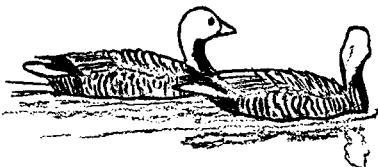


Los Angeles Audubon Society

# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 38 · 1971-72 · NO. 4 DECEMBER



## ALASKAN TUNDRA BIRDS

### by Alan Baldridge

#### 'ALASKA BIRD TRAILS'

Spectacled Eiders, cast a spell on me, having grown up in Britain and been a shore-bird and water-fowl enthusiast all my life. The means had to be found to reach this, one of the richest waterfowl breeding areas on earth. The Yukon and Kuskokwim deltas and the thousands of square miles of coastal tundra lying between them along the shores of the Bering Sea provide a summer home for some 18-20 species of nesting waterfowl and 13-15 breeding shorebird species.

Mid-June found Sheila and I in Bethel, the jumping-off place for Western Alaska. The spring break-up of ice on the broad Kuskokwim River had just passed and eskimos were enthusiastically enjoying the now open river by racing their large flat-bottomed boats and moving families out to salmon-fishing camps along its willow-thicketed banks. Anticipation ran high as we loaded a chartered Cessna float-plane with gear and supplies, including 40 gallons of gasoline for use in rented boats. Soon we were airborne over the silt-laden Kuskokwim and headed west under gray skies for the Bering Sea coast and the village of Scammon Bay. This eskimo village was to be our base for the next two weeks as we explored the area. It proved to be a fortunate choice, for the variety of terrain within walking distance, or penetrable by boat, added much to the success of the expedition. The village nestled at the foot of the north slope of the Askinuk Mountains, an isolated mountain range surrounded by flat delta lands, and a mile from where the Kun River empties into the shallow waters of the Bering Sea.

The advantages to the villagers in siting their community in that location were obvious. The river provided abundant salmon in summer and ice-fishing in winter, and a route for travel at all seasons (with the brief exceptions of the break-up and freeze-up periods). Seals frequented its mouth and waterfowl abounded all round. The mountains behind the village provided a permanent snow-fed stream for drinking water, and the willow thickets were extensive where the hills met the coastal plain; a vital source of winter fuel for heating and haunt of ptarmigan (food) in winter.

The successful completion of the breeding cycle for northern birds in this harsh environment is a chancy factor. In order to achieve the optimum results migratory breeding species have evolved a number of behavioral and ecological strategies. These include completing mate selection and attendant display before arrival on the breeding grounds in the case of waterfowl; timing of the arrival there to coincide with

1. Herbert Brandt, "Alaska bird trails: adventures of an expedition by dogsled to the delta of the Yukon River at Hooper Bay." Cleveland, The Bird Research Foundation, 1943. 464 pp.

Herbert Brandt's classic, <sup>(1)</sup> with its account of nesting Emperor Geese and

abundance of insect food (e.g., the mosquito hatch); the ability to absorb the embryo should nesting prove impossible due to unseasonal climatic conditions; as an alternative to the last, the ability to nest away from the traditional and ancestral nesting grounds should local late snows so dictate.

breakup (to precede it would be to court disaster); the timing of the hatch to match the maximum abundance of insect food (e.g., the mosquito hatch); the ability to absorb the embryo should nesting prove impossible due to unseasonal climatic conditions; as an alternative to the last, the ability to nest away from the traditional and ancestral nesting grounds should local late snows so dictate.

In discussing these tundra birds of western Alaska it should be noted that even though the shorebird breeding list is an extensive one, not all habitat requirements are met and in fact such additional species as the Semipalmated Sandpiper, Sanderling and Knot breed further north in the Point Barrow region and the Arctic islands. Inland to the east in the spruce areas are found both species of yellowlegs and Dowitchers, while the high interior mountains have breeding Wandering Tattler and Surfbird.

Rather than simply list all of the species observed, or merely talk of the highlights, it would appear more useful to discuss the birds by taking in turn each major habitat. Although some of the characteristics identifying one tundra habitat from another may seem minor, nevertheless the birds clearly indicate their preferences and consequent ecological conservatism. Few species are ubiquitous.

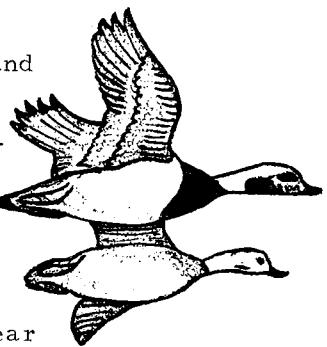
The habitats can be conveniently classified as *sedge-grass marshes*, with moss and much water; *tundra*, a heath with tussocks of grass, *hillside*, drier with sedge-moss, *plateau*, *valley* covered with lichens and heather, and *rocky tops and crags*.

These areas are discussed individually with their endemic breeding populations in the next five sections.

Continued overleaf

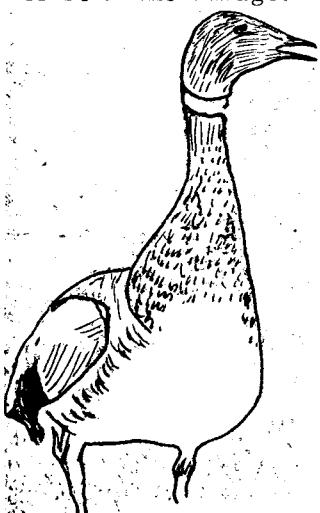
# Alaska Tundra Birds *continued*

1. **Sedge-grass marshes** with a myriad of small pools and occasionally larger lakes, provide nesting grounds for a large number of Arctic Loons. The constant flight of these birds passing along the Kun River to the Bering Sea for feeding was one of the most conspicuous avian spectacles. The smaller Red-throated Loon was, in comparison, exceedingly scarce. Whistling Swans were common, with sizeable flocks of non-breeders and on one occasion we located a bird incubating on its enormous mound-like nest.



Of the four species of nesting geese the diminutive Cacklers were the most abundant, usually choosing an islet in a small pool for their nest site. Although numerous flocks of Black Brant fed on the tundra along the river near the village, they were rare breeders. The bulk nest in dense concentrations one hundred miles south of the mountains, within the massive Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Range. The long sought Emperor Goose turned out to be the second commonest breeding goose. This elegant bird, found nowhere in the world but along both shores of the Bering Sea, rarely migrates south of the Aleutian Islands in the fall. In most of the birds their white heads bore rust-colored stains.

Turning to ducks, the commonest surface feeders were Pintail. Mallard were scarce, American Widgeon common, together with small numbers of Green-winged Teal and Shoveler. Diving Ducks were numerous with Oldsquaws, the commonest breeder, a little more numerous than Greater Scaup. That other Bering Sea specialty, the Spectacled Eider was common and much in evidence close to the village. There was much "crooning" and display from the strangely patterned males but later on they disappeared, presumably to some collective molting ground leaving the females to incubate. Smaller numbers of Canvasbacks, Common Scoters and Red-breasted Mergansers were seen. We failed to find the rare Steller's Eider. The eskimos knew it and called it "A-noch-a-nee-sak-kuk" but even in areas where it is known to breed, it is far outnumbered by other species.



**BLACK BRANT** tant, giving them a perch and clear view across their territory, from which they would vigorously drive every potential avian predator. "Winnowing" Snipe were a common sound, while we found the Pectoral Sandpiper to be very local and confined to an area of long dry grass close to willow scrub. Here a tame male attended the newly hatched young. We were too late to witness the spectacular display song flight, during which they circle their tundra territories with air sacks distended. While Northern Phalaropes were truly abundant, Red Phalaropes were far less so being here near the southern edge of their breeding range.

Glaucous Gulls nested in small colonies on islands in the larger lakes, secure from land predation, but themselves free to pillage unattended eggs and nestlings. While Mew Gulls were common, a visitor is more attracted to the exquisite patterns of the Sabine's Gulls breeding in small colonies of 15-20 pairs around tundra pools.

They flew to the Bering Sea to feed along with the equally abundant Arctic Tern. The latter also nests in small colonies though perhaps more frequently in scattered pairs over the coastal plain.

AMCHITKA KAVALGA

Shorebirds, along with waterfowl, are the most conspicuous and abundant bird family of the Alaskan tundras. The most numerous in the area under discussion were Dunlin and Northern Phalaropes and these, along with Western Sandpipers, were among the most abundant of all birds. The trilling song of Dunlin accompanied by the fluttering display flight was one of the most constant sounds and Northern Phalaropes were so numerous that we found no less than six nests on our best day. Their predilection for very wet areas made them vulnerable to the gale-driven spring tides, when many nests were destroyed. Black Turnstones, so noisy on their California wintering grounds, are even more so on their nesting areas. Small islets in pools were preferred and the presence of driftwood seemed to be impor-



# Christmas Count 71 Sandy Wohlgemuth

Another Christmas Count rolls around: the 72nd annual census of birds of North America sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This pleasant blend of science and recreation brings out an amazing number of people every year. There were 16,657 observers last year and even allowing for those who participated in more than one count there were at least 15,000 individuals involved.

The standard count area is a circle 15 miles in diameter arranged to include the most advantageous habitats so that the greatest number and variety of birds may be obtained. By covering the same circle every year for many years trends in bird populations can be followed and some idea as to the State of the Nation, ornithologically, may be determined. This may not be too apparent inside your own count area but multiplied by 903 15-mile circles it can mean a lot to the Fish and Wildlife computers.

In 1970 the 903 reports were an increase of 25 over the previous year. Texas had 53 counts published, only one more than California. Twenty-eight areas had 150 or more species, a record number, reflecting the diligence, enthusiasm and determination of birders all over the country. Cocoa, Florida, regained its position as number one in the nation with 205 species, far less than San Diego's 224 (the highest species count ever) in 1969. Santa Barbara led with 195 in California which had ten counts over 150 species.

Last year's count illustrated dramatically the proliferation of two vigorous birds. Ten Massachusetts counts came up with 1033 House Finches—a bird only recently introduced in the east. And the largest number of Cattle Egrets ever to be seen in California appeared at the north end of the Salton Sea where 1000 were tallied.

Last year Los Angeles had a fine total of 39,600 birds and 143 species. Our 73 observers were the 14th largest group in the nation. This year we would like to improve our job all around. Naturally the more people we have the more birds and the better our chances of turning up unusual species. It will be interesting to see whether the extraordinary numbers of Robins (4300) and Waxwings (3900) will be repeated this year or whether we will have any other unusual explosions of birds.

Can Los Angeles make the 150-species charmed circle? With a sterling corps of dedicated birders I think it can be done—in spite of our increased urbanization. We got by the skin of our teeth last year with only one each of these fairly common birds: Hooded Oriole, Bullock's Oriole, Rock Wren, Cassin's Kingbird, Shoveller, and Red-shouldered Hawk. Not only do we have to retain these birds on our count this year but to get through the 149-species barrier we have to pick up some of the birds that got away last year: Lark Sparrow, Phainopepla,

Lawrence's Goldfinch—and even Brown Creeper, Roadrunner and White-tailed Kite. Doing your homework on your area before the count is invaluable here. (Incidentally, did you know that 27 counts in California last year came up with 626 White-tailed Kites? ! A heartening bit of information when the spectre of the Passenger Pigeon hovers over all our wildlife.)

A little bit of luck is undeniably important for a Christmas Count. Will it pour down buckets, will the wind blow the birds away? Will three Whistling Swans fly into a reservoir exactly on count day—as they did last year—and not the day before or the day after? Will the Yellow-shafted Flicker in Rosedale Cemetery seen in October keep up housekeeping until December 26th? Or the Virginia's warbler at the Kings' hummingbird feeder stay for the holiday? Who knows? That's what makes horse races and Christmas Counts, as the saying goes.

If you want to be part of this kind of esoteric excitement and painlessly participate in a long-term scientific project, then volunteer your services to the count chairman. No decent offer will be rejected. Sandy Wohlgemuth, 19354 Calvert Street, Reseda, 344-8531.



## Bird Locations

Travelers to various parts of the country can obtain current bird activity by calling telephone reports sponsored by local Audubon groups.

Southern California — Los Angeles Audubon Society — 213 874-1318

Washington, D. C., Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware — Atlantic Naturalist Society — 202 652-3295

Massachusetts — Massachusetts Audubon Society — 617 259-8805

Western Massachusetts — Massachusetts Audubon Society — 617 566-3590

New York City, Long Island, Coastal New Jersey — New York Audubon Society — 516 485-2170



## SIEROTY COASTLINE BILL KILLED

Assemblyman Alan Sieroty's AB 1471, would have established a coastal zone commission to prepare a comprehensive coastal plan, and set up six regional commissions to protect the public interest in our priceless 1,111-mile coastline.

AB 1471 was killed by Senator James Wedworth, who said he would vote "yes" and then disappeared on the day of the vote (on personal business!) and Senators Dennis E. Carpenter (R-Irvine), Gordon R. Cologne (R-Indio), H. L. Richardson (R-Arcadia) and Ralph C. Dills (D-San Pedro).

Five aye votes were needed in the Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee. We are indeed grateful to Senators John Nejedly, Albert Rodda, Robert Lagomarsino, and Arlen Gregorio who cast the four aye votes. Nejedly, Rodda, and Gregorio have long supported the bill and Lagomarsino finally decided to vote aye.

Many of us worked long and hard to try to get this bill through the legislature and that the public pressure was felt is evident. Those in the Inglewood-Hawthorne area should be disgusted with the tactics used by their representative, Mr. Wedworth. His choosing to be gone on the day of the vote was a lousy way to defeat a bill. And now that Senator Nejedly is in the hospital for surgery, Mr. Wedworth can easily say aye on AB1471, knowing full-well that the bill would be defeated on another vote during Nejedly's absence.

## PRESERVE WILDLIFE-----THROW A PARTY!

SILVERWOOD WILDLIFE SANCTUARY succeeded in raising the \$10,000 for the down payment on the additional adjacent land. At that time the land was endanger of being purchased by a gun club. They now ask for your continued support in paying off the mortgage. Send contributions to Edith Curry, 430 E. Lexington Avenue, Apt. B, El Cajon, Ca 92020. Make checks payable to San Diego Audubon Society. Gift is tax-deductible.

## WHAT FATE FOR THE FOREST RESOURCES?

The future of the nation's forest resources, both public and private, including more than eight million acres of de facto wilderness, will depend on the Congress. The Forest Restoration and Protection Act (S. 1734) introduced by Senator Lee Metcalf, Democrat of Montana, is strongly supported by the Sierra Club and many conservation organizations. The Sierra Club's "Project Flash" briefly outlines the bill, as follows:

"(1) S. 1734 would halt the trend of logging more and more areas, especially scenic and wilderness lands. (2) S. 1734 would impose strict regulations for proper timber management on commercial timber lands. (3) S. 1734 applies to private as well as public lands and would greatly improve the total picture of national forest resource management. (4) S. 1734 provides for strict controls on clear cutting and licensing of foresters. (5) S. 1734 provides for strict measures to protect rare and endangered plants and animals. (6) S. 1734 decrees that all timber harvesting, on both public and private lands, shall not impair multiple use values. (7) S. 1734 prohibits log exports unless American timber supply needs for the following five years can be satisfied domestically. (8) S. 1734 places a ten-year moratorium on the development of all de facto wilderness areas of 3,000 acres in size until they are reviewed by the Forest Service and wilderness proposals submitted to Congress. (A Wilderness is an area of scenic land managed by one of the resource agencies of the Federal Government, Forest Service, etc., that has received the classification of wilderness by an Act of Congress.) (9) S. 1734 is a well thought out, detailed, specific, and comprehensive bill which needs our immediate and sustained support. Other bills are on the legislative scene which, if they become law, will continue the current trend of expedient exploitation of our forest resources."

RECYCLING REDEMPTION CENTERS LIST  
at AUDUBON HOUSE. CALL to find out WHERE  
the NEAREST ONE TO YOU IS LOCATED.

# 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

**Audubon  
Bird Reports  
874-1318**



Dec. 2 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8 p.m., Audubon House.

Dec. 4-5 SATURDAY-SUNDAY - CARRIZO PLAIN. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in Maricopa at the junction of US 399 and State 166. Those planning to stay at California Valley Lodge should write or call for reservations early as lodge is usually sold out before the trip. Write to the lodge at California Valley, CA 93453 or phone (805) 475-2272. Prior sightings include: White-tailed Kite 70, Rough-legged Hawk 70, Ferruginous Hawk 69-70, Golden Eagle 67,69,70, Prairie Falcon 70, Mtn. Plover 66-70, Sandhill Crane 66-70, Barn, Long&Short-Eared Owl 70, Horned Lark 66-70, LeConte's Thrasher 66-70, Mountain Bluebird 66-70. Larry Sansone, leader Dec. 4 Phone 870-6398. Jim Huffman, Leader Dec. 11 Phone 545-1224. (For alternate trips refer to next two listings.)

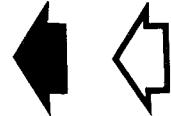
Dec. 4 SATURDAY - WILDWOOD CANYON - 7:30 a.m., NEWHALL. Take Golden State Freeway north to Lyons Ave. offramp, turn right about 2 blocks and meet in Thriftymart parking lot (west end). We will caravan to the canyon. Leader: William Barber phone (805) 259-2308. Chaparral birds will be seen.

Dec. 7 TUESDAY - MALIBU LAGOON. Details will be in December Tanager. Abigail King, leader.

Dec. 11 SATURDAY - DANA POINT - 8 a.m. Meet at new harbor entrance just west of traffic light on Pacific Coast Highway. Local shore and land birds. Leader: Trudy Siptroth phone (714)546-4314.

Dec. 14 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Professor Thomas R. Howell, Dept. of Zoology U.C.L.A. will present a color film on the Fairy Terns, Red-tailed Tropic Bird and other sea birds of the Mid-Pacific.

Dec. 26 SUNDAY - Los Angeles Audubon Society Christmas Census Count  
Sandy Wohlgemuth, Chairman



Jan. 8 SATURDAY - BUENA VISTA LAGOON. Take San Diego Freeway south to Oceanside. Leave freeway just north of Oceanside, taking the right-hand road that leads through town. Meet at 8 a.m. at the north end of the road that crosses the lagoon. Leader: Les Wood, phone 256-3908.

Jan. 11 TUESDAY - Los Angeles Audubon Society Annual Dinner

Jan. 22 SATURDAY - SALTON SEA. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Wister turnoff on Highway 111 (about 36 miles south of Mecca) north of Niland. Those wishing to camp Friday or Saturday night may do so at Finney Lake or at Wister Campground. Please be sure to register at Wister. Bring firewood and water. For others there are good motels in Brawley. Excellent trip for wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. Leader Jan. 22 - Jon Dunn, phone 981-1841. Leader Jan. 29 to be announced.

Jan. 22 SATURDAY - LAKE NORCO. Meet in Norco at 8:30 a.m. Take the San Bernardino Freeway to the River-side-Corona (Norco) exit, then south on Milliken and Hamner to the intersection of Hamner and Norco Drive. An alternate route is via the Santa Ana and Riverside Freeways to Corona, then north to Norco via Hamner Ave. Wintering ducks and other water birds. Leader Jan. 22 - Hal Baxter, phone 355-6300. Leader Jan. 29 - Min Gerhardt, phone 358-7623.

Feb. 5 SATURDAY - BUTTERBREAD SPRING - Proceed out Antelope Valley Freeway through Mojave. Meet about 20 miles north on U.S. 14 at the Jawbone Canyon turnoff at 8:00 a.m. Chance to see Chukar and Le Conte's Thrasher, motorcycles and other racy desert birds. Not a trip for the uninitiated to the desert wilds, but might be fun. Remember, NO water, picnic tables or toilets--just birds, bushes Joshua trees and friends. Leaders: Don & Caroline Adams, phone 372-5536, and Keith Axelson, 394-2255

Field Trip Information: The Los Angeles Audubon Society cannot be responsible for providing transportation on field trips. Bring binoculars and lunch on all trips. Please, no pets and no collecting! On weekend trips, leader is responsible only for the first day. Participants are expected to arrange their own schedules on the second day.

## LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

## The Western Tanager

Official Publication of the  
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
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Field Notes - Shumway Suffel  
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Mailing Supervision - Hans Hjorth

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# audubon activities

EVENING MEETING - Oct. 12. As the title Endangered American Wildlife suggests, the program given by Frank Todd was not meant to entertain but to goad us into action on behalf of our wildlife. Mr. Todd packed a tremendous amount of factual information and a great many excellent pictures into his program. By constant diligence and never ending work on the part of conservationists, a few of our species are actually making a comeback, albeit slowly. We cannot, however, afford to be complacent about anything because it is a constant battle to retain any advantages gained. The Tule Elk, for example, is better off than it has been for many years due to the diligence of concerned persons, yet much of our birdlife, such as the California Brown Pelican, are moving precariously close to eventual extinction.

FIELD TRIP - Golden West Ponds and Newport Bay, Oct. 24. Thirty-six enthusiastic birders met at Golden West Ponds on a sunny, warm morning. A few arrived two hours early due to setting their clocks in the wrong direction. Throughout the day weather and light were excellent. The Ponds had the usual Mallard hybrids and two observers noted a YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD. Birding at Newport Bay was a slow process as the birds were very cooperative and there was a large group of birders to be shown a great many birds. Everyone saw the SORA RAIL, most saw the CLAPPER and VIRGINIA RAILS, and two members were lucky enough to see the BLACK RAIL cross the road. An OSPREY glided over, giving all a good view and many a life bird. Three BURROWING OWLS near their burrow provided everyone with a closeup view of this diurnal ground owl. Dabbling ducks were there as expected with PINTAIL, WIDGEON, and SHOVELLER in good supply. TURKEY VULTURES, RED-TAILED and SPARROW HAWKS crisscrossed the bay during the morning hours. Our group total of 84 species was a rewarding variety for a good morning's workout. We were pleased to have Russ and Marian Wilson join us for birding in Southern California again. Irwin Woldman, leader.

FIELD TRIP - Upper Newport and Bolsa Chica - Nov. 2, 1971, Tuesday, in the space of 5 hours, 20 people saw 12.01% of all the recognized North American birds. (How's that for statistics?) Translation: we saw 85 species of birds. Equal amounts of CLAPPER and SORA RAILS were seen (at least 20 of each) but only one VIRGINIA'S and no BLACK, which was a disappointment. Irma Rogers spotted an AMERICAN BITTERN frozen in the reeds about five feet from the road and we all had a good closeup view of this bird which never moved until after we had all gone away. SEMI-PALMATED and SNOWY PLOVERS were found on the mud flats at the east end of the bay. GOLDEN PLOVERS eluded us at Newport but one was seen at Bolsa Chica on the way home. Jean Brandt and Abigail King, leaders.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE

The following is a partial list of Southern California Christmas Bird Counts arranged by dates. If you are interested in helping on a particular count, please contact the compiler or coordinator given after each count. These people can give you times and meeting places for their respective counts. Some of these counts have a meeting after the count to compile the data and discuss the rare birds; these dinners sometimes require reservations in advance. Plan early to help some of these counts. As in past years, each participant on each count will be charged \$1.00 to cover printing costs at National Audubon. How many counts are you going to participate in this winter? Some persons have gone on as many as TEN counts in the 16 days!

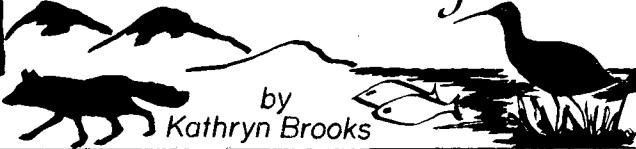
Compilers or party leaders wanting to know tides and/or sunrise-sunset for any area, contact Jay Sheppard. Extra count forms (official from New York) are available to compilers only.

18 December	- <u>San Diego</u> (Tom Taylor, 7139 Purdue, LaMesa, Calif. 92041; 714 465-4690)
19 December	- <u>Santa Barbara</u> (Bill Ure, 2310 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, Calif. 93100; 805 966-5350 or 805 965-6537)
20 December	- <u>Palos Verdes</u> (Shirley Wells, 30443 LaVista Verde, San Pedro, Calif. 90732; 213 831-4281)
22 December	- <u>Pasadena</u> (Bob Copper, 1697 N. Madison, Pasadena, Calif. 91104; 213 798-8611) <u>Buena Vista</u> (Alice Fries, 28890 Lilac Rd., Valley Center, Calif. 92082; 714 747-5469) Meet at at Ocean Marina Restaurant, Ocean-side Marina at 6:30 a.m.
26 December	- <u>Los Angeles</u> (Sandy Wohlgemuth, 19354 Calvert, Reseda, Calif. 91335; 213 344-8531) <u>Orange Co. / Coastal</u> (Barbara Berton, 1130 S. Karen, Santa Ana, Calif. 92704; 714 531-1738)
28 December	- <u>Salton Sea / South</u> (Jay Sheppard, 4002 Howard, Los Alamitos, Calif. 90720; 213 598-3955)
29 December	- <u>Salton Sea / North</u> (Jay Sheppard, 4002 Howard, Los Alamitos, Calif. 90720; 213 598-3955)
30 December	- <u>Malibu Canyon</u> (Joan Mills, 1500 San Ysidro Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210; 213 275-4821)
1 January	- <u>Carrizo Plains</u> (Bob Copper, 1697 N. Madison, Pasadena, Calif. 91104; 213 798-8611)
2 January	- <u>Orange Co / Inland</u> (Barbara Berton, 1130 S. Karen, Santa Ana, Calif. 92704; 714 531-1378) <u>Taft-Maricopa</u> (Jay Sheppard, 4002 Howard, Los Alamitos, Calif. 90720; 213 598-3955)

Please circulate this information....we all need help on counts.



# environment besieged



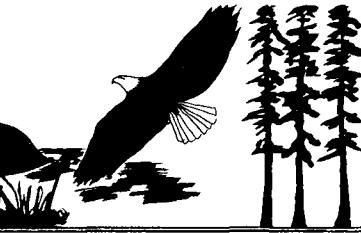
by Kathryn Brooks

THE FIRST NATIONAL AUDUBON TV SPECIAL "EAGLE AND THE HAWK", shown on the ABC network Friday evening, November 26, brought the story of the golden eagle to millions of viewers, the beauty of these majestic birds, the role they play in keeping natural balances and the senseless persecution to which they are being subjected. Favorable responses from viewers to the sponsor, General Electric, and to the network would increase the chance for a repeat broadcast and generate more Audubon specials. The goal of this special was to reach the average citizen, not just those already in our camp.

We are sorry that advance publicity for the show was almost impossible--the program was originally scheduled for January 1972 and then advanced two months.

An Audubon News Release dated 11/7/71 included some important facts. "Despite the fact that federal law is supposed to protect them, for many years golden eagles have been killed at a rate of 2,000 a year in Texas and New Mexico alone: most of them are shot, the rest poisoned... If an eagle is injured--perhaps wounded by a misguided gunner--and can no longer hunt successfully, it will not fall prey to coyote, wolf or other creature in the wild because even a crippled eagle is fierce enough to defend itself on the ground. Instead, the bird will slowly starve to death. Contrary to the claims of some ranchers, it is very rare that an eagle will kill a lamb and even then it will probably be a sickly animal that has fallen behind the flock. An eagle can barely lift six pounds--stories of eagles carrying off sheep and lambs are pure myth. The favorite prey of the golden eagle is the rabbit, a grass-eater that competes with sheep for forage and hence a real problem to ranchers. So the eagle actually performs a valuable service for the sheep rancher."

On the October condor count, John Borneman reported 34 sightings, an additional five that they knew about, plus five in Tulare County, and ten in the Coast Range. That makes a count of 54. But alarming was the fact that only four birds showed immature plumage.



## PESTICIDE BILL, H. R. 10729, PASSES HOUSE

Following a long, lively debate, the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act of 1971 passed the House, and now goes to the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee. A key amendment offered by Rep. John Dow, to provide citizen groups with access to judicial review, failed to pass. Many important deficiencies still remain in the bill. The National News Report enumerates the faults. "1. Definitions of "imminent hazard" and "substantial adverse effects on the environment" which are thoroughly inadequate and have a built-in ratio which puts a price tag on human health and environmental quality; 2. A deliberate attempt to preclude citizen groups from challenging actions of the government in the courts; 3. An indemnities provision which is so sweeping that it will virtually make it impossible to take hazardous products off the market once they become registered; 4. Many loopholes which will allow the restrictions imposed by the bill to be easily evaded, and permit penalties which could only be "wrist slaps" to corporations; 5. No controls over products intended for export; 6. and many others."



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# !announcements

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY HAS RECENTLY RECEIVED A BEQUEST OF \$15,250 FROM THE ESTATE OF THE LATE VIRGINIA CHESTER.



After the oil spill in the San Francisco Bay last January, a large group of volunteers succeeded, by months of effort, in saving and returning to the wild many more oil-damaged sea birds than any one had ever before. These workers came together by chance, from all walks of life, drawn by their one common interest.

Some of us are now anxious that the experience gained should be made available in case a similar disaster occurs again anywhere, and are trying to establish a permanent organization,

## International Bird Rescue

Research  
Center, Inc.

The IBRRC is now dependent on private donations for maintenance and development.

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## Book Review

By LEWIS GARRETT

A few notes on current, and not so current books for bird lovers:

Your Audubon House has recently obtained three items on Australian Birds that should interest the serious field ornithologist. *Australian Flycatchers* by Brigadier Hugh B. Officer, illustrated by Peter Slater, is a nicely bound, well-printed guide to Flycatchers and their allies down under. It is particularly good for the actual watcher with maps of locations and field identification marks. The color plates are adequate for observation even if they won't make the Louvre. A good buy at \$6.00 if you're lucky enough to be heading for Australia. *Australian Warblers* is much the same on a smaller scale, a guide at \$5.00 which seems complete and of handy size for the field. *Field Guide to the Waders* is a paperback covering shorebirds found from New Guinea to New Zealand. It has black and white drawings only and sells for one dollar. Lack of color (or perhaps we should spell it colour in this case) brings down the price, but frankly field identification from monochrome plates is pretty tough.

If we seem slightly less than enthusiastic with the above three fine volumes, it is because we finally acquired a set of *The Birds of California* by William Leon Dawson. We have always felt that for the California-oriented bird-watcher this is the basic book around which the rest of an ornithological library must be built. However, its scarcity and the price are twin barriers. The set has been published on various occasions since it first came out in 1921. It has been printed in both 3 and 4 volume editions and we have always preferred the four-volume large paper deluxe edition of which 300 copies were printed in 1923. We finally found a beautiful set at a reasonable price in a Santa Barbara book store, and throwing caution and solvency to the winds, bought it. If you own a set or have seen one, you know it is almost beyond description. The 580 species and subspecies are photographed in black and white and displayed in color plates with a text so complete that the work covers over 2000 pages. So far as I know there is no geographically limited set to approach it.

May I suggest that if you are interested in adding this great work to your library you familiarize yourself with the various editions and then shop for it. An by shop I mean spend those happy hours in the fine book stores of Southern California comparing editions, condition and price. Even if you don't buy it, you'll have a lot of fun.



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

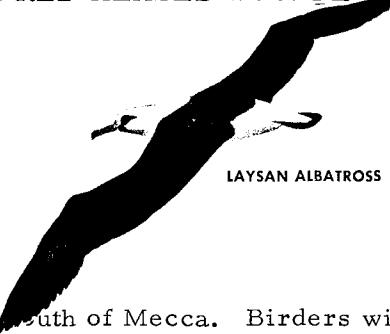
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one found at Malibu by Min Gerhardt on the 16th and seen by many others during the following week, and one or two near Santa Barbara from Sept. 26 to Oct. 25 (Richard W.)

A BROWN THRASHER (Bruce Broadbooks) and a SUMMER TANAGER at Deep Springs, and a very late GRAY VIREO at Furnace Creek Ranch on Oct. 21st, were noteworthy, but the real enthusiasm was for the THIRTY-TWO SPECIES OF WARBLERS sighted in Southern California this fall. Many of these were previously reported, but several of the rarer ones were seen in late October and early November. The BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, found on Oct. 10th at Recreation Park in Long Beach, stayed at least a week and was seen by dozens of interested birders. Another and later B.-t. Green was studied by Scott Terrell and Guy McCaskie near San Diego on Nov. 6th. Our first local report of a TENNESSEE WARBLER in 1971 (there were several earlier ones below San Diego) came from Ron Beck who found one on Oct. 16th near Hansen Dam. A second and third CANADA WARBLER (maximum for our area) were found at Pt. Fermin Park on the 16th and in the TjRV on the 30th. Several BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS were reported - a colorful male at Scotty's Castle in Death Valley and another on Pt. Loma in San Diego, also two inconspicuous females - one in Santa Barbara on Sept. 26th and one near Valley Center, S. D. Co. on Nov. 10 (Alice Fries). A late BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER was seen in the TjRV on Nov. 7 and our second CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER of the season was found near the Canada Warbler mentioned above in Pt. Fermin Park on Oct. 16 by Lee Jones and Richard W. The only report of a PRAIRIE WARBLER was a very bright, tail-wagging immature found on Nov. 8 in the low bush around the edges of the Santa Barbara Airport. The single PALM WARBLER (another tail-wagging species) found at Malibu in early October was joined by another or replaced by two others, which were seen by many L. A. A. S. members later in the month. Robert Fleischer reports a sick or injured OVENBIRD (our only fall report) at Twenty-nine Palms Oasis on the 17th. Our first fall report of a HOODED WARBLER comes from Hank Brodkin who found a female Hooded in Placerita Canyon on Oct. 24. He noted the white flashes in the tail which the similar Wilson's Warbler does not have. The handful of previous records of this rare warbler have all been in the spring.

Looking for Longspurs requires great persistence, a sharp eye and good ears, but it proved popular and rewarding in early November. The difficulty lies in the situation - a very few longspurs with thousands of horned larks in open fields with low grass, so that the birds are seldom seen on the ground. The procedure is to flush the birds a few at a time, listen for the call note of a longspur - a sharp rattle or a double-noted "til-lip" in the Chestnut-collared, then find the

longspur in the hundreds of larks, follow it in flight and get the characteristic tail pattern as it lands. Jon Dunn found a field west of Lancaster with 10,000+ Horned Larks and with them some 30 CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPURS and two LAPLAND LONGSPURS. Smaller numbers were found near Deep Springs (the Cardiffs), at Furnace Creek Ranch, in the San Fernando Valley (Ron Beck), above Santa Barbara (Jon Atwood), and below San Diego (Guy McC.). Bigger news comes from Honey Lake, above Reno, but in California. Here Ron le Valley and Joe Greenberg found McCOWN'S LONGSPURS in some numbers, and will probably prove up the first western record for the SMITH'S LONGSPUR. Longspur finders, step forward and receive your post graduate degree in birdwatching. This is birding at its most difficult. INTRIGUING MISCELLANY: Two LAYSAN ALBATROSS were studied among the hundreds of BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS (114 counted at once), by those lucky enough to be on a pelagic trip 15 miles west of Eureka on Oct. 23rd. This is the first sighting by competent birdwatchers near the California Coast, although fishermen see "White Albatross" occasionally off Northern California. Word reaches us that the Guy Commeaus saw a RED-HEADED WOODPECKER at the



LAYSAN ALBATROSS

catfish farm south of Mecca. Birders will remember the first California RED-HEADED WOODPECKER at the Wister Refuge last August. This is only 35 miles southeast of Mecca, and it seems almost certain that the same individual is involved. FRANKLIN'S GULLS should be looked for along the coast as Shirley Wells found one at Harbor Lake, another on Terminal Island, and Ed Navojosky saw one at Malibu Lagoon. They are rare along the coast in fall, but last year a few wintered for the first time on our coast.

There's still time for birding before the Christmas Counts begin. The high tides in early December should bring some interesting rails (and possibly a Sharp-tailed Sparrow) into view at Upper Newport Bay or Seal Beach marsh. The farming areas of the Irvine Ranch, north of Newport, still provide habitat for wintering hawks, but the Antelope Valley, west of Lancaster is better for Ferruginous, Rough-legged and Pigeon Hawks with Prairie Falcons and Golden Eagles almost a certainty. It's great to be out birding, and we all need the practice for as many of the twenty Southern California "Counts" as you can handle. They all need help.



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds



# Shumway Suffel

## Again

it's time to plan for those busy days at the end of December—for Christmas and Christmas Counts—for New Year's Day and football games. Fortunately these events come during the Holidays and most of us have a lot more time than during our usual work-a-day weeks. So, plan to participate in several "counts". National Audubon has given us a choice of sixteen days this year instead of the usual ten, so the counts will be spaced out a little more than usual. It's a great opportunity to help a less experienced birder, or, reversing the situation, to experience the expertise of an "old hand".

By early November most of our winter birds had arrived with their numbers increasing almost daily. Robins and Cedar Waxwings occurred in large flocks one day, and were almost absent the next, which probably indicates migration to more southerly areas. Audubon Warblers,

Kinglets, White-crowned Sparrows and Juncos were here in good numbers and were apparently settled in for the winter. LEWIS' WOODPECKERS, as expected, were widely reported with single birds at Deep Springs in Inyo County, in the San Fernando Valley and at several spots along the coast. Several were seen in the date groves at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley where as many as ten have been found in good years. Near the same date grove, there was an apparently pure YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER and two other Yellow-shafted with indications of hybridism. Sandy Wohlgemuth found a female YELLOW-SHAFTED at Tapia Park, and Ed Navojosky saw another in the Rosedale Cemetery, right here in Los Angeles. Our only report of a VARIED THRUSH comes from Hank Brodin, who found one in Placerita Canyon on Oct. 31st. Abigail King reports that a VIRGINIA'S WARBLER was seen in her West Los Angeles garden on Oct. 17th and is still being seen. One wintered in their neighborhood last year and this is probably the same bird.

A few loons were being seen along the coast, mostly COMMON LOONS, in early November, but their numbers should increase as winter progresses. FULMARS were widely reported both off the coast and, more surprisingly, from the shore, even inside the breakwaters, with three at King Harbor and eleven inside Los Angeles Harbor (Russ and Marion Wilson et al.). BLACK BRANT moved down the coast with reports of "a few" near Ventura, two at Malibu Lagoon, and hundreds in the San Diego River mouth, where they winter in large numbers. Our first report of an OLDSQUAW came from Audubon's Condor Warden, John Borne man, birding on his holiday at the mouth of the Santa Clara River near Ventura on Oct. 31st, and two were seen there later in the week, (Ed Mas they). Single OLDSQUAWS were seen near Santa Barbara (Richard Webster) and at the south end of the Salton Sea (Guy McCaskie) so this apparently is going to be a good winter for them. HOODED MERGANSERS (always a rare bird locally) were found in the channels at Playa del Rey (Hank Brodin) and near Santa Barbara (Richard W.)

Raptors were widely reported and many of them will winter in the more open parts of our area. Jan Tarble's telephone call on Nov. 2nd, "How long has the PEREGRINE been at Legg Lake Park" brought us our first local report of this rare and endangered falcon. It was an immature bird, but apparently had no difficulty in securing one of the feral mallards there, as she found it feasting on a duck at the edge of the lake. Within the week, Shirley Wells had found a handsome adult PEREGRINE on Terminal Island, San Pedro. It spent its days scaring (and presumably catching) the gulls and shorebirds, soaring with the gulls until it was a mere speck in the sky, and roosting for the night on top of a tall, unused crane along the ship channel. An earlier PEREGRINE, seen at Morro Bay by Jerry Maisel on Oct. 16th was evidently a transient bird, since the resident pair left in mid-August. PRAIRIE FALCONS which are basically resident in the deserts, but wander to the coast in the winter were particularly common west of Lancaster, with seven seen in one day by Jon Dunn. PIGEON HAWKS, rare winter visitors, were found west of Lancaster and in the Imperial Valley. FERRUGINOUS HAWKS were seen in the open country of the western San Joaquin and Antelope Valleys, and below San Diego. This is one of the handsomest and largest hawks, being almost white from below with rufous legs and a rufous band at the end of the tail. OSPREYS seemed less common in November than they had been earlier, but a few of them will probably winter near the larger fishing lakes.

Vagrant passerines continued to receive the lion's share of most rare-birders' time even though the normal migration was over. Two SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHERS was more than our usual fall quota, with one at Morongo Valley and one in the Tj, R, V below San Diego. This is certainly the most graceful and delicately colored of all North American flycatchers. TROPICAL KINGBIRDS, which are irregular for fall stragglers north along the Pacific coast from Mexico, were reported more often this October than in 1970 with four or more seen below San Diego,