



Drawing by
Guy Coheleach

THE WRENTIT

Founded 1904

Pasadena Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 70 — No. 2

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

November 2021-January 2022

PAS Exceeds Fundraising Goal for Guidebook on Local Birding

Our campaign for the Birding Guide to the Greater Pasadena was a resounding success! Our target was to raise \$20,000 to fund editions in English and Spanish. We raised over \$23,750! We owe this success to you, our members, and to mission-aligned organizations and friends. It's been both humbling and exciting to see the support and enthusiasm!

In addition to the many individuals and partner organizations who stepped forward, we'd like to highlight corporate sponsor Celestron who not only provided financial support, but also sponsored an additional 10 binoculars and 2 birding scopes for use by the Bird Science Program as well as outreach. The support has gone far beyond the expectation of the fundraising committee, and we cannot express enough gratitude.

continued on page 6



*One of the gorgeous renderings produced for the soon-to-be released
Birding Guide to the Greater Pasadena Area. © Catherine Hamilton*

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

As I write this, I am being distracted by several Lesser Goldfinches that are busily gleaning seeds from what's left of my Hooker's Evening Primroses. They are so focused and engaged that I delight in watching them. They also make me glad that I am being a little bit lazier in the garden this year. The other day, I was tidying my garden a little bit to prepare for the rain that (we hope!) is coming, and I was sorely tempted to cut back the primrose because it looks like dead brown sticks. But I scratched a little on the seed pods and realized that they were still full of seeds! So I left them for the goldfinches. They make my garden look a bit messy, but that's okay because I grow it for the birds, not human eyes.

I left the seed heads on the salvia for the same reason. The finches prefer the primrose, but the White-crowned Sparrows love the seeds in the sage. The juncos seem quite happy foraging on the ground for any seeds they can find, and right now, there are plenty!

I am also being just the tiniest bit lazy about leaves. I'm leaving the leaves! They provide much-needed mulch as well as wonderful habitat for all kinds of insects and other critters. I know this works, because I see Bewick's Wrens skulking under shrubs in search of bugs and California Towhees fossicking in the mulch and dirt every day. They leave a bit of mess on the

driveway, but cleaning that is much easier than raking all of the leaves!

Maybe it's good to be a little bit lazy. Maybe it's good to let nature do what nature does best. This certainly seemed to be one of the messages from the talk we heard about fire from Dr. Chad Hanson. He argues that our over-management of forests is one reason that our fires are so dangerous. If you didn't get to see the program, I encourage you to find it on our website. It shows that we would be better served by focusing our fire-management efforts on safety and protecting buildings rather than trying to control fires and restoring areas that have burned because fire is natural and nature depends on fire to flourish.

The more I learn about natural processes and the impacts of climate change on our planet, the more I think that we need to significantly shift our thinking about nature. Rather than seeing nature simply as a resource for us to exploit, we should be focusing on ways that we can serve and support nature. We need to do all that we can to keep earth habitable for all of us, including the birds. How are you serving the earth today?

We are Pasadena Audubon, and we take care of bird (and human!) habitat.

Laura Solomon

MONTHLY CHAPTER MEETINGS: UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Birds and Oil

November 17th, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Dave Weeshoff

In early October an undersea oil pipeline spewed thousands of gallons of crude oil into the waters off Orange County. The environmental impact has been substantial, and the ramifications of the spill will likely be felt for years. Dave Weeshoff has spent decades on the front lines in the battle to keep bird habitats free from oil spills and to rehabilitate birds fouled by oil. He'll give an expert's view on what's involved in responding to major oil spills and what we can do to prevent future spills.

David Weeshoff is a long-time member of International Bird Rescue in San Pedro, having held pretty much every position there from volunteer to chair of IBR's board of directors. He's also a member of the Board of Directors for Pasadena Audubon.

Pasadena Gets Tepid Marks from Commercial Green Cities Index

Danish online furniture retailer Interiorbeat has created an online tool for comparing U.S. metro areas by green space quantity and accessibility. Out of 225 similarly-sized cities in the country, Crown City ranked a middling 180th in terms of total green area, 191st out in terms of per capita green area, and 168th by percentage of residents living within a ten-minute walk of a public green space.

Interiorbeat used data available through cloud-based geospatial processing technologies in the Google Earth Engine. According to Interiorbeat's analysis, less than 35% of Pasadena is green, or 8 square miles of the approximately 23 square miles total, and this figure includes private lawns and gardens. There are approximately 1587 square feet of green space per capita, again including private property. Perhaps most deflating, well under 1% of Pasadena residents live within a ten-minute walk of a public green space. For comparison, they found that within the entire data set, the median green space is just over 54%, the median green space per capita is 4365 square feet, but the median percentage of the population within 10-minutes' walk of a public green space was a mere 0.90% (note: Interiorbeat defined this population as living within 1000 feet of green zones. That's a good slower than my walking pace).

The (potentially) good news is that the total amount of green space in Pasadena has actually increased 3 percent in the last ten years, and the amount of green space per capita has increased by over a third. For those curious, the link to the page is: https://interiorbeat.com/green-city-index/?city_id=Pasadena-CA

Interiorbeat's analysis does not take account the vast amount of green space immediately to our north in the form of the San Gabriel Mountains, nor whether these green spaces are bird friendly (e.g. whether shrubs and trees are native), an issue of special importance to us and one on which our Conservation & Advocacy Committee has been working with city officials for some time. Yet, even if Interiorbeat's methodology has obvious limitations, the tool indicates that even a city that does make an effort to prioritize green space, as Pasadena does, may have a lot of work left to do.

75th Annual Christmas Birdcount Orientation

December 15th, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Jon Fisher

The pandemic has put the kibosh on too many PAS events to mention, but it didn't stop the CBC last year, and it's sure as heck not gonna stop us in 2021. This is our milestone 75th year of participation in the CBC, which is the oldest citizen science project in the country.

Organizer and compiler Jon Fisher will talk about the history of our count, notable species trend 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. There will be time set aside for Q&A at the end.

The Natural and Un-natural History of the L.A. River

January 19, 2022, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Mireya Valencia

When Angelenos think of the Los Angeles River -- if they think of it at all -- they picture the endless dystopian concrete trench they see in movies and glimpse from the freeway. But the L.A. River was once home to a vibrant and complex ecosystem, and you can still see traces of it today. Join Mireya Valencia, Education and Programs Manager for Friends of the L.A. River, for a fascinating talk about the river's past, present, and possible future.



If you're ever hankering to see a Great Blue Heron, head to the LA River. You're bound to see one, or perhaps several. © Learden Matthies

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>. Please register on the website to receive the meeting link.

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 LoisB.PAS@gmail.com if you would like the Zoom link to attend.

November 3rd, 2021
December 1st, 2021
January 5th, 2022
February 2nd, 2022
March 2nd, 2022

PAGE THREE BIRD

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

On any given day, the soundscapes of Southern California's chaparral, woodlands, wetlands, and even parts of the high desert are liable to feature the quizzical, quasi-electronic *zeer* of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Because they're not too choosy about which insects they eat, these stout little birds are able to thrive year-round in a variety of habitats in the greater Los Angeles area.

Their blue-gray coloration is confined to the head and back, and is more faint in females; breeding males acquire a distinctive black unibrow. Both sexes have a fine white eye ring and a touch of brown on the wing. Their much rarer cousin, the California Gnatcatcher, is more slaty, and breeding males are black-capped, but the surest way to tell the two species apart is by glimpsing the underside of the tail feathers, which are mostly white on Blue-grays, mostly black on Californias. The Western United States is home to the *obscura* subspecies of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, while the bluer *caerulea* subspecies predominates east of Big Bend, Texas. Additional resident subspecies have been identified in Mexico.

As noted above, these birds do not live on gnats alone. Prey can also include leaf hoppers, plant bugs, weevils, spiders, and caterpillars, which are snapped up through a combination of foliage gleaning and miniature fly-catching sorties proportionate to their quarry. The presence of broad-leafed trees, such as oaks and maples, seems to be the more important factor in deciding where to establish themselves, so Blue-grey Gnatcatchers avoid coniferous forests with little in the way of undergrowth. Studies have shown they also seem to prefer contiguous habitat of more than forty acres, which may explain why you don't see them as often in the pocket parks around town.

Once chosen, males defend their territories from rival males with great tenacity. Vocalizations, which can include bits of other birds' songs, are backed up by vigorous pursuit that can escalate to aerial battles! Females are treated much more hospitably. Males give prospective mates a four-dollar tour of the territory and, if sufficiently impressed, she and her new beau commence building a nest of grass and twigs, 2-3 inches in diameter, bound together with spiderwebs and adorned with lichen for camouflage. Nests are typically situated two to four feet off the ground at the junction of a side limb and a branch. Clutches of three to five pale blue eggs are incubated by both parents for about two weeks, and the chicks, fed a diet of increasingly large arthropods, fledge after another fortnight. In a mating season, several broods are possible, and in the case of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, fecundity is facilitated by males recycling the first nest to build a second, in some instances while it's still occupied by the first brood.



With his Boris Karloff brows, this Eaton Canyon denizen seems to be asking, "Say, when do I get to be the Page 3 bird?" Well, it's your time to shine, little friend. © Javier Vazquez...again!



The definitive field marks of the lower tail feathers are evident in this photo of a breeding male Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. © Javier Vazquez

It all sounds quite idyllic, but like so many other songbirds, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have to worry about brood parasitism from Brown-headed Cowbirds. And unlike some songbirds, once victimized, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are unable to do anything about it. Indeed, their habit of relocating rather than reusing their nests is thought to be a strategy for avoiding nest predation (by snakes and corvids), ectoparasites, and cowbirds.

The climate change forecast for Blue-gray Gnatcatchers predicts continued northward shift in their range, which has already moved roughly 200 miles north in the last quarter century with the concomitant rise in average temperatures. Our *obscura* subspecies may become more common in the Pacific Northwest and even lower Canada, and we may start to see tropical subspecies currently confined to Mexico in our neck of the woods, while *obscura* is extirpated from the hotter areas of its current range.

Carl Matthies

CONSERVATION

Huntington Beach Oil Spill Report

First, let me explain that I am reporting as an individual and not as a representative of any specific organization. I have been involved with five oil spill responses in various capacities, have attended numerous conferences and seminars, and been certified as an oil spill wildlife responder for 14 years. The Huntington Beach Oil Spill (HBOS) was a result of a longitudinal split in an offshore oil pipeline that released about 26,000 gallons of crude oil off the coast of Huntington Beach in a very brief period of time. The exact cause of the spill, the time to formally acknowledge there was a spill, and the official report are subject to exhaustive reviews, and are months away from definitive resolution. And, likely, HBOS will be the subject of litigation, especially as it relates to mitigation and financial responsibility.

The good news is 1) it was a singular event - not a continuous event over multiple days, 2) There were advantageous weather conditions and water temperatures which tended to keep the floating oil away from most of the coastline, and, most importantly, 3) California has the most capable oil spill prevention and response capabilities of any other jurisdiction, arguably in the world.

As a result of a 6.5-cent tax on every barrel of oil coming into the state, or pumped from within the state, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDF&W) Office of Spill Prevention and Response has funding to both enforce regulations on the handling of oil (prevention) as well as planning for, and orchestrating, spill response activities. While there are other State agencies that monitor and regulate on-shore oil pipelines, rail transport, and tanker-truck transport, the CDF&W is the department which bears most of regulatory enforcement and oil spill response responsibility.

In the event of an oil spill the Federal Government response is coordinated through either the Coast Guard if in marine waters, or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) if on land. One of those two agencies along with CDF&W (representing California), and the Responsible Party (the spiller), constitute the leadership of the Incident Command System (ICS). That formal ICS is immediately activated when a spill is reported and is the central coordinator of all aspects of the spill response – search, rescue, resource deployment, monitoring, cleanup, financial, logistics, wildlife response, sub-contractors, Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs), etc. Any organization which is involved will have been certified to participate and will understand the structure and responsibilities of the various

Branches within the ICS and know who to call, email, notify, take leadership from, etc. so as to prevent jurisdictional conflicts and redundancies as well as to promote efficiency in allocation of resources, press/media relations, resolve conflicts, etc.

Specific to wildlife – birds, marine mammals, turtles, etc. as in the HBOS case, the ICS Wildlife Branch is in control and, through the CDF&W Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) and other ICS Branches provides for the search, collection, transportation, rehabilitation and release of the animals.

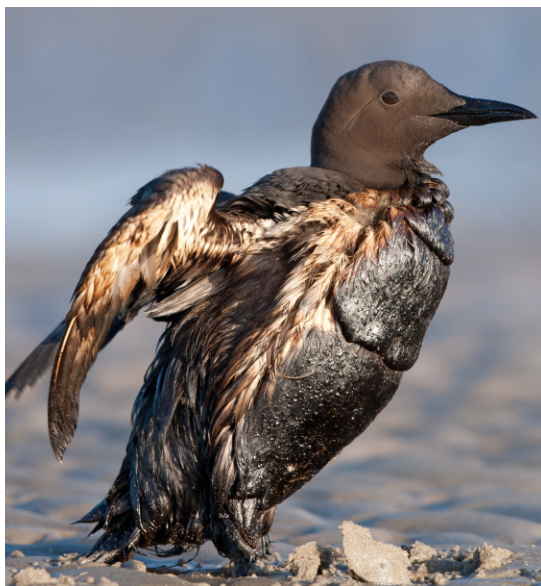
The OWCN, managed by the U.C. Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, and under the leadership of Dr. Michel Zuccardi, is a statewide collective of trained wildlife care providers, regulatory agencies, academic institutions and wildlife organizations working to rescue and rehabilitate oiled wildlife in California. It has more than 40 member organizations, a cadre of more than 1,300 trained responders, and specialized equipment and facilities throughout California. One of their major facilities is in San Pedro, which is the workplace for International Bird Rescue, where every day they rehabilitate sick, injured, orphaned, and occasionally, oiled birds. By doing this important work they also insure the facility is operating well, the entire infrastructure is maintained, and there is sufficient frozen fish on hand for an emergency such as an oil spill off Huntington Beach., etc. And, parenthetically, they were prepared to respond to an Elegant Tern crisis in Long Beach Harbor in July.

This comprehensive OWCN community of public, private, for-profit, and non-profit organizations regularly conduct drills, update response plans, recruits and trains volunteers, conducts research, arranges international conferences and works with oil spill response partners to share their skills world-

wide.

Thus, the entire HBOS response was immediate, comprehensive, and, as reported, effective in mitigating the tragic oil spill off the Southern California coast. And this spill prevention/response structure remains ready to immediately respond to the next one, and the next one, and the next one, for as long as we drill, frack, pump and move oil by ship, pipeline, rail car, or truck.

Dave Weeshoff



A Common Murre covered in oil. Oil makes feathers ineffective for flight, thermoregulation, and buoyancy. In other words, oil is lethal to birds. Photo: Shutterstock.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

BIRD SCIENCE PROGRAM

Malibu Migration Madness

We had at least one quality species in Malibu, a Solitary Sandpiper picked out by Corey Husic at Legacy Park, as well as a local specialty in the shape of some Nanday (Black-hooded) Parakeets at Malibu Bluffs Park. Vaux's Swifts were present in numbers at both locations, and Legacy Park also featured Red-necked Phalaropes, Blue-winged Teals, a downright nasty port-a-potty, and a Virginia Rail, though most of the group missed its brief emergence from the tule reeds. Under the circumstances, however, things were pretty slow in the way of migrants in Malibu, despite the cool temperatures and northerly winds promising perfect weather for fall migration.



Luke Tiller considers making a run for it as group members seethe over the lack of migrants at Malibu Bluffs Park.. © Carl Matthies

Our group therefore decided to decamp to Bob Kildee Park in Camarillo. While the park's interior was host to several action-packed little league games, the birding action was all on periphery, in the magical tamarisk row on its eastern border. The tamarisks held a nice collection of west coast migrant warblers: Townsend's, Wilson's and Black-throated Gray. We got to see a stunning warbler typically associated with the coniferous forests of New England: Blackburnian Warbler! Surprisingly, this wasn't the highlight of the trip, because a bird usually found in Mexico and points south to Bolivia was stealing the show: A cracking Yellow-green Vireo.

Luke Tiller

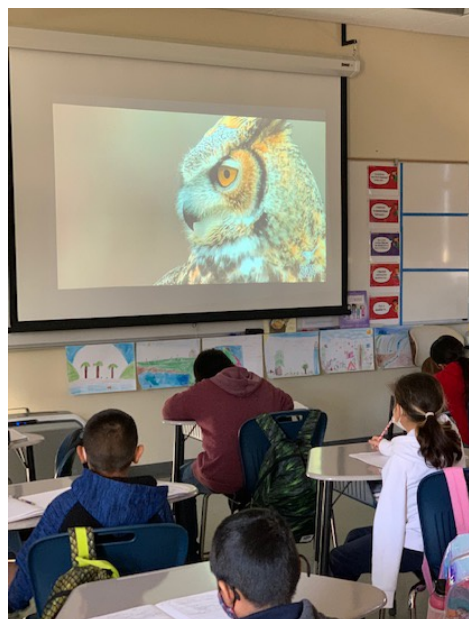


A wayward Yellow-green Vireo makes a curtain call for birders staking out the tamarisk trees at Bob Kildee Park in Camarillo © Luke Tiller

Washington Elementary Students 'Build Their Own Birds'

Last month was October, the time of year inextricably linked to Halloween for the young and the young-at-heart. It was only fitting that Ms. Mickelson's 4th graders at Washington Elementary STEM Magnet were eagerly engaged in a Frankensteinian creative exercise to design their own birds, drawing inspiration from the incredible diversity of real-world birds and their wide variety of shapes and sizes.

Students viewed a video, produced by the Bird Science Program, on the remarkable array of bird adaptations (by the way, this video can be viewed on the PAS website). Then they studied handouts on the different bills, feet, and wing designs found on birds with different natural histories. Finally, they paid a visit to the school's native plant garden to prime their



Students at Washington Elementary STEM Magnet are held in rapt(or) attention by a Great Horned Owl featured in the Bird Science video on avian adaptations.

burgeoning brains. After that it was time to put colored pencil to paper and come up with their own completely novel avian creations!

Teacher Katherine Mickelson reports: "My students had a great time working on the Build a Bird activity. As a teacher, I appreciated how the activities addressed multiple learning modalities and can be adapted based on student needs. The video was awesome and the 4th graders 'ooooohed and awwwwed' at the sharp, close-up images."

"My favorite part was acting like a bird flying over the trees,"

continued on page 6

CHAPTER NEWS

Birding Guidebook (cont'd)

PAS is committed to providing 20% of these guides free of charge to area schools, libraries, nature centers and other organizations. It is our hope this will lead new members of our community to discover the joys of birds and birding!

We hope to have the Birding Guide out for the holiday season. We're also planning a Book Release Party, so watch for news on that.

Sok Tng

Bird Science Program (cont'd)

added student Henry Linares Mancillas.

Many fantastic new forms of fowl were created that day. We can't wait to see what the clever kids at Washington Elementary STEM Magnet dream up next.



Left: Diego Rosas works diligently at perfecting his preternatural passerine. Right: Leonardo Serrano's "King Gripper", apparently a menacing cross between a Magnificent Frigatebird, a hawk, and a Common Raven. You definitely don't want to get gripped by those talons! © Katherine Mickelson

Community Turns Out in Force for Coastal Cleanup

September 18th was a typical warm, sunny, late-summer morning at Brookside Park. But it became truly special when volunteers started gathering to beautify the Arroyo Seco as part of Heal the Bay's Coastal Cleanup Day. Site Manager Dave Weeshoff, along with a phalanx of seasoned volunteers, collected waivers and gave safety briefings to about one hundred people who showed up for the environment! Especially encouraging to see was the multi-generational participation, with everyone from young families to student groups to retirees getting involved.

By the time the event wound down at about noon, a conservative estimate of two hundred pounds of trash had been collected. According to Heal the Bay, Los Angeles County volunteers covered over 50 miles of area on land and underwater, collecting approximately 5000 pounds of trash and 160 pounds of recyclables. Birds, beasts, and botanicals from Pasadena to Palos Verdes and beyond will benefit from this concerted effort to "heal the bay". And of course, so will we. Keep up the great work, folks.

Carl Matthies



Coffee Club is Back!

Flavorful, fair-trade coffee that's grown in the shade to preserve vital tropical bird habitat is once again available for purchase through PAS. Chose from six delicious varieties of the Birds & Beans brand, including espresso and decaf, by going to the Resources tab at pasadenaudubon.org and clicking on "Coffee Club". Let's all raise our mugs to Leandra Woods for taking over as Coffee Club Manager!



"Look out, litter. We're coming for you!" From left: Lois Brunet, Annabelle Aylmer, Kathy Degner, and Viveca Sapin, all armed and ready with trash pickers at Brookside Park



Two young Coastal Cleanup participants prepare to deposit the trash they collected where it should have gone in the first place...the dumpster. Three cheers for volunteers!

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR BIRDING GUIDE TO THE GREATER PASADENA AREA SPONSORS

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Become a Part of the Dawn Chorus

Consider joining our monthly donor program to provide ongoing support for all our programs and events. Sign up at pasadenaaudubon.org/donate. Dawn Chorus donors receive a beautiful enamel pin designed by PAS' own Patrick Walling and Graham Hamby!



Welcome Aboard, New Members

ALHAMBRA: Susan Aguilar, Pat Cuneo, Yvonne Garcia, Sylvia Montante, Natasha Morisawa and Anthony Bell, Cheryl Myers; **ALTADENA:** Barbara Ackermann, Araxie Churukian, Serina Diniega, Joan Hooks, Edrina Mahone, Linda Miller, Elizabeth Sawyer Cunningham, Victoria Seewaldt; **ARCADIA:** Bobbi Gaffke, Olga Hassler, David Shewmake, Kathryn Smeltzer; **AZUSA:** Vianka Gustafson; **BURBANK:** Gordon Barnard; **COVINA:** George Eslinger, Richard Scobey; **DUARTE:** Dennis Burt, James Dunn, Irene Phung, Gloria Romero; **GLENDALE:** Juliana Hazlett, Lyndsay Peters; **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE:** Sally Emerson, Kurt Liewer; **LLANO:** Ruth Gravance; **LOS ANGELES:** Linda Othenin-Girard, Michael Perry, Van Pierszalowski; **MONROVIA:** Laurel Cross, Kara Trummel; **MONTEREY PARK:** Martin Jung, Yen Liu; **PASADENA:** Karen Barker, Barbara Bellano, Charlotte E. Cantrell, Cara Corngold, Sarah Culhane, Jennifer Dotson, Ramona Flood, Mary Freeman, Pamela R. Jackson, Stella Kenner, Sean Lyon, Ruth Mayeda, Cythnia McDonnell, Mary McGilvray, Lorna Nelson, Marvel Richards, A. Rood, Terry Snyder, Ellen F. Strauss, Barb Tagge, Edith Tyebkhan, Esther H. Wender, Lisa Wintner, Hitomi Yamamuro... Richard Yuster; **ROSEMEAD:** Sandra Curtis, Ellen Dundas, Myrna Kaelon; **SAN GABRIEL:** Leslie Fedor, Joyce Palacio, Joyce Runge; **SOUTH PASADENA:** Margaret O'Donnell, Sarah Loverme, Jodi Reagan, Stephen Roscow, Susan Rozler; **TEMPLE CITY:** Mike Appleby, Nenetta Barry; **THOUSAND OAKS:** Ava Molinar

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MEMORIAL & TRIBUTE GIFTS

Mary Renaker gave a gift in honor of Sok Tng King, for her
dedication to nature.

Susan Day gave a gift in memory of her mother, and she
writes, "Although she was afraid of birds, she worked tirelessly
to conserve open spaces for wildlife."

Marianne & Rob Bender gave a gift in memory of Malcolm
Crooks

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PAS Chapter-only Membership supports our conservation,
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