

NEWS



# Huntington Beach event is strictly for the birds



Bird-A-Thon planning committee members, from left, Jean Nagy, Betty Kanne and Sheila Holliday, hold a banner of various birds species as they stand in the Urban Forest on Wednesday. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

BY MATT SZABO | STAFF WRITER

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Jets will soon fly over Huntington Beach as the Pacific Airshow gets underway in two weeks.

The airshow before *that* airshow, though, will take place in the Urban Forest next weekend.

Organizers from the Huntington Beach Tree Society are preparing for the inaugural Urban Forest Bird-A-Thon, which starts Thursday, Sept. 22 at dawn and runs through Sunday, Sept. 25 at dusk.

“The greatest Pacific airshow started weeks ago and will continue for another month or so,” said Tree Society member Betty Kanne, a 40-year resident of Huntington Beach. “That is the fall migration of migrating birds that are leaving their breeding grounds in Alaska and northern Canada. They are hard-wired to overwinter in South America, Central America, Mexico. But some of them will overwinter right here in the Bolsa Chica [Ecological Reserve] or right here [at the Urban Forest].”

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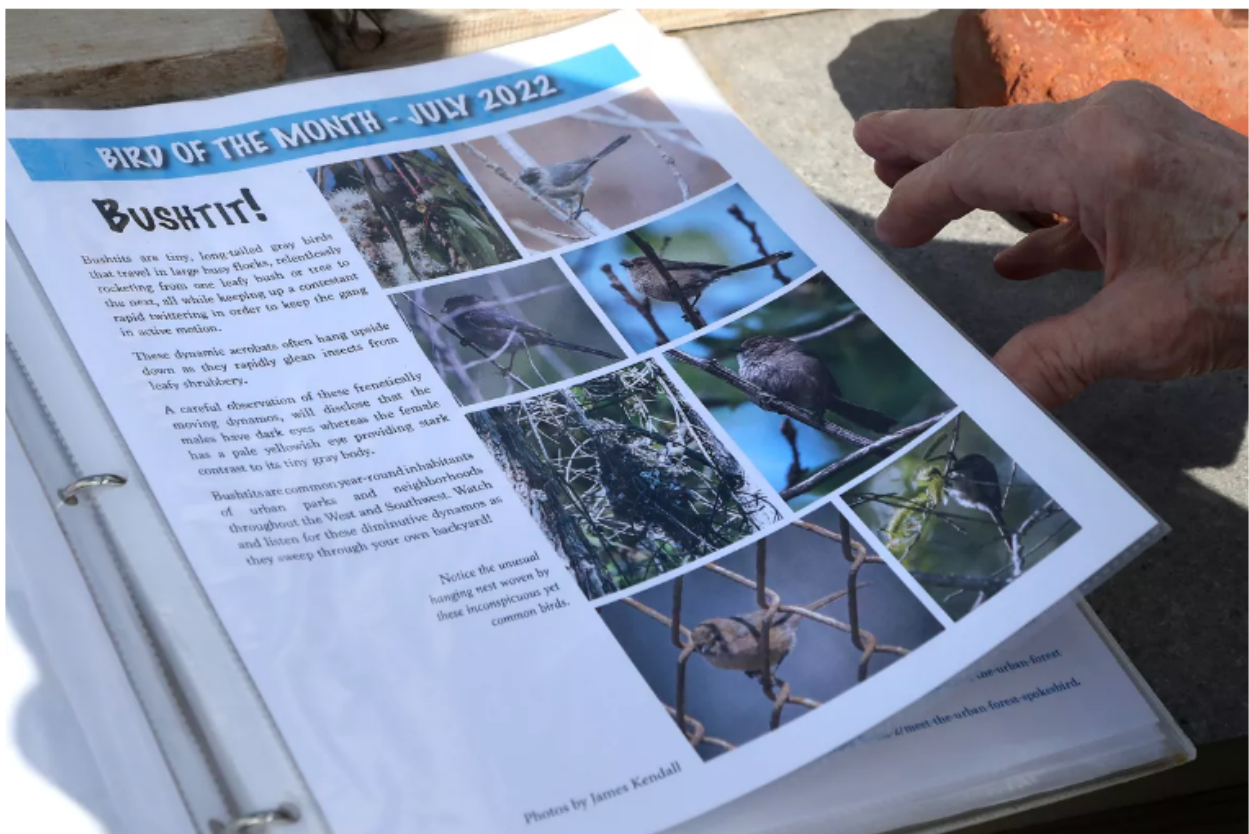
An Allen's hummingbird feeds on nectar at the Urban Forest on Wednesday. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

Kanne is helping to organize the Bird-A-Thon. Expert birders and novices alike are welcome at the free event, which will serve as a major fundraiser for the nonprofit Tree Society.

Kanne said proceeds will go toward the purchase and planting of various habitats for the California gnatcatcher, a species listed as federally threatened and also designated a “bird species of special concern” by the state of California.

Similar to a walk-a-thon, participants can compete in the Bird-A-Thon as individuals or teams, raising pledge money by counting birds and bird species. Checklists will be provided, as will helpful pictures throughout the Urban Forest.

“More experienced birders can record data with the eBird app,” Tree Society president Jean Nagy said. “For baby birders — like my team — we will document observations with our user-friendly ‘Birds Commonly Observed in the Urban Forest’ pictorial form. We just want this to be a fun, easy and inclusive event that brings the community out to discover one the best kept secret gems in Huntington Beach.”



The bushtit was the Bird of the Month for July 2022 of the Huntington Beach Tree Society. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

The organizers hope the discoveries are plentiful, and they should be. Kanne and other birders began monthly record-keeping in the Urban Forest in November 2020. Since then the group, led by expert birder Lena Hayashi, has found more than 90 bird species.

Recently, the Tree Society named the Western bluebird as its official mascot and “spokesbird.” Each participant in the Bird-A-Thon will be given a bluebird medallion made by Laura Klepfer.

“We’re part of the Pacific flyway zone here,” Tree Society member Sheila Holliday said. “To encourage the birds, we’ve got little watering stations that we’re making sure are full. We want to make sure the birds stop by for our inaugural Bird-A-Thon. This is the first ever, and we hope to have it be the first of many.”

Kanne said the first Bird-A-Thon participant or group that spots and records a rare bird, as designated by its placement on the Orange County Rare Bird List, will be recognized on the Bird-A-Thon page at [HBTrees.org](http://HBTrees.org). Each newly reported rare bird species will qualify for entry into the Rare Bird award category, with recognition awards being given soon after the event’s conclusion.



Bird-A-Thon committee members, from left, Jean Nagy, Betty Kanne and Sheila Holliday talk about their upcoming event. (Kevin Chang / Staff Photographer)

Kanne will be leading a Bird-A-Thon group on Sept. 24 and 25, starting at 9 a.m. each day. Those who would like to participate are asked to give notice by emailing [UFbirder@gmail.com](mailto:UFbirder@gmail.com), to make sure the proper group size is kept.

A \$30 donation has been pledged by an anonymous donor for each person who shows up to one of those weekend groups.

“I want people who are going to be bird-curious,” Kanne said. “You don’t have to know anything, but you do have to be curious.”

For more information on the inaugural Bird-A-Thon, [visit the Tree Society website](#).

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