



Drawing by  
Guy Coheleach

# THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

**Pasadena Audubon Society**  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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*To bring the excitement of birds to our community through birding,  
education and the conservation of bird habitats.*

November 2020 - January 2021

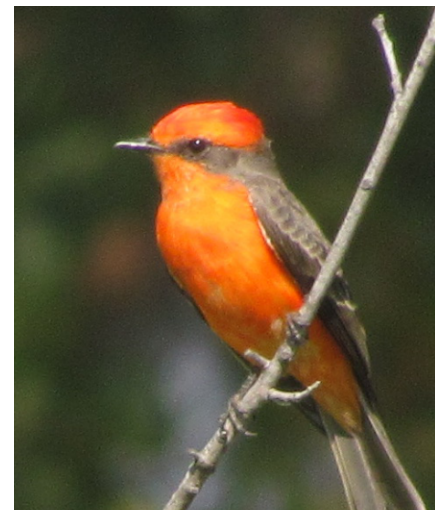
## PAS Field Trips Resume...With Caveats Pilot Outing Provides Proof of Concept

On October 18, a small group of birders participated in the PAS field trip to Santa Fe Dam -- all wearing masks and maintaining distance, in a successful trial run of the interim field trip protocol. All of us were surprised to arrive in a dense, local fog that practically limited us to ear birding only for the start. We first walked toward the dam spillway (fortunately Naresh was able to find the trail despite the invisibility of landmarks) and searched over gradually increasing distance as the fog thinned. The recently-reported Bobolinks had apparently continued on their long migration journey on a prior night, but we did turn up a Clay-colored Sparrow amidst a multitude of seed-eating species.

On the way back to the park area, we got great looks at two Loggerhead Shrikes, also watched and occasionally harassed by a flock of Cassin's Kingbirds. The fog had slowed us down a lot, so the rest of the trip was in overtime, but a few of us continued and visited two more parts of the park, where the highlights were a vivid Vermilion Flycatcher and a Cassin's Vireo. All in all, we saw about 60 species and enjoyed this cautious return to field trips.

*Darren Dowell and Naresh Satyan*

Satisfied that field trips can be undertaken in relative safety with appropriate precautions, the PAS Board has decided to relaunch its Field Trips Program. We are expecting demand for these events to be high, so please make sure to check our website regularly:



*Vermilion Flycatcher at Santa Fe Dam, one of an increasing number of breeding sites for this species in the San Gabriel Valley © Darren Dowell*

*continued on page 5*

### President's Perch

As I write this, the Covid-19 "Safer at Home" order is dragging into its eighth month, our country is in the middle of a contentious election, and Pasadena Audubon hasn't had a live in-person event or gathering since March.

Anyone else getting just the tiniest bit tired of this?

While Covid doesn't show any sign of going away just yet, and some of us are starting to wonder about this election, I am pleased to report that PAS is starting up our field trips again. True, they'll look a little different for the time being, but gosh, it'll be nice to be out in the field again!

We're starting up field trips again because outdoor recreation has been deemed relatively low-risk as long as we follow safety protocols, which we now have in place. Another reason is that you, our members, have made it clear that you value these trips greatly, and it is our goal to serve you.

We know you esteem our field trips because many of you told

us so in our member survey last spring. You also told us that you especially value our conservation work, our monthly programs, our Young Birder Club, and our classes and workshops. We heard you, so we are working on revamping and relaunching these programs. Our conservation work has continued unabated the last several months, and we figured out how to run our monthly programs through Zoom starting last May. Field trips started up again on October 18th, the Christmas Bird Count is on, coincident with the relaunching of Young Birders, and we are developing plans for workshops and classes. Keep your eye open for an eblast or a Wrentit article coming soon with more information.

If you have ideas for any of these programs or would like to get involved, we welcome you! Please contact Program Director Lois Brunet at [lbrunet@pasadenaaudubon.org](mailto:lbrunet@pasadenaaudubon.org) or me at [mypurplecow@outlook.com](mailto:mypurplecow@outlook.com) to get connected.

We are Pasadena Audubon, and we are resilient!

*Laura Solomon*

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**MONTHLY CHAPTER MEETINGS: UPCOMING PROGRAMS**


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**Invertebral Limit: Insect Life of Southern California**

November 18, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
Robb Hamilton

If you've ever wondered about the myriad arthropods that make up the foundation of our local ecosystems or noticed the great variety of little critters that come out when the temperatures rise and the birds get quiet, this is the show for you. The intricate beauty and diversity of the invertebrate world around us is guaranteed to leave your head buzzing! The program will feature some of Robb's incredible photographs.

A member of the El Dorado Audubon Society in Long Beach, Mr. Hamilton is lead author of two standard references describing aspects of birdlife in California: *The Birds of Orange County: Status & Distribution* and *Rare Birds of California*. He has been providing biological consulting services in southern California since 1988. His company, Hamilton Biological, Inc., specializes in the practical application of environmental regulations to land management decisions in the region.

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**CONSERVATION**


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**California Bans Rodenticides, Fires Disperse Local Wildlife**

Recently Governor Newsom signed into law AB1788, which prohibits the use of second-generation rodenticides effective January 1st. These powerful poisons have spread up the food chain and killed many predators, including hawks, owls, and even mountain lions. Under the new law, use of these poisons would be limited to rare exceptions such as public health emergencies and control of invasive species on offshore islands. This is a victory for those of us who have mourned the loss of so many local predators in recent years.

The Pasadena Department of Parks and Recreation currently uses poisons, including recent use of second-generation rodenticide diphacinone, to control gophers and ground squirrels. PAS has advocated for replacing

**CBC Prep Meeting**

December 16, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
Jon Fisher and Luke Tiller

Neither rain nor snow nor heat nor gloom of night *nor pandemic* will stop the Christmas Bird Count, which takes place on December 19th! This year will mark the 74th anniversary of our participation in the CBC, the oldest citizen science project in the country. Organizer and compiler Jon Fisher will talk about the history of our count, notable species trends over the years, and which uncommon birds we're most hoping to encounter. Count areas will be assigned. Field trip chair Luke Tiller will describe how to conduct a count at your backyard feeders and submitting your checklists via eBird. There will be time set aside for Q&A at the end.

*Monthly chapter meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month. Until further notice, the meetings will be held remotely via the Zoom platform for video conferencing. The application can be downloaded free of charge to computer or smartphone at <https://zoom.us/download>. Chapter members will receive an email from PAS with a link on the day of the meeting.*

poisons with trapping and other methods that do not cause wider environmental damage.

The Bobcat Fire caused the death or dispersal of many thousands of animals, and the sediment flows that are expected after this winter's rains might greatly damage the habitat of the endangered Yellow-legged Frog in streams of the San Gabriel Mountains. Many of them were transplanted there from other threatened habitats in a bid to improve the survival chances of the species as a whole. Native fish species such as the Santa Ana Sucker are similarly threatened. A few species of woodpeckers can thrive in burned forests but most birds are forced to move to other areas. For example, my suburban neighborhood has Wrentits that were never there historically but first appeared about a week after the Station Fire.

*Mark Hunter*

**CBC Recap Meeting**

December 19, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
Jon Fisher and Luke Tiller

No dinner this year, unfortunately, but after the count, we'll convene over Zoom for a reading of the final tally. Don't miss out on all the suspense and surprises!

**LA's Urban Raptors**

January 20, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
Courtney McGammon & Dan Cooper

The Griffith Park Raptor Survey was a three-year project to build our ecological understanding of the park and encourage public stewardship of its resources. The project used citizen scientists to survey every raptor nest found in the area to study local ecological dynamics and how human activity may be impacting wildlife. The annual reports from this project were the first comprehensive dataset of an entire raptor community in the urban core of Los Angeles. Learn about the world of urban raptors and how you can get involved in the ongoing project.

Courtney McGammon received her graduate degree from Loyola Marymount University, and has since worked as a Wildlife Biologist and Environmental Consultant in the Greater LA area and beyond. Dan Cooper is the author of *Important Bird Areas of California* (2004), an associate editor of the journal "Western Birds", and an authority on California bird ecology, identification and distribution.

**Upcoming PAS Board Meetings**

The PAS Board meets from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month, between September and June. Contact Lois Brunet at [lbrunet@pasadenaaudubon.org](mailto:lbrunet@pasadenaaudubon.org) if you would like to Zoom link to attend.

November 4th, 2020  
December 2nd, 2020  
January 6th, 2021  
February 3rd, 2021  
March 3rd, 2021  
April 7th, 2021  
May 5th, 2021  
June 2nd, 2021

## PAGE THREE BIRD

## Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets

Half a lifetime ago, back in January, I was on a birding tour with my family in the Santa Marta Mountains of Colombia, gawking at a pair of Barred Antshrikes. Our fantastic guide Edwin whispered with a smile that antshrikes are one of Colombia's "punk rocker" birds. I nodded along in agreement, admiring the spiked "mohawk hairdos" of both male and female. It didn't occur to me just then, or I'd have told him we have little "punk rockers" in our neck of the woods, too, and fall is the time of the year we can count on seeing one of them, and hope to see the other, at some of our local birding haunts.

I'm referring, of course, to the kinglets, two species of tiny, hunched songbirds barely bigger than Bushtits. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet is the more understated and by far the more common of the two. Adult males have a bright thin line down their heads, and it is seldom displayed outside of breeding season. By contrast, in Golden-crowned Kinglets, both sexes have vibrant yellow median stripes bordered by black atop their heads, though the male, when aroused, reveals a crown with a brilliant orange interior. Ruby-crowned Kinglets have a slightly broken white eye-ring, whereas Golden-crowned Kinglets have a stylish smokey eye, complemented by a faint black malar stripe. Both species have a white wing bar adjacent to a more distal black bar on the secondaries.



*The typically subtle crown of this male Ruby-crowned Kinglet recently seen at Descanso Gardens © Jim Margitan*

It can be challenging to get a decent glimpse of these birds, let alone a good view of their head plumage in all its splendor. Kinglets are frenetic little foliage gleaners, habitually flitting about high in the trees, often upside down, and gobbling insects with their thin bills. Pushing can be helpful to bring them into view. While feeding, Ruby-crowned Kinglets rapidly flick their wings to flush prey. The contrasting wing bars are thought to enhance the effectiveness of this strategy. For whatever reason, Golden-crowned Kinglets seem not to rely as much on this method.

Tracking Golden-crowned Kinglets by ear can be quite difficult as well. They call much more than they sing, and the *tsee* notes, at around 8000 Hz, are near the top of the register for birds, which can also be near the upper bound of hearing for older adults. To further complicate things, the call is similar enough to a Brown Creepers that birders sometimes mistake the two. The songs of both species start out as high-pitched notes before cascading into warbles, with the Ruby's getting much lower and louder than the Golden's. It is perhaps no surprise that Ruby-crowned Kinglets rely heavily on singing to establish and maintain territories, while Golden-crowned Kinglets chase away rivals.



*Upside down but still wearing his golden crown © Mickey Long*

Both species build nests several stories up, near the trunks of conifers. Golden-crowned Kinglets have slightly smaller clutch sizes and slightly longer incubation periods. However, Golden's sometimes have two broods in a breeding season due to greater parental investment by the male, who looks after the nestlings and feeds the female while the second brood is incubating. The vast majority of this breeding activity happens well to the north of us. However, isolated breeding pairs of both species have been recorded in the San Gabriel Mountains.

According to ebird data, Ruby-crowned Kinglets are ubiquitous between October and March in Southern California. Sightings of Golden-crowned Kinglets are much sparser. This year, within our Christmas Bird Count circle, they've thus far only been spotted at Descanso and Hungtington Gardens, Lacy Park, and Legg Lake. The difference may be a combination of lower numbers, arriving later and leaving earlier, and stricter habitat preferences. PAS' own Lance Benner recommends

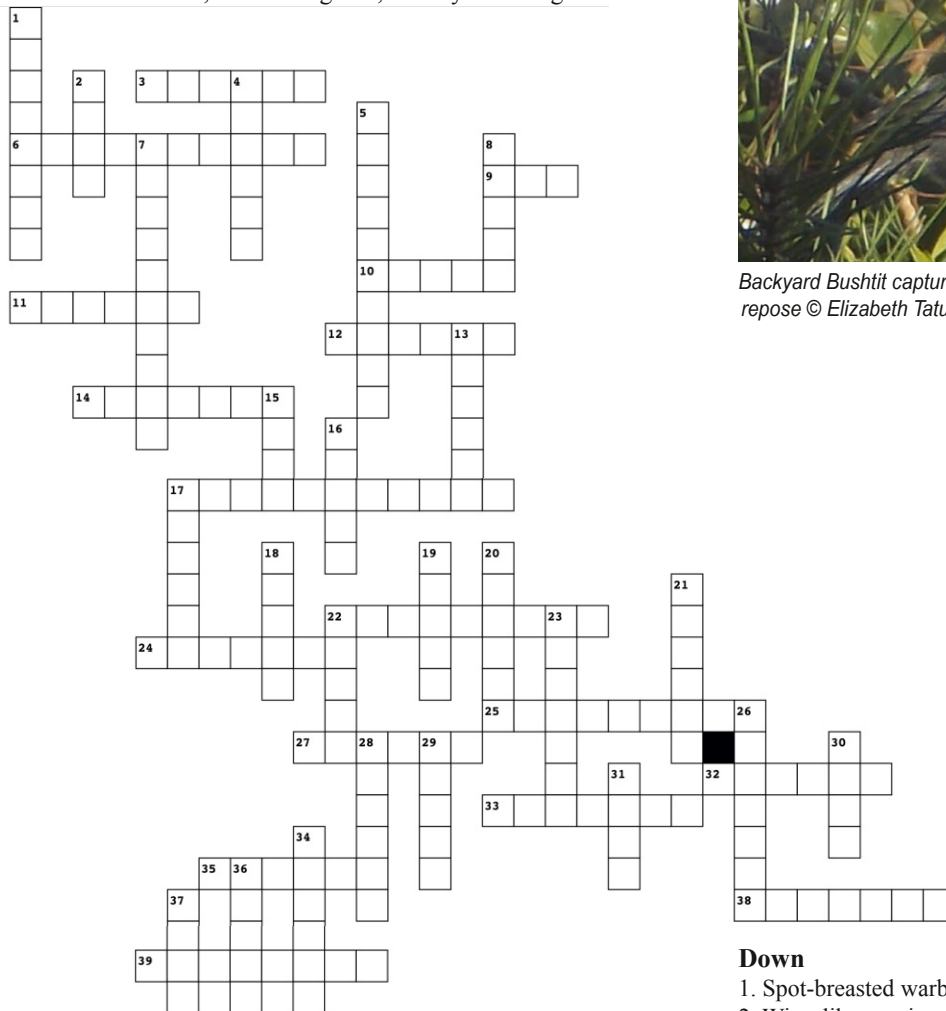
Buckhorn Campground and Grassy Hollow off Angeles Crest Highway as reliable places to see them in winter. Unfortunately, Buckhorn is currently closed, having likely suffered significant damage from Bobcat Fire.

One might expect such tiny birds, with high surface area to volume ratios, to prefer warmer weather. However, the more gregarious Golden-crowned Kinglets are renowned for their ability to huddle for warmth to survive temperatures as low as -40°F in the boreal forests. As with so many birds, whether or not we see kinglets here in the future is dependent on our ability to manage climate change. Audubon's most extreme models (5.4°F average temperature) predict the Los Angeles area will become too warm for either species to overwinter. Increasingly severe wildfires also threaten the coniferous forests they depend upon. We owe it to these audacious little birds, and ourselves, to preserve the climate and habitat that support them.

*Carl Matthies*

## PUZZLE PAGE: THE BIRD IS THE WORD

Looking for a little diversion? See if you can solve this avian-themed crossword puzzle. Some of the clues are pretty easy, others are more difficult. A quick Google search should get you most of the answers, and barring that, the key is on Page 7.



### Across

3. Nightjar facial feature, \_\_\_\_\_ bristles
6. N. America has red-winged and yellow-headed species, while S. America has yellow-winged and scarlet-headed species!
9. Symbol of wisdom or harbinger of death
10. Local woodpecker whose call sounds like "waka-waka"
11. Tim Robbins' call sign in the movie "Top Gun"
12. A group of eggs incubated together
14. Bird featured on Guatemala's flag
17. The Latin name of our Northern variety means "Mimic of many tongues"
22. Burden metaphor
24. 1990s thriller "The \_\_\_\_\_ Brief"
25. Atlanta's erstwhile NHL franchise
27. Complain
32. Feather shaft
33. Character in Last of the Mohicans, M\*A\*S\*H\*, and Marvel Comics
35. Camden Yards player
38. PAS mascot
39. Type of rhapsody or waxwing



Backyard Bushtit captured in a rare moment of repose © Elizabeth Tatum



"Why did the roadrunner cross the road?"  
"It didn't, actually. It ran along the shoulder for a while before darting back into the sagebrush."  
© Adriana Kleiman

### Down

1. Spot-breasted warbler found east of the Rockies
2. Wing-like or wing-shaped
4. Thanksgiving entree, for meat-eaters
5. Descriptor for a flycatcher or a storm-petrel
7. They can be pied, ringed, or green; our local one is "belted"
8. Williams or Gibb
13. 1970s spy thriller "Three Days of the \_\_\_\_\_"
15. Amusing adventure or escapade
16. Genus of sparrow with the nickname "the little executioner"
17. "Mischief-making" bird, when in groups
18. Surname in a Harper Lee novel
19. Birds with prominent head plumes
20. Imitate
21. Wading bird whose genus means "recurved bill"
22. Sixth day of Christmas genus
23. 2018 spy thriller "Red \_\_\_\_\_"
26. Send food or drink down one's gullet
28. Piscivorous raptor
29. Happening quickly or promptly
30. Toy for a windy day
31. Hawaiian goose
34. Deity humor?
36. Bane in a Poe poem
37. According to Lenape legend, bird that brought fire to the world

**FIELD TRIPS RESUME, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

<http://www.pasadenaudubon.org/fieldtrips>. Also make sure that we have your email so we can include you on future email blasts about events. Email [pasadenaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:pasadenaudubon@gmail.com) if you wish to check.

You may also want to join to the PAS Groups.io list for event reminders, as well as field trip reports, and local bird chat. (<https://groups.io/g/pasadenaudubon>)

At the current time trips will only be open to PAS members. Our new Field Trip Chair Luke Tiller is looking forward to putting together a series of fun events. In a slight change to previous trips, you will be required to sign up in advance and complete a waiver form for all trips. Check-out our new trip guidelines, designed to keep us all safe: <http://www.pasadenaudubon.org/Trip-Guidelines>

*Luke Tiller*



*Not the way field trips will look in the near term, but a nice bit of nostalgia from this trip to Los Padres National Forest © Luke Tiller*



**BIRD SCIENCE PROGRAM AND SCHOOLYARD GARDEN UPDATES**

**BSP Video Lessons Take Flight**

The Bird Science Program introduces schoolchildren to the wonders of birds through classroom lessons and a half day field trip. But in this brand-new world of ours, with Pasadena Unified Schools closed and children learning remotely through online platforms, we had to reinvent the program, and we did!

A small team has been hard at work reworking the curriculum and imagining video content supplemented by outdoor activities so that the learning can continue. Professional videographer and editor Marc Dahm has donated countless hours to the project, bringing a level of expertise that we're very lucky to have.

To encourage all children to spend time outdoors, each child at our primary partner school, Washington Elementary STEM Magnet, received a hand lens and a feather. Micah Jaffe, our amazing Project Intern, teaches the kids how to use the hand



*Project Intern Micah Jaffe demonstrates hand lens technique © Lois Brunet*

lens to see the interlocking structure of the feather. Kids are encouraged to explore their surroundings with the hand lens to see what they can discover.

In all we've put together 6 levels of lessons, from kindergarten to 5th grade, totaling over an hour of video instruction. Every lesson has an outdoor activity, like looking for good habitat where migratory birds can refuel. We also took care to include a strong message on conservation. Kathy Degner shares the



*Kathy Degner with Albie © Lois Brunet*

story of Albie, the fledgling Laysan Albatross, who winds up with a belly full of plastic.

To view some of our videos, go to the Bird Science page on our website (found in the Education dropdown menu). Enjoy!

*Lois Brunet*

## CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER NEWS

## PAS Gets New Publicity Chair!



*Kelsey Reckling keeps the PAS fashion trend alive in a smart vermilion flycatcher hat*

Riding a mandate to raise the profile of PAS, Kelsey Reckling was unanimously approved to join the board at its September meeting. A "Cliffs Notes" autobiography follows:

Howdy folks!

I am thrilled to have joined on as Pasadena Audubon Society's new Publicity Chair. You can

find me through all of our social media accounts, so if you don't already, follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. I'm always looking for good bird photos to feature on our social media pages, so if you'd like to contribute, feel free to send any photos my way! [kelseywreck@gmail.com](mailto:kelseywreck@gmail.com)

I'm originally from Houston, Texas, and have spent a lot of time in Colorado throughout my life. I moved to Los Angeles in 2013. When I was a kid, my mom always had bird feeders out and bird books around, and I remember using my grandpa's old binoculars to look at birds. However, I didn't get seriously into birding until 2016. At that point, I wanted to know and learn anything I could about birds!

I began by volunteering at California Wildlife Center, assisting in the rehabilitation of our injured and sick native wildlife. After a year there, I became a volunteer at the Natural History Museum of LA County with the intention of trying to get into the Ornithology department. Instead I ended up spending a year working in the Entomology department, but I figured: if I want to know about birds, then I should know more about bugs... and plants. I then pursued becoming a certified California Naturalist, volunteering with the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a nest monitor for California Condors, bird-banding at Audubon Starr Ranch and Audubon Debs Park (where I also led some native plant walks), and prepping bird specimens with Moore Lab of Zoology at Occidental College. And, well, eventually I found my way here, to Pasadena Audubon!



*Glowing House Wren © Jim Margitan*

## What Was That Call?

Over the years, I have gotten better at identifying birds by their call. At the very least, an unfamiliar call is a signal for me to go look for a rare or new bird. Because I started birding in my fifties, it's going to be a race for me between the time I'm good at identifying calls and the time I lose my hearing.

For a few years, the Cornell Bird Laboratory has offered the Merlin bird ID application. You submit a photo, or you answer a few questions, and ID suggestions are delivered. It's great! But there was nothing to help with bird calls.

That's about to change. Keep track of this web address: <https://birdnet.cornell.edu/api/> If you have a smartphone, there are many apps available that you can use to record a call, and then you can upload the recording to that site. You can submit an MP4 or other audio file, and the site will analyze it and return ID suggestions. It's pretty accurate. Most recently, it helped me ID a Dark-eyed Junco singing while hidden in an oak tree. (In Southern California, if you can't identify a call, it seems like it's always an Oak Titmouse, a Bewick's Wren, or a Dark-eyed Junco.)

*Mark Hunter*

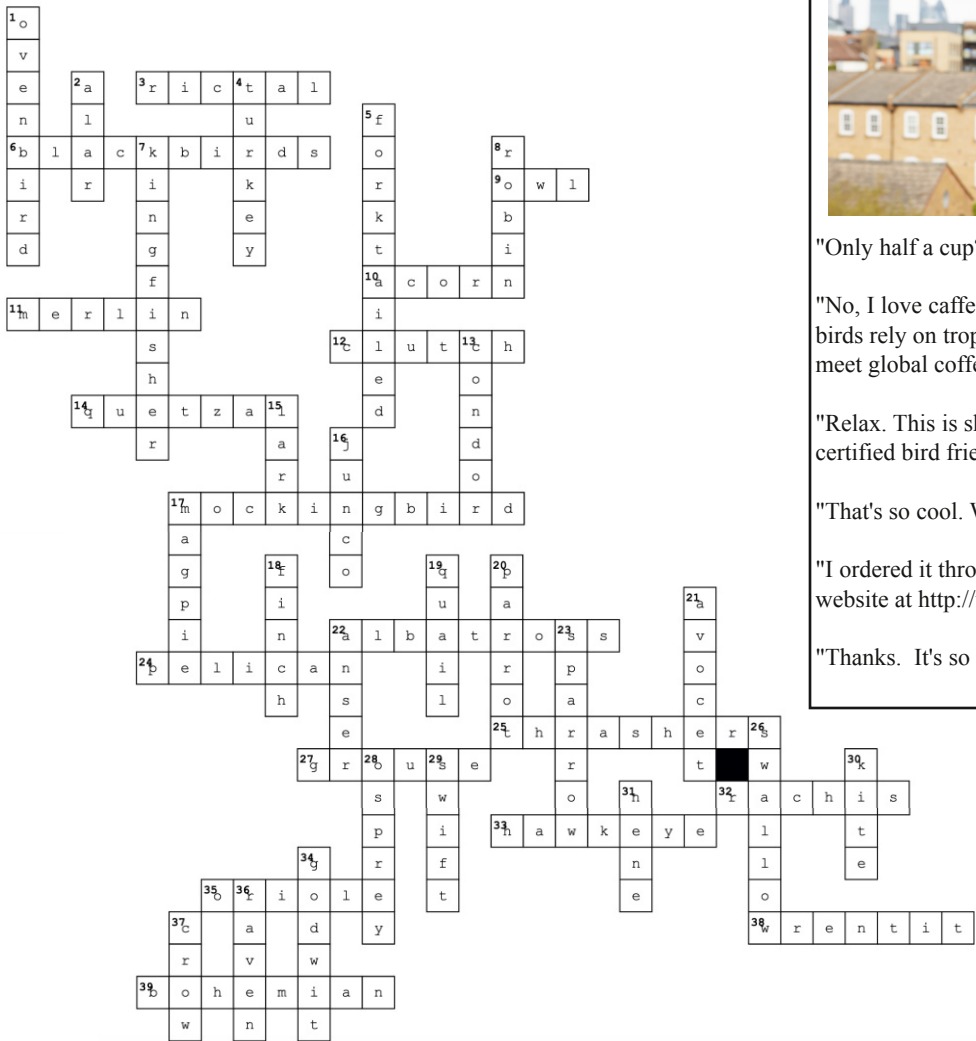


## PAS Member Reports on Ornithologist's Cross-County Bike Odyssey

Dr. Bridget Alex, PAS member, anthropologist at Caltech and Pasadena City College, and science writer for the National Audubon magazine, conducted a pair of interviews with Harvard Ornithology Professor Scott Edwards during and after he fulfilled a dream of bicycling cross-country from Massachusetts to Oregon last summer.

Initially the journey was an end in itself, but in the days before Edwards' departure, protests erupted over the killing of George Floyd, and birder Chris Cooper shared his now infamous encounter in New York City's Central Park. Edwards, who is black, decided he ought to raise awareness for Black Lives Matter at the same time, so he mounted a sign on his bike for much of the trek. Read all about his (mostly) aural birding, and the ups and downs of his two-and-a-half month ride at <https://www.audubon.org/content/bridget-alex>.

**PUZZLE SOLUTION**



"Only half a cup? Cutting back on caffeine, eh?"

"No, I love caffeine. It's just that...I found out countless birds rely on tropical forests that are being cut down to meet global coffee demand."

"Relax. This is shade-grown Birds & Beans coffee. It's certified bird friendly, USDA organic, and Fair Trade."

"That's so cool. Where'd you get it?"

"I ordered it through Pasadena Audubon. Go to their website at <http://www.pasadenaudubon.org/coffee>."

"Thanks. It's so delicious, too [slurp]!"

**Hope is the thing with feathers**

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -*

*And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.*



*Emily Dickinson*

**Thank you to our Wonderful Donors!**

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## Welcome to our New Members

ALHAMBRA: William Whitmore, Aida Segura, Shelley Machock, Bob Kirk, Grace Lu, Leeziel Lopez, Linda Ginn, Rosella Moore;  
ALTADENA: David R. Jones, Gertrude Rugland, Hildegard Klotzle, Lee A. Baker, Jeff Herring, Kim Alvarez, Carol Jones, Ruti Talmor;  
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It's never been easier. Simply visit [pasadenaaudubon.org](http://pasadenaaudubon.org), click on "JOIN PAS" under the "HOME" tab and fill out the form online.

Membership dues provide important support for our education, conservation and outreach efforts. Your contact information is never shared.