

Summer 2014

Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

My Introduction to Birding

Suzan Hubert, President

Birdwatching is one of the most popular activities on the Preserve. I was working the front desk one Friday morning when a woman practically bounced into the Nature Center exclaiming to anyone and everyone that she had finally seen "THE WESTERN BLUEBIRD!" She was so excited! She was a visitor from New England and that caused me to recall my first birdwatching experience which was much lower on the excitement scale.

I was thirteen. I was visiting my Aunt Marylyn and Uncle Henry in Harwich Port on Cape Cod. They were experienced birders and took me along on a group expedition to Monomoy Island, which is just off the coast on the Atlantic side of the Cape and rather famous for bird watching. With the exception of me, we were a small group of serious birders.

We stopped by a small pond and spotted a Northern Phalarope. For those who don't know, this is a very attractive grey bird. Apparently, this was a very rare sighting—everyone was beside themselves with excitement. One of the birders hugged me and said, "Oh, you can tell your children about this!" I was polite, as my Mom would have expected, but really did not get why all these grownups were so euphoric about this bird. I was much more interested in my own sighting of the very cute boy in the house next door. I didn't understand their excitement, but I didn't forget it either. All these years later I met a lot of people at the Nature Center and on the Preserve who were equally excited about this or that bird. I still didn't get it. That was about to change.

I'm always up to learn something new so I went on one of the regular bird walks through the Preserve with Bob Shanman of Wild Birds Unlimited. I was sort of the ditz in the group, as Bob pointed out a few times. My binoculars were wrong, I talked too much and my eyes seemed to be always looking the wrong way. The first time I actually saw an Orange Bishop I was so astonished I let out a loud, profound, "WOW!" Sadly, I frightened the bird away.

Yet, once done, I wanted more. I began to see the birds as more than fast brown blurs that poop on my car. I put up feeders in my North Torrance garden



Suzan Hubert

and now watch what comes to munch. I can now name a dozen birds and I am thrilled when I can identify a new one. Admittedly, I am a rank amateur birder; however, I have developed a great admiration for birds, their society, their culture and their tolerance of how we humans have made their lives so difficult through the destruction of their habitats and the rest areas they use as they migrate.

I am awed by how many come and stay at the Preserve.

One Friday, one delighted ten-year-old came in to tell me that he saw the Red-winged Blackbird I had told him about before he left on a walk with his grandmother—who was equally delighted to have seen one of our egrets. Now here comes my shameless plug for the gift shop. The Friends of Madrona Marsh, using the expertise of Tracy Drake and staff member Dinuk Magammana, have just published their first book for the incompetent and clueless new potential birder: **Common Birds of the Madrona Marsh Preserve**. This great book is currently for sale in the Nature Center Gift Shop, which is operated by the Friends. You are practically almost certain to find, at the very least, one of the birds in this book on your first foray into birding. I am certain the gift shop will sell copies to experienced birders, too, and remember: 100 percent of the profit goes toward programs to maintain and preserve this habitat, as well as educational programs for our local youth and adults.

This piece of land is your land, come enjoy it; you may see a Red-winged Blackbird, a Snowy Egret or a Mallard Duck. You are not likely to see a Northern Phalarope but the same possibility awaits.

Who knows what your adventure will reveal?

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Suzan", written in a cursive style.

Madrona Marsh-Refuge in a Sea of Drought

Tracy Drake, *Naturalist and Preserve Manager*

There has been a major change in leadership for the Madrona Marsh Nature Center and Preserve. We have now moved organizationally completely over from the Recreation Division to Park Services Division. Although we will miss our Recreation family, we are also excited about the potential of serving the City through the Park Services Division.

Another major change is afoot too. Out on the Preserve, the breeding season is coming to a close. This year there has been less breeding than in any other year since breeders have been documented at Madrona, starting nearly forty years ago. For those who read the *Los Angeles Register* article “For Birds of Prey, a Lost Generation,” dated May 18, 2014, you already know what is going on. For those who did not, the story is not a happy one—region-wide. In summary there has been a 90-95 percent failure of breeding in our region’s raptors—the pair of Red-tailed Hawks at Madrona included.

As is the region-wide trend, raptors are not the only bird included in the unprecedented decline. As of this writing, although Say’s Phoebe did successfully breed at Madrona, they simply could not find enough food to feed their young and they were lost to starvation or predation. Interestingly, the Western Bluebirds did build nests in their bluebird boxes on the Preserve but did not breed. Rather, it seems like they may be about to successfully fledge young in the Native Plant Garden within the next two weeks. Some of the birds that have fledged both locally and on the Preserve are very skinny—appearing to be more than a third under normal weight and size.

Another issue due to weather is the increase of Canada Geese on the Preserve (and locally). They, too, were not successful in breeding (their eggs were predated) on the Preserve but they were very successful in scaring nearly all the other ducks from the wetlands in their attempt to secure territory. Some Mallards were successful but fledged very few ducklings when compared to years past.

Mallards are determined birds though, and some came up with a reasonably good solution to being run out. They moved into the nicely planted Condos to our north! Once the young could walk well enough though, we brought them home to the wetlands—on foot! Forever I will remember the days big ol’ Ed Vandever and I walked the ducks nearly a quarter mile to the safety of the wetlands—and the patient manner in which Ed helped guide them; it was heart-warming.



Birds are not the only animals affected at Madrona. At a time when Pacific tree-frogs are usually abundant, one can go for weeks and never see or hear one near the wetlands. Gophers, normally abundant and very necessary as a food source for raptors, are largely absent. Even the nocturnal mammals—skunks, raccoons and opossums—had little to no breeding success.

The authors in the *L.A. Register* article point to lack of rainfall as being a major culprit of the decline due to the severity of this year’s drought, but also point to the greater “ecological drought” that has gripped the region since 2000. The ecological drought is defined as a period of chronic, debilitating effects on plants and wildlife with little relief even when infrequent rains do come.

At Madrona though, even with the clear signs of ecological drought, we are geographically situated in a zone close to the ocean that received some rain and had some benefit from the morning fog, and is still a relatively good habitat for most species. Due to the rain water we received in the wetlands thus far this spring, we are a haven for migrating birds; whereas, inland the land is drier. There are fewer green plants, less food and consequently fewer vital resting areas for migrating birds. But at Madrona, in the habitats birds prefer, there are many insects in the willow trees and moth and butterfly caterpillars are emerging, so the small migrating birds are still stopping by, sometimes in record numbers.

“Refuge...” continued on page 3

What does this mean for us who manage the Preserve? It means that the Preserve is an increasingly vital place for our plants and wildlife, both residential and migratory. And we owe a debt of gratitude to the more than six hundred students who came in for three hours each Saturday over the past two months to participate in our restoration program. It is they, our staff, Tony Baker and Dan Portway and his crew who are keeping the habitat vital.

They are making a difference. And so are many of you. Because of your donations, your membership and your commitment to the Preserve, we have been able to do more restoration this year than in any other year past. The timing could not have been more perfect.

How does your commitment make a difference? Take a walk on the Preserve sometime soon; you will notice that while some things like the gophers and frogs are clearly present in much lower numbers, you will see a lot of butterflies. Sometimes we will see six or seven species within a hundred yards of the entrance gate. The student restoration crews along with the GREAT work of Tony Baker and Dan Portway have made a haven for butterflies, other pollinators and lizards.

The most notable increase is that of the Western Pygmy Blue Butterflies. In years past, we may have seen about five a season. Now we may see from five to fifteen on any given day! They prefer saltbush but can be seen on any of the smaller blooming flowers or resting on tiny blades of grass.



© Dinuk Magammana 2013

These butterflies are the smallest butterfly in the USA, and possibly the smallest in the world. Western Pygmy Blues (*Brephidium exile*) are so tiny that they are difficult to find, but are worth searching the Preserve for. They are beautifully patterned with delicate markings. The wings of this alluring butterfly are copper brown, marked with dull blue on the upper-sides, and flecked with white on the underside of the hind wings. The wings are also fringed with white, and there is a row of black spots on both the outer margin and near to the base.

Between May and November, the male Western Pygmy Blue defends a small territory and spends much of its time searching for receptive females. After mating, the female lays eggs on the leaves of a saltbush species (*Atriplex* spp.) The eggs hatch

into caterpillars which form a symbiotic relationship with ants (*Iridomyrmex* species), for which the caterpillar provides food in the form of liquid nectar while gaining protection from the ants in return. (Aha! Those darn Argentine Ants are good for something!) Once the caterpillar is fully-grown, it will pupate to form a loose cocoon, and then undergo metamorphosis before emerging as an adult butterfly.

A weak flier, the Western Pygmy Blue flies close to the ground, and is restricted by its short proboscis to collect the nectar from only the smallest flowers. So, when walking on the Preserve, look at those small flowers, notice the wonderful work in progress and let your eye catch even the smallest motion. In those little movements you may find a beautiful, tiny Western Pygmy Blue.—T.D.

Native Plant Sale At Nature Center

Tony Baker

FRIDAY OCTOBER 3, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
For members of FOMM, CNPS and PVPLC
only. FREE entry. Refreshments.
SATURDAY OCTOBER 4, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Open to all. Free entry.

The South Coast Chapter of the California Native Plant Society has held an increasingly popular and successful native plant sale every Fall for many years, but this will be the third year we've had the pleasure of holding the sale at this fantastic venue.

This is a good time to start planning for your native plant garden whether you are filling in with a few plants, converting a section of yard to natives or replacing a lawn. Fall is the best time of year for plant availability because it is the optimum season for successful planting.

You can help save our precious resource—WATER—by planting drought tolerant natives.

You can attract wildlife such as birds, butterflies and bumblebees with habitat friendly native plants.

You can avoid the pesticide and fertilizer aisle at the local home center because natives don't need them.

We will have 1,000's of plants available for sun to shade, small to large, *Artemisia* to *Zauschneria*. Prior to the sale a plant list will be available at www.sccnps.org.



The MOG Squad

Dave Roelen

The Mad Old Geezers were at it again.

We had flown to Punta Arenas in extreme southern South America, a short ferry ride from Tierra del Fuego, the “land of fire.” Also the land of roaring waters where the creaky square-rigger HMS Beagle sailed the cold and blustery region then inhabited by wild, bare-skinned Fuegians who existed in what Darwin called a “miserable state of barbarism.”

Tierra del Fuego, shared by Argentina and Chile, an area of scattered islets, large and small, rests at the very tip of South America with chilly Antarctica just beyond the earth’s curve.

The two aging MOGs (both in our 70’s) embarked on this latest trip to out-of-the-way places to see unique birds and interesting vistas. Charting our course toward Ushuaia, the world’s southernmost city, friend Bob and I drove isolated roads toward the island Andes that drop sharply to the shore.

We had crossed the Strait of Magellan in search of adventure and birds. Darwin’s Rheas, ostrich-like birds, ambled about in the high Patagonia brown grasses of the austral summer. Turning off the “main” dirt road the MOGs spied the newly discovered colony of King Penguins near the Inutil Bay. The large colorful penguins (3 feet tall), orange bills pointing skyward like comical statues, flapped little wings and wobbled on stubby feet to our bird watching pleasure.

Ahead of us the dusty dirt ribbon threaded a bleak, wandering landscape. As we motored on, the gas gauge needled downward. All of the quarter-tank mark was now visible as we passed a weathered roadside sign, neglected and leaning, that read “Gas Próximos 150 Kilómetros Más Adelante”—gas 93 desolate miles ahead. We pressed on.

A remote border crossing found us trapped between two countries in an uncomfortable no man’s land. We couldn’t go back without extreme customs red tape, and forward led to possible out-of-gas isolation. Sometimes international frustrations are concerning, but will remain memorable parts of travel excitement.

Chile, a narrow strip of land held tightly between the Andes Mountains and Pacific waters, stretches from forlorn Cape Horn to the dry Atacama Desert (more miles than Los Angeles to New York). This adventure extended from green Fuegian sea level to the arid Altiplano of the north, 15,000 feet up in the

wedge of Chile that sticks into bordering sands of Peru and Bolivia.

In this thin atmosphere, surrounded by white-capped volcanoes, llamas and vicuña roamed and majestic condors soared, easily floating past on outstretched fingered wings. Shallow still lakes reflected splashes of pink as flamingos strutted about on stick legs, heads bent to the water. Amongst rugged rocks, native foxes hunted viscachas or “rabbiroos” (Bob’s word), strange hopping critters that gently ate offered carrots.

Seeking birds has taken the MOGs to far-flung locations. We have searched high Himalayan passes where narrow dirt roads looked straight down into the mountainous abyss above steamy Assam in northeast India. With some skill we once maneuvered a damaged car in Fiji with only two forward gears to view a rebound bird species not seen since 1894.

In magical Madagascar lemurs with large human eyes curiously watched us watch them. On an Australian boat trip we observed scientists net one of the world’s largest flying birds, the Wandering Albatross. Vast deserts of the United Arab Emirates near Dubai have been crossed, and lions, rhinos and elephants viewed in South Africa. World adventures!

The mad old geezers have visited more than 50 countries in search of life and birds on all continents of the world save Antarctica. . . next time! Our interested minds try to keep aging bodies pliantly young and enthusiastic to seek other challenging places dotting our planet’s enticing map.

Life, even beyond seventy years, is really a brief heart beat in the realm of things. The MOGs advise all to stay young, seek adventure and embrace these words from St. Augustine: “The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”

Marsh Mailing is a quarterly newsletter designed to provide information about activities and upcoming events at or relating to the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Contributions are welcome and may be e-mailed to Diane Gonsalves at gonwild2@yahoo.com or Bill Arrowsmith, FrاندBill@att.net or dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center, P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510.

Madrona Marsh Preserve Species-Winter 2013-Spring 2014

Compiled by Tracy Drake, Preserve Manager

BIRDS			
Canada Goose	Rock Pigeon	No. Rough-winged Swallow	Savannah Sparrow
Wood Duck	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Barn Swallow	Song Sparrow
Gadwall	Mourning Dove	Cliff Swallow	Lincoln's Sparrow
American Wigeon	Vaux's Swift	Bushtit	White-crowned Sparrow
Mallard	White-throated Swift	House Wren	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Anna's Hummingbird	Marsh Wren	Dark-eyed Junco
Cinnamon Teal	Allen's Hummingbird	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Western Tanager
Northern Shoveler	<i>Downy Woodpecker</i>	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Black-headed Grosbeak
Green-winged Teal	Northern Flicker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Blue Grosbeak
Ring-necked Duck	American Kestrel	Western Bluebird	Lazuli Bunting
Pied-billed Grebe	Peregrine Falcon	Swainson's Thrush	Red-winged Blackbird
Double-crested Cormorant	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet	Hermit Thrush	Western Meadowlark
Great Blue Heron	Olive-sided Flycatcher	American Robin	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Great Egret	Western Wood-pewee	Northern Mockingbird	Great-tailed Grackle
Snowy Egret	Willow Flycatcher	European Starling	Brown-headed Cowbird
Green Heron	<i>Hammond's Flycatcher</i>	American Pipit	Hooded Oriole
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Gray Flycatcher</i>	Cedar Waxwing	Bullock's Oriole
<i>White-faced Ibis</i>	<i>Dusky Flycatcher</i>	Orange-crowned Warbler	House Finch
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Nashville Warbler	Lesser Goldfinch
Cooper's Hawk	Black Phoebe	Common Yellowthroat	American Goldfinch
Red-shouldered Hawk	Say's Phoebe	Yellow Warbler	European Goldfinch
Red-tailed Hawk	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Warbler	House Sparrow
Sora	Cassin's Kingbird	Black-throated Gray Warbler	Nutmeg Mannikin
American Coot	Western Kingbird	Townsend's Warbler	Pin-tailed Whydah
Killdeer	Cassin's Vireo	Hermit Warbler	
<i>Solitary Sandpiper</i>	Hutton's Vireo	Wilson's Warbler	
Wilson's Snipe	Warbling Vireo	<i>Green-tailed Towhee</i>	<i>Italics = uncommon</i>
Ring-billed Gull	Western Scrub-Jay	California Towhee	
Western Gull	American Crow	Chipping Sparrow	Bold = Breeding
California Gull	Common Raven	Lark Sparrow	

"Species..." continued on page 8

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center*

Schedule of Events for July through October 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<u>1</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>2</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>3</u> 10 am-Tyke Hike-donation 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>4</u> CLOSED	<u>5</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 10 am-12 n"...Beautiful Butterflies"-Dr. Vadheim 8-10 pm-Star Party
<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> CLOSED	<u>8</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders 6:30- pm, "...Beautiful Butterflies"-Dr.Vadheim	<u>9</u> 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 10 am-Adult Weeders 6:30 pm-FOMM Mtg.	<u>10</u> 10:30--12:30-Propagation Society	<u>11</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** Siegel Exhibit Ends***	<u>12</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 10 am-12-Butterfly Count Class-ages 16+-fee
<u>13</u>	<u>14</u> 9 am-12 n-Junior Naturalist-fee	<u>15</u> 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 9 am-12 n-Junior Naturalist-fee 10 am-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon Mtg. Gibson Exhibit Begins	<u>16</u> 9 am-12 n-Junior Naturalist-fee 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>17</u> 9 am-12 n-Junior Naturalist-fee 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>18</u> 9 am-12 n-Junior Naturalist-fee 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	<u>19</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 9-11 am-Intro to Birding
<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> CLOSED	<u>22</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>23</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>24</u> 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>25</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	<u>26</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 10 am-Nature Walk
<u>27</u> 10 am-Nature Walk	<u>28</u> CLOSED	<u>29</u> 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>30</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>31</u> 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society		

JULY

*All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. **No charge for Friday Fun, but reservations are required. ***See Artists Corner, page 3. For latest event information, see our newly updated website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<u>1</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** 6:30pm-Gibson Reception***	<u>2</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.& Student.Service 10 am-12 n-"Hummingbirds"-Dr. Vadheim
<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> CLOSED	<u>5</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders 10:30 am-Birds, Bugs... 6:30-pm,"Hummingbirds"-Dr.Vadheim	<u>6</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders 10am-Art in Nature(fee) 10:30 am-Birds, Bugs... Camp	<u>7</u> 10 am-Tyke Hike-donation 10:30 am-Birds... 10:30-12:30-Prop. Society	<u>8</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** 10:30 am-Birds, Bugs...	<u>9</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.& Student.Service 10am-Art in Nature(fee)
<u>10</u> 2 pm-2nd Sunday Science-Treasure Walk(fee)	<u>11</u> CLOSED	<u>12</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>13</u> 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 10 am-Adult Weeders 10am-Art in Nature(fee) 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	<u>14</u> 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>15</u> 10 am--12n-Friday Fun**	<u>16</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.& Student.Service 9-11am-Intro to Birding
<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> CLOSED	<u>19</u> Kids Bird Camp(fee) 8:30 am-Tour d' Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	<u>20</u> Kids Bird Camp(fee) 10 am-Adult Weeders 10am-Art in Nature(fee)	<u>21</u> Kids Bird Camp(fee) 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>22</u> Kids Bird Camp (fee) 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** Gibson Exhibit Ends***	<u>23</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor.& Student.Service 10 am-Nature Walk 10am-Art in Nature(fee)
<u>24</u> 10a.m.-Nature Walk <u>31</u>	<u>25</u> CLOSED	<u>26</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders Libbrecht Exhibit Begins***	<u>27</u> 10 am-Adult Weeders	<u>28</u> 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	<u>29</u> 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	<u>30</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 8pm-Star Party-Mars/Saturn

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	¹ CLOSED	² 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders	³ 10 am-Adult Weeders	⁴ 10 am-Tyke Hike-donation 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	⁵ 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	⁶ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service Dr. Vadheim-no class
⁷ 10am-Grandparents Day Stroll	⁸ CLOSED	⁹ 10 am-Adult Weeders Dr. Vadheim-no class	¹⁰ 8 am-Bird Walk/ 10 am-Adult Weeders 6:30 pm-FOMM Mtg.	¹¹ 10:30--12:30-Propagation Society	¹² 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	¹³ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service
¹⁴	¹⁵ CLOSED	¹⁶ 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	¹⁷ 10 am-Adult Weeders	¹⁸ 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	¹⁹ 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	²⁰ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 9-11am-Intro to Birding
²¹	²² CLOSED	²³ 10 am-Adult Weeders	²⁴ 10 am-Adult Weeders	²⁵ 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	²⁶ 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** 6:30-Libbrecht Reception***	²⁷ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 10 am-Nature Walk
²⁸ 10 am-Nature Walk	²⁹ CLOSED	³⁰ 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders				

SEPTEMBER

All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. **No charge for Friday Fun, but reservations are required. *See Artists Corner, page 3. For latest event information, see our newly upgraded website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			¹ 10 am-Adult Weeders	² 10 am-Tyke Hike-donation 10:30-Prop. Society.	³ 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** Libbrecht Exhibit Ends***	⁴ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service Dr. Vadheim -no class 7:30 pm-Star Party
⁵	⁶ CLOSED	⁷ 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders Vadheim-no class Vadheim Exhibit begins***	⁸ 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 10 am-Adult Weeders 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	⁹ 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	¹⁰ 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun**	¹¹ 8:45am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 10 am-Turtle&Tortoise Day
¹² 2-4 pm-2nd Sun.Science, 'Fantastic Spiders,' fee	¹³ CLOSED	¹⁴ 10 am-Adult Weeders	¹⁵ 10 am-Adult Weeders	¹⁶ 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	¹⁷ 10 am--12n-Friday Fun**	¹⁸ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 9-11am-Intro to Birding 6:30-8:30pm-Night Life(fee)
¹⁹	²⁰ CLOSED	²¹ 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance 10 am-Adult Weeders 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	²² 10 am-Adult Weeders	²³ 10:30-12:30-Propagation Society	²⁴ 10 am--12 n-Friday Fun** 6:30-Vadheim Recept.***	²⁵ 8:45 am-12 n-Hab. Restor. & Student Service 10 am-Nature Walk
²⁶ 10 am-Nature Walk	²⁷ CLOSED	²⁸ 10 am-Adult Weeders	²⁹ 10 am-Adult Weeders	³⁰	³¹	

OCTOBER

BUTTERFLIES			
Monarch	American Lady	Orange Sulphur	Fiery Skipper
Queen	Buckeye	Cloudless Sulphur	Sandhill Skipper
Gulf Fritillary	Western Swallowtail	Gray Hairstreak	Funereal Duskywing
Mourning Cloak	Checkered White	Western Tailed Blue	Common Checkered Skipper
Painted Lady	Dainty Sulphur	Umber Skipper	
DRAGONFLIES			
Common Green Darner	Variegated Meadowhawk	Wandering Glider	Pacific Forktail
Blue-eyed Darner	Flame Skimmer	Red Saddlebags	

Donations of \$100 or More

Date	Donor	Amount	Notes
March	Anne Kershner	\$1,000	
April	Dale Lincoln	\$500	
April	Ruth E. Vogel	\$125	
May	Bertrand Alm	\$1,040	Northrop Grumman Corp. Matching Funds
May	James Justiss	\$200	Boeing Co. Matching Funds
May	Elsie Inase	\$100	
May	Irma Ruiz	\$365	
May	Maxine Trevethen	\$100	
June	Mary Ellen Hodge Trust	\$1,000	FOMM named as beneficiary of Mary Ellen Hodge Trust

Ellen Peterson

Artists Corner

Works of local artists and photographers inspired by the beauty of the Madrona Marsh are regularly on display at the Nature Center.

Through July 11, **"Beautiful Marsh,"** An Exhibit of Sketches and Paintings by **Jennifer Siegel**.

July 15 - August 22 - **"Through the Eyes of Children,"** An Exhibit of Paintings by **Suzanne Gibson**. Artist Reception, Friday, August 1, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

August 26 - October 3 - **"The Painted Marsh,"** An Exhibit of Paintings by **Ron Libbrecht**. Artist Reception, Friday, September 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Birding with Bob

Lenore Bloss

I have been birding with Bob Shanman many times on the Marsh and it is such a fun opportunity to learn a lot about birds and the importance of the Marsh to our environment.

On different occasions we have seen Cinnamon Teals, Great Egrets, Green Herons, American Kestrels, Western Bluebirds, Cassin's Kingbirds and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers—to name just a few of the hundreds of birds that visit the Marsh. Bob provides comprehensive information on bird migration, behavior, and flight patterns, and is a master at identifying every single bird that we encounter! Bob also gives helpful hints on using binoculars and he brings a wonderful scope allowing us to get 'up close and personal' with perched birds.

Because of Bob's terrific sense of humor, everyone has lots of laughs and it's a great way to meet new folks, enjoy the outdoors, and improve your birding skills, all at the same time!

Many thanks to the City of Torrance and all of the Marsh staff and volunteers who provide this great resource to our community.

October 7-November 14 - **"Natural Dyes,"** A Photography Exhibit by **Dr. Connie Vadheim and Babara Sattlers**. Artist Reception Friday, October 24, 6:30-8:30 pm.

South Bay Native Plant Corner

Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSU, Dominguez Hills



Blue (Mexican) Elderberry *Sambucus nigra ssp. cerulea*

Plants that provide multiple benefits—shade, fragrance, food and shelter—are a real boon to those of us with limited garden space. A native tree like the Blue Elderberry provides much more than shade or a convenient perch for birds. It provides habitat for your family and all the wild co-habitants of your yard.

Blue Elderberry is known by several names: *Sambucus nigra ssp. cerulea* (official scientific name), *Sambucus cerulea* and *Sambucus mexicana*. The species is native to western U.S. and Mexico, where it grows naturally along stream banks and in openings. In cold climates, Blue Elderberry dies back to the ground in winter, re-growing into a large upright shrub each year. In our area, it ultimately grows into a small tree (about 20 feet tall and wide) unless cut back routinely.

While Elderberry becomes briefly deciduous in fall/winter, its leaves form a lacy canopy most of the year, providing the dappled shade that many plants love. The medium green leaves contrast nicely with the red bark of younger branches. Blue Elderberry provides year-round beauty in addition to its other attributes.

Elderberry blooms throughout the year, but the main bloom season is spring/summer. The tiny flowers, which grow in clusters (see picture below)

have a sweet, honey-like aroma attractive to native pollinators.

The abundant blue berries, which resemble small blueberries, ripen from summer through fall. The berries make wonderful juice, jelly and syrup and can also be used in baked goods. Note: raw berries and leaves can be toxic if eaten. The branches are used to make native flutes and clapper sticks. The plant also provides natural dyes and medicines.



Many species of seed and fruit-eating birds eat Elderberries and insect-eating birds are attracted by the numerous insects. For example, an elderberry tree is a natural way to entice Northern Mockingbirds, warblers and Orioles into your garden.

Blue Elderberry is quite easy to grow and does well in most local soils. While quite drought tolerant once established, it can take regular water. Elderberries like sun and benefit from a bark mulch. Prune in winter to shape; or prune hard to keep as a shrub.

For more on Blue Elderberry see: <http://mother-natures-backyard.blogspot.com/2012/08/plant-of-month-august-blue-mexican.html>

Learn more about local native plants at our “Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden” series on the first Saturday of each month.

Orioles in the South Bay

Bob Shanman, *Wild Birds Unlimited*

As I write this article, it's late June. I've just finished the monthly walk at George F. Canyon where we saw one of North America's most colorful birds, the Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*). Each year, in early March, I contact my colleague store owners in San Diego to find out if the orioles have started arriving, knowing that within a week or so, they will show up in the South Bay. The stunning male Hooded Orioles are usually first, followed closely by Bullock's Orioles, and then the rest of the spring migration birds. But the orioles are first, and arrive with a big splash of color. It's always exciting! One never tires of seeing these brightly colored birds. Since I really like orioles, I decided to do some research on them.



Hooded Oriole

I know that orioles belong to the bird family Icteridae, a New World family found only in the Americas. I didn't realize the range of birds in the family. The Icteridae family includes the blackbirds, meadowlarks, cowbirds, grackles, bobolinks and in the tropics, oropendulas and caciques. Icterid comes from the Ancient Greek *ikteros*, from the Roman word for "jaundiced ones" (*ictericus*), since many of the birds have yellow feathers. (Oropendulas get their name from their long, yellow tail—*oro* for gold, and *pendulas* for the long tail feathers.) Orioles belong to the genus *Icterus*.

Ten different orioles have occurred in North America (north of the Mexican border). The Spot-breasted Oriole was introduced by man to the Miami, Florida area, and is now resident in Miami. The Altamira, Audubon's, Black-vented and Streak-back orioles are rare visitors to the United States, and usually occur along the Rio Grande River in south Texas. Eastern U.S. orioles include the famous Baltimore Oriole, and the reddish-colored Orchard Oriole. Western U.S. orioles include the Bullock's, Hooded and Scott's orioles (the latter is found

primarily on the desert). These last five are Neotropical migrants and breed in the U.S.

Both the Hooded and Bullock's orioles breed in the South Bay. The male Hooded has to be one of the prettiest North American birds with its bright orange hood (can't miss it) that wraps around a black bib on its throat and on to its underbelly. Its Latin name is *Icterus cucullatus*. *Cucullatus* means "wearing a cowl" which is quite appropriate! The wings are black with one bold white wingbar, with white edgings on most of the remaining wing feathers.



Bullock's Oriole

The female is a drab yellow underneath and olive green above, with two fine white wingbars. "Hoodies" winter as far south as Guatemala, and breed as far north as southern Oregon. They will often "sew" their nest to palm leaves, weaving a cylinder with a cup-like bottom, big enough for the adults and up to seven young. The eggs hatch after about two weeks, and the young fly about two weeks later.

The Bullock's Oriole is less striking than the Hooded, but still quite colorful. Its black head, orange forehead and cheek, and black bib are easily recognized. The black cap and large white wing patch make it easily distinguished from the Hooded. The female is dull yellow to grey below, and dull grey above, with two pale white wingbars. Its Latin name (*Icterus bullockii*) is not as fun as the Hooded's. It is named after the father and son who first described the bird. Interestingly, during mating, both male and female sing (different songs) and the female may sing more! The Bullock's also sews and weaves a nest similar to the Hooded. It also will have up to seven

"Orioles. . ." continued on page

eggs, which hatch in 11-14 days, and the young fledge about two weeks later. They will nest from the west coast to the east flank of the Rocky Mountains, and as far north as southern Canada. They, too, winter south to Guatemala.

In about Spring of 2007 (or was it 2009?), we had a very exciting day at the South Coast Botanic Garden. During the annual spring plant sale, we had an “oriole tree” along the walk toward the rose garden. At one time, over a vertical distance of about 20 feet in one tree, there was a male Hooded Oriole, a male Bullock’s, a male Baltimore, and a female Orchard Oriole. It was quite a site. And, just for good measure, about 75 feet away across the path, there was a male Calliope Hummingbird! WOW! You just never know. As one friend once said, “Birds have wings. They fly.”

Back to the orioles. Their primary diet includes insects, spiders, nectar and fruit. Look at their bill; it is well adapted for picking off small critters. But its tapered shape (to a point) is ideal for getting into flowers for nectar. They will even pierce the base of deep flowers to get at the nectar. That sharp bill is also good for puncturing fruit to get at the pulp inside.

Orioles are relatively easy to attract with a nectar feeder (use the same mix of four parts water to one part sugar as you would for a hummingbird). The guidelines for cleaning the feeder are the same—every four days wash it out and provide fresh nectar. Most astonishingly, about ten years ago, someone discovered that orioles love grape jelly! Good old fashioned grape jelly. Shocked? So were we, but folks tell us in the store all the time that it works. Feeders and jelly dishes should be primarily orange, as the birds are attracted to this color. Go figure.

Well, as I said at the top of this article, it’s late June, and that brings me a measure of sadness. For most of the orioles around here, the young are fledging. Soon mom and dad will be taking them to your backyard feeders, and will teach them to feed on their own. By mid-July, the males will be winging their way south, to be followed several weeks later by the females and young. By early August, most orioles will have moved through our area. By late August, the last stragglers from up north will have said goodbye.

March can’t get here soon enough!—**B.S.**

Jeri Phillips

Many of you have met long-time Marsh supporters Jeri and Archie Phillips, or have read about them in previous newsletters. They lived nearby, and for many years Jeri walked the perimeter twice a day, picking up litter as she enjoyed watching the seasons change on the Preserve. Archie used his farm experience to help us mow weeds and later served on the Board of Directors of the Friends.

Jeri is now living in an assisted living facility in Carson called Arbor Hall, as she and Archie deal with her Alzheimer’s Disease, and as we reported in our last issue, Archie is now volunteering at the front desk two days a week. We thought you might enjoy reading the following short bio on Jeri which appeared in the May 2014 issue of the facility’s newsletter: Carson Chronicle.

Meet Jeri Phillips, Our Arbor Hall Resident of the Month!

Jeri Phillips was born on December 22, 1932, in Greenville, South Carolina, and lived with her parents.

Jeri graduated from Easley High School in South Carolina.

Jeri was married for two months before her husband, Archie, was drafted into the U.S. Army. He spent six months at Fort Benning, Georgia, and then was shipped overseas for 18 more months during the Korean War. They did not see each other during that 18 months.

She has been married to Archie for 63 years. She has one son, Jeff. She has one grandson and one granddaughter. Jeri worked as a crossing guard, and for thirty years she worked for Douglas Aircraft. Jeri started running at age 50 and ran many 5K and 10K runs. She received 30 winning trophies. She ran the LA Marathon in five hours and won first place in her age category.

Jeri enjoyed singing, and sang in two different singing groups. She also enjoyed church work, as well as working and supporting missions all over the world. Jeri is a Protestant. Her favorite song is, “Jesus Loves Me”, her favorite color is blue, her favorite food is spaghetti, her favorite actress is Jenny Crane, and she loves bike riding, running, camping, dancing, coloring and singing.

Friends of Madrona Marsh

a non-profit organization est. 1972

P. O. Box 5078
Torrance, CA 90510

(310) 32MARSH

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO.214
Torrance, California

Return Service Requested



Membership Application

We appreciate your support. Thank you!

Annual Membership: ____New ____Renewal

Individual ____\$20 Family ____\$30 Youth (under 18)/Senior (over 65) ____\$10

Patron ____\$50 Club/Organization ____\$75 Business/Industry ____\$150

Lifetime Membership ____\$500 Amount Enclosed ____

Please send your donation or offer of services to:

Friends of Madrona Marsh, P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510

FOMM is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Your donations are tax deductible.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

E:Mail _____

I will volunteer for: (Gift Shop, Reception Desk, other) _____