

Sketches

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SAN DIEGO AUDUBON



Red-masked Parakeet
by Michael Matherly

The Naturalized Parrots of San Diego County

Parrots in Southern California have established a unique and benign ecological niche

The Naturalized Parrots of San Diego County

Not Just Another Pretty Polly!

By Lesley Handa, Handa Ornithology Lab

The word “parrot” brings to mind either a caged pet parrot with clipped wings or a colorful Macaw on the shoulder of a pirate, repeating incessantly, “Polly wants a cracker!” Although most parrots do have brilliant plumage and can be quite noisy, parrots in the wild are gregarious, fly around in flocks, and are rarely seen with pirates.

San Diego County has nine established parrot species for us to enjoy in our backyards: the Red-crowned Amazon, *Amazona viridigenalis*; Lilac-crowned Amazon, *Amazona finschi*; Yellow-headed Amazon, *Amazona oratrix*; White-fronted Amazon, *Amazona albifrons*; Red-lored Amazon, *Amazona autumnalis*; Red-masked Parakeet, *Psittacara erythrogenys*; Mitred Parakeet, *Psittacara mitrata*; Blue-crowned Parakeet, *Thectocercus acuticaudatus*; and Rose-ringed Parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*; as well as some hybrids. In 2019, there were an estimated 1,100 established parrots in the county, including 800 Amazon parrots and 300 parakeets, according to the Handa Ornithology Lab. As you enjoy the noisy flocks of parrots that pass overhead through your favorite birding spots in San Diego, here are some important things to know.



Probable Red-crowned x Lilac-crowned Amazon hybrid (two views of same bird) by Ed Henry

Parrots are one of the most threatened orders of birds, with nearly one third of all species declining in population. Despite the conservation concerns for many species of parrots, conservation issues are often overlooked due to the association with parrots as pets. Like many other birds, some populations of parrot species are declining across native ranges because of habitat loss and degradation, but parrots also face additional impacts due to the demand in the pet trade. Many species are subject to poaching across natural ranges and in the United States, with illegal capture of some species numbering thousands of individuals annually.

According to the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Red-crowned Amazon, with an estimated breeding population of 2,000–4,300 individuals; the Lilac-crowned Amazon, with an estimated breeding

population of 4,700–6,700 individuals; and the Yellow-headed Amazon, with a breeding population of about 4,700 individuals, are endangered and included in Appendix I (the most threatened) of CITES. The status of the Red-masked Parakeet, with an estimated breeding population of 6,700 individuals, is near threatened and included in Appendix II (less threatened) of CITES. Other parrot species in San Diego, except the Rose-ringed Parakeet, are also included in Appendix II of CITES.

The United States has a natural history of endemic parrots, and none have

done well. Historically, three species of parrots have naturally occurred in the United States and its territories. The extinct Carolina Parakeet, *Conuropsis carolinensis*, with a former range on the east coast, can only be seen today as museum specimens, in photographs, and in art. According to research, the extinction of the Carolina Parakeet resulted from direct and indirect human activity. The Thick-billed Parrot, *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*, which occurs in Mexico, had a former range across the southwest; it is recognized as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and by the IUCN. Attempts at reintroduction in the United States failed, due to human development into their habitat and to raptor predation. The Puerto Rican Amazon parrot, *Amazona vittata*, occurs in the U.S. Territory of Puerto Rico; it is recognized as endangered by the USFWS and as critically endangered by the IUCN. In 2017, hurricanes Irma and María defoliated the trees. Any birds that survived the storm were seen trying to forage on the ground, as no food was left on the trees. Luckily, dedicated researchers and conservationists supplemented food to the parrots until the foliage and other food sources grew back. With fewer than 600 individuals, most of them currently in captivity, the Puerto Rican Amazon continues to face threats, such as the increased severity of tropical storms due to the climate crisis.

In each urban area, the assemblage of parrot species and the story of the establishment of the parrot population is unique. San Diego County has fewer species of parrot than Los Angeles County. For example, the Blue-headed Amazon, *Amazona aestiva*, occurs in Los Angeles County but not in San Diego County, though both Counties host the Lilac-crowned Amazon. San Diego County also has fewer parrots overall, compared with Los Angeles.

San Diego County has a long history of wild-living parrots dating



back to the 1940s. Some may have originally come from a local pet shop, according to Dr. Jeffrey Jenkins, local avian veterinarian who studied Amazon parrots in Guatemala. Today, the non-native parrots in San Diego and throughout the United States are recognized as naturalized. Additionally, some unscrupulous



Mitred Parakeet
by Karen Straus

smugglers capture parrots in the wild and transport these wild-caught parrots across the border for the pet trade. If these would-be smugglers fear they will be caught, they may release the parrots at the border, to avoid criminal prosecution; these released wild parrots may have supplemented the local parrot population over time. Because these parrots were originally captured from the wild then released elsewhere, they cannot be considered feral.

The naturalized parrots in Southern California are not harming native habitat or wildlife. Multiple sources indicate that the parrots in Southern California have

established a unique ecological niche in urban areas and are not harming native habitat. Naturalized parrots in Southern California are generalists that rely heavily on ornamental trees.

One study by Sal Angius of California Flocks identified more than 50 different food sources for parrots in Southern California. I concur with these findings after studying the parrots in San Diego County, as I have not seen evidence that parrots harm native vegetation. The parrots tend to stick to urban areas and are typically observed eating food items from ornamental trees, some that other animals do not even consume. Additionally, many parrots naturally disperse the seeds they consume, so seed dispersal may assist with the propagation of native plants. If so, parrots' consumption of native seeds may be advantageous to the promotion of native plants.

Regarding parrots interacting with wildlife, interaction with wildlife is minimal, even during breeding; I have not seen any indication that parrots are harming local wildlife. Parrot species that occur in the county are secondary cavity nesters. To address the concern of cavity availability for other wildlife, I observed more unoccupied cavities than cavities being used by parrots for nesting.

Relationships within the flock are crucial for the survival of individuals. Some species of parrot mate for life. Around San Diego, you will often see parrots fly in mated pairs, flying two by two. If lucky, you may observe birds demonstrate pair bonding activities such as *allopreening*, where birds groom one another, or *allofeeding*, where birds feed one another.

Time for the family plays a large role in adult parrot life. For parrots in San Diego, including Amazon parrots and most parakeets (not the Ring-necked Parakeet), the period from laying the last egg to the first chick fledging takes about 90 days. Compare 90 days to that of some songbirds whose period can be as short as about 11 days. The total parental investment of Amazon parrots constitutes 9 months of the year, with the juveniles staying with the parents about 6 months before going off on their own. By the fourth month, in some of the large families with three or four juveniles who beg for food incessantly, I have observed parrot parents trying to avoid their demanding offspring, much like human parents who are exhausted from taking care of demanding toddlers.

I once observed two adult male Red-crowned Amazon parrots, one of whom was missing an eye. I had seen this one-eyed parrot a few years earlier in a different location. The type of relationship between the two adult male birds was unclear, but the unimpaired male was closely attending to the one-eyed male. At one point, the Red-crowned Amazon male was also allofeeding the one-eyed individual. In a non-gregarious bird, this disability probably would have meant slim odds for survival, but this gregarious behavior among parrots was heartwarming to see, with one bird caring for another in need.

The daily schedule for a parrot is early to bed and early to rise with midday naps. Ask anyone living near a parrot roost to confirm, and they will agree that parrots can be extremely noisy at sunrise and sunset! Parrots live by a consistent schedule requiring 10–12 hours of beauty sleep to wake up before sunrise. Usually,



Blue-crowned Parakeet flock, by Craig Chaddock

during midday, parrots will take naps, with different species napping during different times of the day. At the evening roost, the parrots head promptly to sleep shortly after sunset; it is remarkable how quickly the deafening noisy chatter transitions to complete silence once darkness falls. After sunset, a passerby who visited the same area would never know the birds were present. (Continued on page 4)

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Parrots are playful but can fight. Part of the popular appeal of parrots is their playful nature. At any time, you may see parrots in San Diego hanging upside-down, messing around with a flock-mate, or showing curiosity with objects. Parrots play with objects to learn about the usefulness of objects, as play contributes to their survival skills.

Unlike the pet parrot with clipped wings, wild parrots rely heavily on flight for survival, and they fly to avoid aggressive interactions. There are, however, a few occasions when parrots will engage in a fight, such as when defending territories around the nest during breeding, or when another animal gets too close. Earlier this year, during breeding season, I observed a hybrid Red-crowned Amazon × Lilac-crowned Amazon defend a nest cavity against a Red-masked Parakeet. The amazon flew straight at the parakeet approaching the nest and engaged in full-body contact, with the two parrots falling locked in a fight, reminding me of an eagle death spiral. Before the birds hit the ground, however, the conflict ended, with both birds disengaging and flying off in different directions.

On another occasion, I observed a newly fledged juvenile amazon trying to pull itself up by its beak, to perch on a very wide tree branch, striving to reach a spot very close to where an adult amazon was already perched. When I saw the adult take an aggressive body posture with its eyes focused fiercely on the juvenile, I knew that the juvenile was going to get it. The adult then proceeded to kick the juvenile in the face with its foot, moving the young bird out of the way by force. None of the birds were injured after any of these conflicts.

Parrot populations in urban areas are part of the conservation solution. The history of endemic parrots in the United States provides valuable conservation lessons to guide the approach to wild parrot populations in urban areas. Human activity drove the Carolina Parakeet to extinction, and the fate of other parrot species could be similar. Attempts to replenish species across native ranges may be unsuccessful, as we have learned from the Thick-billed

Parrot. Also, with the Puerto Rican Amazon in 2017, we learned that the climate crisis threatens the survival of some species in their native habitat.

Worldwide, the climate crisis is expected to alter the native habitat for many species of parrots in the future. Many species are declining and currently face significant impacts from habitat loss and from the pet trade, and we do not yet know how species will be able to adjust to changes due to the climate crisis. Fortunately, some parrot species of conservation concern have found success in urban habitats in Southern California, with minimal impact on native species. Perhaps these remote populations can serve as a unique conservation solution, as some species are thriving with very little effort on our part.



Red-crowned and Lilac-crowned Amazons socializing, upside down. Cross-species interactions, and even hybridization, are not uncommon. Photo by Karen Straus.

Conservation in Action *Feral Cats in San Diego—An Ongoing Threat to Ridgway's Rails* by Andrew Meyer, Director of Conservation

Feral cats (ownerless cats living wild or semi-wild) are a deadly problem for many of our North American birds, but they remain a divisive issue because many of us love pets and consider them part of the family, including our cats. There are several local projects that are working to limit the impact of feral cats on the bird species that we know and love. We are partnering with the Lakeside River Conservancy to update a sign along the San Diego River to respectfully relate the devastating impacts of cats on riparian, and especially ground-nesting, birds.

In Mission Bay, the UC San Diego Natural Reserve System manages feral cats to limit their predation on endangered Light-footed Ridgway's Rails. In 2019, the range-wide Ridgway's Rail survey found just 308 breeding pairs in California, a very steep decline from 2016, when twice as many were recorded. We are working to expand the wetland available to Ridgway's Rails through our ReWild Mission Bay project, creating a much bigger buffer between human impacts, including cats, and the territories of these cryptic marsh birds that are struggling to exist. Similar management work is being done at

the mouth of the San Diego River, as part of the mitigation for the Mission Bay Bridge project. In 2019, the range-wide surveys found 19 rail pairs at the Southern Wildlife Preserve and San Diego River Mouth, but they pointed to feral cats as a problem for the rails' long-term survival. These rails also probably use Famosa Slough; a rail with chicks was recorded there in 2017. Unfortunately, the Kendall-Frost Marsh, San Diego River, Southern Wildlife Preserve, and other critical bird habitats all have problems with feral cats. Preserve managers struggle to limit the killing of rare birds, as well as of relatively common ones.

While feral cats are a major source for bird losses, please remember, if you own a house cat, it definitely helps to keep it indoors, especially if you live near wildlife habitat. Cat leashes with halters are catching on, and you may consider a "catio" that lets your felid enjoy the outdoors and sunshine without risk to the birds in your neighborhood. Check with the San Diego Audubon Conservation Committee, or write your city councilmember or County Board of Supervisors member to see how you can best address this difficult subject.

Ruffling Our Plumage to Shake Out Long Overlooked Racism

Across the nation, Audubon Board members, Executive Directors, staffers, and supporters are asking, “What does our name convey?” Since 1886, the Audubon Society’s name has been inspired largely by John James Audubon’s lifelong passion for birds, displayed so exquisitely in his *Birds of America* double-elfanto folio and extolled in his *Ornithological Biography*. Though Audubon died roughly 35 years before the first Audubon Society was launched, his name seemed the perfect match for the movement. Over the decades, however, his accomplishments have been selectively honored and highlighted, while troubling elements of his personal history have remained obscured.

When historical accounts omit ugly aspects of our past, these omissions limit our growth as a society. We need to understand our full history to guide our decisions about whom we honor and which values we seek to emulate. Long-downplayed aspects of John James Audubon’s life story are now spotlighted in this historic moment of social reckoning: It is clear that Audubon, whose French-Haitian father held slaves, himself bought, worked, and sold slaves, and he profited from doing so. Audubon’s holding of slaves is an unavoidable and abhorrent truth, just as it is part of our society’s story and of our nation’s historical racism.

As a society and as a nation, we increasingly recognize a deep natural relationship between our protection of wildlife and their habitats and our commitment to human rights and justice for all. As we strive to ensure the remaining biodiversity of our planet, we find that this struggle is inextricably entwined with the struggle for social justice.

With our growing awareness of John James Audubon’s full history, we can decide, “What ethos does our organization now represent?” Unlike the birds we love, we can shape our own identity. Today, “Audubon” represents far more than one individual. The name

Audubon represents a powerful idea that has developed and evolved over more than a century, well expressed in our Society’s mission statement. From its formative years, the Audubon Society has been dedicated not only to appreciating nature but also, importantly, to protecting it. That is the legacy of the true founders of the movement dating back as early as 1886, and of the many thousands who have vigorously championed the cause of conservation under the Audubon banner over the past 134+ years.

The name “Audubon” now symbolizes a vision, a deeply felt understanding, which sees the natural world as a great and irreplaceable wonder that can and must be preserved. But that name must also invoke the common cause of humanity, knowing that we fight for social as well as environmental justice. With renewed dedication, San Diego Audubon Society is moving forward with our own plans to help overcome the inequalities in our world.

A newly formed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force, comprising diverse environmental leaders, is guiding this work. Along with addressing the Audubon name and history, we are acknowledging the tragic practices of early ornithologists who slaughtered birds in the pursuit of knowledge. We are supporting the call to change the names of birds when the persons for whom they were named participated in the defense of slavery, such as the McCown’s Longspur, named after a Confederate general. We are closely following the National Audubon Society as it grapples with these matters, as well, and we look forward to sharing in the processes that will ultimately shape our Society’s identity in the 21st Century. Whatever our name is and will be, now is our time to make a stand for nature and for a healthier planet for all. We look forward to continuing the good fight with you.

San Diego Audubon Board of Directors and Executive Director

SAN DIEGO BIRD FESTIVAL 2021 *Our “Hybrid” Festival puts Safety—and Fun—First*

The San Diego Bird Festival is an annual celebration of the wild birds and habitats of San Diego County. The dates are February 17-21, 2021, Wednesday through Sunday.

The 2021 Festival will be our first “hybrid” event, combining live and virtual components. The festival will include workshops and keynote speakers (in an online format), an online exhibit hall and silent auction, and small capacity, socially-distanced field trips where attendees will gather at the trip site. **The event schedule is posted online on the San Diego Bird Festival page (under “Birding”) at sandiegoaudubon.org.**

Registration for the festival is \$30, which includes unlimited workshops and web-based events. Field trips are an additional cost.

Registration will open November 9 at 9:00 a.m. PST. When registration is open, a link to the registration page will appear on the bird festival landing page. We are expecting field trips to fill quickly. Wait lists will be collected, and additional sections will be added to the most popular trips. People on the waitlist will be approached first to fill the additional sections.

Here are some highlights from the event schedule:

- Opening Keynote with Rosemary Mosco of Bird and Moon Comics.*
- Four Birding the Border trips*
- Three Pelagic trips*
- Four Kayak trips*
- Four Grebe trips*
- Photography field trips*

Northern Flicker
©KS Nature Photography

Keynote program featuring Julie Zickefoose

Owling field trips

Family Day activities on Feb 21

Post-Festival Trip with Mario Cordoba in Guanacaste, Costa Rica

We are so grateful for our sponsors who have made our event possible: **Swarovski Optik, Zeiss, and Redstart Birding.** Sponsorships are available. If you are interested in participating as a sponsor, we want to hear from you! Likewise, if you have an interest in volunteering, or wish to join us as a vendor, speaker, or leader, please contact us online or email Jen Hajj at hajj@sandiegoaudubon.org.



Anstine Ambles *Is there a possible future for native species in Anstine's pond?*

by Walker Wilson, Anstine-Audubon Preserve Assistant

When Europeans arrived in California, they brought with them invasive plant and animal species. The invasive species soon began to outcompete native species, driving some of them toward extinction. The vast problem with U.S. invasive species causes \$100 billion in annual damages, with \$3 billion spent on control and removal. Invasive plants threaten the habitat that supports the animals we love, and many invasive animals threaten our wildlife directly. Though many invasive species come from outside the United States, many disruptive pests come from within our country, outside of these species' natural range.

As the Anstine Preserve Assistant, managing invasive species is the biggest part of my job. Invasive grasses, mustard, hemlock, and castor bean all continually invade the preserve from neighboring properties, quickly filling in any available gaps, leaving little room for wildflowers. Unfortunately, non-native animals also invade the preserve. The American Bullfrog, native to the eastern and southern U.S., was not originally present on the west coast. After escaping from food farms (where they were propagated for their legs), the Bullfrogs quickly settled into our California freshwater habitats. These Bullfrogs grow up to 6 inches long, dwarfing native Pacific Tree Frogs (up to 2" long) and young Western Toads (2.2–5.1"), as well as Red-legged Frogs (1.7–5.5"), now extirpated from much of their former range. A full-sized Bullfrog can literally swallow these native species whole. Also, Bullfrogs multiply rapidly; given their dominant size and aggression, they seriously threaten our local amphibians and other small animals, such as baby ducklings. In turn, the Bullfrogs are the prey of other species. Herons have been observed feeding on Bullfrog tadpoles at the Anstine pond. Another



American Bullfrog © Dale Bicksler

invasive frog—the voracious, long-lived, prolific African Clawed Frog—is similarly depleting native amphibian habitat, pond by pond.

The turtles seen at the Anstine pond and at other ponds, reservoirs, and the pools in local parks

are also invaders originating from the American South. The Red-eared Slider, identifiable by its signature red 'ears', is an introduction from the pet trade. As the most commonly sold pet turtle, literally millions of Red-eared Sliders found their ways as hatchlings into American homes, often quite cheaply. Because of problems with Salmonella the hatchlings are no longer sold, but adult turtles are still marketed for display in private pools and ponds. They often become too large or troublesome to care for, and many animal shelters either won't take



Western Pond Turtle by David Stump

turtles they take. As a result, many owners release the turtles into our waterways, which leads to negative consequences for our native species. The Western Pond Turtle is the only freshwater turtle species native to California, and its range is under threat. It is endangered in the state of Washington, is "sensitive/critical" in Oregon, and is a species of special concern in California. While these turtles lose habitat, Red-eared Sliders quickly adapt to reservoirs and ponds, as well as the few remaining natural water sources, making even more difficult the re-introduction of Western Pond Turtles.

At the Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve we are preparing a plan to restore Western Pond Turtles and perhaps other native aquatic wildlife to the pond, while curbing the on-site invasives. No lover of animals wants to eradicate turtles or frogs, but allowing them to prosper outside their natural range condemns our native amphibians and reptiles to a shrinking range and an uncertain future.

Anstine is now open to visitors and small groups (max four, all from the same household) from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturdays. To sign up, see our calendar for available dates and click on your preferred option. Please note that COVID-19 safety rules are in place.

A Note from the Director...

While we all might be feeling a little feral these days, San Diego Audubon remains strong, focused, and strategic in our work. We are excited to now offer online webinars, welcome visitors back to our sanctuaries, and announce the upcoming 2021 Bird Festival. We hope you are able to join us as much as possible moving forward. I have relished the opportunity to meet many of you over the phone or see your faces on Zoom. Our ability to adapt and continue our great work is in large part due to your support. Please continue to share your stories, wishes, and feedback as we all weather this storm together. And finally, don't be afraid to keep a bit of your new feral streak; we will need that wild spirit on our side for the numerous challenges ahead. In the love and service of nature, there is hope.

Travis Kemnitz, San Diego Audubon Executive Director

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2021

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a century-old program of the National Audubon Society. This annual community science project is a bird census wherein thousands of volunteers from across the U.S., Canada, and many other countries in the Western Hemisphere coordinate to systematically count the number of birds, by species, seen within a specifically defined geographical "Circle." The CBC provides an invaluable profile of bird population numbers, avian movements, and associated trends, such as climate pressures and the impact of land use policies on birds and other wildlife.

If you have an interest in participating this year, please watch the Christmas Bird Count page on our website, sandiegoaudubon.org, for details as they become available.

Silverwood Scene

Avian migrants and fall foliage mark a rite of passage

Phillip Lambert, Silverwood Resident Manager

We are again inviting SDAS members to walk Silverwood's trails and to enjoy birding in the observation area. We are all very excited about this season's reopening after being closed to visitors since spring. (As of September, the time of this writing, we have not seen any of our fall/winter avian migrants, but they should have arrived well before you read this.) Out on the trails we anticipate seeing an abundant wintering migrant population of White-crowned Sparrows, along with Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Fox Sparrows.

To catch you up with our late summer/early fall happenings, two of Silverwood's resident Mule Deer does were seen with fawns. In July a Mountain Lion was observed near the driveway alongside its kill—another of the resident Mule Deer, not one of the mothers. The resident Great Horned Owls produced two owlets this season. Both spent each evening persistently calling to their parents to be fed (think of a harsh grating sound)—with continued screeching

throughout the night. All the resident birds seemed to have had a productive breeding season. Ash and Ashley, our long-time Ash-throated Flycatcher nesters, reared three young this season. The pair of Western Bluebirds has been seen every day in the observation area with their six fledglings. Rusty the Canyon Wren eventually came down from the ridgeline during August for some mealworm handouts to feed his three offspring.

A Bald Eagle was recorded soaring just above the oak tree canopy in the observation area while being chased by a Red-tailed

Hawk, and then again on September 18th soaring near Silverwood's ridgeline. This makes seven sightings since the first recording for this iconic species at Silverwood, made on April 6th of 2011. My records show September 18, 2019, as the most recent previous Bald Eagle recording.

An unfortunate discovery was the remains of our longtime resident rattlesnake affectionately called "Grandma." She was a Speckled Rattlesnake (one of three rattler species native to Silverwood), first seen in the observation area back in 1998 when Nola Lambkin was the resident manager. Grandma had become a regular seasonal education animal who was viewed—always from a safe distance—within the observation area by many adults and students. She was commonly seen coiled in her hunting position beneath a bird feeder or next to a bird bath, waiting for an unsuspecting squirrel, gopher, or bird. A dried section of the mid-part of her remains was greatly bloated, containing the remains of a small raccoon. Grandma had reached the length of about 4.5' and a diameter of 3.5", but it looked as though she may have bitten off more than she could chew (though of course snakes don't chew). Her special role in the Silverwood family will be missed.

Trail clearing is a high priority in fire season, which continues for

another two months or perhaps longer. Cutting back shrub limbs and "weed-eating" dense stands of dry grasses along our 5.7 miles of trail was the high priority during the summer and into the fall. With numerous fires burning in the county, this urgent task was performed in extreme heat conditions, with temperatures soaring as high as 114 degrees. Critically needed help came from Stacy Miller and Christian Cormier, two volunteers, and Anstine-Audubon Preserve Assistant Walker Wilson.

With the closure of Silverwood and all of our on-site education programs, new methods of conducting education are being developed. Using the Zoom platform, a one-hour session was scheduled with many of the families from the San Jose area who had been affected by the CZU complex fire. Some of these families had lost their homes, and all have had to temporarily relocate, many to the San Diego area. Children of these families experienced emotional trauma from the lightning and fires. Using a preexisting Silverwood fire recovery presentation, *Fire Recovery at Silverwood, A Story of Hope*, we reassured these children that all was not lost forever. The presentation portrayed the recovery of Silverwood's wildlife habitats and the return of wildlife, along with the reconstruction process of the Silverwood residence.

Further, 30 biology students from Helix Charter High School joined, via Zoom, a live field trip along Mt. Helix trails for a discussion on food web interactions, symbiosis, threats to the ecosystem, and conservation. We hope to do many more Zoom presentations.

Silverwood's amazing plant communities are coming to life as the weather begins to cool. Flowering Deane's Wreath Plants (*Stephanomeria exigua ssp. Deanii*) with their brown, leafless branches and California Fuchsias (*Epilobium californica ssp. canum*) are showing signs of vitality. Many summer, or drought-adapted, deciduous shrubs such as Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), San Diego Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus minutiflorus*), Bushrue (*Cneoridium demosum*), and Mission Manzanita (*Xylococcus bicolor*) will begin producing carbohydrates from their surviving *sclerophyllous* leaves (small, leathery, heat-tolerant leaves characteristic of chaparral plants). In an annual transformation, their yellowish sun-baked foliage begins to turn green once again. The White Flowering Currants (*Ribes indecorum*), mostly leafless during much of the summer, have begun producing new leaves and clusters of tiny white bell-shaped flowers, along the drooping racemes. The subtle but beautiful changes of Silverwood's seasons have much to teach us.

Silverwood Calendar for November and December:

Silverwood is now open to visitors and small groups (maximum four, all from the same household) from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sundays only. **We ask that you preregister online, as there is a limit to the number of people allowed on the trails.** To sign up for a visit, see our online calendar at sandiegoaudubon.org for available dates and click on your preferred option. Please note that COVID-19 rules are in place during your visit. Please see our web page or call Phil at 619-443-2998 with any specific questions or updates.

Silverwood Wish List:

Silverwood Sanctuary needs replacement picnic tables. The metal frame kits and lumber for bench seats, table tops, and finish will cost around \$1,600. Any amount of support is greatly appreciated. We are also shorthanded for Sunday hosts, and we always need help in trail clearing. Please call Phil at 619-443-2998. *Thank you!*



Great Horned Owl by Ed Henry



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

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

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

Volunteer. Contribute your time and talents.
Visit SanDiegoAudubon.org/JoinOurFlock

Photos by
Karen Straus



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.



Sketches SAN DIEGO AUDUBON

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The office is closed to all but a minimum staff. If you wish to visit, please email or call to learn more.
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Messages can be left at any time by email:
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Please send emails rather than call

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
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