



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNCIL **MEETING AGENDA**

Hosted by the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society

<http://www.sbvas.net/>

Saturday, April 25, 2015

9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

[Lake Perris State Recreation Area](#)

"The Lakeview Pavilion"

NOTE: Building is located on the east edge of Parking Lot 9

*****Lunch will be provided courtesy of San Bernardino Valley Audubon*****



"The strength of the Chapter Network is each individual Chapter...the strength of each Chapter is the Chapter Network."

ATTENDEES:

Travis Abeyta – Audubon California
Garry George – Audubon California/Los Angeles Audubon
Heather Medvitz – San Fernando Valley Audubon
Dave Weeshoff – San Fernando Valley Audubon
Ellan Vahan – Santa Monica Bay Audubon
Dan and Brenda Burnett – Kerncrest Audubon
Vic Leipzig – Sea & Sage Audubon
Dan Guthrie – Pomona Valley Audubon
Kurt and Linda Sit – San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Dave Woodward – San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Drew Feldmann – San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Pete Clark – San Bernardino Valley Audubon

AGENDA:**8:00 am PRE-MEETING BIRD WALK AT LAKE PERRIS STATE RECREATION AREA**

Dave Woodward from San Bernardino Valley Audubon will lead a pre meeting bird walk at Lake Perris Recreation Area. Bird walk participants will be back to the Council meeting location at 8:50 am in time for the 9:00 am meeting.

9:00 am INTRODUCTIONS

Travis Abeyta called the meeting to order and San Bernardino Valley Audubon provided safety and general information for the meeting. Attendees briefly introduced themselves.

9:15 am SAN JACINTO VALLEY IBA

George Hague from the Sierra Club will speak about the current threats to the San Jacinto Valley IBA including the construction of a massive distribution warehouse complex, two expansive residential developments, and increased drought. San Bernardino Audubon, Audubon California, and a working group of stakeholders in the area recently completed the San Jacinto Valley IBA Conservation Action Plan which is now in the implementation phase.

- Exploring threats
- One of the 4 most important IBAs in CA
- Audubon/Sierra Club have worked together to increase the area of the San Jacinto Valley Wildlife Area (10k acre increase – Davis unit)
- Consists of 2 separate units (9k acre and larger unit mentioned above)

- World Logistics Center: Moreno highlands, SDG&E facility impacted development
 - o Final EIR due out in May 2015
- SJWA: Cost 80 million for taxpayers
- Villages of Lakewood (VOL) housing development
 - o Approved a few summers ago by Riverside County (11,000 housing units).
 - o Sierra club, SBVAS litigation and won (big ding on developers was the fact that the housing development did not create local jobs)
 - o Developer had to go back to the drawing board; new plans released at the end of the year
 - o Motte Canyon housing development is waiting to see what happens with VOL before moving forward)
 - o McCanna (1100 acres), Stoneridge, and other housing projects in state of limbo
- What is the alternative? No development?
 - o Areas north of Ramona expressway become public lands;
 - o Have the lands been appraised? - No
 - o Env. groups have tried to negotiate with VOL developer (Louis Homes) with no success
- Mid Valley Parkway:
 - o Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, San Bernardino Valley Audubon hired law firm and commented on 32 mile freeway;
 - o Have been able to stop freeway west of 215;
 - o EIR only out for 10 days; voted to approve the project; justifies the VOL and other housing developments (ends May 6th or 8th to file petition/complaint under CEQA/NEPA on this project)
 - o Is MCP exempt from the MSHCP? – most likely designated as development areas not conservation; checkerboard
- What is popular opinion among locals about these projects?
 - o San Jacinto community is for it
 - o People in VOL not for it
 - o MCP – locals see the need for its improvement do not need a 6 lane freeway

9:35 am AUDUBON CALIFORNIA REPORT

Vic Leipzig, our SoCal Council representative on the Audubon California Board, will report out on information presented at the most recent Audubon California board meeting.

- [Here is the link to Vic's report out:](#)
- Value of strategic plans in chapter

- Some think it is just hot air and is never followed
- Others feel it can help sharpen focus

9:50 am UPDATE ON DESERT RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN (DRECP)

Garry George from Audubon CA will discuss the recent comments submitted by Audubon CA, San Bernardino Valley Audubon, San Fernando Valley Audubon, and San Diego Audubon on the [Draft California Desert Renewable Energy Plan and Associated Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report \(EIS/EIR\)](#). A pdf of the official comment letter was submitted and has been posted online [here](#).

- Schwarzenegger Exec order - meeting with conservation person who said what we need to look at first are the natural habitats affected
- Here is a link to Garry's presentation on Landscape level planning for renewable energy:
- Garry presented a GIS map of the planned DRECP area and how it overlaps with chapter territories
 - Led to the realization that out of state chapters Redrock and Yuma are within the DRECP area
- Audubon CA gave grants to chapters to make comments on the DRECP (Kerncrest, SDAS, SBVAS, SFVAS)
 - SBVAS recently submitted additional comments concerning the Tricolored Blackbird population at Newberry springs
- ArcGIS has proven to be an extremely useful tool (e.g. Golden eagle and Snowy Plover maps)
- Preferred alternative map
- IBAs not identified as conservation areas
- Need to refine development areas to include conservation
- 5 counties started developing their own renewable energy ordinances and limited development that could occur because they want to protect the agricultural industry in their areas
- Over 15,000 comments were submitted in response to the DRECP;
 - It was decided that they would split/bifurcate the plan
 - Federal lands first; rush by Sec of interior to get done under the current administration
 - Private lands – state will start over and work with counties
- Governor pushing for increase to 30% renewable energy
- President would like to increase renewable energy development on public lands
- For perspective, currently 6500 MW renewable coming from Kern county (same as state of Texas)

- Audubon CA commented on 2 big solar projects;
 - o 6000 mitigation set aside for Swainsons hawk in Portal ridge (hope to connect to Poppy Preserve and Tejon Ranch)
- What is the availability of quality private mitigation land?
 - o There is not much in Antelope Valley and western Mojave
 - o It is important to point out that it is much easier to strategically identify lands prior to starting projects

10:10 am ARROWHEAD WATER COMPANY & 27 YEARS OF UNPERMITTED WATER EXTRACTION FROM SAN BERNARDINO AND SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

Steve Loe, a retired US Forest Service Biologist, will speak about how the Nestle Company has been using spring water from the San Bernardino National Forest without a permit or an environmental review since 1988. The issue was written about in the Desert Sun in two articles, [“Bottling Water without Scrutiny”](#) and [“Lawmakers see issues in bottled water, expired permits.”](#)

- Steve Loe was with the San Bernardino National Forest Service for 35 years
- San Bernardino, San Gabriel, Santa Ana mountains all have canyons that extend down where pipelines have been built to remove and transport water
- Permits for water extraction have been expired for 30 years
- Furthermore, the permitting process is outdated and does not consider the current uses of water and how it has changed over the years
- Water removal has greatly affected natural drainage and water bodies
- One year ago, Steve started talking to the forest service about water withdrawal and the mega drought. He asked them to please consider shutting down water diversions until we figure out how to handle the drought.
- Steve also contacted San Bernardino Valley Audubon, Center for Biological Diversity, Forest Save, local Sierra Club, Tri County Conservation League, and inspired locals to write letters to the Dept. of Agriculture and the Forest Service about expired permits
 - o Important Note - There are 100s of expired permits to national forest service across the state
- Call to action - Look at streams on BLM or national forest lands. Ask if they have a special use permit for the pipeline in that drainage area and ask what they are doing to assure there is water in this stream
- Arrowhead is removing water with expired permits;
 - o The company is only paying \$497/yr for 25 million gallons of water!
- In the Santa Ana mountains, the Forest Service is removing check dams in creeks to hopefully increase stream flow

- It is important to first establish the amount of water the stream needs to survive.
- How can we find the pipelines in our areas?
 - US forest service - SUDS database; list of all permits
- What about National land permits? Have we contacted Boxer or Feinstein?
 - No one is leading the effort with Boxer or Feinstein but they are aware of it
 - Redlands – Amanda Frye – wrote a strong letter
- How does the process work if Forest Service agrees to renegotiate a permit?
 - Forest service has agreed to start NEPA on strawberry creek and deer creek; trying to get them to take emergency action against Nestle to not let them take any more water (Forest Service doesn't know if they have the authority to enforce)
- NRDC is trying to support forest service groundwater policy
- Besides bottled water as application of water withdrawal, what are some of the major applications that use similar permits?
 - This varies but even recreational cabins are included
- Who has the water rights?
 - Forest Service acknowledged that the original permits were for surface water extraction, however Nestle is extracting groundwater.

10:30 am TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD HABITAT RESTORATION IN THE SAN JACINTO VALLEY

Rose Cook from the [Regional Conservation Authority, Western Riverside MSHCP](#), and Dave Woodward from San Bernardino Valley Audubon will give a presentation on current efforts/projects to restore Tricolored Blackbird habitat in the San Jacinto Valley.

10: 50 am SALTON SEA IBA

Tim Krantz (or Drew Feldmann) from the University of Redlands, author of numerous reports and books about the [Salton Sea](#) including the online [Salton Sea Digital Atlas](#), will give a presentation on the deteriorating state of the [Salton Sea](#), current restoration efforts, and the future of its viability for birds. A great report detailing the issues at the Sea is "[Hazard's Toll: The Costs of Inaction at the Salton Sea](#)."

- General background - geology studies indicate that the Sea was not accidental
- In 1905 work on the American canal to divert Colorado river caused the banks to burst and the Sea to flood
 - In actuality, the real artificial thing was to plug the hole in the river bank
- In 2003 or 2005, as a result of a lawsuit, the Imperial Irrigation District had to reduce water given to local agriculture and the Sea so that more water could be sent to San Diego County.

- In 2007, the Preferred Alternative was proposed at a cost of \$8 billion over 7 years
- See the Report – Hazards Toll
- What is going to happen with the dust caused by a receding Sea?
 - o More exposure = more fine sediments suspended in the air
 - o Imperial County – pediatric asthma 4 times higher than state average
 - o Crop lands will be covered in dust
- Birds of the Salton Sea
 - o Tilapia and species of pup fish are only fish hanging on; Tilapia are an African breed that has evolved to be very salt tolerant
 - o 90% of the North American population of Eared Grebe may overwinter on the Sea, along with up to 50% of the Pacific Flyway population of Ruddy Duck.
 - o 40% of the global population of the Federally Endangered Yuma Ridgway's Rail (formerly Yuma clapper rail) occur in cattail marshes in the irrigation canals and natural rivers entering at the sea's edge, and the sea is the primary wintering area in the interior U.S. for the both California Brown Pelican and American White Pelican, and Western Snowy Plover.
 - o Wintering populations of several more common water bird species, such as Western Grebe, are likely the largest in the interior West, and the thousands of Cinnamon Teal, Black-necked Stilt, and other waterfowl and waders are unmatched in California south of San Francisco Bay.
 - o Great Blue Heron, have their largest nesting colonies in the state at the Salton Sea, where they utilize dead trees both on the sea and in flooded impoundments along its edges, and on the sea's few islands, up to 25% of the breeding Caspian Terns in North America likely breed in some years, where they are joined by Double-crested Cormorants with some of the largest western U.S. breeding populations.
- Assuming the worst, what happens to the birds?
 - o Depends on which birds
 - o Very hard to predict; need to plan to protect as much of the resource as possible rather than over predict or under predict
 - o Important to not just look at the Sea but also the agricultural lands that will be affected around the Sea
 - o At Audubon CA Board meeting, it was concluded that it may not be possible to completely restore the Sea in its entirety but rather that it will be a mosaic of conservation habitats
 - o There is a big push to develop geothermal and solar in the area and use the resulting profits to help fund restoration projects
- When bad things start happening, who is responsible?

- That is the million dollar question!
- Owens Lake project is similar situation just smaller scale (good example)
- Bringing in water from the Sea of Cortez is one option but the problem is the risk of releasing African tilapia into the Sea of Cortez

11:20 pm CHAPTER REPORTS

For the purposes of time, please do not report out on every field trip, project, bird species, or issue, but instead provide a quick 5-10 minute overview of your chapter's most important activities, goals, or issues. This is also a time for you to ask the Council for advice and to possibly establish areas/ideas for Chapter-to-Chapter collaboration or partnerships.

We will eat lunch during this discussion which will be delicious tacos courtesy of the San Bernardino Audubon Society. You are also welcome to bring your own lunch if needed.

San Bernardino Valley Audubon

- Mainly focused on conservation
- Capacity building workshops showed that we need to diversify and attract new members and recruit new board members
- Have realized that the chapter cannot just stay in conservation side
- Strength is conservation and bird walks
- Weakness – Need to tackle env. issues with the conservation committee outside of board meetings then present a committee report at board meetings instead (more direction; more information); how much extra time does it take to put this together (maybe an hour or so more time); has allowed them to address more issues (90% of time to 50%)
- Grant on Newberry Springs with Audubon CA
- Have found it useful to have Board Meeting conference calls
- Still love to bird watch (most of their members are interested in this rather than env. advocacy)

Pomona Valley Audubon

- Birding trips have good attendance; main focus
- Not doing much for conservation other than sending letters or citizen science
- Not many conservation issues in their area

Los Angeles Audubon

- New president is Margot Griswold who will start in July
- Margot designed salt grass restoration at Owens Lake

- The chapter has implemented some of the most amazing education initiatives:
 - o Baldwin Hills overlook state park after school programs
 - o Kenneth Hahn state recreation area
 - o Esperanza elementary
 - o Ballona Wetlands program (partner with SMBAS)
- National attention on education programs
- Education emphasis: 5-6 grants on education
- Continue with their Snowy Plover monitoring programs (working with SMBAS, Sea & Sage); expanded to Orange County
- Still looking for HQ location for chapter
- Closed their bookstore

San Fernando Valley Audubon

- Antelope Valley renewable energy projects
- Santa Susana field labs
- Chatsworth nature preserve
- Holiday lake Tricolored Blackbird project – SFVAS and Audubon CA are working with local water company to keep water in the lake and monitor population
- High speed rail project (Palmdale to Burbank route proposals)
- Bird LA Day (May 2nd)
- Birdiest county in the US; LA County birdathon; hoping to be at 275 species in a week
- Today is World Penguin Day

Laguna Hills Audubon

- Very small chapter
- Just had recent elections and they were successful in filling all board spots
- New VP and President; retained treasurer; filled 3 director positions
- Very excited about their new president, Lyne Jefferies
- Outgoing president is staying on board as well

Sea & Sage Audubon

- Conservation issues: toll road extension of 241 to San Clemente; won victory in that permits were denied; will be ongoing
- Esperanza (Yorba Linda): partial victory; OC board of supervisors deferred decision to Yorba Linda (good precedent)
- International Migratory Bird Day - used to have birdathon but have stopped it; now have 3rd Annual OC Spring Bird Count (goal to survey all of OC-800 sq miles);
- Snowy plover surveys/monitoring

- Monitor least tern colony at Huntington State Beach in conjunction with State Parks and Recreation
- Collaborations with other chapters: advertise Laguna Hills events, El dorado/Audubon CA collaborations on Los Cerritos wetlands plan
- SBVAS would like to produce tree trimming brochure that Sea & Sage created (Lori Meyers)
- What to do when a key members goes out?
 - o Developed a succession program that ensures that there is not a knowledge drop
 - o Each committee writing up list of typical responsibilities
 - o Trying to convert one person operations into real committees (vice chair for each committee)
- Now have a Dropbox for their docs
- Audubon CA next Board of Directors meeting is in June at Starr Ranch/San Joaquin Marsh
- As a result of Capacity Building workshops, chapter decided that they needed to focus on revising their strategic plan; have committee working on it; strat plan will be reviewed on an annual basis

Kerncrest Audubon

- Located in Ridgecrest
- Population is about 50,000 people in territory
- Kern River preserve
- Recently decreased the size of their board
- Sent letter with real newsletter to see who are active members (originally 50 responses); now have about 100 members
- 9 board members (retiring BLM staff member and young biologist on board now)
- Have been working on DRECP, Butterbredt Springs, Kern River Preserve
- Grant for restoration of Tricolored Blackbird habitat
- Filed comments on scoping phase of Weemo; may have to start over or possibly appeal through state
- Sand Canyon environmental education program (400-600 children per year); southern sierra canyon IBA

Santa Monica Bay Audubon

- New board member under 30 years old
- Have a Twitter, Facebook
- Snowy Plovers monitoring down in LA County expect for Huntington Beach
- Send money to Butterbredt Springs

- [Have grants/scholarship programs with local universities/schools](#)

1:20 pm RELOCATE TO SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA

We will carpool or take our own vehicles to the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. Directions from the meeting location are as follows: Drive south on Lake Perris Drive (hopefully the reverse of the way you came in) to the Ramona Expressway. Turn left (east) onto the Ramona Expressway and drive to Davis Road. Turn left (north) onto Davis Road.

1:30 pm TOUR OF DFW'S TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

Rose Cook will give us a tour of the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Tricolored Blackbird habitat restoration project at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

2:00 pm ADJOURN

2:15 pm POST-MEETING BIRD WALK AT SAN JACINTO VALLEY WILDLIFE AREA

Dave Goodward from San Bernardino Valley Audubon will lead a post meeting bird walk at the San Jacinto Valley Wildlife Area.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- 📅 **July 18, 2015** - SoCal Council Meeting (Need a Chapter to host the meeting)
- 📅 **October 17, 2015** - SoCal Council Meeting hosted by [Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon](#) at Madrona March (Details TBD)

Please let Travis (tabeyta@audubon.org) know if you are willing to host one of these upcoming meetings. Information for upcoming council meetings can be found on the Audubon CA website at <http://ca.audubon.org/southern-california-council>.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

Have you seen the updates we have made to the Audubon California website specifically for the Chapter Network in California? Please explore the links below and let us know what else might help your chapter.

We are constantly developing additional resources to help support your flock so stay tuned!

- ✎ [Southern California Council page](#)
- ✎ [California Chapter Resources](#)
- ✎ [Important California Issues & Policies](#)

Governance

Strat Planning

Fundraising

Leadership chapters will start leadership council