

The Western Tanager

VOLUME 36 NUMBER 4 DECEMBER, 1969

Birding in New England

By Larry Sansone

After having returned from a birding trip to southern Texas two weeks earlier, the time had come for me to take off for another minor expedition to some other part of the country. But where? For years I've wanted to visit the northeastern United States and become familiar with New England's bird life and habitat. So this was it!

Departing Los Angeles International Airport on the morning of June 25, 1969, I flew non-stop to Dulles Airport outside Washington, D. C.,* and was met by Dennis Coskren. Many of you veteran birders will remember him for his legendary Dodge truck with the bashed-in top. This was his landmark on wheels when he birded in California. With only about 3 hours light remaining, we drove to the C and O Canal which parallels the Potomac River in Maryland where 5 life birds were waiting for me. They were the Acadian Flycatcher, whose call is characteristic of a "sneeze," Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Bluebird, and 2 male Cerulean Warblers observed singing. What a way to start out a trip! With this as a beginning, I knew many good things were in store for me.

For a western birder the Northeast affords a good opportunity to become familiar with many birds known to him only as "vagrants." To see and hear them in their native habitat is an experience one won't soon forget.

Birding in and around Washington, D. C., was unique because of places like Rock Creek Park, which are forested areas adjacent to the big cities. Some of the birds here included Blue Jays, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Catbirds, Wood Thrushes and Veerys with their unforgettable flute-like songs.

*For the purist, Washington, D. C., and New York are not in New England—Ed.

The time in D. C. was spent mostly sight-seeing and the real birdwatching didn't get started until we flew to Boston on Friday, June 27. Staying the night at Dennis' home in Lawrence, Massachusetts, we left early for the family cabin along Lake Winnepesaukee in central New Hampshire with his brother, Mike, and sister, Susan. This lake is almost 20 miles across and is dotted with many beautiful forested islands. Then on to the White Mountains and a stop to look at the Old Man of the Mountain at Crawford Notch State Park. The weather this day and throughout most of my trip was perfect. Then Mount Washington comes into view. This is where the highest official wind velocity (over 230 miles per hour) on the face of the earth has been recorded.

Hiking up the Webster Cliff Trail afforded excellent looks at Black-throated Green and Canada Warblers, Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes, and Boreal Chickadees. This trail is a part of the Appalachian Trail. One can also find (if they are lucky, and we weren't!) Spruce Grouse and Northern and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers.

However, a pair of nesting Black-backed were observed at Scott's Bog the next day. This is a typical spruce bog located on the northern edge of the Connecticut Lakes about six miles from the Canadian border. We were met by Bob Smart, a teacher at the New Hampton School for Boys and president of the New Hampshire Audubon Society, who was leading a field trip. The area around the bog was cloudy with a heavy drizzle in the air most of the time. Rusty Blackbirds are very common here and were seen throughout the northern part of New Hampshire. Other birds included Eastern Kingbirds and Phoebe's, Blue and Gray Jays, Winter Wren, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Solitary and Philadelphia Vireos, Parula, Blackburnian, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Black-poll, and Black-throated Blue Warblers, and Swamp Sparrow. Great!

Continued on next page

Since Dennis had to return to Washington for work at the U. S. Geological Survey where he is employed, I joined Bob. It was very fortunate for me to have stayed with Bob Smart, since without him I never would have seen as many birds. Bob is one of the principal birders in New Hampshire and has seen 92% of the birds officially recorded in the state — a percentage matched only by Guy McCaskie for California, according to the American Birding Association.

Using Bob's house in Bristol, New Hampshire, as a base, we made our daily trips to almost every part of the state. The first full day's birding with him produced probably the best bird of the trip, a singing Western Meadowlark. This was staked out at the edge of a marsh near Hampton along the coast. This marsh also had in it Greater Black-backed Gulls, the largest gull in the world, and Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

I am absolutely convinced that birding without a tape recorder in the spring is a handicap, especially in the east where many of the birds are difficult to see because of the dense foliage. For example, on July First we went to the north end of Lake Winnepesaukee and saw a cuckoo fly over the road into the trees out of sight. Having never seen a Black-billed Cuckoo before, Bob got his cassette tape recorder out and played back his call note which was taken from Peterson's records of eastern bird songs the night before. The bird began calling its distinctive "cu cu cu" almost instantly and soon flew to the edge of the woods. Excellent views were made and even the red eye-ring could easily be seen. Shortly after we played the song of a Yellow-throated Vireo and a female of this species promptly popped up followed by a singing male which wasn't singing before. This story was repeated the two nights later when at Dansbury Bog near Danbury a Barred Owl answered the tape recorder and revealed itself so we could easily see its dark eyes and rounded head.

Considerable time was spent photographing the countryside and driving the back roads for a possible look at Ruffed Grouse. But my luck with the gallinaceous birds never was very good. Other life birds up to this point included two young Mute Swans near Durham, 30 Black Ducks on the Exeter sewer ponds, a female Golden-winged Warbler east of East Kingston, Least Flycatchers which could be seen everywhere calling their distinctive "che-bek," and two Great-crested Flycatchers near New Hampton.

At this point I decided to take a side trip to the Boston area to rejoin Bob in three days. Most of this time was used in sightseeing and touring, but I did take a bus trip to Plymouth and after photographing the famous Rock and the Mayflower, took a five-mile walk to the

end of the sandbar south of town which helps to form Plymouth Bay. About half way out the sandbar you come to a small colony of Least Terns nesting on the dunes. At the end is a larger colony of mixed Least, Artic, Common, and at least six pairs of Roseate Terns. Then a five-mile walk back to town for the return ride to Boston.

No birding experience to the Northeast is complete without a pelagic trip off its coast. So, returning to Laconia, New Hampshire, from Boston, Bob and I went to sleep by 11:00 p.m. on July 5th and by 1:00 a.m. we were on our way to Bar Harbor on Mount Desert Island, Maine, to meet the Bluenose for a six-hour ride across the Bay of Fundy to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. On the way to Bar Harbor the American Woodcock can be seen darting across the road silhouetted against the dawn sky. It is light by 4:00 a.m. because of the northern latitude.

The Bluenose is a ferry ship operated by the Canadian government. This is probably the best opportunity for a birdwatcher to observe pelagics at any time of year in the Atlantic Ocean. In the winter, however, service is cut down, so it is advisable to obtain information about its schedule before making any plans.

Leaving Bar Harbor, one at once realizes how beautiful the coast of Maine really is, with its many small islands covered with coniferous forests to the waters edge. It reminded me very much of the Big Sur coastline of California with the mountains meeting the sea. The first birds you will see besides the Herring Gulls will be the Black Guillemots sitting on the rocks and in the water close to shore. Then the cool open ocean and first glimpse of the Greater Shearwater that wheels around to the stern and paces the ship. We estimated about 400 Greater Shearwaters that day with an additional 10 Sootys. Then about half way across excellent looks were made of a Skua which flew after resting on the water. But that wasn't all, another Skua was seen about an hour out of Yarmouth! Fantastic! The day was nicely rounded out when a Manx Shearwater flew effortlessly by and off into the horizon. After a six-hour return to Bar Harbor the same day, our eyes felt like they were suspended from our skulls by springs!

Other birds at sea included 12 Wilson's and 25 Leach's Petrels, Double-crested Cormorant, 1 Parasitic Jaeger, and a Laughing Gull.

After camping the night on Cadillac Mountain on Mount Desert Island, we spent the next day exploring the coast and working our way south toward Rockland, Maine. Before leaving Mount Desert Island, I saw my first carnivorous plants on a Sphagnum-Spruce bog called Great Heath Bog. They were the Sundew Plant, which traps tiny insects on its sticky outer

surface and the Pitcher Plant, whose victims are just as neatly disposed of.

About 15 miles off the coast from Rockland is a chain of small islands known as the Matinicus Archipelago. On one of these islands, Matinicus Rock, which is a rock outcropping with a permanent lighthouse station on top, is the southernmost breeding range of the Common Puffin and Razor-billed Auk. It was our intention to follow the directions given in

Pettingills "Guide to Bird Finding" and spend a couple of nights on Matinicus Island to include a side trip to the Rock. But accommodations couldn't be made on the Island. However, Captain Norris Young, owner and operator of the Mary A, the ferry which makes the run to Matinicus Island from Rockland three times a week said he would arrange for us to get out to the Rock five miles south of Matinicus Island.

Camp was made in an old abandoned eighteenth century house and the following morning we left Rockland aboard the Mary A. On the way out we saw Arctic Terns, Laughing Gulls, and a flight of Common Eider (upwards of 150 Eider for the day). After dropping the people and supplies off on the Island, Capt. Young took us out to Matinicus Rock which we circled twice before returning to the Island for the return trip to Rockland. At least 200 Black Guillemots were on the Rock or in the water as well as 25 Common Puffin and from 5 to 7 Razor-billed Auks. Most of this time we were too busy to really enjoy the birds since we were snapping pictures.

Returning to Rockland by 2:30 we started back for New Hampshire, taking in the scenery and birds for the last time. I enjoyed everything New England had to offer and next time I will coincide my visit to see the fall colors.

Next and final stopover was in New York City for four days where museums and other points of interest were visited, including a tour of the National Audubon Headquarters, to learn how the Society operates. It is quite impressive.

New York is where the weather changed on me for, when on my last day I decided to try for the Glossy Ibis at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, it rained without letup. Soaked to the skin, 6 Ibis were my reward.

One Hundred Seventy Four species were counted of which 33 were new. This has been a most enjoyable and rewarding field trip.

About the Author. LAWRENCE SANSONE III lives where he was born in Los Angeles. He started birding at the age of fourteen, by becoming acquainted with the man next door to his grandmother, Dr. Jean Delacour, then Curator of the National History Museum of Los Angeles. Larry helped to feed the birds

editorial

BIRDS AND BOOKS

Some people study birds in the field, and some study birds in books. The best birders read and look, and the really good ones read about what they expect to see before they go and again after they have seen the new and unusual. Almost everyone has a field guide. Many of us have two or more, since they are mutually complementary, and many have a library to supplement and fill out the information which makes birding a continuing and unending source of interest.

The Los Angeles Audubon Society is extremely fortunate in having a headquarters large enough to accommodate a book store containing a wide variety of books on birds. It is also fortunate in having a Sales Chairman, Miss Grace Nixon, an experienced and well-read birder, who spends a great deal of time in searching and selecting titles for our inventory.

Our selection and collection of books would not be found anywhere else in the world, so why not buy a book for yourself and friends for Christmas, from our bookstore? The more sales we have, the larger our inventory can grow and your selection ultimately become.

Gilbert King

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

ANNUAL DINNER

Tuesday, January 13, 1970

Fox and Hounds Restaurant
2900 Wilshire Boulevard
Sana Monica, California

\$7.00 per person. Stuffed chicken

Reservations must be in by Wednesday,
January 7, 1970. Use enclosed coupon.

Social hour - 6:30 p.m. Dinner - 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Eben McMillan will present his
16-mm color film "OUTBACK AUSTRALIA"

in Dr. Delacour's aviary. By another fortunate coincidence Larry's mother visited another house in Los Angeles, and noticed pictures of birds on the wall - and Larry learnt a lot about birds from Arnold Small. At the present time Larry is a trainee as insurance investigator for the Retail Credit Corporation. He is the leader of the Los Angeles Christmas Count this year.

Oct. 26 - UPPER NEWPORT BAY - Our October visit to the Golden West Ponds and Upper Newport Bay was exceptionally well attended this year, both by birds and birders. Stars at the ponds were the VIRGINIA RAIL and SORA, a GALLINULE, two WHITE-TAILED KITES, conveniently perched in a tree, two KINGFISHERS, and several AMERICAN BITTERNS which were obliging enough to circle the area a number of times. We were happy to note that the city of Huntington Beach has taken action to preserve this area for recreational purposes. Our continuing hope is that a sufficient tract will be left in its natural state so that we may continue to enjoy watching the wildlife here.

At the Bay we watched a PIGEON HAWK (MERLIN), an infrequently seen bird for many of us. Of course there were many of the usual winter visitors, the MARBLED GODWITS, SANDPIPERS, DUNLIN, AVOCETS, STILTS, a beautiful pair of WESTERN GREBES, another KITE, six WHITE PELICANS, ELEGANT TERNS, and a SAY'S and BLACK PHOEBE. There were COMMON and SNOWY EGRETS and a mystery bird which might have been a Reddish Egret in white phase, although identification was not certain, as Snowys with two-toned beaks are sometimes seen.

Dick and Marge Wilson, Leaders



Nov. 8 - SANTA BARBARA - In spite of showers and promise of more rain 17 L. A. Audubon birders arrived promptly at the Santa Barbara Bird Refuge. Here we were met by Nelson Metcalf and Leslie Cook of Santa Barbara Audubon, whose efforts turned a rainy day into a pleasant outing.

The early morning was spent dodging showers while we picked up a number of water fowl, including PINTAIL, 3 species of GREBE, CANADA GOOSE and six gulls including a GLAUCOUS GULL.

Partly due to the weather and also since so few of us had visited the museum, this was included next on our itinerary. This proved

very informative. The habitat groups in the bird hall were excellent.

We next went to the small boat harbor where we lunched. A walk around the breakwater turned up close-up viewing of COMMON LOON and WANDERING TATTLER. Next to the U. C. Santa Barbara Campus grounds where we saw the WHITE-TAILED KITES, three hawks, KINGFISHER and LITTLE GREEN HERON. A total of 54 species were logged; not bad for a rainy day.

Les Wood, Leader



Nov. 11 - EVENING MEETING - With the introduction of new members, first timers, and guests, Herb Clarke moved the meeting right on to Joann Leonard, who had several petitions on conservation she wanted us to sign. Caroline Adams spoke about the Field Trip to Newport Upper Bay, which Marge and Dick Wilson had successfully led in October. The exceptional find was that of a Pigeon Hawk, of which many good views were obtained by all. Les Wood gave us a rundown on the Santa Barbara trip, which he, Leslie Cook and Nelson Metcalf (the last two of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society) led in my place. The weather, grossly over-predicted, produced one shower only and it also failed to bring out any unusual birds, but 19 members did show up.

Late comers to the evening meeting noisily banged chairs as late as twenty minutes after eight, bringing our attendance to well over 125 people.

The speaker of the evening was Peter Alden from the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The November Calendar gives a fine resume of Mr. Alden's many films and his itinerary, which I will not repeat here. He showed many pictures of the environment: smog over Mexico City, the clear skies of Guadalajara and the Central American cities. The stripping of the jungle and rain forests from the mountain tops for corn fields is rapidly reducing the habitat of many species of birds. The ravaging of steep (45 to 60 degree) hillsides for crops results in complete erosion after one or two seasons. True the bird pictures were good but we were left with the feeling that the birds and their habitat would soon be gone. Venezuela, the most forward-looking of the countries, has set aside 14 percent of its land or National Parks and Forests; a small beginning toward the understanding of the word conservation: there is a long way to go yet - Otto Widman

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Next Meeting -- December 16, 1969
7:30 p.m. at Audubon House

We learned a lot at our letter-writing evening on October 28. Out of our experience that evening came the decision to hold monthly CONSERVATION COMMITTEE meetings on the 4th Tuesday of each month. At our first meeting of this Committee on November 25 we got off to a good start by establishing some working concepts.

- a. We evaluated our role in the conservation movement, and our relationship with other organizations and groups concerned with conservation and the environment.
- b. We outlined some of the conservation and environmental goals the Los Angeles Audubon Society can most effectively pursue.
- c. We defined the different areas of knowledge and interest that exist within our Committee and established subcommittees to enable taking the best advantage of our abilities in achieving our goals.

We think we can be a uniquely effective force for conservation and environmental integrity in the Los Angeles area, however we need your help, your abilities, your interest. We can only be the sum of our parts. Each person who participates is very important. We extend you a cordial invitation to the next CONSERVATION COMMITTEE meeting on December 16. (Yes indeed, we know that is the 3rd Tuesday, but the 4th Tuesday is December 22, and that might be a bit difficult for many people.) We look forward to seeing some NEW FACES!

....AND SPEAKING OF LETTER WRITING...

We have reprinted information which recently appeared in the "Southern Sierran," the publication of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club. The reprints are entitled "Letter Writing Simplified," with 12 easy steps to writing those letters that get attention; and "How a Bill Becomes a Law," a chart which clearly shows the sometimes labyrinthine channels taken by a piece of legislation, from conception to final passage. Anyone interested in any way with legislative procedure, and this should be all of us who are concerned with protecting the environment, will find this chart extremely helpful. Both of these reprints are stocked at Audubon House, and are available to our members. If you'd like copies, please call, we'll be happy to send them out. Also, don't forget that we have lists of your legislators. California Congressmen and California State Legislators...and both lists show the all-important Committee assignments.

CONSERVATION CORNER

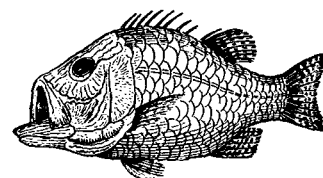
...Joann Leonard

WE HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS....

It looks like Malibu Creek will be relieved of its burden of inadequately treated sewage in the not too misty future. On November 5, 1969, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board held a special hearing to receive testimony on their July 30th decision permitting increased direct discharge of effluent into Malibu Creek. After hearing from those present, the Board unanimously adopted a resolution which will give the discharger, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, until May 27, 1970, to furnish a detailed schedule of actions they will take to find ways to dispose of the treated effluent so none flows into the Creek.

In our statement to the Board we noted that the problem of what to do with our increasing volume of municipal and industrial wastes is a serious and complex one, requiring the full cooperation of all the agencies involved, and some very badly needed innovation on the part of the decision makers. "Everyone wants you to pick their garbage up, but no one wants you to put it down!"

We described our recent visit to Santee California, where 5 lakes serve as recreational facilities, and also provide excellent habitat for many species of water and land birds. All five of these lakes, and a large swimming pool, would not exist but for the careful, intelligent and imaginative use of reclaimed sewage. We wholeheartedly endorse the concept of water reclamation, however, we must guard against mismanagement of this potential resource. Inadequate treatment and unwise use of reclaimed water can degrade our environment...and the Malibu environment is just what will be explored on December 3 & 4, 1969. Two days of meetings to consider the future of Malibu have been set up by the State Environmental Quality Study Council's Land Use Committee. Your participation in all or part of these meetings is invited. We might all learn something helpful about preserving what is left of California's splendid coastal areas. For details on time and place, please call Joann Leonard at 654-9594.



Continued on next page

CONSERVATION CORNER

Continued...

JUST A LITTLE LETTER WRITING GOES A LONG LONG WAY
... and here are some suggestions.

The following are reprinted from the "Val-e-vents" of the San Fernando Chapter of the Sierra Club, with permission.

BLM Request - Your Chance to ACT

The Bureau of Land Management recently sponsored a Radio Commercial asking for ideas and opinions on the best method of preserving or utilizing the California desert.

Your letter will be made part of their records and will be considered in future actions. (BLM has said so.) I urge you to write and give your opinions.

Here is your chance to tell how you feel about:

1. Coyote Canyon (the proposed highway issue is not dead yet).
2. Ugly high tension wires crisscrossing scenic and recreational areas.
3. Ticky tack shacks dotting the landscape (prime example on Morongo Valley road).
4. Dune buggies and motorcycles destroying the delicate desert ecosystems.
5. The urgent need for more recreational areas for our expanding population.
6. The ideas and proposals you consider important.

Write to: U. S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
State Office, Federal Building
2800 Cottage Way #E 2841
Sacramento, California 95825

Regional Director
Bureau of Sport Fisheries
P. O. Box 3737
Portland, Oregon 97208

(San Francisco Audubon
Society, Wilderness
Society, & Sierra Club
groups urge their California members to write in support of this rare wildlife treasure.)

The major value of the Farallones islets about 30 miles west of San Francisco has always been as undisturbed rookeries for seabirds and pupping areas for sea lions. One of the values of preserving these areas is already apparent in the number of bird-watching trips made to the islands by conservation groups in the San Francisco Bay area.

Their inclusion, by Act of Congress, in the National Wilderness Preservation System, would give them firm statutory protection against the forces of population, mechanization, and economic and military activity.

President Richard M. Nixon
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D. C. 20510

Amendments to the Land and Water Conservation Act voted in 1968 provided that \$200 million a year be supplied for 5 years to purchase federal and state recreation land. President Nixon requested only \$124 million in the 1970 budget. 13 conservation group leaders sent the President a letter, saying they were "deeply concerned that during its first 9 months your administration's performance to meet our country's growing outdoor recreation needs is disappointingly inadequate." Mr. Nixon said, during the campaign, that appropriations for conservation should "escape the budget knife." Tell the President you agreed with him - in 1968.

Your Representative:
House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

U. S. Senators:
George Murphy, Alan Cranston
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20510

The passage of the Timber Supply Act (HR. 12025, S. 1832) would have disastrous environmental impacts and if this bill passes, the fate of what remains of our forest wilderness will be at the mercy of the Forest Service and the timber industry. Large sums of money to build roads into de facto scenic and roadless areas and to vastly increase the rate and volume of logging on all unreserved national forest timberland would become law if the Act passes. URGE ITS DEFEAT!

From the Newsletter of the Council for
Planning and Conservation.

***** ..

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 9 A.M.

"OUR DISPOSABLE WORLD"

THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED to participate in an all-day conference on environmental pollution sponsored jointly by the Junior League of Los Angeles and the RAND Corp.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONCERNED community, government, science and industry will be among the speakers. State Controller Houston Flournoy, a member of the State Lands Commission, and Councilman Thomas Bradley will be there along with Dr. Irving Bengelsdorf and William Bronson, Editor of "Cry California," to name just a few.

PANELS OF EXPERTS WILL TACKLE the complex and urgent aspects of air, water and pesticide pollution. Registration, luncheon and a coffee break, are included for just \$7.50. The Century Plaza Hotel is the place, and advance reservations are strongly recommended. For further information call 213-931-4400 or simply make out your check to Conference On Environmental Pollution and mail it to Junior League of Los Angeles, Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Beverly Hills, Ca., 90212.

The next two paragraphs are quoted from
the "Friends of Newport Bay" Newsletter.

*UPPER NEWPORT BAY INVENTORY
UNDER WAY

"A committee has begun the sizeable task of making an inventory of the biological, historical, geological, recreational and educational qualities of the Upper Bay. This is the first step in a planned effort to develop some alternative concepts for the public utilization of the bay in the future. The approach is modeled somewhat on the work done by the San Francisco Bay volun-

teer groups which finally led to the present BCDC organization. Of course, the problems of the two bays are much different, and Newport Bay is vastly smaller, but a systematic look at the Bay as it now exists seems essential to any public discourse on future uses of it. All of this activity is, of course, predicated on the supposition that the proposed land swap, which would turn the Upper Bay development over to the Irvine Company, will ultimately be invalidated by the courts in favor of public rights. To help assure that the public viewpoint is represented, we look to our sister organization, called.....

*UPPER NEWPORT BAY DEFENSE FUND

The Defense Fund, working through its attorney, Ralph Perry, has succeeded in intervening in the court action on behalf of six citizens of the Upper Bay community, and in obtaining several other favorable decisions. The Los Angeles Audubon Society supports the exceptional efforts of the UPPER NEWPORT BAY DEFENSE FUND. If you would like information on the Fund, please call me at 654-9594.



Le Conte's Thasher

As you well know, I have been working on the LeConte's Thrasher for the past two years. Nearly 350 thrashers have been color-banded in my 3-1/2 sq. mi. study tract near Maricopa, Kern Co. Approximately one-fourth of these are still in this tract. However, many birds have undoubtedly moved out. If the latter birds can be located, considerable information can be gained which would otherwise be lost: survival, movements, and pair bonds, for example.

On DECEMBER 5-7 (Friday through Sunday) there will be a complete survey of some 30 sq. miles around Maricopa for all LeConte's Thrashers — banded or otherwise. Could you please help on any or all of these days? The general "plan of attack" is to assign each party (1-2 people) a specified area to search by car and/or foot. Most of the coverage can be done from inside the car by using a tape recorder playing the song of this thrasher. Band colors can be easily seen on the birds which are attracted to the recorder... some birds may even sit ON the car trying to locate the "other bird." I will provide the tape recording, written instructions, sample bands, maps, and forms. You would only have to drive a short distance, play the recorder for a few minutes, and record what you see at each stop.

The weather should be cool, but very pleasant. You may join me at my campsite Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, if you wish to spend the night at Maricopa. It is a 2-hour drive from L. A. to Maricopa via Interstate 5 and Calif. 166 at Mettler. Please let me know BEFORE THANKSGIVING, if you think you can help in this project. This will allow for the planning of manpower usage and assembly of "observer kits." I would also like to know what kind of tape your recorder will use — 1/2 or 1/4 track, speeds, etc. Please do not hesitate to call (evenings, except Tuesday) or write me concerning any question or intention. With 30 square miles, I need all the help I can find. Meeting time will be 7:30 a.m. each of the three days.

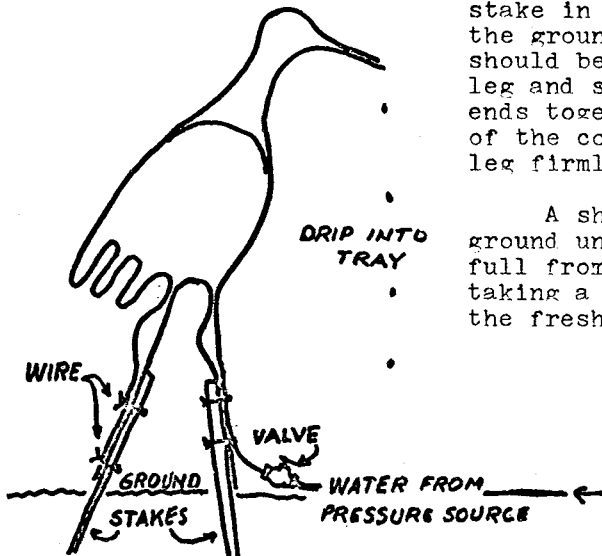
Sincerely,

Jay M. Sheppard
816 Walnut Ave. #5
Long Beach, Calif. 90813
(phone: 213 591-1530)

Recommended Items to Bring:

TAPE RECORDER, PORTABLE (a near must!)
Spotting scope (20-30x) and Binoculars
Clip board and pencils
Warm Clothing (anticipate near freezing at dawn)
Camping equipment
Food (some shopping facilities available)
Gasoline (Mobile) is available in Maricopa

DRIPPING CRANE



Locate the "Dripping Crane" so that it is convenient to your favorite birdwatching window, preferably near some shrubs so the birds can seek quick shelter if a predator appears. The profile of the crane should be toward you.

When the crane is thus located, place the steel stake in back of one leg, and drive the stake into the ground parallel to the leg. The top of the stake should be below the knee. Wind the ductil wire around leg and stake near end of stake, and twist the wire ends together to produce a tight hold. At the bottom of the copper tubing, place another wire to hold this leg firmly in place. Repeat as above on the other leg.

A shallow clay saucer should be placed on the ground under the crane's bill. The saucer will remain full from the dripping water and the birds will enjoy taking a bath in it, but they usually prefer to drink the fresh water from the bill of the crane.

available
now at
Audubon House

AUDUBON CALENDAR

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

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



1989 DECEMBER 1989							
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December 4 THURSDAY

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 8:00 p.m.

December 9 TUESDAY

EVENING MEETING. 8:00 p.m. Great Hall, Plummer Park. Mr. Russell Wilson will give a sequel to his excellent presentation last January at the Annual Dinner called "Happiness is 600 birds." This time it is "After 600, What?" illustrated with colored slides of birds.

December 13 SATURDAY

December 14 SUNDAY

FIELD TRIP. Carrizo Plains. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in Maricopa at the junction of State 166 and U.S. 399. Take Interstate 5 north from Los Angeles to State 166, south of Bakersfield. Those planning to stay at the California Valley Lodge should write or call for reservations: California Valley, California 93453 — Phone (805) 475-2272. Bring warm clothing for this trip! Mainly for the Sandhill Cranes (as many as 2000 have been seen). We can usually count on Mountain Plovers, LeConte's Thrashers, Ferruginous Hawks and Golden Eagles being among the birds seen on this trip.

Leader: ARNOLD SMALL 837-9687

January 10 SATURDAY

FIELD TRIP. Lake Norco. Meet at Sixth and Hamner in Norco at 8:30 a.m. Take San Bernardino Freeway (Interstate 10) to Milliken Turnoff, about 10 miles east of Ontario. Go south about 8 miles to Norco. An alternate route would be Santa Ana Freeway and Riverside Freeway to Corona, then north to Norco via Hamner Avenue. Wintering ducks and other waterbirds — Wood Duck, European Widgeon, Night Herons, etc.

Leader: HAROLD BAXTER 355-6300

Reminder

Christmas Bird Count December 28

ANNUAL DINNER

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS *Continued from back page*

PIGEON HAWK were reported at the Upper Bay on the L. A. A. S. field trip and below San Diego in late October. Jon Atwood had his best hawks day at the south end of the Salton Sea (where large buteos are uncommon) by finding not only a FERRUGINOUS HAWK but also a ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK on the 9th of November, both were far south of their normal winter range.

The BOOBY situation at the Salton Sea is deteriorating rapidly. Early September brought an unprecedented invasion from the Gulf of California to the Sea, with a final count of thirty BLUE-FOOTS and seven BROWNS — both figures being more than the aggregate of all previous sightings in California. The latest figure is four Blue-foots and two Browns, and these in very bad shape — rumpled plumage and some unable to fly. Whether their decline is due to insecticides, lack of food, or other unfavorable conditions we do not know. We do know, however, that the two Blue-foots at Puddingstone Reservoir some years ago appeared to be well fed and in good condition throughout the cold winter after their October arrival; so it probably is not our climate.

Although the main tide of migration tapered off after early October, the fascinating vagrants continued to drift through our area. As Jay Sheppard, to whom I am so deeply indebted, pointed out last month these vagrants are lost, and consequently many of them are later than the regular migrants who know where they are going and stay on schedule. Alan and Jean Craig's banding nets on Pt. Loma reaped the richest harvest of all from mid-October to mid-November. Among their super-rarities were YELLOW-THROATED, CHESTNUT-SIDED AND BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS, PHILADELPHIA AND RED-EYED VIREOS, and a SCARLET TANAGER. But not all the rare birds ended up in the Craig's net. The cemetery on Pt. Loma had a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, a DICKCISSEL and a GRAY FLYCATCHER. Nearby in the Tiajuana River Valley, Ralph Mancke found an adult BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER and a WHITE-WINGED DOVE and Guy McCaskie unearthed (almost literally, searching for them is an arduous job) two CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPURS (but no other Longspurs or Red-throated Pipits this year), a SWAMP SPARROW and a FRANKLIN'S GULL. Not all the good birds were found near San Diego however! Russ and Marian Wilson found a YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER in San Clemente State Park on November 2nd. Don Sterba saw a male BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER at Morongo Valley on the 19th of October (possibly the same bird found by the Clarkes and Arnold Small earlier in the Fall). Ralph Mancke, after seeing the above-mentioned FRANKLIN'S GULL, found two more on his way home at San Elijo Lagoon. Larry Sansone found a "hard to come by" life bird in an ex-

traordinary place — a SAW-WHET OWL in a desert tree at the Salton Sea Refuge headquarters on October 18th.

Possibly a portent of things to come this winter is the large number of RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES along the coast. They are downright common on Pt. Loma, and Shirley Wells reports the same situation in the pines at Palos Verdes. She also has seen two BAND-TAILED PIGEONS and a LEWIS' WOODPECKER there. Both are unusual along the coast. The VERMILION FLYCATCHERS returned to the northwest corner of Legg Lake Park in early November, where they wintered last year, according to Julia Dembrowsky. Jon Dunn found PINE SISKINS common in Encino, and with them a single GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (rare in the lowlands). Several observers have commented on the scarcity of wintering sparrows, particularly White and Golden Crowns. Even the rarer sparrows seemed fewer than normal. A WHITE-THROATED SPARROW in Encino seen by Hal Ferris, and one HARRIS' SPARROW at Furnace Creek Range (five there last winter) seen by Guy McCaskie were among the few sightings reported. Jerry Johnson brings a more optimistic report that WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS (scarce last winter) are back in above normal numbers — one third to one half in the Scoter flocks he's seen.

It's been an exciting Fall, even though I missed the best part of it, and an equally interesting Winter lies ahead of us. Try to get out on the Christmas Counts. If you're a "first timer" seek out an "old hand." It's a wonderful way to learn the birds and to meet people with similar interests.



The Western Tanager

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It's time to think of turkeys and "Christmas Counts," but remember, if you do combine the two, you can't "count" the turkey. True, they're one of our easier birds to identify, but it's the "hard to find" and "hard to identify" birds which concern us now. This is our annual chance to get maximum coverage of our area — good birders working all day over a wide area produce good population statistics, and, to spice things up, rare birds. L. A. A. S. "Christmas Counters" in the last few years have found a Coues' Flycatcher in the Hollywood Hills, a Brown Thrasher in San Pedro, Ancient and Marbled Murrelets off Palos Verdes, Red-breasted Geese at the Salton Sea and a Bendire's Thrasher in San Diego. These were not "staked out" birds, they were actually discovered for the first time, because of good coverage by competent observers. This can happen to anyone who knows his birds and is L-U-C-K-Y, but you must know the birds.

One of the winter birds that is likely to pass unnoticed is the MYRTLE WARBLER which is difficult to separate from the much more common Audubon Warbler. Only one Myrtle was reported on the L. A. Count last year but many more must have been seen and gone unrecognized. The recognition marks were covered in some detail in the December 1967 Tanager, but, briefly, the one infallible distinction of the Myrtle is the combination of a white throat AND a white whisker mark up from the throat behind the dark ear patch. Two similar and easily confused Terns were unreported on last year's count. The FORSTER'S TERN should be fairly common on our coast in winter, but the COMMON TERN is quite rare. Since Commons are unusual they should be identified with great care.

Christmas Count

The Los Angeles Audubon Society needs the help of all interested people to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 28. We need everyone who can identify and count birds or even accompany one of the groups and act as a list compiler. National Audubon requires a dollar from each participant to cover the cost of publishing the Christmas Bird Count in the Audubon Field Notes, so please send in your dollar along with the information on the cut-off portion of this issue of the Tanager without delay.

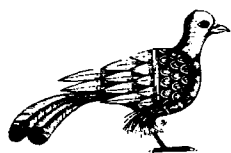
Larry Sansone, Chairman
Christmas Bird Count
3128 Club Drive, Los Angeles, Calif. 90064
870-6398

"Birds of No. Calif." by McCaskie and de Benedictis gives several detailed field marks, but in essence they say: "A mark, difficult to see but always reliable is the pattern of the outer tail feathers. In the Forster's these are white with a dark inner web and tip, so that the tail appears gray on the top. In the Common and Arctic Terns the feathers are white with a dark outer web, so that the tail appears white, narrowly bordered with black." A good place to study these terns is on the cables across Ballona Creek, just north of the Marina del Rey breakwaters. You might also find Myrtle Warblers in the willow clumps just east of the cable towers.

If the supposed return of the swallows to Capistrano Mission, exactly on St. John's Day, is a miracle, as many believe, then we are seven times blessed, for we have an annual miracle of our own. A phone call from Larry Sansone on the evening of October 31st brought the news that the HEPATIC TANAGER had returned to its roost in a eucalyptus tree on the Hillcrest Golf Course at 4:30 that afternoon for the seventh consecutive winter. There is no question that it is the same individual. It arrives from the same direction, at the same time (suntime of course) and roosts in the same tree, year after year. But then we have the unanswered questions: How did this fine red male find his way to West Los Angeles from the pine clad mountains of Southeastern Arizona or Northern Mexico?; where does he spend the winter days and what food supply has sustained him for seven winters?; and, most difficult of all, where does he summer, surely not with others of his kind in Arizona, but if not, where and with whom — alone or with a mate who refuses to follow him to Southern California for the winter? Yes, it is a miracle, and like other miracles, unexplainable.

An unusually wide variety of Raptors were sighted in late October and early November. Perhaps of most interest, because of their newly discovered status — "rare but regular in winter in Southern California" — are two immature BROAD-WINGED HAWKS; one in Palos Verdes on the 22nd of October observed by Shirley Wells, and another in the Tiajuana River Valley on the 25th by Guy McCaskie and Ralph Mancke. Both birds were seen only once and had apparently not yet established winter territories. OSPREYS were seen in Covina by Leo Best, near Fish Cañon by Mike San Miguel and at Upper Newport Bay by Trudi Siptroth and many others in October and early November. It may winter there. Trudi also reports an immature BALD EAGLE, found by Shelby Sherrod of Pasadena, sitting on the mudflats of the Upper Bay, and a LOUISIANA HERON at the same place on November 2nd.

Continued on page 11



HERE'S YOUR INVITATION

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Los Angeles
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Annual Dinner

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