

JUDGEMENT OF SIZE

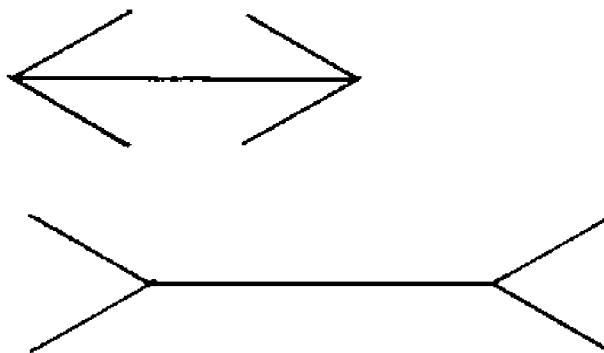
Judging the size of birds in the field with the naked eye can be very difficult, very much more so through binoculars. Yet size is an important discriminant as, for example, between the Unalaska and Song Sparrow, the Northwestern or Fish and Common Crow, the King and Clapper Rail; and in quick identification of Dovekies, Razorbills and the various auks and murrelets at sea.

Estimation of size, distance, and speed is based on a life-time of education with standard objects through the body's physiological experiences with the muscular activity of the eyes, together with the coordination exercised from babyhood of picking up, meeting, avoiding, aiming, and hitting of familiar objects. More specifically, it is impossible to judge size of an object lying more than 500 feet away unless there is an actual extraneous reference body of known size at about the same distance; or unless the range is known. In this event, the mind establishes a virtual reference body, by saying to itself in effect, "a foot at that distance would subtend such-and-such an angle (i.e., have an image of a previously experienced size on the retina)". For distances less than 500 feet, range, and hence the virtual reference object, can be established by physiological aids, the muscular effort of converging the two eyes in binocular vision, and of contracting the eye lens to focus (accommodation), possibly combined with motion of the head. A stronger claim can be made in the case of looking through binoculars. Here, actual familiar reference objects of known size must be in the field of view at the same distance.

T he basis of this contention is manifold. Since ancient times, it has been observed that the Moon looks larger (perhaps 2-1/2 times) on the horizon than overhead, although in fact it subtends precisely the same angle to the eye. There is a long record of ridiculous estimates of size and speed of flight of hummingbirds and ducks that have never withstood the test of time or sober measurements. In recent years, the United States Air Force has had to spend millions of dollars investigating reports of "unidentified flying objects" (UFO's). This fruitless effort has merely substantiated the scientific fact that the human sensory system has absolutely no way of estimating simultaneously both size and distance of an isolated object more than 500 feet away.



This article was written at the request of a number of readers who are interested in the problem of judging the size of birds in the field.



The two horizontal lines are equal.

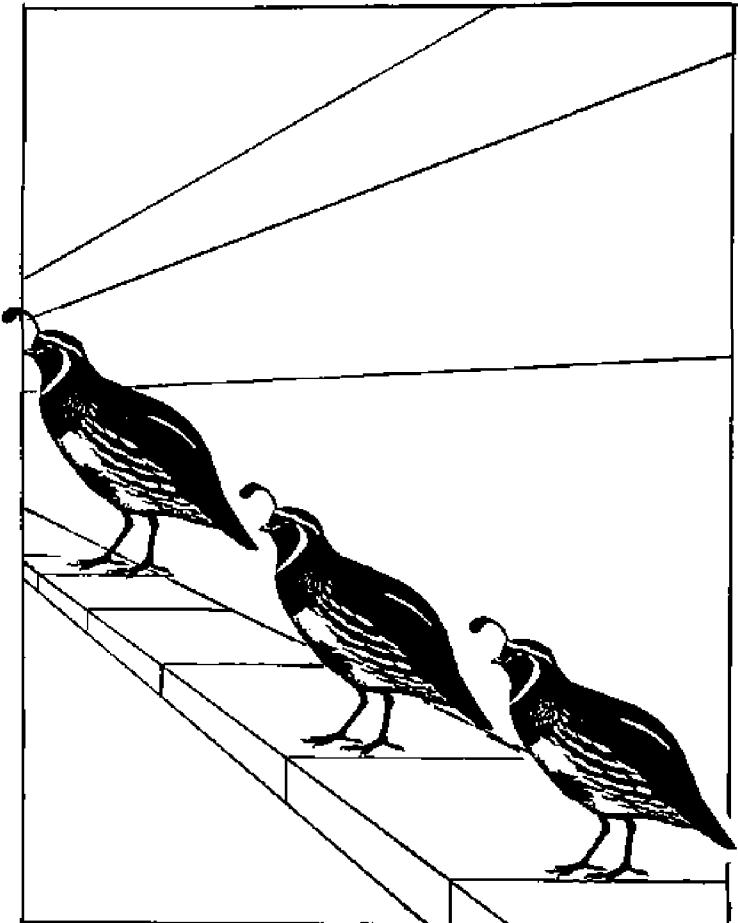
T here are hundreds of documented examples of this statement in their files of claims such as "objects 50 feet long, 5 miles away travelling at 500 miles an hour." On the basis of simultaneous observation of pilots several hundred miles apart such an observation would run out to be a meteor trail 1 mile long, 500 miles away, travelling at 50,000 miles an hour. The fundamentals of judging size, and the appreciation that it is a learning process, was never more evident than in training astronauts for landing on the Moon. Craters of the Moon come in all sizes, from hundreds of miles across to a few millimeters. On being shown a photograph of the surface one cannot say that the scale is—whether the frame is a thousand miles across or a few feet—at least not without detailed study of features other than craters. It turned out that in actual fact the astronauts landed quite smoothly, partly due to automatic radar and wire probes, but largely due to binocular vision and eye muscle accommodation which became effective in the final close approach. Nevertheless, the commander of Apollo 14, Alan B. Shepard, said:

With the horizon much nearer than it is on earth, and with no trees or familiar features to help judge distance, plus a lack of va-

riation in colors, Shepard said, finding one's way about on the moon's surface is like trying to navigate on the trackless Sahara Desert.

Continued overleaf

Similarly, judging the size of birds at sea is very difficult, because waves come in all sizes, and there is no scaled reference. One can learn to estimate the day's wave size by use of binocular inspection of those close by, and transfer this estimate to remote distances, but not even the most experienced pelagic birder could discriminate between a Slender-billed and Sooty Shearwater on size alone.



The three birds are the same.

When the object is less than 500 feet away, its size can be judged relatively accurately. At these distances the muscles of the eye lens have to contract to bring objects into focus, and a lifetime of these physiological experiences are recalled in making judgments. Even people with monocular vision (those with one eye, or who are wall-eyed or cross-eyed) can judge distance and size by this mechanism.

Stereoscopic vision, however, is the most effective method of estimating size. Because of their separation horizontally in space, the two eyes see slightly different aspects of the object being viewed. The acuity of the eyes is such that this difference can also be detected out to 500 feet. The superposition of the different views in the brain results in the appreciation of depth and three dimensionality which in turn give the direct experience of size, experiences which are accumulated in memory and used for future reference when judging dimensions of objects. In addition, each eye attempts to see the object in focus and on axis.

When they have accomplished this, the muscular tension and degree of cross-eyed-ness is appreciated and related to previous experience. With training, one can judge distance to within a few feet out to a range of 500 feet. When this has been done (subconsciously) one's memory of objects of known size—such as a foot—allows one to make a judgment of size at the distance in question.

At large distances, then, some reference scale, or estimate of range, must be established in order to judge the size of an unfamiliar object; and at closer distances physiological clues recall previous experiences as a reference. In either case these techniques for observation with the naked eye require a great deal of skill, learned since childhood, and not consciously appreciated. Even the most experienced birder has been viewing the outside world through binoculars or telescope a tiny fraction of his life, so the judgment of size entails an entirely new learning process, in building up a backlog of physiological experiences. The magnifying power of binoculars presents to the eyes of a viewer an entirely different "space" from the Euclidean space he is accustomed to. The stereoscopic amplification of most binoculars accentuates the differences. For example, look at a rectangular building carefully through binoculars—it looks as if the architect had never seen a right angle!

Estimates of size can with practice be made through a telescope or binoculars. First the observer has to estimate the distance of the bird from prior sighting with the naked eye. The size on the retina will then be correlated with memories of previously studied birds of known and normal size, i.e., with some recalled virtual reference. Atmospheric conditions, such as heat waves, can however give very great magnifying effects which are not corrected for when viewing through the narrow field of view of binoculars.

The reference object can be artificial. **T**he graticle is a piece of flat glass on which a scale has been engraved. It can be mounted in the optical train of a telescope or binoculars so that the scale is in focus and can be seen while viewing a distance object. That is, the observer can measure directly the size of the object as so many divisions of the scale on the graticle. The trick now is to calibrate the scale in terms of conventional distance—a division corresponds to so many inches. If the range is known, this is simple arithmetic—but the range is only known from reading the scale of the focus setting. One can go to the trouble of calibrating one's telescope or binoculars for this purpose—but this procedure is very cumbersome and rarely resorted to.

An ideal scheme would be to have an effective graticle on which there are two fiducial marks corresponding to some generally useful reference distance—say 6 inches; and to have these marks move with the focussing knob so that they are always separated at the equivalent of six inches at the object plane at which the instrument is focussed.

SOME BIRDS OF KASHMIR

By Joel and Bertha Massie

The part of Kashmir that we travelled through is a land of nomads who graze their huge herds of sheep along with some goats, cattle and yaks. The land with all the herds of sheep for the many many years is very badly overgrazed. There was just one day when we traveled in what we called "The Valley of the Flowers" where this type of evidence was absent. This day we met not a single native pack train and the only animals were a few horses. The side of the valley we walked on was a carpet of flowers—monkshood, larkspur, senecio and numerous other composites including one similar to our "old man of the mountain," several striking mints, edelweiss as well as a close relative of our pearly everlasting, some beautiful louseworts and on and on.

The trails left much to be desired—for the most part they were sheep paths and you could take your choice of any one of a dozen of them. Signs were non-existent. According to the Indian topographical maps we had three 13,500-foot passes plus one of a mere 13,000 feet. The day that we were to go over the first of the high passes it was raining. The men with the pack animals absolutely refused to start out that rainy day. When we reached the pass the next day and started down, we recognized the wisdom of their decision. The trail was so steep and rocky that they led the ponies one at a time and at times even placed the foot of the animal on a solid spot.

This was a mountain trek with no emphasis on natural history. Ray Jewell, the leader was interested in ornithology as were several of the others who made a point of walking with us in order to have birds and flowers identified. Fortunately I had purchased "Breeding Birds of Kashmir" by Bates and Lowther sometime before we left the states and I also carried Salim Ali's "Indian Hill Birds."

Much of the time we were at elevations of eleven and twelve thousand feet where there were few trees if any. As you know, the number of species of birds found in the high elevations is limited. The spectacular views of the Lammergeyers soaring over us with great frequency is something we will never forget. Griffon and Egyptian Vultures and a group of seven Golden Eagles in one spot were among the other birds of prey. In the rocky terrain above timberline the everyday Rock Dove is replaced by the Snow Pigeon, a bird of similar habits but more striking in appearance because of large white patches contrasting with the overall gray and black coloration.

Those of us who have spent time in the Alps, particularly in the Jungfraujoch area are very familiar with the Yellow-billed Chough. We saw very few of these but great numbers of its close relative the Red-billed Chough, an all black bird with a rather thin downcurved bright red bill. Since it is somewhat crowlike in appearance, one expects a rather raucous call instead of their very thin talk which so readily identifies them even when they are out of sight on the ground.

One of the loveliest of the small birds was the White-capped Redstart (no relative of ours), a denizen of the rushing mountain streams even at the high elevations. His less colorful cousin, the Plumbeous Redstart, along with another stream lover, the Whistling Thrush, also were plentiful. The finch family was represented by the Himalayan Goldfinch, the Himalayan Greenfinch (much more beautiful than the European Greenfinch), Stoliczka's Mountain-finch (definitely a high-mountain bird), the Red-browed Finch and Hodgson's Rosefinch. Several of the Wagtails were found with the Yellow-headed moderately abundant on the rocky slopes. (I even managed a fairly good picture of one.)

Continued on page nine





environment besieged

by
Kathryn Brooks



Below are a few of the ENVIRONMENTAL BILLS in the CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE. I cannot overemphasize the importance of environmental legislation and letters from concerned citizens do bring positive results! It is imperative that you express your opinions now, before a bill has a chance to die in committee. Names of your own assemblyman and senator, and chairman and members of the committee to which the bill has been referred, can be obtained from Audubon House. (AB=Assembly Bill, SB=Senate Bill, ACA=Assembly Constitutional Amendment)

AB 1056-Establishes an independent, full-time state environmental quality board & eight regional boards charged with the responsibility & authority for comprehensive state land use planning & management, & comprehensive control of air, water, thermal, solid waste, pesticide, radiation, and noise pollution. Would have veto power over any proposed state or local project that could substantially damage environment. Statewide ecological master plan to be developed by 1975. Members of boards must be expert in environmental management. Replaces State Office of Planning & Resources Boards. Introduced by Assemblyman Z'berg, referred to Assembly Natural Resources & Conservation.

ACA 26-Would declare that conservation & protection of natural resources & scenic beauty are rights of the people. Z'berg, to Assembly Committee on Constitutional Amendments.

AB 985-Would give attorney general and private ecology groups legal standing to bring class actions to stop pollution. Z'berg, to Assembly Judiciary Committee.

AB 1471-Would create California Coastal Zone Conservation Commission to develop coastline preservation plan, allocate \$600,000 for operation. Coastal zone is distinct & valuable natural resource, permanent projection of paramount concern, policy to preserve, protect, & restore. Introduced by Assemblyman Sieroty, to Assembly Planning & Land Use Committee.

SB 270, 1, 2-Would reclassify Point Mugu State Recreation Area as state park, require public hearing of State Parks and Recreation Commission on reclassifying of parks and providing for legislative review of park funding, would revise categories for classifying parks and recreation areas within the state parks system. Introduced by Senator Beilenson, referred to Senate Natural Resources & Wildlife Committee.

AB 1377-81-Would require counties to adopt scenic highway plans and coordinate with state; would ban billboards from scenic highways and require consideration of bicycle paths in new state scenic highways. Introduced by Assemblyman Arnett, referred to Com. on Transportation

AB 660-Deletes the mountain lion from the game mammal list, makes it illegal to take, injure, possess, transport, import, or sell the mountain lion with certain exceptions, authorizes the Dept. of Fish & Game to take or have taken any depredating mountain lion. Also requires live capture if possible & economically feasible. Introduced by Assemblyman Dunlap, passed Assembly Natural Resources and Conservation Committee, referred to Assembly Ways & Means.

SB 722-To give California's rare Tule Elk full protection of the law up to the number 2000. Introduced by Senator Behr, referred to Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildlife.

SB 297-Would create a state game refuge at the Farallon Islands to prohibit taking of birds or mammals. Introduced by Senator Marks, referred to Natural Resources & Wildlife Committee.

AB 11-Bars officers & employees of any agency discharging wastes in water from membership on water quality control boards. Assemblyman Roberti, referred to Assembly Gov't Operations
AB 1258-Would ban sale of phosphate detergents. Assemblyman LaCoste, referred to Assembly Environmental Quality Committee.

AB 552-Would make it misdemeanor to use, possess or sell DDT without approval of director of agriculture, allows fines up to \$6,000 a day for violations. Introduced by Assemblyman Ryan, referred to Assembly Env. Quality Com.

AB 2168-Would order all state agencies to return waste paper for recycling. Vasconcellos.

More on page seven

Los Angeles Audubon Society

HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE
PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90048 876-0202

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



April 24 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Morongo Valley. Meet between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. Take Interstate 10 east to the Twenty Nine Palms Highway (2.5 miles east of Whitewater). Go north approximately 10 miles. Excellent for migrating birds. This is planned as a one-day trip, however many may wish to stay over to bird in nearby Joshua Tree National Monument or in the Salton Sea area on Sunday. Camping facilities are available in the Monument. Dry camp, bring your own water. Leader: George Venatta, days 547-2487 eves. 378-8941

May 1 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Morongo Valley. Meet between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. See April 24 instructions for route. As this is one of our most popular field trips, we schedule it twice each spring on successive weekends. Leader: Jim Huffman 545-1224

May 6 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m.

May 11 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - Plummer Park, 8:00 p.m. Program: Mr. John Borneman, National Audubon Society Condor Naturalist, will present an illustrated lecture, "The Seychelles," about his recent trip there.

May 23 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mt. Pinos. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Frazier Park turnoff by restaurant at Shell Station. The Frazier Park turnoff is approximately 2 miles beyond Gorman on Highway 99. This is a good trip for montane species such as Red Crossbills, Cassin's Finch, Calliope Hummers and, possibly, Condors. Call Bob Blackstone for details - 277-0521.

June 3 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m.

June 8 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - "What Bird Is That?" - A novel program by Arnold Small which features pictures of North American birds used in an identification game. Come and see how many you know, or don't know.

June 12 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Thom Meadow. This is planned tentatively as a camping trip. Consult June "Western Tanager" for details.

ANIMAL ROAD KILLS

Many thanks to you volunteers who have so generously donated your time in furthering the cause! I am most appreciative of your letter writing, booth sitting, coordinating, mailing, calling, etc. **KATHRYN BROOKS**

A recent 16-month study in Montgomery, Maryland, collected the facts about the kill of animals on the roads. There is an average of 2 animals killed per mile of road per month. Of these a quarter were birds. This does not count carcasses which were lodged in automobiles or wounded which moved off.

With 160,000 miles of roads in the State of California the harvest of death is 4 million birds per year. At least a hundred million birds are killed by automobiles per year throughout the nation.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Western Tanager

Official Publication of the
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, Calif. 90046



EDITOR
Assistant Editor
Field Notes
Conservation
Typing
Mailing Supervision

GILBERT W. KING
Donald Adams
Shumway Suffel
Kathryn Brooks
Hanna Stadler
Hans Hjorth

Subscription to The Western Tanager \$3.50 per annum. The Western Tanager is mailed two or three days before the first of the month, fourth class. First-class mailing, \$1.00 extra.

audubon activities

FIELD TRIP - March 13 - Tujunga Wash. After a night of rain the day began with heavy overcast, then became clear and pleasant by mid-morning only to turn to a strong, cold wind before noon. Birding was rather slow. We did see the CACTUS WREN and, although there were ANNA'S and RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRDS, no COSTA'S could be found. For those who braved the afternoon winds perhaps most interesting was the opportunity to observe closely four swallows in the air at the same time: VIOLET-GREEN, TREE, ROUGH-WINGED, and CLIFF SWALLOWS, and see at close range the differences in colors of the backs and wings. A total of 39 species was seen, not including Gulls which were on the lake and we did not take time to identify. Freeman Tatum, leader.

March 27 A Conference of all the Southern California Chapters of the National Audubon Society was held at the headquarters of the newly-formed El Durado Audubon Society, under the auspices of Paul Howard, Western Regional Director of the National Audubon Society, and chairmanship of Charles Collins of the host society. Many mutual problems were discussed in an all-day session, and it is to be hoped that cooperation between the Southern California Societies will help to solve them. These meetings will be held quarterly, the next one being at the Pomona Society headquarters.

AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY BIRDERS TRIP, March 27-28

Membership in the American Chemical Society is 100,000, of whom 35 are ardent birders and arrange a field trip before their National Meetings. This spring the Los Angeles Audubon Society had the honor of arranging the trip which was led by Harold Baxter and Gil King. Eighteen members of the ACS had two good days of seeing the local birds of late March, at Newport Beach and at the Angeles Crest. Everyone added to their year's list, and quite a few added new birds to their life list—the most difficult being the Mountain Quail at Charlton Flats.

PELAGIC TRIP OUT OF SAN DIEGO, April 9. The California Field Ornithologists were hosts to the Cooper Ornithological Union in arranging a pelagic trip at the end of the annual meeting in San Diego.

Owing to high winds the "Seaforth" went first to the Coronado Islands where Xantus' Murrels, Black and American Oystercatchers were seen. With calm weather the vessel proceeded further offshore, but except for Pomarine Jaegers and a few Shearwaters few birds were seen. A Rhinoceros Auklet in full plumage was seen near the vessel, in calm water.

NEW FIELD TRIP—Stehly Ranch, March 28. Approximately fifty people gathered at the gate of the Stehly Ranch on Sunday morning; half took the "high road" with Trudy Siptroth, while the other half took the "low road" with Fern Zimmerman and Lois [redacted], and after each had covered its respective area, the groups changed places. A respectable list of 56 species of birds was recorded, though nothing spectacular was seen. Both groups returned to the ranch house to have lunch, to meet Mr. and Mrs. Stehly and to hear Mr. Leonard Shelton, a member of the board of National Audubon Society, speak of the interest of the Society in acquiring Mr. Stehly's ranch for a nature center.

All agreed that the Stehly Ranch is a beautiful place and would be nearly ideal for the Society's purpose. Its 420 acres of hills and canyons have been left by the owners in their natural state and with many fine native oaks and walnuts and sycamores. It is certainly to be hoped that this beautiful property can somehow be saved from the real-estate developers so that others in the future can enjoy it as we did.

We owe thanks to Trudy Siptroth for arranging this visit for us and for the excellent way she and her co-leaders conducted the trip.

Appeal from the President

It is gratifying to report that the response to the appeal by the President in the March issue of The Western Tanager has resulted in an appreciable number of donations, for which the Society gives its thanks. In addition a number of volunteers have helped in the duties of the Society as a result of the appeal.

However, in order to keep up the services to the members still more help in the form of contributions and volunteers is mandatory. Let every one respond.

JAMES FISHER

Our readers will be very sad to hear of the death of James Fisher, in a car accident. His books are well-known, especially the one with Roger Peterson "The World of Birds." He is also remembered by many birders in the United States for his account of the fabulous tour from Maine to the State of Washington with Roger Peterson in 1960, seeing most of the North American birds on the one trip.

He was a great lecturer and broadcaster as well and contributed greatly to the general awareness of conservation. He made permanent contributions to ornithology.

To perpetuate the work of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, remember it in your will.



environment besieged



by
Kathryn
Brooks

AB 1981-Would prohibit a governmental body or public utility from taking park land for non-park purposes without replacing it. Sieroty

SB 118-Prohibits retail sale of off-premise beverage containers unless they are refundable for 5 cents each or are biodegradable. Makes violation a misdemeanor punishable only by fine up to \$500. Introduced by Senator Nejedly, amended, referred to Senate Health & Welfare.

URGE "YES" ON H. R. 5821

We wish to join the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey in their campaign to urge passing of H. R. 5821, introduced by Rep. John D. Dingel. This bill would supplement current federal laws that protect the bald and golden eagles, placing all hawks and owls in the same protective class. Although predator control methods aimed at hawks and owls would be illegal under this bill, control would be allowed by special permit from state resource agencies when in concurrence with the Secretary of the Interior. All holders of valid falconry licenses would be allowed to retain their birds, but no harvesting of raptors from the wild would be permitted after passing of the bill and there would be no specific provision for the practice of falconry. Also prohibited would be the transfer and sale of native raptors. With few captive raptors living in twenty or thirty years, the legal possession of hawks and owls by private ownership would become non-existent.

Public support of this bill is imperative now. Write Congressman Dingel for a copy of the bill if you wish to read it in detail. To lend support, let your own senators and representative know how you feel. Donate time and money to handle cost and distribution of fliers concerning this very important bill.

DDT SUSPENSION WITHHELD FOR ANOTHER

YEAR. 'EPA Administrator Ruckelshaus has decided not to suspend the use of DDT, Mirex, dieldrin, aldrin, and the herbicide 2, 4, 5-T until he can review the results of a year's study which he has ordered to begin immediately on the "safety" of these poisons. Mr. Ruckelshaus is a knowledgeable conservationist who has shown that he fully understands the dangers of these poisons and the damage they can cause. He is under heavy and conflicting pressures.

LAKE MATHEWS: Bird of Prey Natural Area

Lake Mathews Reservoir in Riverside County near Corona might be established as a "Bird of Prey Natural Area" if enough supportive letters are sent to officials currently reviewing the idea. The lake is one of the few remaining closed reservoirs. Nearly 2,800 acres of unpolluted water is home to bass and other fish and make it an ideal protective area for water birds and bald eagles. Threats of opening Lake Mathews for recreational purposes have continued for many years, but water district officials are adamantly against the plan. Most residents in the area also feel the reservoir should remain closed.

Richard Hilton, President of the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey, introduced the plan to Supervisor William Jones of Riverside Joseph Jensen, Southern California Water District, and to Robert Mallette of the Department of Fish and Game. Jones said he would carefully consider the matter and Mallette said he would assign a field supervisor to investigate the proposal and the possibility that bald eagles nest inside the reservoir. (Richard Hilton has studied the raptor populations at the lake during the last three years and claims that bald eagles do nest inside Lake Mathews.) The area surrounding the lake is favorite terrain for ferruginous hawks, red-tail hawks, screech owls, marsh hawks, sparrow hawks, prairie falcons, and golden eagles. Hilton asks that L. A. A. S. members send letters supporting the "Lake Mathews Birds of Prey Natural Area" to:

Robert D. Mallette
Associate Wildlife-Manager Biologist
Department of Fish and Game
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Joseph Jensen, Chairman
Board of Directors
Metropolitan Water District
Box 54153
Los Angeles, Ca 90054

William E. Jones
Supervisor First District
Court House, Room 103
4050 Main Street Riverside, Ca 92501

!announcements!

NOTICE: ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 1971-1972 WILL BE HELD AT THE MAY EVENING MEETING AT PLUMMER PARK.

NOTICE

THE NATIONAL AUDUBON CONVENTION WILL BE HELD IN MILWAUKEE, MAY 20 THROUGH MAY 24, 1971. FIELD TRIPS TO THE WISCONSIN DELLS AND HORICON MARSH ARE PLANNED FOR MAY 21 AND MAY 24.

AUSTRALIAN BIRDING TOUR

ANNOUNCING A THREE-WEEK ESCORTED BIRDING TOUR OF AUSTRALIA DEPARTING NOVEMBER 6, 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 PLATPUSS, 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 LOS ANGELES AUDUBON TOUR LEADERS:
JIM HUFFMAN, 545-1224 OLGA CLARKE, 249-5537

Audubon House * Sales Department

Owing to the cutback in staff, we have found it necessary to give up our gift items and are no longer taking orders for Shaklee Products. For the present the sales department will be limited to books, records and small items such as stationery.

We have several new books on the birds of AUSTRALIA: on FLYCATCHERS, WARBLERS and WADERS among others. If you are thinking of joining the Australian Tour in the fall you will want these. For in depth study we now have a very outstanding book on biology: ORNITHOLOGY by PETTINGILL.

By popular request we now have several different types of bird feeders available. These are made to order by two of our members and samples are on view at Audubon House.

PART-TIME CURATOR?

Dr. John William Hardy of the Moore Laboratory of Zoology at Occidental College would like to make known that he is in need of regular part-time curatorial assistance. He is looking for some housewife, or retired (or semi-retired) adult, interested in and at least somewhat knowledgeable about birds who could work for periods of 3 hours two days a week (or some such mutually agreed upon system) at the college. The work would pay absolutely awful wages (menial level or nothing) but for someone looking for interesting bird-oriented passtime that can be truly educational the job could be stimulating. It would involve for the most part work with specimens, including rearrangement of skins in the cases, cataloguing and identifying skins, skeletons, and alcoholically preserved specimens, and preparation of skeletal specimens (from beginning to end--that is removing feathers and flesh, and finally cleaning bones). This work would be done under direct and indirect supervision of Dr. Hardy and in cooperation with some part-time student assistants. The work, if the worker proved capable, could also include some curatorial work with the bird-sound library, including cataloguing and labelling of the types. An interest in birds, ability to print and type (hut and peck o. k.) clearly, time to work 3 hr. stretches on a regular basis, and of course transportation conveniences to the college are necessary.

You can call Dr. Hardy or his secretary at the Moore Laboratory Monday through Friday (preferably not Friday) from 9:00 to 4:30 to get further information and perhaps arrange an interview and visit to the laboratory.

Birds of Kashmir

Continued...

Both the White-breasted and Brown Dippers were comparatively in proper habitats. Willow Warblers are so difficult to identify, but I feel certain that we did have Tickell's. (This is the only one found in the high elevations above timberline in Kashmir during the breeding season.)

The Cinnamon Tree Sparrow which was very common in some areas brought us back to St. Louis mentally in that it reminded us of the European Tree Sparrow. There, of course, were numerous other birds but I haven't had time to complete my total trip list which was greatly increased by the birds we saw in the lowlands at Delhi and at Agra where we visited the Taj and Fatehpur Sikri.

from SAUDI ARABIA

A week ago we had four house guests from Bahrain to share the big bird-watching weekend with us. A group of 12 came and about 36 of us spent two days watching the birds in various places. We saw some 60 species, which is pretty good. We really have quite a variety of places, for we have lovely gardens (our guest said he had not seen anything as lovely since he left Britain), very extensive beach areas along the Arabian Gulf, including some date gardens at the shore, and then we have the inland bays and desert. The Blue Rock Thrush, the Rock Thrush and the Woodchat Shrike, are still my three favorites of those we saw along with the Hoopoe, and all but the Blue Rock Thrush we see in our housing compound. There are many more birds to come yet, and most of the ducks have already gone. We spent quite a bit of time trying unsuccessfully to get a good look at a huge flock of flamingoes off shore. How about joining us? From a letter to Dick Stephenson from his sister, Dorothy Rogers, who lives in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, dated March 26, 1971.

THE 600 CLUB

CONGRATULATIONS to Los Angeles Audubon Society members Jay Sheppard, Frank Becherer, and Harold Baxter on seeing their 600'th bird. Earle R. Greene reports that they have been accepted as members of the famous "600 Club."

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

Continued from back page

picnic with so many common birds starting to nest. For those wanting to see the rarities, visits to Morongo Valley, Furnace Creek, and Deep Springs might be worthwhile at the very end of May. But for now, go out and enjoy the spring migration at its peak.

MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON NEWSLETTER



FOUND NOT EXTINCT:
An ivory-billed woodpecker of the type seen
in Santee Swamp, S. C.



IVORYBILL HEADQUARTERS

The Big Thicket country of East Texas apparently affords the ivory-billed woodpecker — North America's largest woodpecker and probably its most endangered bird — a slight toehold on life.

Over the years there have been various proposals that might have saved this biologically-rich woodland as a national park. None ever reached reality. In fact, none ever really got off the ground.

While conservationists have dallied the East Texas lumbermen have been busy. The Big Thicket has dwindled from 3½ million acres down to 300,000 acres. Now this final remnant faces destruction, first as a logging area and then as a summer home complex for Houston residents thirty-five miles away.

In 1967, John V. Dennis of Virginia, once an ornithologist for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, found a small population of ivorybills living along the Naches River valley in The Big Thicket. Before Dennis' discovery, the ivorybill was considered extinct — ironically because people who value the woodpecker as a relic of another age had failed to acquire land where the woodpecker was known to exist.

One of the birds' most famous pre-World War II haunts, a majestic, mature forest in Louisiana, now has been logged and converted into a soybean plantation.

The ivorybill is larger than a crow, with shiny black-and-white plumage, scarlet crest and a long ivory bill. It can live only in mature woods because it eats insects found on trees which have been dead several years.

Size of Birds

Continued from page two

Until such a device is available, the birder has to make a very conscious effort to establish a virtual reference scale in the field of view—essentially to ask himself how wide would a six-inch ruler look as he focusses on a bird.



May 1971
4-13-71

The two segments are the same size.

Jay Sheppard SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

May is upon us and with this month we see some of the highest bird, and birding, activity each year. It is possible in early May to record 200 species from midnight to midnight, if one carefully lays his plans. Perhaps he could start in the mountains at midnight for owls and then proceed to the Salton Sea in the early morning hours for the desert birds. He could then drive back to the coast through the mountains and coastal mountains. By late afternoon he could finish the "day" by seeing the waterbirds which were missed at the Salton Sea. However, to do this "feat of birdsmanship" the party could not waste time "watching" any bird; instead, they must rely on each other and their own eyes and EARS. Vocal recognition certainly speeds things up—who wants to spend precious moments "seeing" a Wren-tit, when they are easily heard?

If all goes well, some of our active bird banders will be "madly" banding migrants to understand better this phenomenon in the West. One banding station I am most interested in seeing work is at Morongo Valley. Last May during the first nine days nearly 1200 birds were banded. (See G. N. "Peppy" Van Essen's April article.) We hope this year to band far more than just nine days during late April and early May.

As Shurn Suffel remarked in the last *Tanager*, March is a relatively calm period between our wintering birds and spring migrants. Some of our early migrants and returning summer nesters had started arriving this month. Shum reported the first HOODED ORIOLE on March 6 in Pasadena. Shirley Wells had WESTERN TANAGERS and BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS at San Pedro by the end of March. At the same time, some of our lingering winter birds finally disappeared—hopefully returning to their nesting grounds. Jon Dunn and Kim Garrett last saw the WINTER WREN at Morongo Valley on March 7, the SNOW GEESE had departed from the Salton Sea by early March, and a MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE was still at Morongo on March 29. The SAW-WHET OWL at Salton Sea State Park was last seen on March 13. The LOUISIANA HERONS were still at the Seal Beach marshes on March 25.

A BLUE-WINGED TEAL was reported at Malibu in mid-March, while another was seen near Crowley Lake in early April. A large flock of migrating TURKEY VULTURES (25 birds) was seen over Morongo Valley on March 29. The RED-SHOULDERED HAWK seems to be trying to expand its range onto the Colorado Desert. Jan Tarble has seen one or two birds regularly near Palm Springs, another was seen near Oasis on the North Salton Sea Christmas Count, and still another (more than one?) has been irregularly seen at Morongo Valley since the fall of 1969. We last spotted the latter bird on April 5.

BALD EAGLES are still being reported from Lake Mathews, including at least one adult. I must wonder if they may not be breeding? This species is a very early nester throughout its range, laying eggs in January and February. Another endangered species is the CALIFORNIA LEAST TERN. The number of nesting sights has been rapidly diminishing over the past few years. Anyone finding a nesting colony this summer should carefully note its location to Mrs. Barbara Massey, Dept. of Biology, California State College, Long Beach, 90801.

Ed Mavojosky found a SOLITARY SAND-PIPER near Malibu Lagoon on March 22. It was subsequently seen by several other observers. This is a very rare spring migrant and only a regular migrant in the fall, but in very low numbers. COMMON MERGANSER and ROYAL TERN were also reported at this time from Malibu. The merganser is relatively more uncommon in

salt water, while still uncommon on inland fresh waters. Richard Hilton and Bill Dana reported two ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS at Lake Mathews in March.

Peter Christensen had nesting HUTTON'S VIREOS near Pasadena in late March, which is not unusual but rarely reported. KINGBIRDS were back in March and looking for nest sites. The first migrant warblers were being seen in the first week of April: NASHVILLE, BLACK-THROATED GRAY, MACGILLIVRAY'S, and WILSON'S. SCOTT'S and BULLOCK'S ORIOLES were common in Joshua Tree National Monument and Morongo Valley in early April. I found my first LAZULI BUNTING on April 8 near San Diego. CASSIN'S FINCHES and RED CROSS-BILLS were still being seen by Grace Nixon and Shirley Wells in Rolling Hills during March. A BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE was seen at Finney Lake in early April. Perhaps they will nest at the Salton Sea this year for the first time.

With May now starting, the nesting season for most birds on the desert is drawing to a close, but the mountain species are just arriving on their territories. One might spend a late afternoon at Lake Fulmour looking, and listening, for SPOTTED OWLS and the WHIP-POOR-WILLS. BLACK RAILS, LEAST BITTERNS, YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS, and BRONZED COWBIRDS might be found by visiting the Imperial Dam vicinity. DIPPERS and BLACK SWIFTS might be seen in late May at Fallsville or Santa Anita Canyon. The cool mountains will be an excellent

Continued on previous page