

The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology is a non-profit research and education institution. Its mission is to contribute to the study, knowledge, and conservation of the world's wild bird species through biodiversity activities involving our bird collections, education programs, research projects, and publications.



Fall • 2020

NEWS

WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY

Dear Friends and Members –



Dr. Hall in the field

I hope that this letter finds you and your loved ones as safe and healthy as possible during these challenging times!

As you may know, all indoor museums in California are currently closed to visitors. However, although indoor tours and classes at the WFVZ are canceled for the near future, we will be assisting our community by offering online life science tutoring for students, and are going to make videos of our tours and labs to share with local schools. Tutoring and STEM education are going to be necessary for our local kids to come through this current education bottleneck without severe impacts.

We are excited to provide Field Training workshops for college students majoring in biology and environmental science, and for local professionals needing to hone their bird skills (ID through vocalizations, point counts, banding, etc.). We plan to teach online this winter, and both in the field and online next spring, and offer scholarships to current low-income students so they can take these courses for free.

We're resuming our family-friendly "Birds and Beverages" seminar in September—virtually, of course!—now every month instead of every other month. Members will have access to this, with very low costs to students. See the schedule in this newsletter; registration will be through Eventbrite email—check our website for details (www.wfvz.org).

A reminder that the Conejo Valley Audubon Society is also planning to hold its meetings online, starting September 14th, so I hope that you all can join those meetings too! The link to their meetings is <https://zoom.us/j/6155249106>.

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New Members Welcome!

Thank you for your support and welcome to our flock!

California Condor \$500+: Loren & Kararich Naidoo
Peregrine Falcon \$250+: Richard Cole, Lisa Larramendy, David Mathews, Rebecca Pecsok
Brown Pelicans \$100+: Anthea Adams, Andrew Gilmour, Leslie & Dave Peterson, David Shane
American Kestrels \$50+: Susan Bernstein, Diana Davis, Monica Jacinto, Marcia Risher, Mike & Mindy Zubiak
Ca Quail Family \$35+: Bernick Family, Mary Logan, Sharon Lovell, Sheri Mayta, Doris Mleczko, Frank Sturges
Loggerhead Shrikes \$25+: Sheryl Dorris, Dorothy Gillmann, Kristin Loft, Kimberly Lundy, Gavin Nuttall

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Ojai Women's Fund
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Dear Members and Friends Continued...

Hopefully you have been following us on Facebook and Instagram, where we have been posting wonderful, regular updates since March. We've sent interesting stories on avian-related topics by email too if you are a Member! Many of our posts have focused on the important contributions made to natural history by Black biologists and naturalists, and the current "Birding While Black" movement. The WFVZ has taken a formal public stand against brutality and oppression of Black people, and have posted our commitment to being antiracist on our website home page (www.wfvz.org).

The WFVZ conducted eight field projects this spring and summer despite the coronavirus: we monitored Least Bell's Vireos on a Nature Conservancy property on the Santa Clara River; monitored nesting birds on three river properties where arundo removal was occurring; conducted point counts on 17 river properties; conducted point counts in the Santa Monica Mountains with volunteers; assisted the National Park Service with getting point counts done on the Channel Islands; monitored nesting birds on a project site in Glendale; and continued looking for nesting cuckoos on the Santa Clara River.

We also had great news recently about the Rio Motagua in Guatemala, where we worked on bird projects from 2001 to 2012, and where René Corado has been advocating since then: Guatemala and Honduras are now going to work with the United Nations to clean the river! René's work on this issue has directly helped bring attention to the problem, and has led to real potential for great change. This is good news during this extremely challenging time for Central America's people and environment.

Since the museum is closed right now we are creating ways that Volunteers can help us this fall from the comfort and safety of their homes. If you have a current biology background and love kids, you can help us with tutoring! We will roll this out in October, and by early winter we will likely need more tutors! Check back with us if you are interested in helping.

So what else can you do? If you are able in these times, we would appreciate you re-joining as a WFVZ Member. And, please tell your loved ones about the work we do and the outreach we provide, so they can join as Members too! We would love to have your support this year so that we can continue our meaningful service to Nature and to our Community Members.

Please feel free to contact our wonderful WFVZ staff with any questions (see email addresses below). We hope that each of you stays healthy and safe this Autumn!

Sincerely,

Linnea Hall: linnea@wfvz.org
Jennifer Watson: jennifer@wfvz.org
René Corado: rene@wfvz.org
Paul Grindrod: paul@wfvz.org
Mimi Damwyk: programs@wfvz.org
Shannon Morris
Miguel Romero



Least Bell's Vireo at Hedrick Ranch, 20 July 2020



Santa Clara River, May 2020

Research Update

This summer the WFVZ continued monitoring an endangered songbird, the Least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*). This protected sub-species was nearly extinct in California in the late 1980s, but due to the efforts of many people including our colleague Dr. Kus (a researcher with the US Geological Survey) and her team in San Diego County, and colleagues at the state and federal wildlife protection agencies, this migratory bird is making a comeback in southern California!

In Ventura County, the WFVZ has been counting and tracking vireo densities each breeding season since 2010, and we also have checked vireo nests for parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds, determined numbers of vireo eggs and young, and protected nests from disturbance since 2015.

This work has been conducted on lands managed by The Nature Conservancy and the Friends of the Santa Clara River by several of us at the WFVZ (René Corado, Linnea Hall, Dana Kamada, and Adam Searcy). However, many additional colleagues and organizations have greatly contributed to the understanding of vireo dynamics in Ventura County and elsewhere in southern California, and their hard work has resulted in increasing population numbers. Yay!

A more recent project of the WFVZ has been to monitor nesting birds in areas where restoration is being done on the Santa Clara River.

As with many quickly-growing non-native plants, *Arundo* can out-compete natives when it invades an area, which it has done throughout southern California watersheds for decades.



2020 Least Bell's Vireo nests on the Santa Clara River



Photographs by Linnea Hall



René Corado conducting vireo nest monitoring

On the Santa Clara River, organizations including the Friends of the Santa Clara River, The Nature Conservancy, UC Santa Barbara, Stillwater Sciences, the Santa Clara River Conservancy, and state and local agencies, have been removing *Arundo* little by little throughout the river, creating a healthier ecosystem with enhanced habitat for sensitive migrant and resident bird species, and other animals.

The WFVZ has been partnering with these wonderful organizations since 2010, and we have marveled at the recovery in key places along the river. In 2021, when the Coronavirus pandemic is under control, we look very forward to introducing school children and adult friends to this beautiful, restoring river!



After Arundo removal treatment, 2020



Arundo removal project leaders, surrounded by Arundo, 2019

2020–2021 Calendar

WFVZ Webinar Series!

Talks covering bird research and conservation in Ventura County, Southern California, and the western US. Last Friday evening each month (except December) 6–7:30pm: Advance registration required through Eventbrite check your inbox; and see website for more details(www.wfvz.org).

WFVZ Virtual Classes & Workshops

Winter Professional Training Class: December 2020; email jennifer@wfvz.org for dates

Winter Introductory Bird ID Class: 2-hour online labs on Wednesdays, 9, 16, and 23 Jan 2021 from 6:30 to 8:30pm; Raptors, ducks and geese, herons and egrets, and other species covered. 25 students max; call for pricing information and to make a reservation (805)388-9944

WFVZ Online Silent Auction!

Coming this spring, final date TBD. Please contact us if you have bird-themed artwork, books, services, or other items to donate! 805-388-9944.

Now Online! Conejo Valley Audubon Society Meetings:

September-May, 7:30 to 9:00pm the first Monday of every month except holidays. The link to their meetings is <https://zoom.us/j/6155249106>.

Categories:

- \$ 25: Loggerhead Shrike
- \$ 35: California Quail - Family
- \$ 50: American Kestrel
- \$ 100: Brown Pelican
- \$ 250: Peregrine Falcon
- \$ 500: California Condor
- \$ 750: White- cheeked Goose

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WFVZ News is published by the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology to keep our Members, Board of Directors, Volunteers, Associates, and the community informed of our activities, resources, and events.

We welcome comments, contributions, and advertising support of our newsletter, and will gladly acknowledge individual or corporate sponsorship in upcoming issues. Please direct correspondence and inquiries to the above address or contact us at:

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