

VOLUME 34 · NUMBER 7  
MARCH 1968

# In Search of the California Condor

By Dr. Loye Holmes Miller

1910 - 1911 and 1939



(By special permission of Dr. Miller and the UCLA Library Archives. Never before published. Dr. Miller states, "These notes are now of historical value only. I had been given a special permit to collect a condor for comparison with the abundant remains in the Rancho La Brea asphalt beds. Frank M. Chapman had tried for the birds in the mountains back of Sespe and Piru in Ventura Co. He had employed Whitaker here mentioned, so I first went into Whitaker's mountain ranch with Everett Sheperdson. Later, with Lawrence Peyton of Cooper Ornithological Society, I visited the Castaic area. Still later on, Peyton was able to obtain for me a complete bird shot by an unknown hunter. He also obtained parts of body skeletons from birds collected for the California Academy of Science. - In 1939, I spent a few days observing live birds in Hopper Basin with Alden H. Miller, Karl Koford, and Harvey Fisher. )

## Piru Trip - March 1910

### March 25

Left school after commencement--had to change clothes and come down through students loitering about, waiting for registration. Train to Piru at 1:45 where was met by U. S. F. Ranger Mr. Geo. Hollister who took me to his house and entertained me overnight. Very pleasant family of wife, mother, brother and two children.

### March 26

Slept on porch and awoke early with birds in vines overhead. One mocker came within 2 feet of my face. Hills about here are glorious; rugged and very jagged. Stratification very marked and much disturbed. Mr. Ray Hollister says three condors stay about an oil derrick in the hills about mile and half away.

Saturday morning spent in getting up to the hills. Sheperdson came at 9:40 and we were soon underway. Pleasant drive up the Piru 15 miles. Rather gradual rise to Whittaker's cabin at junction with Agua Blanca. 1300 Ft. arrived 1:30. Cooked lunch at Whittaker's Bee Ranch and started up the Agua Blanca about 3:45 with packs. Remarkably steep and wild. Passed site of one condor nest of Chapman's account but nothing larger than Red - Tail appeared. Devil's Gateway is well named--a perfect saw cut through solid rock so narrow the stream completely fills it. Beyond the Gateway we climbed out to the south up steep trail to the Devil's Potrero where Whittaker has his apple orchard. He has drained a small ciénega from which two springs flow, one highly charged with iron. The Hydrated Oxide clogged his drain pipes once and nearly drowned out his trees with the accumulated water. He took out 600 boxes last year on his burros. His trees were all in bloom and presented a beautiful sight among the rugged canyon scenery. continued on page 58....

ILLUSTRATION BY DAN LEAVITT - COURTESY OF SAN DIEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

# In Search of the California Condor

continued...

We arrived at his log cabin at 6:10 and were kindly received. Had two men with him at work on the orchard. Slept in the apple room and nearly froze. Clouded up and at 7:00 a.m. began to rain. It is Easter Sunday. Rain turned to snow and before noon the ground and trees were beautifully decked.

It cleared up sufficiently at 11:30 for us to visit the Pothole. This is certainly a remarkable hole but the seepage out of it is rapid enough to prevent its remaining a lake for any length of time. The bottom is pretty well covered with grove of Giant Cottonwood.

Found most of the bones of a mountain lion that had been trapped a year ago up near there. The skull, claws and tail were wanting. Shepherdson shot a fox by moonlight last night so I have some bones to start on.

Sharp lookout failed to reveal any condors. Quite a flight of Turkey Buzzards came out after the snow but nothing larger.

## Monday

All clear so we start back down trail to the lower cabin. Everything is beautiful. Two new migrants heard on the oak slopes as we came out of Potrero, i.e. Warbling Vireo and Western Flycatcher. The whole canyon is alive with birds. Canyon Wrens are in great abundance. Certainly it is an ideal place for them here. The Agua Blanca is full of nice little trout just right for frying but not for me yet. I learn however that the trout here are all interpreted as Steel Head which brings the law in a month earlier than the Brook Trout. Arrived at Apiary intime to cook good lunch which we call dinner also.

House Wren in outhouse has now 6 eggs.

## Castaic Trip - April 1911

By signifying my willingness to go, I obtained a very cordial invitation from Lawrence Peyton at Sespe to spend the second week of April up the Castaic Creek.

Left Los Angeles on 7 a.m. train and dropped off at Piru at 9:15, where Peyton was to meet me on his way from Sespe. First man I saw was Roy Jackson, the half brother of Hollister, the ranger at Piru. He said he had seen a condor fly over the town that morning. Called on Mrs. Hollister and in half an hour Peyton came up from Sespe in his one horse "barouche." He was accompanied by Orland Beekman, a Cooper Club recruit who rode a sorrel filly of good points.

Peyton had no cartridges for 25-20 so was

obliged to leave the gun. Jackson lent us his 30-30 marlin, however, and we got under way at 10:30, driving back along the railway up the Santa Clara Valley. I was glad to see this part of the country which was new to me. Western Kingbirds were common with the Audubon Warblers and White Crowns still remaining. Red-Shouldered Hawk, Black-Chinned Sparrow, Sage Sparrow and Golden Eagle were of chief note. No condors seen, though sharp lookout was kept.

A Raven's nest was visited which was to me a very interesting one. The nest was placed on a cliff face entirely exposed and was simply saddled over a slight pinnacle. The soil here was quite loose and it seemed that a very slight rain would suffice to loosen the whole structure. The nest was known to the boys from previous seasons so was evidently secure. Only one egg was present so it was left till the return. Peyton went over the cliff at the end of an eighty foot rope held by Beekman and myself.

Lunched just before reaching the Castaic Creek on weiners, bread and butter and apple pie.

The Castaic Creek is more open than the Piru and seems to have less fall to it in the lower part at least. The walls are less abrupt. The impression is of a larger canyon though the stream is much smaller. Further up the canyon narrows down and resembles the Piru more.

Reached camp at Beekman's cabin at 6:00. The elevation here is 2000 Ft. at junction of Fish Creek and Rowell Canyon. Fish Creek is perfectly clear while the other stream is quite muddy. Great scarcity of oak timber in the canyon. Scant Cottonwoods and few Sycamores. One Prunus iliafolia with trunk over a foot through.

## April 9 - Sunday

Peyton borrowed one saddle and rounded up a gray mare for me and with him bareback, we started up the muddy stream into Rowell Canyon. Peyton had been told that condors nested up Salt Creek above the falls so we started for them. We rode past the mouth of Salt Creek and up for a good distance, but finding nothing of interest returned to mouth of Salt Creek.

Phainopepla and Townsend Solitaire noted here. Left the horse and went on foot up Salt Creek carrying rope. I have my grave suspicions that the canyon we took was not Salt Creek at all but a short secondary ravine. We climbed through the most discouraging tangle of brush and over cliffs to the base of a large wall of immense height where we could go no further. The cliff was full of likely holes but several shots fired into the face brought out no birds.

We returned to the horses and lunched late then went out the Red Rock trail to inspect a Prairie Falcon's nest. The nest was empty but we saw some very wild scenery along the trip

by the steep grade cut by the telephone company in laying a wire from San Francisco.

Some scarcity of timber noticeable at this elevation, though a few specimens of long leafed pine of some kind were encountered.

A small apiary was seen hanging upon a ridge opposite Red Rock where it surely looked to have been lowered with a rope. White Throated Swifts were common, Bullock Oriole, Chipping Sparrow and Golden Crown Sparrows noted.

#### April 10 - Monday

Peyton obtained another saddle so could ride in comfort and we got started at 8:30. This canyon is more attractive and better wooded since the direction is more east and west at this part and the sun cannot beat in so fiercely. Some beautiful Alder and Oak groves occur, also a pretty cienega of considerable extent.

Bell's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Black Throated Gray, Western Flycatcher, Mountain Quail.

Peyton had nests of Cooper Hawk located from last year but nothing in them this year. We saw the nesting site of the Spotted Owls taken by the Peyton Boys last year. The nest was in a hole in the rock about 15 feet up, just above the stream on the shady side of the canyon at a very dark, narrow place. We were followed half the day by a 3 year old colt who seemed to like the company of our mounts.

On the way home Peyton, who was leading, rode right past owl sign on the ground and I coming after him, stopped at the sight and looking up sighted a big fellow in the Alders right over head. He looked down at us in a stupid fashion and the big round head devoid of horns proclaimed him at once as the rare Spotted Owl.

#### April 11 - Tuesday

We decided to call the day Sunday by staying in camp. I spent the large part of the day caring for the specimens that we had taken the three days preceding. Peyton rode down canyon and looked into several nests which his brother had spotted but got no eggs. He came back however with an adult male California Screech Owl in his handkerchief. He had taken the bird from a hole without the least resistance being offered. We set him up on the table and took time exposures of him and then Peyton made a specimen of him.

The day was extremely disagreeable with high winds and dust and very cold--a typical winter northern. I tried to run down the Black Chinned Sparrow which has tantalized us ever since we started but the same old story was repeated over and over. He would drop to the brush to reappear at another place singing his peculiar note so like a marble dropped upon the pavement. In the high wind, the sparrows, gold-

finches and warblers kept to the brush--Lawrence Goldfinch singing his liveliest from the midst of a thick sage. Two specimens were taken.

#### April 12 - Wednesday

The high wind and cold continue. We planned to visit some Raven's nests about six miles down the canyon and then pull out next day. We drove down with the wind and all the clothing we possessed called into service. Peyton went over the cliffs and got nothing from either. The wind and dust were most distressing and we could not keep hats on at all. A good burning and chasing of course resulted in my case.

Peyton has a jock-strap sling of heavy leather straps to which he attaches a heavy rope. By this he is lowered over the cliff then comes back hand over hand, feet against the cliff and body at about 45 with the perpendicular.

About 4:30 Beekman Senior and his man came up with a load of bees. They had driven from Sespe to Castaic during the night and on account of the cold and wind had outspanned at 3:00 a.m. Unable to sleep they had started again at six only to find the mules had strayed and the wind covered the tracks. Nearly half the day was taken in locating the mules, then the slow drive up the canyon facing the wind with a four-mule team to raise the dust into their faces. The old gentleman was nearly all in. We got a warm supper for them and they got to bed early, so soon forgot it. They had seen condors on the way down Saturday and on the way up yesterday. Also they met the boy Orland who went down yesterday and he had seen one, yet we have had no sight of this big bird.

#### Thursday, April 13

Still cold and windy. We packed and got under way in good season, the dust and wind following us down the canyon. We visited the Raven's nest which contained a single egg on Saturday and obtained a beautiful set of five eggs. A set of Sparrow Hawk and one of the Butcher Bird also were taken. The latter was in Botamolc (Bacharis) less than 30 inches from the ground and the present nest was placed upon last year's which in turn surmounted a third making a three story nest about 18 inches high. About noon we met Peyton's uncle who had just seen a condor on the ground beside the road a quarter of a mile back.

I was just about sick. We came on past the big cottonwood where Peyton had seen the eight birds and where one bird had been seen so often. I couldn't help feeling that the old bird would return during the afternoon so I climbed out bag and baggage beside the road at a signboard flag station to spend the three hours till train time in the hope of at least seeing one of the birds. Went down to the river and took a bath and then lay under a tobacco bush reading and gazing often into the blue of the now perfect afternoon sky. Suddenly there he was! Bowling along in the most wonder-

Continued on page 64

# Audubon Activities

By Otto Widmann



## Jan. 27-28 SALTON SEA FIELD TRIP

We had 11 members from other branches join us for birding at the south end of the Salton Sea, bringing our number of participants to 55. Leader George Venatta had his hands full! Besides counting people, we counted 102 species. It was a pleasure for the writer to count two life birds, Cattle Egret and Blue Goose; imagine how many the newcomers got! It was even more exciting to see a flight of 20 White-faced Ibis against a cloudy sky, and to see Snow Geese huddled together in packed formation out of the wind's path. Outlined against the cloud-darkened hills were long wedges of Snow & Canada Geese. Mr. Hensen of the Game Refuge took us out to the duck feeding area, where there were constant flights of Pintails, Mallards, Green-winged & Cinnamon Teal, Widgeon, Shovelers, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup - what a study they made. There were hawks: Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Marsh; and Golden Eagles. At one field, hundreds of Long-billed Curlews kept coming in to feed. Here we saw Cattle Egret, Greater Yellowlegs, Godwits, Dowitchers, Dunlin, Willets, Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, and various Sandpipers. At one field, a Short-eared Owl made a three-point landing. Inland we saw Ladder-backed Woodpeckers and Ground Doves. There were Tree and Rough-winged Swallows, and Mountain Bluebirds hovering over the fields. Here also were Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Abert's Towhee, and Sage & Fox Sparrows. Larry Bonke brought his bride along for some beginning birding - what a wonderful opportunity she had to see many colorful birds. The Brooks family also began birding with us. Welcome to our group!

## Jan. 28 - ALTERNATE FIELD TRIP -

Bill Watson led 15 people through some of our city parks to count 28 species. House Finches were abundant at Elysian Park; of particular notice were the Cedar Waxwings feeding on Toyon berries with the Robins. Again this year there were many Sparrow Hawks and Meadowlarks. At Echo Park was an immature White-fronted Goose, and a Lesser Canada. Lesser Scaup & Canvasbacks were on the water. At MacArthur Park was the species of the day - male & female Ring-necked Ducks, with a second female joining the group later. There were Glaucous-winged Gulls and Pied-billed Grebes. With Bill's 15 people and the Salton Sea group of 55, this made the largest field trip turnout our Society has ever had.

## Feb. 9-10 -MORRO BAY FIELD TRIP -

Life birds! The Society added a couple to its field trip list; and some members added a dozen to their life lists. The Oldsquaw, bobbing in the water at Montana de Oro State Park; and the bright-plumaged Ruff, or probably a Reeve, near the mouth of Pico Creek north of Cambria, were the two most extraordinary birds. A European Widgeon in a minus-5 tidal basin; a Common Merganser further out in the bay; Pelagic Cormorants in breeding plumage; an immature Bald

Eagle; 12 Red-tailed Hawks simultaneously soaring over the hills; these were some of the memorable sights. Black Oystercatchers with Surf-birds; Black Brant & Cormorants flying in long wedges; dozens of Great Blue Herons, one within 100 feet, immobile; thousands of birds in the marshes, - curlews, sandpipers, Willets, Marbled Godwits, Dowitchers, plus ducks, herons, Egrets, and White Pelicans, feeding in unison - it was truly a marvelous sight. Charles & Frances Taubert of Baywood Park let us use their front lawn to see the spectacle of the Bay. Wayne & Ruth Lohr were with us again. Jack Dainty of England added to his life list, meanwhile telling us the English equivalent common name. Many species of land birds were seen in the camp-ground and the Chorro Willows section of Morro Bay State Park.

After a full day as field trip leaders, Marian & Claire Jobe showed us a beautiful program of slides which they had taken on several High Sierra trips. Our group and some of the local birders enjoyed this rewarding evening in the Natural History Museum; we wish to again thank Marian & Claire for a memorable weekend.

Feb. 13 - EVENING MEETING - The third member of the nominating committee was chosen unanimously: Dick Wilson will now work with Bruce Broadbooks and Chairman Caroline Adams. Also by unanimous vote, Mary Hood was chosen by the Society to be our President Emeritus.

The immature Brazilian Cardinal - victim of some trigger-happy gunman - has been mounted by Hans Hjorth, and presented to the Society's bird collection. We greatly appreciate this very thoughtful gesture on the part of Hans.

The evening's program was presented by Mr. & Mrs. Ben Romero; Ben projected the slides while Miriam told of the many National Monuments and Parks which they have visited. Of the people visiting these places, only 1% hike into the wilderness areas; we were fortunate that Ben & Miriam are part of this 1%. We saw parts of the Colorado, Escalante, and Green Rivers, and the surrounding country, showing formations, colors, contrasts, unseen by any of us before. In back-packing in, all the water they consumed had to be carried along, plus their camera equipment - so that we could see these fine pictures of "Canyonlands."

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## THE WESTERN TANAGER

Official Publication of the  
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

7377 Santa Monica Blvd. L.A. 90046  
Free to Members...Others \$2.50 Annually

EDITOR... Betty Jenner, 639 W. 32nd St.  
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Field Notes..... Shunway Sufel  
Activities..... Otto Widmann  
Typing... Caroline Adams, L. Jenner,  
B. Jenner, & Staff

Deadlines: Feature Article - 1st of Month  
Other Material - 10th of Month

Please Phone 876-0202 If You Can Help  
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## MARCH



1968

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
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## MARCH

Mar. 7 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Audubon House

### NOTE CHANGE:

Mar. 10 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Tujunga Wash - Hansen Dam. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on the north side of Foothill Blvd. by the bridge, about 2 miles west of Sunland. This is desert area in Los Angeles, similar to the Mojave Desert.

Leader: Warren Blazer 272-8598

Mar. 12 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park. "Wild Wings of the Water World", by Bill and Ann Barry. The Barry's spent five years making this film of eastern and western water birds, including Wood Ibis, Anhinga and Limpkin. Audubon House will be open before and after the program for sales and library.

Program Chairman: Laura Lou Jenner 748-7510

### NOTE CHANGE:

Mar. 23 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Irvine Park, O'Neill Park. This area is becoming too crowded on Sundays for satisfactory birding. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance to Irvine Park. Take the Santa Ana Freeway to Chapman Ave. (east turnoff). Go east through Orange to the Park; about 50 miles from City Hall, Los Angeles.

Leader: Trudy Siptroth Call: 876-0202 or 221-8973 (Otto Widmann)

Apr. 4 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Audubon House

Apr. 9 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park.

Apr. 13 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Chantry Flats. Spring migrants and probable Dippers; wildflowers.

Leader: Harold Baxter 355-6300

Always bring lunch and binoculars on field trips.

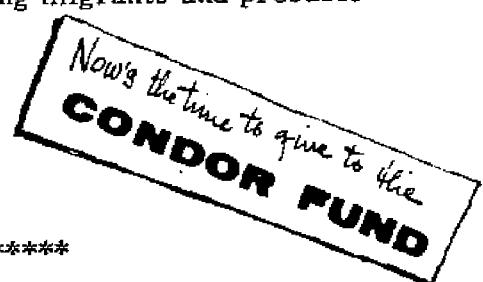
Please - no pets, and no collecting of any kind.

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Totaling your life birds is always a pleasant experience, - especially if you've kept notes, as you should, - for you will re-live all those grand times when you first saw the birds, in field or forest, lagoon or ocean.... for Olga Clarke, a recount catapulted her into exclusive territory, for she found that instead of 599 species, she

has 602! Congratulations on reaching the magic circle!

FLASH!! Do you need a life bird? On lawns and telephone poles at 26th & Pacific, San Pedro - a Boat-tailed Grackle, according to Shirley Wells.



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DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO FAITHFULLY STRIVE TO SAVE UPPER NEWPORT BAY.

**REQUIEM FOR A MARSH** - A stifling stench rises over the bluff. The marsh is dead.

In its youth it had been host to flights of migrant waterfowl. Some had probed the shallows; others left wakes as they swam; there were those whose calls had pierced the fog with calls primeval and then winged their ways to the Arctic Circle and beyond; still others had fashioned crude nests and reared a new generation to grace the marsh.

Too, the marsh had served as nursery for spot-fin and mullet. These had been nourished by countless inconspicuous creatures of the flats. The ebb and flow of the tide had brought life to the marsh in its daily rhythm - but now, the cries of life were no more.

The marsh was still; putrefaction had succeeded life.

And I had taken a life - the life of a marsh. I had dealt it no mortal physical blow, but I was guilty - guilty of uncaring inaction while the life of the marsh was snuffed out.

I stand accused; I am found guilty; MY NAME IS APATHY.

Dr. Lewis A. Follansbee  
Orange Coast College

SEA AND SAGE AUDUBON SOCIETY HAS NOT YET ABANDONED THE EFFORT TO SAVE UPPER NEWPORT BAY FOR WILDLIFE. WATCH FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS OF MEETINGS IN NEWSPAPERS IN ORDER TO ADD YOUR VOICE TO THIS.

In a land exchange, Irvine Co. (one of the largest landholders in California) acquired the shoreline of Upper Newport Bay. Plans call for the dredging of a 10-ft. deep channel 800 feet wide in the Bay north of Highway #101 bridge, and the elimination of at least two of the three marsh islands. The dredging will be used as fill to widen the tidal margin, at present too narrow for residences. Bulkheading, creation of four harbors, boat docks, and residential development would replace an area rich in natural values, a "living laboratory" used by students at all levels in our educational system in an area of the most rapidly growing population, now 8 million. 151 species of birds (out of 645 species on the American continent north of the Mexican border) have been counted by the Audubon Society here. Thousands of migratory birds rest and feed in the bay. The number of shorebirds feeding and sunning themselves is spectacular. This is a nursery for in-shore fishes and the habitat of numberless invertebrates.

The planned development would eliminate for the many, a great variety of no-cost or low-cost recreational activities.

## NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION

This March, - Conservation Month - is one of the most significant and critical times in the history of our city, for on March 7th will come the decision on whether to irrevocably ruin the jewel of Los Angeles, Griffith Park. You can write; you can encourage friends to write, against the plan to level the top of the Park, and run a tramway to souvenir stands and a revolving restaurant.... consider the effect on the Park's wild creatures, which are already under such terrific pressures! This magnificent green area is one of the few places where city children can learn to know Nature as it really is, and is a haven for adults, to whom daily pressures would be too much without the quiet of the Park trails and bracing chaparral-scented air.

Mrs. W. Don Jarvis, president of the Griffith Park Coordinating Council, opposed to the "devel-

Greatly increased usage of the area together with the curtailed tidal flow would add to the pollution of the flood control channels emptying here complicating the existence of wildlife.

Recently, a "memorandum of understanding" was worked out between Sec'y Stewart L. Udall and the Army Corps of Engineers, whereby if a project was deemed detrimental to water quality, or would unreasonably impair the resource value, public hearings would be held. Surely the "biological desert" and the pollution of this project would constitute sufficient grounds for the holding of such a hearing. Sec'y Udall is opposing the dredging of the Pamlico Estuary on the North Carolina coast because of the destruction of wildlife involved. Upper Newport Bay is on a smaller scale, but all the more important to wildlife because it is the last salt marsh of consequential size left along our southern coast.

ASK THE SECRETARY TO HOLD A HEARING.

Also: send your protests to Norman B. Livermore, State Resources Agency, State Capitol, Sacramento 95814, and Dr. John S. Gottschalk, Bureau of Sports Fisheries & Wildlife, Dept. of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

opment", says, "No park in Los Angeles will be safe from developers if Mt. Hollywood is allowed to become a site for a Hollywood Museum, etc. This, the largest inner-city park in the world, already has 17 million visitors a year - twice as many as Disneyland, Marineland, and Sea World combined. Its charm lies in that it is a sylvan and rustic setting with well-developed facilities and recreational outlets where families can forget the tedium of the city...it is up to the people to decide whether it is in the best interest to allow this priceless heritage to be taken for a business enterprise. As for the tramway - a number of them have gone broke already."

Audubon members know that our heritage from Col. Griffith is irreplaceable, conservationwise; we must convince the City Fathers that now is the time for statesmanship not the Fast Buck!

# CONDOR

Continued...

ful flight I ever saw, coming up from the Southwest at medium height, ballasted heavily by its great weight, its flight seemed majestic in the extreme. The accompanying Turkey Buzzards appeared frivolous in comparison.

The curvature of the wing is greater, the point seeming sharper. The neck and head seem to be extended further and appeared sharper. These points with the wonderfully deliberate flight made him distinguishable even when the markings were not to be made out.

Round and round the big fellow circled, rising with great rapidity until his altitude was doubled and all marks of distinction disappeared except for the slightly sharper wing points. Then, his reconnaissance seemingly proving satisfactory he began to drop in a regular spiral glide. One loses patience with the indecision of the Turkey Buzzard as he swings back and forth time after time before venturing to alight. Not so with this greatest flying bird. There was no indecision, no lack of confidence. He had reviewed the situation from the great height and there made up his mind. That was all there was to it so down he came in a great steep spiral dropping two thousand feet or more in a few turns. It almost took the breath away. There was no further delay. Within a minute he was at rest on the rifer sands near an old carcass. The Turkey Buzzards looked like crows beside him.

The distance was too great to admit further observation and the big chap rose before a nearer approach could be made. He went a short distance to the old dead cottonwood which seems to have been a favorite roost for some time. Here a second attempt was made but the tree had to be lost to sight for a short time. A loudly rattling King-fisher flushed from the river bank went screeching past him and the next time the big bird was sighted he was in air. Several hours of waiting failed to bring him to sight again. The mere sight of him was reward for all delay.

Back of Fillmore, Calif.

1939

(This Trip for Observation Only)

Friday, Dec. 29

Ridge between Hopper Basin and Sespe, about 4500 ft. Koford had located about 15 condors Thursday at our arrival 8:30 a.m. All birds were perched and so remained for about an hour. During the remainder of the day till 5:00 there was seldom a time when birds were not visible in the air up to a maximum of eleven at once. Our ridge ran nearly N & S and they would come south repeatedly along this ridge fairly close over us giving us perfect views at pretty good light and variety of poses in air. On the steep west side they once flew close below our level showing the light chevrons across the secondaries.

Why do they coast this same terrain so often? The air is remarkably still but these great birds are able to plane in spirals by moving at an acute angle. The tail rotates through a most remarkable range of angles. I am surprised also at the amount of camber  to the wings at times like *Cathartes*. Up flexure of the primaries is almost incredible. Separation of primary tips and forward thrust of the entire wing at times was striking. Again the wings would be bowed downward or flapped ventralward till the tips appeared almost to touch below the body  . Very little flexure at the wrist was noted--possibly because of the quiet air and no need to "shorten sail."

The pectoral bare patch shows very distinctly as the birds sit on perch or glide overhead. The color seems almost persimmon color. The feet appear more gray. Often in flight the feet are dropped down--possibly in balancing--sometimes one foot only was dropped. The condor's "day" seems to be only about 6 hours long. They leave perches about 9 - 10 and come back about 3:30 in the p.m. Roosts are in dead *Pseudotuzgas* on steep slopes. These trees here grow only on the shaded north exposures so sunlight is late and shadow arrives early. In the morning, the birds sometimes move up onto perches in the sun.

Saturday, December 30

Came up to the lookout from cabin about 8:30 again. Much more wind moving and air quite warm, still the birds we left on the roost at dusk last night had not moved out and no birds were seen in air for a long time. They were "sitting down" with breast against the perch. By 9:00 they were moving about on perch and stretching an occasional wing. Soon they made short moves to nearby trees. About 10:00 there suddenly appeared a spiraling flock of fourteen birds to the south of us. They must have been roosting in Hopper Canyon at a lower elevation from the small group near here. Three were still perched near us making 17 birds at one time. Two of the local birds saw the spiral and seemed to be stimulated thereby for they quickly joined the group. The spiral broke up, mostly in pairs, some four or five coming northward over us but most of them moving west toward the Sespe. Two birds were observed in a clumsy "dog fight" in air.

The breeze dropped down to zero at ten o'clock when the last perched bird took off. For two hours afterward birds were rarely seen--not like yesterday when they kept cruising along our ridge. Later they again used our ridge as a cruising ground, coming south overhead as yesterday. One came over at an elevation of not more than 75 ft.

Alden Miller and Fisher discovered a dead cow to the southward upon which birds had been feeding--eyes, tongue, and vent were attacked and one hole in rib basket. Through these holes the birds reached in as far as 20 inches. After  
(concluded on next page)

# Welcome NEW MEMBERS

Dr. Abraham Bernstein  
878 Stradella Road  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90024

Beatrice Carlson  
16203 Vanowen Street  
Van Nuys, Calif. 91406

Mr. Thomas R. Chell  
18747 Alberdury Drive  
La Puente, Calif. 91745

O. L. Cox  
9318 Annetta Street  
South Gate, Calif. 90280

Marjorie Galliard  
1741 W. 26th Street  
San Pedro, Calif. 90732

Mr. John Golden  
205 S. Medio Drive  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90049

Mrs. E. A. Jarvis  
816 S. Citrus Ave.  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90036

M. M. Kennedy  
52 Portugese Bend  
Rolling Hills, Calif. 90274

Kathy Lynne  
1303 North June Street  
Hollywood, Calif. 90028

Mr. & Mrs. Albert Maltz  
1235 Brockton Ave.  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90025

Miss Jane Maxwell  
1527 Sixth Street  
Santa Monica, Calif. 90401

G. Paul  
10614 Beak Ave.  
South Gate, Calif. 90280

Mr. Richard S. Papin  
2735 Arlington Ave.  
Torrance, Calif. 90501

Mr. Charles Franke  
225 Bicknell #3 Station  
Santa Monica, Calif. 90405

Mr. Edward Weinstock  
1059 1/2 Ayers Street  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90064

Mrs. Ella Mae Wind  
11740 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90059

Nellie Whelan & Family  
469 Midvale Ave.  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90024

Correction:

Miss Maria Koch  
420 S. Harvard  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90005

## President's Message — MONTHLY BIRD COUNT: A NEW PROJECT

It has become alarmingly evident to the Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count Compiler that such species as Mourning Doves, Red-shafted Flickers, Black Phoebes, Scrub Jays, Mockingbirds, Brewer's Black-birds, and Song Sparrows have slumped in numbers in the last few years. But, this is shown only on a one-day-a-year basis - the Christmas Count Day.

A realistic picture must be developed by counting these birds more times during the course of a year. Incidentally, Killdeer, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and others, are up in number.

Obviously, we do not have enough information from the Christmas Count alone to arrive at any intelligent conclusions; thus the reason for initiating this monthly-count approach. Suppose that garden pesticides were leading to the extirpation of Black Phoebes in Los Angeles? We have no intelligent, documented way to prove a decline of Black Phoebe without a sustained monthly count throughout the gardens of Los Angeles.

Until 1955, we always counted more than a hundred Black Phoebes on Christmas Counts. The annual counts since then are: 1956, 86; 1957, 46; 1958, 42; 1959, 22; 1960, 16; 1961, 12; 1962, 54; 1963, 38; 1964, 11; 1965, 20; 1966, 20; 1967, 9! The Christmas Count shows no such significant decrease in Sparrow Hawk numbers, for instance. But without a population study sustained every month by the greatest number of reporters, we can never have the facts to make a case if one ever becomes necessary. It is a thrill to see a rare bird in our area; but what would Los Angeles be like without its only urbanized hawk, the Sparrow Hawk? What would it be like never to see Killdeer, Mourning Doves\*, Spotted Doves, Anna's Hummers, Red-shafted Flickers\*, Black Phoebes\*, Scrub Jays\*, Common Bush-tits, Mockingbirds\*, Robins, Cedar

Waxwings, Audubon's Warblers, Brewer's Black-birds\*, House Finches, Brown Towhees, White-crowned Sparrows, Golden-crowned Sparrows, or Song Sparrows\* in Los Angeles again? (Species marked with \* seem to be currently declining somewhat, or even drastically.)

PLEASE VOLUNTEER to help count these birds every month. You can count anywhere in our Christmas Count Circle that you wish; your own garden, street, neighborhood, feeding station, or whatever. We only want the numbers that you see somewhere in our Circle. If you want to help, please send a postcard so stating, including your name, address, and phone number, to:

William T. Watson  
1249 N. Edgemont St., Apt. 10  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90029

Bill Watson will then send you a supply of Monthly Report Forms which are to be returned each month to him with your count entered on them. He will keep the records if you will help. An added dividend will be a more efficient Christmas Count in 1968.

## CONDOR (CONCLUSION)

feeding they appear to loaf on the wing for a time for the mere pleasure of the exercise. And why not!

Through the telescope I saw the nest hole in which "Oscar" was hatched. Two birds were brought off this year in the same canyon of Hopper Basin. Our road comes up Pole Canyon, a tributary of Sespe Creek which flows into Fillmore from eastward to join Sespe Creek from the north.

# Southern California

## Birds



### By G. Shumway Suffel

March is the month in between; not quite winter, but not yet spring. Most of the winter birds are still here - although the geese and ducks, and some of the gulls, are starting their leisurely journey north. The migrants come through slowly - the first hummers are here, swallows are arriving in large flocks, but the warblers and flycatchers for the most part are later arrivals. An exception is the Western Kingbird, which comes north in March accompanied by the vast majority of the Cassin's Kingbirds, which have wintered further south. The Kingbirds should be easy to separate - the Western has white outer tail feathers, the Cassin's does not. Yet, it's amazing how they can hide this characteristic when perched on a wire, or when flying with the bright sky for a background. From below, the Cassin's is a darker, more contrasty bird, - white throat, dark breastband, and yellow belly. The Western has more uniform underparts with a light gray breastband. Their calls also are distinctive.

The Swallows require a quick eye as they seldom slow down to be recognized. Barn Swallows are easy, the others more difficult. Tree Swallows, to me, look steel-blue and buffy white, short-necked, and fly in a labored fashion. Violet-greens are more colorful, with the snowy white of the underparts coming up onto both sides of the rump. Their flight appears to be more graceful, and airier. The definite dark brown breast band of the Bank Swallow is distinctive, if you're quick enough to see it, and lucky enough to find one.

One exciting late March migrant is the Swainson's Hawk. These large buteos migrate in flocks along the foothills and over the desert. In the old days flocks numbered up to a hundred. Today you'll be lucky to see ten or twenty. These migrations are seldom observed, and should be reported.

Never have there been so many rare winter birds "staked out" - remaining in one place, as though tied to a stake. To review and up-date into February, with the name of a person to be contacted:

Trumpeter Swan - (for those of you who can travel to Northern California) five, wintering west of Santa Rosa (Gordon Bolander).

Broad-winged Hawk - two near Santa Cruz (David Gaines), one in Carmel Valley (Wm. Reese) and one in Palos Verdes (Shirley Wells). This one was banded. These observations are amazing because the species had never even been reported in California until December, 1966.

Dickcissel - one at a feeder in Pacific Grove (Capt. Hurlbert).

Ruff - wintering, with the rock birds near the mouth of Pico Creek, north of Cambria (Eleanor Pugh).

Oldsquaw - off Santa Rosa Creek near Cambria (Eleanor Pugh), and in the little bay at the headquarters of Montana de Oro State Park.

Hepatic Tanager - a male, at Rancho Park, Los Angeles (Larry Sansone).

Coues' Flycatcher - At the entrance to Brush Canyon, Griffith Park; last seen Feb. 3 (Laura Lou & Betty Jenner).

Brown Thrasher - Cabrillo Beach Park - (Shumway Suffel).

Baltimore Oriole - three or more on Pt. Loma (Alan Craig or Ginger Coughran).

Northern Waterthrush - in the Otay River bottom above the old highway #101 bridge (Alan Craig).

Eastern Phoebe - Capistrano Beach (Shirley Wells).

Our younger, more eager members seem to be experts at locating White-throated Sparrows. Kim Garrett found an adult in Palm Canyon on Jan. 29th, and the "grapevine" brings word that "Rich" Milne has one in his Palos Verdes back yard. Shirley Wells reports a Gray-headed Junco at her daughter's home in Rolling Hills, and Alice Fries, Shirley's mother, located those hard-to-find Grasshopper Sparrows at San Juan Capistrano again. A Slate-colored Junco was found by Ralph Mancke at the Arboretum in Arcadia in early February. Swamp Sparrows are turning up along the coast - two in the Morro Bay area, one at the Ventura Marina (David Gaines), and another along the 19th st. ditch in the Tijuana River Valley, by three L.A.A.S. members, including Bruce Broadbooks and Ralph Mancke. Jerry Johnson's trip to Morongo Valley produced an immature Scott's Oriole, rare in winter, and both Ladder-backed and Nuttall's Woodpeckers. This is the only place we know of where these sibling species can be found together. Eva Millsap and Dr. Harding found both dark- and light-phase Rough-legged Hawks, as well as a very rare dark-phase Ferruginous Hawk, in the area to the west of Lancaster.

Errata: Female and immature Common Scoters resemble an enlarged version of the winter male Ruddy Duck, not the female Ruddy Duck as stated in February. Sorry!

#### NATIONAL AUDUBON WESTERN CONFERENCE

Dates: April 6-9; place - the beautiful pine-covered Asilomar grounds at Pacific Grove, Calif. Among those attending will be the Secretary of the Ornithological Society of Japan and Staff Member of the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology in Japan, - Mr. Masashi Yoshii, who will make an address and show pictures on Tuesday morning, April 9th. This will follow the personal presentation of the film "San Francisco Bay" by Laurel Reynolds, noted lecturer and conservation photographer.

Registration for the entire convention, including nine meals and three nights, can be made for as little as \$33.50. For complete information, write: Audubon Western Conference, P.O. Box 3666, El Monte, Calif. 91733.