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Editor's note: KEEP THE DATE!

Our annual Conservation Dinner will be March 16, 2017. We will have more information about our honoree and the dinner details in next month's newsletter. *Jennifer Schmahl*

The Nature Conservancy: Science and Market-based Solutions

BirdReturns, offered by The Nature Conservancy in partnership with the California Rice Commission, provides an opportunity for growers to receive compensation for providing essential habitat for migratory birds on their productive rice fields.

California's Central Valley hosts millions of ducks, geese, swans and shorebirds each winter as a critical link in the Pacific Flyway. Their trek takes them from lands with virtually pristine conditions, down to California, where less than 5 percent of the historic wetland habitat remains. Despite habitat loss, California's Central Valley still supports 60 percent of the ducks and geese, and 30 percent of the shorebirds on the entire Pacific Flyway. Serving as a critical wintering spot, California is the linchpin of the Pacific Flyway. With 95% of historical wetlands habitat converted to agriculture and other land uses, TNC's goal is to ensure that sufficient habitat is available in the Central Valley each winter by working with farmers on private agricultural land.

Over the past several years, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the California Rice Commission (CRC), Audubon California, Point Blue Conservation Science and TNC have been working to develop the Waterbirds Habitat Enhancement Program (WHEP), which incentivizes the adoption of bird-friendly farming practices using public funds provided under the Farm Bill. Though WHEP is separate and unaffiliated with this program, the continued success of WHEP is a core component of TNC's approach to effectively partnering with the rice industry. In that context, this program is an opportunity to bring private funds to further incentivize bird-friendly farming. By working closely with the CRC, TNC has developed the BirdReturns program which incentivizes bird habitat creation when and where it is needed most, utilizing the latest in precision science tools and a competitive bidding system.

Ricelands provide essential migratory bird habitat. While the number of birds on the flyway has sharply declined, globally significant concentrations of waterbirds endure because birds have adapted to use farmlands to supplement their limited natural habitat. Because bird-friendly farmlands are threatened by a multitude of development and land-use pressures, we are working with farmers to align their interests in a long-term agricultural future with TNC's interest in providing wintering grounds for migratory birds. Many rice growers are already excellent stewards of the land, providing some of the most important and highest quality surrogate habitat for birds. Rice production uses many practices that support bird habitat, such as winter-flooding for decomposition. With some additional effort, the value of ricelands for migratory birds can be enhanced. TNC hopes to help incentivize these activities.

Scientific analysis shows where, when and what habitat is needed. Shorebirds typically depend on shallower water than waterfowl and other waterbirds, between 2

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Audubon

We are a chapter of National Audubon

KIDS SPACE

How Birdwatching Can Help Kids Learning About Math

Just a simple and entertaining activity can help school-age children to develop their STEM skills

Next time your child has a hard time solving equations, take them for a walk in the park and don't forget those binoculars. Don't believe a little birdwatching session can help a child get their homework done? Think again. A

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simple, yet fun time out can actually have tons of benefits for elementary school students in all STEM—Science, Technology, Engineering and Math—areas. Here are five of them.

Counting as a warm up. When students observe birds, they don't have to only enjoy their cute colors. You can also encourage them to count and estimate bird populations right in your local neighborhood, which also happens to be the birds' habitats.

Scientific method 101. Why is this bird here? Why is it eating that? So many things to wonder about! By watching birds, young students make their imaginations fly, which can also translate into making inferences and using the scientific method to solve problems.

Geometry, anyone? Birdwatching gives kids the opportunity to create models of birds, focusing on wing, tail and body shapes, while learning more about them. This is also a boost for any child with artistic skills, too!

Biology lesson. A stroll outdoors is also useful for kids to learn the scientific foundations of bird anatomy, their behavior and the way they adapt to make survival possible.

Fact-based experiences. The basis of all science is data. With birdwatching, students learn how to collect and analyze real-time data, which can later be used to make their own hypotheses and assumptions.

Happy birding and math learning

Mailing address:

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

Field Trip Schedule:

7:00am 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. **Jay Oberholtzer leads.**

Saturday, November 19 San Joaquin March & Wildlife Sanctuary

located in Irvine. The address is 5 Riparian View, Irvine. This is great place to see a wide variety of water birds along with rails, raptors and just about anything that flies anywhere in Orange County. It is a leisurely stroll through a well-designed and maintained facility. A perfect place to spend a Fall morning.

Bring water, lunch, sunscreen, a hat, and binoculars. A scope will be very handy. We'll have lunch at the picnic tables located near the Duck Club buildings. We will carpool from the Whittier Community Center (Mar Vista and Washington in uptown Whittier) at 6:30 AM. If you prefer to meet us there, plan on being at the Duck Club around 7:30. Please let me know if you are planning to attend so that you get any word about last minute changes. Jay Oberholtzer 562-945-2838 (tvulture@earthlink.net)

Jay Oberholtzer leads.

General Meeting for November

We the People. A citizens' approach to climate change.
How 40,000 volunteers in 300 chapters are working to pass a national price on carbon in 2017. Come learn about climate change and hear how this 40,000-member volunteer group, founded in California in 2007, is

working across the aisle to put a national price on carbon in 2017 – and how you can help. Our speaker will be Citizens' Climate Lobby volunteer, Whittier resident and retired businessman Ken Bodger, who holds an MBA from UCLA and BA degrees in Politics and Economics from UC Santa Cruz.

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

BirdReturns

(from page 1). and 4 inches in depth, relying on open, flooded ground with little or no vegetation. Shorebirds depend on a range of shallow water depths capable of supporting different species which vary in size and thus use different water depths for feeding on the abundant insects and other invertebrates that emerge from flooded soil. The number and types of shorebirds in a given area is influenced by proximity to existing habitat provided by wetlands, seasonally flooded agricultural areas, and wildlife refuges. With partners, TNC is developing models using information on seasonal shorebird distributions, crops and surface water availability to predict shorebird responses to habitat enhancement and to show where, when and what habitat is needed. Private donors are willing to fund new models of cost-effective conservation. Piloting efforts to bring private funds to incentivize habitat in ricelands TNC sees an opportunity to attract private funds to further incentive habitat creation. These donors are private individuals and foundations who value migratory birds. These funders choose to give based on the

FIELD TRIP NOTES:

On Saturday, October 22, we led a birdwalk to Claremont's Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. There were 13 Whittier Area Auduboners and 1 guest of Becky and Edwin's from Riverside. The day was clear and warm and we had to work for our 36 species of birds. The native plant gardens were a beautiful setting in which to spend a fall morning. We saw California Thrashers, 2 species of towhees, 3 species of woodpeckers, some California Quail flew by us, and we saw lots of California Scrub-Jays carrying off acorns. We had good looks at American Robins and at least 5 Hermit Thrushes.

When we went to Memorial Park on Indian Hill Blvd for our picnic lunch and more birding. We had a lot more Acorn Woodpeckers to entertain us, Edwin Menendez especially got lots of good shots. Steve Huber found our best trip bird, a Red-naped Sapsucker. It was a fitting conclusion to a rewarding birding day with good company.

Linda LeRoy & Al Moreno

conservation outcomes created by their philanthropic dollars. If successful, TNC hopes to increase the funding available to incentivize bird-friendly farming. For this reason, TNC's aim is to incentivize efficient habitat creation through a market, in much the same way as any commodity is sold. Using a bidding process, TNC's goal is to efficiently create bird habitat, recognizing that costs to grower to provide this habitat varies from farm to farm. The vision is to incentivize habitat creation on farmlands through a program that balances the need to keep farming viable with the need to support the Pacific Flyway in the Central Valley.