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## Editor's note: KEEP THE DATE!

Our annual Conservation Dinner will be March 16, 2017. Join us as we honor Bob Henderson and his many years of dedication to Whittier and its environmental causes. Check our website for ticket info. *Jennifer Schmahl*

## Salton Sea and the State of California: Making the Water Work

**Located** about 130 miles east of San Diego, the Salton Sea is a study in contradictions. It is massive, yet practically unknown to most Californians. The landscape is barren and apocalyptic, but full of life. It is natural, but man-made. The environment puts birds at risk, but it is also vital for their survival.

**More** than 300 bird species rely on the deep water, shoreline, mudflats, and wetlands at the Salton Sea, as well as the river channels and agricultural drains leading into it. Tilapia live in the deeper waters, providing essential food for many species, including California Brown Pelican, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Caspian Tern.

**Perhaps** the sea's greatest value for birds is its ability to support very large numbers of waterbirds during the winter months, including up to 90% of North America's Eared Grebes, 50% of Ruddy Ducks, and 30% of the American White Pelicans. The mudflats and shorelines are also essential for hundreds of thousands of shorebirds. The Salton Sea has hosted two Christmas Bird Counts for decades, and the lake draws thousands to birding festivals and other events.

**Beginning** in 2018, thanks to a 2003 agreement between the State of California and Southern California water districts, the Salton Sea will get a lot less water from the Colorado River, eventually up to 40 percent less. The shrinking sea will also expose up to 64,000 acres of the lakebed and result in massive dust storms that could create the worst air pollution crisis in North America. Tens of thousands of acres of habitat will disappear.

The State of California hasn't fulfilled its promise to pay for habitat restoration and dust mitigation in advance of the 2018 deadline. But in the last year, the state named an assistant secretary for Salton Sea policy to build stakeholder support for a new management plan for the sea. Gov. Jerry Brown included \$80 million in his budget for Salton Sea restoration.

Audubon California and a number of other conservation groups believe that now is a rare opportunity.

"**There's** just no way that you can talk about doing flyway-level bird conservation in California and not throw your weight into finding a solution at the Salton Sea," said Audubon California Executive Director Brigid McCormack. "The challenges are daunting, but there hasn't been a better time to make real progress than right now."

**Audubon** California is fully participating in the state process, offering testimony before the State Water Resources Control Board and the many subcommittees created as part of the management planning process. Audubon California is also working with Point Blue Conservation Science to provide the state with detailed habitat map and develop a monitoring program to measure change in the sea to bird populations.

"**Ultimately**, the state of California is going to need to make a substantial, sustained investment in restoring the Salton Sea," McCormack said. "Our engagement now will help ensure this is done right—that critical bird habitat is protected, and the toxic dust no longer threatens local communities."



## Audubon

We are a chapter of National Audubon

## KIDS SPACE

**Why should a kid become a birder? From Kid Birders themselves:**

**10. There are so many birds!** There are more than 9,000 bird species in the world. They come in all shapes and sizes. Some are small, like hummingbirds, and some are big like hawks and eagles. Some, such as tanagers from South America, are brightly

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colored; others are dull—like gulls off the coast of Australia.

**9. Birds are all around us!** Everywhere you look, you can find birds. Whether you are taking a car trip or just out in the local park, there are birds in the sky and in the tree. The cool thing is that wherever you go, you can see new birds that replace the ones you saw in another area.

**8. It is an excuse to get outside!** When you are outside, you can find new places wherever you look. Therefore, there are practically infinite places to go. After you have been outside birding for a while, whether it is just for a walk or for a serious bird study, you will start to notice things you have never seen before.

**7. Once you look at birds for a while, you start to see details in the birds you are looking at.** Noticing detail is important in all aspects of life. In bird watching, this skill helps you see small field-marks are hard to see. You can also draw birds better if you can pay attention to detail.

**6. Kids that go birding have an excellent understanding and appreciation of the environment.** By learning about conservation at an early age through something fun and informative, they become environmentally aware, and this characteristic stays with them their entire lives.

**5. Birding is a fun and interesting activity that**

**promotes ecological research and protection.**

Getting involved in birding can lead to interesting and prestigious future careers in ecology, biology, and/or natural history.

**4. Birding has something for everybody.**

Writing, math, physical activity, and of course science are vital to the birding experience. Therefore, birding helps kids develop and improve these skills as well as allowing them to enjoy them.

**3. Birding is a very enjoyable pastime.**

It combines hiking, mind games, and science. Nothing compares to the thrill of glimpsing a colorful bird and flipping hastily through your field guide to identify it. It does not take long for a young birder to accumulate an incredible life list of exciting and extremely varied bird species.

**2. When you become a serious bird watcher, you will want to see new birds that will not show up in your backyard.**

Once you get to this point, you will want to travel. If you travel, you get to see places all around the world that you may not get to see otherwise. If you are not able to travel to these places, you can still enjoy their beauty through books and in your own backyard!

**1. Birding allows kids to connect with their family and friends.**

This pastime involves much socializing and talking, and birders gain more knowledge from other

practitioners the more they participate in birding activities.

**FIELD TRIP NOTES:**

November 19<sup>th</sup> Jay Oberholtzer led the chapter field trip.

**Mailing address:**

Whittier Area Audubon  
PO Box 548  
Whittier, CA 90608-0548

**Field Trip Schedule:**

**8:00am Sycamore Canyon Beginning Bird Walks**, meet at the Sycamore Canyon Trailhead. Every second Saturday of the month (except July and August, rain or recent cancels). The trail is located adjacent to Rose Hills Cemetery gate 17, but note that the trail is not in the cemetery! The entrance to Sycamore Canyon is a driveway just southwest of the entrance to the cemetery. **Al Moreno and Linda LeRoy lead.**

**Saturday, December 17 Bulmer Bird Walk Whittier Narrows Nature Center** Please join us as **Whittier Area Audubon Society President, Chris Huber, leads us on our annual Bulmer Birdwalk (formerly known as the Bill Bell Birdwalk). This walk is in honor of Tim and Lloyd Bulmer who were long time leaders of Whittier Area Audubon.**

We will bird the Nature Center grounds and along the San Gabriel River to see what Winter residents and visitors

are here. Meet at the Whittier Narrows Nature Center parking lot at 8:00 am. Refreshments to follow in the picnic shelter near the parking lot at the conclusion of the walk. Whittier Narrows Nature Center, 1000 N. Durfee Ave., South El Monte

**General Meeting for December**

Vic Leipzig, President of Sea and Sage Audubon and Chapter Representative for California Audubon will present a talk on the Salton Sea

The Whittier Area Audubon Society meets on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at the Whittier Community Center, 7630 Washington Avenue, Whittier, California. (*not be confused with Washington Blvd.*), on the corner of Mar Vista St. and Washington Ave., in the City of Whittier. Meetings start at 7:30 pm

**Admission is free and light refreshments will be served**

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Linda Oberholtzer assists Sea and Sage Audubon in their Christmas Bird Count, which takes place December 18<sup>th</sup>. Contact Linda if you can help out.