



THE OBSERVER

WHITTIER AREA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Visit our website www.whittieraudubon.org

As of writing this month's newsletter, our chapter is still uncertain about our ability to lead our Beginning Bird Walks in Sycamore Canyon at our usual early start time. The Habitat Authority is planning to limit public access hours at all entrance points to control the number of daily trips inside the property. It seems we are loving it to death.

What this really says is that we have left ourselves too little wilderness here in Southern California. Coincidentally, a deal was reached between the Center for Biological Diversity and several developers wanting to build in Tejon and Newhall Ranches. It remains to be seen if the deal saves enough wilderness for human needs, let alone Wildlife's needs. *Jennifer Schmahl*

From National Audubon: Hurricane Updates:

Response efforts for Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma are underway and while the impact of these devastating storms is still unfolding, it's clear there is a lot of work to be done over the coming months and years. With our deep conservation roots in Texas and Florida, Audubon is committed to both informing the process and carrying out the rebuilding efforts. The Audubon Gulf team is hard at work making impact assessments and Houston Audubon continues their recovery repair work with upcoming workdays at several locations. To the east, the Audubon Florida team is working on assessing the impact of Hurricane Irma and has just shared this terrible news – All Endangered Everglade Snail Kites Nests Lost on Florida's Lake Okeechobee, which is why the fight for improved habitat for Everglade Snail Kites must continue. We send our best wishes to everyone in Texas and Florida as they manage their daily lives in the aftermath of these storms. Our thoughts are also with our international partners and communities in Puerto Rico and across the Caribbean as Hurricane Maria passes through. We will keep you posted with the impacts.



Audubon

We are a chapter of National Audubon

KIDS SPACE

Are you a teacher, administrator, teaching coach that can find teachers that would like to add Audubon Adventures to a classroom, afterschool or out of school program? Let us know!

This year *Audubon Adventures* puts the spotlight on the amazing variety within the world of birds, on all kinds of owls, and on long-legged wading birds like cranes, egrets, herons, and storks. For young people, learning about birds means learning about how all living things are connected to and affected by the other organisms—other animals, plants, and human beings—they share their habitats with.

General Meeting for October 19

Craig Hover will give a presentation at the Whittier Area Audubon, "Solving the Global Warming Problem"

Hover is a retired engineer. He believes that aggressive development of renewable energy sources is necessary for us to successfully meet the challenges of today's national and global environment.

He is the author of the book, "A World to Come Home to. Ending Global Warming in our Lifetime."

- **Editor's note: Humans in the Wild**
- **Hurricanes Updates**
- **Kids Space: New Audubon Adventures**
- **General meeting info**
- **Field trip schedules**
- **Where do birds go during migration?**

Copies of the book will be for sale at the meeting.

Thursday, October 19, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at the Whittier Community Center, 7630 Washington Ave., Whittier, CA. 90602. The Whittier Community Center is located on the corner of Mar Vista St. and Washington Ave.

(not to be confused with Washington Blvd., next to a softball field and across the street from the Whittier Public Library Central branch.

The meeting is free to the public and light refreshments will be served.

Mailing address:

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

Field Trip Schedule:

October 14, 2017 7:00am Sycamore Canyon Beginning Bird Walks, meet at the Sycamore Canyon Trailhead. Pending future governmental action, we may have to change location or time. Please check our website for updates.

Every second Saturday of the month (except July and August, rain or recent rain cancels). The trail is located adjacent to Rose Hills Cemetery gate 17. **Linda Oberholtzer leads.**

Saturday October 21st, 2017 Birding Prado Dam

Steve Huber leads

Migration is happening. Join us as we see what's stopping at Prado Regional Park, San Bernardino County. Entrance fee \$10/car. Bring lunch and plenty of water. We will leave the Community Center parking lot at 7:00 am. We should be back in Whittier between 2:00 and 3:00.

Tiny Warbler Leaves South America, Turns Up Outside The Cornell Lab Weeks Later Where do our feathered friends go from here?

By Max Witynski FROM:
www.allaboutbirds.org

August 14, 2017

On June 24, 2017, researchers from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, caught a Yellow Warbler in their nets. As they prepared to put an identifying band on the bird's leg, they noticed something very unusual: the bird already had one.

The warbler was a breeding male that had been momentarily interrupted from defending his territory among the short willow trees lining a nearby pond. The last time he'd been caught, just 2 months earlier, he had been fattening up for spring migration—2,300 miles away in northern Colombia, South America. What were the chances of flying one-third of the distance between the equator and the North Pole only to fall into the hands of ornithologists once again?

The chances are, in fact, very small, which meant that the researchers (perhaps unlike the bird) were ecstatic. Catching a previously banded bird is almost like winning the lottery—it happens so rarely. This band recovery was the first between North and South

America for a Yellow Warbler, despite the fact that more than 130,000 of them have been banded in northeastern North America alone in the last few decades.

The researchers who made this find—David Chang van Oordt, Jenny Uehling, and Teresa Pegan—were ornithology students, like me. Thus I understood the excitement they felt as they held the tiny band in the light and read the numbers printed on it: AA5055. That's not a sequence used in the U.S., so they immediately knew the bird had been banded in a different country. With a bit of research, they learned the Yellow Warbler had previously been banded on April 13, 2017, at Finca Las Palmeras, Colombia, by a bird study group called [SELVA](#). The group's records showed that in April, this adult male had lots of fat stored along his breastbone (indicating he was in prime shape for a long migration) and weighed 12.6 g. When captured in New York, he weighed just 10 g. He had lost at least 20% of his body mass during migration.

Having studied Yellow Warbler migration as a Cornell undergraduate myself, I was particularly fascinated by AA5055's example. The distance he had travelled, and the proportionally enormous change in his body mass as a result, clearly showed just how physically demanding it is to migrate. And yet billions of birds go through trials like AA5055's every year.

Until recently, no one knew quite where Yellow Warblers from specific populations spent the winter. However, over the past 2 years, I developed a project (which became my undergraduate thesis) that tracked Yellow Warblers between North and South America for the first time. We fitted warblers with tiny devices called geolocators that allowed us to determine where the birds had traveled.

These devices are revolutionizing what scientists know about migration—and our study of Maine and Wisconsin warblers was no exception. Our Maine birds spent the winter in northern Colombia, while Yellow Warblers from

Wisconsin went farther east, to Venezuela. In most species, it's assumed that eastern and western populations migrate parallel to one another, but these birds' routes crossed over, and the Wisconsin birds ended up wintering east of the Maine birds, which was surprising.

Our geocator results also helped me imagine the details of AA5055's impressive journey between Colombia and New York. The birds we tracked on fall migration traveled about 55 miles per day on average, although on some days they moved much faster, traveling as far as 300 miles toward destinations more than 2,000 miles away. The tagged birds didn't fly in a straight line; they flew circuitous routes that kept them over land as much as possible. On their way south, they visited the forests and coastlines of Florida, Cuba, and the Yucatán Peninsula before swinging east all the way through Central America to their wintering sites in South America.

Spring migration is usually even faster than fall migration as birds race back to get a jump on the breeding season. AA5055's entire 2,300-mile migration probably took him less than 3 weeks, and likely took him across the Gulf of Mexico in one hop. He faced obstacles as diverse as storms, skyscrapers, cats, and starvation, but somehow he made the journey between the two points in good enough shape to carry on with his life and give a momentary thrill (and some priceless data) to a few biologists. Yellow Warblers live up to 11 years, so in all likelihood AA5055 will make his marathon trip between Colombia and New York a few more times yet—whether anyone catches him again or not.

Max Witynski ('17) majored in Biology and Society at Cornell University. He now lives in Madison, Wisconsin.