



Least Bell's Vireo's Voice

Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates Newsletter

January 2021



2020 Christmas Bird Count (An annual event)

← **Black-crowned Night Heron**
(*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

Photo by Tom

The Count at Whittier Narrows

A Christmas Bird Count adventure surely awaited five enthusiastic birders just west of the nature center off Wells Road one fine Saturday morning. Just as the birders prepare for the morning count, four dogs that are off-leash in the area see them from afar and suddenly charge at full speed towards them at the gate near the 20-acre lake area. Luckily, the birders are able to hold their ground as the dogs rush past them without incident. Phew! What a way to start the day.

After these resilient birders collected themselves, twenty-two bird species in the area were spotted, including a Say's phoebe catching insects in the recently burned area, and a female Nuttall's woodpecker. Toward the end of this adventure, a tiny blue-gray gnatcatcher perches within arm's length to investigate a couple of the birders. One could say that Christmas Bird Count at Whittier Narrows Nature Center was a success despite an unruly dogs snafu.

Charlie Valdez, President

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**FEBRUARY
BIRD OF THE
MONTH**

**AMERICAN KESTREL
(*Falco sparverius*)** |

January Bird of the Month Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)



In this photo, Lou was lucky enough to catch our featured bird with his crown on display. It gives the species its name, but it is present only on males and it is seldom visible. The name *Regulus* derives from the Latin word *Rex* meaning, of course, king. In the eyes of many, it can also be called King of Cuteness.

Photos by Lou



This is a very small bird, barely four inches, but extremely active, searching for insects and spiders but also berries and other fruits. Its call is said to be varied although not very loud. Note the distinctive eye ring. It is also said that ruby-crowned kinglets can use the "broken wing" maneuver to distract enemies from its nest. Kudos for the courage of this little treasure.



Grace's Wisdom Corner

(Featuring a special plant every month)

This month: **BLADDER-POD**
(*Isomeris arborea*)

This is an evergreen shrub with gray-green leaves, alternate. Flowers are yellow, in terminal clusters, and seedpods are inflated capsules, rattling when dry.

It flowers from February to May but has a few flowers throughout the year. It is found on hillsides and bluffs from central California to Baja and also around the western edges of Mojave and Colorado deserts.

Seeds sown in the ground during the fall germinate within a week or ten days. They are not very particular as to soil, and they are drought resistance. If planted on dry slopes or road banks, it will grow with no more water than rainfall. In a garden it should not be heavily watered in the summer.

It is very attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds as well as bees. Requiring very little effort, if planted in your garden or yard, it will reward you with visits from these species as long as there are flowers present.

It is a sturdy plant that seems to take care of itself.

At WNNC, it can be found in a couple of places, but the largest example is by the river gate.



THIS MONTH'S SIGHTINGS

(including Bird Count Event)



A rare appearance by a Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*)
Photo by Charlie



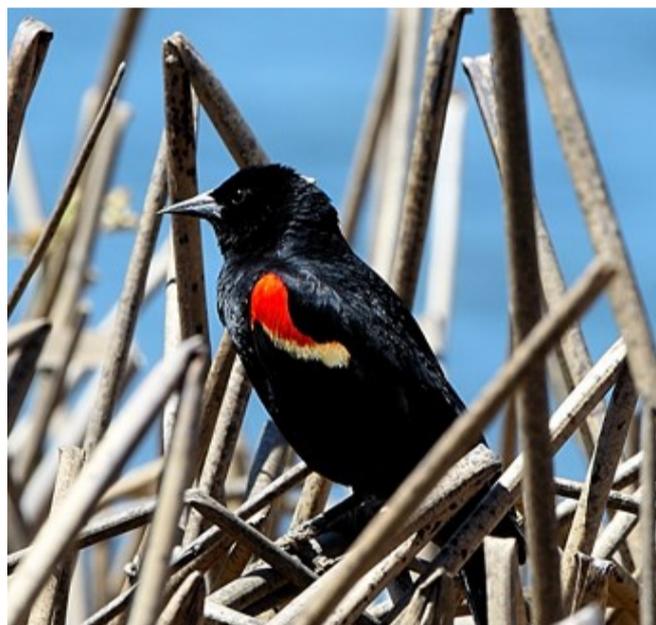
Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*)

Photo by Tom



↑
Lesser goldfinches
(*Carduelis psaltria*)

Photo by Socorro



↑
Red-winged blackbird
by the river
(*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Photo by Lou

→
Yellow-rumped Warbler
at the pond
(*Dendroica coronata*)

Photo by Charlie

