



Southern California Chapter Council Meeting
Saturday, December 9th, 2017

Hosted by:
Antelope Valley Audubon Society
Prime Desert Woodland Preserve
43201 35th St W, Lancaster, CA 93536

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

1. Don Goeschl, Antelope Valley Audubon Society
2. Kathy Degner, Pasadena Audubon Society
3. Tina Stoner, Pomona Valley Audubon Society
4. Jim Kissinger, Sea and Sage Audubon Society
5. Brenda Burnette, Kerncrest Audubon Society
6. Dan Burnette, Kerncrest Audubon Society
7. Kym Buzdygon, Pasadena Audubon Society
8. Paula Orlovich, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
9. Megan Flaherty, San Diego Audubon Society
10. Vic Leipzig, Sea and Sage Audubon Society
11. Victoria Elmore, Audubon California
12. Drew Feldman, San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
13. Patrick Saatzer, Antelope Valley Audubon Society
14. Carol Lea Collins, Antelope Valley Audubon Society
15. Kathy Goeschl, Antelope Valley Audubon Society
16. Dave Weeshoff, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
17. Steve Shaw, Kern Audubon Society and Antelope Valley Audubon Society

Preparation for meeting:

- **Light breakfast and lunch will be provided by Antelope Valley AS and Audubon California**
- **Optional Tour after the meeting.** After the meeting there will be a tour of Prime Desert Woodland Preserve by Antelope Valley AS. The chapter played an instrumental role in protecting this habitat.

9:15 am Welcome by Don Goeschl from Antelope Valley Audubon and Introductions

Don welcomed everyone to the space. He thanked Carol, Melinda and Kathy for help with setting up. Don introduced Antelope Valley Audubon Board members and spoke about the Desert Woodland Preserve. The chapter was instrumental in saving 20.6 acres from housing development and adding it to the preserve with support from the City of Lancaster and L.A. County. The habitat here is unique in that it supports both Juniper and Joshua Trees in the same area.

Patrick explained that an activist named Elise was relentless in getting the city to preserve the land which was purchased with Prop A bond money. The habitat is healthier than other similar ecosystems. The preserve was opened in 2001 and historically was a part of the ancient Amargosa Creek system. As it is a high desert area, it is very hot in the summer and there are no natural water sources around. We are looking for good ways to bring water into the area. We have an active relationship with the City in regards to stewardship of this area.

9:35 am Announcements

- Next council meeting to be hosted by El Dorado Audubon. Save the date: March 31st, 2018.
- NAS Board Building and Governance Webinar for chapters have been scheduled for January 11 and February 8th. For more information on Audubon Works click [here](#).

- San Diego Audubon's BirdFest: dates confirmed Feb 21-25 . For more information, go to www.sandiegoaudubon.org

10:00am Salton Sea Experience. Reports from Natasha, Patrick, Drew, Kym, Vic and Dave.

Natasha: Audubon California hosted a two-day trip to the Salton Sea. The trip consisted to two bird walks led by Andrea Jones, Director of Bird Conservation and Dan Cooper, Ecological Consultant. The trip consisted of bird watching and also learning about how the changing sea is impacting birds and the local ecosystems. Frank Ruiz, Director of the Salton Sea Program organized a community celebration which was attended by chapter leaders and local community members. There was representation from a lot of faith based groups, the Torres Martinez Cahuilla Indian Tribe, and other local groups. Audubon California also hosted a network reception in which chapter leaders got to learn more in depth about what Audubon California is doing to address the crisis at the Salton Sea in coalition with other groups. There were approximately 96 participants in total who attended out of which about 39 were chapter leaders.

Patrick: We went birding in both the Northern and Southern part of the sea. The sea is shrinking and the salinity is now 60 parts per thousand. Tilapia, which are very robust fish that can survive in high salinity are disappearing and no longer reproducing. The whole ecosystem is changing. We saw Snow Geese around the Sonny Bono Recreation Area. There were hunters hunting them there. There is a proposal to transition the sea into a marsh, similar to the Owens Valley project. There are also 12 large geothermal plants.

Drew: This marks a turnaround with Audubon California getting involved. Audubon California has grown to learn and become an expert. There are plans to bring water from the ocean. The concern with the gulf of California is that your bringing salt water not fresh water.

Kym: Tim Bradley, from UC Irvine spoke about the state of the sea. His talk at the meeting was very hopeful. What he was saying was that we are watching this ecological event unfold in real time. We don't have a lot grebes coming back because there are no fish. We need to find some solution to keep the water in there to support habitat. It was good to have that note of hope.

Vic: The bad news is the complete loss of the Eared Grebe. The good news is the bond proposal for the California ballot. This is the Owen's Lake approach. We chapters will be asked by Audubon California to work on passing the bond measure. Right now it is called SB 5. The name will change on the ballot. One more aspect is that bond will provide water infrastructure for communities that have chronic health issues due to dust that blows from the neighboring areas and the Salton Sea as the lake bed is exposed.

Dave: SB 5 is a park bond that is inclusive of providing funding to the Salton Sea, neighborhood parks, and every geography in terms of funding. It is a good bill to support. No matter where you living in California, this bill will provide funding to local areas.

10:30am Audubon California Board Meeting Update, Vic Leipzig

Vic serves on the Audubon California's Board. The board meets quarterly. The last meeting for the year was yesterday in the form of a conference call. Audubon California has a search committee looking to fill the Executive Director position.

Audubon California is almost ready to announce the nominee for the position. They were planning to make an announcement at yesterday's meeting but there was a last minute snag and they will make the announce next week. Audubon California is the largest state office of the National Audubon Society. We will have a new ED shortly. Potentially things could change or not as we get a new ED, in terms of what direction Audubon CA goes.

Question from the council: What is Audubon doing nationally in terms of some of the national issues like the national monuments, the EPA, commerce, etc. Was there any new discussion from National?

Answer: In regards to endangered species, US Fish and Wildlife Service has not taken strong enough steps to protect endangered species. That is why Audubon CA is looking into legal action for endangered species. This will be a key legal maneuver that Audubon will be taking to protect the entire act as well as an endangered species.

There was a break in at Debs Park with a theft of computers, binoculars, scopes, and other equipment. There was an immediate community response to cover the insurance deductible.

Humboldt Bay: The work to protect eel grass habitat has been such a victory that this will be a major feature of the next NAS board meeting.

Megan Hertel and Mike Lynes went bird watching with Governor Jerry Brown. It was informal and not publicized. They got the opportunity to communicate with the governor himself. He did not know about the Salton Sea. Evidently the governor is well versed in many other environmental issues. They were able to bring him up to speed.

There is a possible change at the national level. National Audubon is going into a different direction. Possibly in terms of their fundraising approach. They hired a new director of development. Audubon CA board members were asked to make suggestions. My suggestion was to expand development programs to support chapters in developing outreach for fundraising skills. I suggested doing fundraising in conjunction with chapters and we might benefit at all levels on improving fundraising.

Chapter Network Program: Ariana Rickard, the Associate Chapter Network Director gave a presentation on the program. Ariana highlighted the work from the past three years. A major emphasis was on capacity building. We will continue to focus on that.

10:45am Audubon Branded Website Template for Chapters, Natasha Khanna

Natasha shared some resources that National has created in collaboration with Squarespace. Chapters can now use templates designed by Square Space if they are interested in revamping their website. This is supposed to be user friendly and designed with the structure of Audubon chapters in mind. For more information on Audubon Works, [click here](#).

10:55am Renewable Energy Development, Victoria Elmore, Desert Advocate with Audubon CA

Tory introduced herself to the council. She has a lot of expertise in GIS. Tory lives in Wrightwood and works at Bearpaw Ranch, which is partially owned by San Bernardino Valley Audubon. Tory works with Garry George. Her job is to do spatial analysis and work with local chapters in the desert. Tory spoke at length about why we need renewable energy and how we can make it as bird friendly as possible. We all know that climate change is the number one threat to birds. Audubon CA recognizes that renewable energy is a critical solution that can help address climate change. It is really important to take climate data into consideration as bird ranges change over time. Audubon is working closely with industries to expedite and expand renewable energy sources. Tory explained how the organization decides to support or not support energy projects. Tory gave examples of how not all renewable energy is good for wildlife, habitat and for birds. Audubon does not support concentrated energy solar projects because of impacts on birds.

11:25am Forage Fish Policy Work, Megan Flaherty, San Diego Audubon

Megan spoke about San Diego Audubon's fish forage policy work. Forage fish are small schooling pelagic fish essential to marine food webs. SDAS primarily focused on northern anchovy since they are the number one seabird food. They are an important resource for coastal marine ecosystems in Southern California. SDAS helps to maintain four different nesting locations all of which are in Mission Bay. All of the nesting sites are manmade. Least terns are dependent on Northern Anchovies. Human fishing and climate changing is really impacting normal boom and bust cycles of anchovy populations. Between 2009 to 2016 there were huge crashes in anchovy stocks. San Diego Audubon has teamed up with Audubon CA, Sea & Sage Audubon, Portland Audubon, the Pew Charitable Foundation, Earthjustice and Oceana to advocate for better forage fish management along our coastlines. At recent meetings of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, SDAS testified on behalf of birds and other wildlife that depend on forage fish for survival. We called for the use of adaptive quotas for the Northern anchovy fishery. These would change yearly depending on the status of the fishery, giving the stock the opportunity to recover after poor years and better balancing the needs of both humans and wildlife.

We are also carrying out public outreach in order to increase awareness of the importance of healthy forage fish stocks, including local businesses to gain support for increased protections for Northern anchovies. We have recruited volunteers for the annual Pacific Brown Pelican Survey, which is another species highly dependent on healthy anchovy stocks.

11:40 pm Discussion on Membership

What strategies and tactics has your chapter employed to increase membership, and improve membership participation? Does membership stay the same or fluctuate through the years?

Pasadena

Kym and Kathy: It usually stays the same. Right now we don't do much outreach to national membership. But we were thinking of expanding to do targeted outreach to national list. We have a dual membership- national and chapter. We have 380 chapter only/ local members and 1200 national members. There are about 80 members that overlap. PAS sends out postcards.

Twice a year we have new member receptions. We provide snacks, wine, and have board members attend. It is hosted at a board member's house in South Pasadena. We chat with them to see why they joined and plug them in to the right areas. At meetings we make people feel welcomed and make sure it's not cliquish. New members get a "fledgling" button, board members wear their button identifying them as a board member. We have board members attach themselves new members. They sit with them at the meeting.

We also have a Birding 101 class. It is a great way to recruit new members. It consists of three evening sessions for two hours and two field trips. It gets them really excited for birding and then you immediately steer them into other chapter programs. We are starting to go paperless. We put our newsletter on the website and encourage old subscribers to give us their emails. We can share curriculum with other chapters. We are starting to do a Birding 102 class.

San Fernando Valley

Paula and Dave: We have a constant of 250 members. We have 1800 national members and 250 local only members. We get about 25-30 attendees at our monthly meetings. We have 8 meetings a year and skip 3 in the summer.

Our general membership meetings are very poorly attended. People come to different walks. But they do not come to the general meetings. We have talked about calling it something other than a "meeting". We are thinking of how to rebrand our meetings. For us it is not about the how many members we have but about participation and getting people more involved. We do see the importance of collecting email address.

Pomona Valley

Tina: We have 900 national members and about 75-76 local members. Our monthly meetings are very well attended. Meetings start promptly at 7:30 with a 10-minute bird ID activity. We have excellent refreshments. Then we go through announcements and business. Then we have fabulous monthly presentations that are typically associated with birds, scientific studies, conservation, etc. We are lucky to have presenters from the Claremont colleges. A lot of the people who come are senior members. We have general meetings 10 months out of the year.

San Diego

Megan: We are a little bit siloed. We have 2500 national members. Maybe a third of them are chapter members. We don't have a general meeting, but we do have events throughout the year. We also have a volunteer appreciation party. This creates a space for volunteers from different bubbles and programs to interact with each other.

Sea and Sage

Jim and Vic: We are unique in that we are all national members. We have 3000 members and chapter members. Our membership numbers have been reasonably stable this year but in the past years there has been fluctuations. I attribute that to the national system of record keeping. We found that about half of the people

that sign up every year through national, come and then go. This made us think that we don't have a recruitment problem. Instead we have a retention problem. We thought about how to get new members involved and for them to stay. For the last 4 -5 years, we have been harvesting email contacts. We now have emails for about 60% of our membership. We use Mailchimp to send out emails. It is free if you stay within a limit of email addresses and number of emails that you send out. We recently had a council meeting around snowy plovers. We were able to use the same system to reach members. We got a high turnout of SASAS members to come out to the meeting. The moment we get information from National, we send out an email immediately thanking them for membership. This helps verify the email address. We have also started collecting emails from field trips and all events.

San Bernardino Valley

Drew: We are very spread out. It takes 230 miles to drive from one corner to the other of our chapter boundary. The numbers fluctuate enormously from 1300 to 2000. We were never able to figure out why. We have a little over 100 chapter only members. We really should be 4 chapters. There have been attempts to set up separate chapters but none of them have lasted. We have 20-40 people at our general meetings. We only have meetings eight times a year and one Christmas potluck. We provide a turkey and roast ham.

Antelope Valley Audubon

Don and Pat: We have about 200 national members and about a hundred local members. Our meetings were running 30-35 on average. After the summer, our local membership dropped tremendously to 10-15. AVAS sends out post cards out to everybody.

12:15 pm **Lunch** – Big Thanks to Antelope Valley Audubon for providing lunch.

1:15 pm **Chapter Reports**

San Fernando Valley:

Paula: We are trying to diversify our membership since we live in the San Fernando Valley. We went to a Pacoima Beautiful meeting. We have decided to go outside our networks and listen. We found this might be the best way to meet, hear and see. We want to create a dialogue with other communities, find mutual ground and bring more people in.

Dave: We are going to participate in Climate Watch. It is a semiannual bird count except you only look for nuthatches and blue birds. This is a nationwide program. NAS will use the data to validate the climate projection maps to see if these models accurately project where birds are moving as climate changes over the course of the years. A major project is the Santa Susanna Field laboratory. The area is contaminated, but it is beautiful oak woodland and sage scrub habitat. We are fighting a major 75 home project in Simi Valley. We have homeless issues. We are working with LAPD in the Sepulveda Basin wildlife area.

Antelope Valley:

Don: Unfortunately, we lost one of our major projects- Holiday Lake. We are trying to work with the water district to do something about getting water in the lake. It is home for about 2500 tricolored blackbirds. Audubon CA is not going to be putting more money into the lake. We are trying to come up with a way for water to be pumped into the lake. For our Cal City project, we did three major events to raise money to do a rendering of the lake so that we can get an evaluation and cost figure to see what it will take to re-do the lake. Originally the lake was 15 feet deep, now only 5 feet deep. The main project we will be working on is to raise money for the development of the 20.8 acres here at Prime Desert Woodland Preserve.

San Bernardino Valley:

Drew: We are famous for our lawsuits. We have the last remaining flat land that has not been developed. So we have a lot of lawsuits against development projects. There is a project to put in thousands of houses by the Ramona Expressway. Riverside County scaled back that project. This is adjacent to the San Jacinto Wildlife corridor. We might go into litigation on this project, but we are not sure. There was a loophole that a developer found out about that overrides Cal SEQA law. AB 890 would have closed this loophole. We advocated strongly for AB 890 but it did not pass.

Cadiz project: Cadiz is a dry lake over the Mojave Desert. There is a project to pump 50,000 acre feet of water, that would primarily go to Orange County. It looked like we were going to win on the federal level but BLM has changed direction with current administration in process. We pay for court costs through partnerships with CBD and Earth Justice. Audubon's reputation of being centrist helps with that.

Sea and Sage:

Vic: We are also working on forage fish project to recruit local businesses to support policy. Captain Dave's has endorsed us and might be one of the business leaders at the forefront of campaign.

Snowy Plover: We have nesting sites in Orange County. At a recent Newport Beach city meeting, we filled the room with Audubon member to advocate for protecting nesting Snowy Plovers. Now the city is paying attention to Audubon's concerns.

Lands Pass Program: Two of the leading birding locations- Bolsa Chica Preserve and Upper Newport Bay Preserve, is managed by Cal Fish and Wildlife. Now they will have a Lands Pass system. There will be 50 different sites termed ecological reserves or wildlife refuges. Starting January 1st, you will be required to use a lands pass to access locations. You can obtain it online, at their offices or at some of the stores that sell other passes. Funds will go to Cal Fish and Wildlife. For more information, click [here](#).

San Diego:

Megan: We have multiple education programs. Sharing our shores program educates elementary school kids on how to share shores and they post signs on the beaches. We are continuing our forest fish work. ReWild Mission Bay is our biggest project. We are looking at ways to restore the last 40 acres of wetland habitat. It used to be 4000 acres. It is shrinking every year because it does not receive freshwater. We just had a planning committee meeting where the city is pushing forward with plans without any analysis of sea level rise. We are trying to wade through the political mire.

Pasadena:

Kym: Our membership just voted to amend our bylaws to add a development and outreach chair to really look at fundraising so we can bring in more funding.

Hahamongna Watershed: We have ongoing litigation against the City of Pasadena and LA County to not dredge out the watershed. We are in negotiations to settle. We want to see how far we can get the county to back off. We want to shrink the footprint. Right now they want to have 400 truck trips going out a day.

Cal Fire/ Vegetation Treatment Plan: Cal Fire will be doing a big vegetation removal. California Chapparral institute will be leading the charge against it. The EIR does not seem to consider habitat. If your chapter can, please send in a comment letter. [Natasha sent out information on this in early January]

Pomona Valley:

Tina: Right now our priority is to build out our conservation committee. Do any of the council member have ideas on this?

Conversation from the Council:

- Create a committee from existing board members.
- Try recruiting professors.
- Try recruiting retired teachers. Maybe put a call out in teacher newsletters or at parent teacher associations.

2:30pm

Adjournment