



# THE OBSERVER

Volume 81, Issue 7, April 2023

## Whittier Area Audubon Society

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We are a chapter of National Audubon Society



# Audubon

Join us in Sycamore Canyon for our Beginning Bird Walks! The entrance is on Workman Mill Rd. just south of Rose Hills Gate 17. Be prompt as we are required to lock the gate behind us. Leader: Jay Oberholtzer

- **General Meeting: Habitat Authority**
- **Bird Walk:: Sycamore Canyon 4/8 , 7am**
- **Field trip: Bear Divide**

## Bear Divide Field Trip March 18, 2023

Bear Divide is a low, narrow, pass or saddle within the San Gabriel Mountains just above Soledad Canyon. It is home to amazing morning flights of migrating birds in the spring from March through May with the height of migration usually towards the end of April. Thousands of migrating birds have been known to funnel over the narrow divide daily, sometimes so close an observer feels the need to duck or dodge. The Moore Lab of Zoology at Occidental College runs a regular count to quantify the numbers and identities of birds migrating through Bear Divide. As this is on public lands, the public is welcome to watch and participate. By 9 or 10 AM, the show is usually over. Clear days after a storm front are best, fog or winds in the wrong direction tend to shut migration down through. Our field trip is timed to hopefully experience spectacle at the height of north bound migration. Be prepared for anything. Cold, wind, rain, heat. No need for a lunch as we will be done before then.

**Meet: We will leave from the Whittier Community Center at 5:30 a.m.** We will caravan up there. Carpool is you can. Trip Leader: Larry Schmahl

## MARCH TRIP REPORT

Jay Oberholtzer  
WAAS Field Trip March 18, 2023:  
San Elijo Lagoon

be of interest to Preserve supporters, and we'd like to hear from Audubon members about their priorities for the Puente Hills.

Andrea Gullo is the Executive Director for the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority and has over

25 years of experience in natural land management. She was staff for the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, and California State Parks before joining the Habitat Authority. She has served on the Board of Directors for various local and national nonprofit organizations. She holds a masters degree in Urban Planning from UCLA.

As is our recent practice, this will be a Hybrid Program online and in person at the Whittier Community Center, located at 7630 Washington Ave. Whittier. Wearing a mask is optional. The program is free and open to the public.

Visit our website or contact [web@whittieraudubon.org](mailto:web@whittieraudubon.org) for a link to the online meeting.

### Mailing Address:

Whittier Area Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 548  
Whittier, CA 90608-0548

## April Field Trips

### Beginning Bird Walk, Sycamore Canyon

Every second Saturday of the month (except July and August,) April 8, 2023, 8:00am

Visit our website  
[www.whittieraudubon.org](http://www.whittieraudubon.org)

### Election of Board Officers

At the May General Meeting, all Members that have current dues paid are eligible to vote for next year's officers. Slate:

President	Jay Oberholtzer
1 <sup>st</sup> VP	Steve Huber
2 <sup>nd</sup> VP	Linda Oberholtzer
Treasurer	Kathleen Barry
Recording Sec	Jim McNamara
Corresponding Sec	Larry Schmahl

## GENERAL MEETING

[www.whittieraudubon.org](http://www.whittieraudubon.org)

## April Program

Thursday, April 20, 2023  
7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

### Habitat Authority Happenings

During this presentation, Habitat Authority staff will provide updates on current projects currently underway on the Preserve and also share information on other endeavors, in particular a special funding mechanism because the Habitat Authority currently faces a declining budget. These topics may



Due to weather and road conditions we did not go to San Jacinto as planned. Instead, we went to the San Elijo Ecological Reserve. The San Elijo Ecological Reserve is situated between Solana Beach and Cardiff-By-The-Sea. It serves as the primary drainage for Escondido Creek. It is a wonderful wetland graced by a meandering creek and well-maintained trails.

That morning we were greeted with clear blue sky and bright sunshine, a welcome change from what felt like nonstop rain and cloudy days.

Waterfowl, peeps and shorebirds were all plentiful. Song Sparrows perched every few feet, claiming their territory.

All you had to do was hold your binoculars to your eyes. For example, several Marsh Wrens were singing, out of sight, in the vegetation. Suddenly one popped out into open, picked a very conspicuous perch and started singing. There was always something to see.



The day was a perfect day with near perfect weather. By the time we finished walking the trails around the inlet, it was time for lunch. It was a great morning. I can't say that we had any unusual sightings. But it was such a nice, relaxing, day that everything seemed special.



### CONSERVATION NEWS

**Our Special Emissary to the Army Corps of Engineers dealing with the Whittier Narrows Dam Modification project, Dr. Kathleen Barry, has submitted her latest comments on our Chapter's behalf.**

" Some of our greatest apprehensions relate to the "Borrow Site" at the Santa Fe Dam that the ACE plans to use to increase the grade with the dam modification area in Whittier Narrows. This borrow site is located in Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat and is as critical as the California Gnatcatcher and Bell's Least Vireo habitats in Whittier Narrows. . The Borrow Area overlaps with 180.69 acres of flycatcher critical habitat. The area also supports one of the few remaining stands of the unique alluvial fan scrub vegetation, which is distinctly different from riparian woodlands or coastal sage scrub. The resident Cactus Wren depends on this unique habitat."

Be assured that Dr. Barry is in contact with the local Corps folks and their biologist.

### San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society

#### Requests support from SoCal Audubon Chapters

**PROBLEM** A bald eagle nest is on National Forest land in the Fawnskin area of Big Bear Lake. But key roosting & foraging habitat is on high-market-value private land slated for development. If the land is developed, the eagles are liable to abandon the area.

**SOLUTION** The Forest Service would like to buy the land (called Moon Camp), and the owner is willing to sell. There's a federal program to provide \$\$\$ for the USFS (and National Parks) to buy land: It's the LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF), budgeted at \$900 million each year.

**CHALLENGE** ...to persuade Senator Feinstein to allocate \$10 million of the LWCF budget for Moon Camp. Senator Feinstein is on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees LWCF

**Our Audubon Chapter is writing in support of a U.S. Forest Service acquisition of the 62-acre Moon Camp property in Big Bear Lake, using the Land & Water Conservation Fund program.**

Protecting the year-round pair of nesting bald eagles in the San Bernardino National Forest is a major concern. A 24-hour nest camera lets the world watch the birth of new hatchlings each year. While the nest is on National Forest land, the critical roosting and shoreline foraging habitat is on private land threatened by urban development. These eagles, known by millions of children as Jackie and Shadow, are examples of the true majesty and inspiration of nature. Nowhere else in urban southern California is the grandness of nature so fully accessible

to the public than in the versatile San Bernardino National Forest. The SBNF is the unsung hero of all US public lands, insofar as it serves the largest and closest population of all.

We're immensely grateful to this forest for the exceptional sanctuary it provides to all birds and wildlife along with its great scenic and recreational qualities too. As a special treasure in the midst of the whole forest, the north shore of Big Bear Lake is a particular highlight that requires Moon Camp's protection as the final capstone of this priceless asset. As the south shore has gotten overbuilt, it is even more imperative to fully secure the north shore. That means rescuing the Moon Camp site as a Forest Service LWCF acquisition. As the last critical piece of lakeshore, it ought not be sacrificed to urban development. Big Bear was once home to over two dozen wintering bald eagles, but loss of south shore habitat has now reduced that number to six. The north shore is one the most inspirational forest surroundings to be found in Southern California, home to world renowned eagles and major sightseeing and recreational destination for this region's enormous population.



Long term protection of the nesting bald eagles depends on the acquisition of Moon Camp. So too does saving the scenic character of Big Bear Lake's north shore. The Moon Camp property is also habitat for the California spotted owl and San Bernardino flying squirrel along with rare (pebble plain) plant species found only in Big Bear. This acquisition will ensure that vital wildlife, watershed, scenic qualities of the lake and the Forest Service's full management capability take precedence over a detrimental housing development. For these reasons we strongly support an LWCF purchase of Moon Camp's 62 acres of lake frontage, open space and eagle habitat.