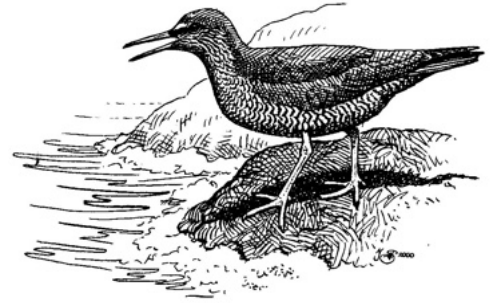


Wandering Tattler

October 2026
Volume 76, Number 2



The Voice of SEA AND SAGE AUDUBON, an Orange County Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Your Voice. Your Vote. Our Environment

Melissa Rapp, President

Advocacy is an important role that Sea and Sage plays. We work to understand changes to environmental protections so that we can better support birds, wildlife, and their habitats -- and then, within our guidelines as an organization, we speak up. The Conservation Committee's Legislation and Advocacy Committee, working with the direction of the Conservation Committee and input and assistance from the wider organization, monitors legislation and recommends when contacting legislators is needed.

Sea and Sage has sent representatives to several California events in recent months. On **California Ocean Day** in April, a coalition of coastal environmental groups sent delegates to Sacramento to meet with legislators to encourage them to support protection for our coastal resources. Our representatives were Hope Ludwig and Cassandra Margitan. The timing was especially poignant considering the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was conducting a formal evaluation of the California Coastal Program and the prospect that it may cut California's voice in decision-making about our own coastline.

In August, Gail Richards, Cassandra and I spoke in support of the Coastal Program and California Coastal Commission at a **NOAA public hearing**. During the same week, Sea and Sage sent representatives to the **Audubon California Advocacy Day** in Sacramento, including Hope Ludwig and Vic Leipzig. These Sea and Sage participants were able to meet in person with staff members of Orange County's elected legislators and to advocate for birds.

This November, voters will have an important proposition on the ballot. Sea and Sage recommends that you **Vote No on Proposition 45**, which would change the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to eliminate environmental review for a long list of projects, reducing the amount of environmental scrutiny and public review given to these projects.

Nature needs your vote!

General Meeting - Zoom Presentation Friday, October 16th - 7:00 PM

"Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary: Conservation in the Canyon"

Presented by Anthony LaSalle

Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary is a 4,000-acre wildlife sanctuary in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains in south Orange County. The mission of Starr Ranch is to offer innovative approaches to land management and environmental education that will influence the way Southern California citizens appreciate, conserve, and manage wildlands. Starr Ranch Sanctuary is unique in that the landscape has not been impacted by suburban development.

Starr Ranch has been owned and stewarded by the National Audubon Society since 1973. Research-based restoration has been underway since 1999 to restore the landscape to native coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and purple needlegrass grasslands.

Research, education, and land management at Starr Ranch were directed by Dr. Sandy DeSimone prior to her tragic passing earlier this year. Audubon California is working on her replacement.

Anthony LaSalle began his conservation career at Starr Ranch in the fall of 2024. Prior to joining Sandy DeSimone's restoration crew, Anthony earned his bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Vermont. He arrived at Starr Ranch with experience in non-chemical invasive plant management, climate change activism, organic farming, and more odd jobs than he can count or remember.

After completing two seasons of restoration work, he took on the role of Operations and Maintenance Technician, lending a hand to Pete DeSimone, who has been the Ranch Manager since 1988.

Meeting is by Zoom only and meeting doors will open 6:30 pm. Join us at 6:45 pm. for a Sea and Sage project highlight; meeting starts at 7:00 pm

Zoom meeting ID: 841 9842 3399

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84198423399>

Need help? Email Melissa Rapp at programs@seaandsage.org

Conservation News



Vote **No on Prop 45** – *Stop the Gutting of Environmental Review Process*

by Scott Thomas & Vic Leipzig

Prop 45 - Would Harm Wildlife and the Environment



Photo by Sandrine Biziaux-Scherson

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that harm to wildlife, including birds, water, air, and the climate, be disclosed, reduced, or avoided before harmful projects can be built in your community. CEQA gives citizens (you) a powerful voice in shaping the future of your communities, and the authors of Prop 45 want to take that away.

WHO OPPOSES PROP 45?

Sea and Sage Audubon Society has joined with over 350 Conservation, Environmental, Health, Labor, Justice, Faith Organizations, and the California Democratic Party in **Opposition to Prop 45**. The coalition includes partners and friends such as Orange County Coastkeeper, Surfrider, Bolsa Chica Land Trust, Endangered Habitats League, Hills for Everyone, California Native Plant Society, Coastal Protection Network, Sierra Club, Planning and Conservation League, and many others in the **No on PROP 45** Campaign



Photo by Trude Hurd

PROBLEMS WITH PROP 45

1. Prop 45 - Does Not Fix Housing

Environmental protection is not the cause of California's housing shortage. Numerous studies show that CEQA has had practically no impact on housing shortages. Other obvious market problems are really to blame for the housing shortage, and Prop 45 includes no language addressing housing costs. Weakening our laws and our voices will not improve housing.

2. Prop 45 - Stifles our Democratic Process and Public Participation, and Locks in Bad Policies

CEQA offers the public the opportunity to be involved in their communities. Prop 45 includes language to "lock itself in," so that the weakened CEQA cannot be amended or fixed in the future, and its flaws would remain in perpetuity.

3. Prop 45 - Would Allow Pollution

Prop 45 would streamline industrial and commercial developments such as data centers in urban locations. It would limit public input and diminish mitigations for environmental impacts, putting urban communities at risk and potentially causing hundreds of millions of dollars in environmental harm.

4. Prop 45 - Would Not Fix the Abuses of CEQA

CEQA has been abused by special interest groups not interested in conservation, and by business competitors not interested in the community's voice. Prop 45 does nothing to solve those problems.

5. Prop 45 - Would Weaken the Benefits We All Derive From Environmental Protection Laws

California's environmental laws have been tremendously successful in informing the public and protecting the environment for people and wildlife. Prop 45 is designed to weaken CEQA in a way that would simultaneously override other critically important laws, such as the California Clean Air Act and the California Endangered Species Act.

Conservation News

Susan Sheakley, Conservation Chair



Join us at our October Meetings

Meetings: Cons Com TU Oct 6 6:45; Tackling Climate & Trash TU Oct 20 4 (S Warrior); Bird Collisions W Oct 21 7 (H Ludwig); Leg & Advocacy SU 4:30 (V Leipzig); Coastal Issues TBA (S Thomas); '4th Tues' Program Oct 27 6:30

Contact us at conservation@seaandsage.org

'4th Tues.' Conservation Lecture

Tuesday, October 27th

Zoom Doors will open at 6:30 pm

***6:30 pm: 'Prop 45 Briefing'**

by Scott Thomas & Vic Leipzig

"Invasive Plants: Why Worry? What to Do About Them?"

Presented by Jutta Burger

Director of CA Invasive Plant Council

Invasive species are considered the next greatest threat - after habitat destruction - to native biodiversity. Increased recognition of the serious biodiversity impacts of invasive plants and outspoken local concerns have brought greater attention to this matter.

Join Jutta Burger, Cal-IPC's new executive director, for a brief overview of invasive plants, their origins and impacts and an update on what is being done at a statewide, regional, and local level to combat them. This presentation will include a description of integrated pest management (IPM) and how prevention, early detection, and a combination of tools and techniques can be used to address invasive plants, including examples from Orange County.

Jutta will share information on the free resources Cal-IPC has available to support land managers and the public with invasive plant issues and how Cal-IPC is working with partners to advocate at the state level for more consistent funding and refined strategy.

Jutta has had a career-long passion for conservation, ecology, and the effective management of invasive plants to reduce their impact on natural systems. Before joining Cal-IPC, Jutta served on the OC California Native Plant Society board and was director of science and

stewardship at the Irvine Ranch Conservancy.



CAPE
HONEYSUCKLE

"Native Plants After Tree of Life: They're Still Out There"

by Ron Vanderhoff, CA Native Plant Society, OC & Roger's Gardens

The closing of Tree of Life Nursery is a tremendous loss for Southern California gardeners. For decades we could make the pilgrimage to San Juan Capistrano, wander through an inspiring landscape, and choose from an extraordinary selection of California native plants. I doubt we will ever see another nursery quite like it.

But here's the good news: the plants are still out there. In fact, I am certain more California native plants are being grown and sold today than ever before.

Native plants are increasingly showing up at Armstrong, Green Thumb, Plant Depot, Roger's Gardens and a long list of other, sometimes small, local independent garden centers—often in surprising variety and quantities. Even the big home-improvement stores are carrying more native plants. Look around, ask questions, and if your local nursery doesn't have the native you want, ask if they can order it.

A great place to start your hunt is at Calscape.org, the California Native Plant Society's excellent online gardening resource. Enter your ZIP code and you can explore plants native to your area.



CLEVELAND SAGE

Tree of Life helped create today's enthusiasm for California native plants. Now we all carry that legacy forward. The plants are out there, more than ever, just not at one convenient stop. Go find them. Buy them. Plant them. And keep asking for more.

Advance Registration is required for this event and will be available by the 1st of October through our website www.seaandsageaudubon.org under the heading of "Conservation". **Please join us.**

Chapter News & Announcements



For more information about Sea & Sage activities, check the CALENDARS on our chapter webpage at seaandsageaudubon.org



Audubon House Volunteers

We would like to thank all of our Audubon House volunteers who staff Audubon House and keep it open to the public.

Our volunteers greet visitors, answer the phone, sell merchandise, answer questions about birds, check out binoculars, etc. If you are interested in helping at Audubon House, please contact our Audubon House Volunteer Coordinators at ahvolcoor@seaandsage.org.

Reading Group: Tues, 20. 1:00 – 2:30

Hurricane Lizards & Plastic Squid: The Fraught and Fascinating Biology of Climate Change – by Thor Hanson. Zoom link: info@seaandsage.org

Looking for a worthy project to sponsor?

Each year, we need donations to support Outdoor Adventures which is provided free for 40-50 classes of Santa Ana school children. School buses, supplies, and staff time are all important parts that make this an outstanding program.

- Student worksheets, student water quality test strips, and batteries for walkie-talkies (\$2,000).
- Naturalist manuals, name badges, and staff preparation for new naturalist training (\$2,000).
- Cleaning supplies, acrylic boxes, and staff time for annual taxidermy dusting of our collection (\$1,000).
- Donations of any amount gratefully accepted. Please send checks payable to *Sea and Sage Audubon* to Education, Sea and Sage Audubon, PO Box 5447, Irvine CA 92616. Thank you for your support!



Holiday Open House Sunday, Nov. 29th

Join us on Sunday, Nov. 29, for Sea & Sage Audubon's Holiday Open House! The Audubon House and Duck Club will come alive with holiday spirit as we gather for seasonal treats and beverages, holiday shopping, and time spent with friends old and new.

The Nature Store will be filled with unique, thoughtfully chosen gifts for the bird and nature lovers on your list — and perhaps a little something for yourself! Come browse our holiday selection, enjoy the festivities, and spend some time at the beautiful San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary. Details in the November Tattler.

Best of all, all proceeds benefit Sea & Sage Audubon and our mission. We hope you'll join us as we welcome back this special Sea & Sage holiday tradition!

Accessible Birding – Friday, Oct 9 at Irvine Regional Park – 9:00 am[®]

Join us for a Birding and Brunch outing at 9:00 am at Irvine Regional Park on Oct 9th. Doug Lithgow will be leading us on a 1-hour walk around the lake on a flat, paved path. After a morning of birding, we will have a bring-you-own brunch or lunch as we review the birds we saw. *Be sure to save the date!* You can register any time by emailing Sharon at srockwell@writeme.com.

Artzy Birders – Friday, Oct. 2 6-8 pm – Learning Center (Doors open at 5:40 pm)

Topic: BATS

Learn all about Southern CA local bat species. A knowledgeable speaker will provide an overview of bats in our area.

Oct. Project: BUTTON ART

Create simple, dimensional pieces with leftover or recycled buttons. Incorporate fall shapes like leaves, harvest moons, etc. or design your own shape. We'll glue them onto painted backgrounds for some fun fall art. Supplies: We will have supplies available, but participants are encouraged to bring buttons from their own supply if possible. Flat buttons in a variety of sizes some of the smaller spaces, and colors work best. Beads are also helpful for filling in spaces.



Sea & Sage Audubon PANCAKE BREAKFAST Saturday, October 31st 8:00 – 11:00 AM



On Saturday morning, Oct. 31st, we will host our 33rd Annual Pancake Breakfast at the **San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary in Irvine**. Our breakfast menu includes pancakes, sausages (including a plant based option), potatoes, fresh fruit, orange juice, hot coffee or tea, and milk for the kids, served from **8:00 to 10:30**. Dining is inside the historic Duck Club as well as at limited outdoor seating at the picnic tables. Be sure to pick up your meal tickets at the Welcome Table close to Audubon House.

IT'S NOT JUST PANCAKES!

Meet in front of Audubon House at 7:00 AM for a **Guided Bird Walk** or take a self-guided walk to the bird scope station. Shop at our popular **Used Book Sale Center** (big gray building). Be sure to visit **Audubon House** and the **Nature Store** for birding books, T-shirts, and gifts. Visit our **Chapter exhibits**. Stop by the **Wild Birds Unlimited** booth for bird seed and feeders. Check the **Optics4Birding** booth for the latest binoculars and birding scopes.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

7:30 – 11:00 AM— Welcome Table is open (Pick up your meal tickets.)

7:00 – 8:15 AM— Guided Bird Walk. Meet in front of Audubon House at 7:00.

8:00 –10:30 AM — Breakfast

8:00 –11:00 AM — Used Book Sale in the Learning Center (big gray building)

8:00 –11:00 AM — Chapter Exhibits, Wild Birds Unlimited and Optics4Birding

8:00 – 4:00 PM — Audubon House & Nature Store will be open all day.



GET YOUR TICKETS.— ADVANCED RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED!

Go to our website at seaandsageaudubon.org. Click on the “hamburger” — 3 small horizontal lines in the upper right corner of the page. Go to the EVENTS calendar & select Pancake Breakfast. Follow directions to register. The cost for tickets is \$15 for adults, \$10 for volunteers, \$8 for children 10 - 4 yrs, and free for children 3 yrs. and under. Ticket sales end on Oct. 29; earlier if sold out before that date. Due to limited parking, we cannot accommodate walk-ons.

HELP US REDUCE WASTE: To reduce waste and our carbon footprint, we will be using non disposable dinnerware (plates, silverware, cups, napkins, etc.) All food scraps will be placed in a compost bin. Leftover food will be delivered to a homeless shelter.



PARKING is very limited. When making your reservations, please indicate the number of vehicles needed for your party. Please carpool if possible. Those people who have mobility problems and need reserved parking closer to the Duck Club, contact nancy.kenyon@seaandsage.org. Nancy will also help if you have questions about this event or need assistance buying your tickets on Eventbrite.

Education News: Wayward Travelers

By Trude Hurd, Project Director of Education

Wayward Travelers

Big news at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary last August was the sighting of a juvenile **Purple Gallinule**. Seen every day for over three weeks, it was Orange County's very first record of a species common along the Gulf coast! The rail walked back and forth on its humungous feet in front of dozens of birders, wildlife photographers,



news channels, and others interested in the spectacle. While not showing adult purple, it was still pretty with iridescent green.

So what happened to bring this juvenile to California when it should have headed south for the winter? It reminded me of our county's first record of a **Snowy Owl** in 2022-23. That was even more of a spectacle as hundreds flocked to a Cypress residential area to witness a large white owl with heavily barred markings that was over 3,000 miles south of its typical habitat in the Arctic tundra. Were you there? I remember seeing California birding expert Jon Dunn standing next to a little girl clutching a Snowy Owl plushie. That's the kind of appeal owls have!

First seen in December, the Snowy Owl stayed a month, sleeping on roofs of houses during the day and then flying off around sunset heading west to presumably hunt at nearby Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station.



Examination of castings showed it was eating regularly on rodents, gophers, and even an American Coot. So it was healthy although it panted heavily in our winter heat.

Why was it here in Orange County? Denver Holt, founder of The Owl Research Institute in Montana, came to give an Owl Talk to the community. He thought it was probably a female born in June, and "most young owls are left on their own by their parents in about September and are programmed to migrate". One of migration's miracles is that many young birds are

expected to migrate correctly without adult guidance. We wondered if the owl would return in subsequent years, but it did not.



Compare this to the **Ruff**, a rare shorebird from Northern Eurasia that took a wrong turn south and ended up in a small section of the Santa Ana River

instead of Africa. After that, this individual has returned in late summer every year for at least 14 years! Did it make the news? Did hundreds flock to see it? They would have if it was a male in breeding plumage. But alas, without outlandish head tufts and neck ruffs, it is welcomed back only by birders as it feeds alongside other shorebirds before heading...I wonder where it goes next?

Sometimes many years go by between sightings of a rare species. Like the **Roseate Spoonbill**, typically found along the Gulf coast, that was seen in 1977 at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary and then again in 2018 along the Santa Ana River. Eager to add it to my life list, I invited a wildlife photographer friend to help me "chase" the 2018 spoonbill...and we found it.



Save the Date: Saturday November 7 Discover Hummingbirds at the marsh

If you love Hummingbirds, and who doesn't, mark your calendar for November 7 for a free, family friendly event all about hummingbirds. Activities may be a scavenger hunt, read-aloud, short talks about hummingbird antics, and short walks in the Pollinators Garden to discover how to attract hummingbirds to your yard. More information in November Wandering Tattler and on our website.

Orange County Rarities

by Samuel Bressler



To report a RARE or UNUSUAL bird, or to receive reports from other birders about rare or unusual bird sightings here in Orange County, send an email to: OrangeCountyBirding+subscribe@groups.io

It was a slow August for both songbirds and shorebirds in August, as most of the vagrant action occurred offshore, where this year's El Niño brought a wide variety of tropical birds to nearshore Orange County waters. The brave of heart and strong of stomach are encouraged to take to boats and vessels to see what other notable vagrant seabirds might turn up.

White-winged Doves were in Laguna Beach, August 15; San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary, August 24; and Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, August 25. The bird of the month, which received local and national attention well-beyond the birding community, was Orange County's first, and California's eighth record of a **Purple Gallinule**, a juvenile which was first seen August 13 and continued through the end of the month. The continuing **American Oystercatcher** at Dana Point was last seen on August 29. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was along the upper Santa Ana River, August 24, while two **Baird's Sandpipers** were at Irvine Lake on August 30. Orange County's favorite **Ruff** returned for its thirteenth(!!!) consecutive year to its favorite spot along the Upper Santa Ana River from August 7 through the end of the month. There are very capable birders younger than this bird!



Purple Gallinule – photo by T. Hurd

It was a memorable month for tubenoses and other seabirds in the county. A **Guadalupe Murrelet** off Newport Beach on August 1 was Orange County's first county record. **Sabine's Gulls** were seen offshore on August 3, 22, and 29, while pairs of **Black Terns** were observed at Anaheim Coves Park and Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve on August 21-28. Up to three **Common Terns** were at Bolsa Chica Ecological reserve, August 17 through the end of the month, while two **Arctic Terns** were seen offshore on August 29.

Multiple **Northern Fulmars** were seen offshore on August 1-20, but the real tubenose action this month was amongst storm-petrels. On the August 29 offshore pelagic trip, at least seven **Least Storm-Petrels**, several dozen **Leach's Storm-Petrels**, and up to four Townsend's Storm-Petrels (Orange County's second through sixth records). Most remarkable however was the El Niño-induced incursion of five booby species into Orange County records. **Cocos Boobies**, our most expected species, were seen on several whale watching and pelagic trips, including a high count of three on August 5, while a **Masked Booby** was seen at Newport Pier on August 26. Additional boobies seen offshore included **Red-footed Booby** on August 2, **Nazca Booby** on August 2 and 27, and a **Blue-footed Booby** on August 3.

Neotropic Cormorants continued at many of their usual haunts in August, though one at Upper Oso Reservoir, August 30, was notable. The summering **Little Blue Heron** continued through the end of the month.

By contrast, August was generally a slow month for songbird movement. The most notable vagrant was a **Greater Pewee**, Orange County's sixth record, at Huntington Central Park, August 29-30. Up to two **Bank Swallows** were at San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary on August 15-31, at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve on August 20, and at Irvine Lake on August 23. **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary on August 16 and at the Upper Santa Ana River August 23-30. A **Green-tailed Towhee** at Anaheim Coves Park, August 21, was a remarkably early migrant. A **Black-throated Sparrow** was at Irvine Lake, August 30, as was a **Brewer's Sparrow** at La Bonita Park in La Habra, August 12. The only vagrant warbler observed during this period was an **American Redstart** at Huntington Central Park, August 22. The summering **Summer Tanager** continued at Mile Square Regional Park through the end of the month, while an additional bird was at Turtle Rock Community Park, August 17.

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Treasurer... treasurer@seaandsage.org
Director 2027... director27@seaandsage.org
Director 2027... director27@seaandsage.org
Director 2028... director28@seaandsage.org
Director 2028... director28@seaandsage.org
Director 2029... director29@seaandsage.org
Director 2029... director29@seaandsage.org

Committee Chairpersons:

Accessible Birding... accessible.birding@seaandsage.org
Archives & Records... archives.records@seaandsage.org
Audubon House... audubonhouse@seaandsage.org
Audubon House Vol Coord... ahvolcoor@seaandsage.org
Bird Information... birdinformation@seaandsage.org
Bird Surveys... bird.surveys@seaandsage.org
By Laws & Related Documents... by.laws@seaandsage.org
Community Connections... connections@seaandsage.org
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Newsletter Editor... newsletter.editor@seaandsage.org
Programs... programs@seaandsage.org
Raptor Research... raptor.research@seaandsage.org
Research Grants... grants@seaandsage.org
Science... science@seaandsage.org
SJWS Liaison... sjws.liaison@seaandsage.org
Social Media... social.media@seaandsage.org
Webmaster... webmaster@seaandsage.org
Webpage: www.seaandsageaudubon.org

STAFF

AUDUBON HOUSE **949-261-7963**

Marsh Education Project Director... educationdirector@seaandsage.org
Education Assistant... education.assistant@seaandsage.org
Nature Store... naturestore@seaandsage.org
Administrative Aide... admin.aide@seaandsage.org

OTHER CONTACTS

Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center – for injured or sick birds and other native wild animals in need of help (corner of Newland & PCH in HB) 714-374-5587. <http://www.wccoc.org/>

October 2026:

02	Fri	Artzy Birders ...	6:00 pm
03	Sat	Fall Pelagic Trip out of Dana Point (\$)	6:30 am
06	Tues	Fall Birding Skills Workshop begins today	9:00 am
06	Tues	Conservation Com Mtg via Zoom..	6:45 pm
09	Fri	Accessible Birding at Irvine Reg. Park ®	9:00 am
11	Sun	SJWS bird walk ®	8:00 am
13	Tues	Quail Hill Open Space Preserve bird walk.....	7:00 am
13	Tues	Board Meeting via Zoom	7:00 pm
15	Thurs	Dana Point Harbor bird walk (P)	8:00 am
16	Fri	GENERAL MEETING via Zoom.....	7:00 pm
18	Sun	Anaheim Coves bird walk	8:00 am
21	Wed	UNB by pontoon boat (\$)	8:15 am
25	Sun	Upper Newport Bay bird walk ®	8:00 am
27	Tues	4 th Tues Conservation Lecture.....	7:00 pm
31	Sat	PANCAKE BREAKFAST ®	8:00 am

November 2026:

03	Tues	Conservation Com Mtg via Zoom..	6:45 pm
06	Fri	Artzy Birders ...	6:00 pm
08	Sun	SJWS bird walk ®	8:00 am
10	Tues	Board Meeting via Zoom	7:00 pm
15	Sun	Carbon Canyon bird walk.....	8:00 am
18	Wed	UNB by pontoon boat (\$)	8:15 am
19	Thurs	Bolsa Chica bird walk.....	8:00 am
20	Fri	GENERAL MEETING via Zoom.....	7:00 pm
24	Tues	4 th Tues Conservation Lecture.....	7:00 pm
29	Sun	Upper Newport Bay bird walk ®	8:00 am
29	Sun	Holiday Open House.....	