



Least Bell's Vireo's Voice

Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates Newsletter

December 2020



We continue our Saturday morning nature walks, observing, of course, all regulations aimed to keep us safe. The last few weeks have not been rich in sightings, but we are noticing a gradual increase in numbers of species. Water in the river and last Saturday attracted red-winged blackbirds, not commonly seen in the area. (Check page 5.) If you visit the Center, a good place to see small birds bathing and eating is the pond in Woody's trail: white-crowned sparrows, song sparrows, towhees and others. (Check page 3.)

Web site access:

WNNCA.org

Our email: wnnca@att.net

JANUARY BIRD OF THE MONTH

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET
(*Regulus calendula*)

December Bird of the Month

Northern Flicker

(*Colaptes auratus*)



These smashing photos by Lou (no surprise there) are of our December chosen bird, the Northern flicker. Flickers are part of the woodpecker family. Its toes are different from other birds, having two toes in front and two toes in back of its feet, providing excellent balance and facilitating climbing. It has a sharp bill with which it does its drumming on trees in search for insects and other food, and with its long tongue, it is able to extract nutrition from the holes it creates. They build their nests in holes and seem particular about cleanliness. They make excellent parents, both sharing in the responsibility.

There are two groups: the Yellow-shafted Flicker that occurs in the east and far north, and the Red-shafted Flicker in the west, which is the one we are familiar with. They seem to adapt to urban areas as well as open woodlands.

Native Americans consider the flicker feathers as religious articles. A red feather on a prayer stick usually reflected war, physical or spiritual. When feathers were worn in the hair, indicated the membership of a medicine society. The flicker teaches that the same energy that used for war can also be used for healing.



Welcome to Grace Wisdom Corner

We persuaded Grace to share her love and knowledge of all things natural, especially in this area. She is a fountain of information on native plants and she will be sharing some of it with us at this time, which is a significant time for the care of our native flora. The following is in her own words:

Mediterranean climates run between 30 and 45 degrees North or South of the Equator. The WNNC is part of the 3% of the land areas of the world with a Mediterranean climate. Coastal California, South and Southwestern Australia, Western Cape of South Africa, Chile and of course the area around the Mediterranean Sea, enjoy this type of climate, with moderate weather, irregular winter rainfall, propensity to fires in the summer, and almost no freezing temperatures.

The vegetation is primarily arboreal and shrubby evergreens. Most of these plants are dormant in the summer and grow during the winter. Some are not to be watered in the summer and pruning should be done before their growing season.

The Nature Center plants along the San Gabriel river cover three communities. From the ocean to the Whittier Narrows is coastal sage brush, along the banks of the river is riparian, and up-slope toward the mountains is chaparral.

To name a few examples, sycamores and laurels grow in the riparian area, currents, holly-leaf cherries and foothill penstemons are present in the chaparral, and blackberries appear in the coastal sagebrush zone.

Planting seeds from annual natives should be done in the fall, just before or after the first rains. Perennials should be planted from Christmas through March, giving them time to root before it gets too hot. The same applies if you are using cuttings from perennials, remembering their growing period is from the first rains through March.

(More to come)

POND LIFE

How many can you identify?





A HUMAN- INTEREST STORY

AND A PARAKEET ONE TOO

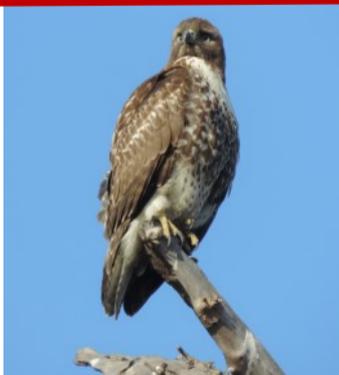
This is a Miltre Parakkeet. It is a pet, owned by a neighbor of one of our members. She was touched by the incident and so were we. Here is the story:

CAN A PET PARAKEET RECOGNIZE THE VOICE OF IT'S OWNER?

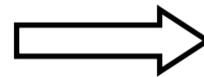
It was a sad day for my neighbor. Her Mitred Parakeet, Cutie, had disappeared from her backyard while sunning. There were thoughts of a cat or a Cooper's Hawk getting to her. Her wings were clipped. My neighbor was alert all day listening for possible callings. Towards the late afternoon, she thought she heard her and I accompanied her around a square block, calling her name. We identified a clump of trees where her callings became louder and after asking permission of the owner, went to the backyard where my neighbor and Cutie were reunited!

Submitted by Christina.

(Thanks.)



Spirit surveying her realm



Red-winged blackbird



A good source of bird information is an Audubon site that can be reached at:
audubonconnect@audubon.org