



Audubon CALIFORNIA

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER COUNCIL

Hosted by San Fernando Valley Audubon Society & Audubon California

**Saturday, February 4, 9:00 A.M.
Tillman Water Reclamation Plant
6100 Woodley Ave
Van Nuys, CA 91406**

ATTENDEES:

1. Mark Osokow, San Fernando Valley
2. Doug Lithgow, Sea and Sage Audubon
3. Vic Leipzig, Sea and Sage Audubon
4. Drew Feldman, San Bernardino Valley Audubon
5. Kim Buzdygon, Pasadena Audubon
6. Dave Weeshoff. , San Fernando Valley
7. Rosemary Leibowitz, San Fernando Valley Audubon
8. Sharon Ford, San Fernando Valley
9. Kathy Goeschl, Antelope Valley Audubon
10. Ann Richardson, Antelope Valley Audubon
11. Don Goeschl, Antelope Valley Audubon
12. Paul Blieden, Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon
13. Becky, San Fernando Valley Audubon
14. Natalie Shapiro, Buena Vista Audubon
15. Margo Griswald, Los Angeles Audubon
16. Tina Stoner, Pomona Valley Audubon

NOTES:

Garry George called the meeting to order. Rose Liebowitz from San Fernando Valley Audubon welcomed everyone to the chapter's facilities and neighboring areas, which include the Sepulveda Basin and the Japanese Garden.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Staff:

- Garry introduced Natasha Khanna. She started this week as the field organizer based at Audubon Center at Debs Park. She will serve as a liaison between Audubon California and the South California Chapters. Natasha reports to Garrison Frost, Audubon California's Director of Campaigns and Communications. Her email address is nkhanna@audubon.org. In the past, she interned with Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon YES program and volunteered at Debs Park. Previously she worked at Special Service for Groups Alliance as a case manager with homeless and formerly incarcerated populations.
- Garry announced the hiring of Frank Ruiz as Director of Audubon California's Salton Sea Program. Frank Ruiz will be invited to the next council meeting, which will be held at Buena Vista Audubon.

Lobby Day: Audubon California is organizing an Audubon Lobby Day in Sacramento on June 8th, 2017. The Southern California Chapter Council recommends that the Southern California chapters take an active role in Lobby Day by sending members up to Sacramento.

Next Meeting: May 13, 2017 in Carlsbad hosted by Buena Vista Audubon Society at their nature center.

CHAPTER RECOMMENDATIONS:**Salton Sea**

- There is an updated film on the Salton Sea called Breaking Point.
<https://www.amazon.com/Breaking-Point-Bill-Wisneski/dp/B01GU3TTES>
- Define Dan Cooper's role in the Salton Sea program.

Communications:

- Members reported receiving too many emails from Audubon's various mailing lists and have difficulty sifting through them.
- Members suggested setting up a protected, private face book page or list serv for each council. Chapters reported that it is difficult to use WORKS.
- Chapters suggest that Audubon California update contact databases rather than waiting for National to update list.
- Chapter members suggested creating a mailing list just for chapter leads so that they can share news and information on issues that concern Southern California Chapters.

- Various members asked if it would be possible for Audubon California policy calls to be either in the evening or on the weekends.

Lobby Day: Below are recommendations from the council to improve participation of SoCal chapter members:

- Block booking of hotels
- Coordinate roommates to reduce costs
- Funding support for chapter leaders to attend
- Emphasis on youth and funding of youth attendance.
- Report on voting record of the legislator you are going to visit. Include League of Conservation Voters recommendations/record.
- Create a method to report back on impact of each year's lobby day.

CAPACITY BUILDING:

Garry invited chapters to discuss outcomes of two-year capacity building offered by Audubon California. Program offered training on board governance, recruitment, strategic planning, fundraising, and building community partnerships and diversity and inclusion. Discussion questions include:

- Has the program benefitted your chapter?
- What worked and did not work? How would you improve it?
- Should National Audubon launch a capacity-building program?
- Have you been able to create a strategic plan for your chapter?
- Was the diversity and inclusion workshop useful?

<https://works.audubon.org/resources/capacity-building-resources-audubon-chapters>

General Feedback:

- Term limits and board member turnover make it hard to sustain a capacity building effort.
- Difficult to get the entire Board to buy in.
- It takes time to implement. Audubon California expectations are too high on the timeline.
- Local chapters can use education programs geared toward youth and students to implement diversity and inclusion and to help in creating the next generation of birders.
- Workshops were good for cultivating the field, but were not implemented until there was a lightning bolt/event.

- It is difficult to transform a board that primarily focuses on birding activity into a non-profit model board structure.

Feedback from the various Chapters:

- Los Angeles Audubon – The chapter found the governance, recruitment, strategic planning, cultural shift & inclusion workshops to be valuable. The LA chapter reported that it is taking longer than expected to implement. Strategic planning is essential for fundraising as big donors and especially foundations ask for it. While the LA chapter did not attend diversity and inclusion workshop, it has already started recruiting younger and bilingual members.
- Sea and Sage Audubon: The chapter found the training to be overall very helpful and inspiring. The chapter is in the final stages of completing the strategic plan and their board will vote on it in about two months. The chapter choose to establish broader goals over quantifiable goals due to limited capacity. The diversity workshop helped in raising awareness and the chapter has created a plan but does not yet have the capacity to implement it. The fundraising component was also very useful.
- San Bernardino Valley Audubon– The chapter reported that despite attending some of the sessions, the chapter does not have enough capacity to build more capacity. The San Bernardino Valley chapter covers three counties and has the largest territory geographically – from Corona to the Colorado River. We have huge conservation issues with six ongoing lawsuits. While the chapter has 2000 members, it is spread thin with only ten core members. The council discussed the possibility of breaking the chapter up into smaller areas but concluded that there are not enough core members to do so.
- San Fernando Valley Audubon: The board completed and approved an annual strategic plan. The chapter commented on the difficulty of creating a five-year plan. The chapter is on track with implementing the plan. For example, the chapter has already been able to increase local membership. One new board member took the initiative to revise outdated bylaws. The chapter has not created a diversity or partnership plan. However, the chapter has ongoing outreach and education programs that do engage younger and diverse populations. San Fernando Valley Audubon Chapter member Sharon spoke about the urgency of diversifying all chapters and urged all chapters to make this issue a priority.
- Antelope Valley Audubon Society: The chapter reported that it is in the process of building up their youth programs.
- Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon: The chapter has a board position that is always filled by a young person from the local high school. This helps create a channel for youth to get involved with Audubon is a great recruitment method. Audubon Palos Verdes has Audubon YES which is dedicated to working with youth.

- Audubon Pasadena: The chapter president was able to attend the board recruitment, governance and strategic planning sessions while the staff member attended the diversity session. The chapter commented on how the council might need to spend more time on addressing the issue of making Audubon chapters more diverse. The chapter has decided to scale back to an annual plan. The chapter remarked on the importance of having specific goals in the strategic plan as many grants require it or ask for specific deliverables. Kym, Pasadena Audubon's staff, remarked that one way to recruit younger people into Audubon is to create paid positions for staff.
- Buena Vista Audubon: The chapter president reported that she was unable to attend but that the chapter is interested in capacity building. The chapter has 16 board members. The president expressed the need for more diversity and younger people in Buena Vista's chapter. The chapter does have a nature education program in which 95% of its participants are not white.
- Pomona Valley Audubon: The chapter completely revised its by-laws and updated its annual donor letter appeal. The communication chair and secretary translated their brochure and website into Spanish in order to be more reflective of the local community. The chapter hopes to expand its membership beyond Pomona and into neighboring towns.

ROUNDTABLE/NEW ADMINISTRATION: Have any of the chapter's faced any challenges with the changes in administration? What impacts do you expect your chapter to have moving forward in the new political climate?

A majority of chapter leaders agreed that it is too soon to tell. General issues that concern a majority of chapters are:

- Rising waters and sinking lands.
- Drought and its effect on wildlife.
- Selling of BLM lands.
- Flooding issues.
- National Antiquities Act
- Concern about how federal agencies will change their policies. List of agencies include:
 - USDA
 - EPA
 - BLM
 - Army Core of Engineers
 - Federal Bureau of Reclamation
 - National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration
 - USGS

- NPS

Below are some issues that concern individual chapters:

- San Fernando Valley Audubon: Chapter is concerned about DOE DEIS on Santa Susanna field site. Chapter is concerned about how delta water is going to be allocated and will it affect the availability of water for wildlife and the City of Los Angeles. The chapter is waiting to see who will be the new commanding colonel for Army Core of Engineers and how that will affect the Sepulveda Basin wildlife preserve.
- San Bernardino Valley Audubon: There might be less of a demand for warehouse due to trade wars with China. This might mean less warehouse development in San Bernardino Valley. The chapter is concerned about whether or not BLM will sell land to private owners. The chapter president commented on the benefits of collaborating with hunters who oppose public land transfers.
- Antelope Valley Audubon: The chapter commented on how they have very good working relationships with hunters and gave the example of Paiute Pond, which is used by both birders and hunters.
- Los Angeles Audubon: There is concern about how the new immigration policies may affect youth members who come from immigrant families.
- San Fernando Valley Audubon: The chapter is concerned about delta water allocations.

CHAPTER CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION

Each chapter shared about the major conservation and education issues in their region.

Los Angeles Audubon:

- LA Audubon was able to win a grant after participating in the UCLA undergraduate philanthropy program. The chapter also won a grant from US Fish and Wildlife Schoolyard Habitat fund. The chapter used the funds to build a schoolyard habitat first in Leo Politi Elementary school and then Esperanza Elementary school. The habitats were installed with the help of students and their parents. The chapter has an after school program up and running at Leo Politi and hopes to have one at Esperanza soon.
- The chapter has increased membership by giving first time volunteers a free one-year membership to join LA Audubon.
- The chapter also has a pilot program to implement a naturalist education program in partnership with West LA College.

Sea and Sage:

- The chapter is hosting their annual fundraiser dinner on March 17th at 7pm with David Yarnold as their keynote speaker. Each SoCal chapter will be given one free ticket.
- The chapter is hosting a roundtable discussion with David Yarnold on March 16th at 8pm at the Irvine Ranch Water District.
- Sea and Sage successfully won a lawsuit opposing the extension of the 241 toll road into San Clemente and won funds for mitigation.
- Sea and Sage has opposed the County of Orange to allow dogs of leash at the Huntington State beach where there is a large least tern colony.

San Bernardino:

- El Casco Case: Riverside Land Conservancy has become the landowner of a series of vacation cottages by the El Casco earthen dam.
- Tapestry Development Case: The chapter is currently in negotiations to settle and appropriate sensitive habitats close to housing developments.
- Harmony Highlands Case: The chapter is in litigation for a 300,400-house development project.
- World Logistics Center: This is a project proposed in city of Moreno valley for 41 million square foot warehouse space. Case is currently in appeals.

Pasadena:

- Hahamongna Watershed case: Litigation is ongoing. Note: Superior Court judge ruled in favor of Pasadena Audubon on February 14th, 2017 requiring the County to prepare another Environmental Impact Statement. For details contact Laura Garrett at purplecow@jps.net

San Fernando Valley:

- The chapter will be apart of Bird LA Day on May 7. For more details go to www.BirdLA.net .
- Angels Fest: The chapter successfully prevented Angels Fest in the Sepulveda Basin.
- Santa Susana Mountains: The Chapter is monitoring the efforts of DOE, Bowing and NASA to clean up impacted land.

Antelope Valley:

- Holiday Lake: The chapter worked with California Audubon and was able to fill lake with water for tri color black birds. The chapter is asking authorities to remove reeds.
- Prime Desert Woodland Preserve: The chapter raised funds to purchase 130 acres of land and prevent development.

- Cal City Lake: The chapter is raising funds to analyze the lake, which is in very poor condition and is a natural flythrough.
- Antelope Valley Audubon is working with the school board to develop education programs for youth.

Palos Verdes: partnered with Rolling Hills Preparatory School to restore the blue butterfly to Palos Verdes. The blue butterfly was thought to be extinct but was rediscovered in 1995 and is endemic to Rancho Palos Verdes.

Buena Vista:

- Buena Vista Nature Center: The chapter works with the community to do natural education tours and serves 5500 students a year. The center offers grants for transportation to schools.
 - Sharing our Shores Program: This program is a part of Audubon Adventures curriculum. The program takes youth to the beach, teaches them about the local ecology and the importance of learning how to live with shore birds.
 - Augla Head Yonda Lagoon Case: The chapter won the case to prevent the development of a shopping mall.
 - The chapter has acquired land adjacent to the Nature Center and is working on an MOU with US Fish and Wildlife. The chapter is also acquiring another parcel of land between Camp Pendelton and the San Luis River.
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