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# El Tecolote

Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.

Volume 37, Issue 1

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## Sagebrush and Time: Wide-eyed in the Idaho Desert

by Guy Hand

I am here attempting reconciliation, the wayward son come home. I walk through a knee-high forest of what I once derisively called "sagebrush" and as penance whisper the names of plants that also live here, plants I've only just learned to see: winterfat, rabbitbrush, horsebrush, snakeweed, needle grass, and Indian rice grass. When I was a child, Idaho's high desert looked all blue-grey and hopeless, but twenty years after leaving I felt an increasing tug to return, a sense that I'd passed judgment on this land too quickly, that much more than sage grew south of my back door.

The April sky hits the horizon miles away, and on it a thin amber line marks the spot where the sun is rising. Light strikes the Owyhee Mountains and soon after the day's first hawk. I pull binoculars to my eyes and whisper "Swainson's," as it soars high in the sky, wings held in a shallow "V." A few moments later a northern harrier glides by, inches above the ground, white patch conspicuous at the base of its dusky tail. These, too, are things I've just learned to see.

The sageland that borders the Snake River Canyon 40 miles south of Boise holds the densest population of nesting raptors in North America, perhaps the world. More than 800 pairs of falcons, eagles, hawks, and owls gather here each spring to mate and raise their young. I never knew; many here in the West still don't. A view persists of desert as dead land and raptors as "varmints" that compete with and kill livestock and game. "Chicken hawks" are still shot in Idaho, but two decades of work have won protection for this particular stretch of land.

The Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, established in 1993, runs along 80 miles of the Snake and spans 485,000 acres. (Still, compromises were made: a third of the NCA is occupied by an Idaho National Guard tank training range, and as I walk I hear the deep rumble of exploding shells.) Golden eagles, prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks, ferruginous hawks, Swainson's hawks, northern harriers, American kestrels, turkey vultures, and seven species of owl nest here. Nine other raptor species migrate through.

The orange flame of a desert paintbrush catches my eye, and just beyond I see a golden eagle perched on a small lump of basalt. It turns its head toward me, then rises into the air, as if through

(Continued on page 2)

## SBAS Endorses Measure K Oak Protection Initiative

by Darlene Chirman

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of Santa Barbara Audubon Society has voted to endorse the ACORN initiative, which will appear on the November ballot for Santa Barbara County as Measure K. We are hopeful that this endorsement will convince voters that Measure K will help conserve the oak resources of Santa Barbara County and that Measure O falls short of this goal.

We are very concerned about the loss of oak trees, especially Valley oaks, which are a California endemic and are known to be regenerating poorly. Oak habitats are important for many species of birds and other wildlife. You may have attended the "Oak Woodland Forum" sponsored by Audubon in April, or read *The Importance of Oak Woodlands*, by biologist and board member David Kisner, in the April *El Tecolote*. The ACORN initiative states that the County "shall ensure

(Continued on page 3)

<i>Sagebrush and Time</i>	1-2
<i>Oak Protection Initiative</i>	1,3
<i>Pampas Grass Control</i>	2
<i>President's Message</i>	3
<i>Up for an Adventure?</i>	3
<i>Programs</i>	4
<i>Field Trips</i>	5
<i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>	6

(Continued from page 1)

levitation, unfurls its immense wings, then surprises me by diving toward earth rather than sky. It disappears, as if swallowed by the desert itself and as I walk to where it has vanished find myself at the edge of the Snake River Canyon. I see the eagle gliding hundreds of feet below.

This deep rift in the desert flatlands is a perfect nursery for raptors. Black basalt cliffs drop 700 feet to the narrow canyon floor; ledges, cracks, and crevices along the cliff walls provide shelter for birds to nest and raise their young. Some eagle aeries—thick fortresses of interwoven branches and twigs—weigh two thousand pounds and measure seven feet across. I wonder if this eagle is parent to the pair of downy-white chicks I'd spotted—a few days earlier and upstream from here—peering from one of those immense woody sanctuaries like children from a penthouse balcony.

Adult raptors launch from cliffside, rising on warm currents of air, to the brushy plateau above. The soil there is deep and light—loess dropped by desert winds over the last 10,000 years—and in it grow the plants that support the large populations of Townsend ground squirrels and jackrabbits on which the birds survive.

The sun is warm and air rising from the canyon is suddenly thick with the scent of sage. A pair of red-tailed hawks glide toward me from below, motionless yet moving quickly, and when they reach the rim begin circling. They drift through the air at eye level, only a wing beat away, too close to track with binoculars. But I can still see the splash of yellow at the base of their hooked beaks, the delicate black and gold lines bordering the tips of their tails, the arc and quiver of their primary feathers. If I had the presence of mind and inclination I could catalogue the smallest of anatomical details, but instead I am transfixed by their dark, penetrating eyes.

How could I have found this land so unremarkable, this web of life so indistinct? Like many Westerners, I passed it off as sacrificial ground, better suited to bombing ranges and waste dumps than anything close to understanding. I was wrong. The realization that land poorly seen is land easily destroyed, and

that I have long been a partner to that particular kind of blindness, is the force that has pushed me into this desert homecoming, and, thankfully, opened my eyes.

*Guy Hand is a writer (and fledgling birder) living in Santa Barbara. A version of this essay first appeared in the March/April 1998 issue of Sierra magazine.*

## Pampas Grass Control Project in Goleta Slough

by Darlene Chirman

THIS SUMMER we have been mapping the distribution of Pampas grass within the Goleta Slough Management Area. (See April 98 *ET* for a description of the project.) Two interns from the UCSB Environmental Studies program have assisted this summer. Our thanks to Judy Kim and Rassany Suvans.

The first Volunteer Work Day for Pampas grass removal on August 2 at the Goleta Slough Ecological Reserve, by Los Carneros Drive, was very successful. Our goal for this part of the project is eradication of all Pampas grass on the 30-acre Department of Fish and Game parcel of the Reserve. This is a preliminary stage of a project which will re-establish tidal flow to the upper reaches of the historic Goleta Slough, including the Ecological Reserve and UCSB's Storke Campus wetlands.

We had a poster on Pampas grass control at Coal Oil Point Natural Reserve's Open House on August 1. This was the first part of our public education component for the project. There are three areas with significant Pampas grass infestations in the region: Goleta Slough, Devereux Slough, and Lake Los Carneros County Park.

Landowners, managers, and regulatory agencies have been very supportive of our efforts. Flood Control has provided us with topographic maps of the area. Marborg Industries donated a roll-off box for disposal from the first work day. Goleta West Sanitary District has offered assistance with equipment and disposal.

The next Volunteer Work Day is tentatively set for September 13. Call Darlene at 692-2008 for more information.

## President's Message

AS THE NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT of SBAS, I would like to introduce myself. I grew up in SB, studied geology at SBCC and Political Science/Environmental Studies at UCSB. I currently work as a Solid Waste Program Specialist for the County Public Works Department. I met and married my wife, Xiaoli, in China.

I first became interested in birds in 1988 when working for the Mono Lake Committee. The late David Gaines, the Committee's co-founder, inspired and encouraged me to pay greater attention to the natural world. A thoughtful and patient teacher, David was always ready to share his knowledge.

Like many of you, I'm concerned about the effects of continued development and expansion of human activities on local bird species in our area, many of which are already under pressure at home and abroad.

I've served on the SBAS Board for a number of years, first as Field Trip Chair, then as Secretary. We have a talented, capable Board, and I am honored to serve as its President.

— Everett King

## Up for an Adventure?

by Jim Greaves

AUDUBON ADVENTURES is a program created by Audubon for teachers to use with grades 4, 5, and 6, to facilitate outdoor education in the classroom. Topics include rivers, schoolyard habitats, wetlands, songbirds, animal communications, wildflowers, migration, sea turtles, recycling, and bats!

New this year in every kit provided to classrooms is a publication called *Connecting Children to nature in Your Community*, developed specifically to address questions and concerns educators have about the program. Also, the program is available in Spanish this year.

The cost of providing a classroom with Audubon Adventures for one year is only \$35. Member support of the program will keep it alive. Your contribution, which can be mailed to the SBAS office, will make a difference in the life of a child.

*For the curious:*

*To purchase your own kit, call 1-800-813-5037.*

(Continued from page 1)

no net loss, over time, of oaks, oak savannas, oak woodlands and oak forests in Santa Barbara County." The alternative measure "makes it a goal", with no mandate.

The ACORN initiative will be on the November ballot because nearly 20,000 registered voters in the county signed petitions to get it there. The alternative Measure O, which was drafted by Susan Petrovich, attorney for Kendall-Jackson. These are the vintners who bulldozed 843 oaks, many 200-year-old Valley oaks, to make room for vineyards. Six people signed the measure and presented it to the Board of Supervisors; a 3/2 voted placed it on the ballot beside the ACORN initiative.

Measure K, the ACORN-sponsored measure has exemptions so normal agricultural activities should not require oak removal permits. It is designed to address large-scale removal. One requirement for issuance of a permit would be the investigation of reasonable alternatives to removal—for example, redesign of a project to limit the number of oaks which must be cut down. Measure O provides for mitigation, planting 10 acorns or seedling oaks for each one removed, beyond the exempted number, but provides no protection to prevent our majestic oaks from being cut in the first place.

Measure O has a nickname the "Poison Oak measure", because it states that if both measures pass, Measure K is invalidated if Measure O has more votes. Audubon Board members are concerned that this measure would undermine some current protections for native oaks in, for example, the Goleta Community Plan, by requiring more lax rules throughout the county.

If you would like more information from Audubon board members, you can contact Kathleen Whitney at 687-0842, or Darlene Chirman by e-mail: dchirman@rain.org or 692-2008. This is not only an issue of biological protection for birds and their habitat; our county's oak trees sustain our spirits as well.

We urge you to get information, volunteer, or contribute to the campaign by calling the ACORN office at 966-4537.

VOTE YES on MEASURE K

## September Program & Activities

### September 24: Thursday Flycatchers: a Workshop with Jon Dunn-

Co sponsored with the  
SB Museum of Natural History  
Doors open at 7:30 p.m.  
program at 8:00 p.m.  
at the Santa Barbara Museum of  
Natural History, Farrand Hall  
\$5.00 Admission Fee

NATIONALLY KNOWN BIRDER and author Jon Dunn will be this year's first speaker. A So. Cal. native, Dunn co-authored (with Kimball Garrett) *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution*, has served as chief consultant for National Geographic's *Birds of North America* and has published in the *Peterson Field Guide Series* "Warblers." Dunn has birded the Central Coast extensively and his three most recent slide shows at the museum have sold out. Don't miss this one!



### September 19: Saturday Coastal Clean Up Day

Coal Oil Point  
9:00 a.m. to Noon

PLEASE JOIN US a for SBAS's annual participation in California Coastal Clean Up Day. Audubon members, friends, families, and guests are invited to spend the morning collecting, inventorying, and recycling beach litter. Then join other volunteers from around the city for food, music, prizes, and refreshments at Stearns Wharf, 1- 4 pm (free to all participants).

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Devereux Slough Parking Lot, UCSB West Campus, at the end of Devereux Drive. Parking passes will be provided. Wear "sand" shoes and bring gloves. For more information, contact the the Audubon office at 964-1468.

— Lee Moldaver, Clean Up Captain

## Welcome New Members

SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON Society extends a warm welcome to all new members. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming Audubon programs and field trips. We're glad you're part of the growing number of local supporters for Audubon's efforts to excite people about birds and the preservation of their habitat. Thank you for joining:

Ms. Laura Anderson  
M. Appleton  
Michael Avakian  
Faith Berry  
Jim & Maggy Cara  
William D. Chapin  
Vesta Clinton  
Erin Colley  
Sharon Connolly  
Mary Lou Cooper  
Tom Cummings  
Sylvia Y. Curtis  
Mary Jane Davison  
Edward J. Dennett  
Jeanine Derby  
Wendy Dishman  
Doreen Edwards  
Joseph M. Egus  
Gretel Ehrlich  
Mrs. Robert Feldtkeller  
Patricia Forrest  
Edith Freeman  
Cindy Ghrist

Susan Gingold  
Ellen Lopez Gomez  
Mr./Mrs. Daniel J. Goss  
Elizabeth Grace  
Carolyn I. Grapard  
Clarinda Hanna  
John F. Harrigan  
Ruth E. Harrison  
Alice Henry  
Gene Hensley  
Pam Henson  
Katherine Hintergardt  
Joan E. Hjortaland  
Sam T. Hurst  
Betty R. Huthsing  
Greda Inger  
Sheila W. Jones  
Mary A. Kana  
Robert L. Kelley  
Anne Kelly  
A. Keys  
Eva Kirkpatrick  
Deborah Konkel

Margaret Lafon  
Sharon Lang  
Margaret E. Larren  
Lawrence K. Lauer  
J.B. Lawrence  
Joan Leipnik  
Barry Levine  
Dereck Lohuis  
Glenn Mathews  
Jeff McFarlene  
Suzanne C. Mellichamp  
Anne Morrison  
Lisa Nead  
Kathy Neely  
Helen S. Neill  
Shirley Nelson  
Connie O'Shaughnessy  
Mary Overton  
Mieka E. Ouderaa  
Gerry Place  
H.R. Potier  
Greg P. Pynn  
Lona Reed

Donald W. Rice  
Nancy Robinson  
Virginia L. Rowley  
Ada Sandburg  
Dr. Marcia Sherman  
Dr./Mrs. Jack P. Shield  
Leila Srouer  
Jack Stanford  
Eric Stones  
Homer Swander  
Leslie Taylor  
Shawn Thompson  
Rose Varni  
L.W. Villa  
Anne Warburton  
Marcia Warrecker  
Mr./Mrs. Charles Watt  
Julie Wayne  
Paula Westbury  
Dorothy Wilson  
Leslie S. Wilson  
James Worley  
Mary & Dennis Wylie



## Fall Field Trips

### GUADALUPE-NIPOMO DUNES PRESERVE (TNC) AT THE SANTA MARIA RIVER MOUTH WEST OF SANTA MARIA

1998 September 12, Saturday, 7:30 am  
fall shorebirds, shearwaters, jaegers possible;  
Chestnut-backed Chickadees nearby  
Dave Compton, 805/965-3153  
Drivers may appreciate gas money. 101 to  
Storke, Glen Annie exit in Goleta. Go south on  
Storke Rd to Jack-in-the-Box parking lot near  
corner of Storke Rd and Hollister Ave. Carpool  
from here. Or meet us there at 8:45 am—take  
101 to Santa Maria and exit 166 west and drive  
to preserve entrance. Let Dave know you'll  
meet us there in advance so we'll look out for  
you. Wear shoes for sand and mud and warm  
jacket for fog. Scopes useful. Back by early af-  
ternoon so bring water and snack.

### DEVEREUX SLOUGH, SOUTH OF GOLETA

1998 September 19, Saturday, 8:00 am  
Snowy Plover and other shorebirds  
Paul Keller, 805/968-7804, wrentit@jps.net  
From the north take 101 south to Glen Annie,  
Storke and take Storke Rd south and turn left  
onto El Colegio Rd then right onto Camino  
Corto Ln. From the south take 101 to Los  
Carneros Rd south past Hollister Ave to El  
Colegio Rd and turn right. Turn left onto  
Camino Corto Ln and drive south to the end.  
Turn right onto Del Playa Dr and drive to the  
end and park on the street. Scopes useful.  
Bring water. Wear junk shoes for sand, tar, and  
a walk around the slough. Done before noon.

**WORLD WIDE WEB** site for Southern California  
Audubon field trips on line has been changed.  
It is now:  
[http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/  
SoCal/trips.htm](http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/SoCal/trips.htm)



### VENTURA COUNTY GAME PRESERVE IN OX- NARD

1999 February 06, Saturday, 7:30 am  
Virginia Rail, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Amer-  
ican Bittern, White-faced Ibis, Yellow-headed  
Blackbird

Guy Tingos, 805/681-0026,  
gtingos@west.net

Drivers may appreciate gas money. From the  
east take 101 north to Cabrillo Blvd (left lane  
exit just past town of Montecito.) Take  
Cabrillo and turn right onto Los Patos Way  
and look for Andree Clark Bird Refuge park-  
ing on the left. From the west, take 101  
south to Los Patos off ramp (after Milpas  
exit) and turn right into Bird Refuge parking.  
Carpool from here. If you want to meet us at  
the Game Preserve (private and normally off  
limits) take Hwy. 101 to Camarillo. Exit Las  
Posas and go south to Hueneme Rd and turn  
right. Go west and turn left on Casper Rd.  
About a mile after the left bend on Casper Rd  
turn right into the game preserve and park by  
the green bungalows by 8:15. Bring water  
and snack. Scopes useful. Trip over by noon.



*Unless otherwise noted, trips are free and reservations  
are not needed. If you would like a loaner pair of  
binoculars for a trip, call the leader.*

Thank you Karen Bridgers, Dave Compton,  
Dr. Fred Emerson, Dr. Bob Haller, Ron Hirst,  
Mark Holmgran, David Kisner, Don Rathbun,  
Tom Rohrer, Guy Tingos, and Steve Tucker.  
Special thanks to all of you who came with us  
on any of last year's field trips and enjoyed the  
leadership of these volunteers.

—Paul Keller

## Calendar of Events

Sunday, September 12	Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes f.t.
Saturday, September 19	Coastal Cleanup
Saturday, September 19	Devereux Slough f.t.
Thursday, September 24	Flycatcher Workshop

## Calling all Volunteers

The Santa Barbara Audubon Office could use some top notch volunteers to keep the local office open every day. If you have even two hours to help staff the small office at the Goleta Valley Community Center to answer questions on a regular basis, we'd love to train you. Please call the office if you can help at 964-1468.

The Conservation Committee relates the following volunteer opportunities:

Saturday, September 12 — Atascadero Creek Restoration Project

Sunday, September 13 — Pampas Grass Removal

Saturday, September 19 — Coastal Clean up Day

Saturday, September 26 — San Jose Creek Restoration Project

Contact Darlene Chirman at 692-2008 to help.

## Santa Barbara Audubon Society Officers & Committee Chairs 1997-98

### OFFICERS

President	Everett King	569-2307
Vice-President	Darlene Chirman	692-2008
Secretary	Mary Wenzle	685-5601
Treasurer	Christine Walden	969-4256

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation	Dave Wass	682-6962
Education	Jim Greaves	563-2905
Field Trips	Paul Keller	968-7804
Hospitality	Don & Florence Stivers	967-3690
Newsletter	Janet Eastman	964-1468
Membership	David Kisner	692-9792
Programs	Lee Moldaver	682-2120
Publicity	Sheila Golburgh Johnson	682-4618

### At Large

Don & Florence Stivers	967-3690
Kathleen Whitney	687-0842

BIRD REFUGE	Sally Walker	569-5388
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*Officers and Committee Chairs meet the second Thursday of the month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call the Audubon office to verify dates and times (805) 964-1468; FAX (805) 967-7718. Cover art by Daryl Harrison.*



Santa Barbara  
Audubon Society  
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### In This Issue...

Wide-eyed in the Idaho Desert