

# A Modest Proposal

## By Elisha Atkins

**We are** hearing a lot these days about the "Over 600 Club"—birders with more than 600 species on their N. A. Life Lists. We've even learned that a splinter group may be formed: the "Over 650 Club"—exclusiveness, apparently being here, as in other areas of life, the badge of distinction. We now have a bi-monthly bulletin for listers only, presumably, to separate this activity from humbler or less specialized forms of bird watching.

Mr. Stuart Keith, who seems to be the father of this activity (or at least its most ardent supporter) has chosen the term "Grand Master" to identify the members of the Over 600 Club. This is a term, I believe, borrowed from chess, one of man's most revered and intellectually stimulating and exacting games. Although I am not a chess player, this term has always connoted to me a skill and knowledge that derive from unusual aptitude, long practice and deep study. Is this the appropriate analogy, however, for the top bird listers? I think not, and should like to propose another and more fitting one. Are these people not, rather, the stamp or coin collectors of the birding world? Like collectors of either sort, the avid life lister requires two simple but often hard-to-obtain commodities: time and money. As in all collecting, a third item, connections, can often be a useful adjunct to the other two. Think how being an FDR or King George V or Cardinal Spellman contributed to the size and distinction of their respective stamp and coin collections. Similarly, the life birder (especially if he is a well-known ornithologist) can profit from his connections throughout the country in building up his life list.

Let us analyze the way in which the stamp or coin collector goes about his task. First he peers into the catalogue to see what is available. Next, if he wishes to procure an item, he gets in touch with his dealer and with his help, by letter or in person, purchases the stamp or coin. That is, of course, if he has the requisite cash. Otherwise, he just leafs through the catalogue enviously. The bird lister does much the same; his catalogue is his RTP guide or local bird book, his dealer is the local expert or area guide, and his help is in the form of directions for finding the bird. Some of these birds, like some stamps or coins, are, of course, expensive. To see a Steller's Eider usually costs the price of a round trip to Alaska. To see a Ross' Gull may be even more costly—if time if not money, because in October when these birds come past Point Barrow, ice may form on the

wings of his returning plane and the unprepared lister may be faced with the prospect of spending the winter in the dark near the top of the globe.

Let us look at the profile of an over 600 lister. He is likely to be reasonably wealthy, a professional (many are M. D.'s), or a businessman (semi or wholly retired is better) who can plan his birding to coincide with his business trips. A company representative for a far-flung enterprise is, of course, ideal. He may be a teacher with summer and other vacations (preferably without encumbering family commitments) that allow him time to spend his savings on his hobby. Best of all, he may be an independently wealthy person whose hobby can be so tailored to his profession that his business and leisure time and expense can be used for the same purpose. It is now, I believe, evident that what is lacking in the analogy between a Grand Master and a Big Bird-lister is the implied acquisition of skill by the former but not necessarily by the latter who need not, indeed, have an unusual skill in finding birds, let alone identifying them. Where, then, in our hobby can a place be made for the recognition of skill specifically in bird identification? Surely not in the man who runs or flies over the continent seeing other people's birds, but in the birder who finds new birds at home. This, then, becomes analogous to the collector whose discerning eye spots a precious item and picks it up at a fraction of its worth.

To offset the advantages of dollars and time, I propose that we all go back to our lists and do a cost analysis of our birding ventures. If, for instance, conspicuous consumption is to be the objective, one might multiply one's birds by the number of dollars spent finding them. If, however, economy is to be the goal, one may simply divide the same figure in dollars by the number of birds on one's list and derive a cost per bird. Hence, by the first set of rules, one has a game like football or baseball, where the highest score is best; if one adopts the second point of view, one emerges with a game like golf where the lowest score is the winner. If the concept of dollars seems offensively commercial, one might substitute the number of days or months spent on one's hobby—with some allowances (or handicaps) for finding such species as the Bachman's Warbler

# A MODEST PROPOSAL

Continued...

or Ivory-billed Woodpecker which understandably take longer than more common species.

Let us examine for a moment the difference in skill required in finding a bird outside its range or season as opposed to chasing it down to some far place where all the natives know it. An Ivory Gull was spotted on a rooftop in Gloucester harbor, Mass., after two busloads of birders had passed it by as a pigeon. On the remote cliffs of Devon Island in Arctic Canada where this bird breeds, the confusion would hardly pose a problem. Similarly, it took skill to note Red-throated Pipits for the first time in the U. S. south of Alaska among migrating flocks of Water pipits in the Tijuana Valley. To see them at Wales in western Alaska, where a small breeding colony exists, simply takes money and time. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the first U.S. record of a Berylline Hummingbird was made by someone visiting S. E. Arizona who actually looked at the bird after a group of listers had disregarded it as merely a Buff-breasted which they had already checked off in its normal habitat in the Rio Grande delta. One may lose the advantage of one's own eyesight if one relies on the eyesight of companions to satisfy the needs of one's list.

By a system such as I have been proposing, one would get more points for discovering a bird where and when it did not belong (perhaps proportional to its displacement in both dimensions). Extra points might also be awarded for the difficulty of the identification; finding a Red-faced with the Pelagic Cormorants off the California coast or a Boat-billed Flycatcher in Harlingen, Texas, among the resident Derby Flycatchers takes a closer look than does a Fork-tailed Flycatcher or Swallow-tailed Kite in Massachusetts. One might even receive extra credit for obtaining confirmation by one's colleagues, thereby contributing modestly to their score while, of course, maintaining a comfortable lead. Conversely, less points would be awarded for birds seen in their normal range and season, no matter how far from the observer's native haunts, or those discovered or identified by someone else. Such measures might discourage the plea of followers to their leader—"Did you see it well enough for me to count?"

The wealth of nations is hardly maintained by coin collecting nor is the postal service run by stamp collectors. Listers have never claimed any scientific or practical advantage for their pastime and we should hardly frown on enjoyment of a hobby being its own reward. However, the more zealous advocates of the listing game seem in danger of losing sight of two important features of our common pursuit of bird-watching: first, the opportunity to make substantial contributions by

compiling local observations over an extended period; second, that intangible quality, the esthetic enjoyment of watching, not just checking off, birds for their own sake. "If you've seen one, you've seen them all," such listers all too often indicate by their actions. Frequently, the lister must check to be sure he has, in fact, already seen the bird.

By instituting a point system based on skill and discovery, rather than cash and time, one may allow more to play the game, the competition will become keener and, at least, much slack time can be consumed in rescoreing one's list when new birds are hard to come by.

Perhaps in the final analysis my plea, because I also keep a life list and have spent both dollars and time adding to it, is simply that we ought to treat our lists more as a woman treats her age—something she can calculate if necessary but tries not to think about, even less often (one hopes) worries about, and in any case wouldn't dream of talking about because age, after all, is the least interesting thing about a woman. \*\*\*

It is rumored that, in spite of these words, Dr. Atkins once took an 8:00 a.m. plane from New York City, and return at 8:00 p.m., to see the Eskimo Curlew in Galveston.

Approaching 50 (next year) Dr. Atkins has pursued the gentle sport (& art) of bird watching for the past 40 years largely in New England (outside Boston) where I birded both with Ludlow Griscom and Roger Peterson (2 summers at Camp Chewinksi, Maine, where he was Nature Counselor). Chandler Robbins of Birds of North America fame was a neighbor and fellow wanderer across fields and woods in Belmont, Mass.

Since then Dr. Atkins spent several years at (successively) Rochester, N.Y. (Med. School), St. Louis — and for the past 15 years, Yale. He has made many trips to all 48 states and Alaska (1967) as well as Canada and Mexico, Caribbean, South West Pacific (USMC in 1943-44); also 4 trips to most of Europe (sabbatical 1962-63). He is now on sabbatical here in La Jolla.

Dr. Atkins enjoys watching birds — also semi-scientific reading (behavior and migration), and banding (past 3 yrs). He keeps a life list (600 Club) but would like to play down competition, as his article indicates, since competence in the field is hardly mirrored by size of life list. He writes "Chandler Robbins and Guy McCaskie are two of the best people in the field I know — yet neither is in the 600 Club."

Professionally, he is in the Department of Medicine, Yale, interested in infectious disease and cause of fever, in which most of his research career has been involved.

Elisha Atkins specializes in warbler songs — and yields to none in identifying them in the field!

This article first appeared in shorter form in "BIRDING," and is reprinted by kind permission of the author and the editor of that publication.

# A Soggy Saga

## By Pat and Paul Hessler

Having met birders from Missouri, Montreal, and Washington as well as LA at Madera Canyon, we were equipped with much advice and enthusiasm by the time our tent and bedding had dried. So off we went to Ramsey Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains where at Mile High they run a breathtaking nine-ring circus determined to make you cross-eyed, wall-eyed, or at least dizzy. You simply sit on lawn chairs in a yard surrounded by feeders and witness a continuous dazzling show of about 10 species of hummingbird. The excitement in the summer of 1969 was an Anna's (big deal, you say?) and a hybrid. But our big thrill was the arrival of the Violet-crowned Hummingbird, a magical transfer of the clean splendor of a cuckoo translated into a mini-marvel of a hummer! There were also the spectacular Broad-billed and Rivoli's Hummingbirds besides those we'd seen in the Santa Ritas.

Understandably lightheaded, we traveled on to the Chiricahua Mts. and scenic Cave Creek, where round caves high up in the pink latite rock once sheltered Indians, and where the American Museum of Natural History has its Southwestern Research Station. Here we met the streaked Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and found a nesting pair of Olivaceous Flycatchers. And here was set the tale of the Coppery-tailed Trogan.

Other birders were seeing the Trogan in upper Madera Canyon with the aid of a tape recorder. And others (the cook at the Research Station, for one) were seeing the Trogan on Cave Creek. But not the Hesslers. A cousin of the magnificent Guatemalan Quetzal (the latter now endangered through destruction of its forest habitat), the Trogan is a colorful Mexican parrot-sized fruit- and insect-eater who has extended his range into very limited areas of Arizona. Our trail was a level one-mile hike that would have been very easy in May or June. Summer rains now required our driving across one stream to a parking place, then fording the creek at five crossings as it meandered with the trail among the boulders and rock walls. With another couple and the taped recording of the Trogan's call we made the round trip once, wading through the stream crossings in wet sneakers, and ending up with a vocal response but no sighting (except for a good view of a female Hepatic Tanager).

Then it rained in earnest. We tried a second time but were frustrated half way along the trail by the rushing water--it was too fast

## Concluded

and deep for wading along carrying Patty, and there weren't enough rocks exposed for jumping across safely. In fact, we couldn't drive the car back out across the swollen stream. We set up the tent beside the stream near the parking area (after all, it had been flooded before without permanent damage) and next morning set out early with a bag of crackers and fruit for breakfast en route, encumbered only slightly by Patty and greatly by Pat's fear of crossing water. Nobody should be surprised that Pat fell in (The last rock of the fourth crossing, Paul said, "Now, that one....NO, NOT THAT ONE..."), but what is amazing is that she lifted her binoculars as she fell and kept them dry! Poor Patty got scared. And Paul and Pat got smart and took the added time to try the Sierra Club method of fording streams: remove socks, wade across in boots, dry out boots, replace socks. When we arrived at the now marshy bog where people had seen the Trogan, Pat slipped again on a mossy rock and developed what was for months later called her "trogon leg"! But virtue is rewarded. The ventriloquist call of the Trogan sounding loud but far away, at the turn of a head materialized into the flame-fronted male Trogan, a big grasshopper crosswise in his bill. A little patience, some bribery for Patty, and Mrs. Coppertail arrived with a big caterpillar. They circled cautiously and conversed. Finally Junior appeared in a hole about 20 ft. up in a tree about 15 ft. in front of us. The green-black of his head and back iridescent in the filtered forest light, and a red circle of skin marking his wary eye, the male delivered his grasshopper. Fantastic! This was better than we had dreamed, and surely worth a "trogon leg".

Cave Creek runs out of the Chiricahua Mts. (home of Cochise's Apaches) at about 5,500 ft. elevation. It's a 3,000-foot climb up to Rustler Park. Along the switchbacking road through transitional oak-pine forest and slopes of brush and agave, we ran into mixed flocks of dozens of Mexican Chickadees, Black-throated Grey and Virginia's Warblers, Titmice, and a couple of Red-faced Warblers. (Who ever invented that bird?) A mighty snag pine was a hotel for Purple Martins; Band-tailed Pigeons seemed to be everywhere. Near Rustler Park we (im)patiently watched a flycatcher up in the tall ponderosa pines until we finally were sure it was a Coues' ("cows") Flycatcher. Rustler Park is handsome pine forest broken with meadows blooming scarlet buglers; these buzzed with the wing noise of Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. The big pines were alive with Mexican Chickadees, Olive and Grace's Warblers, and the black-lined Mexican race of the Brown Creeper. The bold little Mexican Junco abounded on the forest floor. Of course we got caught in a storm.

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# Soggy Continued...



It was time to move out, pushing through New Mexico (where we encountered some friends near Taos--Lewis' Woodpeckers) and UP into Colorado. What magnificent landscape (and what hordes of campers). We snuck into the last vacancy in one of the few campgrounds in Rocky Mountain National Park, and, encouraged by our Arizona experience, hung a hummingbird feeder. Well, no Calliope, but we did have several Rufous Hummingbirds who found us in that forest of trees and jungle of people. We spent the better part of four days driving daily up to above the 12,000 ft. mark and hiking across tundra virtually carpeted with wild flowers to slog among dwarf willow bogs looking for the White-tailed Ptarmigan. This chickenlike bird with feathered feet is well camouflaged: looks like a lichen-covered rock in summer and turns snow white in winter. The clever little fellow does not startle easily; he prefers to rely on deception until practically under foot. All this we eagerly absorbed from the rangers, along with personal advice on the exact place to find the birds. That place and 25 like it, we scoured. Lots of elk prints; lots of Water Pipits and Horned Larks; lots of White-crowned Sparrows. Then the ranger admitted that the only sighting all summer was by one off-duty ranger on a hike. Patty walked three miles with us one day at that altitude. Now, that's virtue. Maybe it was a low year in a cycle. Or maybe they don't exist. Anyway, the scenery is great.

The Plains offered us Franklin's Gulls, a black Rough-legged Hawk, Lark Buntings, Prairie Falcons. In the Black Hills of South Dakota we tracked down the White-winged Junco. We visited the muddy environs of a reservoir near Belle Fourche, the geographic center of the expanded United States, and saw Sprague's Pipit, McCown's Longspur (a very classy bird), and a Pectoral Sandpiper. Time was pressing now, and our detour to revisit the Badlands was speedy--just long enough to stop for the evasive Grasshopper Sparrow.

The rest of the trip was a lot of driving and a reintroduction to Eastern birds. But ask us if we'd like to revisit Arizona. There's all that unfinished business--the Flammulated Owl, maybe a Turkey, and that Black Hawk. As for Colorado, we're waiting for a peak year in the ptarmigan cycle!

Nowadays most of the time Ellen finds birds for other people, but this is no easier. Recently, in a camping in Yosemite to find a Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker for a young man climbing the 600-ladder, bears raided their refrigerator, opened the lock, took out everything except beer ("which they don't like"). After lying still, scared to death for hours, they cleaned up the remnants and salvaged something to eat themselves. "But, she says, "the sound of Great Gray Owls on the right and hippies on the left, made up for everything."

## AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR OWN OVER 600-ER

Ellen Stephenson is the latest member accepted to the 600 Club from Southern California, and as she says, "I am the genuine article. My birds were seen in the 48 contiguous States, 600 even before coming to California." Her last bird, the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Number 620, came fairly easily, thanks to the local organization of birders and interest in making quick trips.

"But some were hard to come by" she says, "I remember the first time going with Guy McCaskie to find.....something unusual with him. The first morning at 6:30 a.m. we sweltered in 120° at the Salton Sea, too hot to sleep at night, next day freezing on the cold beach at Monterey."

"Camping with the enthusiasts in California rapidly built my western list soon after I arrived, for there is nothing better than being where the birds are. But in the East it meant repeated field trips as far out as one could reach, for example from New Haven to Montauk. These were particularly effective with leaders such as Ludlow Griscom, who was a martinet. (In fact, it was only in his prime that he allowed women to join his field trips. However, Dee Snyder once brought wine for lunch--after that no lunch with Griscom was without wine.) You could not count a bird unless he saw it and identified it first. Or if you did say you saw such-and-such at the Linnean Society, you were immediately cross-examined with 'Who was with you?'"

In any case, "you read up on everything before you went on a trip, in those days. You struggled through all the empidonax-Traill's and Alder's. I can't be bothered now. Even so, some trips were birdless. Only two were seen in the snow at Mt. Lassen."

Ellen first met Earle Greene on a trip out of San Francisco to see the Pacific pelagics, headed to The Farallons in torrential rains, pitching and rolling through the Golden Gate. An albatross came aboard (not shot) and they saw their first Tufted Puffins.



After this training, it was Ellen herself who was finding rarities for others. Elisha Atkins many years later said, on mention of her name, "I shall always be indebted to Ellen Stephenson for finding us a Curlew Sandpiper (in Connecticut)." As Ellen says, "it helps to have lived some time in various parts of the country--Rochester, New Jersey, New Haven--and when the Fish and Wildlife Department moved to Chicago, Phillip DuMont widened my bird horizon." Trips to key birding places are essential--islands off the coast of Maine, the Florida Keys, etc. The trip to Big Bend put my list over the 600 mark.

# Los Angeles Audubon Society

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PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046 876-0202

# Calendar

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

July 11 SATURDAY Potluck Picnic CANCELLED.

July 26 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mt. Pinos, primarily for Condors. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the summit. Take Interstate 5 north to Frazier Park turnoff (about 2 miles north of Gorman) and follow the signs to Mt. Pinos. There is a parking lot at the end of the paved road; the two miles of dirt road between here and the summit can be driven in an ordinary car, but some may prefer to leave their cars in the parking lot and walk to the summit. The idea is to spend the day at or near the summit, observing Condors as well as hawks and eagles. The 8:30 a.m. meeting time need not be regarded as a deadline. Leader: Otto Widmann 221-8973

August 23 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mt. Pinos - This is a repeat of the above and the same directions apply. Leader: Larry Sansone 870-6398

Sept. 12 SATURDAY - PELAGIC TRIP - We have arranged to charter the 85-foot research vessel, "Vantuna," on this date. We will leave San Pedro early in the morning for a 12-hour cruise to the vicinity of San Clemente Isl. and back to observe pelagic birds. Reservations will be strictly limited to 30, on a first come, first serve basis. Fare of \$10 must accompany your reservation. Full details will be in the September Tanager. Send reservations without delay to: Erwin Woldman, 22900 Calabash St., Woodland Hills, Cal.

Sept. 12 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Malibu Lagoon north along the coast to the mouth of the Santa Clara River at Ventura. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on Pacific Coast Highway just west of the bridge over Malibu Lagoon. Leader: To be announced.

July						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI.	SAT.
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

## Sales Department

WE HAVE A GOOD COLLECTION  
OF BOOKS ON AUSTRALIAN BIRDS,  
AND ALSO PLENTY OF COPIES OF  
RACHEL CARLSON'S BOOKS.

August						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI.	SAT.
1						
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Saw Whet Owl

DO NOT BOTHER  
TO BREAK IN!  
THERE IS ABSOLUTELY  
NOTHING HERE TO  
INTEREST YOU!  
ANYTHING OF VALUE  
WAS TAKEN LAST MONTH  
AND NOT REPLACED!

### SCHOLARSHIP TO THE AUDUBON CAMP OF THE WEST

The Los Angeles Audubon Society provides for four half scholarships, to defray the expense of attendance at the National Society's "Audubon Camp of the West." The funds come from L.A.A.S. share of membership dues, and from gifts. At the present time the recipients are chosen at the request of the President of L.A.A.S. by the Western Representative of the National Audubon Society.

This year so far four awards have been made: State Park Ranger David B. Donahue, Idyllwild, Calif.; Wildlife Biologist David Dunaway, Inyo Natl. Forest, Bishop, Calif.; Biological Information Specialist Richard M. Harris, Inyo Natl. Forest, Bishop, Calif.; Area Mgr. C. D. Thompson, McArthur Burney Falls, Burney, Calif.

# audubon activities

## A SPRING MIGRATION IN MORONGO VALLEY

BY RUSSELL WILSON

For some time we have wanted to spend a spring in Morongo Valley and now we have. It has been common knowledge among birders for several years that this is a principal flyway for birds passing from the lower desert to the upper desert and hence via the springs and oases along the north side of the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains to the Tehachapis and the High Sierra and points farther north. Morongo Valley lies in the natural pass between Mt. San Gorgonio (11,000 ft) to the west and the Little San Bernardino Mountains (over 5,000 ft) to the east. Covington Park, the Levin ranch (now a regional park) and the Nature Conservancy area form a natural oasis in an otherwise desert area. With a fine stand of old cottonwoods, willows, mesquite and desert catalpa, a flowing stream and a small impoundment of water the essential requirements are present to provide a resting place and feeding place for birds on their flight northward.

On the second day of April we put our trailer in the Roadrunner Trailer Village which is two miles northeast of Covington Park. When Chandler and Mary White started development of the Village some ten years ago, they set out six hundred trees and innumerable low-growing shrubs and these have grown to the point that the Village represents a secondary oasis. As many of the residents maintain feeding stations and bird baths, the concentration of some species of birds here even exceeded that in Covington Park itself. From here we had ready access to the Covington Park-Regional Park-Nature Conservancy Area oasis which we birded daily, keeping track of both the species and the number of individuals seen, much as one would conduct a Christmas count.

Migrants were very rare during the first week of April, our first significant listing of species (eleven) occurred on the eighth and by the fifteenth we had recorded thirty two of the migrants we were interested in. From the standpoint of number of species and number of individuals seen, our best two days were April 28 and 29, after which the number of species seen each day fell off markedly although the number of individuals seen each day remained high until May 10 due to the appearance of rather large waves of three species that reached their peaks during the first week of May.

Some species passed through in an almost continuous trickle whereas others showed very distinct waves. The first Bell's Vireo was seen April 8 and thereafter two were seen (or heard) each day with only one count of three. This pattern seems to have held also for the empidonax group, for Solitary Vireos, Lazuli Buntings, Lawrence's Goldfinches and MacGillivray's Warblers, whereas the Warbling Vireos showed two pronounced waves, April 14 and May 4. Beginning April 18 large flocks of Pine Siskins

were present (high count 56) until April 30, after which their numbers dropped off abruptly. There were two distinct waves of Western Tanagers, April 24 and 25 and May 4 and 5. Black-headed Grosbeaks peaked April 24 to 27. Wilson's Warblers showed three waves, April 21 and 22, April 28 and 29 and reached a flood tide peak May 7. Yellow Warblers seemed to keep pace with Wilson's Warblers and peaked April 28 and May 6 and 7.

We were considerably surprised at the scarcity of some species. Only one Hermit Warbler was recorded, six Townsend's Warblers scattered over as many days, a mere trickle of Black-throated Gray Warblers, only two Blue Grosbeaks, a male bird April 24 and a female May 7. Apparently these species do not use this migration route in significant numbers, probably stay west of our mountain ranges.

Several species are of special interest because Morongo Valley represents the western edge of their range. The first Wied's Flycatcher appeared April 14 and was seen (presumably the same individual) almost daily to April 23, when it disappeared. This must be very early for this species. May 7 another appeared and by May 9 there were two pairs in widely separated areas that seemed territorial, as they called continuously and were seen examining holes as if in search of a nesting site. The first Lucy's Warblers were seen April 24 and were seen almost daily to May 5, after which they seem to have left. On April 24 the first Summer Tanager arrived and the following day two were singing territorially. We have seen only one female but on May 15 both males became silent (we still see them every day) and we presume the pairs are nesting.

We have failed to find a reliable relationship between weather and migration as has been reported so abundantly in the case of migration on the Gulf Coast in Texas. There were three cold spells when the night temperature fell below freezing, April 17, April 21 and 22, and April 28 and 29. On the first of these dates our species count did fall thirty percent below that of the previous day and of the following day and the count of individuals was off fifty percent. On April 21, however, the species count was equal to that of our best previous day and the count of individuals was up twenty-two percent over the best previous day. April 28 and 29 when my outside thermometer registered 23 degrees, the coldest weather we had, we consider in fact to have been our best two days, both in number of species and number of individuals.

We are appalled at the number of nesting failures we have observed. We were watching two nests of Vermilion Flycatchers. When we

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# THE 600 CLUB

Earle R. Greene

The membership of this Club consists of those who have seen and recorded 600 or More Species of Birds within the AREA defined in the America Ornithologists' Union Check-List of North American Birds, Fifth Edition, 1957. This includes North America north of Mexico, Greenland, Bermuda, and Baja, California. Many people have kept Lists of Birds about them, City Lists, County, State, and areas but comparatively few have travelled enough to find and identify 600. It is not easy but millions are interested and ambitious enough to try for that goal. In an article in Audubon Magazine by Stuart Keith 19 people were mentioned as having recorded 600 or more by 1963. At this writing about 46 are now members. Certain policies in regard to wandering birds, exotics, etc., have been made by Roger Tory Peterson and are adhered to and approved by the Membership. There are no stated meetings, no officers, no dues—The Motto of the Club is Co-operation Not Competition and this motto is working well throughout the country. Although this club is probably the most exclusive club in North America (far surpassing the old "400" of Newport and New York), its aims in the study and protection of all wildlife are being felt in many areas. Dr. Jean Piatt of the University of Pennsylvania wrote "Long live the 600 Club and may there still be at least this many species extant for future generations to enjoy in our rapidly vanishing environment."

Continued from page eight

- I. Fight the social myths "Growth," "Progress," "Development." Natural growth and development are much more beautiful.
- II. Fight the Social pressures for baby production and large families.
- III. Set a good example yourself of what you think the concerned person should exemplify in terms of living style, awareness, waste, consumption, reproduction, and informing others.

## The Western Tanager

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## THE "600" CLUB

This is the Official Summary of this club as of April 15, 1970. The next Summary will be dated October 15, 1970. Our Motto—  
CO-OPERATION - NOT COMPETITION.

Name/State Address	Species Recorded in North America
Joseph W. Taylor, N. Y.	676
Ira N. Gabrielson, Va.	673
Dudley Ross, Pa.	666
Vivan Ross, Pa.	666
Don Bleitz, Calif.	663
Norman Hill, Mass.	656
Roger Peterson, Conn.	653
Edward Chalif, N. J.	652
Whitney Eastman, Minn.	652
Elisha Atkins, Conn.	651
Earle R. Greene, Calif.	649
Stuart Keith, N. Y.	647
Karen Eastman, Minn.	645
Locke MacKenzie, N. Y.	638
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Laurence C. Binford, Calif.	616
Olga Clarke, Calif.	615
I. J. Abramson, Fla.	615
Robert Smart, N. H.	614
James Lane, Calif.	614
Jean Piatt, Pa.	613
Marybelle Piatt, Pa.	612
Fred Haerich, Calif.	609
J. F. Rothermel, Sr., Tex.	607
Mrs. J. A. (Linda) Snyder, Tex.	606
Paul W. Sykes, Jr., Fla.	606
Horace H. Jeter, La.	603
Dorothy Synder, Mass.	602
Ruth Emery, Mass.	602
Jerry B. Strickling, Mo.	602
Nancy M. Strickling, Mo.	600
Theodore A. Chandik, Calif.	600
Alexander Wetmore, D. C.	600 Plus
Arthur A. Allen, N. Y. (dec.)	600 Plus
Guy Emerson, N. Y. (dec.)	600 Plus
Ludlow Griscom, Mass. (dec)	600 Plus

Please advise me by October 1, 1970, the exact Number of Species recorded by you within the AREA covered by the A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds, Fifth Edition, 1957.

Earle R. Greene, 1600 West Fifth Street,  
Oxnard, California 93030

The PCL (Planning and Conservation League) LEGISLATIVE REPORT, June 1970, AN INDEX OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION is available through PCL, 909 Twelfth Street, Sacramento, Ca 95814. In addition to an excellent summation of bills concerning noise pollution control, land use policy, transportation, conservation education, water pollution, pesticide control, etc., it urges strong support to save the California coastline.

To Quote, "The push is on to develop California's coastline for private profit! Schemes for housing developments, second home projects, trailer parks, nuclear power plants, oil drilling, sand mining, gravel dredging, water projects, freeways and other economically practical attacks on the coastal ecology are increasing rapidly both in numbers and in political power. The California Constitution guarantees public access to coastal waters, but developers still fence off beaches, preventing public access. . . Of the 1000 miles of California coast, less than half (45%) is in public ownership. Of that, only 200 miles is suitable for general public recreation and much of that 200 miles is in military reserves. Today there is 1/2 inch of usable beach frontage for each of California's 20 million residents. . . 60% of coastal estuaries have been diked or filled, destroying food and habitat for sport fish and birds. Of the remaining 40%, only San Francisco Bay is protected."

YOU CAN HELP BY writing to Governor Ronald Reagan, Assembly Speaker Robert Monagan, the Assembly and Senate Committees on Natural Resources, and your own State legislators urging them to work for strong coastal legislation. SUPPORT the California Coastal Alliance, Box 90978, Los Angeles, Ca 90009. PERSUADE your local governments to endorse strong coastal legislation.

## THE EFFLUENT SOCIETY

### EVERYMAN'S GUIDE TO CONSERVATIONAL LIVING

The following is an excerpt from a twenty-page booklet with the above title, published by The Santa Barbara Underseas Foundation, Inc. Copies of the booklet can be obtained from them at 2020 Alameda Padre Serra, Santa Barbara, California 93103. The Guide contains suggestions of physical and psychological things that you as an individual can do to ease the burden of pollution, overpopulation, waste, and resource depletion.

From "General Rules to Live By" . . .

1. Don't use more than you absolutely need to survive.
2. Eliminate the "I want" philosophy of life.
3. "Eat to Live, Don't Live to Eat"
4. Don't buy more than you need. Fight needless consumption.
5. Before purchasing, ask: "Will it add that much to

KATHRYN BROOKS

**CORNER**

### DISASTER IN 1985 DRAMATIZED

Our thanks to KTTV for its presentation of "1985" on June 1, 1970. The MOST FRIGHTENING ASPECT of the one hour uninterrupted news dramatization was that the films of death and destruction from pollution are the "here and now," not 1985! If you missed it, request a repeat showing. Write to: Pollution KTTV, Box 420, Hollywood, Ca 90028.

### PUBLIC PRESSURE and LEGAL ACTION HELP TO SAVE UPPER NEWPORT BAY

The original 5-0 position of the Orange County Board of Supervisors in favor of the land exchange has changed. In a letter from Allan Beek, Trustee of the Orange County Foundation for Preservation of Public Property (supersedes Upper Newport Bay Defense Fund), there may be a 4-1 majority against the exchange on the next board. In an almost unheard-of rejection of an incumbent, Ron Caspers, President of Keystone Savings & Loan, took 53% of the vote against incumbent Supervisor Allen. Caspers took positions against the exchange, put a lot of energy and money into the campaign, while the Friends of Newport Bay supplied legwork in great quantity.

The City of Newport Beach, the County of Orange, the State Resources Agency, and the Irvine Company have a joint study committee going to decide what they want done with the bay, both with and without the exchange, but has made little effort to contact the public. The public has a powerful bargaining position in the Upper Bay. Let your views be known. Write the committee now.

my life?" "What will it do to the state of the environment?"

6. Buy long-lasting items, not those designed for timed obsolescence.
7. "Make what you can, bake what you can, grow what you can..." Avoid "Take what you can."
8. Seek to recycle anything you "consume"-Don't throw away things that others can use, reuse products rather than dumping them, be alert to what happens to items after your use (detergents, etc.)
9. Alert yourself and others to the overt despoilers of the world. Then support any political (or non-political) action (or inaction) that tends to alleviate the problem.

Continued on previous page

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS Continued...

desert bird has been reported regularly, but rarely. Jay Sheppard was surprised to find a flock of nine FULVOUS TREE DUCKS on a small pond near the Fire Station in California City, San Louis Obispo County on the 24th. This dry inland valley seems far off course for these unusual ducks which now rest very sparingly in the lush marshes of Merced County. BLACK SWIFTS were widely reported but in very small numbers: at Santa Anita Cañon above Arcadia (Jon Dunn), one at Humber Park near Idylwild (Dick Robinson), and two at Jade Cove, north of San Simeon (Kim Garrett). BLACK RAILS, always hard to locate, were heard by Dick Robinson at West Pond above Yuma, and seen on the west side of upper Newport Bay by a visiting Canadian birder (*fide* Trudi Siptroth). Switching from black to a lighter shade, GRAY VIREOS were reported in the pinyon-juniper belt of the San Bernardino Mts. from Cactus Flats below Baldwin Lake (Shirley Wells) to Round Valley (Joe Greenberg) where a nest with three eggs was found and David Gaines found one at Morongo Valley on May 2nd, very likely a migrant at this place and time. At least six singing male GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS were found on the grassy hillsides above Dana Mesa Road near San Juan Capistrano by Don Sterba and Kay Yagii in mid May. Jon Dunn reports from the Sepulveda Recreation Area a late WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE on April 24th and a very late pair of Bank Swallows on May 27th.

From the Santa Barbara area, Richard Webster writes that this May was one of his best birding months and he's had some good ones in the past. An overnight trip to Anacapa Island on the 17th produced thousands of Shearwaters, four species of alcids, and a RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD (always a rare 'find'). A condor finding trip up the Sespe Cañon found four CONDORS, but more exciting yet a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO. Another Cuckoo was seen at Lake Cachuma. These are the first reports (to my knowledge) from the coastal slope of California for many years. Add to these a bright male SUMMER TANAGER on his school grounds, and the HOODED WARBLER previously mentioned and the month was complete, but early June was even better. He awoke before seven on the morning of June 3rd and found a MISSISSIPPI KITE in his own backyard. The kite stayed for only fifteen minutes but was carefully studied by Richard and his mother, the President of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society. This is only the third record for California.

The magic of Guy McCaskie turned his car off the freeway to Yuma on Memorial Day at the Brocks Experimental Ranch (an oasis with abundant water and ornamental trees between Hottville and the Colorado River). Here he found a new bird for the California list a RED-FACED WARBLER. This summer resident of the high mountains of central and southeastern Arizona had never strayed to the western part of that state, and was completely unexpected in the Colorado desert. Now the only warblers regularly occurring west of the Mississippi River and still unrecorded in California are the Swainson's and Olive Warblers and no doubt these will show up. Who will be the lucky finder? As if a Red-faced Warbler were not enough the weekend before he found a SCARLET TANAGER, a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER, two REDSTARTS, a PARULA WARBLER and a INDIGO BUNTING in Death Valley.\*

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examined one of them on April 18 we found three young which had apparently hatched no more than twenty-four hours earlier, all dead, probably from exposure. Their incubation had occurred simultaneously with one of our cold spells. We began to speculate that this species, whose main breeding population is far to the south where cold weather does not occur during nesting season, possibly has no instinct to brood its young with special care when the weather turns cold. Perhaps this factor alone prevents it from extending its range into suitable habitat farther north and west and imposes the absolute limit of its range. The second nest we found one morning partly torn from its foundation, hanging at a sharp angle and with one egg at the lip of the nest and about to roll out. We theorized that a Cowbird, perhaps, had tried to lay its egg in the nest, was too heavy and clumsy and dislodged the nest from its place in the fork of two branches.

For several days we had observed the progress of a Great Horned Owl's nest where we had occasionally seen one chick clambering around on the platform. On the morning of April 18 the chick was found on the ground under the nest, where it had fallen, and quite dead. Of four hummingbird nests we have been watching two have failed, one brought off one young and the fate of the fourth is not yet known as the young hatched only May 18. A Cooper's Hawk's nest, where we found the adult almost daily, seems to have been abandoned since May 11 for no reason that we can determine. One wonders if this attrition is typical.

We seem to get special excitement from seeing a bird we see only rarely and in this sense our "best birds" were a Tennessee Warbler on April 13 in summer plumage and singing, a Black-and-White Warbler May 6, and an American Redstart (male) May 8. Our total list for this limited area reached 128 species.\*

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

Shumway Suffel

A few April observations have come in since last month's issue. Certainly the outstanding one has to be the ZONE-TAILED HAWK seen at Morongo Valley on May 10 by several L. A. A. S. members, including Kim Garret, Jay Sheppard, Grace Nixon, Rusty Scalf, and David and Richard Bradley. Lucky people they are, for this is the first report in California since 1960. As they studied the Zone-tail, a RED-TAIL HAWK (probably one of the resident pair) chased it out of the area and it was not seen again. AMERICAN RED-STARTS were reported sparingly—an adult male banded by Jon Atwood near Azusa on the ninth, another male seen by Rusty Scalf in Palos Verdes on the fifth, and a few seen in the San Diego area. Other warblers of interest were: two NORTHERN WATERTHRUSHES at Morongo Valley in early May, a PALM WARBLER on May 3 at Palos Verdes (Rusty Scalf), and two TENNESSEE WARBLERS reported by Abigail King and Joan Mills near San Fernando on April 29, one of these was a fine spring plumaged male. John Mencke gives us our only report of BLACK SWIFTS so far this Spring. Three were seen near Encino on April 30. While taking his weekly "Shorebird Census," Rusty Scalf found Shearwaters and Jaegers off the coast consistently during April. He also found two BLACK OYSTERCATCHERS at Palos Verdes (they are rare on the mainland south of Pismo Beach, but common on the Channel Islands). Several people have reported that HOODED ORIOLES returned in mid-March, as is normal. They evidently just were not seen by me or reported to me, which gave me the impression that something might be amiss. Edward Schaar reports his Hooded Oriole returned on March 19 which checks his previous dates of March 18, 1966; March 7, 1967; March 6, 1968; March 28, 1969. Richard Webster also writes that CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEES have been reported from just north of Santa Maria. They evidently are expanding their range south along the coast, as well as in the Sierras.

Shirley Wells, on May 27th while leading her enthusiastic nature study group through the South Coast Botanic Gardens, ran across a bird so new and secretive that she had to do a double take, and even glance at a field guide, before she convinced herself that it was a RED-EYED VIREO. Again on June 10th, while checking up on a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER she had seen the evening before, she found a RED-EYED

VIREO singing in the willows beside the little stream in Averill Park, San Pedro. Another RED-EYED VIREO (my jinx bird) was found at Tollhouse Spring below Westguard Pass in Inyo County by a group of Bay-area birders whom we met at Deep Springs an hour later. We hurried to the spring and made a twig-by-twig search of that rather small area to no avail. We did, however, find several RED CROSSBILLS, two male CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRDS and a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK, so our trip was worthwhile.

Hart Schwarz found a singing male MAGNOLIA WARBLER in Tuna Cañon, Malibu. Within an hour Ellen Stephenson and I were searching for the bird and by 2 P.M. we had found it—very handsome but not easily found high in the rustling alders. AMERICAN REDSTARTS were widely reported in May: Jon Atwood banded an adult male near Azusa; Kay Yagii found two in the willows along the Mojave River east of Barstow; two were seen near Scotty's Castle in Death Valley (G. McC.); and we (Bruce Broadbooks, Don Sterba, Jon Atwood & S. S.) found at least four at Deep Springs Ranch on the 29th. A very late adult male REDSTART greeted Dr. Richard Neuman on the morning of June 10th in his Pasadena garden. Two BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS were reported—one by Isabel Ludlum at Palos Verdes on the 7th, and one by the Greenbergs from Palo Alto at Morongo Valley on the 31st. Kim Garrett found a VIRGINIA'S WARBLER in his favorite area of the Hollywood Hills, Brush Canyon, on the 20th and Richard Webster wrote a detailed description of the female HOODED WARBLER he saw on the 29th at the Goleta Sewage Plant near Santa Barbara. This is a very impressive showing of vagrant warblers and most of them found late in the month after the regular western migrants had come and gone.

Not all the interesting birds were warblers however. While running her route for the Breeding Bird Survey, mentioned last month, Jan Tarble found a GILDED FLICKER near Cima, east of Baker. This is the only area west of the Colorado River where this typically Arizona

## Editor's Last Inch

The Editor apologizes for the printing errors in the last issue, and the delay of this, both due to reprogramming of typing owing to the fact that Headquarters have been broken into five times, and typewriters stolen. See Drawing elsewhere in this issue. In the last inch of this volume the Editor expresses his appreciation to the Assistant Editor, Jim McClelland; Jan Leventon for typing, when she has a typewriter, the difficult manuscript of some of our contributors; to Hanna Stadler for having kept the text moving throughout the year; to Richard and Marge Wilson of "Sir Speedy" for timely printing; to the Headquarters staff, in particular Hans Hjorth for mailing. Bob Sandmeyer has kindly continued to supply cartoons and headings. "The Western Tanager" would not exist without our regular contributors, Shumway Suffel, Joann Leonard, and now Kathryn Brooks, occasional contributors and authors of lead articles.