



# Least Bell's Vireo's Voice

**Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates Newsletter March 2022**

## Great Backyard Bird Count



A faithful group of Saturday morning birders showed up to participate in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count, promoted by Cornell University, National Audubon and Canada Birds. Lydia assembled a combined list and submitted it to ebird to make sure of WNNCA's contribution to this year numbers. Thanks, Lydia



Feb 19, 2022  
8:17 AM  
Traveling  
1.09 miles  
101 Minutes  
2 Egyptian Goose  
5 Mallard  
2 Mourning Dove  
3 Anna's Hummingbird  
2 Allen's Hummingbird  
11 American Coot  
3 Double-crested Cormorant  
2 American White Pelican  
4 Great Blue Heron  
3 Great Egret  
1 Snowy Egret  
1 Turkey Vulture  
1 Osprey  
1 Cooper's Hawk  
3 Red-tailed Hawk  
1 Nuttall's Woodpecker  
1 Northern Flicker  
1 American Kestrel  
1 Peregrine Falcon  
4 Black Phoebe  
2 Cassin's Kingbird  
2 California Scrub-Jay  
8 Common Raven  
4 Red-whiskered Bulbul  
3 Bushtit  
1 House Wren  
2 Northern Mockingbird  
3 Western Bluebird  
22 House Finch  
2 Purple Finch  
7 White-crowned Sparrow  
3 Song Sparrow  
3 California Towhee  
3 Spotted Towhee

Web site access:

**WNNCA.org**

Our email: [wnnca@att.net](mailto:wnnca@att.net)

**APRIL  
BIRD  
OF THE MONTH**  
**Cassin's kingbird**  
**(Tyrannus vociferans)**

# FEBRUARY

## Bird of the Month

**Vermilion flycatcher  
(*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)**



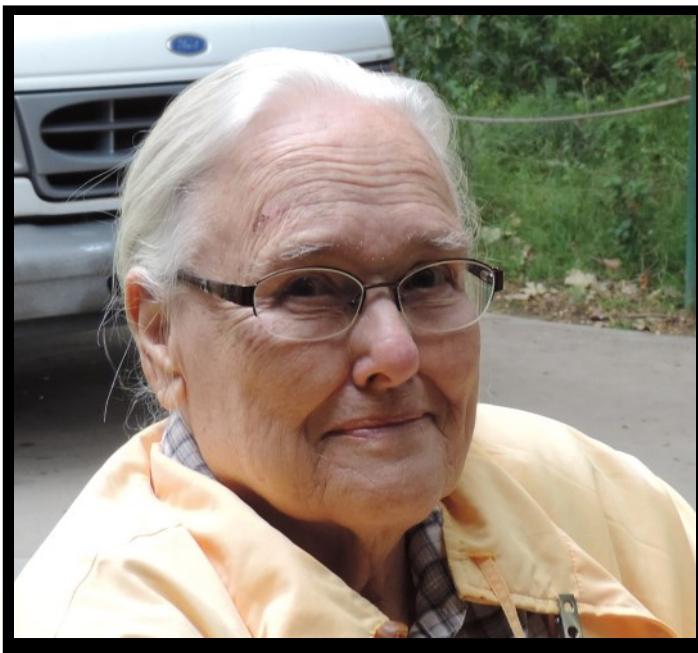
The vermilion flycatcher is a striking sight, especially the male of the species. The female is less colorful. Its range is South and Central America and Southern North America, winter visitor to the Gulf coast. Frequently found in streamside shrubs, bottomlands and small wooded ponds, near water.

Photo by Tom

They eat mostly flying insects captured on the wing by fling from an exposed perch. The male courts the female by offering her a butterfly or other scrumptious insect. The nest is made of twigs, lined with hair or feathers. Laying 2 to 4 eggs, they take two weeks to hatch and in 15 days, the chicks are ready to leave the nest.



At WNNC we have seen them in burned areas, possibly exploiting insect abundance, thus providing us with an impactful contrast between the apparent desolation of the fire and the beautiful sight of bird's brilliant plumage. Many philosophical pronouncements have been provoked by this unusual association.



# Grace's Wisdom Corner

(Featuring a special plant every month)

**White Sage**  
*(Salvia apiana)*



Salvia apiana is called white sage, bee sage or sacred sage. All names make sense: white sage for its silver-white pointy leaves, bee sage because it is very favored by bees, and sacred sage because it is the most sacred plant for Southern California tribes, deeply rooted in their culture. It grows naturally only in Southern and Baja California.

It is a perennial shrub, growing up to 6 feet tall, with flowers pale lavender to white, although different from other sages by not appearing in whorls but right on the sides of the stems.



The blossoms seem designed to aid in pollination, and it's said that white sage honey is clear, pale and very fine. (Apiana is a Latin reference to bees.) Medicinally, it was, and still is, used for respiratory congestions, sore throats, as diuretic, and for many other ailments, and as all salvias, for its anti-bacterial properties. Indigenous groups use it in ceremonies and healings for smudging, which is sacred smoke for purification and healing. Its use became sort of fashionable for all sort of social occasions, thus, coupled with development and climate change, threatened the wild sage population.

White sage deserves a lot of respect and deference, it is advisable not to collect from the wild but acquire our own plants for use if so desired.



# **Memories of Ray Jillson**

We recently reported the passing on a cherished friend of WNNC, Ray Jillson. We have been asked to shine more light on his importance for our birding community. Here is what we have been able to find:

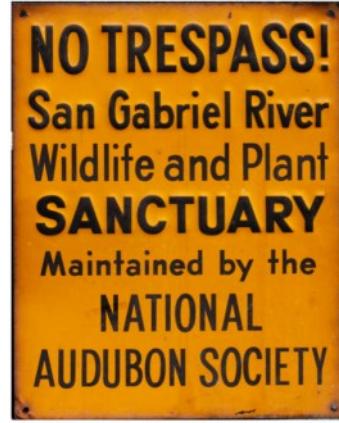
Ray was visiting this natural area since or before this Audubon held preserve became the County's Whittier Narrows Natural Area. Ray held a temporary position with the L.A. County, holding the record for the longest-time temporary employee, well over 40 years. Apparently he preferred this situation because it did not interfere with other activities he enjoyed.

According to Ed and Lou, Ray interested them as general naturalists, not just birds. Jim also said that Ray played the double bass and performed with a band.

Ray's name appears for bird sightings and identification over 90 times in the 2007 Supplement to *Birds of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area*, authored by Mickey Long. (Ed's name appears over 40 times.)

In the photo below Jim appears with Ray at Ray's "retirement" in 2014, celebrated in the nature center picnic shelter.

Ray conducted many a public and private birding walks in the natural area, and he was a frequent sight in our trails as long as he was able.



In our usual 5th Saturday of the month field trip, a WNNCA group visited Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, where a lot of excitement was generated by the rare appearance of a Horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*.) Lou snagged a couple of excellent photos of it, and claimed this as a life bird for him.

**Photo by Lou**