El Tecolote

Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc. Volume 43, Issue 5 April/May 2005

Chick Watch 2005 Snowy Plovers Grab the Spotlight Again! By Jennifer Stroh

Plover breeding season is here again! Just for fun, test your Plover I.Q. with this quiz: (answers on page 7)

- 1. What is the range for the coastal population of the Western Snowy Plover?
- 2. When is their breeding season?
- 3. How many breeding pairs nested at COPR in 2004?
- 4. What decade holds the most recent records for breeding Snowy Plovers at COPR, before the single chick survived and fledged in 2001?
- 5. What are 4 impacts that contribute to the decline of Snowy Plovers?
- 6. List 5 things you can do to help Snowy Plovers and other wildlife species recover.

Four years ago only 2 out of 100 people could identify a Snowy Plover when shown its photo at Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR). Now the majority of beach goers,



Snowy Plover Chick Photo by Beth Price

recreationalists, and a variety of community members have a better understanding of the natural history of this little shorebird and the efforts that have been made at Sand's Beach to ensure their survival. The **SBAS**, UCSB, USGS, and the Friends of Coal Oil Point Reserve (FOCOPR) will continue to work together to strengthen their partnerships with additional organizations so that the Plovers at

the Reserve and at other sites within their range will remain safe and have the chance to fully recover.

The Plovers and **SBAS** thank everyone who has helped them so far, especially each and every Snowy Plover Docent who has dedicated 2-3 hours per week to educate the public and ensure minimal disturbance to the threatened species. Docents have been critical to Plover recovery. Due to the *Please see* **Plovers** on page 7



By Bridget Lewin, Orca School

This year, we began our Nature Study with a focus on local birds. Our study was centered around **Gabriele Drozdowski**'s Audubon Program, entitled, *Eyes In The Sky: Meet Your Wild Neighbor*. Gabriele joined us for our fiveweek study at various locations throughout Santa Barbara. A brief description of our study will give you a taste of this unit of instruction.

Each visit from Gabriele included her first sharing one of her rehabilitated birds of prey. Gabriele introduced us to "Max," a Great Horned Owl; "Kichinu," an American Kestrel; "Ivan," a Red-tailed Hawk; "Squirt," a Redshouldered Hawk; and "Sedona," a Peregrine Falcon. Students learned the story of each bird as well as factual information about that bird's species.

Along with being introduced to five majestic rehabilitated raptors, students also learned about twenty other local birds. Each week Gabriele would add to the students' developing packets by adding picture cards of local birds, vocabulary cards, environmental stewardship cards, and information cards about their habitats, ecological niches, and adaptations. Gabriele would also always include bird sounds, recorded on CD, so that students could learn to identify the local birds with their ears as well as their eyes. On three occasions, we took field trips to study local birds in their natural habitats. We went to the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens, Alice Keck Park Memorial Gardens, and Lake Los Carneros. During each of these field trips, Gabriele provided students with photo-enhanced lists of the birds we would most likely see. Students collected data about the birds they saw on the field trips. For a Friday field trip to Santa Claus Lane, Gabriele made a special point of developing an appropriate bird list for the shorebirds we would see along the beach and in the estuary. These sheets were extremely useful for the students in gathering data about local birds!

Throughout this study, each student's interest in birds Please see Wild Neighbors on page 7

2005 SBAS Tree Swallow Nest Box Project

By David Kisner, Science Chair

The Santa Barbara Audubon Society (SBAS) has begun to set up and monitor Tree Swallow nest boxes at Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR). The SBAS has joined the Tree Swallow Nesting Project, Inc (TSNP) based out of

Camarillo, which has been setting up and monitoring Tree Swallow nest boxes for the last 14 years. In 2004, they had over 350 nest boxes in four counties and fledged over 750 baby Tree Swallows.

Tree Swallows are aerial insectivores, hunting for insects while flying, which may eat close to their body weight in insects per day. Historically, Tree Swallows breed near water – along streams and rivers or around ponds and lakes. The breeding populations within southern California have been dramatically reduced due to loss of large riparian trees and competition for nesting locations with non-native birds. When TSNP began working along the Santa Clara River in Ventura, there were an estimated ten breeding pairs. This have now increased to well over a hundred.



COPR has been kind enough to offer **SBAS** access to set up the boxes and will be helping with monitoring. The nest boxes, though targeting Tree Swallows, may also be used by Western Bluebirds, House Wrens, Bewick's Wrens, Oak Titmice, and Ash-throated Flycatchers.

I would like to thank all of the people who have helped support the SBAS Science Committee, and Cristina Sandoval of COPR. I would also like to thank the crew who have help assemble the nest boxes – Johanna LaClaire, Joe and Charles Medley, Amy Musante, Kendy Radasky and Cristina Sandoval.



A What? A Whet – it's a Saw-whet!

By Gabriele Drozdowski and Jim Walker

A n everyday rescue call from Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network about an injured bird of prey turned out to be quite a surprise. The bird, left by unknown finders without information at the CARE veterinarian hospital downtown, turned out to be a Northern Saw-whet Owl – only one of TWO received in all our thirteen rehabilitation years.

As is often the case, the bird had either been either hit by a car or stunned from an impact with a window. Luckily there was no lasting damage, and after a couple of days of feasting on a banquet of mice, this precious spirit was released at a suitable wild location at Rancho Oso off Paradise Road.

Best wishes to you little one. May you thrive and reproduce plentifully!

Santa Barbara Audubon Programs

All programs, unless otherwise noted, will take place at **Farrand Hall, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History**, Mission Canyon, Santa Barbara. Free on-site parking. All programs, unless otherwise noted, will begin at **7:30 pm**, doors open at 7:00 pm, and are **free** to the public. **SBAS** members are encouraged to bring guests.

The True Facts on the Restoration of Santa Cruz Island

Kate Faulkner, Channel Islands National Park Service, Speaker Wednesday, April 27

Close to the mainland, yet worlds apart, Santa Cruz Island is home to plants and animals that are found nowhere else on Earth. Like the Galapagos Islands of South America, the Channel Islands exist in isolation, allowing evolution to proceed independently, fostering the development of 145 endemic or unique species. Santa Cruz Island is host to 70 of these endemic species. Some, like the Island Scrub-Jay and the Santa Cruz Island Silver Lotus, are found only on Santa Cruz Island.



Island Scrub-Jay

Unfortunately, this isolation has also made these species vulnerable to extinction.

The melodic song of the Santa Barbara Island Song Sparrow and the crimson flower of the Santa Cruz Island Monkey Flower are no longer heard or seen within the park. The destruction of these species' habitats by non-native, exotic plants and animals has caused their extinction along with eight other rare and unique island species.



Island Fox, photos by NPS

In order to save 10 other island species, including the Island Fox, from the brink of extinction as well as protect 3,000 internationally significant archeological sites, the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy have embarked upon a multi-year program to restore Santa Cruz Island. This restoration program is part of the NPS mission, as mandated by Congress, to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Kate will present a program that will talk about the restoration of Santa Cruz Island which includes removal of feral sheep, reintroduction of Bald Eagles, live capture of Golden Eagles, captive breeding of Island Foxes, and eradication of feral pigs.

Owls of Santa Barbara County Peter Gaede, Speaker Wednesday, May 25

Peter will present a program on the 10 species of owls found in Santa Barbara County including an introduction to their biology, natural history and identification. He will include a discussion on their adaptations, behavior, and other interesting characteristics, including specifics about food habits, breeding and habitat associations. Peter will elaborate some on the Flammulated Owls and on their nesting ecology.

Peter is currently working as a freelance scientific illustrator, and a few of his current clients include SBMNH, SB Botanic Gardens, University of CA Press and the Nature Conservancy. Peter began studying owls in 1993, where he conducted undergraduate research on the nesting biology and food habits of Flammulated Owls in Idaho. He has authored and/or co-authored papers on this species in *The Journal of Raptor Research*, *The Journal of the Idaho Academy of Sciences* and *Western Birds*. He has also conducted monitoring projects on the Spotted Owl in Colorado and Washington.



Northern Pygmy-Owl, photo by Peter Gaede

Santa Barbara Audubon Field Trips

Everyone is welcome! These trips are fun for both beginning and expert bird lovers. Binoculars are useful for enjoyment of birds, but if you don t have a pair please call the trip leader and we ll lend you a spare. Trips are free unless noted.

Rancho La Vina 4455 Santa Rosa Rd between Buellton & Lompoc Saturday, April 9, 9 am - noon

(8:15 am at carpool location)

Target Birds: songbirds, spring migrants, etc. Leader: Paul Keller, 733-5904, wrentit@verizon.net

Take 101 to the La Cumbre Rd exit in Santa Barbara. Go north on La Cumbre Rd and turn left into the Five Points Shopping Center and park near Carl's Jr (3925 State St). We will car pool from here at 8:15. Drivers may appreciate gas money. Or you can meet us at Rancho La Vina at approximately 9 am.

Bring water, lunch and wear shoes that are comfortable for some leisurely walking. Binoculars and spotting scopes are useful.

Enjoy ranch owner **Jose Baer**'s generous hospitality in allowing us to bird his ranch.

Hollister Ranch, near Gaviota

Saturday, May 7, 8:15 am - 1 pm

(8:15 am at mandatory carpool location) (Reservations required due to limited space)

Target Birds: songbirds, ocean and pond waterfowl, raptors and perhaps an owl or two **Leader: Guy Tingos**

Take 101 to the La Cumbre Rd exit in Santa Barbara. Go north on La Cumbre Rd and turn left into the Five Points Shopping Center and park near Carl's Jr (3925 State St). We will car pool from here at 8:15. Drivers may appreciate gas money.

To reserve your place please call **Jack Sanford**, 566-2191, no later than Thursday, May 5. Please tell Jack if you are willing to drive and how many your vehicle can hold. We must car pool as we are limited to 5 vehicles. Bring water, lunch and wear comfortable shoes. Binoculars and spotting scopes are useful.

Don't miss out on this rare opportunity to bird the unique Hollister Ranch!



Point Mugu Naval Air Station Field Trip Report Friday, February 18 By Nancy Shepherd

Picture this: a mud flat at low tide and in the foreground a Black-bellied Plover, a few Long-billed Curlews, a flock of Forster's Terns, in the distance some Red-breasted Mergansers and on the sand spit are Dunlin, Semipalmated Plovers, and Sanderlings. Point Mugu has many habitats for water birds and we enjoyed a few of them when **Peggy Kearne**, **Jack Sanford** and **Martin Ruane** organized and lead a very successful trip.

This long weekend was remembered by many people as a time of record rain but we gathered under cloudy skies at the Bird Refuge and we were able to enjoy some precious hours without rain as we visited the Naval Air Station. In addition to the mud flats, Point Mugu has ponds of duck (Ruddy, Cinnamon Teal, Bufflehead, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, American Wigeon, Gadwall) and an inlet with Caspian and Royal Terns, Surf Scoters, and Gulls — Glacous-winged, California, Western, Bonaparte's, plus Skimmers and seals. By the runway we saw a Ferruginous and a Red-tailed Hawk. A Tree Swallow sat on a piling immediately in front of us and let us gaze at its beautiful blue-green body. Killdeer screeched and dove all around the car and Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets waded in the ponds near the road. There were more species than we could count.

Page 4



Friday Bird Walks

Join us on the first and third Fridays of each month from 18:30 am - 10:30, except otherwise noted. Please call Trip Leader Jack Sanford, 566-2191, if you have questions or are interested in leading a bird walk or field trip.

Friday, April 1: Loon Point

Target Birds: water and shore birds, raptors, etc. From 101 north take the Padaro Lane exit and turn towards the ocean. From 101 south take the Summerland exit (# 90) and turn left on Padaro Lane. We will park and meet in the Loon Point parking area (near the intersection of Padaro Lane and 101).

Friday, April 15: Coronado Dr and Devereux Creek Target Birds: raptors, songbirds, etc.

From 101 take the Glen Annie/Storke Rd exit and turn south on Storke Rd and proceed to Hollister Ave. Turn west (right) on Hollister Ave and south (left) on Coronado Dr. Park at the end of Coronado Dr.

Friday, May 6: Tucker's Grove/Kiwanis Meadow Target Birds: song birds, raptors, etc.

From 101 take the Turnpike Rd exit and turn north towards the mountains. Cross Cathedral Oaks Rd and enter Tucker's Grove County Park. We will park and meet near the playground/restroom area.

Friday, May 20: UCSB Campus Lagoon

Target Birds: water, shore & song birds, raptors, etc. From 101 south take the Ward Memorial Blvd exit and proceed towards the ocean. Take the Goleta Beach County Park exit and proceed to Goleta Beach. From 101 north take the Fairview Ave exit and head towards the ocean (south). Fairview turns into Fowler Rd, then Moffett Pl and then Sandspit Rd. Turn right into Goleta Beach County Park. We will meet at the west end of the parking lot (nearest UCSB).

Friday, June 3: Nojoqui Falls County Park

Target Birds: Yellow-billed Magpie, Acorn Woodpecker, Purple Martin, Black Phoebe, Blue Grosbeak,

Lazuli Bunting, owls, vireos, towhees, orioles Take 101 to the La Cumbre Rd exit in Santa Barbara. Go north on La Cumbre Rd and turn left into the Five Points Shopping Center and park near Carl's Jr (3925 State St). We will car pool from here. We will go north on 101 to the Nojoqui Falls turnoff and proceed to the park. We will bird the park and hike to the falls (an easy walk). This walk will take a little longer than usual and we will return by 11:30. We will also bird Gaviota State Park on the way back, time permitting.

Figueroa Mountain Field Trip Report Saturday, January 22 By Alison McPherson

Dave Compton was right – a little highway closure wouldn't stop us from birding. No Way. Ten birders headed north on the 101, exited on 154 and turned left onto Figuroa Mtn road. A few miles along our sharp-eyed leader and driver, Dave, spotted a Merlin. All cars came to an abrupt stop, everyone sprang from their seats and Dave's spotting scope was quickly set into motion.

Traveling along, we stopped to admire the handsome Lark Sparrows. A Rufous-crowned Sparrow was spotted but quickly eluded us. Arriving at the turnoff to the peak of Figueroa, we were dismayed to find the gate locked. Well, a little road closure isn't going to stop us. No way. We packed our lunch, gathered our jackets, tightened our shoe laces and journeyed up the hill for the 1 ¼ mile hike. White-throated Swifts made a spectacular show on the down hill side while Brown Creepers flew circles around tree trucks on the up hill side.

Near the summit, we located the bird feeding station which mainly attracted Oregon Dark-eyed Juncos. We ventured over to Pino Alto day use area where I quickly joined Jeannette to break open my lunch bag. Others joined but lunch was soon interrupted by a Crossbill.

Our after lunch-stroll was along the zero slope Nature Trail. It was like walking up a scree field, two steps up, one step back. We'd go twenty paces forward, ten paces back attempting to locate the calls and songs of Hutton's Vireos, nuthatches, chickadees and kinglets with necks craned into the towering trees.

Before heading back, we checked out the feeding station again and spied a Steller's Jay. Half way back, a Golden Eagle was chased by a Red-tailed Hawk. Once at the cars, a different kind of bird flew overhead, a glider.

One last stop on Zaca Station Road produced. Golden Eagles. A grand finale, indeed! Special thanks to **Dave**, our fearless leader; **Jack**, for your enthusiasm; **Oscar**, for your youthful expertise; and **Jeannette**, my new friend.



Sandhill Crane Field Trip Report Saturday, Feb. 12 - Sunday, Feb. 13 By Ginny Turner

Three happy birders and one enthusiastic leader met at Kern National Wildlife Refuge and proceeded to Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park to secure camp sites for our overnight field trip. This park was a pleasant surprise because of the progress made in restoration of about 20 of the 1911-14 style wooden buildings and because of the excellent camping facilities. With hints from the Ranger we began our walk around the "town" and in a matter of minutes were looking face to face with two beautiful Burrowing Owls. Several other pairs were sighted before we left for our next stop, Pixley National Wildlife Refuge.

We had been told by other birders in the area that there were thousands of Sandhill Cranes wintering in the Refuge and we were definitely not disappointed. As we drove toward the Refuge we were suddenly aware that they were everywhere quietly feeding in the green fields on each side of the road. After several stops for closer viewing and photos we arrived at the observation area. A short walk brought us to an elevated viewing platform and another group of local bird enthusiasts waiting for the cranes evening return. As the sun began to set and the sky turned pink they began to arrive. Wave after wave – you could see them coming in large flocks well past twilight. It seemed almost impossible that there would be enough room for the estimated 3,500 birds we saw arriving. Space may indeed have been an issue as the late arrivals made more than one flight over the area before coming to rest.

After dark we drove back to our campground with the call of the cranes fresh in our minds. After dinner our thoughtful leader, **Jack Sanford**, provided a warm campfire and wine. Sunday morning we returned to the Refuge and a slow motor tour around the marshes. The biggest surprise of the trip was a pair of Vermilion Flycatchers (female and im. male). The novice birders were very impressed with the flaming color and cooperation for viewing in the scope. Thanks to some excellent spotting by **Kim Kathol** and Jack we identified between 65 and 70 species including: Burrowing Owl, Common Moorhen, Yellow-billed Magpie, Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Sparrow, Blue-winged Teal, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Marsh Wren, and of course the spectacular Cranes. Kim was happy to add a Tricolored Blackbird to his life list.

By early afternoon it was time to head for home by way of Maricopa with a stop at Wind Wolves Preserve, the largest privately owned nature preserve in the western United States, at 95,000 acres. This beautiful and historic area in the foothills was a pleasant change from the flat land of the valley. Our short walk up the quiet canyon along San Emigdo Creek did not reveal as many birds as we had hoped but for those of us who had not been to this canyon before were impressed and hope to return for a full day of birding some day soon. Special thanks to Jack for introducing us to these exceptional birding areas.

Earth Day 2005 SB County Courthouse Sunken Gardens

April 23, 10:00 am – 5:30 pm By John Walker

Come visit the **SBAS** booth on Earth Day! The *Eyes In The Sky* program will have fun childrens' material and general information. The *Snowy Plover Docent Program* will also be featured and sign-up information will be available for those who are interested in becoming Docents. Hope to see you all there!

San Marcos Foothills News By Julie Kummel

On March 3, the Planning Commission again postponed the final decision on the plan to build homes and condos on the San Marcos Foothills property. The next (and likely final) hearing in June will decide the fate of this threatened habitat. Public comment is important! Go to www.sanmarcosfoothills.org for the latest news and addresses of public officials.

Thank you Robert and Tomi Sollen

The Sierra Club will honor **Bob** and **Tomi Sollen** at their Annual Awards dinner on April 30 at the La Cumbre Country Club, beginning at 6 pm with no host cocktails. The Sollens are truly local heroes whose contributions to the community will not be forgotten.

Bob was a reporter at the News-Press when the 1969 Oil Spill occurred and he became the voice of the nation on the consequences of that disaster. He continued to cover the oil industry and other energy issues for the News-Press until his retirement. He also found time to write the defining book on the issue, *An Ocean of Oil*. He served on the SB Planning Commission and has been a Sierra Club Activist for decades. His service to the community in its confrontation with oil development in the SB area has been awesome.

Tomi served on the Audubon Board of Directors for many years and has been a Sierra Club Leader for decades. Her dedication and quiet wisdom is valued by all who know her.

For more information and reservations for the dinner, please contact **Ada Babine**, 962-2042, adamb130@cox.net.

El Tecolote, April/May 2005

Plovers, continued from page 1

protection that they provide, we can look forward to another successful breeding season at Coal Oil Point.

If you'd like to join the Snowy Plover Docent Team, contact: Jennifer Stroh, 880-1195, stroh@lifesci.ucsb.edu

The next training session to become a Snowy Plover Docent is Saturday, April 2, from 9 am-2 pm at the Cliff House at COPR. Please join us (from 2 pm to 5 pm) for a potluck party to kick-off the breeding season. You must register to attend.

PLOVER POWER ROCKS!

Answers to the quiz:

- 1. The west coast of southern Washington state through Baja California
- 2. March 15 through September 15
- 3. 17
- 4. 1960's
- 5. a. disturbance, b. predation, c. invasive plant species, d. habitat loss
- 6. a. read educational signs, b. leash your pets, c. respect boundaries of protected habitat, d. pack your trash, e. volunteer as a Snowy Plover Docent, or with other similar programs

Wild Neigbbors, continued from page 1

has grown. Students have continued to point out birds in Alameda Park, on Friday field trips, and parents have shared that their children are pointing out birds to their families. One parent spoke of her child calling out to her during the middle of a soccer game to point out the Redtailed Hawk circling above the field! In addition to Orca students increasing their knowledge and ability to identify local birds, this unit of study has also proved successful in increasing their care and appreciation of local wildlife.

We see this study of local wildlife continuing throughout the year as we explore and learn in a variety of natural habitats. Presently, we are focusing on a study of trees. This has been a natural progression from birds, as birds have direct interactions with the trees in their habitats. Each student has chosen a tree, in Alameda Park, to study throughout the year. They have begun this study by first making specific observations about their "tree friend" and recording data through drawings and written descriptions in their Orca School Nature Journal. This tree study will include students increasing their awareness and understanding about the relationships between their tree, local animals, people, other plants, and abiotic factors such as the sun, water, wind, and more.

Volunteer Restoration Opportunities

A udubon helps recruit volunteers for habitat restoration for Coal Oil Point Reserve and Arroyo Hondo Preserve. Come spend a morning in a beautiful bird habitat, helping restore our local natural areas. To volunteer at Coal Oil Point contact **Julie Love**, jlove@lifesci.ucsb.edu, 453-4840, or **Darlene Chirman**, dchirman@rain.org, 692-2008. For Arroyo Hondo contact Land Trust Volunteer Coordinator **Jane Murray**, ltvolunteer@yahoo.com, 684-4405.

Date	Time	Place	Contact	
Sun, Apr 3	9am-12:30pm	Arroyo Hondo Preserve, bring a lunch, hike afterwards if you like	Jane	
Sat, Apr 16	9am-noon	Coal Oil Point Reserve, contact for site	Julie	
Sun, May 8	9am-12:30pm	Arroyo Hondo Preserve, bring a lunch, hike afterwards if you like	Jane	
Sat, May 21	9am-noon	Coal Oil Point Reserve, contact for site	Julie	
Sat, Apr 16 Sun, May 8	9am-noon 9am-12:30pm	Coal Oil Point Reserve, contact for site Arroyo Hondo Preserve, bring a lunch, hike afterwards if you like	Julie Jane	

National Audubon Society Membership Application

(new members only)

Includes membership in National Audubon & Santa Barbara Audubon Society (C13 7XCH) and subscriptions to Audubon magazine & El Tecolote, the SBAS newsletter

□ \$20 Introductory Membership

□ \$15 Senior (62+) or Student

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Calendar of Events

Apr 1 Bird Walk: Loon Point Apr 3 Restore: Arroyo Hondo Preserve Field Trip: Ranch La Vina Apr 9 Apr 15 Bird Walk: Coronado Dr Apr 16 Restore: Coal Oil Point Reserve Apr 23 Earth Day Apr 27 Program: Santa Cruz Island May 6 Bird Walk: Tucker's Grove May 7 Field Trip: Hollister Ranch May 8 Restore: Arroyo Hondo Preserve May 20 Bird Walk: Campus Lagoon May 21 Restore: Coal Oil Point Reserve May 25 Program: Owls of SB County Jun 3 Bird Walk: Nojoqui Falls Check our website for any changes or late additions

to our Bird Walks, Field Trips or Programs: http://www.rain.org/~audubon/

El Tecolote is published 6 times a year by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc. Members are invited to send announcements, letters, articles, photos and drawings for consideration to:

SBAS, Bill and Elaine Uomini, Editors 5679 Hollister Avenue, Suite 5B Goleta, CA 93117 or e-mail: eltecolote@cox.net Submission deadline is the 10th of the month.

El Tecolote

Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc. 5679 Hollister Avenue, Suite 5B Goleta, CA 93117



Anna's Hummingbird

SBAS - July 2004/June 2005

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Report Rare Birds: Karen Bridgers	964-1316	
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Officers and Chairs meet the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Members are welcomed to attend. Call SBAS office to verify dates and times. FAX: 967-7718. Cover art by Daryl Harrison.

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In This Issue... Students Meet Wild Neighbors!

or current resident