

Los Angeles Audubon Society

The Western Tanager

VOLUME 38 · 1971-72 · № 5 JANUARY

Alaska Tundra Birds continued

by Alan Baldridge

2. Tussock-heath tundra

on slightly elevated rises, sometimes old beach lines, provide a better drained, short vegetation biotope, preferred by a distinct group of bird species. It was in such areas that one was likely to flush a white-fronted Goose from her nest, or disturb a brood of Willow Ptarmigan, accompanied by both adults as they emerged from cover for an evening feed. The "Little Brown" race of the Sandhill Crane was a common breeder about these drier hummocks. Nesting shorebirds identified with such areas were Black-bellied Plovers, Whimbrel, the super-abundant Western Sandpiper and the scarce Bar-tailed Godwit. The last species, like all breeding godwits, is a wary bird but at the same time bold in territorial defense. They were frequently seen driving off marauding gulls and jaegers.

3. Sedge-moss covered lower slopes of the Askinuk Mountains rise from the flat coastal tundra, to the 300-foot level. These well-drained hillsides often have extensive patches of chest-high alder or willow thicket. This was especially true where snow-fed streams debouched onto the plain. These hillsides provided the nesting sites for Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers. While the latter was a little less numerous, both were common, and nests were found, although there were far more non-breeders of both species, apparently due to the low point in the Lemming cycle at the time of our visit. The Parasitic Jaegers concentrated their hunting on the coastal flats and in intercepting gulls and terns using the river as a flyway, the Long-tails ranged to the highest mountain tops, perhaps living a less piratical existence.

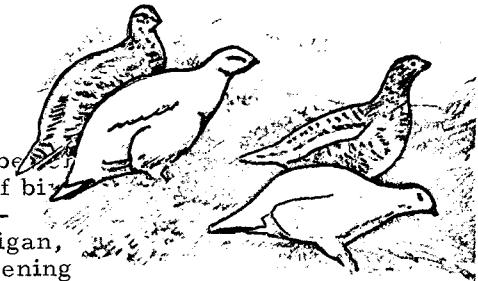
The willow patches were the only refuge available to boreal species such as the Gray-cheeked Thrush. Warblers were represented by small numbers of Yellows and Wilson's. Most characteristic of the scrub areas was one of the asiatic intruders into Western Alaska, the Yellow Wagtail. Hoary and Common Redpolls were also at their most abundant, although they ranged high into the mountains, where the alder scrub became a stunted, ground-hugging growth. Their loud and chattering calls carried far. The lighter colored Hoary race clearly outnumbered the darker Common Redpoll. These thickets of willow and alder provided the home for the finest passerine bird song in the area, that produced by three sparrows, the Tree, the Golden-crowned and especially the russet-colored Fox Sparrow.

4. Heather and lichen covered the plateau 1000 feet above the lower slopes and the willow thickets of the Askinuks. Here talus slopes littered the hillsides and the north-facing slopes held their snow fields well into the summer. Breeding birds were few. The musical whistle of the Golden Plover betrayed their otherwise unseen presence. Herbert Brandt in 1924 had suspected that the Rock Sandpiper would be found breeding in these mountains, although he had failed in his search, but had noted them as common migrants on the coast at Hooper Bay. One of the highlight discoveries of our expedition was a nest with newly hatched young at the 1000-foot level and close to a very rocky area. The highest rocky screes were home for a few pairs of dazzling Snow Buntings, the males in fluttering display.

5. 'Tors' (isolated rocky outcrops) sprouted in places from the mountains. These provided secure nesting sites for the few pairs of Rough-legged Hawks and Ravens. Neither species was observed away from the mountains. The latter species remain about the village during winter and, together with the Willow Ptarmigan, is the only bird found there at that season. One small Cliff Swallow colony had established itself on a 'tor' on the warmer south side of the range. The eskimo children had been taught that insectivorous birds around the village might help abate the mosquito problem there. We were astonished to find two pairs of Tree Swallows attempting to breed in boxes set up for them.

Very few species occur ubiquitously in the region, breeding successfully in all of the major habitats described here. Two which appeared to do so were the Lapland Longspur and the Savannah

Continued overleaf



GROUSE (from top):
Blue, Sooty, Franklin's, Ruffed, and Sharp-tailed Grouse; Rock and Willow Ptarmigan.



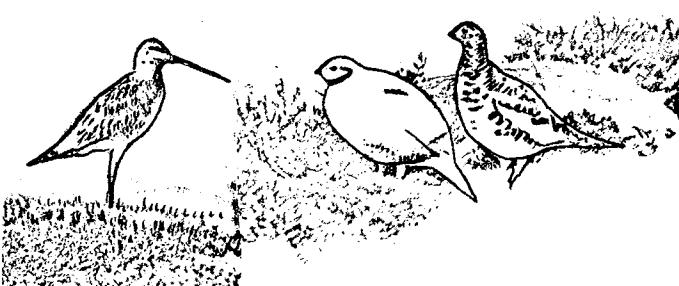
Alaska Tundra Birds *continued*

Sparrow. Both are found from the flat coastal plain to the highest summits of the mountains. In the case of the longspur the favorite song perch of one male was the roof of our school-house home.

While most of our time was spent exploring the north slope of the mountains and the network of river and slough stretching north towards the mouth of the Yukon, we did make one major side trip. The forbidding cliffs of Cape Romanzof stretched westward into the Bering Sea. The eskimos described seabird colonies at the tip of the Cape. Knowing this area to be rarely visited by ornithologists we decided to take a boat and circumnavigate the Cape, camping overnight on the Kolomak River to the south. Common Eiders and Harlequin Ducks were abundant about the rocky shores of the Cape, the latter made up almost entirely of flocks of males. At the outermost point the guano-covered rocks were frequented for the most part by non-breeding flocks of Pelagic Cormorants, Black-legged Kittiwakes and Glaucous Gulls. Small numbers of both Horned and Tufted Puffins flew to and fro from cliffs to the ocean, possibly breeding birds.

Although this part of Alaska remains pristine at the present time nevertheless, like the rest of the Arctic it is vulnerable to exploitation. In the early 1960's the threat of the Rampart Dam project on the Yukon, if realized, would have seriously compromised the delta lands. More recently oil exploration has revealed extensive deposits under the shallow coastal tundra and adjoining waters presenting a future threat of exploitation and possible despoliation.

White-tailed Ptarmigan.



BAR-TAILED GODWIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Baldridge is known to the Los Angeles Audubon Society as a leader of birding trips in the Monterey Bay. His knowledge of marine life is professional—he is now at Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove. He has edited the *Audubon Field Notes* of the North Pacific Coastal Region, and of the Middle Pacific Coastal Region. He will be remembered for his classic "Pelagic Birds Off California" appearing in the November issue (No. 3) of Volume 37 of *The Western Tanager*.

AN ANNOTATED SPECIES CATALOGUE OF THE MAJOR TAPE RECORDED HOLDINGS IN THE MOORE LABORATORY OF ZOOLOGY

THE catalogue summarizes in highly abbreviated fashion the most important recorded vocalizations of birds in the Moore Laboratory of Zoology, Sound Library, at Occidental College, Los Angeles, California. Master recordings in this library are retained and catalogued in unedited condition to preserve the maximum natural quality of the original field or laboratory situation. We are anxious to increase our holdings of sound recordings and encourage amateurs and professionals alike to deposit copies of their own recordings in this library, which can serve in the Western United States as a central depository and clearing house much as the Cornell Library of Natural Sound does in the east. Not all institutions are equipped to house and curate sound collections. Yet it is important when a tape recording is cited in support of a scientific interpretation or fact that the recordings be easily available for other workers to hear and reexamine upon request, just as is the case with study skins in a museum. Especially if a recordist has no permanent well curated collection of sounds important to his work or no convenient way to provide copies to other workers for investigation, he should ensure the availability of his materials to the scientific community by arranging for their deposition in a formally maintained library such as that of the Moore Laboratory.

Any qualified student of birds may use recordings in the Moore Laboratory Library in person or may have copies of recordings therein for the cost of tape and the technician's time. Any person may also obtain sonagraphic analysis of his own tapes or of tapes housed in this library at the cost of their production. Those who submit copies, with annotation, of their own recordings for deposit in the library or who send us their recordings so that copies may be made for housing therein, may obtain a commensurate amount of free service and materials from the library.

Merely because a species is already represented in the catalogue does not mean that further recordings are not desirable. We desire good quality recordings of any and all wild bird species or of captives under certain conditions. Recordings do not have to be of perfect fidelity and without extraneous noises to be valuable for many purposes. We especially encourage recordists to include taped commentary on their subjects—including description of habitat, weather, behavior of the recorded bird and other information that increases the biological pertinence of the specimen materials. We are equipped to handle

Continued on page nine

Reminder

Christmas Bird Count December 26

ANNUAL DINNER

January 11

sign up now

***** COME ALL YE FAITHFUL *****

to the PROUD BIRD RESTAURANT Grand Ballroom East
11022 Aviation Boulevard (West of the San Diego
Freeway, between Century and Imperial)

6:30 PM Social Hour 7:30 PM Dinner

!!!!!! PEERLESS PROGRAM !!!!!!!

DR. GEORGE A. BARTHOLOMEW, JR. Professor of Zoology
at U.C.L.A. will show and discuss two of his
superb films on the Galapagos:

DARWIN'S FINCHES and
THE GALAPAGOS ALBATROSS

((((((((((((DELECTABLE DINNER))))))))))))

Mixed Green Salad Garnie
Brochette of Beef Bordelaise
Pilaf of Rice - Buttered Carrots
Chocolate Mousse
Beverage

\$\$\$\$ POPULAR PRICE --- \$8 PER PERSON \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Parking: Ample, convenient, and free.

BAGS OF ROOM.....BRING YOUR GUESTS

Send your check (Payable to L.A. Audubon Society)

to JOANN GABBARD Phone: 395-1911

823 D 19th Street

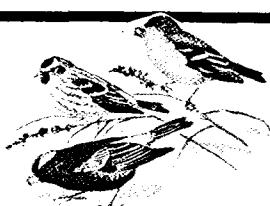
Santa Monica, Calif. 90403

Please enclose stamped addressed envelope.

Reservations must be received no later than Jan. 6.
(No refunds after January 6th)

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HELP! Volunteers are badly needed to help
fold the Tanager for mailing. If you can pos-
sibly give a few hours on "folding day" once a
month call Audubon House at 876-0202.



LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY BIRDING TOURS

Plan to take an LAAS conducted Birding Tour
on your Summer Vacation.

Tours under consideration: Malaysia, Thailand,
Burma, South America

Watch for an early announcement in the Tanager



Audubon House **Sales Department**

The Sales Department is very pleased to be able to announce the long awaited arrival of W. Earl Godfrey's BIRDS OF CANADA. Also BIRD FINDING IN INTERIOR AND SOUTH CENTRAL ALASKA plus the ALASKA CHECKLIST came in recently. For those of you who are already planning another trip to Europe, WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS IN BRITAIN AND EUROPE by John Gooders would be an ideal companion.

For those interested in in-depth study we have F. H. Kortright's DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS. AUDUBON WATER BIRD GUIDE by R. H. Pough is back in stock after a short absence. Either of these books would balance anyone's ornithological library. WILD FLOWERS OF CALIFORNIA by Mary E. Parsons is a fascinating book both for the birder and the naturalist. For those of you who are teaching or working with young people, we have a large supply of teaching and children's guides covering ecology, plants and flowers and birds.



Cannikin Result--More than 900 Sea Otters Dead

News reports estimated 900 to 1100 sea otters killed by the AEC's Cannikin nuclear test on Amchitka. This is according to the preliminary surveys made by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and a biologist under contract to the AEC to do sea otter studies. The number will be known more precisely in June when the Department makes its annual sea otter census. Scientists now state that the Bering Sea side of Amchitka Island is 80 to 90% devoid of sea otters. Although only 20 carcasses have been found so far, biologists have speculated that the others were either blown out to sea by the 100 mph winds of the severe storm during the test, or are trapped below the surface of the ocean by the phenomenon of "underpressure," which destroyed the natural buoyancy of the otter. The Bering Sea floor and beach were abruptly and permanently uplifted about ten feet, much more than AEC scientists had predicted, causing the underpressure by ground acceleration or "cavitation." It was reported that the agency's final environmental impact statement had predicted that up to 240 sea otters might suffer ruptured ear drums and eventually die as a result of the blast.



MAJOR VICTORY for EVERGLADES COALITION

President Nixon asked Congress for federal acquisition of the Big Cypress Swamp, the water resource for Everglades Park. Co-chairmen of the Everglades Coalition, Dr. Elvis J. Stahr and Anthony W. Smith, have been working for two and a half years to preserve the park and its water supply. It is probable that Congress will grant the authority to purchase over a half-million acres of the Big Cypress Swamp as permanent insurance against drainage, pollution, drilling, or development. The Big Cypress provides more than half of the park's water supply. Senators Jackson and Chiles both have bills pending to acquire the Big Cypress.

UPPER NEWPORT BAY FENCED ! !

Portions of the perimeter of Upper Newport Bay are being fenced by the Irvine Company. They are on Irvine Company property. However, the County Counsel collected several hundred affidavits last year from people who had crossed these lands for years to gain access to public tidelands of the bay. These affidavits would form the basis for a lawsuit to establish permanent rights of access to the bay, if the Board of Supervisors directs the County Counsel to proceed. The item is up for discussion now.

NATIONAL URBAN PARK COMMITTEE
can use your help to reach their objective---a national mountain and seashore park which will extend throughout the Santa Monica Mts, fall down to the seashore, and extend outward to include certain of the channel islands. Legislation has been introduced and public and political support is needed. Their address is P.O. Box 48753, Los Angeles, Ca 90048 (272-4743)

LOWER GILA RIVER BIRD HABITAT UNIT

Approximately 1000 acres of land in the Gila National Forest has been set aside by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as habitat for 265 species of birds with at least five "rare" species, including the zone-tailed hawk, the grey hawk and the Mexican black hawk. It is a breeding place for some of these species as well. National Audubon commended then Secretary of the Interior Hardin, expressing the hope that this precedent-setting action on the Gila would serve as an example to other public land-holding agencies.

ANNOUNCING---THE MINERAL KING FILM

Premiere showing of the Mineral King Film will be Saturday, January 22, at 8:30 p.m. in Bovard Auditorium on the USC campus. Free admission! Donations to assist the use of this film may be made at the door. Exhibits, refreshments, and special guests will be featured. Join your friends at the pre-premiere banquet at USC's Town & Gown at 7:30 p.m. (Get-acquainted social at 7:00 p.m.) Send \$5 per person with your reservation to Mrs. Richard Koch, 6334 W. 80th St., Los Angeles, Ca 90045, with checks payable to the Mineral King Film Fund, by Jan. 15, 1972.

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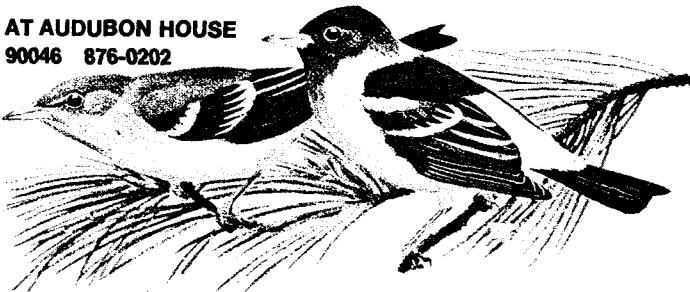
Los Angeles Audubon Society

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**



Jan. 6. THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8 p.m., Audubon House.

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 - ANNUAL DINNER - The Proud Bird Restaurant, 11022 Aviation Blvd. Reservations must be made by January 6. Phone Joanne Gabbard, 395-1911, for information. Social hour 6:30 Dinner 7:30.

Jan. 17 MONDAY - LEGG LAKE and WHITTIER NARROWS RECREATION AREA. Meet at 9 a.m. at the north side of the parking lot. Take San Bernardino Fwy. (Interstate 10) or Pomona Fwy. (State 60) to Rosemead Blvd. then south to Durfee Ave. Joan Mills, leader. CR 5-4821.

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 - Frances Kohn, phone 665-0171.

Jan. 22 & SATURDAY - LAKE NORCO. Meet in Norco at 8:30 a.m. Take the San Bernardino Freeway to the Riverside-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. 3 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8 p.m., Audubon House.

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 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: Keith Axelson, 394-2255; Don & Caroline Adams, 372-5536.

Feb. 8 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING, 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Program to be announced.

Feb. 12 SATURDAY-SUNDAY - MORRO BAY. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the foot of Morro Rock. This is one of our best areas for wintering coastal birds; it also provides excellent birding in wooded areas and canyons in the vicinity. Many people go up Friday night in order to have a full day Saturday and a half day Sunday. There is camping at Morro Bay State Park; many good motels are to be found in the vicinity of Morro Bay and nearby San Luis Obispo. Morro Bay is approximately 210 miles north of Los Angeles via the Coast Highway (US 101). Leader Feb. 12-13, Bob Blackstone, 277-0521; Feb. 19-20, Herb Clarke, 249-5537.

Feb. 12 SATURDAY - NEWPORT BACK BAY. Meet on Back Bay Road at 8:30 a.m. Freeman Tatum, Leader. 454-8839.

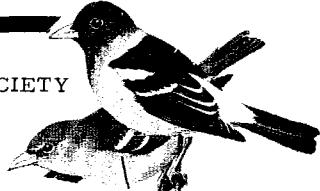
Feb. 26 SATURDAY - PELAGIC TRIP - VANTUNA.

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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Los Angeles, Calif. 90046



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audubon activities

FIELD TRIP - Santa Barbara, Nov. 13. The group gathered at the Andre Clark Bird Refuge and birded there about an hour, seeing a surprising number of CANVASBACKS - more than 100. Going next to the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden they saw few birds, although a MAC GILLIVRAY'S WARBLER was observed. Because the first rain of the season had come on the previous Thursday, the rare birds we had hoped to show the party moved out, including the GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER which had been here since Nov. 9 and several TROPICAL KINGBIRDS which had remained in the area since Sept. 31. After a lunch stop at Tucker's Grove County Park the group proceeded to Goleta Slough. This was where we saw the female OLDSQUAW and the female HOODED MEGANSER which have been in the same location since Oct. 21. The OLDSQUAW was not at all spooky and everyone got fine looks at it. The MEGANSER was more spooky, but even so most of the party had satisfactory views. Nelson Metcalf, leader.

EVENING MEETING - Nov. 9. As a complement to the interesting article "Five Years in a Box" Russ Wilson presented his program "Happiness Is 600 Birds." His informative narration accompanied the excellent slides, most of which were birds he and Marion have seen on their wide travels across the United States and Canada. Russ not only gave many pointers on how, when and where to see birds, but had suggestions of many persons whom he and Marion had met and who were helpful to them in birding, and who are willing to help other serious birders. The Wilsons have been most generous in presenting this outstanding program to Audubon societies throughout the country.

FIELD TRIP - Malibu Lagoon, Nov. 28. A large number of BROWN PELICANS were seen by the group as well as a MEW GULL and a GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL. Up the stream a fine view was had of SNIPE, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS and many other interesting birds. The leaders, Bob and Bonny Kennedy invited everyone present to lunch in their patio, where the bird of the day was seen: a WESTERN TANAGER having a drink in the bird bath. Later nine enthusiasts continued up the coast to Hueneme where many hawks were seen. The last bird to be seen was a HOODED MEGANSER seen at Mugu on the way home by the leaders.

FIELD TRIP - Malibu Lagoon, Dec. 7. Nine hardy enthusiasts braved the wind and the cold to join Jean Brandt on Tuesday morning. Although the wind had both birds and birders seeking cover a total of 53 species were seen. Excellent views were had of BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS, SNIPE and a GREATER YELLOWLEGS. An obliging HERMIT THRUSH joined the group for a time, giving everyone an opportunity to study him in detail.

FIELD TRIP—Carrizo Plains, December 11-12.

Jim Huffman led the second LAAS trip from Maricopa to the Carrizo Plains on a day which was cool but with no wind. LeConte's Thrashers and Sage Sparrows were seen west of Maricopa in the usual place. Twelve Ferruginous Hawks, four Prairie Falcons, three adult Golden Eagles and one immature (with the white in the tail and wings). Red-tailed Hawks were all of the melanistic variety. A Short-eared Owl was again seen where the road enters the plains. A Barn Owl was seen at the south of Soda Lake. Two dead owls (probably Barn) were in one of the tanks at the southeast end of the lake. A Burrowing Owl was also seen there.

There was no water in the lake, which probably accounted for the scarcity of Sand-hill Cranes, of which less than a hundred were counted. The total species count was forty-three.

EVENING MEETING—December 14

Professor Thomas R. Howell of the Department of Zoology at the University of California in Los Angeles presented slides and motion pictures taken of the bird life on Midway. The incredible nesting of the Fairy Terns and flight displays of the Red-tailed Tropicbird will never be forgotten. An unexpected pleasure was the report that man's presence on Midway has after some bad starts actually increased the number of nesting successes on the island. Indeed the small island, Eastern, may be given up by the Navy in the fairly near future.





environment besieged

by Kathryn Brooks

HEARINGS on RAPTOR PROTECTION

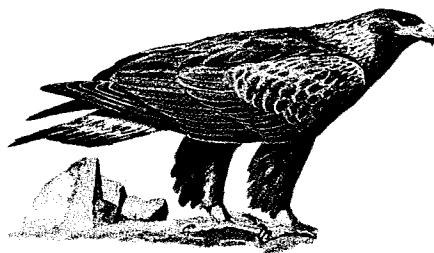
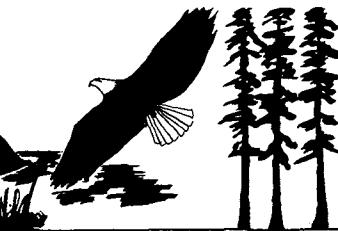
The December 1971 publication of the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey, Vol. 6, No. 5, reported a synopsis of the comments made concerning raptor protection bills H. R. 5821 and H. R. 10482. The following is from page 4.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY spokesman was Charles H. Callison, executive vice president, who gave the subcommittee a brief history of the Bald Eagle Act and a rundown of the causes of raptor declines. On the subject of falconry, Callison said:

"Falconry is a difficult problem. The ardent, ethical falconers develop a highly emotional attachment to the live birds they fly. This makes them subjective and highly emotional about their sport, and also protective to the species they use. This is true, I think, of the leaders of the North American Falconers Association, although one of their past directors was convicted last year of taking and possessing 12 gyrfalcons illegally. The biggest problem caused by falconers is, in my opinion, due to their inability to resist the newspaper interview, the radio mike or TV camera. They bask in publicity and love to promote the glory of their sport. This encourages youths who are totally untrained or emotionally unfit to care for a wild raptor to strive to possess a bird. These youngsters go climbing trees to remove the eyas, or they become the customers of the pet shops and the mail order profiteers. Most hawks so possessed by the untrained and the inept are soon dead.

"The National Audubon Society feels strongly that falconry should be strictly regulated if it is permitted, and very few states have such regulations or try to enforce them. Some states simply have no provision for falconry, in effect prohibiting it, but at the same time making no effort to enforce the prohibition.

"We believe that under no circumstances should falconers be permitted to take or possess birds of endangered species. We do not believe the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has the manpower to enforce suitable regulations for falconry, including the necessary periodic in-



spection of falconers and the facilities they maintain for keeping the birds, unless the State wildlife agencies participate in such enforcement and inspection.

"Therefore, instead of the two-word authorization in line 23, page 2, of H.R. 10482, we recommend the following explicit amendment for the authorization and regulation of falconry:

"The Secretary may by regulation permit the taking and possession of falconiformes other than bald eagles for the practice of falconry: provided that falconry permits shall not be issued for the taking or possession of any species found by the Secretary to be rare or endangered under the authority of the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 or to the resident of any state which prohibits falconry or which, in the Secretary's judgment, does not have an adequate law for the licensing and regulation of falconry or that does not provide for efficient enforcement of such law."

"Such a provision would encourage the states to adopt suitable licensing requirements and regulations for falconry, and to enforce them. At the same time it would prevent an unnecessary and possibly fatal drain on the population of rare and endangered species. With this amendment, we urge a favorable report on H.R. 5821."

NATIONAL URBAN PARK COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 48753, Los Angeles, California 90048/Telephone 272-4743



CONDOR

To All Los Angeles Audubon Members:

Last April we sent out a summary of 1969 California condor observations, hoping to get more people interested in reporting condors to us. Knowing where condors are at various times of the year is extremely important in our current program of research and preservation of this very rare bird.

Many people sent us reports in 1970, and these records are summarized on the map included with this letter. This is perhaps our best year ever for having a good idea of condor distribution, and we sincerely appreciate the help you gave. Please continue to send your reports to us during the 1971 year.

The 1970 information yields the following facts and suggests several questions for which we need answers.

1. Ten or more condors were reported together on several occasions in Kern County: Ellsworth Ranch southeast of Arvin, 12 on June 8; Farnsworth Ranch near Glennville, 10-22 in August and early September; and Tejon Ranch, 10-17 in November. *Are there other large congregations we are missing, or are the condors more widely distributed in smaller groups at other times?*

2. We receive very few reports of condors actually seen feeding. Those we did get were: *January* - Moorpark area, Ventura County, dead cow; *February-March* - none; *April* - Moorpark, sheep, and Frazier Valley (Tulare Co), cow; *May* - Granite Station (Kern), calf; *June* - Ellsworth Ranch (Kern), steer; *July* - Glennville (Kern), deer; *August* - Glennville, calves, and Santa Paula (Ventura), deer; *September* - Glennville and Granite Station, calves, and western Kern County, deer; *October* - none; *November* - Monache Meadows (Tulare), deer; and *December* - none.

Where, and on what, are condors feeding at other times?

3. We received two (possibly three) reports of condors in Santa Clara County in September. The closest other records were in southern Monterey and northern San Luis Obispo counties. *Are there condors in the country between, and are there condors in Santa Clara County at other times of the year?*

4. Reports of possible condors came to us from far north on both the west and east sides of the Sierra Nevada. Rumors of condors in Owens Valley reach us periodically. *Are there condors in the Sierra north of Fresno County? Are there condors in Owens Valley?*

5. We did not make an intensive condor nest check this year, so can't estimate total production. We do know that one young bird was reared in the Sespe Condor Sanctuary in Ventura County.

6. The annual condor survey in October failed to account for more than 28 condors. However, this was because of bad weather and poor visibility rather than any decrease in the condor population. We still estimate total numbers at around 60.

Book Review

LIBRARY TALK

Everyone who has read one of Edwin Way Teale's books will be pleased to know he has written a new one. This one is "Springtime in Britain." It is a nature travelogue and it is certainly not one of those "If this is Tuesday we must be in Belgium" types- that kind of travel is not for the Teales. No, it is an account of a leisurely four months travel to explore a foreign spring. On country roads, hedge-bordered lanes, village streets, from Lands End to John O'Groats they drove 11,000 miles keeping to the rural by-ways and avoiding all the large cities. An end paper map shows their route and that route looks like snails' tracks. Naturally they consulted with Peterson and Fisher and other ornithologists beforehand and had the birds pinpointed. On their very first day they saw the skylark and listened to it as if it were the only bird of its kind, only to find that skylarks sing somewhere in England every month of the year. Parenthetically, he mentions that larks are one of the chief sources of food for the sparrow hawk.

Before leaving for Britain, Roger Tory Peterson told them that of the birds seen, roughly one-third would be the same as ours, one third similar to the birds we know, and one-third entirely different.

Mrs. Teale botanized and found much to interest her. Besides the fields of bluebells and daffodils there were wildflowers with strange names such as archangels, woodruffs, ransoms and jacks-by-the-hedge. Always there were historical and literary associations; Roman coins and roads, Thomas Hardy's birthplace and the place where his heart is buried: Gilbert White's Selbourne 50 miles from London, the third greatest city of the world, yet a part of a simple tranquil past; W.H. Hudson, who, when he died left his entire estate to the Royal Society for the protection of Birds.

All together this book has a great fund of information for the person who intends to follow in the Teales' footsteps or to read and enjoy at home.

Bess Hoffman, Librarian

If you see condors, please send your reports to us at: 1190 East Ojai Avenue, Ojai, California 93023. Include your name and address, and all information you have on date seen, time of day, numbers, ages of birds, and what they were doing.

Thank you for any help you can offer.

Sanford R. Wilbur, Wildlife Biologist,
U. S. Department of the Interior.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

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the Yellow Rail did not show. An intrepid, waist-deep wading feat by Jay Sheppard to an isolated dike in mid-bay flushed six CLAPPER RAILS, eight SORAS and one VIRGINIA RAIL. The BLACK RAIL was not seen that morning, but it was studied by 'scope near its usual haunts on December 11. GOLDEN PLOVERS were reported by several observers at Bolsa Chica, and two Goldens of the "fulva" race were seen at Marina del Rey (Hank Brodkin). This Siberian race stays golden on the back even in winter, and is usually a cause for confusion by birders who are not familiar with this race.

Another FRANKLIN'S GULL was found by Russ and Marion Wilson at Huntington Beach on November 16. It will be interesting to see whether these rare gulls are wintering birds or just late migrants. Eight small terns were seen about twenty miles west of San Diego on November 21, and all aboard agreed that most of them showed the field marks of ARCTIC TERNS as set out in "California Birds" Vol. 1, #1. Guy McCaskie cautions, however, that since this is a difficult identification, and since the sighting was more than a month later than any previous record, he would want further confirmation to be 100% sure. Jay Sheppard thinks that the LONG-EARED OWL he found in the tree-tobacco clump at the old sewer plant in Solano Beach in early December may winter there. This is one of the more difficult owls to find in our area.

Although migration was virtually completed by October, a few late migrants lingered into early December. Late WARBLING VIREOS were found in Balboa Park, San Diego, and at Doheny Beach Park near Capistrano Beach on December 5. With the one at Doheny Beach, there were three TOWNSEND'S WARBLERS, which sometimes winter along our coast in very small numbers. Richard Webster reports a rare BAY-BREASTED WARBLER, a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER and a PALM WARBLER near Morro Bay on November 12 and a fine adult male REDSTART north of Santa Barbara on December 3.

A sharp lookout should be kept for wintering orioles. Jewel Kriger who had three BULLOCK'S and one BALTIMORE ORIOLE at her Santa Barbara feeder on December 3 advises using the sugar-water feeder to tempt them. David Bradley found a rare female ORCHARD ORIOLE near his Palos Verdes home on December 5.

Most records of RUSTY BLACKBIRDS come in late November from the area east of our mountains ("California Birds," Vol. 2, #2) as did the one previously mentioned in Death Valley, but Jon Dunn and John Mencke studied one along the reedy margins of Hansen Dam lake near San Fernando on December 10. This is the first local record in several years.

Although at least four CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS were seen below San Diego earlier in the fall, they are seldom identified locally

and the one Shirley Wells banded on November 18 and then retrapped several times in her San Pedro yard may be only the second record for Los Angeles County. A WHITE-THROATED SPARROW appeared to be wintering in Shirley's garden as well. A SWAMP SPARROW, in the Malibu Creek channel above the bridge, was found on November 28 by Richard Webster, and then found independently on December 5 by David Bradley. This secretive water-oriented sparrow is usually found after hearing its call—very similar to that of a Black Phoebe.

LATE REPORTS OF INTEREST—Arnold Small found, what must have been an immature female HARLEQUIN DUCK at Malibu Lagoon on December 12. Even though it was a very dull little duck, it was a Harlequin nevertheless and the first local record in many years. The VIRGINIA'S WARBLER first seen in the Kings' West Los Angeles garden on October 17 has not been seen since the high winds of early December, but the male RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD, which has been coming to their feeder since mid-fall, survived the storms.

It seems strange that the storms of early December, lots of cold wind but no rain, did not bring down more northern and mountain birds—Robins and Waxwings were noticeable by their absence, while Nuthatches, Chickadees, Crossbills, etc., were almost unreported in the lowlands. Only Swans and Lewis' Woodpeckers (Hank Brodkin) found more than thirty at the foot of Mt. Pinos were found here in above average numbers. Careful notes should be kept on these erratic winter species.

P.S. When I mentioned to friend wife that Rusty Blackbirds were very water oriented, she replied, "Oh, is that the reason they're rusty?"

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any standard speed tape, any track type (full, 1/4, 1/2, stereo) and most transport systems (reel to reel, 3-inch to 10-inch reels, cassette). So do not be hesitant to contribute because of these variations in quality or equipment.

If you have further questions, write Dr. John William Hardy, Curator, Moore Laboratory of Zoology, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California 90041, or call (213) 255-5151 ext. 430, week days. By appointment you are welcome to visit the laboratory during normal business hours, 9 to 5, Monday through Friday.

Any interested bird enthusiast may obtain a copy of the catalogue, which also contains information on using the library, by sending or delivering 25 cents in coin to: Dr. John William Hardy, Moore Laboratory of Zoology, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California 90041.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

Shumway Suffel

january

is a time for planning, Christmas Counts closed out 1971 with a flourish, now for the future! What will it be—one big trip, several shorter ones or many long weekends? Whatever you plan, birding is sure to be a major factor in your decisions.

Those fortunate people who birded Australia with the L. A. A. S. group in November know how rewarding a long trip can be, but our concern here is with Southern California and birding. The number-one weekend trip in January, any year, has to be the south end of the Salton Sea after the end of hunting season (mid-month). The sight of thousands of Snow Geese against a deep blue sky is guaranteed to thrill even hardened non-birders (they won't read this, but you might convert one if you take him along). For the birder there are more challenging pursuits, finding that one Blue or Ross' Goose among the thousands of Snows, identifying a very few Stilt Sandpipers in the tens of thousands of shorebirds, and for a real challenge, find a field with thousands of Horned Larks and see if you can separate the Longspurs among them (Lapland, Chestnut-Collared, and McCown's Longspurs have all been seen there in the past few winters). Another worthwhile mid-winter trip is Death Valley. The weather was perfect and the birding rewarding over the Thanksgiving weekend—a WHISTLING SWAN and a WOOD DUCK on the golf course ponds; three HARRIS' SPARROWS in a brushy area, and a TREE SPARROW, a RUSTY BLACKBIRD and a late TENNESSEE WARBLER in the flooded date groves were outstanding. Nearby in the Owen's Valley, Hal and Dotty Baxter found 14 SWANS at Tinnemaha Reservoir, and a SAGE GROUSE and a NORTHERN SHRIKE on the flats north of Crowley Lake.

Reports of FULMARS continued to come in from the piers and breakwaters, and even from the harbors along the coast. Most observers commented on the tameness of the Fulmars which could be approached within a few feet in most cases. The pelagic trip off San Diego on November 21 failed to find the "hoped-for" Slender-billed Shearwaters, but did find FULMARS and MANX SHEARWATERS in large numbers, and a single ANCIENT MURRELET, which was seen well by all aboard. The big surprises, however, were at the Coronado Islands, just south of the border in Mexican waters, where three AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS were seen (only one had been seen there before) with the expected BLACK OYSTERCATCHERS, and thirty-eight BLUE-FOOTED BOOBIES fishing and resting on a ledge with the Pelicans. The latter sighting is doubly interesting because, prior to this fall, there was only one record for our entire Pacific Coast, and it may answer the question of "Where have all our boobies gone?" The fifty or so at the Salton Sea in September were down to two in November, while the seven at Puddingstone Reservoir were down to one. Not all the boobies in November were on the Coronados, however, with one seen from the San Pedro breakwater and one from Rocky Point on the Palos Verdes peninsula (David and Richard Bradley).

Four reports of immature LITTLE BLUE HERONS were unprecedented, although it is probable that only two or three individuals were involved. In order, they were near Oceanside in late October (Alice Fries), at Harbor Lake from November 24 to early December (Arnold Small and Shirley Wells), near Oceanside on December 4 (Jean Brandt) and at Upper Newport Bay on December 5 (Hank Brodkin). LOUISIANA HERONS (rare but regular in winter) also showed up in late November—one below San Diego and two at Bolsa Chica Lagoon.

Late reports would indicate that we are being invaded by WHISTLING SWANS. The first locally, was found on San Elijo Lagoon, San Diego County, on November 18, then on December 11 there were four at Upper Newport Bay (Marge Wilson), one at Seal Beach, and fifty-two on a very small lake in the west end of the Antelope Valley (Jon Dunn). WOOD DUCKS, too, appeared in unusual numbers with about twenty at the Arcadia Arboretum, of which four are feral, four more seemed rather tame—possibly having wintered there last year, and the balance were very wild (Bob Copper). A HOODED MEGANESER at Malibu Lagoon in late November was reported by several people. No European Widgeon were found, although an intensive search was made of the thousands of widgeon at Upper Newport Bay, the San Diego River mouth and at Legg Lake. Possibly they arrive late as most vagrants do.

Birds of prey were widely reported, particularly from the Antelope Valley where seven FERRUGINOUS and one ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK were found on December 11, but FERRUGINOUS HAWKS were also found along the coast with two or more below San Diego and one below Oceanside. A single BALD EAGLE was seen during November at Upper Newport Bay (Trudy Siptroth, et al.) and two sub-adults were there on December 1. PRAIRIE FALCONS were often reported but there were no late reports of Peregrines or Pigeon Hawks.

Local birders took advantage of the extreme high tides in November to look for rails. This culminated in the sighting of a YELLOW RAIL at Upper Newport Bay on December 1. Although the rail was only seen for a few seconds after it flushed and then dropped only ten feet away, the white patches in the wings were obvious and characteristic. The next morning some thirty birders gathered in hopes of a repeat performance, but

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