



Chaparral Naturalist



A Publication of
Pomona Valley Audubon Society

www.pomonavalleyaudubon.org

WINTER 2020-21 | DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

A Tree Swallow's Best Friend

Part Two: Continued from the Fall 2020 Chaparral Naturalist

Story By Sheila Bolka

Photos by Sheila Bolka and Tina Stoner

My visit in June was near the end of the nesting season when Hank's primary job is to clean out the boxes. At several boxes, Hank used his mirror and flashlight to confirm all the chicks had fledged and then he used his spatula to gently lift and remove the nest from the box so I could see it intact. The swallows had created a beautiful work of art, a cozy-soft nest lined with downy duck feathers. Hank said that this year's nesting season seemed to begin late and run late probably due to the cooler, wetter winter and spring. Lucky for me because there were still chicks in one of the boxes and I got to see them reflected in Hank's mirror.



The work does come with a few hazards, some as simple as accessing the boxes. Located mostly "off the trail" because the birds don't seem to like high traffic areas, a little bushwhacking is sometimes required to reach them (especially if the facility gardeners fail to keep the path clear). This is where the clippers in his bucket come in handy. The clippers are also used to trim foliage near the poles to prevent ants from using the foliage as bridges to get to the nests. If ants are found, Hank uses the spray bottle of vinegar to wash the ants off and cover their scent trails. Ground cinnamon and ginger have been tried as non-chemical ant deterrents at the base of the poles but they become ineffective when wet. Currently, the Wetlands uses Tanglefoot® insect barrier around the very

base of the pole so that the birds are not affected but it does help deter the ants. Hank has observed that when ants get into a nest of newly hatched chicks with sparse downy feathers, it corresponds with a greater death rate. Older chicks fair better. Finding and recording dead chicks, especially those close to fledging, is one of the more difficult parts of the job. Although ants are the most common problem, Hank has also encountered wasps, bee swarms and a couple of rats. He told the story of one memorable encounter when

he opened the front panel on a nest box and a rat leaped out and hit him in the chest as it dropped to the ground and scurried off, reminding him to always stand off to the side of the box when opening it!

It was an enjoyable and unique morning observing Hank and learning about his interesting volunteer work. If you ever see him checking nesting boxes, stop and ask him questions. Let him show you what he does and educate you on the swallow's nesting cycle. Meeting people and sharing with them about the swallows and PVAS is something he really enjoys while collecting

the data. "Try it sometime," says Hank, "You might like being a citizen scientist and you get to bird while you do it."



An Invitation to Join Friends of Pomona Valley Burrowing Owls



To join Friends of PV Burrowing Owls, send an email to Pomona Valley Audubon Society at pomonavalleyaudubon@gmail.com with your name, contact information, and any other information you would like to share about your experiences with Burrowing Owls.

THANKS, FRIEND!

Winter Meeting Speakers via Zoom

You will receive the meeting links via email, IF we have your address! If you've never received an email from PVAS, send your address to pomonavalleyaudubon@gmail.com.



Pomona Valley Audubon Society
2058 N. Mills Ave., PMB426
Claremont, CA 91711
www.pomonavalleyaudubon.org

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Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 7 pm

Dr. Jeff Burkhart, PhD - Venomous and Noxious Creatures Nearby



Jeff Burkhart, Professor of Biology Emeritus from the University of La Verne, will discuss a variety of venomous and

otherwise dangerous creatures which live in our local recreational areas. Here's your chance to learn how to deal with creatures ranging from rattlesnakes to ticks and how some can harm us directly

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while others can transmit disease (such as Lyme disease or Salmonella). He has devoted much of his career to the study of arthropods (insects, spiders, scorpions), reptiles and amphibians.

Dr. Burkhart studied zoology at Humboldt State University and the ecology of

desert insects at Arizona State University where he received his PhD. Since 2013 he, his students and colleagues have been compiling an inventory on the current status of the reptiles and amphibians of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Thursday, January 7, 2020 at 7 pm

Kurt Leuschner, MS – Bird Migration Through the Desert



Non-stop flights of over 7,000 miles on a single pair of wings! Come learn about the latest techniques for tracking bird migration and what the new technology is teaching us. Professor Leuschner will show us some of the many interesting and colorful migrants that pass through this area each spring and fall. Using familiar examples from the desert region, he will help us sort out the different ways that birds migrate and perhaps inspire us

to take a field trip to the Salton Sea or the Anza-Borrego Desert to see for ourselves!

Kurt Leuschner, M.S., is a Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert where he teaches courses on Conservation, Entomology, Field Ornithology, Native Plants, and GPS Navigation. Kurt also teaches weekend courses and workshops on birdwatching, insects, GPS, and backyard habitats for UCR Extension, the Desert Institute, the Desert Studies Center, and the Living Desert. His latest research project involves the sound recording of the various subspecies of North American Scrub-Jays.

Thursday, February 4, 2020 at 7 pm

Dr. Cathy McFadden, PhD - Birds of New Zealand



The isolated islands of New Zealand are home to five families and about 60 species of birds that are found nowhere else on earth. These include the iconic Kiwi (actually, five different species of kiwi); the world's only truly alpine parrot, the Kea; and an impressive array of albatrosses and other pelagic seabirds. Having evolved

in the absence of mammalian predators, most of these endemic species are now highly endangered, and many survive only in predator-free reserves that have been established on small islands. In 2018, PVAS members Cathy McFadden and Paul Clarke drove the length of the country, visiting these reserves and other natural areas, and participating in pelagic birding trips from all three of New Zealand's main islands. In this multimedia presentation they will share the unique avifauna they saw and photographed amid spectacular natural scenery.

Dr. McFadden is a professor of biology at Harvey Mudd College and has special research interests in the evolutionary relationships of marine organisms, especially soft corals. She and her husband Paul Clarke enjoy international travel and birding the world.

REMINDER: Meeting links are NOT posted anywhere so we need your email address to send you a link. Send to pomonavalleyaudubon@gmail.com. Thank you!