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

March 2024 • Volume 75 • Number 3

Celebrating 75 Years of Protecting Birds

Creating Wildlife Habitat at Home with NATIVE PLANTS

The landscaping of Dennis and Pamela Mudd’s home blends seamlessly into the natural habitat. Photo by Dennis Mudd
A small number of non-native plants in your yard can turn your yard into a conservation habitat that can make a difference. (Continued on page 4)
In a study on breeding chickadees in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., one of Tallamy's students, Desiree Narango, and a team of field assistants, found that parent birds foraged on native plants 86% of the time. Yards dominated by introduced plants produced 75% less caterpillar biomass and were 66% less likely to have breeding chickadees. When chickadees nested in yards with non-native plants, the nests contained fewer eggs, produced fewer chicks, and chicks had slower maturation rates than those in nests located in yards with lots of native plants. In fact, chickadee populations only produced enough eggs each year to replace the adults lost to old age and predation in yards with less than 30% native plants. "Desiree's research helps us to understand that the plants we have in our yards may break bird reproduction, not the seeds and suet we so dutifully buy for our feathered friends, although supplements certainly help birds after they have successfully reproduced," writes Tallamy.

The reason native plants play such a critical role is that caterpillars can't eat just any plant. “By far the most important and abundant specialized relationships on the planet are the relationships among the insects that eat the plants and the plants they eat,” writes Tallamy. “Most insect herbivores, some 90% in fact, are diet specialists—host plant specialists that are restricted to eating one or just a few plant lineages.” This is because plants have evolved ways to deter insects and other wildlife from eating them, such as producing chemicals that are stored in their leaves and other vulnerable tissues to make them taste bad or even make them toxic. “Because caterpillars necessarily ingest chemical deterrents with every bite, there is enormous selective pressure to restrict feeding to plant species they can eat without serious ill effects,” explains Tallamy.

Caterpillars have evolved ways to deal with a plant's defenses through a combination of sequestering, excreting, and/or detoxifying the chemicals they ingest. “It usually takes many eons for an insect to adapt to a new host plant, if it can adapt to the plant at all,” writes Tallamy.

Tallamy and his associates' research shows that in order to support the better pollinators of our native plants than honeybees. They move quickly from plant to plant, cross-pollinating plants at a rapid rate. Honeybees can actually decrease the fitness of native plants because they tend to linger on a single plant, slowly going from flower to flower to collect pollen for their colonies. As a result, they often end up self-pollinating plants instead of cross-pollinating them, leading to plant offspring that are less likely to germinate, develop, and reproduce, according to a recent study conducted by UCSD researchers, which was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

Two-thirds of native bee species nest in the ground, including sweat bees, mining bees, and digger bees. To encourage these bees to nest in your garden, try creating a 6- to 12-inch mulch-free zone around the base of plants that bees and other pollinators visit. You can also provide natural leaf litter to remain in your garden to enrich soil, provide weed suppression and moisture retention, as well as to create cover for overwintering bees.

Other native bee species, such as katydid bees, mason bees, and carpenter bees are cavity nesters. They like to nest in holes in wood or plant stems with pithy centers. To support these bees, be careful when trimming plants and leave some 12- to 18-inch stems for bees to nest in. The plants that work best have long, linear, strong flower stalks with varying diameters. Tree stumps and fallen trees or branches can also provide nesting habitat for cavity nesting bees.

Native bees forage on native plants more frequently than on non-native plants. Tallamy found that in 96% of their plant groups when gathering pollen for their larve. It's important to provide a continuous sequence of flowering plants for native bees because going even two or three weeks without blooms available in a landscape is deadly to bees. In a presentation at the National Audubon Society (NCS) titled, “San Diego’s Native Bees and the Plants They Love,” UCSD Entomologist Jess Mullins and CBN Vegetation Specialist Patricia Simpson offered plant recommendations for pollinators around their yards for native bees. For January blooms, Lemonadeberry (Rhus integrifolia) and Sea Dahlia (Coreopsis maritima). Beginning in March, Bladderpod (Portulaca arborescens) is a reliable and prolific bloomer that can keep flowering nearly year-round. Try Dudleya (Dudleya sps.) for blooms in May and June, and Toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia) for June and July. Chaparral Bush Mallow (Malacothamnus sp) blooms in July and August, attracting the Ochre mimic Hummingbee, which visits only this plant. In late summer, when many native plants go dormant, California Buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum) is an important source of blooms, attracting many species of native bees. In fall, Goldenrod (Solidago) and Sunflowers (Helianthus) are a large variety of bees. Violets (Vaccinium species) attract the very small, but highly-adaptable Purple Cream, while Baccharis (Baccharis arborescens) is another good choice. (If you'd like to learn more about our native bees, watch their fascinating presentation on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37399p1B1yE).

Nurture Diversity
A garden with a greater abundance and diversity of native plants will provide habitat for a greater abundance and diversity of insects, birds, and other wildlife.

• **Plant in overlapping, vertical layers of trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, and groundcovers to provide wildlife with options for shelter, foraging, and raising young.**

• **Include multifunctional habitat plants, such as Ceanothus species, which host caterpillars and offer late winter/early spring blooms for native bees, seeds for birds, and shelter for a variety of wildlife.**

• **Attract birds such as Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, Western Bluebirds, Northern Mockingbirds, and House Finches, as well as other wildlife, with fruit-bearing plants, such as Toyon, Catalina or Holly Leaf Cherry, Coffeeberry, Lemonadeberry/Sugar Bush, Elderberry, California Grape, Currant, Gooseberry, and Manzanita.**

• **Provide seed-bearing plants, including Buckwheats, Sages, Deergrass, Ceanothus species, and other attract birds such as Lesser Goldfinches, California and Spotted Towhees, Song Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos.**

• **Attract hummingbirds with plants such as California Fuchsia, Hummingbird Sage, Showy Penstemon, Datura, Big Blueweed, and Ironweed.**

Both native and non-native plants can provide food for wildlife. “Don't try to convert your entire yard,” says Dennis. “Every time you see a new bird species, it’s wow, it’s incredible. I haven’t done the update in a while, but the last time I did my bird list for just this property, we had over 50 species.”

For those wishing to create a habitat garden at their homes, the Mudds recommend taking it slowly and doing it in stages. “Don't try to convert your entire yard,” says Pamela. “It would be such a big job.” We did certain areas, and then took a year or two between each one. It’s more manageable. It’s less daunting task.” Dennis adds that you also learn a lot from each stage that you can apply to the next. Both are thrilled that they took the plunge and encourage others to do so, too. “We can save so many species, and we can create habitat for so much of nature if homeowners would do a little nature restoration projects in their own gardens,” says Dennis. “We put that in the mission of Calscape to try and create these little islands of biodiversity to slow down and even reverse the loss of biodiversity we have in this state primarily through development.”

In addition to visits from ducks, Green Herons, Night Herons, and Snowy Egrets, the pond once even attracted the attention of a Belted Kingfisher. “It was right up on that roof looking for fish in the pond,” says Dennis. “Every time you see a new bird species, it’s wow, it’s incredible. I haven’t done the update in a while, but the last time I did my bird list for just this property, we had over 50 species.”

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Both photos by Dennis Mudd

> An Ann’s Hummingbird tends her nearly fledged chicks. (Left) Snowy Penstemon attracts more than just hummingbirds. (Above) An Anna’s Hummingbird tends her nearly fledged chicks. (Left) Snowy Penstemon attracts more than just hummingbirds.

Both photos by Dennis Mudd
If creating habitat corridors for wildlife in your yard is good for biodiversity, imagine what a whole neighborhood of native plant gardens could achieve. That’s the goal of San Diego Audubon’s Native Seed Library program. By making native seeds available in neighborhoods throughout the county, we hope to make native plant gardening accessible to everyone.

Each library is constructed and managed by volunteer librarians, who stock them with a variety of native seeds provided by SDAS (through CNPSSD). The goal, however, is for each library to become self-sufficient, so ideally people who take seeds from the library will replenish them with seeds that they harvest from the native plants they grow in their gardens.

Since our Audubon Advocates started the program two years ago, native seed libraries have sprouted up throughout the county—in neighborhoods, public libraries, schools, businesses, and public spaces. From Imperial Beach to Rainbow, and east all the way to Julian, there’s a native seed library near you. See our website to enter your zip code and find a convenient location. Here are just a few.

When Christine Small decided to install a native seed library near her home in Juniper Canyon, she networked with neighbors to get the job done. Patrick Trimm, an expert carpenter, constructed and installed the library with the help of his daughter, Alex, and Christine’s husband Tom. Another neighbor, Pati Voneuw, created labels with QR codes for each seed packet—scanning the code takes you to the CalScape information for each specific plant. She also created full-color, laminated information sheets for each plant, so people can see what the plants look like. Christine gets help filling the seed packets from neighbor Roger Busse, and concludes, “Everyone likes to be on a fun team and do something great for the neighborhood.”

Ethnobotany is part of the curriculum for 7th graders at the Barona Indian Charter School, and students receive hands-on education by maintaining the native plant garden and native seed library at the Barona Cultural Center and Museum. They are also adding a new pollinator garden. Not only do the students learn how to identify and care for the native plants, but they also learn the lipay word for each plant, as well as the native knowledge, which has been passed down for generations among the Kumeyaay people, for how each plant can be used. The students also harvest seeds from the plants to stock the native seed library. “They cut off all the seedpods when they turn to seed,” says Laurie Egan-Hodley, Director and Curator of the Barona Cultural Center and Museum, who teaches the Culture class. They’ve been instrumental in separating seeds, letting them dry, and packaging them for the seed library.

Branch Manager Steve Wheeler and his wife have even added a native seed library to their own front yard (photo to right). Wheeler became a native plant convert after attending a presentation by Doug Tallamy at the Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center. “I learned about how important it is for individuals to grow native plants and what a big difference there is between native plants and introduced plants when it comes to the ecosystem and supporting insects, and through the insects, the animals and birds,” he says.

The Point Loma Native Plant Garden (photo to left), owned by the City of San Diego and managed by the San Diego River Park Foundation, is the perfect place to view a large variety of native plants in a garden setting. Mike and Dana Sanchez enjoyed strolling around the garden. During their visit, they stopped at the native seed library and picked up a variety of seeds, including Santa Cruz Buckwheat, San Diego Sunflower, and California Poppy. Dana discovered the garden through a program called “Story Stroll” that she participated in as the Youth Services Librarian for the Point Loma/Hervey Library. “When I came here last summer, I was stunned by how beautiful it was, how well maintained it was, and how many volunteers they had,” Dana says.
Create a small-scale coastal sage habitat for a variety of native birds, insect pollinators, and other wildlife, plus a floral display that will bring color throughout the year. Even a modest-sized yard, properly designed and cultivated, can make a difference.

Restoring Nature, One Yard at a Time

Coyote Bush, sometimes called Chaparral Broom, attracts seed eaters like this Bushtit. 

California Buckwheat is a familiar coastal sage plant that will attract seed eaters and provides ground cover for towhees and other small birds.

Several species of Ceanothus (California Lilac) are available at local nurseries. In a garden setting, they thrive on minimum water.

The profuse flowers and seed-filled “bladders” of the Bladderpod support healthy insect populations and many native bird species.

As a host to hundreds of species of caterpillars and a producer of nutritious acorns, the Coast Live Oak is the ultimate bird feeder. It also supports cavity nesters and a variety of other wildlife. As the oaks go, so goes the biome’s biodiversity.

Several species of Monkeyflower (below) grace our region, and are great for pollinators.

California Fuschia is a familiar coastal sage species very popular with hummingbirds.

The profuse flowers and seed-filled “bladders” of the Bladderpod support healthy insect populations and many native bird species.

Anna’s Hummingbird

Townsend’s Warbler feeding on Western Sycamore seed pods. Photo by Ed Henry

Catalina Cherry, with cherry-like fruit that draws songbirds like this Hooded Oriole. Photo by Jonathan Cattin

Blue Grosbeak

American Robin

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Growing Opportunity for Wildlife

by Justin Daniel, President, San Diego Chapter of the California Native Plant Society

Each spring, the San Diego Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) hosts a garden tour during which local homeowners open their habitat gardens, filled with native plants, to the public, and this year’s tour will be held April 6 and 7 was “Planting Animals,” chosen to illustrate how each plant in a habitat garden offers food, shelter, and sometimes play areas, and special relationships for various wildlife. Each plant attracts bees, butterflies, moths, and a wide variety of other insects. By planting regionally native plants and providing access to them, an urban garden can support beleaguered animals thriving on the edge in fragmented habitats. In a sense, every healthy and thriving native plant “grows” opportunity for animals. Some animals require the edge in fragmented habitats. In a sense, every healthy and thriving native plant can support beleaguered animals surviving on

Reasons include habitat loss, pollution, and pesticides, loss of nectar plant diversity, fast vehicle traffic bifurcating habitats, wildfire, drought, and extreme weather events. All of the subspecies of this butterfly are considered species of concern, though they are not yet imperiled enough to be listed for specific protections. This butterfly is found most often along using trails in the natural wild, but also in gardens and open spaces interspersed in the urban complex. Where buckwheat is grown in abundance, this butterfly is likely to find these plants and create a home.

Thankfully, buckwheat plants are easy to grow, stay green year-round, and are covered in flowers that attract all sorts of life for long periods of time. They are easy to maintain and to prune, if needed, filling spaces that are recently disturbed and remodeling barren soils with a rich humus of leaf litter that retains rainwater long into the summer. They take summer rains and tolerate mixed gardens, though the butterflies and plants do best in a garden with a variety of locally native plant species. Whether grown by seed thrown on the ground in late fall or winter, or planted from nursery-grown plants, varieties of buckwheat are some of the easiest and most rewarding native plants in almost any landscape. Recommended are the California Buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum—coastal, inland, and desert transition varieties), and Wright’s buckwheat (Eriogonum wrightii—mountain variety), though other buckwheat varieties are occasionally used.

The Behr’s Metalmark butterfly is just one example of a species that needs our study and support, but support for one species through restoration and rewilding, native gardening/landscaping, and conservation can meet the needs of many species. Individuals can protect habitat at their homes and can engage with the public process, through native and planning frameworks, to advocate for habitat and wildlife that cannot speak for themselves. By planting natives at home, we provide more habitat and connectivity for wildlife to exist and to thrive. By advocating for the protection of wildlife and their habitats through collective communication and action, we stand for keeping our wildland’s special character and diversity.

Behr’s Metalmark on buckwheat by Lauren Gilvanik

LOCAL NURSERIES Specializing in California Native Plants

Moosa Creek Nursery 20350 Good Water Road, Valley Center, (760) 479-3216

Moosa creek nursery.com

You can purchase plants online and have them delivered to a local retail partner, or purchase directly from local retail partners. See their website for a list of partner nurseries and garden centers near you.

The Little Barn at Native West Nursery

1848 Leon Ave., San Diego, retail location, (619) 423-2284

The Little Barn offers a large selection of native plants from the 130-acre wholesale nursery across the street. You can also purchase locally collected native seeds and propagates. See their website for a list of native plant gardening resources, special events, and workshops, or to buy online.

The California Wildlife Habitat Garden: How to Attract Bees, Butterflies, Birds, and Other Animals by Nancy Auer

Practical advice paired with beautiful photos and profiles of several inspirational California wildlife habitat gardens, complete with plant lists, make this book a delightful resource for aspiring habitat gardeners.

California Native Gardening: A Month-by-Month Guide by Helen Popper

Beginning in October, this book lays out monthly gardening tasks for a successful native plant garden, including planting, prunning, weeding, soil collection, and propagation.

The Drought-Defying California Garden: 230 Native Plants for a Lush, Low-Water Landscape by Greg Rubin and Lucy Warren

Local native gardening experts Greg Rubin and Lucy Warren provide practical advice for installing and maintaining a native plant garden, as well as information and planting tips for 230 native plants designed for low-water landscaping.

Native Garden Tour, which showcases the coastal and inland native garden projects of local San Diego County residents. See their website to buy seeds online and to find information on upcoming events, involvement opportunities, and more. Here’s a link to native plant gardening resources, including CNPSSD’s Native Landscape Planting Guide with 50 California native plants and seeds, and to buy online. See their website for events and workshops or to buy online.

Neel’s Nursery 660 N. Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas www.neelsnursery.com

Buy online for pick-up/delivery in San Diego County or visit the retail location on Encinitas Way the Saturday-Sunday, 9 a.m. 5 p.m. The nursery adds new inventory every Friday night.

Tree of Life Nursery 3210 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 728-0685 www.californiaforplants.com

The nursery’s retail location, Casa La Paz features plants, books, garden dec, and unique gifts. Open Monday- Saturday, 9 a.m. 3:30 p.m. See their website for events and workshops or to buy online.

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Nature’s Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard by Douglas W. Tallamy

Building off his popular book, Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants, Tallamy makes the case that we can and must help save the plants that are being studied. This book lays out monthly gardening tasks for a successful native plant garden, including planting, prunning, weeding, soil collection, and propagation.

Finding additional native plant gardening information on the main CNPS website. Here’s a link to the organization’s popular Naturehood gardening webinar series, where you can register for upcoming webinars or listen to recordings of existing webinars on a wide range of native gardening topics. Log on at www.cnpssd.org/gardening/webinars. You can also find native plant gardening advice for beginners through expert tours at www.cnpssd.org/garden_resource.

Theodore Payne Foundation www.theodorepayne.org

If you’re interested in Los Angeles County, the 22-acre canopy site of the Theodore Payne Foundation in Sun Valley features a nursery; a store with a large selection of books, seed, and garden accessories; and a demonstration garden with native plants for use, shade, slopes, narrow beds, pollinators, bird, groundcovers, wildflowers, and fire-wise landscapes. See their website for a wealth of native plant gardening resources, and to buy seeds, books, and other items. They do not ship plants. Here’s a link to access plans for birds, bees, for plants for butterflies and moths. www.theodorepayne.org/learn/guides/
Protecting Ramona’s Golden Eagles

Through Audubon Advocates and the Wildlife Research Institute

by Natalie Jane Cibel, Wildlife Biologist, Science Communicator, and SDAS Conservation Committee Member

The air was crisp, but the sun cast a warm glow over the Ramona Grasslands. Surrounded by a vast expanse of golden fields and the music of rustling grass, I found myself alongside other birdwatching enthusiasts who had gathered together for the Wildlife Research Institute’s (WRI) Hawk Watch event. My heart quickened with anticipation as I looked up at the bright blue sky. “Did you see that?” I exclaimed, my voice filled with a mix of excitement, amazement, and disbelief as I looked up at the massive bird above me. The wingspan alone was six to seven feet wide, and the white wings stood against the golden brown of the bird was breathtaking. It was my first encounter with a Golden Eagle, and the shared thrill of the sighting bound our group together. It was as if the universe had granted us a front-row view of one of its most majestic raptors.

That encounter sparked my desire to understand the threats that Golden Eagles face amidst San Diego County’s urban sprawl and led me to that encounter. It was as if the universe had granted us a front-row view of one of its most majestic raptors.

The Audubon Advocates program provided us with strategies to implement policy change and community-based social-marketing campaigns that would benefit the Golden Eagles and the communities coexisting with them. These strategic steps included reading The Empowered Citizen’s Guide: 10 Steps to Passing a Law That Matters To You by Pat Libby, which armed us with the knowledge for how to build a coalition of advocates and how to contact local representatives for policy change. We gathered each month, learned about the theory of change, and learned how to best strategize our objectives and key results for our mission of protecting Golden Eagles in San Diego County.

As we built our coalition and networked with Katie, we began to understand the social-ecological complexities of protecting this Golden Eagle pair. By partnering with WRI, we learned firsthand how recreational activities, such as hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and dog walking, can threaten the breeding success of Golden Eagles because the species is very sensitive to human disturbance, especially during breeding and fledging season.

Upon learning about these threats, the Golden Eagle Alliance attended the WRI Hawk Watch event on Saturday mornings to engage in community outreach and to conduct surveys for gauging the audience’s understanding of Golden Eagle threats in Ramona.

In addition to these boots-on-the-ground efforts, SDAS helped us to channel our advocacy into policy initiatives by engaging with local and state authorities to shape policies that prioritize the protection of Golden Eagles and their habitats. Through education, outreach, and policy advocacy, SDAS and WRI stand as beacons of hope for the Golden Eagles and their habitats. The Audubon Advocates program not only provided me with an avenue for personal growth, but it also showcased the collective power of passionate individuals, communities, and nongovernmental organizations striving for a shared conservation goal. By participating in public forums, advocating for stronger conservation legislation, and collaborating with like-minded organizations, SDAS amplifies the voice of those who champion the cause of these regal raptors.

The 2024 Advocacy Training Program will start up in May, with applications available in early April. Find the application and more information on our website: https://www.sandiegoaudubon.org/what-we-do/audubon-advocate-program.html

Silverwood Scene

Spring Birds and Blooms Beckon Visitors

by Phillip Lambert, Silverwood Resident Manager

The winter’s abundant rainfall brought the Hairy Ceanothus (C. oliganthus var. auricula) and Hoary Leaf Ceanothus (C. crassifolia var. crassifolia) to life in February; adorning the chaparral canopy with their clusters of light blue and white blooms. In the observation area, Miner’s Lettuce (Claytonia perfoliata agg. Perfoliata) bejeweled the slope with a spathe-like shape. The tips then fan out and around, fusing together to form one circular cup-shaped tip where a petiole with blooms forms in the center. Signs of a very colorful spring also began to appear in February. Leafy rosettes of annual White and Yellow Pincushion (Chaenactis artemisiifolia, C. glabrata var. glabrata), species of Cryptantha (Poppom Flower), Parry’s Phacelia (Phacelia parryi), Field San-cups (Camissonia hirtella), and Red-maids (Parslane family) offered an array of diverse leaf patterns.

By April, the flora and fauna are in full celebration of the arrival of spring. The main tributary still trickles with flowing water as annual flowers in and around the observation area begin to bloom. All 10 species of annual and perennial Monkeyflowers, including the San Diego Monkeyflower (Diplacus x australis), Slope Semiplena (Diplocos brevipes), Fremont’s Monkeyflower (Diplocos fremontii), Bush Monkeyflower (Diplocos longiflorus), Coast Monkeyflower (Diplocos pinnatus), Scarlet Monkeyflower (Erythranthe cardinalis), Slimy Monkeyflower (Erythranthe jordanae), Sea-petunia (Erythranthe guttata), Palomar Monkeyflower (Erythranthe diffusa), and Downy Monkeyflower (Minuetantha pilosa) will paint the landscape with an array of colors.

High up along the ridge in the open granite slab area, many species of annual flowers begin to bloom within the successional islands. Southern Goldfields (Lasthenia coronaria) cover the open fields with a carpet of rich gold dotted with the pinkish fringed petals of Ground Pinks (Linanthus dianthiflorus) and purple Dove Lupines (Lupinus buckii). Within the chaparral bordering the slab, the yellow flowering Broom Poppy (Dendromecon rigida) and shows pale California Tomatoes add delicacy to the scenery.

Each year during the month of March, many early spring migrant birds begin to arrive at Silverwood. The Violet Green Swallows dart through the oaks looking for cavities to nest in. White-throated Swifts can be seen soaring high above the ridge lines. Wilson’s Warblers, Black-and-White Warblers, Western Wood-Pewees, and Hutton’s Vireos row through the oak woodlands. During the month, an average of 48 species of birds can be seen at Silverwood.

Be sure to come out and enjoy the seasonal colors that make Silverwood a jewel of the East County.

Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary is open to the public on Sundays 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Silverwood is also open to San Diego Audubon members on Wednesdays 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Please call (619) 443-2998 a week in advance to arrange your visit. The programs and services we offer here at Silverwood are made possible through your support, and we would like to express our appreciation to our many generous volunteers, members, donors, and partners.

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The winter’s abundant rainfall brought the Hairy Ceanothus (C. oliganthus var. auricula) and Hoary Leaf Ceanothus (C. crassifolia var. crassifolia) to life in February; adorning the chaparral canopy with their clusters of light blue and white blooms. In the observation area, Miner’s Lettuce (Claytonia perfoliata agg. Perfoliata) bejeweled the slope with a spathe-like shape. The tips then fan out and around, fusing together to form one circular cup-shaped tip where a petiole with blooms forms in the center. Signs of a very colorful spring also began to appear in February. Leafy rosettes of annual White and Yellow Pincushion (Chaenactis artemisiifolia, C. glabrata var. glabrata), species of Cryptantha (Poppom Flower), Parry’s Phacelia (Phacelia parryi), Field San-cups (Camissonia hirtella), and Red-maids (Parslane family) offered an array of diverse leaf patterns.

By April, the flora and fauna are in full celebration of the arrival of spring. The main tributary still trickles with flowing water as annual flowers in and around the observation area begin to bloom. All 10 species of annual and perennial Monkeyflowers, including the San Diego Monkeyflower (Diplacus x australis), Slope Semiplena (Diplocos brevipes), Fremont’s Monkeyflower (Diplocos fremontii), Bush Monkeyflower (Diplocos longiflorus), Coast Monkeyflower (Diplocos pinnatus), Scarlet Monkeyflower (Erythranthe cardinalis), Slimy Monkeyflower (Erythranthe jordanae), Sea-petunia (Erythranthe guttata), Palomar Monkeyflower (Erythranthe diffusa), and Downy Monkeyflower (Minuetantha pilosa) will paint the landscape with an array of colors.

High up along the ridge in the open granite slab area, many species of annual flowers begin to bloom within the successional islands. Southern Goldfields (Lasthenia coronaria) cover the open fields with a carpet of rich gold dotted with the pinkish fringed petals of Ground Pinks (Linanthus dianthiflorus) and purple Dove Lupines (Lupinus buckii). Within the chaparral bordering the slab, the yellow flowering Broom Poppy (Dendromecon rigida) and shows pale California Tomatoes add delicacy to the scenery.

Each year during the month of March, many early spring migrant birds begin to arrive at Silverwood. The Violet Green Swallows dart through the oaks looking for cavities to nest in. White-throated Swifts can be seen soaring high above the ridge lines. Wilson’s Warblers, Black-and-White Warblers, Western Wood-Pewees, and Hutton’s Vireos row through the oak woodlands. During the month, an average of 48 species of birds can be seen at Silverwood.

Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary is open to the public on Sundays 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Silverwood is also open to San Diego Audubon members on Wednesdays 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Please call (619) 443-2998 a week in advance to arrange your visit. The programs and services we offer here at Silverwood are made possible through your support, and we would like to express our appreciation to our many generous volunteers, members, donors, and partners.
**Anstine Ambles**

**Native Plants Welcome Wildlife**

by Rebekah Angona, Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve Manager

When planning a garden in your yard, there are typically two approaches for your design: Plant species that provide a pleasing aesthetic appeal to your residence or grow plants that attract particular species of birds or other wildlife to your yard. When using native Southern California plants, you don’t have to compromise beauty for the benefits to wildlife. Native plants are those that naturally grow in our region and, in San Diego County, we could not be more fortunate to have so many low-water, fire-resistant, wildlife-attracting native plants to adorn our properties.

The Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve is home to four distinct native habitats: coastal sage scrub, oak woodlands, mixed riparian, and a freshwater pond, each boasting a variety of native plants that support the more than 100 bird species observed on our preserve. But native plants do not just support birds, they are essential for other pollinators, including butterflies, moths, bees, bats, and even small mammals.

Before you enter our trails, you’ll be greeted by the fluttering dance of Monarch butterflies as they float between the white and pink flowers of the Narrow-leaf Milkweed. The pink bell-shaped flowers of Showy Penstemon, and Fuchsia-flowering Gooseberry are perfectly designed for hummingbird feats. Purple flowering plants, including White Sage, Black Sage, Purple Sage, Cleveland Sage, and Craneberry are a spectacular contrast to the yellow Coast Sunflowers. Monarch butterflies can be seen lining the trails in yellows, oranges, and reds. And, of course, the vibrant orange of the California Poppy is sure to bring a smile to anyone walking by.

Whether you have a few planters on your patio, a modest backyard, or sprawling acreage, native plants can have a place in your landscape designs. Not sure what native plants to grow in your area? Visit calflora.org in find native plants for your neighborhood, as well as the best planting techniques to ensure your native garden is an attractive success.

And when visiting Anstine, you can even collect native seeds at our native seed library to start your own native plant garden at home!

The Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve is open on Saturdays 9 a.m.–12 p.m. and on the third Wednesday of the month 8 a.m.–11 a.m., October–June.

**Conservation and Community**

At the 2024 San Diego Bird Festival

by Padma Jagannathan

San Diego County is sometimes championed as “America’s birdiest county” with an approximate total of 540 species identified since such records were first kept. This past year saw the county record of 402 species identified in one calendar year by a solo birder (a Big Year) broken by two local bidders, David Trissel of San Diego and Sally Veach of Oceanside. They both stood on the shore of Sweetwater Reservoir on the last day, spotting a solitary Franklin’s Gull, a species that seldom strays to the West Coast. They were alerted to its presence by the online eBird community.

Franklin’s Gull, a Great Plains species that nests mainly in Central Canada and winters along the coast in South America, is a rare visitor to our region. It takes a keen eye to discern the differences between the Franklin’s and Laughing Gull. Photo by John Aviara, Professor Emeritus at UC Irvine.

**409 SPECIES**

Two Local Birders Set County Record with Big Years

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**San Diego Bird Festival of 2024 was nothing short of a triumph this year, and I am proclaiming this just based on the quality of the keynotes. The outings and talks were outstanding, too, and the 1000+ people who had registered must be on cloud nine now. I have been attending the festival since 2013 when my daughter was 8. We only did the Family Sunday the first year, started attending a few talks the second, and then added in keynotes and trips as her interest grew. I remember we did a birthing by ear workshop in 2017, which also led us to seeing the beautiful owls of Tecolote Canyon, and one year we went on an amazing pelagic trip. This year was bittersweet for me because my daughter is away in college, and I was by myself; but she asked me to quiz moping and appreciate how lucky I was to be at the festival! The top star attraction was Christian Cooper of Environmental Non-Fictional Birder fame—a show that we love at our home. Parents with a Disney+ subscription should watch it with their kids of all ages! (Some of the episodes are also available on Nat Geo Wilds. YouTube channel.) Not only did they feature some truly remarkable birds, but the emphasis on conservation efforts resulted in the show featuring some remarkable birders, too. Cooper’s keynote at the Bird Festival delivered what it promised—it was funny, heartwarming, inspiring, and was a clarion call to all the groups working to protect biodiversity to expand their tent and incorporate multifactorial diversity in their approach. The opening host keynote was by writer and birder Julia Zaraskin, who was very funny with a self-deprecating humor, which was perfect for her messages—it is never too late to get into birding, it is OK to make mistakes, and there is no one particular way to be a birder.

But the highlight for me this year was the keynote by Tiana Williams-Claussen who spoke about her 17-year journey to reintroduce the California Condor to the wild in the ancestral territories of the Yurok tribe and the Pacific Northwest. I think if there was ever a perfect “on-deck” moment. I left this festival with a lot of hope. Julia’s keynote reminded me it is never too late to become a birder and to find the sense of humor to laugh at ourselves, Tiana showed me how cultural connections forge strong links to conservation and communities, and Christian asked us to expand our tent and become more inclusive as we face an “all-hands-on-deck” kind of moment. It also made me nostalgic as I looked back to 2013/2014 when my daughter was 8. We started attending San Diego Audubon events, birdwalks, lectures, restoration events, and the festival itself. We were an odd couple—my daughter and I. I was a 40-year-old who couldn’t tell an Osprey from a cormorant trying to keep up with an 8-year-old. We were welcomed by the SDAX community, who made room for both of us and gave us our very first birding lesson at the Tijuana estuary—how to tell Great and Snowy Egrets apart! I am grateful for that and all the lessons we have been learning ever since. The 2024 festival was another step along that journey.