society, a gathering of twenty-some individuals created a short-lived organization with the same name. This group was not associated with the National Association of Audubon Societies, established in New York 12 years earlier. (The national organization we are familiar with was restructured in 1943 under the name National Audubon Society.) Among those advancing the 1917 local group were family names still remembered in San Diego today: Marston, Gill,

Klauber, Wegeforth, and Gilbert. The purpose was to educate San Diego's children about bird lore and to offer birding walks along popular trails. The first birding walk was along 6th Avenue in what would become the Balboa Park we know today. Walkers gathered at the western entrance to the Laurel Street (now Cabrillo) Bridge. This earliest San Diego Audubon officially disbanded in 1921 after only four years.

## 1948: A New Chapter for a New Era

The years following the end of the Pacific Campaign in World War II were momentous for San Diego. The city's population more than doubled between 1930 and 1950, from 137,995 to 333,865. San Diego was still very much a "sleepy little Navy town" but rapidly developing. Mission Bay was a mostly untouched estuary for the relatively wild San Diego River, and many of the mesas to the east of the city were undeveloped. Highways were two-lane blacktops. In 1948, a loosely formed group of civic leaders began a Sunday matinee film series for children and families in the auditorium of Roosevelt Jr. High (directly adjacent, not coincidentally, to the San Diego Zoo). Among the sponsors of the series were not only the zoo, but also the Natural History Museum, San Diego State College, and the San Diego Teacher's Association.

The first film was Walt Disney's *Bambi*. It was a success, with more than 100 in attendance. Shortly afterward, on October 14, the San Diego Audubon Society (*this year renamed as San Diego Bird Alliance*) was officially launched. The first president was Major Chapman Grant, the grandson of U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant. A major impetus for the fledgling chapter was the film series

produced by Audubon Screen Tours, which set the foundational vision for our chapter: Educating children about the natural world, especially birds, and the need to conserve and enjoy nature.

San Diego Audubon Society was officially incorporated under California law under the leadership of Chapter President Vernon Bennett in 1953. The following Statement of Philosophy was included in the Articles of Incorporation:

*We believe in the wisdom of nature's design.*

*We know that soil, water, plants, and wild creatures depend on each other and are vital to human life.*

*We recognize that each living thing links to many others in the chain of nature.*

*We believe that persistent research into the intricate patterns of outdoor life will help ensure wise use of earth's abundance.*

*We condemn no wild creature and work to assure that no living species shall be lost.*

*We believe that every generation should be able to experience spiritual and physical refreshment in places where nature is undisturbed.*

*So we will be vigilant to protect wilderness areas, refuges, and parks, and to encourage good use of nature's storehouse of resources.*

*We dedicate ourselves to the pleasant task of opening the eyes of young and old that all may come to enjoy the beauty of the outdoor world and to share in its wonders forever.*

For most of the first fifty-some years, the chapter remained small (in 1960 there were only 222 members), but it was highly active in field trips. Local walks, such as those led by Guy Fleming in Torrey Pines, and longer trips, including excursions to the Salton Sea and the Coronado Islands, filled the chapter's calendar. The chapter held monthly meetings at the Natural History Museum's lecture



Harry Woodward, donor of Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary.

hall, with its walls and ceilings lined with mounted birds. Retired public school teachers, including Jean Meagher and Susan Breisch, led a steady program of in-classroom nature education.

San Diego Audubon was a membership-governed chapter with an all-volunteer committee and board structure. James Crouch, Professor of Zoology at San Diego State, became an important leader

*An early Sketches edition, dated 5/26/51. This badly yellowed newsletter states, "Of course the mimeographing isn't the best! Maybe the name isn't suitable either. Suggestions are in order." It shows volume 2, suggesting a second year of publication.*

*"As long as we see nature as something that is separate from us, an activity to be played with on weekends, but otherwise of no greater importance than stock quotes, traffic, or the price of ground turkey at the grocery, we are destined for further environmental and ecological chaos. When our society really accepts that each of us is part of, and bound to, nature, then and only then will our species have a chance to flourish in the long term, not just for the blink of time that humans have so far dominated nature. Our ecosystem is not just to be exploited, but to be nurtured because it is vital to our own species' continued existence. With acknowledgements to Pogo, 'We have met wild nature... and it is us.'"*

Peter Thomas, from his *President's Message* in the December 2011 *Sketches*.



White-tailed Kite by Bruno Enrique Struck



This iconic image of Frank Gander, the first Silverwood resident manager, and Hamlet, the untamed Great Horned Owl, has appeared often in *Sketches*.

and promoter of the Audubon Society in the early 1960s. The San Diego State pipeline would prove invaluable over the years, with numerous SDAS chairpersons and several board presidents coming from the college. Wayne Harmon, Phil Pryde, Mike Matherly, Ed Henry, and Lisa Chaddock are just some of the chapter's leaders to come from the school.

## Protecting Birds and other Wildlife, Conserving Habitats

As the city around us grew rapidly and was transformed with a constantly expanding network of roads and tract housing developments, issues of conservation became more pressing, and engagement with city hall, unavoidable. Where environmental threats emerged, we increasingly made our voices heard. Norma Sullivan championed many of the causes the board took up. The Norma Sullivan Conservation Award, given annually between 2001 and 2010, was established in her honor. (To get a fuller account of the SDAS, now SDBA, conservation campaigns and projects, see Jim Peugh's account on the following pages.)

Michael Lynes, Policy Director of California Audubon, addresses the 2018 banquet held at the Nat





# Timeline: Conservation

Prepared by Jim Peugh, Conservation Chair emeritus, and Andrew Meyer, Director of Conservation

We tackle numerous projects—large and small—each month, and our programs have benefited a variety of bird species, including the California Least Tern (CLTE), Ridgway's Rail, Western Bluebird, Brown Pelican, Vaux's Swift, Tri-colored Blackbird, Elegant Tern, Burrowing Owl, and many others. The following timeline provides an overview of some of what we've accomplished through the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers, community partners, and members like you.

## 1965—Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary Established

Over the decades, the 45-acre sanctuary has expanded to 785 acres. Its various near-pristine and well-maintained habitats are a refuge for more than 124 bird species and more than 324 native plant species, plus dozens of mammal, reptile, and amphibian species.

## Early 1970s—Stopped the Deepening of the San Diego River

Longtime member and former Board President Phil Pryde and others worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to stop the dredging of the San

Diego River and protect the vulnerable riparian corridor.

## Late 1980s—Famosa Slough Wetland Preserve

This irreplaceable brackish-water slough, home to American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Belted Kingfishers, and dozens of other wading and water birds, was slated for partial filling and development.



Black-necked Stilts by Ed Henry

A handful of concerned conservationists, including former Conservation Chair Jim Peugh and former Board President David Kimball, led the effort to save it in its natural state. The Friends of Famosa Slough won the day when the City of San Diego acquired the slough from developers. The work has continued with various grants funding restoration projects, and today it continues to be a haven for birds, other wildlife, and a variety of native plants.

## 1991—Present—ReWild Mission Bay

We supported wetlands restoration in the northeast corner of Mission Bay for the 1994 Mission Bay Park Master Plan Update. This was the genesis for what would become the ReWild Mission Bay campaign. Conservation strategic planning began under volunteer Roxie Carter and continued through the work of former Director of Conservation Rebecca Schwartz-Lesberg, the Northeast Mission Bay Wetlands Feasibility Study, and today's very public advocacy driven by Director of Conservation Andrew Meyer, the full SDBA staff, and an amazing coalition of supporters. The City's version of the plan, De Anza Natural, was passed by the City Council in spring 2024, though completion of the project will be years in the future.

## 1993—Present—Mariner's Point Least Tern Nesting Area

We committed to maintaining the site with the encouragement of USFWS. The work continues with scores of volunteers and a deeply engaged staff

collectively investing many hundreds of hours each year. We now work with the City and USFWS to manage four CLTE nesting preserves in Mission Bay. With annual habitat restoration and the ever-vigilant TernWatchers, these smallest of terns get the most devoted care. Hundreds of chicks have fledged from this small spit of sand and shells over the decades.

## 1994—Tijuana River Valley Flood Control Task Force

We were a key voice in a successful effort to stop a plan to channelize the western part of the Tijuana River.

## 1995—X Games Settlement

The initial plan for the X Games at Mariner's Cove essentially ignored the adjacent Least Tern Nesting Area. Through aggressive confrontation followed by thoughtful negotiation among our Conservation Committee, Audubon California, and the City, the eventual Settlement Agreement resulted in record success for tern nesting for both of the years that the Games were at Mariner's Point.

## 1997—Bay-to-Bay Canal

Our Conservation Committee's persistent efforts helped to discourage the implementation of this proposed project. Our concern was that it would require dredging much of the habitat of the San Diego River Mouth and would bring more litter and pollutants from the Midway/Sports Arena area directly into the river. We hope that this ill-conceived plan has finally been laid to rest.

## 1998—Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP)

We supported the grand scheme to set aside large areas of undeveloped habitat for the long-term purpose of preserving the county's biodiversity, but we were concerned about the lack of a permanent source of funding and the consistent willingness of the County to compromise the plan for the sake of new development. These are still concerns. Jim Peugh was honored to meet and talk with then Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt.

## 1999—San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge

The establishment of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge boosted our confidence that big things can happen with patience and hard work. A multi-year campaign by a 20-group coalition worked to create the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge for the Brants, Black Skimmers, Surf Scoters, and many other seabirds and shorebirds of the bay. Despite considerable development-oriented opposition, the effort finally convinced the Port District to support the plan and to provide \$21 million to USFWS to purchase the lease for the salt ponds and to produce the conservation plan for the new South

Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The Port District's contribution was mitigation for the habitat loss caused by the construction of Terminal 2 at the airport. The refuge is a significant nesting and foraging site for a broad range of shorebirds and seabirds and a splendid place for birding.

## 1999—Mission Bay Avoids Environmental Disruption

A proposed international jet ski competition would have brought 700 jet skis to Mission Bay with no regard to the water quality impacts. Together with "Surfers Tired of Pollution," we asked the Coastal Commission to cancel the event, and they did.

## 2003—Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve established

John Anstine, a nature lover from Vista, donated the 11-acre mixed-habitat preserve, including a million-dollar endowment. Years of hard work and

expert guidance have largely restored the property to a natural state, though more work remains. Many have contributed to its success, but few more than Mel Hinton, who designed and built the bridge crossing the stream and engineered the restoration of the pond at the heart of the preserve.

## 2003—Canyon Sewer Access Task Force

Our task force meetings resulted in changes in regulations that dramatically reduced the damage done by installation and maintenance of wastewater pipes in sensitive canyon areas. Walt Shaw, a deeply committed member, provided a well-researched proposal for low-impact vehicles and equipment, making the revisions possible.

## 2004—Southern Extension of SR 125

We, along with others, tried to stop building this stretch of highway in hopes of preventing another layer of urban sprawl in East Chula Vista. We worked hard against tough odds, but the highway was built, and the sprawl continues into biologically sensitive areas.

## 2007—Attempted California Least Tern Downlisting

The USFWS sought to downlist this bird, already reduced to small pockets of habitat, from Endangered to Threatened, but the criteria for downlisting had not been met. With the support of California Audubon, we tracked how the recommendation developed. When we pointed out that the action was based on inaccurate information, it was rescinded, and the terns retained their essential protections.

## 2008—Border Triple Fence

Long before powerful political forces demanded a Brownsville-to-San Ysidro border fence, there was one built in San Diego, which shares the busiest border crossing in the world with Tijuana. We lobbied in favor of a much more environmentally benign border fence system and got the Coastal Commission to agree. But the Real ID Act preempted any environmental consideration for the project, and the environmentally damaging Triple Fence was built.

## 2015—Chula Vista Bayfront

A large Conference Center and hotel complex project was planned very close to a shoreline portion of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. After a few years of discussion and negotiation, a land swap was arranged, the intense development was moved to behind the Chula Vista Marina, and a 400-foot buffer was adopted between any development and the refuge's wildlife habitat areas. A natural park is now being constructed there.

## 2018—City of San Diego Pure Water Program

As part of a coalition, we supported the City's plan to recycle wastewater for potable reuse. At the time, several opportunistic politicians opposed the project, playing on people's emotions. Our interests were focused on reducing the greenhouse gases resulting from importing water from great distances, avoiding the habitat losses resulting from exporting that water from environmentally important areas, and lessening of the discharge of partially treated wastewater into the ocean. The program is currently being constructed, and it has become a national model.

## 2019—Audubon Advocates program, now EarthAdvocates

With seed money from National Audubon, we created an advocacy training program, which has been running for the past six years. Through expertise provided by many partners and leaders, we share with a new crop of Advocates how, why, and where we advocate.



Jim Peugh (left) and Rick Halsey of the California Chaparral Institute

## 2019—Native Plant Invasion

In this project, which came out of our Advocacy training program, we partnered with a community group to help restore habitat in community gardens or public landscaping.

## 2019—Federal Fish Catch Regulation

Lead Ornithologist Lesley Handa and former Conservation Manager Megan Flaherty provided tenacious leadership in the battle to set catch limits for bait fish based on current population data instead of a long-standing formula that was largely detached from good science. Managing

the fish stock levels is vital for many seabirds, including the CLTE, and now better reflects the need to set realistic limits.

## 2020—Preserving a Wildlife Corridor for the SD River Park

We successfully advocated for a protected wildlife movement corridor, connecting Murphy Canyon to the San Diego River through San Diego State's stadium, housing, and park redevelopment area. We appreciate the flexibility of all parties in making it happen.

## 2020—Native Plant Seed Libraries

One of the most successful projects to come out of our Advocates program is the Native Plant Seed Library. Posted boxes filled with native plant seed packets have spread across the county, and hundreds have taken seeds for planting in their own yards. Participants pledge to return seeds harvested from successful plantings, creating a self-perpetuating cycle. This program follows a long-standing effort by our chapter to promote landscaping with native plants. Both Silverwood and Anstine prioritize removing non-native plants from our properties.

## 2020—Present—Otay Valley Regional Park

We have been leading a small but long-term habitat restoration and community connection project here, which is centered around Fenton Pond and the Beyer Blvd. Ranger Station. With hundreds of community volunteers, we have worked for more than 5 years planting 300 individual native plants for birds, other wildlife, and the community to have a vibrant and accessible park.

## 2023—Point La Jolla Nesting Seabird Protections

We lobbied successfully to convince the Regional Board to not approve pesticide spraying near nesting Brant's Cormorants, Western Gulls, and other seabirds, and we worked with a local coalition to stop Cove visitors from entering the harbor seal, sea lion, and seabird areas.

**The Present**—With help from volunteers, we contribute native plants and sweat equity to regional preserves such as Emory Cove, Grand Caribe, and Sweetwater Marsh, to the benefit of all wildlife. Existing parks and undeveloped land, such as West Ski Island and the canyon threatened by the proposed Regent Road bridge, receive our support. As we grow as an organization and continue to cultivate effective alliances, we will be able to accomplish even more.

*We have worked closely with many organizations to achieve important victories, including Environmental Health Coalition, SD Coastkeeper, Sierra Club, Central Emergency Response Fund, Surfrider Foundation, San Diego River Park Foundation, Endangered Habitats League, San Diego Canyonlands, AmeriCorps, the U.C. Natural Reserve System, UCSD, and SANDAG, to name only some.*

*Editors—While many have successfully championed our mission through the years, we feel the need to recognize the notable contributions of these four volunteers: Norma Sullivan, Phil Pryde, Jim Peugh, and Laura Hunter.*





# Sanctuaries: Models of Conservation, Storehouses of Biodiversity



## Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary *Gleanings from Service and Silverwood, which was written by Mary Mosher and Phil Pryde*

“Harry, what a wonderful idea! Let me take it to the Board!”

With this simple exclamation, Helen Morris, a past president of SDAS, took a big step toward the transfer of ownership of Woodward Hills from owner Harry Woodward to our chapter. (The initial gift was 85 acres, given in two parts, the first in 1965; an additional 48 acres were soon added). It was named Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary—a gift given in friendship, which would be multiplied many times over the coming decades.

The first resident manager, Frank Gander, was a retired Curator of Botany and Education Activities at the San Diego Natural History Museum. His 10-year service at Silverwood left an indelible legacy (*see photo on page 3*). Mayor Pete Wilson declared March 7, 1973, to be “Frank Gander Day” for his 50 years of conservation and education leadership. Near death, his final journal entry was “Heard a coyote singing.”

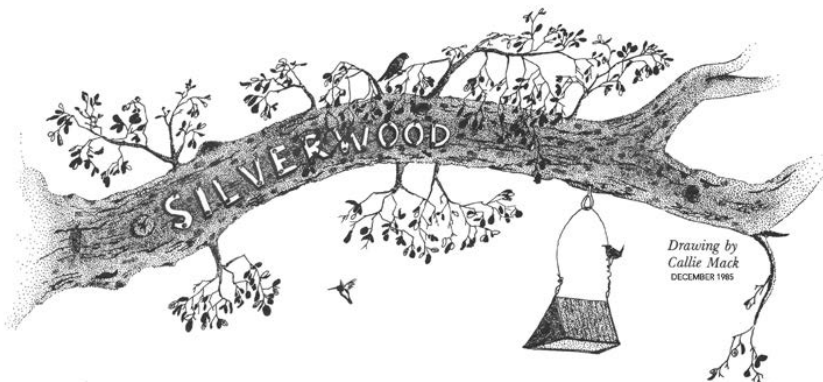
Other SDAS leaders would contribute greatly to Silverwood’s growth. Serving on the Silverwood Committee or as resident managers, they were benefactors, educators, and visionaries. Managers following Gander were Edith Curry, Bob and Geri Nicholson, Gerald Cosgrove, Nola Lamken, and Phil Lambert. Committee champions include Howie Wier (whose name graces one of Silverwood’s trails), Lee Kenaston, Dorcas Utter, Jane Alexander, Christine Tratnyek, Pete Nelson, Lisa Chaddock, and Phil Pryde. The dramatic growth in Silverwood’s acreage was largely shepherded through under Pryde’s leadership (*see acquisitions map below*). A full page of names would not suffice to list those worthy of mention.

The Cedar Firestorm of 2003 will always be remembered as a test of the mettle of the committee’s leadership, and Silverwood, now more than fully recovered, speaks to the resilience of nature and of Silverwood’s stewards.



(Above) This 1996 Silverwood Committee meeting includes Howie Weir (in white shirt), Dorcas Utter (with blue hat), and Enid Gleich (far right). Dorcas shared newly printed copies of her accordion-fold brochure showing Silverwood flowers. The photo was taken by Phil Pryde, then chairman of the Silverwood Committee.

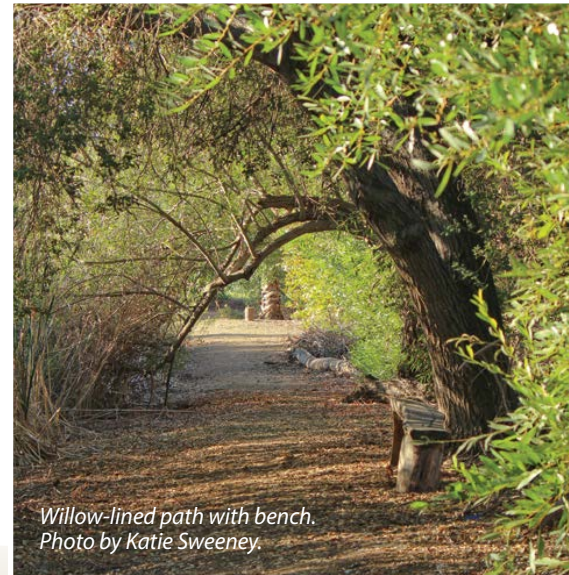
(Below) The original house came with the deed, and served as a residence for managers up until the Cedar Fire. This photo is circa 1932.



*Drawing by Callie Mack  
DECEMBER 1965*



Phil Pryde explains displays to students at the Gander Nature Center.



Willow-lined path with bench. Photo by Katie Sweeney.

## Anstine–Audubon Nature Preserve

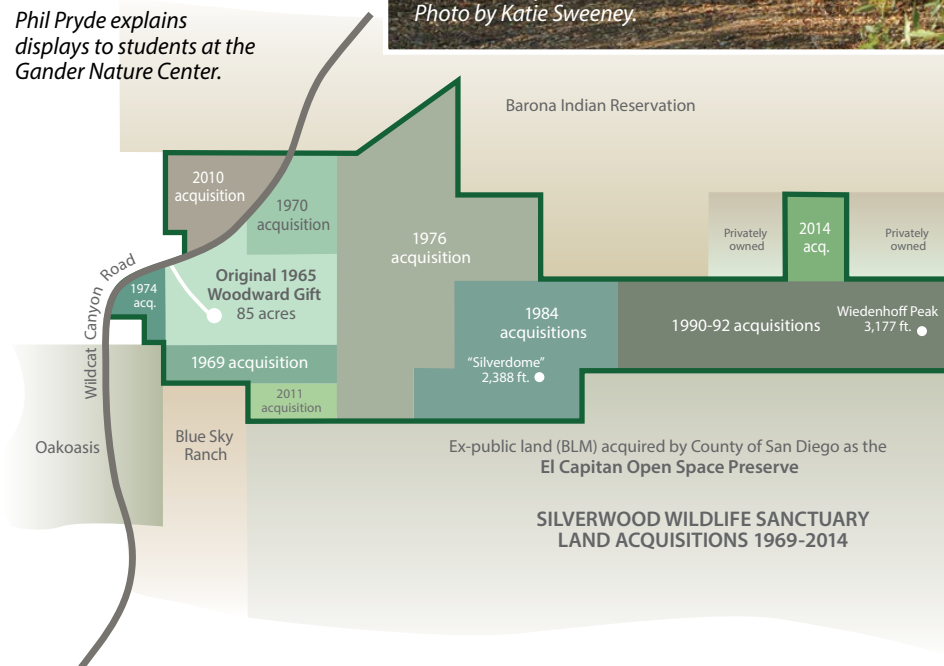
Rebekah Angona, Director of Property Stewardship

So much has changed over the past 24 years in which the organization has managed and restored our North County nature preserve. What was once the residence of John and Lois Anstine has transformed into a community nature center and living classroom. Through countless efforts from staff and volunteers, including Claude Edwards, Mel Hinton, and original resident manager Becky Wilbanks, the property has evolved from orchards and farmland to a native plant haven for wildlife. Old farm equipment was removed to make way for new nature trails; the pond was dredged of cattails and tule overgrowth; and observation decks and seating areas were added to provide a relaxing space for visitors to enjoy the tranquility of nature.

Soon after, students from local schools began using the preserve as an outdoor classroom, participating in hands-on experiential learning activities. Researchers used the preserve as a living laboratory, and local experts educated our guests through workshops and nature-themed hikes. As our organization celebrates its 75th Anniversary, we are excited to envision the future for our preserve, as we will soon embark on the celebration of 25 years of managing this unique preserve.



(Above left) A Silverwood idyll, including hammock, circa 1946. (Above) Twin Great Horned Owl chicks were a big draw at Silverwood. (Far left) Silverwood resident managers Nola Lamken and Phil Lambert. Lori Gleghorn (right) was Silversprings resident. Photo dates from 2003, shortly before the Cedar Fire. (Left) Ash-throated Flycatcher



The restored Anstine pond was a major project for the reserve. Mel Hinton was the primary engineer of the pond’s restoration, and primary designer and builder of the bridge. Photo by Katie Sweeney.



# Learning that Sticks: Classroom Teaching + Nature Experience

by Rebekah Angona, former Education Director

The education department has evolved over the years from volunteer visits to local grade schools, faithfully undertaken by retired teachers, to the robust environmental education department it is today, providing more than 3,500 student visits to nature annually. Prior to my joining, Susan Breisch spearheaded the program as she visited schools throughout the county, sparking joy and curiosity in her students. In 2007, the organization led a small coalition of local groups in the development of our afterschool enrichment program, **Outdoor Explore**. With a growing number of programs, Shannon Dougherty was hired to manage the department as program coordinator, soon followed by education coordinator Camille Armstrong. In 2009 **Sharing Our Shores in the Urban Environment** (now just called Sharing Our Shores) was launched, introducing students to the endangered California Least Tern and initiating the next generation of environmental stewards.

In 2010, Brian Moehl was hired as the first education manager, and with great enthusiasm, he embarked on developing **Habitat Helpers**, a restoration-themed program that built off of Outdoor Explore curriculum and the **Silverwood Science Discovery** program, showcasing San Diego's native habitats through classroom lessons and field trips to the Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary.



Judy Lincer, long-time naturalist for SDBA, photographed her charges

In 2013, I was hired as the new education manager and over the years my position grew into director of education. The Sharing Our Shores program reemerged and expanded to Silver Strand State Beach, Tijuana Estuary, San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Mariner's Point, Kendall-Frost Marsh and even as far as the Salton Sea. This program deepened our partnerships with city and state agencies and enabled students all across the county to have access to coastal habitats.

Our most recently designed program, **Anstine Adventures**, has increased significantly since its debut in 2017. Originally serving just a handful of schools with the opportunity to visit our North County nature preserve, it has now expanded to serving all of the first- through third-grade afterschool students at 13 Vista Unified School District schools. Just as our education programs have evolved over the years, so has my role in the organization as I transition to director of property stewardship. We are excited to see what the new director of education has in store for the department and how our programs can inspire San Diego youth for the next 75 years to come.

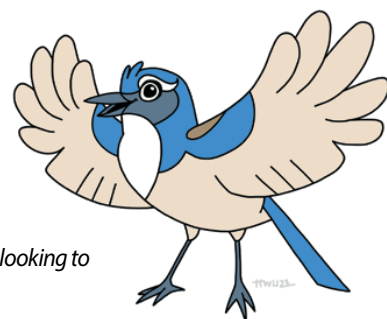


Brian Moehl leads an attentive Outdoor Explore group

Susan Breisch, Retired Educator

"The many joys of sharing nature with children is a passion, and my calling. About 20 years ago, I travelled to classrooms throughout San Diego offering owl pellet dissection experiences sponsored by San Diego Audubon. Within a couple of years, more than 1,000 kids discovered the relationships among all kinds of critters by studying the pellets. The demand was great. Jeannie Raimond helped from time to time. As word spread, I added homeschoolers and their families to the schedule; then, nature walks were offered during the day. When *Sharing Our Shores* was introduced by Audubon California, I, Normandie Wilson, and others brought the program to Imperial Beach classrooms, reaching more kids and involving them as protectors of our beach nesters. Walt Shaw used thin dowels to create 'tern stands' to hold Least Tern decoys for Brownie Scouts to paint after school, reaching another community. Although the decoys may be retired, *Share Our Shores* continues. All in all, I loved every minute and believe it sparked lifelong curiosity about birds, as well as imparting lessons about the natural world around us.

When SDAS decided to 'go big' with afterschool programs, I helped. It wasn't the same experience, but an important piece of the education puzzle."



Sally Scrub-Jay, created by Haiwa Wu, looking to join the Education Team soon!

## A 75-Year Focus on Birds

### Building a Birding Community One "Wow!" at a Time

Peter Thomas, Field Trip Coordinator

In the 1980s, when Millie and I first joined the San Diego Audubon Society (now the San Diego Bird Alliance), we were primarily attracted to the organization's many birding outings. Bill McCausland and Claude Edwards, who frequently led the outings, impressed us with their ability to identify the birds not only by sight, but also by call, without even looking. We wondered, "How can they possibly do that?"

My enthusiasm for birding led me to become president of the organization's board. By the time I finished my term, Bill and Claude were no longer with the organization, so the position of field trip chair opened up. Reluctantly, I offered myself as a candidate. What a great decision that turned out to be!

My goal as a field trip leader has always been not only to take folks outside, find birds, identify them, and maybe add a few facts, but also to be like a late-night TV host, piquing participants' interest and attention by telling stories that stimulate their connection with birds and with nature. My hope is they will grow to love nature, support it, and vote for legislation and social change that will protect it. I strive to make person-to-person contact with each participant in my birding trips to help them feel part of the group.

New technologies have added new dimensions to birding and bird outings. The eBird website and cellphone app have continually improved, making it easy for birders to list our observations of birds and to have the app (or website) keep track of those observations over time. (You can even look at your checklists by date, location, bird species, and more.) On our bird outings, we make a list of all the birds we saw or heard, and we share it with participants through eBird. They can easily choose to add all the birds on the group's list or choose just the ones they wish to add to their own list.



Cactus Wren launches from Ocotillo. Photo by Gerry Tietje.

Another app, Merlin's "Sound ID," helps users to identify many birds based on their vocalizations, making it more fun to be outside searching for birds by ear. Also, iNaturalist, which has AI capabilities and crowd-sourcing information, acts as a bridge between birds and the whole of nature by helping people identify plants, insects, and other wildlife, as well. These tools enhance our enjoyment.

And more enjoyment is important. Birding should be fun! It's powerful when someone looks through binoculars or a scope and sees a bird up close and personal, then exclaims, "Wow!" or "That bird is so beautiful! Thank you for showing it to me." It pleases me to realize that so many of the really active birders in San Diego County got their start by attending our birding field trips.



Blue Sky Ranch, a neighbor to Silverwood, hosted many bird walks. Photo by Nathan French



Black-tailed Gnatcatcher by Linda Furey.

"The position of Lead Ornithologist for SDBA constantly poses new challenges as the organization strives to protect the birds and habitats year-round in the biodiversity hotspot of the San Diego Region. I am fortunate and grateful to work alongside the hard-working, bright, dedicated Conservation team and Conservation Committee volunteers. Threats facing bird conservation in this region are unending, numerous, and frequently require immediate action and response. With our hard work behind the scenes, we speak on behalf of the birds, wildlife, and habitats and attempt to quell threats to conservation in our region."

Lesley Handa, Lead Ornithologist

While the heart of SDBA birding remains the field trip calendar, there are many facets to our full birding program. For years SDAS sponsored a globe-trotting series of birding expeditions known as **Avian Adventures**, eventually discontinued for insurance reasons. Our annual **Birdathon** fundraising competition has been a calendar staple for decades. **Beginning and intermediate birding courses**, special workshops, and of course our annual **San Diego Bird Festival** (see page 14) are vital successes. In the world of community science, the end-of-year **Christmas Bird Count** is an annual, and vital, project (see page 14). San Diego is usually at or near the top for counted species. Lastly, we remind you of the masterful, definitive **San Diego Bird Atlas**, a project laden with data and insights and led by Phil Unitt, Curator of Birds and Mammals at the San Diego Natural History Museum and a long-time member of SDBA.



# Growing Diversity: Through Advocacy Training and Hands-on Experience

by Andrew Meyer, Director of Conservation



*“I have always wanted to be an advocate for conservation. This program was a valuable step in my journey as I gained real-life experience for the first time.”*

Sree Kandhadai, participant in first advocate training (shown at far right below). Photo by Craig Chaddock



It was standing room only in the board conference room for the first training session

SDBA's EarthAdvocates program gives us the chance to work with the next generation of conservationists. Participants learn to act on issues with immense importance to the health of our regional ecosystem, and help form alliances with new, long-term partners.

Made possible in part by a grant from National Audubon, this unique training program kicked off in 2019, and it is one of the many ways SDBA is increasing the visibility and impact of its efforts to advocate for birds, other wildlife, and their habitats—all with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

That first year, 17 participants received free training and education on a range of conservation topics. Their first workshop started with a potluck dinner, where they received an overview of regional conservation planning, dove into the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), discussed how large conservation organizations can be most helpful on environmental justice issues, and learned how to talk to elected officials to drive meaningful change. For the last of five workshops, the trainees visited the Tijuana River Estuary for an insider's discussion on how advocacy helped to create the conserved areas in the Tijuana River Valley and how advocacy is still necessary to fuel essential research and community projects. City College, San Diego State University, and University of San Diego all offered college credit for their participating students.

The EarthAdvocates program continues to be an exciting path for our organization to engage passionate people in learning about the issues that are important to them, and to give them real-world tools to be stronger environmental advocates.

## Mentoring a New Generation

I came to the organization through our Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary and Dr. Phil Pryde. I was a wide-eyed undergraduate student at SDSU, and my professor, Dr. Pryde, invited me to be a part of the Silverwood Committee. I was at once enchanted and intrigued by Silverwood, and wanted to be a part of the community that protected this amazing place that was so close to the city. The oaks, the birds, the trails—it was amazing. It was a stepping-off point into many activities such as conservation, the Christmas Bird Count, Birdathon, and finding speakers as the vice president of the board. I did an archaeological survey of Silverwood after the Cedar Fire and watched as the full ecosystem returned and grew stronger. Board President David Kimball said that I could form a club at the school where I now teach, San Diego City College. With his support, and that of this amazing organization, a true Bird Alliance has brought in new members that are as wide-eyed and new to this community as I was when Dr. Pryde invited me to start on this journey of conservation for our precious and amazing birds. The club is award-winning, and many of its members have moved on from City College into positions on the Conservation Committee and are even working for the organization. I am currently the secretary of the board of directors and advisor to an active club, now named **Bird Alliance at City**, that is helping grow this powerful alliance. It all started with Silverwood, and an invitation from another member.

Lisa Chaddock, SDBA Executive Committee



Lisa Chaddock and five members of her thriving San Diego City College club (now Bird Alliance at City) attended the National Audubon Convention in Milwaukee, WI, held July 26–29, 2019. The students and Lisa received the 2019 Chapter of the Year award, and Lisa received the William Dutcher award. Top row, l-r: Missael Corro-Flores, Christian Ayala, and Pedro Beltran. Front row, l-r: Karina Ornelas, Christopher Tinoco, Lisa Chaddock. Photo by Luke Franke, National Audubon

## San Diego Bird Alliance: A New Name for a New Era

by Travis Kemnitz, Executive Director, and Rebecca Kennedy, Communications Manager



This year, we are celebrating 75 years of working for birds, for people, and for the planet. And now we have something else to celebrate—a new name for a new era in conservation:

### San Diego Bird Alliance!

Over the course of a year, we collaborated with our board, staff, community partners, members, and the public to select a name that would keep our mission clear and at the forefront, connect with more diverse communities, and help maintain a vital link to other chapters across the region and the country. Hundreds of people shared their thoughts and provided insightful feedback.

We listened, and we found a name we believe we all can be proud of:

**San Diego**—Our advocacy, education, and restoration efforts span across Southern California and even down into Baja, but the core of our work is here in San Diego, the most biologically diverse county in the entire country!

**Bird**—We do a lot for the environment, but birds remain at the heart of our work. By calling out birds in our new name, we get to quickly and effectively share who we are and why we're here.

**Alliance**—We can do what we do because of our incredible network of community partners, members, donors, and volunteers. It's only through these connections that we can truly protect the nature of this place we love.

While the name may have changed, our core mission endures. San Diego Bird Alliance will continue to advocate for the region's birds, unique biodiversity, and threatened habitats through advocacy, education, and restoration. Birds are for all, and need all of our help to thrive. Our new name will increase our ability to build coalitions, to remove barriers to participation and increase equitable access to nature for all people, and to help create a thriving alliance of people working together for nature.

Under the Audubon name, the San Diego chapter, along with hundreds of other chapters across the world, helped to drive the environmental movement and connect many to birds and to nature. While we are an independent 501(c)(3), we remain an affiliated chapter of National Audubon Society. We currently have no plans to leave the network, as it is a powerful system of organizations with similar goals. We regularly work with our partner chapters across the state and with National Audubon Society to accomplish great things in conservation and to amplify our message. While we no longer share a name, our collective mission remains the same.

As we honor our past, we look ahead to a more inclusive, collaborative, and impactful approach to protecting the birds that connect us all. We invite everyone to join us in our mission. Together, we can make a difference for birds, for people, and for the planet.

## Discovering a Vocation, Finding a Home

by Karina Ornelas, Conservation Outreach Coordinator / Karina Ornelas, Coordinadora de Conservación de Extensión

*Sin el Club Bird Alliance de SDCC, no estaría trabajando con SDBA como Coordinadora de Conservación de Extensión, y terminando mi licenciatura en Biología de Conservación y Ecología. Gracias al club y a SDBA, encontré una carrera que me permite hacer lo que amo y mostrarle a la gente de color que la conservación es para todos. De vez en cuando, personas de color me han agradecido en eventos por compartir lo que hago porque sienten una conexión con la conservación a través de mí. Eso significa mucho para mí; este es el cambio que queremos hacer. ¡Todos pueden participar en la conservación y todos son bienvenidos en SDBA y en el Club Bird Alliance!*

Working with San Diego Bird Alliance (SDBA) for the past four years has been rewarding. I have gotten to do a lot of fun things, such as researching and monitoring the wildlife cameras set up to observe the Ridgway's Rails at Kendall-Frost Marsh, and to learn about endangered species, as well as native and non-native species.

These experiences have been thanks to the Bird Alliance at City club at San Diego City College (SDCC). Through the club, I found a place that feels like home. I found people who enjoy and love the same things I do. The Bird Alliance at City club was my first step to learning about all of San Diego's biodiversity. As part of the club, I learned about the birds and other wildlife on campus, and how to do research about the migratory birds that visit the campus. I was able to network with different organizations, including the USFWS (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve.

At the National Audubon Convention in 2019, the other club members and I were able to present our findings about the migratory birds we researched on campus—an opportunity realized by too few people of color. Our club was the only one with all Hispanic students at the conference!



Karina Ornelas and a crustacean friend.

Bird Alliance at City opened doors for me and for other students to learn about SDBA and why conservation is important. SDCC is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and I am a Latina, but during all my years at the college, until I found the club, I never learned about conservation jobs or other opportunities available to people of color. Being a person of color in conservation can be hard sometimes, as we don't see a lot of Latinos in this field. I am grateful that Bird Alliance at City showed me the path to SDBA, where I have found a home.

Without the club, I would not be working with SDBA as conservation outreach coordinator and finishing my B.S. degree in Conservation Biology and Ecology. Thanks to the club and to SDBA, I found my career, doing what I love and showing people of color that conservation is for everyone. Occasionally, people of color have thanked me at events for sharing what I do, because they feel a connection to conservation through me. That means a lot to me; this is the change we want to make. Everyone can participate in conservation, and everyone is welcome at SDBA and at SDCC's Bird Alliance at City!



# San Diego Bird Festival: 28 Years Strong and Growing

by Jen Hajj, with contributors Anne Fege, Michael Klein, and Karen Straus

In 1996, Claude Edwards and Michael Klein had a great idea. They wanted to bring together the people who love birds and birding in San Diego. They set up a nature festival nonprofit, organized bird walks, invited well-known birders to speak, promoted and registered birders, and produced the festival for five years. In the beginning, the festival moved from venue to venue, starting in the Veteran's Park, then moving to Mar Vista High School, and to the Chula Vista Nature Center (now Living Coast Discovery Center). Like a house plant outgrowing its pot, the festival soon outgrew its available space, so it was finally moved

to its current location at Marina Village in Mission Bay.

Without question, the field trip in greatest demand in those early years was the pelagic trip down to the Coronado Islands, which provided views of nesting Brown Pelicans,



Birding at the San Diego River estuary. By Karen Straus

Blue-Footed Boobies, and Northern Elephant Seals pupping. The pelagic trip looks a little different today, but it is still one of the most popular trips of the festival.

Another big attraction was a three-day excursion to Baja California Norte to see the endemic Gray Thrasher. Trips around the region's coastal scrub to get a chance to hear and see the California Gnatcatcher have also been popular, drawing birders from all over the United States and Canada.

When Edwards and Klein were ready to step down, the festival was picked up by three dedicated San Diego Audubon Society volunteers, Ann Hannon, David Kimball, and Karen Straus. "Claude and I were proud to have started this," says Klein. Edwards passed away last year but is remembered for his warmth and his big contributions to birding in San Diego.

"I know that if Claude was still here, he would agree we are very proud

San Diego Audubon (now San Diego Bird Alliance) took it over for us," Klein says. "It has continued to benefit the economy and at the same time help keep our region's wildlife safe."

Hannon, Kimball, and Straus attended bird festivals around the country to learn about what other festivals feature and to promote the San Diego Bird Festival. They worked with local and national media to get coverage of the festival. They sought and were awarded funding through grants and sponsors. They expanded the types of field trips offered.

"One of the trips I am most proud of was a festival trip to explore all 500 miles of Baja," reflects Straus. "We are so fortunate to have this beautiful and biologically diverse place so nearby. We departed the festival home at Marina Village in a motor coach, birding all the way to La Paz, looking for rare thrashers. At La Paz, we ventured out on boats to see a Greater Frigatebird nesting colony, then snorkeled with California Sea Lions at Los Islotes. The group flew home from La Paz." Another memorable trip was to see California Condors at San Pedro Mártir in Baja California.

Realizing the growing festival needed professional planning and coordination, Kimball and Straus oversaw the hiring process for a contract event planner to take over the brunt of festival planning. They had several applicants but eventually offered the position to me, a recent transplant from Utah who had zoo education program and concert promotion experience. I was hired and have been the coordinator ever since. Kimball remained on the festival committee as a valued advisor and friend until his death.

The festival continues to grow. With the exception of 2021, when the festival program was cut back due to COVID-19 concerns, the festival has seen 10%–20% annual growth in pre-registered attendance over the past ten years. In 2024, the attendance nearly doubled, with 1,500 people attending from 37 states.

## 2025 San Diego Bird Festival

February 26–March 2  
Online registration opens  
November 1, 2024

[sandiegebirdfestival.org](http://sandiegebirdfestival.org)

San Diego Bird Alliance  
Members will have the  
opportunity to register early.

Details will be available soon!

## Christmas Bird Count: 70 Years of Counting Beaks Supports Critical Community Science

Since the very first Christmas Bird Count in the winter of 1900, when 27 observers tramped the snowy fields and woods of just 25 New England locations, the annual count has grown to involve well over 50,000 birders in roughly 2,100 count circles. The count now incorporates much of North America and parts of Latin America, and it tabulates the total numbers of each species identified, whether a single bird or flocks of thousands. Our chapter has participated since 1954. In 1966, we tied with Cocoa Beach, Florida, nationally, with 206 species. More recent counts have been higher. There are seven "circles" in our county. Each individual count is performed in a "count circle." At least 10 volunteers, including a compiler to manage the data, count in each circle. They break up into small parties and follow assigned



routes. These routes change little from year to year. In many count circles, some people may also watch feeders instead of following routes.

Estimating flock sizes and counting individual birds involves specialized skills. The vagaries we all recognize as part of the "game" are part of the count as well. Collectively, though, circle after circle, chapter after chapter, year after year, patterns do emerge—and each "beak" counted helps to tell the greater story.

The CBC has, throughout its history, been an Audubon-led event, though it is now carried out through an international partnership, including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Bird Studies Canada, and the North American Breeding Bird Survey, among several others.

The San Diego Circle gathers in December, 2019 for final instructions.

# Eight Decades, Eight Birds: If History Wore Feathers...

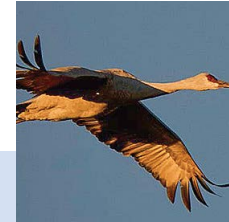
by Jack Dawes, Scribbler



**"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."** Aldo Leopold

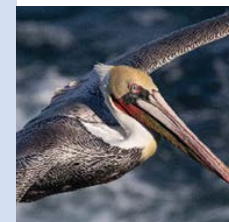
### 1948–1958 — Sandhill Crane

In 1949, Aldo Leopold, a Wisconsin Audubon champion, published *Sand County Almanac*, convincingly building the case that conservation starts with preserving the earth under our feet—including wetlands. Sandhill Cranes are just one species that has benefited, in part, from the land ethos developed in Leopold's book. The **Salton Sea** remains a viable wintering ground for the cranes because of the surrounding agricultural fields where they are allowed to glean.



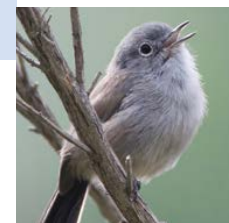
### 1959–1968 — California Brown Pelican

Many bird species began sliding toward extinction due to the bioaccumulation of DDT in their bodies, which made their eggs too brittle to brood. Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, took on the pesticide corporations and unresponsive federal agencies, enduring years of personal attacks, including blatant sexism, until the political tide turned in nature's favor. Our pelicans remind us of the hard battles fought and won—and how important our continuing efforts are.



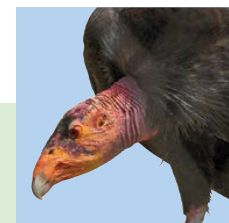
### 1969–1978 — California Gnatcatcher

Much of the landmark federal legislation to protect the environment was signed into law in the early 1970s, including the **Endangered Species Act** in 1973. A coastal sage scrub specialist, the California Gnatcatcher might well have become extinct in our region without this bill. It is estimated that up to 99% of the species provided protection under the act are still with us.



### 1979–1988 — California Condor

The captive breeding and strategic **reintroduction** of species such as the California Condor have proven to be a viable options for species on the brink of extinction. First opposed by some in Audubon's leadership and then supported as the last chance to save the species, captive breeding programs developed innovative techniques to hand-rear chicks that were not imprinted on humans. Now, nearly 400 condors fly free in a wide-ranging map covering four refuges, with more than 200 birds in 5 captive breeding locations, including the San Diego Safari Park. While there are (as yet!) no wild condors in the San Diego region, we celebrate the success of the program.



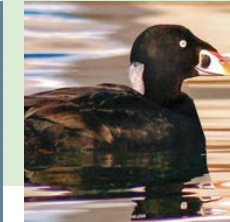
### 1989–1998 — Surf Scoter

**San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge** was established in 1988 and remains one of the most important conservation victories for our chapter and our allies. It covers 2,620 acres of land and water and is an irreplaceable habitat for birds, including wintering Surf Scoters. This saltwater duck is typically the most numerous in the **San Diego Circle Christmas Bird Count**, a critically important, multinational community

science event sponsored locally by our chapter. In 2023, 8,319 of these ducks were counted in the San Diego CBC.

### 1999–2008 — California Scrub-Jay

The **2003 Cedar Fire** ravaged 273,246 acres of oak woodland and conifer habitat, from the Sunrise Highway to Scripps Ranch. Woodland-dependent species such as the Acorn Woodpecker took years to recover as the oaks and other seed-bearing trees slowly recovered, affected first by the fire and then by a prolonged drought made worse, by all indicators, by climate change. But the adaptable California Scrub-Jay has



long reestablished its presence at **Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary**, which had become a torched, ashen landscape after the fire. The jays, like the woodpeckers, store acorns, but they do so mostly on or near the ground and actually reseed the next generation of oaks.

### 2009–2018 — California Least Tern

With good science and a mountain of pulled weeds, **Mariner's Point** and other Mission Bay nesting sites have become a vital "line in the sand" for this threatened bird, now the living icon of our conservation work. If there is one species that embodies the heart and soul of who we are as an organization, this little bird with the white brow is it.

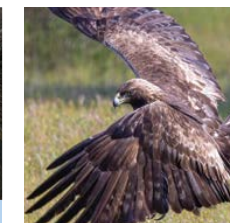


### 2019–2204 — Golden Eagle

Our Golden Eagles have been squeezed into ever-smaller remnants of eagle-friendly habitat. Will we preserve room for this most majestic of our local birds by placing its needs above those of our ever-expanding human population? The future beckons, and our vision remains clear.



**"Man's attitude toward nature is today critically important simply because we have now acquired a fateful power to alter and destroy nature. But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.**



**[We are] challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves."** Rachel Carson

This issue of *Sketches*, conceived as a celebration of the 75-year history of our organization, can scarcely touch the highlights of all that has happened, or properly share the stories of the many hundreds of individuals who have contributed to its successes. We realize that for many, your name and your efforts have earned a place here. We also realize that so much of the detail that makes history interesting has been lost, or at least undiscovered in our searching. *Thanks for your understanding, and thanks for all you do!*

Photo credits: Sandhill Crane, Cal. Gnatcatcher, Cal. Condor, Surf Scoter, Cal Scrub-Jay, Karen Straus; Brown Pelican, Ed Henry; Cal. Least Terns, Sandeep Dhar; Golden Eagle, Rich Durham