

# SKYWAYS

By Dr. Loye Holmes Miller

Although this article was written in 1946 - the dim and primitive past for our younger members-- the truths expressed here by Dr. Miller are perhaps more poignant and challenging today than ever.

Such stars, stars and more stars! Such wonderful desert stars! We had come a long way from the fog and smoke of the coastwise air that we had been breathing for the past three years--this clean desert air was good to the nostril and it was good for the soul. Lying in my sleeping bag out under the open sky I looked up and gloried in the stars--even as men of the desert have done ever since those long ago nights on the plains of Judea. There was for me, however, no stir of cud-chewing camel. I heard no bleating or rustle from woolly, bedded-down flocks. Even the mechanical "ship of the desert" upon which we so confidently relied, had ceased to creak and snap as its engine block cooled off. (You see, a Ford motor doesn't have to chew its cud at night.) There was only the desert silence and the wonderful, glorious, voiceless stars (with an occasional Horned Owl hooting in the distance.)

Gradually there began to creep in a note that was strictly modern--the hum of a multi-motored airplane--far and high 'til it smoothed out into an organ-like tone. All at once I realized that certain of the stars in my night sky were moving among their twinkling neighbors, and I recognized the riding lights of an eastbound air transport--a modern type of planet "wanderer" in the sisterhood of the stars.

We moderns have to adjust so rapidly now-a-days that we have come to accept these mechanical fly ways that are almost as fixed as our concrete highways. Our camp was far from any such highway but it was only a few thousand feet directly underneath a "skyway."

I lay there thinking of those less fortunate and much more desperately hurried passengers up there, sleeping in their transport berths; or perhaps they had given up trying to sleep and were even now looking down upon a dark and desert earth while I, down below them, looked up at a brilliant star-prickly sky--and was content.

Dr. Miller has given us permission to print this and others of his articles provided we mention that this is through the courtesy of U.C.L.A. Archives. Again may we say that we deeply appreciate the privilege.

Then I began thinking of the other flyways under which I had camped in the years past--flyways that were older than those shepherds of Judea, older even than the astrologers of the Chaldees. I mean the airpaths of migratory birds, those seemingly unmarked skylanes that have been followed day or night by countless generations of untrained pilots, for at least a geologic period or two.

California is rich in these bird flyways. Her varied topography has made them necessary and has helped also to define them pretty accurately. High mountain masses cut off the coastal plain or the great sheltered interior valley, from the semi-deserts and the Great Basin to the east. These barriers must be crossed by the migrating bird and it is to his advantage to save energy by saving altitude. Late one summer I camped at Bull Frog Lake just below Kearsarge Pass in the Sierra Nevada. To watch the sunrise I stumbled up to the summit of the Pass one morning and sat there for some hours--watching the new day grow up. The notch is 11,600 feet above the sea but the range rises abruptly for another thousand feet at either side. Just as the sun came up, a flock of White-fronted Geese came wedging their way in from the north east, headed for their wintering grounds among the grain fields of the great Central Valley.

They cleared the knife edge of the Pass by what seemed only a few inches--almost scraping their checkered breasts on the sharp rocks. They had probably been flying all night and they were conserving every ounce of fuel. Their steady wing beats carried them through the lowest notch in the mountain barrier and out over the lower lands where the sun had not yet risen. I saw them disappear into the blue shadow whence they could soon plane down to a resting ground in the marshy country about Tulare Lake. I wondered how many generations of their ancestors had followed that same trail through the notch of Kearsarge Pass.

(please turn page)

# Skyways *Continued..*

There are many other gateways through the Sierran wall. One near Lake Tahoe is used by California Gulls, some ducks, and the White Pelicans. Here I once saw a most incongruous sight. A flock of these great, white, pond-loving birds--they measure 7 or 8 feet across the wings, you know, and they float high in the water like a full-rigged ship--but here they were, gliding through the pine forest so low that the rush of their wings, was like escaping steam. They were moving southwest from their breeding grounds on Pyramid Lake in the basin country of Nevada. Their charted course took them through the Sierran notch just above Lake Tahoe.

For twenty-five years our home was on the rim of the Arroyo Seco gorge in Los Angeles. This stream runs south from the east-west barrier of the San Gabriel Mountains and it has carved quite a notch through the mountain wall that rises between us and the basin country to the north. An automobile highway now takes advantage of this gateway, but the White Pelicans found it ages ago. About the last of March, I would begin to expect them, and had sometimes even made bold to prophesy (with success) that, within the week, some of us would see the White Pelicans ploughing the air up the Arroyo, headed north for the basin country.

Another and very important migration route follows the great San Andreas Fault which traverses so much of the state and separates so many of our mountain blocks from their nearest neighbors. Its low notches cut the San Jacinto from the San Bernardino block by the San Gorgonio Pass. The San Bernarios are cut off from the San Gabriels by the Cajon Pass, the Tejon from the Tehachapi by Antelope Valley and Tejon Pass. In fact, if you will take the pains to study your map, you can trace this fault line as an almost direct bird highway from the Gulf of California, up the Coachella Valley, through notch after notch, into the great San Joaquin Valley, and from there on to the Golden Gate. If you do that, it becomes easy to explain those flocks of sandpipers, geese, pelicans, or even gulls, that are sometimes seen among the Joshua forests of Antelope Valley--such an incongruous picture they make--until you remember that you are camping on the bird highway of the San Andreas Fault.

An even more surprising flyline was discovered while on some of my "camps at sea" during several years of marine exploration off the California Coast. Our motor ship left La Jolla at ten o'clock one night and ran for six hours on a straight course southwest, into the open sea. At dawn the next morning we cut off the motors and lay silent on the long Pacific swells. All about us in the half light we saw small forms moving and heard the voices of land-birds calling. Our ship seemed to confuse them a little bit. It was like a new and strange, small island, looming out of the dark. No wonder they were disturbed. When

full daylight came on most of them proceeded on their way, but a Bullock's Oriole perched for a moment on our rigging. Sparrows and doves were also identified. During subsequent cruises many of those migrating land-birds were observed and their route was pretty well plotted. From a point of departure near Santa Barbara, they fly southeast across the great in-swing of the coast line, to land at some port of entry into Mexican territory for their six months winter sojourn. Unafraid, they set out in the dark across the open sea on a fly line that has no guide posts, no land marks, no beacons. I wonder what sort of "radio beam" they tuned in on to ride that dark sky!

The time is still within the memory of many of us when a lone man first ventured to fly straight out to sea with some measure of confidence that he would survive to fly again. The birds were doing it long before man quitted the smoke-stained cave where he cracked the marrow bones of barrel-headed horses and looked out into the fearsome dark that was peopled with evil spirits and with the more tangible danger of the sabre-tooth tiger.

Perhaps we have been a bit slow at some things but we are capable of learning. Anyway, it was good to look up at the friendly stars and hope that we may profit by our learning--that we may not in vain have emerged from our cave to stand erect, to look up, and even to leap into the air and follow the skyways of the birds, our riding lights moving among the sisterhood of the stars.



## NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Stewart A. Anderson  
2320 Carlyle Ave.  
Santa Monica, Ca 90402

Miss Norma E. Hulford  
4470 Rosewood Ave.  
Los Angeles, Ca 90004

Mr. Peter Kahn, Jr.  
915 Benedict Canyon Drive  
Beverly Hills, Ca 90210

Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Margolies  
516 N. Roxbury Drive  
Beverly Hills, Ca 90210

Miss Mary Wang  
P.O. Box 621  
El Segundo, Ca 90245

From Texas, two good-news items of interest to all birders: at Aransas Refuge, FIFTY Whooping Cranes, of which six are young-of-the-year. And at Rockport, the nation's #1 birder, Mrs. Conger Hager, is fully recovered from surgery and is leading her usual active life.

## THE ART OF BIRDWATCHING -- MEATAXE OR SCALPEL?

By G. Shumway Suffel

Birdwatching is a little like cutting up a chicken - there are two ways to do it. If you believe in the "scalpel school", you'll cut delicately, find the joint with great precision, sever the tendons with a clean stroke, - and the job is complete. The "meataxe" method is practised by professionals - a few bold blows and the bird is disjointed; but leave this method to the professionals unless you're very expert (or willing to lose a finger).

Both methods produce the desired results, but it's wise to start cautiously. If you have a given area to work, stop well before the nearest good habitat, survey it with your binoculars to see if there is need for a cautious approach, and then proceed slowly and quietly. The advantage of this method can best be shown by an actual example. The small canyon to the east of Pt. Fermin Park in San Pedro has several clumps of fennel (that tall plant that looks like leafy asparagus, with a licorice odor) which is very attractive to small migrants in the fall. As one of us bulldozed his way up the bottom of the canyon in order to find the birds in a hurry, he saw several small bodies, wings flapping in alarm, and knew only that they were birds flying away. No identification was possible. On the scalpel side, the "quiet watcher" on the rim of the canyon saw the birds before they flushed, and when they alighted again. Result: a precise identification of two rare Virginia's Warblers. Another case, later on the same day, shows how little one learns. We drove up to a choice little freshwater pond in Harbor Park, stepped out of the car, and only fifty feet away flushed a large shorebird with white patches on either side of its tail -- a Ruff? It almost had to be, -- but we'll never know. An hour's search of all possible nearby habitats revealed nothing. What did we do wrong? Nearly everything. We knew the pond was there, and that it might harbor a good bird, yet, despite this, we drove right up to the edge without scouting it first, so probably missed one of the rarest shorebirds on the West Coast.

With all this out of the way, I'll admit I belong to the "meataxe" school, and it does have its virtues on a quantitative basis. Where there is a large territory to cover, it is better to get 75% coverage of the whole than 100% coverage of only one-half. I feel sure that a large part of Guy McCaskie's ability to find birds is because he works fast and can make instant identifications even of flying birds. In other words, he uses his "meataxe" like a scalpel in the hands of a trained surgeon.

Which method is best? This depends on your temperament, and the conditions of the particular place and time. If you are the placid, contemplative sort who likes to study and enjoy the habits and actions of the birds in a natural relaxed setting, the "meataxe" is not for you. Contrarywise, if you're the competitive kind,

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Los Angeles Christmas Bird Count, like many others, was hampered by the infamous H. K. Flu germ. However, 39 observers took part, on a sunny, warm day -- the best Count weather in years. Number of species seen -- 142, with 8 additional species seen in the Count period. Number of individual birds: 16, 860. Perhaps the most interesting bird was the Hepatic Tanager, seen for its 6th winter. A Pigeon Hawk, and 4 Golden Plover were also of interest. American Goldfinches, Audubon's Warblers, and Anna's Hummers were in good numbers. If only we had more observers covering the city's residential blocks, we would have much larger totals of Mockers, Scrub Jays, and other birds which have adjusted to city living.

### SCOREBOARD:

Palos Verdes: 151 species, 36 observers; 10 additional species seen during count period.  
Topanga Canyon: 124 species, 22 observers, 6855 individual birds.  
Buena Vista Audubon: 141 species, 19, 380 individual birds.  
Santa Barbara: 165 species, 67 observers, 50, 486 birds.  
Sespe Wildlife Area: 104 species, 8, 353 birds, - including 13 California Condors!  
Fresno: 106 species, 13, 045 individuals.  
Sacramento: 131 species, 280, 082 individuals.  
Tucson Audubon: Atascosa area: 67 species, 4 observers, 1121 birds. Nogales area: 134 species, 26 people, 25, 861 birds; during the last eight counts 180 species have been seen. Patagonia area: 83 species, 3, 725 birds. Tucson Valley: 119 species. Santa Catalina Mountains: 116 species.  
San Diego: most recent reports place the number of species at 220, plus or minus a few.  
Seattle Audubon - 95 species, including Tufted Duck; 18, 027 individuals. 34 observers endured 10° to 17° weather, - the coldest Christmas Count in years.  
Phoenix: 113 species, 79, 345 birds, 31 observers.

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That superb birder, Alice Fries, has obtained permission to conduct groups of interested observers around a privately owned ranch which has hitherto been closed to the public. This is Mission Viejo Ranch; these trips will be available on weekdays only, and the party should consist of three or four people minimum since there are numerous gates to be opened and closed. Please call Alice Fries for details; she will make an appointment for you. Phone: 714-Sy6-5616.

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with energy to burn, wade right in, flush a lot of birds, get a big list -- the "scalpel" is too slow for you. Aside from temperament, let the circumstances determine your method. It's just a matter of how many chickens you want to cut up -- and how well!



## BIRDING IN TRINIDAD

TROPICAL MOUNTAINS provide excellent birding and good climate year round. Bellbirds, trogons, toucans, manakins, motmots, gaucharos, parrotlets, honeyscreepers and tanagers are only a few of the exotic species seen at

*Asa Wright*

## Nature Centre

SPRING HILL ESTATE, Arima, Trinidad, West Indies. Write for reservations by air mail.

A Naturalist in Trinidad - by C. Brooke Worth; J. B. Lippincott Co., E. Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pa 19105 -- \$7.95. The author of this book is both scientific observer and poetic reporter. Tropical biology, as he describes it, is an excursion into wonderland. As a member of the Trinidad Regional Virus Laboratory, C. Brooke Worth ranged into regions unseen by tourists and unfamiliar to most Trinidadians. The best of the book lies in his infinite delight in every living thing. Whether he is writing about a hive of bees, an avocado tree, the rare spider-bug, or netting birds, the reader is entranced--and often amused to the point of laughing out loud. The chapter on "Lists and List Makers" alone makes the book a treasure to birders. He says, "As in other degenerative ailments, advanced stages become more difficult and hideously expensive to deal with. County and state having been exhausted of likely new life listers, the ravaged victim must now close his conscience, dig into his pocket, and plan his vacations to increasingly distant mountains, shores, and plains." About the book, Allan Cruikshank says: "I find a kindred spirit in Dr. Worth's insistence upon observing uncaged, unfrightened animals as they go about their native habitats."

Your reviewer had the pleasure of spending a few days in Trinidad; the pleasure has been prolonged by reading Dr. Worth's book. -- B. J.

The breathtaking spring warbler migration through the Mississippi Valley will be at its height when the National Audubon Society meets in St. Louis next April for its 64th convention--and its first held in the spring. The field trips--before, during, and after the meeting--are already planned and promise excitement. The program is taking shape. And the speakers will include...

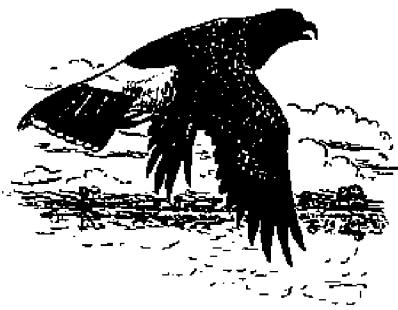
Dr. Elvis J. Stahr, the distinguished new president of the National Audubon Society; Leonard Hall, writer, lecturer, the sage of the Ozarks; Dr. Barry Commoner, the noted Washington University ecologist, who startled the world with his book *Science & Survival*; and Carl R. Noren, director of Missouri's outstanding Conservation Commission. Our host will be the St. Louis Audubon Society.

# AUDUBON ACTIVITIES

Jan. 11 - LAKE NORCONIAN - The weather was ideal, - clear and cool. Thirty birders gathered for the annual trip to the lake, including Russ and Marion Wilson, who will soon be off for the desert, - Arizona and Texas. Most of the wintering ducks were seen, along with Canada Geese, Black-crowned Night Herons, Cormorants, Common Egret, Common Gallinule and many others. A Red-shouldered Hawk was well observed, both by sight and voice. Among the 56 species seen, the bird of the day was the European Widgeon, with two (presumably) seen, one at each end of the lake. -Harold Baxter, leader

Jan. 14 - ANNUAL DINNER - A gathering of 150 members & guests chatted while nibbling hors d'oevres, then sat at tables for ten to enjoy the breast of chicken and the rum pie. After President Laura Jenner had presented her board and the rest of the people who make our Society a going concern, she held aloft a plaque and read its message: an appreciation of Otto Widmann's many years of service to our group, in being Field Trip Chairman, in improving the Audubon House yard, and in writing the Audubon Activities column for many seasons. The unfortunate part was that Otto was home with the "flu"! I wish we could have recorded the warm & sincere applause for Otto to hear.

The rest of the evening was almost as good as taking a real trip around the country to round out our "600 bird" list. The scenery was colorful from Organ Pipe desert country to New England fall colors. And the birds! You couldn't pick a favorite; the Vermilion Flycatcher who owns the Quitobaquito pond; the Kirtland's Warbler near



**EVERGLADE KITE**  
*Rostrhamus sociabilis*

Mio, Mich.; the Puffin, the Pileated Woodpecker, the Everglade Kite; and the biggest birds of all, our space ships at Cape Kennedy. It is so good to have Russ & Marion Wilson with us for a while; Russ was practically inundated with congratulations on his splendid bird pictures taken on their leisurely trailer tour of our country.

# Los Angeles Audubon Society



Miss Laura Jenner, President  
639 W. 32nd Street  
Los Angeles 90007  
748-7510

Mrs. Abigail King, Executive Secretary  
700 Halliday Avenue  
Los Angeles 90049  
476-5121

HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE  
PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046 876-0202

# calendar



## 1969 FEBRUARY 1969

| SUN       | MON      | TUE      | WED      | THU      | FRI      | SAT    |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| 1<br>TH 2 | 2<br>L 3 | 3<br>W 4 | 4<br>F 5 | 5<br>S 6 | 6<br>U 7 | 7<br>8 |
| 9         | 10       | 11       | 12       | 13       | 14       | 15     |
| 16        | 17       | 18       | 19       | 20       | 21       | 22     |
| 23        | 24       | 25       | 26       | 27       | 28       |        |

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

Feb. 8 SATURDAY - SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Morro Bay. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the foot of Morro Rock. This is one of the best areas for wintering coastal birds. Many go up Friday night in order to have a full day Saturday and a half day Sunday. Camping at Morro Bay State Park; many motels available in the town of Morro Bay.  
Leader: Bob Blackstone 277-0521

Feb. 11 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park. Our own L. A. Audubon member, Mary Schroeder, will present her program -- "A Naturalist's View of New Zealand." In addition to bird pictures, she will show a few of the reptiles, insects and plants of this fascinating area.

Feb. 23 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Chatsworth Reservoir. A wonderful area for wintering birds near the center of Los Angeles which is seldom open to the public. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the corner of Roscoe Blvd. and Topanga Blvd. We will enter the Fallbrook Gate as a group at 8:30 a.m. sharp. Late comers will not get in. We leave as a group at 2:30 p.m.  
Leader: Harold Swanton 886-1721

Mar. 8 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Tujunga Wash.

## NATIONAL CONVENTION ST. LOUIS, MO. APRIL 25th THROUGH 29th

Audubon House is looking for someone to work in the office one or two days a week. We are especially anxious to find someone to work on Saturdays. Some office or sales experience desirable; typing essential. Please call Abigail King at 476-5121 before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m. for details of hours & salary.

### FROM YOUR SALES DEPARTMENT :

THE FINAL VOLUMES OF BENT'S "LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS", ON THE FRINGILLIDAE: GROSBEAKS, FINCHES, SPARROWS, AND BUNTINGS, IN THREE VOLUMES AT \$3.00 EACH ARE NOW AVAILABLE.

DUE TO RISING PRICES WE ARE BEING FORCED TO RAISE THE MINIMUM PRICE FOR THE 10% DISCOUNT FOR MEMBERS FROM \$3.00 TO \$5.00.

GRACE NIXON, SALES DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN

LATEST ARRIVALS

# THE AUDUBON SCENE

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

The Emperor Geese mentioned in Shum Sufel's column were adult birds, -- genuine wanderers from the North Country; however, this item should be of interest to all:

The U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife have switched eggs of Emperor Geese to nests of White-fronted Geese which winter in California. If family ties (which are strong among Geese) dominate, the young Emperors may fly south with their foster parents this year. Any observation should be reported to State or Federal conservation agencies or to the Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Refuge, Bethel, Alaska 99559, where the experiment was initiated.

THE OBSERVER, Dec. 1968  
Sacramento Audubon Society

## OAKLAND'S FAMOUS WINTER ROBIN ROOST

At sundown the winter sky is filled with many thousands of robins flying in from all points of the compass to their community roost in Oakland's Joaquin Miller Park. To guide you to the best observation point for this spectacle, Paul Covel, Oakland Park Naturalist, has posted a large map in the lobby of the Rotary Natural Science Center in Lakeside Park with the dates he will be at the "Robin Roost".

THE GULL, Jan., 1969  
Golden Gate Audubon Society

SEASONAL OBSERVATIONS - Cold storms brought the wintering species into our valley with a rush. Waterfowl and perching bird populations are "zooming"..."Swans, geese, and cranes everywhere" was one phone message Dec. 17 about the Delta area. "Two to three HUNDRED THOUSAND Robins blackening the sky over ridges and gullies, going southwest of Georgetown, every toyon bush covered with them, Dec. 15."...another phone.

THE OBSERVER, Jan., 1969  
Sacramento Audubon Society

## The Western Tanager



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## TWO ORANGE COUNTY PARKS OUTDRAW YOSEMITE

Orange County's two major regional parks drew more visitors than Yosemite, one of the nation's busiest vacation spots.

2.4 million persons visited Irvine and O'Neill Parks during the year, a 16% increase over the number logged in 1966.

Included in the total were 5000 trailers and truck campers which made overnight stays at O'Neill.

THE WANDERING TATTLER  
Sea & Sage Audubon Society

## .... BUT ONLY GOD CAN MAKE A TREE!!

Having spent most of my life in the nursery and horticultural field, I cringe at the destruction of trees along our highways and byways. Just at the time when we as a nation are trying to clean up and beautify our miles of highways, thoughtless ones are tearing out trees that have grown to majestic beauty along them. The people should be aroused! Beautiful oaks that lined Laguna Canyon for years were torn out in a few days. Last month, beautiful white oaks planted 75 years or so ago, were torn out along the Santa Ana Freeway. The nurserymen and landscape contractors of this state have the means, know-how and equipment to move such trees, and the cost would not be much greater than that of destroying them. These people would gain much in public good will -- even if it cost them money.

Loring L. Bigelow, Editor  
THE WANDERING TATTLER, Jan., 1969  
Sea & Sage Audubon Society

(Tanager Editor's Comment: You know what the highway department calls those of us who feel strongly on this subject?

"POSY PICKERS". How does that grab you, fellow taxpayers?

## NEW RESEARCH ASSOCIATE FOR NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM. (From "Environmental Southwest", Museum Bulletin, Dec. 1, 1968)

At the Oct. 14th meeting, the Board of Directors appointed Mr. Guy McCaskie, well-known local ornithologist, a Research Associate of the Society, strengthening the unofficial association he has had with the Museum since his arrival here in 1962.

His main interest is the status and distribution of California birds. In the past six years he has added about 20 birds to the California checklist, and several unusual specimens to the Museum's collection.

Mr. McCaskie, originally from England, received a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from San Diego State College and is now with a local construction firm.

"Sketches", Jan., 1969  
San Diego Audubon Society

# Stamps Wanted

MANY RANCHERS, foresters, real estate developers, and owners of smaller properties on which Bald Eagles are nesting in Florida have registered their lands as Florida Audubon Society Cooperative Bald Eagle Sanctuaries. The owners agree to guard the nest trees from fire, and from disturbance of either adults or young. Nearly three million acres of land in Florida is now included in these eagle sanctuaries. Since most of the few remaining Bald Eagles of our nation nest in Florida or Alaska, the eagle program in Florida is important.

The Florida Audubon Society needs funds to purchase and erect the sanctuary signs and to pay a limited travel expense of some of those who watch and report on the nesting success each year. This money comes from several sources:

1) Cash donations to the Bald Eagle Fund.

- 2) Membership of adults in the American Bald Eagle Club at \$1.00 per person.
- 3) Membership of young people in the Eagle Guardians at 25¢ per person for a year, or \$1.00 for life. 15¢ of the Eagle Guardian dues pays for the membership card and eagle button, the rest is used for the eagle work.

4) The sale of used, U.S. Commemorative or Foreign Commemorative postage stamps which are being received by the Florida Audubon Society from all parts of the United States and from other parts of the world as well. This is a project in which all, young and old, can help. Commemorative stamps are those issued to honor people, historical events, natural resources, etc.

To collect the stamps for this purpose, tear out or cut out the corners of the envelopes on which the stamps are pasted, leaving sufficient margin about the stamps that they are not damaged. The stamps must be in good condition. They are worthless if clipped so as to damage perforations, or if torn, thinned, or folded.

After the stamps are received by the Society, they are soaked off the paper in lukewarm water, sorted and counted by volunteers. Some people who are experienced in stamp collecting do this before they send the stamps to the Society, thus saving postage and work for the Society. After packing in envelopes of 100 of a kind, these are sold to stamp wholesale dealers at prices ranging from 25¢ per hundred up. Dealers are not interested in the Christmas stamps, the small flag stamps, or any of the regular issues from 1¢ to 40¢. The higher values of the regular issues, from 50¢ to \$5.00 are usually worth as much as the average commemoratives. While foreign commemoratives are also worth saving, the regular issues of countries using great quantities of stamps, such as Great Britain, Germany, Canada, Australia, and the like are worth no more than the common postage stamps of the United States.

Your contributions of used commemorative postage stamps should be sent to P. O. Dr. 7, Maitland, Florida 32751.

Good News! The current Recreation and Parks Dept. budget (1969-70) includes \$100,000 for the initial phase of irrigating Elysian Park. This means that trees and other plants suffering from lack of water may yet be saved. A staff report, presented Jan. 9, estimated total cost for irrigation in the park at a whopping \$2,279,040, but recommended against any funds being allocated now to reverse the park's galloping deterioration. It proposed, instead, waiting for a 1970 bond issue, "THAT'S THE SAME AS FILING IT AND FORGETTING ABOUT IT," commented Mrs. Harold C. Morton, commission vice-president. Other commissioners agreed. They voted unanimously to place the \$100,000 item in the department's \$22,700,000 budget. Councilman Paul H. Lamport, chairman of the council's Finance Committee, promised cooperation in keeping the irrigation funds from falling victim to the council's pruning shears. — January 9 was also a banner day for Griffith Park. The Recreation & Parks Dept. voted, 3-2, to reject a scheme to turn the top of Mt. Hollywood into a junior Disneyland. An encouraging note during the discussion was the park philosophy enunciated by one of the commission's new members, Patricia Delaney. Voting to kill the aerial tramway were Mrs. Morton, Miss Delaney and James Madrid. Favoring commercialization of the park's highest peak were President A. E. England and Brad Pye, Jr.

**RECREATION & PARKS IS MISCAST IN THE ROLE OF MONEY-MAKER. THAT IS NOT ITS FUNCTION. IT SHOULD, RATHER, SET ABOUT CONVINCING SHORT-SIGHTED CITY OFFICIALS OF WHAT THE PEOPLE KNOW FULL WELL: EVEN WHERE THERE IS NO FINANCIAL GAIN, RECREATION FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE ARE ESSENTIAL, - NOT A FRILL.**

This call to mind the awed remark made by a little girl in the sixth grade when her class was taken to the Griffith Park Observatory. "This is the very first time I've ever been in the mountains!"— Let's never spoil this "mountain" for our city children.

Why don't you write to the commissioners and tell them how pleased you are that our park is being kept in its natural state?

FROM THE COMMITTEE TO SAVE ELYSIAN PARK

## NATURE WHO NEEDS IT?

### A SATIRE

We are constantly besieged by conservationists to help slow the march of progress. They want to save San Francisco Bay, the Grand Canyon, the Everglades, the Great Lakes, the redwoods and the Whooping Cranes, the tule elk and the Condors. They are concerned about pollution, smog, pesticides, and junkyards.

Well, they need to be updated. We are no longer living in the nineteenth century. Modern science has brought us out of the woods. We are no longer dependent upon natural resources; suppose all the forests are cut and burned, the agriculture land covered with housing tracts and shopping centers, the rivers and seas filled with sewerage and industrial waste--so what?

In this enlightened age one can rent, or even buy, an apartment in a towering building far above the city's noise and confusion. Here one can enjoy all the lush comforts of civilization without any contact with the earth. In many of these complexes one can find employment in businesses who rent quarters in the building; the lower floors shops of all kinds, restaurants, bars, and theaters.

In this antiseptically clean environment one has no problems from insect bites, house flies, dust, pollen, cold or hot winds, thunderstorms or blizzards. An endless variety of pre packaged, pre-cooked, refined and enriched foods is available in the supermarket downstairs. Climate-controlled air pours out of the air-conditioner vent. Sparkling clear chlorinated and fluoridated water gushes from the tap. In some places it is even enriched with scented hand detergent - free suds! Steady cool light floods the room from the fluorescent fixtures. Looking through the double-paned picture window we see the tops of other hi-rise buildings soaring above the enfolding layers of soft brown smog. Wildlife is represented by hordes of busy starlings and pigeons on the ledges and cornices. - So why sweat it, man, we got science and technology, who needs nature?

Hubert Farley, President  
Paso Robles Audubon Society  
CALIFORNIA THRASHER, Jan., 1969

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS By G. SHUMWAY SUFFEL

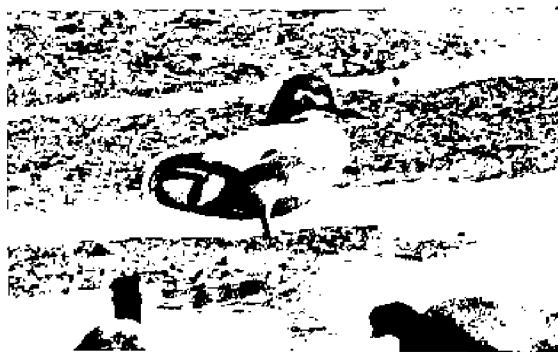
What can February bring to equal the excitement, birdwise, of early winter? Obviously this is something only February can reveal, but we can make some predictions, - the awakening, - or return - of the Poorwills, the arrival of the Allen's and Rufous Hummers, and of the earliest Swallows (all species except Bank Swallows, which are late), and the departure of the first waterfowl --geese, particularly, start north early.

The "excitement of early winter" centered on four rare species of waterfowl, which were studied by dozens of eager Auduboners. The first of these were six Emperor Geese (rare wanderers from the Bering Sea) making their "furthest south" occurrence. Jerry Johnson found a lone bird at Emerald Bay in Laguna Beach on Dec. 15th; and the same day, five more were seen at the entrance to Anaheim Bay near Seal Beach, by the local fishermen. On the next day, these five were reduced to three and by month's end to one - the penalty they paid for being conspicuous, unsuspicious, and edible. The European Widgeons at Upper Newport Bay must have arrived in mid-December, since a careful search was made for them on the 7th without results, but by the turn of the year at least two males, probably four, and maybe more, were present. While studying the widgeon, Jon Atwood noticed an odd duck "like a hybrid between a Pintail and a Mallard", - and in a rough sort of way, it was! Subconscious recall placed it as Asiatic and rare, possibly a Baikal or Falcated Teal, but we had no description or pictures in our field guides. Four of us wrote "feather by feather" descriptions; then the Cottons from Tucson came by with a Peterson, and we had a very brief but adequate description. It was a Falcated Teal; Pough mentions five previous records, and the Atlantic Naturalist, winter, 1968, mentions one at Roaches Run, presumably last fall.

Jay Sheppard's Christmas Count at the south end of the Salton Sea produced the last of our rare waterfowl, - two Red-breasted Geese. These birds were flying with the tens of thousands of Snow and Canada Geese, and for this reason were not always easy to find even though they are unmistakable when once located. A note of caution should be interjected here. There is a possibility that the Falcated Teal could be an escapee, and a probability that the Red-breasted Geese are escapees. This probability is based on the fact that "Red-breasts" nest in North Central Siberia and migrate southwesterly to winter near the Caspian Sea, tending to take them away from our area; and that they are commonly kept, and reproduce well in captivity. Further information on the status of these birds is solicited.

Not so rare, but noteworthy, were the Whistling Swans on the periphery of our area -- five were at Little Lake (Dr. Richard Neuman) and two or more in Kern County. They should be looked for locally this winter.

While waiting for the Emperor Geese to appear, a brief check was made at Bolsa Chica and a female Hooded Merganser was our reward.



FALCATED TEAL (*Anas Falcata*)

By Richard Bradley. Taken with a 300mm telephoto with a 2x telextender at f11 and 1/125th of a second exposure.

This large-headed, short-tailed, rather chunky duck is closer to a gadwall than a teal. The elongated and curved tertials are unique. Its body has a scaled appearance because of the dark edge of the feathers. --R. H. Pough, Western Bird Guide

An hour or so later, still waiting, a Louisiana Heron was found at Seal Beach. This is probably the same bird reported at Bolsa Chica on the 4th by Mrs. Ethel West.

The "Bohemian Waxwing Winter" mentioned last month is developing as expected - two were seen in Loma Linda, up to four were at the Arboretum in Arcadia (Ellen Stephenson & Ralph Mancke), about 125 were recorded on the Big Bear Lake Christmas Count (Mike San Miguel), and, incredibly, five to ten THOUSAND "Bohemians" were in Las Vegas at holiday time (Jay S.) It may be many years until we have such a chance to see "Bohemians" again.

The Arboretum in Arcadia illustrates again that an area with good habitat, worked persistently by good birders (the Baxters, the Coppers, Jon A. & Ralph M.) will produce good birds. An adult Harris Sparrow joined the immature White-throated, the Golden-crowned and the White-crowned Sparrows in mid-December, making it possible to see all four Zonotrichias at one time - a rare experience. Also seen in December was a Warbling Vireo, very rare in winter, and seen by several observers for over a week; a Wilson's Warbler, a Slate-colored Junco, a Western Tanager, and a previously reported Pigeon Hawk.

Elsewhere in the Southland there was much of interest. Shirley Wells found a male Scott's Oriole in her San Pedro yard the day after the Palos Verdes Christmas Count ('twas ever thus!), and at nearby Averill Park she had a Solitary Vireo (rare in winter), two Western Tanagers, and a Varied Thrush. Another Varied Thrush was seen at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino by Paula Randall. From Encino, John Dunn reported it in black and white; sparrows, we mean, - a Black-throated Sparrow, seldom seen away from the desert, winter or summer; and a White-throated Sparrow, always noteworthy, were there at year's end. Surf Scoters were present along the coast in thousands, as is normal, but White-winged Scoters were seldom reported, and then singly, in contrast to last year's hundreds. Com-

mon Scoters were seen in their usual small numbers - eight in Los Angeles Harbor (Jay S.) and three females off Will Rogers State Beach in Santa Monica (Paul Hessler). Paul also saw a male Common Merganser (not often seen on salt water) in the same area. The presence in winter of Cattle Egrets locally is well known but they are seldom seen in the metropolitan area. However, one was found in a small grassy area, - sans cattle, - of El Segundo by Taylor Gabbard on Jan. 8th.

Three years ago, Shirley Wells found Allen's Hummingbirds nesting on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, an occurrence unrecorded south of Ventura County. She started 1969 right by finding her first Allen's nest on New Year's Day. Another nest was found within the week, and these two will be only the first of many to be discovered by her well-trained eyes. Unquestionably these hummers have been wintering and nesting on the Peninsula for years but their status was not recognized. This emphasizes again that there are worthwhile discoveries to be made very close to home.

Before the winter birds depart, cover the coast and the lagoons for waterfowl; some of the rare ones may still be there, - and gulls, divers, and "pelagics" from the piers after the storms. Best bets for hawks are the area between the Santa Ana Freeway (Myford Road turnoff) and Upper Newport Bay; and the area northeast of Lancaster. And, - find your own "Walden", as Sandy Wohlgemuth did in the January Tanager, - an area you know as well as your own home, but which is constantly surprising with its changing seasons and birdlife.

#### VANCOUVER SUPPLEMENTARY BIRD COUNT

R. A. Pilkington of the Vancouver, B. C., Natural History Society writes: "I met Prof. Egbert Peckham at the annual convention of the Vancouver Wild Life Federation, which is always held on New Year's Eve, because at that time Vancouver's wild life is at its wildest. We studied wild life mostly through our glasses until long after Auld Lang Syne (that famous Scotsman) had been honored in song and we finally found ourselves faced with the choice of finding a new subject for research or going to our separate homes and explaining to guess who." The two bird counters then set forth and sighted an amazing list including the following:



"Two kippered herons, a flock of pot-headed hippies, a turtle-necked singlet, a seamless stockingbird, several chocolate chipits, a bird with a harsh, scratchy voice - probably a sandpaper, an exorbitant lightbill and a flock of western teenagers making a great clamor. (When alone this bird utters a plaintive cry of 'Gimme, gimme'. Also the tiniest of birds - the haffinch; nine imported flycatchers in the baseball park, a Wilson's wobbler and a small bird Prof. Peckham said was always the last one to arrive in the spring, - the also wren."

Seattle Audubon Society "NOTES", Jan., 1969

## RARE BIRD ALERT

By G. SHUMWAY SUFFEL

Recent reports of rare birds, and my ability to notify all persons who might be interested, have made it seem advisable to reactivate the "Rare Bird Alert." Arnold Small's original organization of this "alert" was well planned and carefully thought out, but somehow, it barely got off the ground. Maybe we just didn't have the right birds to report or maybe, since it was based on a chain of telephone calls, the chain broke down. It seems wise to use the same general plan with an area leader in each toll-free telephone district. It will be the area leader's responsibility to see that the people in his group are notified, - not necessarily directly, but through a system which he finds will work with his own group. Let me emphasize - WE ONLY WANT ENTHUSIASTIC BIRDERS WHO WILL MAKE THE SYSTEM WORK. It is not necessary to run out and see all the birds, but it is necessary that you notify others so that they will not be denied that opportunity. If you live out of the toll-free area you will be called collect unless you furnish your area leader with self-addressed post cards.

Details on what birds to report and to whom, the method by which information will be passed on, and the names of participants will be furnished when we're ready to go, - hopefully by early March. If you are willing to undertake the responsibilities of participation, send the following to:

Shumway Suffel  
1105 No. Holliston Ave.  
Pasadena, Ca 91104

1) Name, address, city and zone number; telephone number, and best time to phone.  
2) A one-dollar bill, preferably not a check. This money will be used to defray the cost to the leaders of long distance calls (for the benefit of all), collect calls (ditto), and multi-message unit calls between leaders or their properly authorized assistants. There will be no accountability for this money. Additional assessments may have to be levied in the future. However, if there is a lack of interest, the money will be given to the Los Angeles chapter of the Audubon Society.

3) Deadline for above information:  
Feb. 20, 1969

#### EMPEROR GOOSE

(*Philacte canagica*)



The latin name translated means "loving the seashore". Kortright describes the bird thus:

General effect: A medium-sized goose, with ashy plumage barred with black and white. Chief distinguishing features, (a) head & hind neck, white (often suffused with rusty), definitely outlined against black foreneck, (b) feet, orange yellow.



MORE ABOUT  
BIGHORN SHEEP  
IN THE  
SAN GABRIELS

By Charles Jenner - January 2, 1969

Four members of the Jenner Ecological Foundation, - Dr. Jenner, Dan Monette, Wayne Smith, and Richard Grogan, arrived at Cow Canyon Saddle at 0800 hours. The weather was clear and promised to be warm, although some snow remained along the south walls of Cow Canyon. We hiked to the knob overlooking Lookout Ridge, hoping to find some ewes, resting and feeding, on the steep granite walls in that area. We were accompanied on our hike down the Coldwater Truck Trail (past the locked gate) by John Angle, whose father owns a cabin in the Coldwater Canyon area. He told us several stories concerning Bighorn in the Canyon, including one about a ram which he approached to within five feet, the animal being too weak to climb a slope and escape; and of a ram which was supposedly killed by coyotes during the night, the noise being heard by residents of the canyon.

We arrived at the knob overlooking the steep granite canyon north of the truck road at 0900. No sheep were visible in the area, so we decided to hike down to Cattle Canyon. We reached the mouth of Cattle Canyon about eleven, and started up the right-hand side of the wash. Signs were scarce. We hiked up the wash until about 11:30, and were ready to turn back when Richard Grogan spotted sheep climbing the north wall of Cattle Canyon. There were four animals: a ram with a 3/4+ curl, and three mature ewes. They had just begun the steep ascent, and were obviously aware of us and were attempting to escape. We stopped to set up the camera and spotting scope. The ewes clambered a short way along the wall, and descended again to the canyon floor; they soon disappeared from sight up the canyon. The ram continued to work his way upward, stopping from time to time to observe us. He finally disappeared into a ravine about a third of the way up the wall. He was not "panicked" by any means, but moved deliberately and quickly. We followed their tracks back to a spot on the south side of the canyon, an area enclosed by young spruce, oaks, mahogany, and toyon. The slope there was moist and mossy, with much early green grass; the tracks led up the slope, where they may have been feeding when we disturbed them. At this time, 12 o'clock, we noted the ram moving northeast along a ledge about half-way up the north wall. When he was a considerable distance from us, he easily descended the cliff to the rocky wash, and headed up the canyon in the direction taken by the ewes. He disappeared through a gap without looking back. We started down the canyon, and found a watering spot in the middle of the rocky wash near the mouth of the ravine, north of the truck road. Many Bighorn tracks and small mammal tracks were in evidence.

We began our long hike up the trail to Cow Canyon Saddle. Dan Monette and Wayne Smith

were exploring a small ravine on the south slope of Lookout Mountain about three o'clock when they heard a great deal of noise in the brush, and sighted a sheep moving rapidly up the slope. They were unable to classify this sheep as to age or sex. A small, trickling stream runs in this ravine, which can be traced back to a 25-foot, mossy "waterfall".

Cow Canyon Saddle, the VW Kamper, and lunch, were reached at 3:30. The Cattle Canyon area is a very promising region for Bighorn study, but without a key to the locked gate, the long hike, with equipment, limits the amount of time which can be spent in the area.

**Editor's Note:** Members who attended the evening meeting of June 13, 1967, or read about it in the July-August, 1967 "Tanager" will remember that Ranger Francis Winter, our speaker, remarked that the Forest Service did not have funds for needed research in the Bighorns of the San Gabriels; he asked for suggestions as to who might help out in this rugged and time-consuming task. The Jenner Ecological Foundation volunteered to cooperate in this study. More observers are needed; all Audubon members interested in participating in this cooperative Bighorn study are requested to contact Dr. Charles Jenner, 11381 Loch Lomond Road, Los Alamitos, Ca 90720. - (213) 431-7531. Persons with long range photographic equipment are especially needed to record the activities of this spectacular mountain-climbing species.

North American Nest-Record Card Program

LABORATORY OF ORNITHOLOGY  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Through the generosity of Mrs. Bradley Fisk the nest-record card program has entered a new phase. We are at last able to go forward on our long projected plan of editing and analysis of the data we have been collecting. Further, the director of the program, Dr. David B. Peakall, has moved from the Upstate Medical Center to Cornell University and is thus able to supervise the program on a day-to-day basis. .... Initially we plan to edit and punch the cards of a dozen common species: Mourning Dove, Eastern Phoebe, Barn & Tree Swallows, House Wren, Robin, Eastern Bluebird, Catbird, Yellow Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird, Cardinal, American Goldfinch and Song Sparrow. This list includes two almost exclusively plant eaters, five almost exclusively insectivores and several species whose diet is fairly evenly mixed. For these species enough data should be available to give statistically significant information on long-term trends as well as information on important aspects of their breeding biology. We still want a many cards on as many species as possible, but cards on the above species would be of special interest at the present time.

Those in the Southern California area wishing to help, - even if you can visit a specific nest only once, - please contact Shirley Wells; her phone is 831-4281; her address, 30443 La Vista Verde, San Pedro, Ca 90732.