



Poppy Reserve
Part of the Western Antelope
Valley
“Globally Important Bird Area” –
One of only 424 in the entire
world

Biologically Rich & Diverse

Important migratory route for a variety of endangered birds and provides nesting and hunting habitat for species both iconic and threatened including

Close proximity of the

- San Andreas Fault wetlands
- Angeles Forest on the south and
- Open foraging areas, including the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve, on the north.

Important Bird Area



Audubon Society: Western Antelope Valley “IBA”

- “The grassland bird community is most impressive in winter, when large numbers of raptors concentrate in the area.
- Large flocks of ...
- Horned Larks and
- Mountain Bluebirds also occur here, widely extirpated elsewhere in the Los Angeles area.”

Bald and Golden Eagles



Photo courtesy of Robert Kerekes

Prairie Falcons



Kestrel



Photos courtesy of Robert Kerekes

Ferruginous Hawk





Great Horned Owl

Photo courtesy of Mary Wilson

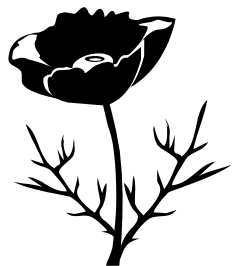


Burrowing Owl

Photo courtesy of Robert Kerekes



Barn Owl



More About: Western Antelope Valley “IBA”

- Swainson's Hawk maintains its southernmost breeding outpost in the state here.
- As this IBA lies in the path of a major spring migrant route for songbirds, these windbreaks can host hundreds of vireos, thrushes and warblers during April and May.

California Listed Endangered Species

- Contains the last few breeding colonies of two species once abundant in Southern California:

Swainson's Hawk

Tricolored blackbirds



California Listed Endangered Species



Antelope Valley
Swainson's hawks are
Nested:
Joshua tree woodlands

Foraged:
grasslands and native
desert scrub
2010:
10 nesting pairs in the
Antelope Valley

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Birds/Swainsons-Hawk>

Look for flock of Tricolored Blackbirds at the Poppy Reserve in May



Tricolored Blackbirds

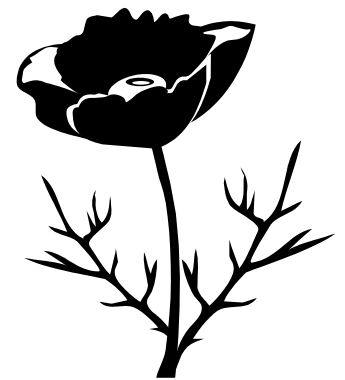
LA County

- Los Angeles Fairmont Reservoir
- Los Angeles Gorman Post Road
- Los Angeles Holiday Lake
- Los Angeles Lake Palmdale
- Los Angeles Munz Ranch Aqueduct
- Los Angeles Quartz Hill Detention Basin, Ave L west of 60th St. West



Swainson's Hawk

Photo courtesy
of Robert
Kerekes



Swainson's Hawk

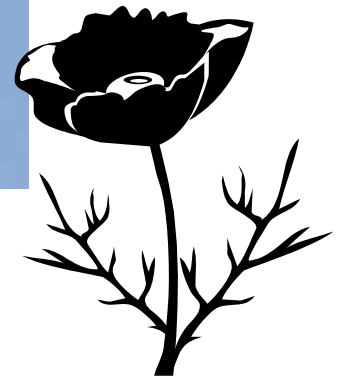


Photo courtesy of Robert Kerekes



Swainson's Hawks

95% decline in S.
Cal. population in
last 100 years

Remnant
Population:
Approx 10 breeding
pairs in the A.V.

Swainson's Hawk

State Threatened Species

Nest in Joshua tree woodlands and ornamental roadside trees,

Foraging habitat include all of the open land types in the Antelope Valley including active and fallow agricultural fields, desert scrublands and grasslands and Joshua Tree woodlands

Prey: Pocket Gophers and other rodents

Migration: California's Swainsons Hawks winter in Mexico, Central America South America, and a small percentage in the Central Valley

Migration habits of the Antelope Valley population are unknown.

Approximately 10 active breeding pairs in the Antelope Valley.

High nest site fidelity, meaning they return to the same site year after year

Source: **Swainson's Hawk**

Survey Protocols, Impact Avoidance, and Minimization Measures for Renewable Energy Projects in the Antelope Valley of Los Angeles and Kern Counties, California

State of California

California Energy Commission and Department of Fish and Game

June 2, 2010

What to look for in February and March?



Horned Lark

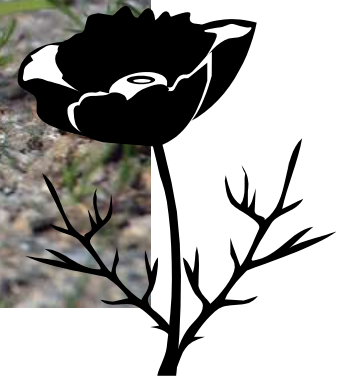


Photo courtesy of Ron Wolf

Horned lark

- **Size**

- 7-8" (18-20 cm)

- Even its genus name, *Eremophila*, is Latin for "desert-loving," further illustrating this bird's fondness for bare, open ground

Voice

- Song, tinkling, irregular, high-pitched, often prolonged; from ground or high in air. Note, a clear *tsee-titi*.

Horned Lark

- Horned Larks eat mostly seeds of grasses, weeds, and waste grain but feed insects to their young.
- Adults consume some insects as well.

Horned Lark

- On open fields in winter, flocks of Horned Larks walk and run on the ground. Do not “hop”
- If disturbed, the flock circles in swift, twisting flight, making soft lispings call notes.
- The "horns" of the Horned Lark are little tufts of feathers, visible only at close range.

Adult Male



Breeding

- Horned Larks are monogamous for one season.
- The male establishes his territory in January-February.
- He attracts the female by perching on fence posts and bushes to sing his mating call.
- In display, the male takes off into the air, rising to about 300-800 feet; he circles and sings his high-pitched tinkling song.
- After his song is finished, he closes his wings, and dives head first towards the ground.
- Just before reaching the ground, he opens his wings and pulls out of the dive! Such a show-off!

Nest a basket woven of fine grass or other plant materials, lined with finer material, placed in depression or cavity in ground



Horned Larks: Nesting

- Male residents establish and defend territories as early as January and February.
- The female selects the nest site, usually on open ground next to a clump of grass or other low feature.
- She also builds the nest, a slight depression lined with plant material such as grass.
- The nest often has a flat 'doorstep' of pebbles.
- The female incubates 3-4 eggs.
- Both parents feed the young.
- Pairs in lowland areas may have 2-3 broods per year, but high altitude/latitude pairs have only a single brood.

Juvenile



Horned Lark - Interesting Facts

- The Horned Lark is the only member of the lark family that is native to the new world.
- These birds return to their birthplace after every migration (a characteristic known as philopatric).
- Because of this, local populations have adapted to the color of their habitat resulting in 15 distinct subspecies in the West

Meadow Lark



Photos courtesy of Bob Waidner

White Crowned Sparrow “Desert Sparrow”



Photos courtesy of Bob Waidner

Large long tailed sparrow bright pink or orange bill



Photos courtesy of Bob Waidner

White Crowned Sparrow

- *The smart black-and-white head, orange to pink beak, and crisp gray breast combine for a dashing look – and make it one of the surest sparrow identifications in North America. Watch for flocks of these sparrows scurrying through brushy borders and overgrown fields, or coax them into the open with backyard feeders. As spring approaches, listen out for this bird's thin, sweet whistle. (From allabout birds.org)*

Mountain Bluebirds



Mountain Bluebirds hunt insects from perches or while on the wing, at times resembling a tiny American Kestrel with their long wings, hovering flight, and quick dives.

Mountain Bluebirds

- *Male Mountain Bluebirds lend a bit of cerulean sparkle to open habitats across much of western North America. You may spot these cavity-nesters flitting between perches in mountain meadows, in burned or cut-over areas, or where prairie meets forest—especially in places where people have provided nest boxes. Unlike many thrushes, Mountain Bluebirds hunt insects from perches or while on the wing, at times resembling a tiny American Kestrel with their long wings, hovering flight, and quick dives. (From allabout birds.org)*

Western Bluebird

Both Mountain and Western can be seen in flocks together



Western Bluebird

- *In open parklands of the American West, brilliant blue-and-rust Western Bluebirds sit on low perches and swoop lightly to the ground to catch insects. Deep blue, rusty, and white, males are considerably brighter than the gray-brown, blue-tinged females. This small thrush nests in holes in trees or nest boxes and often gathers in small flocks outside of the breeding season to feed on insects or berries, giving their quiet, chortling calls. You can help out Western Bluebirds by placing nest boxes in your yard or park. (From allaboutbirds.org)*

From Providence Mountains, Mitchell Caverns
Facebook Page Feb 2025:
(Interpreter Andy Fitzpatrick)



"A lone Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) has been mingling with a flock of Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) among the historic buildings here. Even with an overcast sky, the brilliant electric blue of this species is striking. Both species of bluebirds here are winter visitors; come spring they will head north to higher and cooler elevations."

Turkey Vulture





Turkey Vulture

Larger than a raven but smaller than a condor.

Light gray flight feathers and tail. Adults have a red head.



Excellent sense of smell.

Migrate through the Antelope Valley in Feb – March.

Gather in flocks at night, even in suburban trees!

Seen at the Reserve: Loggerhead Shrike



Photos courtesy of Bob Waidner

“Loggerhead,” a synonym for “blockhead,” refers to the unusually large size of this bird’s head in relation to its body.

Loggerhead Shrike

- *All About Birds: The Loggerhead Shrike is a songbird with a raptor's habits.*
- *Preys on insects, birds, lizards, and small mammals.*
- *Lacking a raptor's talons, Loggerhead Shrikes skewer their kills on thorns or barbed wire (or Joshua trees!) or wedge them into tight places for easy eating"*



At Poppy and Ripley - Also Look For

Savannah sparrow
(shown to the left)



Fox sparrow

Yellow-rumped warbler

Warbling warbler

Mountain chickadee

Wilson's warbler

Ladder-backed
woodpecker



Photos courtesy of Bob Waidner



The West Antelope Valley part of the historic hunting grounds for the California Condor. One of the last free flying condors was seen at Quail Lake in the 1980s



Reported at Avenue J and 110th West several
years ago

California Condor



Comparison



CROW

RAVEN

40-53 CM LONG
15.7-20.8 INCHES

56-78 CM LONG
22-30.7 INCHES



HOOKED BEAK

IMPRESSIVE THROAT FEATHERS

LARGE TALONS



Turkey Vulture

For more information:

www.allaboutbirds.org

For a great app for your phone to
identify birds by their calls, on your
phone go to:

merlin.allabout birds.org