

El Tecolote



Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.
Volume 51, Issue 2 Oct - Nov 2012

White-tailed Kite Monitoring: The 2012 Nesting Season By Mark Holmgren

If you birded at all in Goleta this spring and summer, you could not fail to see White-tailed Kites. In 27 years of tracking Kites, I've not seen as many in Goleta's open spaces as attempted to nest this year. The large crop of young Kites produced in the summer of 2011 apparently stuck around to form the 2012 population. Despite the dry year, the late spring rain probably gave the small mammals what they needed to reproduce. Conditions were right for a successful Kite breeding season.



White-tailed Kite preparing for prey transfer in mid-air, More Mesa. Photo: Lynn Watson

In the 1980s, despite protections afforded by Santa Barbara County's Local Coastal Plan (LCP), several Kite roost sites were threatened by development. Obviously, documenting the locations of these roosts was pivotal to the County's ability to enforce its LCP policies. By 1998, I extended the focus of my monitoring effort to include nesting areas.

Fifteen or so citizens with similar concern about the White-tailed Kite population joined me, and so the weekly Kite Watch was formed. The monitoring area extends from the easternmost corner of the Goleta Slough watershed (high in Cieneguitas Creek on San Marcos Foothills) west to Winchester Canyon. Kites pretty much restrict their nesting activities to the foothills and coastal plain. The first breeding evidence was in February of this year. Parental care of young may extend into October.

Santa Barbara Audubon Society adopted the Kite Watch effort this year and hired Mariah Edmonds as the community coordinator. Edmonds cleverly recruited and trained ten students from Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) and UCSB to monitor each known nesting territory weekly. I'm

most grateful to Edmonds for her leadership and crew: Anna Hilliard, Daniel Crockenberg, Alicia Benson, Gianna Haro, Randy Davis, Kevin Lamb, Karla Perez, Deanna Duffy, Grant Cooper, and John Knill.

Long-time Kite watchers Jeff Hanson, Peggy Kearns, and Adrian O'Loughlen provided steady observations and assistance as well. Newer Kite Watch members are Brian Sieck, Dennis Ringer, Eric Culbertson, and David Levasheff.

Nesting Results

Of the twelve major open spaces where Kites have nested for the longest time, six were occupied by ten nesting pairs. (It's not uncommon for some regular nesting areas to 'go fallow' for a season. Because they are less intensely hunted during the breeding season, these unused areas host post-breeding family groups who find easy hunting in these open spaces – a great situation to raise their young.) Kite pairs held territories and nested at four lesser open spaces, including some not previously used. Because a few pairs nested twice, there were a total of eighteen nests successful through at least the nestling stage.

Kites and Open Spaces

I've come to recognize that Kites have a 'comfort zone.' That is, they choose to nest mostly in or near open space habitats that are neither too wild (with many avian predators) nor too developed or disturbed to support healthy prey populations. In the Goleta Valley, Kites appear well adapted to human communities. They actually benefit from some of the effects of long-established human activities. Interestingly, American Crows are sometimes thorny neighbors, but in fact, crows offer Kites as much or more protection than

The mission of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society is to help conserve and restore the earth's natural ecosystems and improve its biological diversity, principally in the Santa Barbara area, and to connect people with birds and nature through education, science-based projects and advocacy.



White-tailed kites hunting courtesy More Mesa Preservation Coalition

threat. Because crows are so aggressive towards owls and other potential predators, Kites nesting near crows receive some protection.

Neighborhood Nesting

Here is what distinguished this nesting season: several pairs of Kites chose to nest in the middle of neighborhoods not immediately attached to open spaces that provide prey. To bring off the breeding event, the adults had to fly farther and spend more time away from the nest. This was risky because they traded time guarding the nest for time flying some distance away to hunt. We were able to watch the effects of this trade-off.

Tree trimming in a neighborhood south of Dos Pueblos High School agitated the crows at the same time a batch of nestling Kites were attempting to fledge from an Ash tree. The crows molested the young Kites, one of which had to be taken to the Wildlife Care Network. Kites don't fare well in any captive situation (this is why falconers won't choose to fly kites) so the only option is to bring the bird back to its territory. Reuniting fledglings to their parents is seldom successful.

Near the 'North Parcel' at the west end of Phelps Road, Kites bred in a neighborhood pine tree. Again at fledge time, for some reason, the crows attacked the nestlings, driving them out of their nest. Again, the attempt to reunite these young with their parents was probably futile.

Tree trimming in the bird-breeding season was again a problem at a nest site on Ekwill Drive. Apparently, the adults were breeding when nine Redwoods were felled without having contacted an ornithologist to assess breeding bird activity. Unfortunately, this is a story repeated every breeding season, despite laws prohibiting this between April and August. [Where raptor nesting is probable, the law should prohibit tree trimming from January to August.]

Dealing with the effects of both humans and crows is a delicate balance. Human encroachment into, or inappropri-

ate land management of open spaces undermines the small mammal populations Kites feed on. And when crows are too dominant (as in neighborhoods), young Kites are very vulnerable when crows get upset.

Other Kite Watch Efforts

Though I report here on Kite nesting activities, Kite Watchers also tracked the locations of communal roosts in the non-breeding season. Birds from up to seven miles away converge as dusk approaches and stay till pre-dawn when (I believe) they often go back to the same familiar foraging areas. For many years, the Goleta Valley Kites all roosted together at a single roost. These roosts were sometimes enormous; in the late 1970s, more than 100 Kites roosted nightly on More Mesa.

More information is needed. Nowadays, Kites are not linked by a single large roost but choose smaller roosts in different parts of the study area. We do not have information on all roosts this fall. I'm looking for tips on the locations of Kites flying or gathering within 30 minutes of dusk.

I'm very grateful to the Santa Barbara Audubon Society for its support, and I hope we can continue our partnership next winter when we begin another nesting season of Kite Watch.

In the meantime, Santa Barbara Audubon is looking for funds to support a Kite Watch Coordinator for next season. If you can help, please note this is one our chapter priorities for the Annual Appeal. If you are a member, you will receive the Annual Appeal letter during October.

To view a map of the sites monitored this year for Kites, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/8z36r7w>

Santa Barbara Christmas Bird Count Saturday, January 5, 2013

Mark your calendars now for the 2012-13 Santa Barbara County Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Sign-ups will start in early October. We will send an email to everyone who participated last year asking them to check on their availability and interest for this year's event. New registrations will be taken at our website under 'sign up', or you may send an email to casbcbc@gmail.com indicating your interest in participating. Stay tuned to our website <http://casbbirdcount.org/>, to the yahoo group sbcobirding, this newsletter, and the SB Audubon Society website for ongoing information. We hope you can join us.

The Updated *Birds of Santa Barbara County* Available Online

Paul Lehman's 1994 *Birds of Santa Barbara County* was the fullest accounting ever compiled of area bird species—including their habitat preferences and distribution patterns. But shortly after it was published, people began asking Lehman to update it; new information (ironically, information made possible because of his book) was already pouring in.

In 2010, Lehman, a nationally renowned birder who lives out of the area, began updating his seminal work in earnest. With help from a dozen Santa Barbara biologists and birders, he gathered up all the new information available on Santa Barbara County birds and put it into an updated draft text that's now available online. You can access it at <https://sites.google.com/site/bosbc2012/>.

Wim van Dam, who provided Lehman technical help, said the author-birder-ornithologist will never consider the book "done." Chapters on Topography & Climate and Ornithological History are still awaiting their updates, for example and, of course, new information from the field will always call for revisions. But species accounts are current through Spring 2012.

Mark Holmgren, the retired Curator of the Vertebrate Collections at UCSB's Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration, helped Lehman with his original book and the update. Holmgren said a lot has changed in the world of birds in the past 18 years. We have a few more rigorous studies now for use in understanding abundance; i.e. riparian birds on Vandenberg AFB, the western half of the Santa Ynez River and the crest of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Birder penetration into remote areas of the county has also improved. And, improved boat travel. Today we can get information from 150 miles off-shore, so our knowledge of off-shore birds is hugely advanced, said Holmgren.

Birds spotted for the first time in the county include Sedge Wren, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Hawaiian Petrel (which is a species recognized following the split of Dark-rumped Petrel to this and Galapagos Petrel), and White-chinned Pe-



Sedge Wren is one of the new species seen in SB County since the publication of Paul Lehman's book in 1994. Photo by Wes Fritz

trel. Cackling Goose is now considered its own species, and not a subspecies of the Canada Goose. Pacific Wren, formerly Winter Wren west of the Great Plains, is now its own species. The status of some species has changed too: Loggerhead Shrikes are now rare or absent as a breeding species anywhere in the county. Distribution and abundance of many species has changed; while Western Meadowlarks no longer breed in areas where they had been common, Nutmeg Mannikin is spreading rapidly. These are just a few of many changes found in the revised BOSB.

"Much of this information is a result of the quality of the 1994 book," said Holmgren. "It pointed

out the importance of understanding the timing of bird migration and the status of species at various times of the year. It has made us all much better, more astute, bird observers. Hopefully, this revision will provide another 'shot in the arm.'

And what about future studies dealing with birds in Santa Barbara County? Holmgren suggests that BOSB is a superb background from which to focus new studies that measure birds' responses to changes in sensitive ecosystems. Those would be, for example, in grasslands and coastal estuaries, which stand to be most affected by climate change.



Verdin has been seen for the first time in the county since Paul Lehman's book was published in 1994. Photo by Larry Jon Friesen.

BIRDATHON IS COMING!

In celebration of Santa Barbara Audubon's 50th Anniversary, we are having a Birdathon in the Spring of 2013. What is it? It's a great way to get outside to go birding and at the same time support our chapter and all it does. For more details, see the next issues of *El Tecolote* or our website: Audubon.org

El Tecolote is a free publication published 6 times a year by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc., 5679 Hollister Ave. Ste 5B Goleta Ca 93117

Members are invited to send announcements, letters, articles, photos and drawings for consideration to:

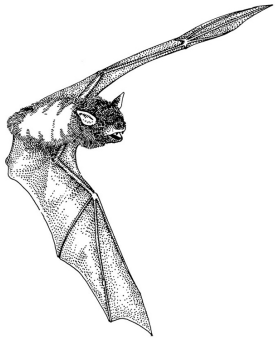
SBAS, Isabelle T. Walker Newsletter Chair
5679 Hollister Avenue, Suite 5B
Goleta, CA 93117

or email: newsletter@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org

Submissions deadline is the 10th of the month before publication.

Santa Barbara Audubon Programs

Bats of the Central Coast



On October 31st, Dr. Paul Collins, curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, will discuss bats of the Central Coast. His talk will provide information on the biology of bats in general and specifics on the various species of bats found on the Central Coast. In the first half of the talk, Collins will cover misconceptions and myths, ecological benefits, and factors impacting bats. Also, information on bats and rabies, bat morphology, bat systematics and diversity, bat roosting, bat reproduction, echolocation, foraging modes and adaptations, and foraging niches will all be discussed. The second half of the lecture will introduce the bats of the Central Coast region.

Collins has worked as a research scientist at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History for 39 years. He has conducted focused research on a wide variety of wildlife found on the Central Coast, including California tiger salamanders, red-legged frogs, bats, rats, mice, shrews, foxes, birds, condors, eagles, and Rufous-crowned sparrows. He has published numerous papers related to this research work in a diversity of scientific journals, published proceedings and in-house technical reports. Much of his research has been focused on wildlife found on the Channel Islands. He is currently working on a book about the birds of the Channel Islands. He conducted an intensive two-year study of bats, which is where he gleaned knowledge and experience with the bats of this region.

Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve

On Wednesday, November 28th, at the Museum of Natural History's Farrand Hall, Debbie Miller will provide a multimedia presentation on her exploration of Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve. "The Reserve," a 23 million acre stretch of uninterrupted wilderness marked by pristine rivers, massive bluffs, and expansive stretches of open tundra, is home to America's largest caribou herd, grizzly bears, birds, and the world's largest Arctic dinosaur bone bed. It's the largest single unit of public lands in the United States; a place with an unfortunate name that few people will ever visit.

Debbie S. Miller will delight you with stories from her years spent exploring this wild corner of Alaska. While sharing images from talented wildlife photographers, many of whom have traveled with her in the Reserve, Debbie tells of her thrilling encounters with wildlife as she traveled down the rivers of this massive stretch of wilderness. Sound recordings from Richard Nelson immerse audiences in the natural world and transport them to a place they may never have the chance to explore.

Miller has paddled and hiked more than 600 miles along four of the Reserve's rivers. She moved to Arctic Alaska in 1975 to teach in a Gwich'in Athabaskan Indian village, on the south boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. For the past 37 years, she has traveled extensively through Alaska's wild lands, exploring the unique landscape and serving as a guide to visitors like President Jimmy Carter.

Her new book, *On Arctic Ground: Tracking Time in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve*, is a large-format photography book with images from an array of talented wildlife photographers that complement the personal accounts of her travels. Other contributors include former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, wildlife-biologist Jeff Fair, and paleontologists Jack Horner and Patrick Druckenmiller.

On Arctic Ground is part of an ongoing multimedia and advocacy campaign. Advocacy partners include Alaska Wilderness League, The Wilderness Society, The Sierra Club, Audubon Alaska, and more. For more information on the book, go to www.OnArcticGround.org



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

Santa Barbara Audubon Field Trips

These trips are fun for both beginning and expert bird watchers. 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. Please contact **Jack Sanford** (805) 566-2191 or birdsandtennis@hotmail.com for details or questions.

Devereux Slough

UCSB West Campus, Goleta

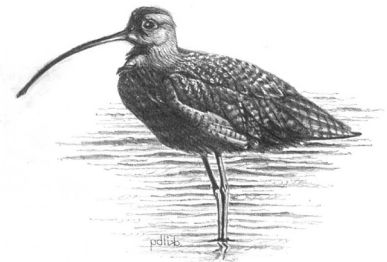
Saturday, October 20, 2012, 8-11 am

Target Birds: shorebirds, water birds & wintering song birds

Trip Leader: Robert Lindsay, capnbob@sbceo.org

Directions: Take Hwy 101 to Glen Annie/Storke Rd exit. Proceed south towards the ocean on Storke Rd. then go left on El Collegio Rd. and right on Camino Corto Ln. and right on Del Playa Dr. Park and meet at the end of Del Playa.

We will bird a loop trail walking the beach past the Snowy Plover reserve and follow a trail around the far side of the slough. We will then bird the other side of the slough and back to the parking area.



Long-billed Curlew
Artist: Daniel S. Kilby

Las Cruzitas Ranch, near Santa Ynez

Saturday, November 17, 2012

7:45 am at car pool location, return between 1- 2 pm

Target Birds: Goldfinches, Buntings, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Phainopepla, Yellow-billed Magpie, Prairie Falcon, Nuthatches, Hummingbirds, and maybe a Golden Eagle

Trip Leader: Cruz Phillips, 688-8233, cruzitas@aol.com

Cost: \$8.00 gas money to car pool drivers

Directions: Car pooling is recommended as parking is limited. We will meet at the Five Points shopping center (3925 State St. Carl's Jr) at 7:45 am. To meet us at the ranch, take Hwy 154 to Armour Ranch Rd. which is 3.3 miles west of Bradbury Dam (Lake Cachuma). Go north on Armour Ranch Rd 1.4 miles and turn right on Happy Canyon Rd. At 2.4 miles, turn right on Alisos Ave. At 0.7 miles, the pavement ends at a cattle guard. Continue 2.6 miles straight past 2 more cattle guards to the barn and ranch.

We will arrive around 9 am and bird near the ranch house for about 2 hours where there are a large number of feeders and bird habitat. Then we will take an easy walk around the general area and perhaps a tour of a canyon. Bring water, a snack, and/or lunch.



Golden Eagle Juvenile
Artist: Steven D'Amato

Field Trips/Bird Walks Do you have an idea?

We are always looking for suggestion for places to visit on our monthly field trips. If you have an idea and are not sure where or what to do next, or are interested in helping coordinate a field trip contact **Jack Sanford** (805) 566-2191. birdsandtennis@hotmail.com

Friday Bird Walks

Hidden Valley Park

Friday, Oct. 12th

Target Birds: Black-headed Grosbeak, Towhee, Mockingbird, Woodpeckers

Directions: From Hwy 101 from either direction, take the Las Positas Road off ramp and proceed towards the ocean. Turn right on Modoc Rd. and left on Calle De Los Amigos. Park is on the corner of Calle De Los Amigos and Torino Dr. Park on the street.

Rocky Nook Park

Friday, Oct. 26th

Target Birds: Blackbirds, Bushtit, Woodpeckers, Phoebe, Vireo, Warbler, Wren

Directions: From Hwy 101 take Mission St. past the Mission. The road becomes Mission Canyon Rd and Rocky Nook Park is on the right as you head towards the mountains.



Townsend's Warbler
Artist: Kirsten Munson

Stevens Park

Friday Nov. 9th

Target Birds: Raptors, Woodpeckers, Warblers, Phoebe, Wren, Kinglet, Towhee,

Directions: Hwy 101 to Las Positas Rd. off ramp. Turn towards the mountains and follow Las Positas Rd. till it becomes San Roque Rd. Follow San Roque Rd., turn left on Calle Fresno and right on Canon Dr. The entrance to Stevens Park is on the right.

Winchester Canyon

Friday, Nov. 23rd

Target Birds: Kingbird, Kinglet, Raptors, Siskin, Woodpeckers, Titmouse, Towhee

Directions: Take Hwy 101 to Winchester Canyon Rd. exit. Take Winchester Canyon Rd. towards the mountains, cross Cathedral Oaks Rd., turn right on Winchester Dr. and left on Rio Vista Dr. Park near the open space area on the left.

Join us on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at 8:30-10:30am, **except as otherwise noted**. Please call Bird Walk leader **Jack Sanford 566-2191** or email at birdsandtennis@hotmail.com if you are interested in leading a future bird walk to your favorite birding location or have any questions.

Welcome

SBAS extends a warm welcome to our newest members.

We look forward to seeing you at our programs and field trips. Thanks for joining!

Marcia Anderson	Richard Doerner	Jeffery Mould*	Robert J. Perko	Charles G. Thompson
Alvaniece Andrich	William Edelstein	Virginia Nolan	Elisa & Peter Merkl	Michele Tornabene
April Border*	Trudy E. Furst	Dawn O'Brien	Charles S. Ryan	Horace Warner
Patricia Brennan	Roberta Grant	Betty O'Malley	Emily Sanders*	*Chapter Only Membership
Janet Bullock	Kathy A. Haklai	Julia Orlosky	James Scheib	
Lise Christiansson	Richard E. Hammond	W. M. Pardee	Michael Shapiro	
Peggy Cooley	Shauna Hirsch	Gerald Parent	Patricia Shewczyk	
Kathryn Cremeen	Adrienne Lesage	Peter & Paulina Conn	Ronald Sickafoose	
Robert L. Davis	Joan K. Moravec	Nadya Penoff	Norma & Stan Schlosser	

Opportunities

Volunteer Habitat Restoration

ARROYO HONDO

Contact: **Sally Isaacson**

Sunday Oct.	7	9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Sunday Nov.	4	9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Sunday Dec.	2	9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

COAL OIL POINT RESERVE

Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon

Date	Restoration	Contact
Oct. 13	Slough Margin Rest.	Darlene Chirman
Oct. 20	COPR Trails	Tara Longwell
Nov. 17	Slough Margin Rest.	Darlene Chirman
Nov. 17	COPR Trails	Tara Longwell
Dec. 1	Coastal Poppy Rest.	Darlene Chirman
Dec. 1	COPR Trails	Tara Longwell

CHANNEL ISLANDS RESTORATION

Oct. 20 Lake Los Carneros w/ SB Audubon

Contact: Volunteer Coordinator Dee Hamby at volunteer@cirweb.org

Please consult their website or Dee on restoration projects including Lake Los Carneros, San Marcos Foothills, Santa Barbara Zoo, Carpinteria Creek, Anacapa Island and others.

Their website is: www.cirweb.org

Audubon helps recruit volunteers for habitat restoration; come help to restore a creek or estuary while spending a morning in a beautiful bird habitat. We now have a new Audubon-managed project at Coal Oil Point Reserve as well. Contact Darlene Chirman at President@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org or 692-2008. Contact Coal Oil Point Reserve: Reserve Steward Tara Longwell at tara.longwell@lifesci.ucsb.edu or 893-5092. Contact the Land Trust for Arroyo Hondo Preserve: Volunteer Coordinator Sally Isaacson at 260-2252 or volunteer@sbandtrust.org

SBAS Needs Your E-mail Address

To be added to the **SBAS** e-mail list, just send an e-mail message with the subject line, "Add + your name" to Membership@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org

The **SBAS** e-mail list will only be used for SBAS business and will not be sold or shared with any other group.

Plover Project Docent Training

Training takes place at the West Campus Conference Center at Coal Oil Point Reserve, from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Training dates:

October 6
November No Training

Training Schedule:

Tour 9-11 a.m.
Training 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Those interested should Contact: April Price, COPR Conservation Specialist at 893-3703 or copr.conservation@lifesci.ucsb.edu

Audubon Society Membership Application

Option 1: Local Chapter-only Membership

- Membership is for a FAMILY!
- Memberships initially received between October 1st and March 31st: Renewals Due December 31.
- Memberships initially received between April 1st and September 31st: Renewals Due June 30.

This is my choice of membership!

- Cost: \$25 Annually.

Make check payable to: Santa Barbara Audubon Society

Option 2: National and Local Membership

Santa Barbara Code: C2ZC130Z

- This is my choice of membership!
- Please do NOT share my contact information.

Introductory \$20 (NAS subsequent-yearly memberships are \$35/year.)

Make check payable to: **National Audubon Society**

For more information on these options please go to our website at: www.SantaBarbaraAudubon.org or call (805) 964-1468

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
E-mail: _____
Amount Enclosed: _____

Mail to: Santa Barbara Audubon Society
5679 Hollister Ave, Suite 5B
Goleta CA 93117

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Development	Julie Kummel	403-3203	Development-2@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org
Development	Margo Kenney	963-3011	Development-3@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org

APPOINTED POSITIONS

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Eyes In The Sky:	Gabriele Drozdowski	898-0347	EITS@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org
Hospitality:	Teresa Fanucchi	705-3796	Hospitality@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org
Science Advisor	Don Schroeder	403-2090	ScienceAdvisor@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org

Rare Birds sbcobirding <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sbcobirding>

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

Calendar of Events

Check our website for any changes or late additions to our Bird Walks, Field Trips or Programs:

<http://www.SantaBarbaraAudubon.org>

October

- Oct. 6 Plover Training
- Oct. 7 Restore Arroyo Hondo
- Oct. 12 Hidden Valley Park Bird Walk
- Oct. 13 Restore Coal Oil Point Slough
- Oct. 20 Devereux Slough Field Trip
- Oct. 20 Restore Coal Oil Point Trails
- Oct. 20 Restore Lake Los Carneros
- Oct. 26 Rocky Nook Park Bird Walk
- Oct. 31 Program Bats of Central Coast

November

- Nov. 4 Restore Arroyo Hondo
- Nov. 9 Stevens Park Bird Walk
- Nov. 17 Las Cruzitas Field Trip
- Nov. 17 Restore Coal Oil Point Slough
- Nov. 17 Restor Coal Oil Point Trails
- Nov. 23 Winchester Canyon Bird Walk
- Nov. 28 Program National Pet. Reserve

December

- Dec. 1 Restore Coal Oil Point Poppies
- Dec. 1 Restore Coal Oil Point Trails
- Dec. 2 Restore Arroyo Hondo

January

- Jan. 5 Christmas Bird Count

Printed on recycled paper.

