



Least Bell's Vireo's Voice

Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates Newsletter

January 2022



Lets set the alarm for an early renewal of our membership dues

- \$30—Individual
- \$45—Family
- \$75 —Friend Associate
- \$100 —Patron Associate
- \$250—Support Associate
- \$1,000—Golden Oak Associate
- \$15—Senior (Over 62)
- \$15—Student

To: WNNCA
 1000 N. Durfee Ave.
 South El Monte, CA
 91733

*Or better yet,
come visit*

HAPPENNINGS

January 1st:
Nature Center
Open



NCA Meeting
January 11
10:00 AM



Revegetation for
classroom project
starts



Web site access:

WNNCA.org

FEBRUARY BIRD OF THE MONTH

Red-tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis)

Our email: wnnca@att.net

January Bird of the Month

California Thrasher

(Toxostoma redivivum)



Thrasher pairs form long term bonds, and both male and females construct the nest with twigs and line it with grasses and other materials, usually in dense shrubbery. The eggs number from one to six, blue with dark spots, usually raising two broods per year. The incubation period is about 14 days and the fledglings leave the nest in about two weeks. Sometimes they start the process for a second brood before the first brood is quite ready to be on their own, so the male continues feeding them while the female takes care of the second nesting.

Easily identifiable, they are a pleasure to encounter and listen to.

A couple of inches bigger than its Mockingbird relatives, but just as musical, the California Thrasher has a long tail and a deeply curved bill, although is not very colorful. Both genders sing with gusto and variety, and can imitate other species and sounds. Many a birder have been expecting to locate a Mockingbird after hearing their song, only to spot that unmistakable curved beak.

It inhabits chaparral environments, fairly widespread in spite of a decline in populations due to development and agriculture. Even feral cats pose a threat. They are permanent residents, staying within a certain home range.

Thrashers forage on the ground for insects and can insert their bill in and open it to find their prey. They also eat fruits and berries, including poison oak berries.





Grace's

Wisdom Corner

(Featuring a special plant every month)

Mule Fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*)

Mule Fat is a common large shrub, native to sage and scrub communities. It is also called Seepwillow or Water-wally.

The foliage is somewhat sticky with plenty of small fuzzy white flowers, tinged pink or red, flowering year round. It likes to grow near water sources, but it can look weed if it doesn't get enough moisture.

Mule Fat's range is threatened by land use and invasive species. It is a great pollinator, numerous insects, butterflies and bees are attracted to this plant, facilitating extensive pollen interchange.



A characteristic of this unassuming, yet important plant, is that there are male and female plants, easily distinguished by the flowers. As visible in the photo below, the female flowers resemble tiny delicate paintbrushes, while the male flowers have larger and broader heads with protruding spiky stamens.



It is said that cowboys and prospectors used to tie their mules to mule fat bushes to browse while they went about their business. The leaves would make the mules bloat and appear fat. Of course, next day they would be back to normal and the process would repeat.

That's where the name Mule Fat comes from.

Native Americans used the leaves as an eyewash and to stop chills. It was believed to cure baldness.

WREATH MAKING EVENT



A JOYFUL TIME

It warms our heart to see families that have made this event part of their holiday celebration.

A fun time was had by all attending.

Thanks Socorro for being at the heart of this project.

WNNC has lost a Friend

We have lost a great friend of WNNC, and an eminent birder. Ray Jillson passed away recently, and the birding community will greatly miss his vast expertise, his spirit, his almost uncanny sixth sense in identifying species, and his keen enjoyment of pursuing his passion for birds.

Ray will be remembered by all that had the pleasure (and experienced trepidation about not being able to make a good personal observation) to share one of his bird walks and learn from a master.

A NEW WNNC RESIDENT

This is a Western screech-Owl (*Otus kennicottii*) She, as you can see, has lost the vision in one eye and our Superintendent is delighted to have Dobby in her care. We hope go give you more information in the future.

