



# CHAPARRAL NATURALIST

A publication of

Pomona Valley Audubon Society

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## Birding Las Vegas

by Ed Babcock

Neon lights, glitzy night club shows, and acres of slot machines and gambling tables are core ingredients of the desert escape destination, Las Vegas. This sprawling metropolis is home to nearly six hundred thousand permanent residents, yet less than five miles from the famed strip, a birding paradise exists, Wetlands Park Nature Preserve.

I read a brief description of the park in our Auto Club travel book and suggested to Gloria that we search it out as an escape from the glitter and congestion of Vegas. The preserve can be found one mile east of Boulder Highway that connects Las Vegas to Boulder City. A 1.6 mile paved walking path encircles the preserve and winds among a series of lakes and a stream in the Las Vegas Wash. The water that feeds the stream is a combination of natural runoff from the local mountains and treated water from Las Vegas.

A small visitor's center provided us with a map of trails and ponds. We were also given a check list of Birds of the Las Vegas Wash compiled by members of the Red Rock Audubon Society. Two hundred eighty eight species are on the list. We were now ready for our adventure.

Very quickly we were treated to close-up views of a Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Great Egret, and Common Merganser in one of the ponds. In the Cottonwood and Willow trees, we spotted a Loggerhead Shrike, in the brush below, Valley Quail. Audubon Warblers and Say's Phoebe flitted around serenading us with song.

We departed from the paved walk to explore one of the many dirt paths that led to the interior of the preserve. Each of us became engaged in our own search for birds and soon found ourselves



separated. Even with a map in hand, it was easy to get lost in the the labyrinth of trails.

Once reunited at the visitor' center, our allotted birding time had elapsed. We felt that we had barely scratched the surface of this wondrous Las Vegas birding resource. In only an hour and a half, we had seen over twenty species.

For us, however, the highlight of this visit was yet to come. Upon exiting the preserve, a flash of red and black, landing in a roadside

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## Birding Las Vegas

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tree, caught my eye. We stopped. There, offering a magnificent car window view was a Vermillion Flycatcher; in a protective pose, perched on an open branch in the next tree, was an elegant Sharp Shinned Hawk. It was as if they had landed on cue to bade us farewell.

So, if your gambling luck fails and the glitz of the neon lights goes stale on your next visit to Las Vegas, head for the Wetlands Park Nature Preserve at 7050 E. Wetlands Park Lane one mile east of Boulder Highway. Take the Tropicana off ramp. We guarantee your luck will be good as you enjoy the colors of Mother Nature's gallery of birds in The Las Vegas Wash. Who would have thought there was excellent birding in Vegas? We enjoyed our surprise experience....and so will you.



## Keep that Squirrel Information Coming!

I will have a student working on Grey vs. Fox (not Red, I stand corrected) Squirrels this summer in our area. Thanks to all who have reported sightings of remnant Grey Squirrels in our area. I see lots of Fox Squirrels (many flattened on the road) but no Greys in Claremont around the colleges. I wonder if our nesting campus Great Horned Owls and Red-tailed Hawks are taking advantage of this new food source? All observations are welcome. Send them to me at [dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu](mailto:dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu). I am especially interested in the elevations fox squirrels exist in our foothills.

## Welcome New Members

We extend a warm welcome to all new members. Subscribers to Audubon Magazine from our area are automatically enrolled in our chapter and receive the Chaparral Naturalist at no additional charge. You are welcome to all our events.

**Alta Loma:** Lee Maracacci, Mike Olander, Dennis Wallon

**Chino Hills:** Janet Armstrong, Robin Lougee-Somers, Ariana Wagoner

**Chino:** Margaret Hanson, Katherine Mansell, Nellie MacHlan

**Claremont:** Mary Ann Barkey, Ian Beardsley, Holly Beckner, David Fawcett, James Harkrider, Judith Hill, Jennifer Nereim, Jane Peterson, Sharon Snowiss, Susan Tarvin, Lee Theriault, Jon Wenrick,

**Corona:** Lupe Arreaga, Esther Becerra, Shirley Davies, Karen Henson, Sandy Maneri, Lynnette Sayre

**Covina:** Keith Dawson, Adrian Hall, Richard and Gail Kidd, Maryon Matsuda, Yolanda Segura, Darleen Smith, June Staggs

**Diamond Bar:** Amy Lin, Lynda Martinez, Cheri Owings, Frank Venheule

**Glendora:** Gary Clum, Diane Russikoff, John Martonchik, Rachel Gray, Warren Paap

**La Verne:** Celso, Briones, Jean Hannah, Inge Johnson,

Catherine Fugitt, Rose Martin

**Mira Loma:** Myrle Whiting

**Montclair:** Johnny Odom

**Mount Baldy:** Robert Falk

**Norco:** Joanne Coons, Natalie Gass, Michele Kluge, Audra Lopez

**Ontario:** Richard Ressel, Grace Wormer,

**Pomona:** M. Snider

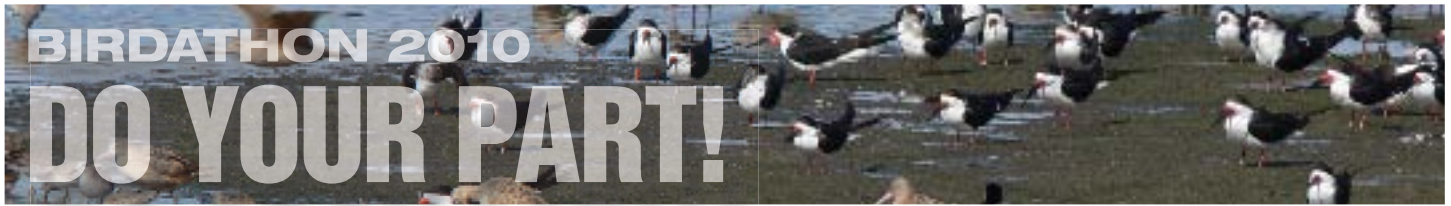
**Rancho Cucamonga:** Julia Bailey, Irene Carty, John Clapper, Lupe Lutz, Cinda Mocabee, Gunvor Valentin, Joyce Warhank

**San Dimas:** Barbara Chapman, Eileen Dyer, Karen Fazel, Susan Glasgow, Dona Gillotte, Nancy McDonald, Constance Wertanen

**Upland:** Allen Jackson, Mike Melvin, Benjamin Ramirez, Nancy Scahill, Robert Watson

**Walnut:** Akemi Kimura, Geraldine Wolfe

**West Covina:** Frances Andreozzi, Polung Kao, Christine Lemasters, Richard Mah, James Martin, Marilyn Pina, Carmelita Sarao



It's time for our annual fundraising event, **BIRDATHON 2010** and we need you to do your part!

**BIRDATHON 2010** took place Friday, April 16 through Monday, May 3, 2010 – during the peak of spring migration. A great opportunity for you to get involved in Pomona Valley Audubon by supporting conservation, environmental and educational programs.

What is BIRDATHON? Teams of Birders search for as many bird species as they can see (or hear) in a 24-hour time period. Money raised through BIRDATHON is used to support such activities as the Kern River Preserve, Endangered Habitat League and environmental programs and projects throughout Southern California. Some is

used by our chapter for educational and conservation programs and projects. In these days of tight budgets, some must be used to meet the costs of running the Chapter, including the printing of this newsletter.

In 2009, PVAS raised more than \$8,000 through the BIRDATHON. It was a good showing, but we need to top it this year. You can do your part by soliciting your friends, neighbors, family members and co-workers to send in donations. If you are interested in this opportunity for a little birding fun and a chance to help some very worthwhile causes, fill out the form below and hand it to someone you know is taking part, or return it to Neil Gilbert at the address shown.

### **Birdathon 2010 Contribution Sheet**

**Send in a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail the completed form to:** Neil Gilbert, 183 East Miramar Avenue, Claremont, California 91711 or hand it to any participating birder.

## **Hooray!! Audubon is Coming Back!!!**

*by Dan Guthrie*

I really dislike the term Yellow-rumped Warbler. The more familiar “Butter Butt” is no better. It’s not that I am a prude, although referring to the rump of anything other than warblers can lead to social difficulties. Rather, I really like the name of our little winter friends for John James Audubon – a fit commemorative. There is a shearwater named for Audubon, but I get seasick, and there is an oriole in extreme south Texas named for Audubon, but never seen here. I enjoyed having Audubon’s Warbler all winter, much classier than saying Yellow-rump or Butter Butt.



Recent genetic research has indicated that eastern Myrtle and western Audubon’s populations, in the region of overlap in British Columbia, have maintained their genetic separateness despite hybridization, an indication that hybrids do not do well, and that the two populations are, indeed, genetically distinct. Further, the non-migratory population of Audubon’s warbler in Guatemala (Goldman’s warbler) is also genetically distinct, as is a resident non-migratory population in the mountains of Chihuahua and Durango. This is a darker warbler, named Black-fronted, is perhaps occasional in Arizona. It will take a while for the AOU to officially accept these results. Perhaps by Christmas we can add a new species to our Christmas count (Myrtle). I have the Mexican and Guatemalan species on my soon to be added list.



## Items Needed for June Silent Auction

We are currently accepting donations for the silent auction that will be held at our annual Potluck Dinner on Friday, June 5. Donated items are often bird watching or nature related, but they don't have to be. In the past we have auctioned such items as bird books, bird houses, bird prints, duck decoys and decorative items. Last year, thanks to the generosity of our members, over \$400 was raised at this event.

Come and enjoy the delicious food brought by our members, and bid on the items of your choice. It's a fun evening, and we hope to see many of you there.

**If you have something to donate, please call Karlene Campo at 909-627-8191 to arrange for pick-up before the June meeting.**

# Thompson Creek Planning

by Dan Guthrie

The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), a state bond agency, has awarded the League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area a Grant of \$200,000 to prepare a Feasibility Study which will analyze opportunities for groundwater recharge, habitat restoration, and creation of recreational amenities (low-impact public access trails, etc.) once the Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds land is purchased or otherwise made available. The present owner is the Pomona Valley Protective Association (PVPA), a privately held non-profit corporation that has maintained the land as open space and managed water spreading for over a century.



The Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds is 120 acres of open space adjacent to the southern border of the Claremont Wilderness Park. The site is bordered by Mills Avenue to the east, Pomello Drive to the south, and privately owned open space to the west. Within the Spreading Grounds, the Thompson Creek Dam runs east to west midway through the property. A biking and hiking trail runs diagonally through the property from Mills Avenue to Pomello Drive. Land from the trail northward to the Wilderness Park is fenced off and posted "No Trespassing".

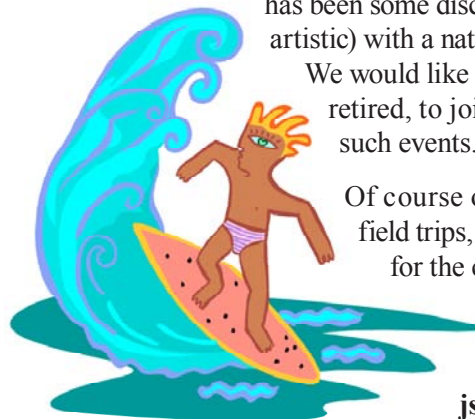
This area is mostly coastal sage and once had cactus wrens and other coastal sage species. Whether the area should be kept in a natural state, or have picnic tables, parking, and educational signage added are among the questions to be determined about its future. There is also a possibility of maintaining the area behind the dam at the head of Thompson Creek as a seasonal wetland. The League has a questionnaire on their website, which I urge our members to take, at [www.claremont.ca.lwvnet.org/ThompsonCreekSpreadingGrounds.html](http://www.claremont.ca.lwvnet.org/ThompsonCreekSpreadingGrounds.html)

## Your Board's Summer Activities

Each summer, our Board of Directors has a meeting to organize and discuss our goals for the upcoming year. First, our Board will be much the same as in the past, with the exception of our excellent conservation chair, Dick Moore, who is stepping down after several years of outstanding work. We will be looking for a new person to deal with local conservation issues.

We have also discussed how we might spend some of our funds. Thanks to several bequests, we have more money in our accounts than usual and it seems like a good time to think up creative ways to spend it. Some suggestions have been to use some of the money on education, specifically a scholarship for young people and/or teachers to attend an Audubon camp session in the summer. Also, there has been some discussion of sponsoring a contest (perhaps artistic) with a nature theme among local school children.

We would like very much to recruit a teacher, active or retired, to join our board and help us with planning such events.



Of course over the summer we will be planning field trips, programs, newsletter and special events for the coming year. Any suggestions that you may have for any of these categories would be more than welcome.

**Contact Dan Guthrie at [dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu](mailto:dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu) or 909 607 2836.**

# Field Trips

## Sunday, May 23, 2010 Butterbreadt Springs/Galileo Hill

A trip for migrant species coming through the desert. Meet at Memorial Park at 5:00 a.m. **Leader: Dan Guthrie dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu or 909-607-2836.**

## Sunday, May 23, 2010 Bonelli Park Bird Walk

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Bonelli Park headquarters on Via Verde near the 57 freeway for our monthly walk (4th Sunday, about 2 hours) at Bonelli Park. **Leader: Rod Higbie 909-599-6526**

## Sunday, June 6, 2010 - Beginner's Bird Walk Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden

Join us for our monthly (first Sunday, September, through June) bird walk. Family friendly, the walk is flat and takes about two hours. (Bring binoculars if you have them) Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the front entry gate (north end of College Ave. north of Foothill Blvd. 1500 N. College Ave.) **Leader: Fraser Pemberton 909-624-6451.**

## Wednesday, June 9, 2010 Carbon Canyon Regional Park

Meet at Memorial Park at 7:30 a.m. **Leader: Dan Gregory 909-944-2259**



## Saturday, June 12, 2010 Big Bear Lake Area

A day trip for mountain species. We'll explore meadows, visit Bluff Lake, and the Champion Lodgepole Pine. Target species include Lincoln's and Fox Sparrows, Calliope Hummingbird, Green Tailed Towhee, and warblers. Bring a lunch. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at Memorial Park or 7:00 a.m. at Aspen Glen

Picnic Area (Hwy 18, right on Tulip Lane) **Leader: Pam Kling 909-240-7604 or pamtone@verizon.net.**

## Saturday, July 10, 2010 Wrightwood Area

A great time of year to observe fledgling mountain birds. Plan to stop at Blue Ridge Campground, Grassy Hollow, and perhaps Valyermo and Bob's Gap. Meet at Memorial Park at 6:00 a.m. and bring a lunch. **Leader: Pam Kling 909-240-7604 or pamtone@verizon.net.**

## Saturday, August 21, 2010 Wrightwood Area

A trip to the Wrightwood area for early fall migrants. Meet at Memorial Park at 6:00 a.m. and bring a lunch. **Leader: Pam Kling 909-240-7604 or pamtone@verizon.net.**



*Half and one day trips start at Memorial Park, Indian Hill Blvd at 10th Street, Claremont. Weekend trips usually meet at the destination on Saturday morning. Bonelli Park trips meet at park headquarters on Via Verde, just off the 57 freeway. It is recommended to bring a snack (lunch if recommended), plenty of water, sun protection, and bug spray to all trips.*



As Audubon ramps up to respond to the oil spill disaster in the Gulf, we wanted to be sure you were aware of information, resources and actions that are underway.

1. An alert on how people can help has been sent to the activist list.
2. Similar information has also been sent to all chapters
3. On the Audubon home page, two home buttons will allow visitors to donate or lead them to a “how you can help” page that includes a link to a registration form for would-be volunteers, a further donation option, and our current alert on expanded oil drilling and additional information.

You can also send people directly to Audubon.org. The spill-response buttons will be prominent.

Staff in Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida are already working with local officials and conservation colleagues to recruit and coordinate volunteers, to keep well-meaning people out of harm’s way, and to monitor impacts and assure that protective measures are in place at fragile habitats—especially globally significant Important Bird Areas.

Staff members have received widespread media coverage, alerting the public of the threats to migratory and coastal birds as the oil heads for toward fragile shorelines. For hundreds species such as the Brown Pelican—just removed from the Endangered Species List, to other marsh and beach-nesting birds and a host of migratory species, the danger is real. The need to act is urgent and a concerned public is looking to Audubon to lead the way.

Central to our response is to keep working the effective conservation plans already in place for the Gulf Region. Our efforts involve protecting and rebuilding healthy habitat that will become even more vital as other areas are damaged by oil. Our focus on Important Bird Areas will continue to guide us in protecting the habitats that imperiled species need most. Today, our efforts to promote safer energy policies got a boost when the President agreed to delay new off-shore drilling until the cause of this tragedy is fully investigated. But Audubon will need to continue its push for renewable energy that is cleaner and safer.

To see Audubon efforts over the weekend, Follow Audubon on Twitter and Facebook.

**For volunteer sign-up, visit**  
[www.audubonaction.org/SpillResponse](http://www.audubonaction.org/SpillResponse)

**To learn how to help, visit**  
[www.audubonaction.org/howtohelp](http://www.audubonaction.org/howtohelp)

## Paul Sonner Wins First Place in Ornithology at the State Science Olympiad

Our last newsletter reported that PVAS member Paul Sonner, age 15, won first place in ornithology at the L.A. Regional Science Olympiad, and his school would advance to the state competition. We are pleased to report that at the state competition, Paul earned first place in ornithology and third place in meteorology.

When asked how it felt to win ornithology at the state level, Paul, a man of few words, responded, “Good.”

Paul said the 50-minute test was not too challenging, but was harder than the test at the regional level. None of the questions had multiple choice or matching answers, meaning the students had to know the answers, not just guess.

One part of the test involved bird identification from slides. Another part, and the hardest, was identifying birds from written descriptions and range maps. The students had one minute to identify each bird with its Latin name. There were many questions on identifying recorded calls, which Paul had prepared for extensively. Other questions covered evolution, behavior, and bill and foot characteristics.

The “tie breaker” required students to create a conservation

strategy to save the Kittlitz’s Murrelet.

Paul prepared for this competition for many months. He started with a list of 200+ North American birds that might be on the exam. In addition to various field guides, he studied several ornithology textbooks. He also used Audubon video guides, CDs of bird calls, and various websites. Then he created a podcast, compiling the information so he could review it easily.

Only one school advanced to the national Science Olympiad competition, and unfortunately, it wasn’t Paul’s. The school that won the overall state competition only placed sixth in ornithology. We are confident Paul would have done well in ornithology if his school had advanced to the nationals.

Paul appreciates the expertise and support of PVAS members, and said he learns a lot about birds from the monthly meetings. He would also like to thank Marcy Clements, who helped him earn his first Boy Scout badge (bird study, of course) and who has taken him on many Christmas bird counts over the years.



# "Birds Can Save the World"

**Tuesday, May 18th at 6pm**  
**Cornell Lab of Ornithology Director**  
**John Fitzpatrick to speak at**  
**the Los Angeles Zoo**

Ithaca, NY— The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is proud to partner with the Los Angeles Zoo for a special presentation by Dr. John Fitzpatrick, the Louis Agassiz Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and professor in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University. Dr. Fitzpatrick will be discussing the vital roles that birds play in fostering conservation of worldwide biological diversity. New technologies, especially the Internet, offer citizens unprecedented and unlimited opportunities to provide real scientific data that answers important questions about bird populations around the world. Humans are beginning to serve as biosphere sensors. The question remains, do we also have the will to self-correct? Birds can motivate us to do so and serve as an excellent barometer for measuring our success.

To reserve your seats, call 323-622-8114 or email docents@lazoo.org. The cost for GLAZA members is \$8 and \$10 for the general public.

**PVAS OFFICERS 2008-2009**

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Vice-President.....	Bruce Strang .....	626-339-6984
Secretary .....	Pam Kling .....	909-596-7604
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**CHAPARRAL NATURALIST**

Editor..... Pam Kling.....909-596-7604

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Subscriptions to the newsletter are available for \$10 per year to non-members. **Make checks payable to PVAS and mail to W. M. Keck Science Center, 925 N. Mills Ave., Claremont, CA 91711.**

**National Audubon Membership / Membership Information Update**

Annual membership in the National Audubon Society is \$30 per year. **New** membership dues are \$20. Members receive the Audubon Magazine and Chaparral Naturalist newsletter. Renewals of membership are computerized by National Audubon and should not be sent to PVAS. However, a new membership may be sent directly to PVAS. Checks should be made payable to National Audubon Society. Mail payment with membership form below and mail to: **PVAS, W. M. Keck Science Center, 925 N. Mills Ave., Claremont, CA 91711.** (Please note chapter code **C08, 7XCH** on your check.)

Information such as mailing address, email address and telephone numbers are used for sending email notifications, electronic versions of the newsletter, and are published in our membership directory. Membership information may be updated by filling out this form and turning it in to any board member. This information will be distributed only to members and will not be sold to other organizations.

- Yes**, Please sign me up as a new member!       **Yes**, I am renewing my membership.  
 Please send me the Chaparral Naturalist electronically.       **Do not** publish my information in the chapter directory.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ **Chapter Code C08, 7XCH**  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

# PVAS Annual Potluck Dinner

Join us for our annual Potluck on Friday, June 4, 2010. It will be held at the Alexander Hughes Community Center at 1700 Danbury Rd., Claremont. (Danbury Rd. is off of Scripps Dr., between Towne Ave. and Indian Hill Blvd. Take the Towne Ave. exit from the 210 Freeway and go south to Scripps then east to Danbury.) Admission will be \$5 at the door.

Our evening will feature a Silent Auction, the annual Election of Officers, the presentation of the 2010 Flock Leader Award and the now famous Member's Powerpoint Photo Show. **If you would like to make a presentation, please contact Pam Kling at 909-240-7604 or at [pamtone@verizon.net](mailto:pamtone@verizon.net).** Presentations should be limited to 30 images per person and should be provided on a cd or flash drive.

**6:00 to 7:00 p.m. – Happy Hour & Silent Auction**  
Enjoy appetizers, wine, beer, soft drinks, coffee and tea while bidding on one-of-a-kind items!

**7:00 to 7:45 p.m. – Potluck Dinner**  
**7:45 p.m. – Meeting and Program**  
The Silent Auction ends and the winners will be announced at the end of the meeting. (Those lucky

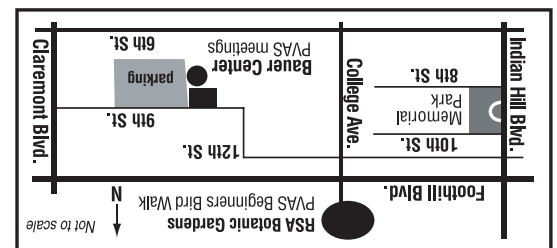
winning bidders can pay for and pick up their treasures by the front door. All items should be picked up at the end of the evening.

Please bring a favorite dish that serves 8, the necessary serving utensils and your own plates and dining utensils. Beverages will be provided.

- Last names beginning with:**  
**A – G Main and Side Dishes**  
**H - L Desserts**  
**M - S Salads**  
**T – Z Appetizers (by 5:30pm, please)**

If you have items of a birding or nature interest you'd like to donate for Silent Auction, please see the article on page 4.

## See you there!



Pomona Valley Audubon Society  
W.M. Keck Science Center  
925 North Mills Avenue  
Claremont, CA 91711

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