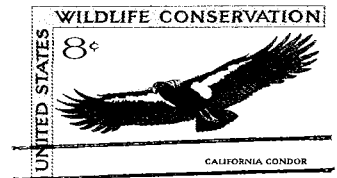


Los Angeles Audubon Society

# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 37 1970-71 NUMBER 11 JULY-AUGUST



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

## The Condor's Place by Sanford R. Wilbur

**What** is the significance of the California condor? Is it worthless as some would say, or is it extremely valuable? Is our current effort just a matter of preserving a remnant population of the country's largest flying bird "because it is there," or are the implications much broader?

In the past year and a half of studying the condor, trying to evaluate its past, understand the present, and anticipate its future needs, I've developed some ideas on this subject of species preservation. The conclusions I've reached are not all original, not necessarily final, not always supported by firm facts, and certainly not "official" in the sense that my Bureau or any other organization fully supports them. Together they form my personal viewpoint on condors and, generally speaking, all wildlife. This philosophy has three parts: (1) the California condor *can be* saved; (2) the condor should be saved; and (3) even though saving the condor is a worthy goal in itself, it is part of a much bigger and better package. Let's look at each of these points.

The thought is often expressed that the California condor is a dying species, and nothing we can do will arrest its decline and eventual extinction. Because many animal species disappeared in prehistoric times, and because many more kinds of vultures lived then than now, it seems to follow that our present-day condor is a "relic of the Pleistocene" and on its way out.

We don't know why prehistoric animals became extinct, but lack of adaptability is most often suggested. Natural conditions changed, and certain animals could not survive in the new situation. Long-term climatic changes

are probably still going on that may render condors more or less suited to life on this earth, as they may make Man more or less adapted to life here. But to date, the condor's problem has been people: *everything* bad that has happened to condors in the past 200 years has been the fault of men, not evolutionary adaptability. Condors have been killed outright, their eggs have been stolen, their living areas have been usurped, and their food supply diminished. These are the forces that will determine life or death for this species, in the foreseeable future at least. We are not fighting a losing battle against uncontrollable natural phenomena, but against ourselves and our values.

Why should we save the condor? It's hard for me to see him as a positive economic benefit, at least within the framework that we generally use to judge economic benefit. Although some people come from distant places to see condors, and local communities benefit from expenditures on food, gasoline and lodging, the revenue derived is a mere drop compared to what might accrue if the birds weren't there and the country was "opened up." In fact, trying to increase the popularity of condors and condor watching to increase local revenue might actually be harmful to the condor population. From another possible economic standpoint, the condor has minimal value as a helpful scavenger because there aren't enough of them. We have rightly or



Photo by John Borneman  
Condor Naturalist



Continued overleaf

# The Condor's Place

continued...

wrongly put economic value on some animals by selling their "sport" or "trophy" value, but even this doesn't fit the condor. If we are to say the species *should be saved*, we will have to look elsewhere for valid justification.

My personal reasoning is a blend of Christian belief and scientific training. I know God had a good reason for making each species; I know He went to great lengths to insure every species made it through the Great Flood; I know He told *all* the birds of the air and the beasts of the fields to multiply and be fruitful; and I know He gave Man stewardship over all His earthly creations. (I see no conflict here with my earlier statements on "natural extinction"; that's His plan, not ours!) My scientific training tells me each species of animal and plant has a special place in the overall scheme of things, and we know the sad results of unbalancing the "Balance of Nature." The California condor doesn't *seem* to play a vital role in the workings of the ecosystem, but we often find out too late our judgments are far in advance of our wisdom. Saying we lack information on the significance of the condor is not the same as saying the condor is *not significant!*

As I mentioned earlier, saving the condor will be just part of a much bigger, much better end product. "Survival" to this bird is synonymous with open space. It requires lots of country with relatively light human activity for nesting, feeding, and I suspect for exercising some basic inherent urges to wander. If any major part of the open space within the present condor range is lost, the condor may go also. But, from another viewpoint, if any more open space goes what will the quality of *human* life in central and southern California? Man may not die from lack of wildlands near his home, but one wonders how much "civilization" modern man can stand and still stay healthy and happy. If the trend towards a supercity from San Francisco to San Diego continues, we'll be losing much more than the condor!

It is true condors can't survive without wildlands, but it may be equally true wildlands can't survive without condors. In recent years the condors have stopped (for the time being at least) a major water project; they have influenced highway planning and development; they have slowed oil exploration and drilling; and they have caused numerous changes in public land management. Over a wide area the condors have become Priority #1, and few new developments or uses of this area are permitted unless they are compatible with condors or unless they can very definitely be shown to be in the best interest of the whole country. This doesn't constitute interference with progress or the American Way; it simply means we are required to think about the things we do before we do them, rather than after. If the condor goes, and its slowing and stabilizing influence is removed, I have serious doubts anything else will be able to stop Development in all its many forms

Sanford R. Wilbur was born in Oakland, California. He has a Wildlife-Management degree from Humboldt State College and has been with U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife since 1960 with assignments at Stillwater Wildlife Mgt. Area, Nevada; Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho; Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, California; Staff Biologist in charge of Wilderness Act studies and land acquisition for western states; Regional Refuge Biologist, Southeastern U.S.; joined staff of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center November 1969 to work on California condor and other endangered California wildlife. He is an Audubon member; one-time editor of Altacal Audubon newsletter.

from consuming the remaining good parts of Southern California.

The California condor may not appeal to everyone as a creation valuable for itself alone, but considered as an ally in keeping California livable its image changes considerably. Could salvation of our land and "life style" depend on a giant vulture?

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\* California Condor Surveys are published annually by: California Dept. of Fish & Game, 1416 Ninth St., Sacramento, California 95814.

# Gymnogyps

## continued

by J. Richard Hilton

**The** first major threat to condors came in 1964 with plans to dam Sespe Creek. The creek travels from the central portion of the Los Padres National Forest through the entire Sespe Condor Sanctuary, finally joining the Santa Clara River in Fillmore. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the United Water Conservation District were pushing the Sespe Creek project which was to include the establishment of a recreation area. A mere thirty-two votes by water district taxpayers were to defeat the Sespe Creek project on March 15, 1966. If it had not been for these thirty-two nay votes, the condor probably would not have survived more than twenty years as a free-living bird. Although the project plans were officially halted in 1966, threats of development continued for many years.

In 1965 the National Audubon Society with the financial help of the National Geographic Society underwrote another condor study, the results of which were published as Audubon Research Report No.6, entitled "The Current Status and Welfare of the California Condor" by Alden H. Miller, Ian I. McMillan and Eben McMillan. The Miller-McMillan study team estimated a population of forty individual condors based on Koford's method of estimation, and the National Audubon Society consequently hired their own man to fill the post of Condor Warden. A former Audubon Center staff member from southern California, John C. Borneman was appointed by the National Audubon Society to the post in 1965. Later the title Condor Warden was changed to Condor "Naturalist" when it became apparent the duties dealt more with education and public relations rather than condor protection.



Photo by John Borneman  
Condor Naturalist

Soon an annual Condor Count was initiated by the California Department of Fish and Game in 1965 in cooperation with the Forest Service, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (U.C. Berkeley) and the National Audubon Society. Heading the Survey Committee was Dr. Alden Miller. Miller's death in 1965 saw Ben Glading of the Department of Fish and Game as the new Survey Chairman. The annual two-day count, held in mid-October, provides a general picture of condor numbers, distribution, and ratio of young to adult birds. Each yearly census consists of a number of volunteer participants stationed at different observation points throughout the condor range. Accumulative sighting reports are then tabulated and a systematic attempt is made to eliminate count duplications. Whether by coincidence, chance, or mere method accuracy, the count results since 1965 have remained largely constant, indicating a somewhat stable condor population.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Richard Hilton first became interested in wildlife, with a special interest in birds of prey, during his high school years. He is president of the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey and serves as editor of its publication, *The California Condor*.

An avid bird bander, he is currently experimenting with trapping methods and ringing techniques of turkey vultures and burrowing owls in Ventura County. A sparrow hawk nest box program he began two years ago includes 100 erected boxes in three counties. Every year Richard conducts a survey entitled "State and Provincial Laws Relating to Raptor Protection" as a means to keep enforcement officials, legislators, and the public aware of the protection extended to birds of prey.

His many projects in the area of raptor protection often take him outside the state. He is currently heading a campaign in Maryland and Virginia to abolish bounty payments for goshawks, sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks, and the great horned owl.

Richard divides what little non-birding time he has between free-lance writing and public relations. He is an ex-officio member of the Publications and Public Relations Committee of the Bay District L.A. County Medical Association and is managing editor of their publication.

Richard is currently gathering material for his first book, tentatively titled, *"Birds of Prey: Selective Readings."*



#### CALIFORNIA TOMORROW PLAN

Ellen Stern Harris's Council for Planning & Conservation meeting on June 10 featured "The California Tomorrow Plan" presented by the President of California Tomorrow, Alfred E. Heller and Los Angeles Architecture Critic, John Pastier. The Plan is a first sketch version—a plan in skeleton form for the future development of California as an alternative to the present course of piecemeal decision-making and project planning. The State of California was supposed to prepare such a plan when it was authorized by the Legislature in 1959. More than \$4 million was spent for that purpose. Their report amounted to a recommendation for further studies. California Tomorrow then proceeded to prepare a plan. Their single goal is to provide maximum individual fulfillment within an amenable environment. The overall goals are 1) to establish a framework for settlement, 2) new patterns of consumption, 3) guarantee economic sufficiency, and 4) guarantee political participation. A copy of the plan is available for \$1 from California Tomorrow, 681 Market Street, San Francisco, Ca 94105. Membership in the group will bring you the excellent journal "Cry California", \$9 for one year to the same address.

WELL CONGRATULATIONS CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION, for recognizing that the bald eagle is an endangered specie!

## 25% of All DDT Now in Ocean, Scientists Say

**Pesticide Reported Killing Baby Fish;  
Second Study Finds High Cadmium Level**

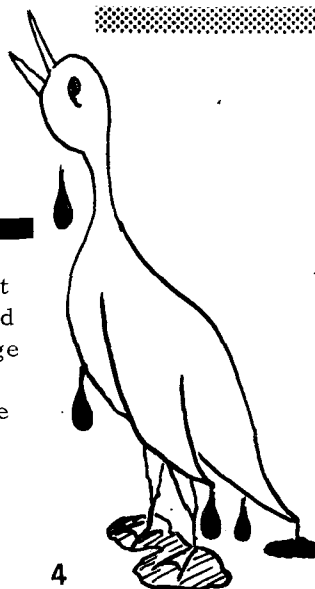
FUNDS FOR BIG MORONGO CANYON STILL NEEDED. Last minute contributions are most welcome. (Would you believe taxes on the land are something like \$1000 a year?) Mr. George Olinsky of Beverly Hills has offered to match, dollar for dollar, all gifts toward the purchase and protection of Big Morongo Canyon. Money should be mailed to The Nature Conservancy, Morongo Canyon Project, P.O. Box 60616, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, Ca 90060.

#### "REVIEW of the PROBLEM of BIRDS CONTAMINATED by OIL and their REHABILITATION"

This Resource Publication 87 by John W. Aldrich, Division of Wildlife Research, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, is available for 35¢ from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402. This publication lends sound arguments for "safe" oil drilling methods, because it is practically impossible to save the birds when contaminated. Some reasons—their waterproofing ability is lost, ingestion kills, insulation loss means more food needed, the chemicals used to clean also destroy, oil kills fish which in turn attract more birds to area, which then die from eating poisoned fish. The only method to date which seems to be a possible way to save the birds is to induce a premature molt, but this has not been successful yet.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL BILLS IN SACRAMENTO NEED SUPPORT.

The most effective way to correct our environmental ills is to pass the laws mandating improvement. The following bills introduced in Sacramento were explained briefly in the May Tanager. As of this writing, they are in the committees , and, government machinery being what it is, are probably still there when you read this. WRITE to your own assemblyman and senator and to Governor Reagan. Send originals or carbons to committee members.



help-please  
call Kathryn at 479-0830  
in the evenings to  
**VOLUNTEER FOR**

typing . . . mailing . . . running errands . . .  
participating in telephone alert chain . . . printing  
or duplicating ecology resource materials for  
distribution . . . speaking . . . writing letters  
. . . carrying petitions . . . distributing materials  
at fairs and conferences . . . making posters  
. . . drawing cartoons & sketches for "Western  
Tanager" . . . attending hearings . . . analyzing  
federal, state, & local legislation which affects  
our environment (in general) and birding (in particular)  
. . . directing subcommittee activities. . .

# Los Angeles Audubon Society

# Calendar

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

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



Aug. 15 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mt. Pinos for Condors. This is a repeat of the July 10 trip. There will be no prescribed meeting time, as the group will spend the day near the summit. Take Interstate 5 north to the Frazier Park turnoff about a mile beyond Tejon Summit. Go west through Frazier Park to Lake of the Woods and turn north again there to Mt. Pinos. The last 3 miles to the summit are unpaved; this part may be driven (with care), or you may leave your car in the parking lot at the end of the paved road and walk to the summit. It is suggested that you come reasonably early and plan to make a day of it to be reasonably sure of seeing Condors.

For information call: Fran Kohn 665-0171 or Audubon House

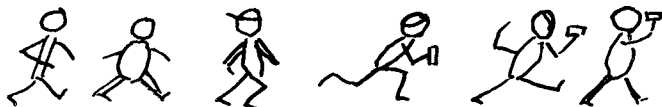
Aug. 21 SATURDAY - PELAGIC BIRD TRIP - We are again chartering the research vessel "Vantuna," which will depart from San Pedro early in the morning for a 12-hour cruise out to sea to find and observe pelagic birds. Departure time, directions to "Vantuna's" berth, etc. will be sent along with confirmation of reservations. Reservations will be strictly limited to 30 on each cruise (one cruise to a customer if there is a waiting list). Deadline for reservations for the August 21 trip is August 16; refunds will not be made for cancellations after that date. Deadline for the September 4 cruise will be August 30. Fare of \$15. should accompany your reservation. Checks should be made payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Send reservations to: Joann Gabbard  
823 19th Street Apt. D  
Santa Monica, CA 90403 telephone: 395-1911

Sept. 11 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mouth of the Santa Clara River. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in parking lot of the Colony Kitchen in Ventura. Take Ventura Freeway to Ventura. Exit via Seaward Avenue off-ramp and follow Seward Avenue in the direction of the beach. Trip should be good for shore-birds and other early migrants.

## NOTICE

When you visit Morongo Valley, please register in Mr. Francis' guest book during the day. The list of names of those using the area for birding is helpful in determining the future use of the area--either as a Wild Life Sanctuary or as a San Bernardino County Recreation Park.



The Bird Report is recorded each Wednesday afternoon. Anyone wishing to report a sighting for the tape may call Jean Brandt 788-5188 Tuesday evening or Audubon House 876-0202 Wednesday morning.

## Erratum

The Editor regrets that the list of Chairmen of the Los Angeles Audubon Society published last month should have read:  
Librarian -- Mrs. Harry R. Hoffman.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

## The Western Tanager

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



EDITOR - GILBERT W. KING  
Assistant Editor - Donald Adams  
Field Notes - Shumway Suffel  
Conservation - Kathryn Brooks  
Typing - Hanna Stadler  
Mailing Supervision - 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

Jekyll Island, Georgia  
May 6, 1971

Yesterday we left Florida and entered Georgia. Our places to go north from Tallahassee were changed. Earle Greene has moved back to St. Simons Island, Georgia, where he will be near relatives in Atlanta and friends here on the Coast. He had had good reports of Russ' program from Whitney Eastman and wanted Russ to do it for the Audubon Society in this area.

We are entranced with this Island. It is one of the most beautiful areas we have seen. We may have showers today but hope for a sunny day tomorrow so we can bird the rest of the island. Here in the camp ground and immediate area—a large marsh just to the west of us—we have been seeing Ovenbirds, American Redstarts, Parula Warbler, Clapper and King Rails, Fish Crows, Blue Jay, Boat-tailed Grackles. We are hoping for more warblers. Just returned from a walk south of the camp ground, found Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-and-White Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Painted Buntings, and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Marion Wilson.

Coosawhatchee, So. Carolina  
May 12, 1971

Just a note to tell you of our visit with Earle Greene.

The Audubon group on St. Simons Island is only a year old but has a membership of nearly 200. The members are people of very interesting background. Many have retired only within a year or so and they all love Earle.

The president this first year was a young married woman, mother of two small children. Her husband works for one of the companies causing pollution there so she decided not to continue as president since it has caused a little friction at home, but will continue in other capacities. Marion Wilson

## SHUMWAY SUFFEL CONCLUDED

and the Idylwild area have Black Swifts and Spotted Owls, with Dippers in the former and our only Whip-poor-wills in the latter. Further afield Bridalveil or Crane Flats camps in Yosemite have Great Gray Owls, Black-backed Woodpeckers, and Pine Grosbeaks, with Rosy Finches higher up and Evening Grosbeaks at Wawona. We have already mentioned the Salton Sea, but must suggest another hot trip—the Colorado River above Yuma, where Cuckoos, Bronzed Cowbirds, Great-tailed Grackles, Least Bitterns and Black Rails are possibilities. Until September then—bird strenuously or leisurely, but keep birding!

# Book Review

SQUIRRELS OF NORTH AMERICA, by Dorcas MacClintock. Illustrated by Walter Ferguson. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970. 184 pp.

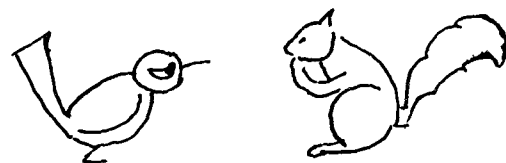
When we recently moved from Hollywood to the San Bernardino mountains, our first new friends were the Steller's Jays and the Western Gray Tree Squirrels. The Steller's Jays had replaced our Hollywood Hills Scrub Jays and the tree squirrels the California Ground Squirrel. We were happy to find that the tree squirrel did little damage outside of an occasionally gnawed television cable, whereas the ground squirrels had denuded an entire hillside of groundcover and we had escaped the unhappy prospect of eliminating them.

Watching the antics of the pugnacious tree squirrels on our front porch, we soon found ourselves as interested in them as the jays, nut-hatches, grosbeaks and many bird species that visited our feeders. In thinking back on Western travels, we remembered the rock squirrels, Kaibab and Albert's of the Grand Canyon, the Golden-mantled squirrels of Crater Lake, and wondered about the many others we had seen but been unable to identify.

When we saw "Squirrels of North America" advertised in Audubon Magazine, we soon ordered and received a copy. More than a field guide, we found it to be a definitive and well-written treatise on the family Sciuridae, a part of the rodent suborder Sciuromorpha. It includes the ground and tree squirrels, chipmunks, woodchucks, marmots and prairie dogs. We discovered that within a few hours of our home were to be found a dozen of these fascinating rodents.

Dorcas MacClintock was a former research associate at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, and with the black and white drawings of Walter Ferguson and range maps of each species, has presented what is advertised as the first book to be devoted entirely to the North American squirrels.

Identification of these animals is far from easy in the field. Except for those few that have become tame from the handouts of tourists, they dart rapidly to cover. The chipmunks present a particular challenge, but for those of you who have mastered warblers and sparrows they should be relatively easy. Mrs. MacClintock's book, along with the Peterson Field Guide to Mammals, gives the nature lover a pair of outstanding volumes to sort out these fascinating animals. Reviewed by Lewis Garrett



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

# gymnogyps?

Continued from page three

The first count in 1965 showed the total estimated condor population to be about thirty-eight individual birds.

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, began its California condor research program in 1966 under the supervision of field biologist Fred C. Sibley. Sibley's two-year study included the evaluation of probable effects of the Sespe Creek project should it ever be reconsidered due to water needs and economic interests. His findings were published under the title "The Effects of the Sespe Creek Project on the California Condor". Biologist Sibley also attempted to locate all active condor nests and roosts in 1966. Meanwhile, annual nest checks were begun to assess the annual condor production. Nest visits, performed late in the brooding season when the adult condors will tolerate a single nest disturbance, have been criticised as an unnecessary program which might lead to the abandonment of a nest or fledgling.

The United States Forest Service and the National Audubon Society decided in 1966 to build a pair of condor observation points as a means of enlightening the public of condor conservation. The MOUNT PINOS site (see map) is situated on a 8,831 foot plateau overlooking mountainous condor-foraging terrain in the Los Padres National Forest. Condors move into the area during summer when the deer hunting season is in full swing. They come from their southern winter range—the Sespe Condor Sanctuary—location of the DOUGH FLAT observation site. Dough Flat is situated north of Fillmore in the center of the condor refuge. Condors nest some five or six miles from the Dough Flat vicinity.

In February, 1967, another zoo became involved with a condor when a nine-month-old bird, abandoned by its parents, was captured and taken to the Los Angeles Zoo where it recuperated from near-starvation. Zoo officials released the condor back into the Sespe Sanctuary but claim it was "rejected" by other condors. The young condor, dubbed "Topa-Topa" after the range of mountains in which it was found, was returned to the zoo where it resides today.

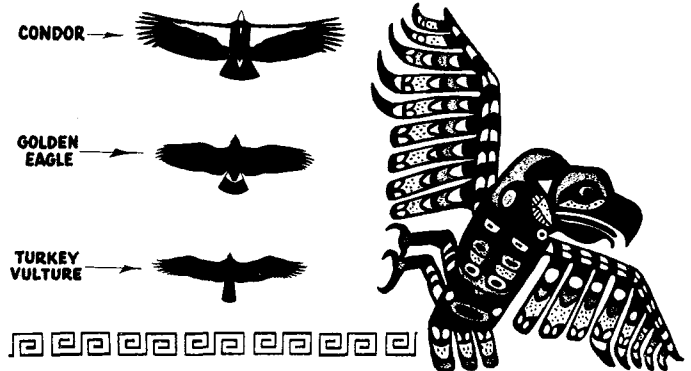
The Ojai Regional Office of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife adopted a study in 1969 apart from the annual NEST CHECK and CONDOR COUNT. The system utilized a network of interested observers regularly reporting condor sightings. Its procedures were similar to the California Department of Fish and Game RAPTOR REPORTING PROGRAM begun in May, 1966. The condor reporting system was a success in providing an overall view of condor movement and distribu-

tion. Results of the first program in 1969 were published in 1970 through the Ojai District Office of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and were summarized by Sanford R. Wilbur. This report concluded that the small number of subadult birds seen during 1969 "testify to an alarmingly low reproductive rate in recent years", adding that "only one condor nest was known to have produced a bird in 1969".

The U.S. Forest Service appointed a Condor Biologist, Dean Carrier, in 1969 to advise them of areas considered of great importance to condor survival. The Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and other condor concerns identified seven areas totalling some 526,900 acres as "vital" to condor welfare. The areas are known as the Sespe-Piru, Matilija, Springville-Balch Park, Sisquoc River, Hi Mountain-Beartrap, Mount Pinos, and Breckenridge study areas.

The fate of California condors during most of the 60's, although shaken and uncertain, was brought to a favorable close in 1969 when another attempt to dam Sespe Creek was halted by the Department of Interior.

*To be concluded in another issue*



The Rev. Gilbert White, July 1771:

The question that you put with regard to those genera of animals that are peculiar to America, viz., how they came there, and whence? is too puzzling for me to answer; and yet so obvious as often to have struck me with wonder. If one looks into the writers on that subject little satisfaction is to be found. Ingenious men will readily advance plausible arguments to support whatever theory they shall chose to maintain; but then the misfortune is, every one's hypothesis is each as good as another's, since they are all founded on conjecture. The late writers of this sort, in whom may be seen all the arguments of those that have gone before, as I remember, stock America from the western coast of Africa and the south of Europe; and then break down the Isthmus that bridged over the Atlantic. But this is making use of a violent piece of machinery; it is a difficulty worthy of the interposition of a god! *"Incredulus oli."*

# !announcements!

## CONDOR FUND

ONCE EACH YEAR THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY ASKS ITS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE

### CONDOR SANCTUARY FUND

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE OF COURSE TAX DEDUCTIBLE. PLEASE MAKE CHECKS OUT TO "CONDOR SANCTUARY FUND" AND MAIL TO LAAS, PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046.

THIS FUND IS FORWARDED TO NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, WHICH USES IT TO SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY'S CONDOR NATURALIST, RESIDENT AT THE SANCTUARY.

On Tuesday, June 22, 1971, the male, female and three young Black-capped Gnatcatchers were shot in Sonoita Creek, Arizona, by a graduate student in ornithology at the University of Arizona. This was after the birds had been netted, photographed, thoroughly examined and anatomical measurements recorded.

## \* Sales Audubon House Department

NOW THAT THE SUMMER VACATION PLANS ARE MADE, MAY WE HELP YOU WITH YOUR "TRAVELLING LIBRARY?"

For the family going on a camping trip we suggest a selection from the Peterson Field Guide Series. There is something for every taste from Wildflowers and Rocks to Insects and Reptiles. For those wishing a more thorough study to prepare for a trip, how about The World of the Red Tailed Hawk, The World of the Frog and the Toad or another of the same series.

For the serious birders the Lane group are a must. Birdwatcher's Guide to Southern California and Birdwatcher's Guide to Southeastern Arizona have now been joined by Birdwatcher's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. In addition to maps and charts these guides include lists of birds and mammals and where to look for them.

Last of all for all those fortunate people who will be travelling out of the country this summer we have the following books available. Birds of North Africa by Etchecopar & Hue, Birds of West Central and Western Africa by Mackworth-Praed & Grant, Guide to Birds of Ceylon by G.M. Henry and still another book on Australian birds, What Bird is That by Cayley. Also a paper-back field guide to Europe, the Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe.

We have many other volumes available, so if you don't see what you want, call us, write us, or just come in and ask us.

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

*Continued from page nine*

of a live bird at sea—a few have been found on the beaches either dead or dying). News like this is very exciting with pelagic trips off San Diego starting in July.

Our fears for the safety of the LUCY'S WARBLERS at Morongo, expressed last month, were premature. There are probably three or more nesting pairs there. At least one pair of WIED'S CRESTED FLYCATCHERS had returned to Morongo Valley by mid-May (they are normally late arrivals). In Death Valley the LUCY'S are not doing as well. We failed to find them at Furnace Creek Ranch, where they were quite common two year's ago, but Mike, Jon and Richard found a family group (adults and juveniles) there on May 29th. We did, however, find a single LUCY'S (possibly one of a pair) at Mesquite Springs, some forty

miles north of Furnace Creek. The Salton Sea lived up to its reputation for unusual birds as Guy McCaskie's group found an OLDSQUAW, *eight* FRANKLIN'S GULLS (seldom seen in numbers), and a CLAPPER RAIL (the Yuma race is an endangered species). Jerry Johnson and Larry Sansone also saw a CLAPPER RAIL there and the first WOOD IBIS of the season on June 6th. Jay Sheppard, camping on the ridge of the Little San Bernardino Mountains, awoke on May 16th to find small migrants flying overhead in great numbers and heading toward Morongo Valley, where his banding nets had just been furlled for the first time in three weeks.

There are so many places to bird in July and August and we can mention only a few. Mt. Pinos, Buckhorn, Moonridge, etc., have high mountain birds, while Santa Anita canyon

*Concluded on page 6*



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

Continued from page ten

and a second WATER THRUSH and an INDIGO BUNTING seen by a group from Northern California.

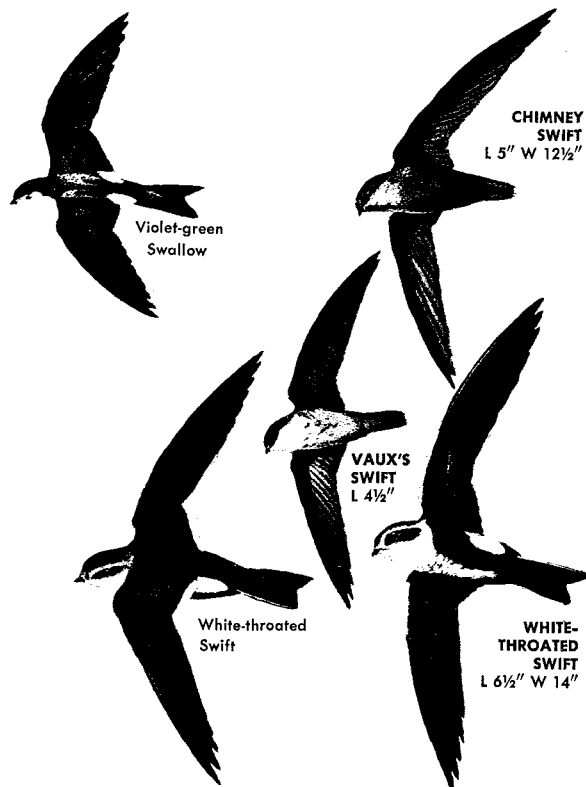
No Elf Owls were seen or heard at Cottonwood Springs by the Greenberg party from Palo Alto but they did find a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK there. Dennis Heineman and Lee Jones stopped at the Brock Ranch, east of Holtville, Imperial County, on their way to the Colorado River and were rewarded with another fine male ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK. Almost twenty AMERICAN REDSTARTS were seen during May, with at least one at each of the spots mentioned above, which makes it by far the commonest of the eastern warblers.

On the coastal slope there were the normal migrants but few vagrants—a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER in the Arroyo Seco above Pasadena on May 12th (Ellen Stephenson's party), a NORTHERN WATER THRUSH on Anacapa Island (Richard Webster) and a probable SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER at Bolsa Chica on June 2nd (Shirley Wells and Shum Suffel). Another SEMIPALMATED was found at the north end of the Salton Sea on May 31st by Guy McCaskie (but this was a well-marked bird and in an expected place).

The Bolsa Chica "peep" was very gray (no rusty) with a pale face and a noticeably short bill—all good marks for a Semipalmated, but almost too good—too light gray on the back with the face too light and plain. Could it be a retarded (still in winter plumage) Semipalmated or a retarded Western with a very short bill? About a year ago we commented that "you might not even trust yourself on this identification," and this is the exact situation I find myself in. Despite all this, we're both convinced it was a Semipalmated.

May 1971 will be remembered as the "month of the swifts." Last month we mentioned the large number of VAUX'S SWIFTS in late April and early May—hundreds seen at many places in the region, and over one hundred banded in a vacant house near Palos Verdes. These mass flights continued through mid-May with a few late birds almost into June. The first surprise was the many sightings of BLACK SWIFTS—five over the mountains north of Glendora on the 19th

(Mike San Miguel and Shum Suffel) and several sightings later that week of a few over Mike's home in nearby Duarte; six over the Colorado River above Yuma on the 22nd (Lee Jones and Dennis Heineman); and as many as twenty-five on several occasions at Encino Reservoir between May 28th and June 3rd (Jon Dunn and Kim Garrett).



The climax of the swift story however was the CHIMNEY SWIFTS, which Jon suspected on the 28th and confirmed on the evening of the 30th. The next morning Richard Webster and I joined Jon and Kim at the Reservoir and saw not only four CHIMNEY SWIFTS, but two very late VAUX'S SWIFTS for comparison, one BLACK SWIFT and many WHITE-THROATED SWIFTS. This is very probably the first time that all four species of North American swifts have been seen at the same time.

Pelagic trips also proved worthwhile in May. San Fernando Audubon's trip to Anacapa Island provided excellent views of ASHY, BLACK and LEACH'S PETRELS and of a SKUA near the boat; a sighting of a possible LONG-TAILED JAEGER; and good views of a FRANKLIN'S GULL at sea beyond the Island, an unlikely spot (Ernie Abeles, et al.). Dr. Joseph Jehl of the San Diego Museum spent four days near San Clemente Island and found hundreds of thousands of shearwaters including at least ten rare PALE-FOOTED SHEARWATERS; two RED-BILLED TROPICBIRDS, a SKUA, a TUFTED PUFFIN (very rare in those waters), and a HORNED PUFFIN (the first Southern California record





# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

## It's

difficult to write about summer, about heat and hot weather, and about the birds which visit our area only during the hottest time of the year, after a spring which has been the windiest and

coldest, particularly on the deserts, that I can recall. But summer will come and, hopefully, the birds will come too—some of these birds are post-breeding wanderers from Mexico. We can rely on heerman's gulls and elegant terns along the coast, and wood ibis at the Salton Sea—these we have every summer in greater or lesser numbers, but always a few. It is the rarer ones—the boobies, frigatebirds, spoonbills and tropical herons which come in very small numbers and some years are not seen at all—which are avidly sought and long remembered when found. Of course, all this is leading up to your best bet for a birding trip in July and August—the Salton Sea. If you really can't stand hot weather, get an air-conditioned motel and do your birding at dawn and dusk. You may find it so exciting that you'll even "stay out in the midday sun."

The copy for last month's article was barely in the mail, with a statement that practically no vagrants had been reported to May 10th, before the fat was in the fire spewing vagrants onto the desert oases from Mono County to the Mexican border. In addition to these vagrants, the whole passerine migration seemed unusually late this spring with WOOD PEEWEES, SWAINSON'S THRUSHES, TANAGERS and even WILSON'S and YELLOW WARBLERS at peak numbers as late as the Memorial Day weekend. At Oasis Ranch, near the Nevada border in southern Mono County, the L. A. A. S. presidential party Herb and Olga Clarke and Arnold Small (past President) reported a male HEPATIC TANAGER, far north of its southeast Arizona mountain home, and north of the few previous California records. Nearby at Deep Springs Ranch in Inyo County, the rare birders' "cup ranneth over"—a fine male BOBOLINK skylarked, while in full song, over the alfalfa fields (Dave de Sante and David Gaines); at least two NORTHERN WATER THRUSHES were netted or seen; two male INDIGO BUNTINGS were sighted several weeks apart; a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER remained for a week or more; and an OVENBIRD was present on June 5th (Guy McCaskie, Lee Jones, and Jon Dunn).

At Scotty's Castle in Death Valley the birder's cup continued to overflow—four AMERICAN REDSTARTS were seen on May 22nd, two adults (male and female) and two first spring immatures, which are recognizably less colorful than adults in this species of warbler.

## Shumway Suffel

(Bruce Broadbooks, Guy McCaskie, and Shum Suffel); a male BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER which remained for at least a week; an immature male BALTIMORE ORIOLE (the presidential party); and we heard unconfirmed rumors of another male BOBOLINK, and a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER and/or a GRACE'S WARBLER seen by a group from Northern California. Furnace Creek Ranch was disappointing because of an excess of cattle on the golf course and of Ravens and Starling in the surrounding trees—one AMERICAN REDSTART and a VERMILION FLYCATCHER was the slim total for a hundred or so birder-hours spent there. Saratoga Springs at the southern end of Death Valley was more productive—two female SCARLET TANAGERS were unprecedented in our area (Lois Boylen and Shum Suffel) (one was seen at Scotty's Castle in May 1970); a single CHIMNEY SWIFT was studied, with detailed descriptions written by Mike San Miguel, Jon Atwood and Richard Webster; and an INDIGO BUNTING was observed on June 6th (Guy McCaskie, Lee Jones, and Jon Dunn). Much further south Morongo Valley was well covered by banders until mid-May and by birders all through the month with excellent results—a VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (banded); an AMERICAN REDSTART (banded); and two NORTHERN WATER THRUSHES (one banded, one observed). Nearby at Yucca Valley Golf Course there was a NORTHERN WATER THRUSH (Mike San Miguel, et al.) an OVENBIRD and a week later a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (both Jerry Johnson);

*Continued*

### Editor's Last Inch

In this concluding issue of Volume 37 the Editor expresses his appreciation of the support from Shum Suffel for Southern California Birds; Donald Adams as Assistant Editor in rounding up material for the Calendar and reports of Audubon Activities; the regular contributors and our contributors of lead articles. The Editor is also greatly indebted to Hanna Stadler for preparing the manuscript for printing; to Caroline Adams for preparing the Calendar and Activities; and to Robert Sandmeyer for assistance in the art work.

The Editor also thanks the Aerospace Printing Center, especially Bob Groves, for the excellent job of printing The Western Tanager; and to Hans Hjorth and his many coworkers in mailing it out.

# TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

The LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Until recently membership in a local chapter was limited to those members who either joined through the chapter or requested membership in a specified chapter. Now National has instituted a new policy whereby all members are assigned to a chapter, according to geographical location. We welcome all new members to our chapter and invite you to join in some or all of our activities, which are mainly supported from a portion of the dues you pay to the National Audubon Society.

The principal activities are:

1. The field study of birds and other wildlife. Two or more field trips are held each month, led by experienced birders.
2. A monthly meeting featuring speakers on various aspects of natural history (except July and August), with emphasis on wildlife and its conservation.
3. Scholarships to the Audubon Camp of the West.
4. Support of the California Condor Sanctuary.
5. A Conservation Committee which writes letters, carries petitions, distributes literature, petitions, etc., at ecology fairs, keeps membership informed of current conservation issues and legislation.
6. Participation in the annual Christmas Bird Census sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
7. Monthly publication of THE WESTERN TANAGER.
8. Audubon Bird Report, a weekly report of bird sightings recorded on tape, heard by dialing 874-1318.
9. Birding Tours. This fall a three-week trip to Australia will be led by two of our members who are outstanding birders and one of whom is well acquainted with the area.
10. The oldest frame house in Hollywood is the headquarters of the Society. It contains a small natural history museum, an extensive natural history library, and a well-stocked bookstore (10% discount to members). We accept mail and phone orders for books and records, but hope to meet you in person. Audubon House is in Plummer Park at 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard between La Brea and Fairfax and is open from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.