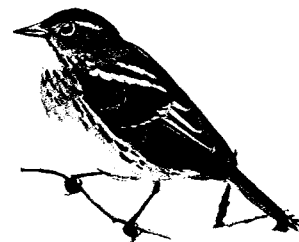


The Western Tanager

VOLUME 37 1970-71 NUMBER 6 FEBRUARY



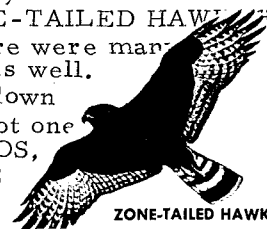
Summary of 'Seventy by Shumway Suffel

1970 was one of Southern California's driest years, with virtually no rain between Washington's Birthday and late November, when a series of storms brought abundant moisture to the lowlands, and snow to the mountains. The drought and hot dry winds, however, spawned devastating fires which stretched in a hundred-mile arc from the Malibu Mountains to the Mexican border. These fires will have long-term effects on bird life in our region. Malibu canyon, as an example, is badly washed, and the lagoon, usually so attractive to birds, is a sterile mudflat, rimmed with charred debris, and open to the tidal action of the sea. Nature, in time, will heal these scars; but the loss of habitat due to man's "improvements" are almost irreversible.

1970 as every calendar year, had two winters—the end of '69 - '70 and the beginning of '70 - '71. Both winters were noteworthy for the lack of "invasion species"—arctic or high-mountain birds driven into the lowlands by weather or lack of food in their normal winter territory. Last winter seemed to have more Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins than usual, and certainly was an exceptional winter for two pelagic species—Common Murres and Fulmars. Normally all these species are present in lesser numbers. It was the carry-over of rare birds from 1969 that sparked the local birders interest: the YELLOW-THROATED VIREO in Riverside remained until mid-March; the HEPATIC TANAGER, spending its seventh winter near the Hillcrest Golf Course in West Los Angeles, was last seen in January; the HARRIS' and WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS at the Arcadia Arboretum for their second winter remained until April; while the five LARK BUNTINGS near Homeland in Riverside County also stayed well into the spring. Only the White-throated Sparrow has been reported again this winter. Rare water fowl received attention, with a WHISTLING SWAN in the San Diego County lagoons, a EUROPEAN WIDGEON at Legg Lake, and an OLDSQUAW near the Santa Monica pier providing enjoyment for many birders. These are all more or less regular in winter, but in very small numbers. It was early spring before the "ATLANTIC" BRANT was found near

Santa Barbara, where it very accommodatingly stayed for a month. There are only one or two records of this species (or race?) in our area. A female KING EIDER found with the scoters near the fishing pier in Monterey may have summered there, as it was seen in September and has been reported again this winter.

Spring came early after a very dry winter. In the deserts it was a rather hectic season for the birds. High winds blowing through the passes tended to dam up the migrants in protected places, and freezing weather with snow above the 2,000 ft. level, in late April froze out many early nesters. Russ and Marion Wilson chronicled all this, along with a day-by-day survey of the birds, in their "Two months in Morongo Valley." Beside the expected western migrants and summer residents which they meticulously recorded by date and number, they found a few eastern strays; BLACK-AND-WHITE and TENNESSEE WARBLERS, and an AMERICAN REDSTART. Other observers in the Morongo area found a BROWN THRASHER (same date and place as in '69), two NORTHERN WATER THRUSHES (nearby on the Yucca Valley Golf Course), and a ZONE-TAILED HAWK, first record since 1960). There were many vagrants along the coast as well. The enthusiastic birders down Palos Verdes way found not one but two RED-EYED VIREOS, two BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS, a PALM,



ZONE-TAILED HAWK

BLACK OYSTERCATCHERS and a RED-NECKED GREBE (all rare on our coast). Elsewhere along the coast there was a MAGNOLIA WARBLER in Tuna Canyon, Malibu; a HOODED WARBLER near Santa Barbara; an OVENBIRD in San Diego County, and at least a dozen REDSTARTS in widely scattered coastal, foothill and desert localities. By far the rarest warbler, since it was the first record for California, was a RED-FACED WARBLER found at the Brock Ranch, a desert oasis half way between Holtville and Yuma. In Santa Barbara, Richard Webster found a MISSISSIPPI KITE in his own back yard on June 3rd. This sighting is remarkable because all three California records were in June, a date when these kites are normally nesting in their summer territories.

Continued on last page

audubon activities

FIELD TRIP - Carrizo Plain- December 12 and 13. Fifty-two people turned out Saturday and about half remained overnight at California Valley Lodge in order to continue birding Sunday morning. The weather on the plain was relatively warm and clear after the heavy fog encountered on the way. We had good luck all day, starting with the sighting of a VIRGINIA'S WARBLER at Maricopa. LE CONTE'S THRASHERS were seen a bit farther on.

On the way to Soda Lake we saw several FERRUGINOUS HAWKS, GOLDEN EAGLES and PRAIRIE FALCONS, one SHORT-EARED OWL and one BARN OWL. HORNED LARKS were numerous everywhere. MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD and MOUNTAIN PLOVER were seen in several areas. Large flocks of SANDHILL CRANES were in the fields around Soda Lake when we arrived. Estimates of the number seen were as high as 5,000, probably the greatest number of cranes ever seen on a Los Angeles Audubon trip.

Sunday morning many cranes were still present at the lake, but some flocks were moving out to various feeding areas, their ringing calls audible for miles. Total species for the two days was 35.

Jim Huffman, Leader

Note: On the trip home several members of the party reported additional observations: 15 LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS (Jenners); LONG-EARED OWL (Widmann); ROADRUNNERS (Adams and others); ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK and WHITE-TAILED KITE (Mills and Brandt).



FIELD TRIP - Lake Norconian, January 9 - Forty-three of us, including several new birders on their first trip, gathered on the lake shore on a cold, clear morning. As usual, the water birds were present in abundance with an unusually good number of CANVASBACKS. Most of the common species were seen, including a few REDHEADS and BLUE-WINGED TEAL, which were not spotted last year. We were happy to see both adult and immature BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS back, after being absent last year. Altogether, sixty-three species were seen - a considerable improvement over the past several years.

Hal Baxter, Leader.

More on page seven 2

!announcements!

The Los Angeles Audubon Society has had to reduce its Headquarters Staff, and to close Audubon House on Mondays. We need financial support over and above the dues sent to the National Audubon Society in order to provide services to our members to make LAAS a good society.

American Cetacean Society

A very special operation is being carried out just offshore by Fund for Animals' Wildlife Protection Patrol. Set up on Santa Barbara Island this group is keeping watch on over-zealous seal hunters and reporting cases of pollution. Happy volunteers are spending from a few days to a couple of weeks on the island -- a far-away retreat that's close-by. And if you, too, would like to have the opportunity to take this kind of vacation, no matter how brief, get in touch with Clark Cameron at (213) 821-2411. You can camp out, as one family did with their year-old babe, or you can help with the restoration of a couple of Navy-discarded huts.

AUSTRALIAN BIRDING TOUR

ANNOUNCING A THREE-WEEK ESCORTED BIRDING TOUR OF AUSTRALIA IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1971 SPONSORED BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY.

PURPOSE OF TRIP TO SEE AND IDENTIFY MAXIMUM NUMBER OF BIRD SPECIES.

* * *

SEE AUSTRALIAN PARROTS, HONEYEATERS, BOWER BIRDS, LYREBIRDS, BIRDS OF PARADISE, WINTERING ASIATIC SHORE BIRDS, PENGUINS, EMUS, CASSOWARIES, KANGAROOS, DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS, KOALA BEARS, FLYING FOXES.

VISIT THE LARGE CITIES, THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND OTHER NATURE AREAS.

* * *

TOP AUSTRALIAN BIRDERS TO ASSIST IN FINDING AND IDENTIFYING BIRDS.

* * *

STOP-OVER PRIVILEGES IN OTHER SOUTH PACIFIC AREAS FOLLOWING TOUR.

RESERVATIONS TAKEN NOW

FOR RESERVATIONS OR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL THE TOUR LEADERS: JIM HUFFMAN, 545-1224
OLGA CLARKE, 249-5537

CHRISTMAS COUNT

Los Angeles Audubon Society members are to be congratulated on a splendid job they performed in the Christmas Bird Count. Although the weather looked menacing on the previous day, Count Day was clear, pleasant and only inoffensively overcast. There was just a light wind. Seventy-three observers turned up with great enthusiasm and traveled 445 miles (114 on foot) in 229 hours to bring in 143 species and 39,570 individual birds.

We had several strokes of luck. The Kings, Joan Mills and Nancy Bloch were at Lower Franklin reservoir when three Whistling Swans flew in, circled close to them twice and then alighted on the water. They (Swans, not observers) stayed only another day and then departed. Elizabeth Bartholomew had a male Summer Tanager at her Rustic Canyon home since October and we were hoping mightily he would stay until the 27th. On Count Day, not only did he show up as usual, but he was joined by a female who had not appeared before! The Brooks', the Coopers and Charles Bush picked a Gray-headed Junco out of a flock of Oreos at the Veterans Administration in Sawtelle—and then found a Red-shouldered Hawk in the same area—a most unexpected place. It was our only Red-shouldered in the count. Kim Garrett had found the White-headed Woodpecker at Lake Hollywood in October and, after much plain-and-fancy digging, Shum Suffel, Ed Navojosky and Phillip Sayre came up with the bird. This shows rather dramatically the value of staking out an area before count day. Who would have expected a mountain species like that in the city?

The most numerous bird of all was—surprisingly—the Robin with 30 of 36 parties of observers reporting them for the grand total of 4384! Joan Mills was inundated by over 2000 of them on Oak Pass Road in Beverly Hills. Cedar Waxwings were seen in great numbers—3876—but not a Bohemian among them.

On Christmas Day, two days before the count, Eva Millsap saw a Golden Eagle over Elysian Park, but alas, it did not return on the 27th. It seems incredible, but none of our 73 observers spotted a Lark Sparrow, a bird we usually take for granted. Nor did we get a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Yellow-throat or a Tricolored Blackbird. Even with some disappearing habitat and an unfortunate dearth of marshland we should still be able to make 150 species. Given the same dedicated, enthusiastic group that did so well this year and more recruits next year plus a lot of luck and a little body-English we ought to do it. Sandy Wohlgemuth, Leader.



Bird Count Shows 49 Species

Sunday was a cold and snowy day, but there were robins, bluebirds, a warbler, and a meadowlark out hunting food in the rural areas east of Mansfield, Ohio.

The Ashland Christmas bird count for the National Audubon Society showed 49 species, including some unusual winter residents.

The fifth Palos Verdes Christmas Census Count only turned up 131 species, compared with last year's 146, although it did well on numbers—152,106 individuals. Although 50 people took part, hearing rain and strong winds prior to count day took their toll. The loss of the habitat of Harbor Lake of course eliminated several species.

The best birds were three Mountain Chickadees (Richard Bradley party) and Roadrunner (Ernest Abeles), both new for this count. Notable were 91,000 or more Bonaparte's Gulls, 27 Purple and 2 Cassin's Finches, 306 Hermit Thrushes, and 115 Allen's Hummingbirds (twice last year's). The commonest bird missed was the Western Sandpiper, most likely through loss of habitat.

Shirley Wells, Leader

A new count area, Carrizo Plains, was tackled by the Brooks and Coppers (party of 8). Snow on the Ridge Route, mud in the Temblors, general rain, snow and fog contributed to a low count of 34 species, 3000 individuals, mostly Sandhill Cranes. Few raptors were seen, although undoubtedly present in reasonable numbers—Robert Copper, Leader.

The fourteenth year of the Malibu Canyon Count found 6055 individuals in 105 species, down from last year's 117. Thirteen people searched, fog delayed an early start. The September fires reduced a large fraction of the chaparral habitat. The best birds were Franklin's Gulls and Palm Warbler (Dennis Heinemann) and a Mountain Chickadee (Shirley Wells and Bonnie Kennedy). A bird of note was a white-faced Brown Towhee. Few ducks were seen, and no Western Sandpipers—Joan Mills, Leader

Independent Journal, Wednesday, January 6, 1971

Bird Watchers Sight 193 Species In Marin

Marin County bird watchers appear to have earned third place in a national bird counting competition staged between Dec. 22 and Sunday.

John Winter, a scientist at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, said yesterday the combined forces of the Marin and Golden Gate chapters of the National Audubon Society and the observatory unofficially counted 193 species of birds.

The Point Reyes figure, taken inside a 15-mile circle centering on the Point Reyes National Seashore, topped by one the unofficial total gathered by rival San Diego.

The Marin count, taken from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday, produced such sightings as that of a peregrine falcon, European wigeons and blue gray gnat catchers.

Winter said numerous white and brown pelicans and a surprising number of whistling swans were sighted.

He said unofficial counts showed Freeport, Tex., sighted about 205 species and Cocoa, Fla., about 195.



Bluenose Birding

By Elizabeth Ellis

"Bluenose," a motor vessel which ferries cars and passengers between Bar Harbor, Maine, and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, is well known to birders for its passage through the Bay of Fundy, where pelagic birds of the North Atlantic may be seen. In the late summer great numbers of Greater Shearwaters and Wilson's Petrels are often about, together with Cory's Shearwaters, Leach's Petrels, Fulmars, Skuas and others. Rumors are that other pelagic birds are to be seen from the "Bluenose" in winter, and this Christmas season my husband and I decided to investigate.

A starting place is an (expensive) overnight stay in the Boston airport hotel to catch an eight o'clock Northeast jet to Bangor, Maine. On arriving after the fifty-minute flight into crisp, clean snow we were told it was 20° below. Fortunately, National Car Rental had our engine running, but nevertheless we used the facilities to change from city to outdoor winter clothes.

The drive east from Bangor was very dull, but as soon as we hit the causeway to Mt. Desert Island we were in the world of birds. Golden-eyes splashed between cakes of ice, and in spite of an icy blast we looked over every one for a Barrow's.

Side roads, fortunately ploughed, circle the island, and give access to numerous bays and inlets, each of which we explored. Oldsquaws were in unusual numbers, and an occasional raft of Eiders were seen in open waters. A blue-white Snowy Owl glided across a marsh. Every woodpecker's rattle was traced down on the chance of the Three-toed species.

The only lunch spots were in Bar Harbor, with the freshest Maine sea food. Bundling up again we continued our circle—Horned and Red-necked Grebes were together for comparison. Crows, Ravens and a Bald Eagle completed the day. A few motels are open, one opposite the ferry terminal and another nearby. With full heat on we kept warm through the night.

The ferry leaves at eight. We parked the car at the terminal, leaving our keys so the car can be moved if ploughing is necessary. We were aboard in no time, and patrolled the decks, already picking out gulls and scoters (White-winged in large quantities). On A-deck we found a recessed door, which was to be our "owl's" hole during the icy trip across.

We were soon steaming down Frenchman's Bay, scanning the surf for Harlequin Ducks. Out in open water a small flock of Black Guillemots made way across the bow and soon three Dovekies flew along with the boat, first on one wing then the other.

As we shook off the Herring Gulls, a few Greater Black-backed casually inspected the ship, but as soon as land dropped astern, Black-legged Kittiwakes appeared. In spite of the speed of the vessel and worked-up sea we had no difficulty in noting the detail of the completely black wing tip. Then Razorbills flew alongside, larger than Dove-

kies, but with somewhat the same shifting flight. Again we could see a field mark clearly—the black shoulder stripe (well displayed by Roger Peterson in a colored drawing in "Birds of Nova Scotia" by Robie W. Tufts.)



Razorbill
Alca torda
twisted auk (Icelandic)

In one of our warm-ups inside the Captain paid us a visit—very polite and taking a couple of birders spending Christmas vacation on a wind-swept deck as if it happened every day. Because of the head seas he had reduced speed from his customary 18 to 17-1/2 knots—so now we know how fast Razorbills fly. The Captain invited us to the bridge, high above the waters, but we soon left, as the spray covered the windows every time the bow went down. At 17 knots most birds pass by too fast; we needed the 180° view of our "hole"—and the ability to run aft for a further look.

A big storm off Nantucket Island was moving east at 20 knots, and by now the snow caught up with us, which together with the early darkness of these, for us, northerly latitudes, made it the end of the day at 3:30 p.m. as we approached the Nova Scotia shores. The Kittiwakes gave way to gulls, and as we ran the long Yarmouth harbor, there were shore birds on each quarter.

Customs are quite simple when you are the only two passengers, and a taxi soon took us up to the Grand Hotel in downtown Yarmouth. Although it was quite dark, we again braved the elements, now quite menacing, and walked through the deepening snow along the harbor. The gulls were still active, and were fully rewarded with a "white-winged gull"—an Iceland.

Next morning we arrived at the terminal for the nine o'clock return passage. The "Prince of Fundy" from Portland had not made it the night before because of the storm, so the "Bluenose" had a few more trucks. One was delayed—and we overheard the Captain saying he would wait until 9:30 a.m., but no longer, as a northwesterly was making up, and would make the crossing rough later in the day. With several enormous trucks returning full of lobsters on the lower deck he does not want to make heavy weather of it.

While we waited the snow stopped, fog came in, lifted and revealed another "white-wing"—this time a heavy-set Glaucous Gull. We hugged the shore up to Digby neck, and as the northwester picked up power we went under the lee of Brier Island, then headed out into the Bay. In spite of the very strong winds

Concluded on page nine

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



**Audubon
Bird Reports
874-1318**

- Jan. 27 WEDNESDAY - CONSERVATION MEETING, Plummer Park, 8:00 p.m., Mrs. Kathryn Brooks, Chairman.
- Feb. 4 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m.
- Feb. 9 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - Plummer Park, 8:00 p.m. Program: Dr. Charles T. Collins, Professor of Biology at Long Beach State College, will present an illustrated program on birds of Trinidad. Dr. Collins is a world authority on Swifts.
- Feb. 13 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Terminal Island. Meet at the corner of Barracuda and Cannery Streets at 8:30 a.m. Take the Harbor Freeway to San Pedro and cross the main channel via the Vincent Thomas Bridge. Take the first exit after the bridge to Ferry St. - left on Ferry to Terminal Way - right on Terminal Way to Barracuda - then left to Cannery. This trip will be a half day workshop on gull identification. This is your chance, whether novice or expert, to learn about the identification of immature (and adult) gulls. Leader: Jay Sheppard. Phone: 598-3955.
- Feb. 24 WEDNESDAY - CONSERVATION MEETING, Plummer Park, 8:00 p.m., Mrs. Kathryn Brooks, Chairman.
- Feb. 27 SATURDAY-SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Morro Bay. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the foot of Morro Rock. This is one of our best areas for wintering coastal birds; it also provides excellent birding in wooded areas and canyons in the vicinity. Many people go up Friday night in order to have a full day Saturday and a half day on Sunday. There is camping at Morro Bay State Park; many good motels are to be found in the vicinity of Morro Bay and nearby San Luis Obispo. Morro Bay is approximately 210 miles north of Los Angeles via the Coast Highway (US 101). Leaders: Betty and Laura Lou Jenner. Phone: 748-7510.
- Mar. 4 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m.
- Mar. 9 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - Plummer Park, 8:00 p.m. Program: Mr. James Hammond, wildlife photographer and lecturer, will present a 16 mm color film on "The Birds at Malheur."
- Mar. 13 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Tujunga Wash. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on the north side of the Foothill Blvd. bridge over the Tujunga Wash in Sunland. In spite of the flood damage in recent years, this still remains a good place to get acquainted with some desert type birds and vegetation in a close-by area. Leader: To be announced.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Western Tanager

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- Shumway Suffel

Conservation

- Kathryn Brooks

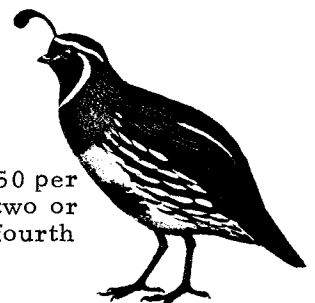
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BINOCULARS FOR BIRDING Part 2

The second important characteristic of binoculars is the diameter of the "entrance" or "object" lens (that faces the object looked at). The value of this diameter, in millimeters, is given as the second number of the basic specification, e.g., 7 x 35, 8 x 30, and 10 x 50, binoculars have objectives 35, 50, and 60 millimeters in diameter, respectively.

The diameter of the objective is important because it determines the resolution of the image, that is the amount of sharp detail which can be seen, and which is so important in birding. There is a fundamental law of optics, which says that the ultimate resolution of an optical instrument is proportional to the diameter of the object lens. In practice only the very best binoculars achieve this limiting resolution, which for a 50-mm objective would be ten times the acuity of the eye, because of various aberrations. Nevertheless the larger diameters allow more leeway in the design to get resolution matching good eyesight.

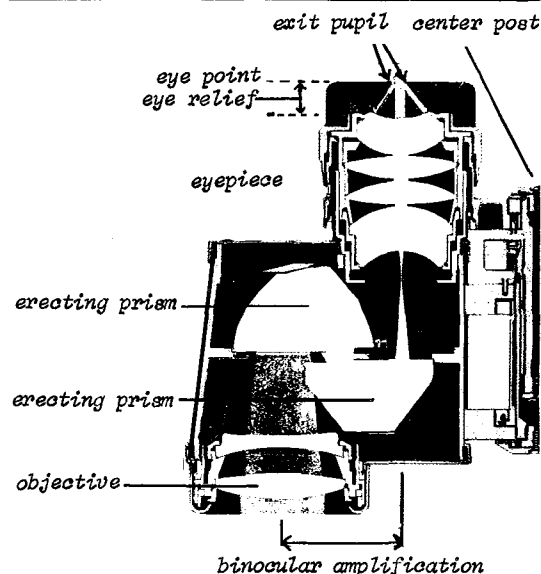
Similarly, unless the lens of the eye is fully used, i.e. the iris is wide, resolution will be limited. The great acuity of birds of prey is due to the fact they have large lenses, larger than human's, in their eyes. For good resolution the rays leaving the eyepiece should fully fill the opening of the iris, at least for those with excellent eyes.

Even more important is the fact the diameter of the objective determines the amount of light in the image; doubling the diameter increases the light gathered four times. The brightness of the image is important in birding. A dim image is annoying and tiring, since the eye, on looking through binoculars, has to adapt from the bright outdoors to a much lower light level.

If vision through a telescope is not to be markedly darker than inspection with the naked eye, it is necessary not only to have a large absolute diameter of the object lens, but also to have the *exit pupil* a certain size. This is the disc of smallest diameter through which all the rays leaving the eyepiece pass through. This disc can be seen by pointing the binoculars at a well-lit scene and holding a piece of white paper behind the eyepieces in a darkened room. Its diameter can be calculated as the ratio of the objective diameter to magnification; e.g., for 8 x 30 binoculars it is 30/8 or 3.5 millimeters.

For full luminance of an image the disc of light of the exit pupil should fall at the *eye point*, the place where the pupil of the eye is placed, in order for all the light collected by the object lens to enter the eye. The diameter of the observer's pupil is controlled by the iris, and varies from 2 millimeters in glare to 7 when fully expanded. Thus if the exit pupil of the binoculars is substantially less than 7 millimeters the image will appear dim.

In addition to these purely physical conditions there is an important physiological factor. Despite the inevitable loss of light caused by the use of an optical instrument, objects viewed in very weak light with a magnifying system appear to be more luminous and more visible. This "night-glass" effect is apparently caused by the presentation of a larger, although less bright, image on the retina. Thus larger magnifications are more effective. The above facts should be considered for owling. The desirable combinations of high magnification and 7-millimeter exit pupil are 10 x 70, 8 x 56, possibly 7 x 50.



Related to the exit pupil and eye point is the property of *eye relief*, the distance behind the eyepiece lens surface at which the exit pupil is formed. This has practical importance for people who wear spectacles, as a greater amount of eye relief is necessary if one is to wear one's spectacles when using binoculars and still see the entire field of view. Persons who wear spectacles only for near- or far-sightedness can of course take them off, provided there is adequate focussing range built into the binoculars. On the other hand, persons with astigmatism must wear their spectacles when using binoculars unless they have the make of binoculars that provide corrective lenses in slip-on mounts. For those who wear glasses, some manufacturers design their eyepieces with considerable eye relief, and provide rubber eye cups. The cups are extended when no spectacles are worn, and the eyes are held off at the correct eye point. The cups serve to cut down extraneous light. With the rubber cups folded down, and spectacles pressed against the cups the eyes again are at the correct eye point.

To be continued in another issue





Continued...

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Board has called a meeting on Feb. 3 at 2 p.m. to declare Pt. Mugu as a landmark, which means for 90 days it can't be defaced without approval of the board. This would provide temporary breathing space.

Commissioners that are undecided or for the development are: (1) Clarice E. Gilchrist, 25 Sea View, Piedmont, Ca 94600; (2) Leonard S. Thompson, 111 E. Lucard St., Taft, Ca 93268; (3) Daniel D. Villanueva, KMEX TV, 721 N. Bronson, Hollywood, Ca 90038; (4) Harry E. Sokolov, c/o 20th C. Fox, Box 900, Beverly Hills, Ca 90213; (5) Lowell Berry, 1939 Harrison St. Suite 802, Oakland, Ca 94612; (6) Mrs. Leah F. McConnell, P.O. Box Af, Redding, Ca 96001

HOORAY FOR UPPER NEWPORT BAY

Congratulations to the Orange County Board of Supervisors, who voted unanimously on Jan. 5 against the land exchange with the Irvine Company. And thanks to all the people who wrote letters, signed petitions, donated money, and filled out the Orange County Declarations of Bay Use.

Whether to make the Jan. 5 decision final, will be decided in 90 days from that date. Upper Newport Bay's value as a relatively natural estuary, wintering grounds for migratory shorebirds, and nesting area for resident birds, has apparently been recognized by the board of supervisors. To ensure that their final decision upholds the Jan. 5 decision, letters of appreciation should be sent to Supervisors Robert W. Battin, David L. Baker, William J. Phillips, Ralph D. Clark, Ronald W. Caspers at:

P.O. Box 687
Santa Ana, Ca 92702



Our Embattled Wildlife: The California Condor

The threats to species on the verge of extinction seem never to end, and the Condor seems to be foremost in the battleline. First the oil interest, now gypsum strip mining, and an ever-present threat of a dam on the Sespe Creek.

In defense of the California Condor, demand the suspension of all private interest operations within the refuge and urge that surrounding land be afforded protection as a wilderness area.

Mr. J. Russell Penny
Bureau of Land Management, Federal Bldg.
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, Ca 95825

Secretary Rogers Morton
Department of Interior
C Street & 18 Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20240

Audubon Activities continued

ANNUAL DINNER - January 11 - One hundred seventy-three members and friends of the Society enjoyed a delightful social hour and dinner at Robaire's French Restaurant, topped off by the superb program of color slides of East Africa presented by Herb and Olga Clarke.

Deplaning at Entebbe, the Clarkes saw their first African bird, the CROWNED CRANE, and in the following three weeks they not only observed and identified 503 life birds and 50 mammals, but managed to record many of these on film. In Uganda and Kenya they visited Murchison Falls

National Park, Budongo Forest, many fabulous lodges on the Victoria and the Albert Niles, as well as Aberdare National Park and Lake Nakuru. At Lake Naivasha they saw and photographed thousands of FLAMINGOES. The pictures taken at Hell's Gate of the LAMMERGEYER, a large vulturine eagle, were especially notable.

Much credit for the success of the evening was due to the several unsung heroes and heroines who worked long and diligently behind the scenes to make the function such a pleasant one, in spite of having to move from the restaurant to Plummer Park for the program because of the unprecedented turnout. Their final gesture of hospitality was opening Audubon House after the program and serving coffee.



ALASKA PIPELINE URGED BY INTERIOR DEPT.

Despite some "unavoidable" adverse effects on the environment, the Interior Department on Jan. 13, 1971 recommended construction of the 800-mile hot-oil pipeline across Alaska. The department said that the undesirable effects would include damage to wildlife and their habitat if a major oil spill occurred, degradation of permafrost, localized erosion and siltation of some waterways and streams. They claim that the economic benefits to Alaska and the nation would outweigh the dangers. Still in question are the court injunctions prohibiting the government from issuing a construction permit until the Interior Department's authority to do so is clarified and until native land claims along the route are settled.

It is still possible to challenge the government's conclusions. Public hearings will be held Feb. 12 & 13 in Anchorage, Alaska, and Feb. 16 & 17 in Washington. Citizens can still send letters to the Department of Interior requesting that their opinions be part of the "official record."

What should be happening is a slowdown of the present feverish oil rush, in order to allow adequate assessment and fact-finding. The Wilderness Society reported in November 1970 that Dr. Robert B. Weeden of the University of Alaska, one of the most knowledgeable of Alaskan environmentalists, predicted that it would take at least two or three years to answer important questions about the ecological effects of constructing a hot-oil pipeline. His questions, included whether disturbed Arctic areas can be revegetated, whether the pipeline would be a barrier to animal migration, and how big a risk there is of pipeline breakage from landslides and earthquakes.

It is imperative that a comprehensive land-use plan be prepared before launching any pipeline, road, or other development. The urgency of such comprehensive planning in advance is obvious. Construction of the pipeline and its intended haul road would open up a vast expanse of almost untouched wildland to mineral and timber exploitation and settlement, for which neither the federal nor state government is properly prepared. It has been estimated that the North Slope oil is enough for only a few years of America's needs and that its consumption will aggravate the continents pollution and congestion problems. I would also question the urgency of a rush for domestic

oil to save dollars when foreign oil is cheaper, and depleting our own supplies certainly appears incompatible with the oil companies "reasons" for benefitting from the oil depletion allowance!

We urge a moratorium on development north of the Yukon until approval and implementation by Congress of a comprehensive Alaska conservation plan is completed. The Council on Environmental Quality, Congress, and the President should intervene in the pipeline issue immediately, before a precipitate and potentially disastrous commitment can be made by the Department of the Interior by itself.

RECLASSIFY POINT MUGU AS STATE PARK!

The State Department of Recreation & Parks has significantly scaled down its plans for hotels, restaurants, a golf course, shops, and other commercial developments at Pt. Mugu, but it still includes the motorcycle paths which are quite incompatible with the natural beauty of the area. Furthermore, the subject of hotels can come up again. However, if the upland area is declared a State Park, it must, under the State's own criteria, preserve and enhance its natural environment, placing primary value on the natural features, with no unnecessary intrusions.

Over 300 people attended the hearing in Palm Springs on Jan. 8, and with few exceptions, were overwhelmingly against the development at Pt. Mugu. We thank Joann Leonard for testifying on our behalf. She said that it was an exhausting session with no break for lunch. All those who attended the hearing should be congratulated.

NO FINAL DECISION HAS BEEN MADE YET.

The next hearing is in Oroville, Ca, Feb. 11. It is interesting that the fate of Pt. Mugu may be decided at a hearing 600 miles away. For further details, and to verify hearing date (conflicting reports on dates of previous hearings), call the local office of the State Department of Parks and Recreation, 620-3342.

On the Sierra Club sponsored walk into LaJolla Valley at Pt. Mugu, over 500 people showed up, with 200 completing the over 15-mile walk into the valley. On another day, my husband, brother, and I walked into the valley via LaJolla Canyon, which turned out to be rugged, but well worth the effort. The valley was beautiful and we counted over 30 species of birds. Envisioning motorcyclists was dreadful.

Shumway Suffel continued

Observations of December included the sighting of three WHISTLING SWANS (A. King, et al) as they flew into the Franklin Reservoir in West Los Angeles, an unexpected bonus for the L.A.A.S. Christmas Count. COMMON MERGANSERS are seldom common with us, but a few are seen every winter. Alice Fries reports one near Oceanside on the tenth, and a handsome female (or should we say "beautiful" in view of her sex) appeared to be wintering at Legg Lake. A COMMON TEAL was found on the ponds near the fire station at Lake Sherwood, Malibu, on January 3rd by Charles Velguth and Ed Masthay of the Conejo Valley Audubon Society. This is only the third record for Southern California. A male OLDSQUAW west of the Santa Monica pier may be the same duck previously reported from the Venice pier, while a female seen from the Belmont pier in Long Beach (Peter Christenson) was, of course, another bird.

PIGEON HAWKS (rare in our region) showed up on at least four local Christmas Counts—one is wintering in the Sepulveda Recreation Area near Encino (San Fernando Audubon Society), another was found in Pasadena on the count day only, a third was seen at the north end of the Salton Sea by Jon Atwood for the count there, and the fourth was sighted in the hills above Westwood for the L.A.A.S. count. Our only December report of a GOLDEN PLOVER comes from Alice Fries near Oceanside on December 10th. Although there have been several fall reports of FRANKLIN'S GULLS, the one at Malibu has remained in the vicinity at least into January. There are very few winter records. Although COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRDS occur sparingly on the Colorado Desert in the winter, they are rare in our area. Owen Wade reports that a strikingly plumaged male visited his Silver Lake feeder during the last two weeks of the year.

Wintering warblers were noteworthy because of their scarcity. The VIRGINIA'S WARBLER found in the Gilbert King's West Los Angeles garden in mid-November remained until going to press in January. A PALM WARBLER found on the Malibu count by Dennis Heinemann with a

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flock of small birds in the geranium fields around the Malibu Administrative Center was apparently of the yellow "Eastern" race. Single NORTHERN WATER THRUSHES were found for the San Diego Audubon Society count and at the south end of the Salton Sea on count day (Guy McCaskie). The immature CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (first winter record in California) found by DENNIS PAULSON near Mecca was found again a few days later for the Salton Sea (North-End) Count. We may have to revise the winter status of Yellow and Nashville Warblers from "casual" to "rare" as a very few are reported nearly every winter. Single YELLOW WARBLERS were found on both the north and south ends of the Salton Sea counts, and a NASHVILLE WARBLER was near Encino on December 13th (Jon Dunn and Kim Garrett). Kim also has a SUMMER TANAGER wintering near his home in the Hollywood Hills. Two BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS (rare in winter) were reported: one near Laguna Beach on December 13th by Jerry Johnson, and another in the Santa Ana Mountains on January 2nd by Isabel Ludlum. The only VARIED THRUSH reports came from the San Fernando Audubon Society: one in Placenta Canyon (Hank Brodtkin) and one in Dexter Park (Art Langton, Jr.). Hal Ferris in Encino gives us our fourth WHITE-THROATED SPARROW record of the winter, with one coming to his feeder there.

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One cannot help being struck by the number of rare birds found in our area in 1970. This is particularly so if one contrasts it with the records up to 1960 as cited in Pyle and Swall's "Distributional List" revised in 1961. With certain major exceptions (Brown Pelicans, Peregrines, Cormorants and Cattle Egrets) the birds occur very much as they always have, and the difference is due to increased coverage by a growing group of enthusiastic birders with greatly increased expertise. Christmas Counts illustrate this best as we then get the best overall coverage of the year and never fail to find new birds. The birds are there and intelligent hard work will bring them to light. We then wish you many happy days in the field in 1971. They are good for the soul, for the body, and last but not least for your "list." ζ

BLUENOSE BIRDING continued from page four

(60 knots) we saw Kittiwakes again. Many Razorbills soared in the lee, and a few Dovekies were raised. These birds do not mind a storm!

A Fulmar flew by calmly, and we studied it closely, as it held its course in the gusts. Then, surprise, Manx Shearwaters skimmed by on their stiff wings. The wind and glare became very strong, and it was very hard to see. Our binoculars were covered with salt.

Finally we reached the shelter of the islands off the coast of Maine. A Harlequin Duck made for some breaking waves, and the



Dovekie

Plautus alle

duck-like (lappish) flat-foot

scoters appeared again. Rounding a point in Frenchman's Bay we saw two Razorbills sitting in the water, holding up their heads in a characteristic way—and we even saw the white ring on their bills.

This bird was actually the only "lifer" for us—which confirms the observation that you search far and wide only to find what you want at the starting place.

No Puffins, though; so we have to go again. ζ

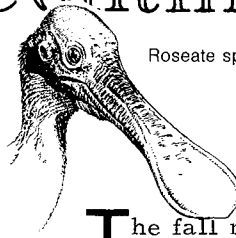
Shumway Suffel continued

Summer was uneventful with the warm dry weather until the hot Santa Ana winds and the disastrous fires hit in late September. A BLACK-BELLIED TREE DUCK (4th California record) near U. C. Irvine in Orange County in late July attracted a lot of attention. Although it may have been an escapee, it is probably as good a record as any, as the timing was right, and this was a good year for them in Texas and Arizona. The Salton Sea fell short of expectations this summer with practically no BOOBIES after the unprecedented numbers seen in '69, and no Frigatebirds or Skimmers. There were, however, two ROSEATE SPOONBILLS with several hundred WOOD IBIS, and the usual numbers of LAUGHING GULLS and GULL-BILLED TERNS. All of these are birds which cannot be found regularly in other parts of California. The big news from the Sea was that CATTLE EGRETS are nesting there in large numbers (more than 100 nests were found on an island off the end of the New Riverdike). This long anticipated first nesting on the Pacific Coast may have been going on for several years in this inaccessible location but is now a proven fact.

Tropical herons are usually a conspicuous attraction during their post-breeding dispersal in late summer and early fall, and this year was no exception, even though their numbers were small. An early REDDISH EGRET was found near San Diego on July 26th, one was seen at Upper Newport Bay on July 31st, and one was seen near San Diego in August. Because of the early dates and the single, consecutive sighting, it seems possible that only one individual was involved. An immature LITTLE BLUE HERON was found near Oceanside on September 7th and was widely seen during its two weeks stay there. It was reported later from Malibu and Seal Beach, but did not stay at either place. Two LOUISIANA HERONS were found at Seal Beach on February 26th and one was there on December 4th. "Louisianas" are by far the commonest of the three tropical herons along our coast.



September pelagic trips off San Diego are better than adrenalin to make a birder's heart beat fast. Our September 12th list included: four species of PETRELS (including hundreds of LEAST, and a very probable HARCOURT'S); at least two RED-BILLED TROPICBIRDS; both XANTUS' and CRAVERI'S MURRELETS; and all three species of JAEGERs. Lest one expect too much, it should be said that no one person saw all these birds, as three boats were involved.



Roseate spoonbill

from page one

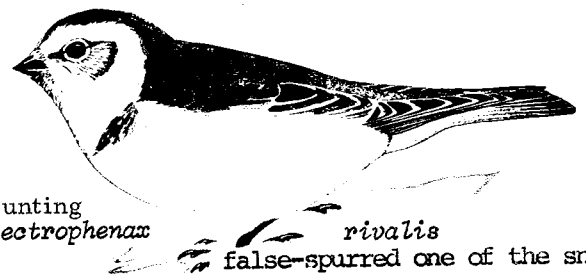


PRAIRIE WARBLER

The fall migration of small landbirds, as expected, was the most exciting event of the year, with twenty species of flycatchers and nearly thirty species of warblers being seen. These sightings are covered in detail in recent "Tanagers," but a few outstanding records are worth amplifying here. There are only a handful of California records for the PRAIRIE WARBLER yet two of them were found below San Diego in mid-August, a very early date. Other rare warblers were two CAPE MAY WARBLERS near San Diego, and a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER at Deep Springs in Inyo County. RED-EYED VIREOS were reported in unprecedented numbers with three reports in the spring and four in the fall. EASTERN PHOEBES also were reported more often than usual with four fall sightings (two of them in the Imperial Valley). They are normally a one-every-few-winters bird. A GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER found at Palos Verdes on September 26th, stayed only long enough to be studied by a few local birders. This is the first mainland record for California, as the other three records are from the Farallon Islands off San Francisco; Jean Craig got the surprise of her life when she found a large goatsucker in her nest on Pt. Loma in San Diego on November 14th. Measurements showed it to be a WHIP-POOR-WILL of the Eastern (not Arizona) race. This is the first coastal record, and the latest occurrence in a year of any report in the West.

Although there is no evidence of major invasions of northern or mountain species this winter, it does seem that fox sparrows, PURPLE FINCHES and MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES are more common in the lowlands than usual and it is certainly a good winter for Robins and Cedar Waxwings. Keep an eye on the Waxwing flocks as five "BOHEMIANS" were reported from Santa Barbara in December. NORTHERN SHRIKES have been reported from several locations in Inyo and Mono Counties where they were virtually unknown before this winter. By far the most exciting winter bird was the SNOW BUNTING found at Scotty's Castle in Death Valley. The few previous records are for the extreme northern part of California.

Concluded on page nine



Snow Bunting
Plectrophenax

rivalis
false-spurred one of the snow