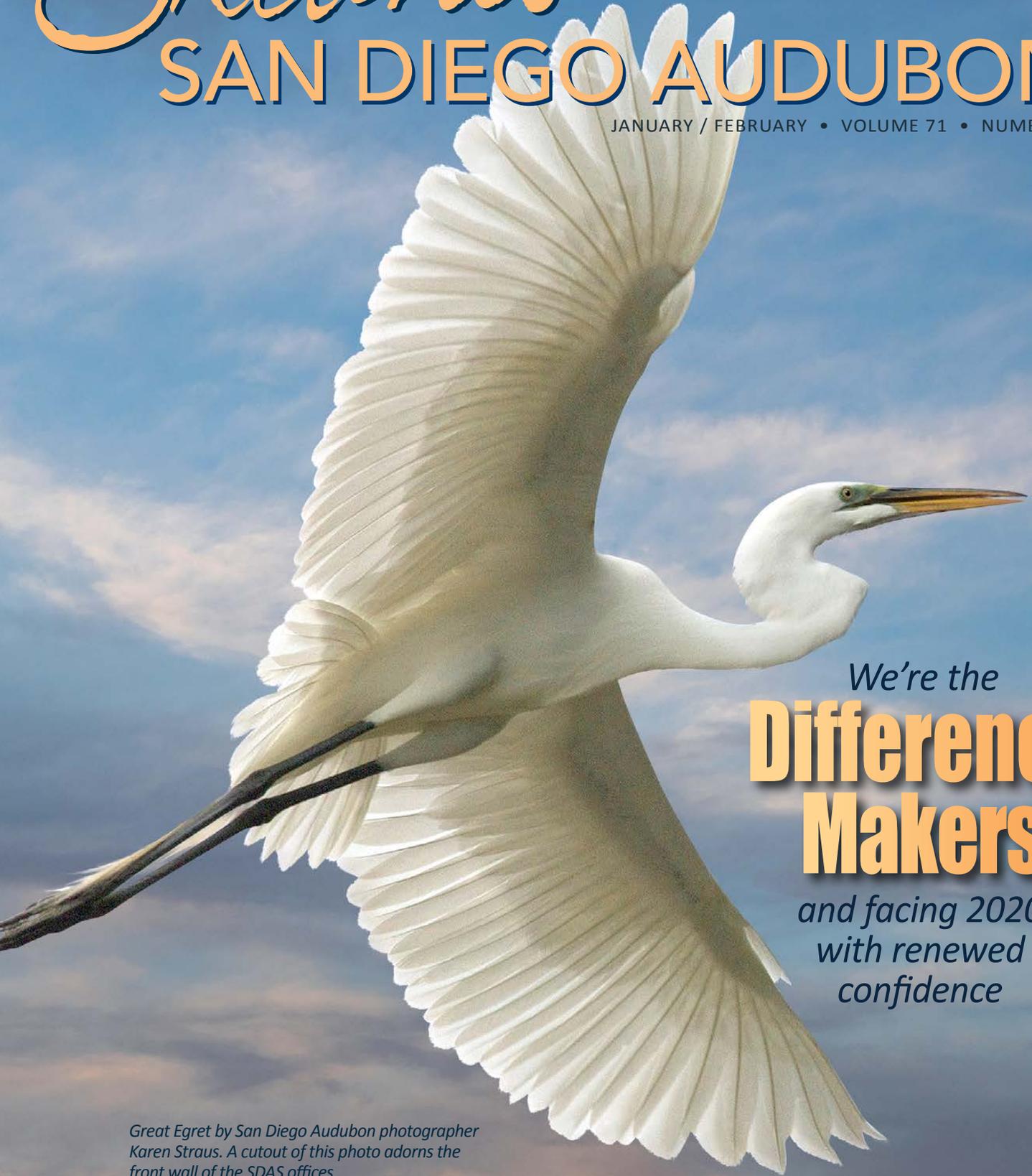


Sketches

SAN DIEGO AUDUBON

JANUARY / FEBRUARY • VOLUME 71 • NUMBER 3



We're the
**Difference
Makers**

*and facing 2020
with renewed
confidence*

*Great Egret by San Diego Audubon photographer
Karen Straus. A cutout of this photo adorns the
front wall of the SDAS offices.*

We are the
**Difference
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Yes, it is easy to feel that the obstacles faced by the environmental community are too imposing and too numerous to overcome. They're even beginning to create names for the emotions associated with this difficult reality. But I woke up this morning to see that Greta Thunberg was *Time* magazine's Person of the Year, and was reminded yet again that we are not alone, and not a minority—and we're not on the wrong side. It is a time of testing, to be sure, but also a time to be grateful and proud—grateful for the hard work of so many, including the staff and hundreds of San Diego Audubon volunteers, and proud of the hard-won successes that have come through their skill, zealous dedication, and confidence that we're doing the right things. *San Diego Audubon makes a difference*, and is always striving to make even more of one.

We urge you to remain engaged and supportive through your talents, energies, and gifts. We are conceiving and forming new ways to reach out with the message of a "culture of conservation," such as a new approach to membership meetings and expansion of our highly successful Audubon Club program to open new chapters in other local colleges and universities. We are planning further growth of our timely Advocates training efforts. New ways to focus on our local concerns with climate change are underway right now, notably a major photo documentation of king tides. San Diego Audubon has posted some important wins this year, and here are just a few of them. *David Stump, SDAS President*

Don't take the bait: Audubon wins big on behalf of seabirds

by Megan Flaherty, Restoration Program Manager

The Audubon network helped achieve a remarkable victory in late November, when, thanks in large part to the vocal opposition of volunteers and community members, federal fishery managers voted to stop a scoping (documenting) process for a new longline fishery off the West Coast.

One of the most destructive types of fishing gear, longlines entail dragging up to 50 miles of line and thousands of hooks through offshore waters for days at a time, unintentionally catching extremely high levels of unwanted fish and other marine species. Unsustainable catching of albatross, sea turtles, and other endangered species resulted in the prohibition of longlines within the California fleet in 1989.

Working alongside Audubon California, Sea and Sage Audubon, San Fernando Valley Audubon, and Oceana and Pew Trusts, we met the newest proposal with a series of opposition letters and spirited public comments at the November meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council. We were joined by many sport fishers who were similarly concerned about the impacts of longlining on the marine ecosystem.

Audubon staff and volunteers made sure to speak of the especially concerning plight of albatross. As long-lived, late-breeding seabirds that feed opportunistically on food items at the ocean's surface, they are especially vulnerable to being captured in fishing gear. Any loss of breeding-age adults constitutes a major impact to the albatross population. Globally, 15 of the 22 albatross species are considered endangered, and fisheries are the leading cause of their mortality.

Along the coast of California, the albatross species of concern are the Laysan, Short-tailed, and Black-footed Albatross. While the Laysan Albatross is listed as Near Threatened, the population has never fully recovered since its initial decline in the 1900s. One step higher on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species is the Black-footed Albatross. Recovery of the species has stalled,



Black-footed Albatross with chick. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



(Left) The eye-catching ReWild shirts stand out in this Mission Bay press conference. The guest speaker, Richard Norris of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, gave clarity and urgency to the need to reclaim at least a corner of Mission Bay for wildlife habitat.

(Below) San Diego Audubon Conservation Director Andrew Meyer speaks to Channel 8 News before a critical City Council session, backed up by Restoration Program Manager Megan Flaherty and a throng of ReWild supporters.

with the adult population highly impacted by longline bycatch; an average of 218 birds are caught in the still-operating Hawaii-based longline fishery every year. Once on the verge of extinction, the global population of Short-tailed Albatross hovers at about 6,000 birds, making them an infrequent sight along the West Coast. All three species are feeling the impacts of fisheries bycatch, and would be highly vulnerable to the effects of an expanded longline fishery off of our coast.

Fortunately, the Pacific Fishery Management Council appeared to heed our warnings, voting to not proceed at this time with any action to scope or authorize a pelagic longline fishery along the West Coast. We are extremely grateful to the dedicated volunteers and advocates who make wins like this possible, and we will continue to advocate for the unique and threatened birds and other wildlife that make our region special.



ReWild resists taming: *The Audubon-led coalition smartly maps their long game.*

by Andrew Meyer, San Diego Audubon Conservation Director

The ReWild Mission Bay project was based on the far-sighted words of the 1994 Mission Bay Park Master Plan, in which Campland on the Bay would be relocated and restored to wetland: “foremost in consideration should be the extent to which [the De Anza area] can contribute to the Park’s water quality. In fact, additional wetlands creation must be considered as part of the [De Anza area].” Those ideas are 25 years old now, but they harken back to not only 75 years ago before Mission Bay was dredged, but 1000s of years ago, when the Kumeyaay lived alongside the shores of Rose Creek and the tidal marsh expanse, both filled with birds, crabs, fish, and culturally important plants.

In 2019, we made great strides towards making this vision a reality. We took the completed ReWild Mission Bay Feasibility Study and have been using it to build the ReWild Coalition. Our coalition has grown to more than 25 organizations, with religious, civic, environmental, business and labor groups well-represented. We organized press events, rallies, and letter writing, and got out many supporters for a June City Council vote. Unfortunately, the Council voted to extend short-term leases in Campland and De Anza. After extended negotiations, we got critical concessions from Campland and the City, forcing all the RV investment and expansion into the interior of De Anza, as far from Rose Creek and the hoped-for home of future wetlands as possible. At the summer Council meeting, we also got many of the Councilmembers on the record supporting wetland restoration, saying they wanted climate change action, and asking for a ReWild alternative to be analyzed by the City. That was a huge victory, and we are pushing hard for the City to fund that new alternative.

We need to show that a restored and vibrant tidal wetland will be an amenity for this regional park, providing value to communities throughout San Diego—including historically disadvantaged communities that have faced barriers to accessing the coast and the existing land uses. We have a grant from the Coastal Conservancy to continue the Kendall-Frost restoration projects with community involvement. We are planning for our 2020 Love Your Wetlands Day on February 1, 2020 where the gates of Kendall-Frost are flung wide and the community comes in for activities, stories, restoration work, speeches, and music. We also had a momentous March to the Marsh for the Global Climate Walkout. Led by the Mission Bay High School Eco Club, more than 600 people came out to Kendall-Frost Marsh and proudly shouted that they wanted climate action now, including this wetland restoration project that will sequester carbon. Each of these events, and so many more, are how we’re moving the ReWild Mission Bay project forward, building the support to show our elected officials the path our city has to take.

A 'Model' Chapter: End-of-year dispatch from San Diego City College Audubon Club

by Karina Ornelas, Vice President of City College Audubon

It's been an amazing year for the San Diego City College Audubon Club. Most memorably, this is the year we received the 2019 Chapter Award at the Audubon National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. One of 61 college chapters around the country, we were recognized by Audubon CEO David Yarnold as a model that's being used to create even more of these chapters that engage young adults.

Our trip to the convention in July was made possible by the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, which provided us with a grant for travel expenses. Once at the event, our chapter presented research about hummingbirds and butterflies on the City College campus and we had abundant opportunities to network and expand our knowledge about conservation. We are already thinking about the next national convention—Audubon 2021 in Tacoma, Washington!

Looking ahead to the new year, we are currently working out details for creating a native garden at either a local school or a church. We are excited to continue our work with San Diego Audubon, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and San Diego Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, we're planning the San Diego Audubon Bird Festival Family Day, with exciting activities for local families. We can't wait for what 2020 will bring.

Members of the San Diego City College Audubon Club, along with San Diego Audubon Vice President Lisa Chaddock, traveled to Milwaukee to represent our causes and programs. We are looking to expand this vital model for the involvement of students to other local campuses.



And remember these statewide Audubon successes...

News items from Audubon California

In this year's biggest victory, the **California Migratory Bird Protection Act** was signed into law. This Audubon-sponsored bill ensures that migratory birds will continue to have state-based protections despite federal rollbacks of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Audubon supporters sent over 5,000 letters, and 100 advocates visited the State Capitol to urge legislators to pass this bill. Together, we defended millions of migratory birds in California.

California made history by implementing the **nation's first 100 percent lead ammunition ban**. This law protects raptors such as California Condors and Bald Eagles from deadly lead poisoning. This victory was 12 years in the making, starting with the first lead ammo ban in condor habitat in 2007. Working with a broad coalition and hundreds of thousands of supporters, we successfully passed legislation to ban lead ammo across California once and for all.

Threatened Tricolored Blackbirds had a phenomenal breeding season in the spring. With your support, we established partnerships with farmers in the Central Valley to delay harvests in silage fields where the birds were nesting. This gave the chicks six weeks to fledge and successfully fly off the nest. In total, we saved 90 percent of nesting colonies and 178,500 Tricolored Blackbirds.

The California Fish and Game Commission adopted a first-of-its-kind **Fishery Management Plan for Pacific Herring**, becoming one of the most sustainable fisheries in the nation for this vital forage fish. For the past seven years, Audubon worked to design this plan with herring fishers, Oceana, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Audubon supporters delivered thousands of letters to protect this key food source for millions of seabirds.

A federal court dismissed a lawsuit seeking to remove the imperiled coastal California Gnatcatcher from the Endangered Species Act list, ensuring protection for this tiny songbird and its coastal sage scrub habitat. The decision from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia came after years of attempts by developers to delist the species.



Silverwood Scene

Boughs of (Toyon) holly cheerfully usher in 2020

by Phillip Lambert, Silverwood Resident Manager

The fall season at Silverwood required a fast change of gears, thanks to heavy rains that seemed to burst out of nowhere. One moment, we were finishing up fuel reduction for fire clearance, and the next we're out on the trails constructing erosion control berms and brow ditches. This isn't a bad thing; it was satisfying being out in nature working hard as the darkest month of the year crept in. By the end of November, Silverwood had received 6.33 inches of rain.

During the festive final season of the year, many people rejoice in hanging holiday decorations to keep the mood bright. At Silverwood, nature did the work for us. The chaparral disclosed its unique picturesque winter charm with the help of a shrub known as Toyon, also called Christmas Berry. Toyon (*Heteomeles arbutifolia*), are laden with clusters of bright red pomes, were set against a dazzling frost-covered ground. Its leaves sparkled with tiny droplets of water, a spectrum of colors, shimmering like ornaments on a tree. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of Indians in the San Francisco Bay area originally named the Toyon. But the evergreen shrub also is sometimes referred to as "California Holly" and may even be how Hollywood got its name.

The Toyon's berries are edible for birds, but contain a small amount of cyanide, which feasibly could kill a person if they ate a large quantity. If you cook them, however, those dangerous compounds burn off and a cherry flavor remains. Low in protein and calories, the berries offer limited nutritional value for birds that need to consume their body weight in food each day to survive the winter. Hermit thrushes are seen foraging on the berries during the late fall, and American Robins and Cedar Waxwings eat the berries during their arrival in late winter. California Thrashers have also been seen eating the red berries. Ripened berries can ferment, making birds a little tipsy when eaten during the holiday season. Deer are also known to eat them during years of low acorn production.

In the 1920s, it became a tradition of Californians to collect Toyon branches to make Christmas wreaths. The impact on the plant's population led to a statewide protection of the species, making it unlawful to cut branches off on public lands.

As we begin a new year, it's not hard to reflect on what to be thankful for here at Silverwood. Over the past 16 years, with help from so many volunteers and supporters, Silverwood has made a full recovery since the 2003 Cedar Fire. With the many hours put in on eradicating dense stands of invasive weeds choking out the native species, we have recorded 37 new native species in those years. The chaparral continues to recover slowly to its climactic height and the new fire-activated recovery oak tree trunks are already filling in the sky with their full canopy of leaves high above.

During January, we expect to see many species of plants blooming early to get a jump on seed production before the dry season begins. All five species of Ceanothus, Ramona-Lilac (*Ceanothus tomentosus*), Hairy Ceanothus—(*Ceanothus oliganthus* var. *oliganthus*), Chaparral Whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*), Lakeside-Lilac (*Ceanothus cyaneus*), and Thick-Leaf-Lilac (*Ceanothus crassifolius*)—usually begin blooming this time of the season and can be found along the trails with their various shades of blue and white flowers. Also typically in bloom are all three species of Manzanitas—Eastwood's Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *glandulosa*), Big-



Migrating Cedar Waxwings flock to the ripe Toyon pomes. Photo by Ed Henry.

berry Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*) and Mission Manzanita (*Xylococcus bicolor*), with their pinkish and white colored urn-shaped flowers.

During 2019, some unexpected expenses impacted the Silverwood budget. The team is looking for an "angel" to help support some of the extra costs. The hot water heater at the manager's residence had to be replaced at a cost of \$600 for the heater and \$400 for the installation. The motor to the Stihl weed wacker seized and a new one had to be purchased at a cost of \$380. Without this tool, it would be impossible to maintain the 5.7 miles of trail clearance. Silverwood always appreciates volunteers to help with the trail clearing and many other ongoing projects. To offer assistance and to make donations, contact Phillip Lambert at 619-443-2998.

SILVERWOOD CALENDAR

January 2020

January 5, 12, 19, and 26 (Sundays) — Open visitation and guided nature hikes at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

January 16 (Sunday)— "The Little Pleasures Along the Trails," a special theme hike at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Have fun with fungi, ferns mosses, and lichens along Silverwood's beautiful trails.

January 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 (Wednesdays)— Open visitation from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

February 2020

February 2, 9, 16 and 23 (Sundays) — Open visitation from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; guided nature walks 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

February 16 (Sunday)— "Hike the High Country," a special theme hike at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Join us in the pleasure of venturing through the San Diego's back country chaparral.

February 5, 12, 19 and 26 (Wednesdays) — Open visitation from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Call 619-443-2998 for information. Silverwood is located at 13003 Wildcat Canyon Road in Lakeside. Watch closely on the right for the entrance sign.

Anstine Ambles

Creatures after dark—those that lurk beneath

by Anna Prowant, Anstine Committee Member

Have you ever contemplated what occurs in the wild as you lay comfortably in your bed each evening? As you begin to drift into dreamland after a long and productive day, many local creatures are just beginning to stir and venture out for their nightly pursuits. Here is a snapshot of two of San Diego County's most fascinating nocturnal residents. Being active after the sun has set, both of these animals conserve water by avoiding the daytime heat.

Western Spadefoot Toad

As the pitter-patter of raindrops lands on the Western Spadefoot's dirt dwelling, this native toad greets the evening with a hop. Its skin readily absorbs the sky's moisture, while also providing a natural defense against predators with skin secretions that have a distinctive smell comparable to peanuts. It's breeding season, which spans roughly from December to May, and that means it's time to advertise for a mate with short, snore-like calls.

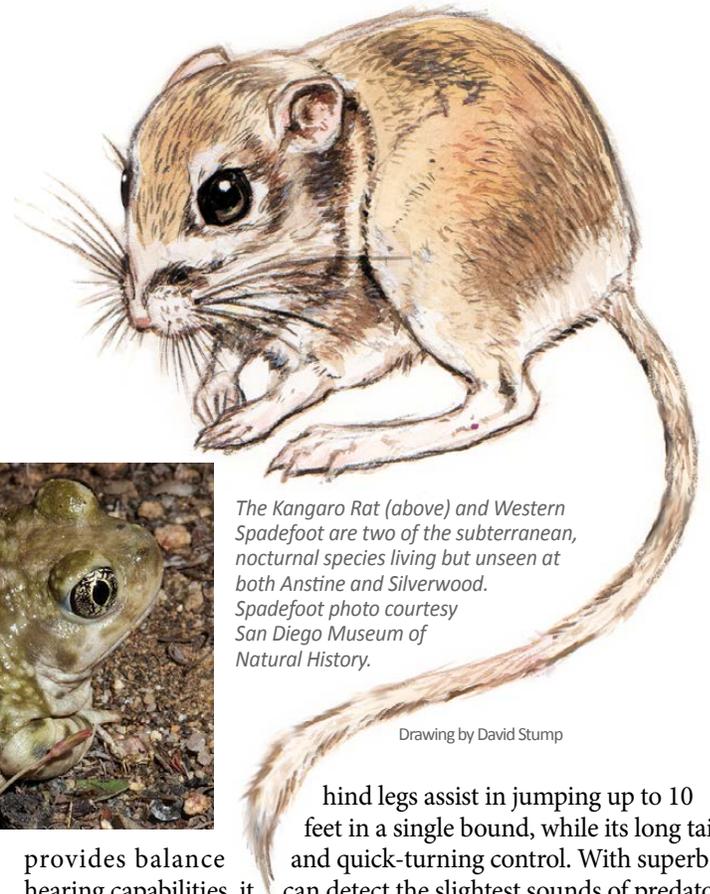


The Western Spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*) may hop along until it finds a water source to float in, as its snore pierces the night sky. As a spadefoot, its unique hindfoot "shovels" make it possible for the species to survive in dry conditions, penetrating even the hard desert floor to find cool areas to live.

Hopping back home after a long evening, the spadefoot may feel content knowing that if the rain damaged its dirt dwelling, it will be able to easily rebuild a new home using its natural shoveling toolkit, and then rest peacefully with moist skin and a belly full of small insects and other arthropods.

Kangaroo Rat

Each evening, the Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys s.*) awakens and stirs in its carefully crafted, tunnel-riddled abode. Scurrying out into the moonlit sky, it is alert and prepared. Should danger strike, its strong



The Kangaroo Rat (above) and Western Spadefoot are two of the subterranean, nocturnal species living but unseen at both Anstine and Silverwood. Spadefoot photo courtesy San Diego Museum of Natural History.

Drawing by David Stump

hind legs assist in jumping up to 10 feet in a single bound, while its long tail and quick-turning control. With superb hearing capabilities, it can detect the slightest sounds of predators, even one as quiet as an approaching owl.

It quickly gathers seeds into its cheek pouches before retreating into the safety of its homemade dwelling. No need to seek water; its trusty seeds provide all the moisture its body needs to survive dry desert-like conditions.

The kangaroo rat disgorges its nightly seed collection. And after the evening feast, it will store the remainder in various chambers of its dirt home. Aware that the morning sun will bring heat, it seals the home's open entrances with ever-plentiful soil. By doing so, it not only creates a temperature-friendly burrow, but also an environment where the moisture from its breath will be readily absorbed by its seed collection. Once all nightly duties are complete, it will rest peacefully underneath the earth, protected from the outside world.

Welcome our new Volunteer/Office Coordinator Chelsea Felbeck

Chelsea Felbeck was hired in November as SDAS's new Volunteer and Operations Coordinator, taking over the roles of Jesus Sanchez and Tracy Lawrence. She gained experience in information management, volunteer relations, and office operations working at UC San Diego and Cal State Fullerton. Chelsea spent years studying Elegant Tern breeding dynamics for her master's thesis and has worked with California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers. She loves spending time outdoors and is passionate about wildlife conservation.

We welcome Chelsea to the San Diego Audubon team!



Chelsea Felbeck with Tern friends

2020 San Diego Bird Festival

February 26 through March 1 at the waterfront Marina Village Conference Center in Mission Bay

Our event lineup this year promises a splendid celebration of the birds and wild places of San Diego County, along with plentiful opportunities to socialize and build new skills. We expect more than 500 people will converge from all over the country to participate in the festival's many events. The festival offers a wealth of speakers, trips, workshops, shopping, and more. Most of the trips filled up within hours of the online registration opening, but please review the complete schedule found on our website at www.sandiegoaudubon.org. Sign up to be a volunteer, and work just one shift to receive a discounted registration fee.



California Gnatcatcher
by Matthew Binns

Bird ID for beginners: *How to become a birdwatcher*

Are you new to bird watching and intimidated by the number of species to learn, or simply looking for a new activity to get you out into San Diego's beautiful natural surroundings?

Join us on two consecutive Saturdays in March for a bird identification workshop led by Dr. Matthew Binns. The in-class lesson (March 14) at the Lakeside Community Center will focus on how to get started in birding. You'll learn about common characteristics of birds, useful technology resources, and how to choose the best birding tools. The following week (March 21), the interactive field component will take you onto the trails at Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, where you will identify local bird species with a focus on how to identify relevant field marks.

Part I: March 14th 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Lakeside Community Center at 9841 Vine St., Lakeside

Part II: March 21, 9 a.m.– noon, Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary at 13003 Wildcat Canyon Rd., Lakeside

Register online at www.sandiegoaudubon.org or call 858-273-7800

Drawing Birds as Living Animals—*Last Call!*

Two consecutive Saturdays: January 25 and February 1, 2020

Sessions will run 9 a.m.–1 p.m. with light refreshments provided

Held at the Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center

2202 S. Coast Highway, Oceanside, CA 92054

Register online at www.sandiegoaudubon.org or call 858-273-7800



Yellow-crowned Night
Heron by Ed Henry

birding trips

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Please regularly check our website at sandiegoaudubon.org for full trip information as it becomes available. All trips subject to change.

SAN DIEGO AUDUBON BIRDING TRIPS are open to all. Please remember that these birding trips are very popular, and most fill up quickly. Please limit yourself to one or two trips to leave room for others.

1: Follow our listings on our new website at sandiegoaudubon.org (*Go Birding, Local Bird Trips*). Trips shown in Sketches are posted first online, generally around the latter part of the month prior to issue date. Starting dates for registration will be indicated on the website.

2: Online registration is required for all field trips. Attendance for trips is now capped at specific numbers to ensure the best experience for all participants, and all trips are filled in order of registration. A few trips will require a registration fee.

3: For directions, go to the SDAS website (look for *Go Birding, then Local Bird Trips*). Google Maps info is provided for each birding trip.

Call Peter Thomas with questions at 858-571-5076, or email your queries to: prthomas1@yahoo.com. **And always remember, "Cherish Nature."**

JANUARY 2020

Chollas Lake

Saturday, January 4, 2020, 8:00–11:00 a.m.

Leaders: Kathryn Wendel, 707-834-7134, and others

Capped at 25 participants. Directions on the website.

Dairy Mart Ponds and the Bird and Butterfly Garden

Saturday, January 11, 2020, 8:00–11:00 a.m.

Leaders: John Walters, 619-267-1821, and others.

Capped at 25 participants. Directions on the website.

Winter Raptors of the Ramona Grasslands

Sunday, January 19, 2020, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Leaders: Peter Thomas, 858-571-5076, Nancy Christensen, and others

Capped at 25 participants. Directions on the website.

South Bay Salt Works – San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, January 25, 2020, 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Leaders: Peter Thomas, 858-571-5076, Jim Pea, and others

Capped at 30 participants. Directions on the website.

Tecolote Canyon Natural Park

Saturday, January 25, 2020, 8:00–11:00 a.m.

Leaders: Anitra Kaye, 619-517-1168, John Walters, and Jack Friery

Capped at 25 participants. Directions on the website.

FEBRUARY 2020: Check website in January for details

San Jacinto Wildlife Area – return visit

Saturday, February 1, 2020

Kit Carson Park

Saturday, February 8, 2020

Beginning Birders at Lindo Lake

Friday, February 14, 2020

South Bay Salt Works and the South San Diego Bay

Saturday, February 22, 2020

Tecolote Canyon

Saturday, February 22, 2020

And possibly others



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- Subscription to *Sketches*, our member magazine (6 issues a year)
- Access to free local birding trips
- Members-only guided walks at our two nature sanctuaries
- Discounts on nature guidebooks and other merchandise, and access to our excellent library
- Access to a wide variety of volunteer opportunities
- Discounts on special workshops about birds, native plants, and more
- Invitations to special events (such as our holiday party and volunteer celebration)
- Email newsletter updates, including advance notice of events

While San Diego Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon Society, we are an independent not-for-profit organization. We encourage you—especially if you are already a National Audubon member—to become a Friend of San Diego Audubon to directly support our local conservation and education programs.


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Sketches SAN DIEGO AUDUBON

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SDAS OFFICE 4010 Morena Blvd. Ste. 100, San Diego, CA 92117. Our reception desk is staffed by volunteers, and some time slots may go unfilled. Please call ahead before planning your visit, to ensure someone will be available to assist you. Messages can be left at any time on the office answering machine at **858-273-7800**, or email sdaudubon@sandiegoaudubon.org.

San Diego Audubon Office: 858-273-7800

California Audubon Society: www.ca.audubon.org
National Audubon Society: www.audubon.org
National Audubon Activist Hotline: 800-659-2622
National Audubon Customer Service: 800-274-4201

San Diego Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society



Visit our website at
www.sandiegoaudubon.org

Visit for all online resources, including our
Bird Festival and Birding Trips

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...Fostering the protection and appreciation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats...