

Los Angeles Audubon Society

# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 38 · 1971-72 · № 6 FEBRUARY

1971 was a very good year.

## 'SEVENTY-ONE BIRDS

by Shum Suffel

**1971** will be remembered as the year of the BLUE-FOOTED BOOBIES. This Southern California "specialty" occurs north of Mexico, only here, and then usually at the Salton Sea in very small numbers. In September of 1969 we had an unprecedented invasion, northward from the Gulf, when about thirty Blue-foots were counted at the Sea. This was more than the aggregate of all previous sightings in the U.S.A., and, at the time, was very exciting. In early August of 1971 Blue-foots began arriving at the Salton Sea, and, within the month, there were sightings at dozens of places in the desert and coastal lowlands to the north and west of the Sea—Morongo Valley (1); Riverside (1); Lake Elsinore (3); Hansen Dam (1); Harbor Lake (1); and Puddingstone Reservoir (7). By late August they were seen on the ocean itself, where there was only one previous record—Palos Verdes (3); Catalina Island (1); Port San Luis Obispo (7); and even a few as far north as Monterey Bay. The real shocker, however, was finding more than thirty-five on November 21 on the Coronado Islands, just south of the border in Mexico, where they were unknown prior to this fall. They seemed to be in good condition, as compared with the pitiful remnants at less hospitable inland locations, and were fishing and resting on a ledge with the resident Brown Pelicans, just as they would on their natal island in the Gulf of California. With a colony of this size, a desert island and adequate food, it is possible that nesting may be attempted, despite the cold water and summer fogs of the Pacific Coast. With some hundred sightings in twenty widely scattered locations we again have an "irruption" of unprecedented proportions—more than the aggregate of all previous U.S. reports including those in 1969.

But lest readers think that Blue-footed Boobies were the only cause for excitement in 1971, there were at least five new species added to the California list. Unofficially and possibly incompletely, they are:

1. PYRRHULOXIA—seen by many observers at Heise Springs, Imperial County, in February 1971 and reported to be there again in December 1971.
2. OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT—studied, with Double-crested Cormorants for comparison, by a competent observer at West Pond, near Imperial Dam, Colorado River, on April 13, 1971.
3. WHEATEAR—taken on that super bird-magnet, S.E. Farallon Island, in June 1971.
4. RED-HOODED WOODPECKER—seen by many and photographed at Wister Refuge, Salton Sea in August.
5. PIPING PLOVER—studied and photographed near Santa Barbara in December, and probably the same individual seen nearby last April but not confirmed at the time.

In addition two records of pelagic birds are so outstanding that they should be included here:

- A. HORNED PUFFIN—studied by Dr. Joseph Jehl off San Clemente Island. This is the first record of a live bird at sea off Southern California.
- B. LAYSAN ALBATROSS—studied and photographed on a pelagic birding trip off Eureka, California, in October. Fishermen have seen "white albatross" off our coast on rare occasions but this is the first record by competent birders.

SEASON BY SEASON, 1971 WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR:

LAST WINTER was not outstanding for "invasion species" but Robins, Cedar Waxwings and Mountain Chickadees were found in normal numbers, with Fox Sparrows, Purple Finches, and Cassins Finches here in greater than usual numbers. NORTHERN SHRIKES were found at many places in Inyo and Mono Counties, where they were almost unknown previously, and the one at the south end of the Salton Sea, almost to the Mexican border, in late January was hundreds of miles south of any previous sighting.

Several individual birds received a great deal of attention from local birders: a very accommodating little SAW-WHET OWL dozed in a tree at the entrance to Salton Sea State Park for several weeks in January and was much admired; a COMMON (EUROPEAN) TEAL played

*Continued overleaf*

# 'Seventy-one Birds

"hide and seek" along a meadow stream near Lake Sherwood; and a VIRGINIA'S WARBLER supplemented its high protein insect diet with sugar-water from the Gilbert King's hummingbird feeder. Probably the most noteworthy event was the overwintering of at least two, probably three, immature FRANKLIN'S GULLS which were seen many times at Malibu Lagoon or King Harbor, near San Bernardino, and in and above Santa Barbara.

SPRING migration was quite late this year with the western warblers peaking out in early May, and the late migrants—Peewees, Swainson's Thrushes, Tanagers and even Wilson's and Yellow Warblers still present in early June. The Morongo and Yucca Valley area was popular and productive not only because it is the most westerly nesting area for such Arizona species as Wied's Crested Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, and Lucy's Warblers, but because there is always the chance of finding a rare eastern vagrant like the Tennessee Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird or Scissor-tailed Flycatcher which were found there last spring.



SCARLET TANAGER

Further north at Deep Spring, Death Valley other rarities were found—Bobolinks, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers and rarest of all, a Yellow-throated Warbler.

VAUX'S SWIFTS were seen more often than usual in late April, and within a few weeks it became quite evident that May 1971 was the "Month of the Swifts." Over one hundred VAUX'S SWIFTS were banded in a vacant house near Palos Verdes, which they entered by funneling down the chimney. BLACK SWIFTS, too, were found in several places later in the month, with more than twenty at the Encino Reservoir being the top count. The climax of the swift story came over the Memorial Day weekend, when CHIMNEY SWIFTS (unknown in coastal California prior to June 1968) were found at Encino Reservoir with many WHITE-THROATED SWIFTS, one BLACK SWIFT, and two late VAUX'S SWIFTS; thus making it possible to see all four North American swifts at one time. As a corollary to this, the simultaneous visits of a HARRIS' SPARROW and a WHITE-THROATED SPARROW in mid-April to a Monrovia feeder which already hosted many WHITE and GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROWS made possible the same feat with all four Zonotrichias.

For many years Cottonwood Springs, twenty miles east of Indio, has been known as the most westerly outpost for nesting Elf Owls, but since the huge native cottonwoods were cut down several years ago, these tiny owls have decreased, and this year they were not reported by those few observers who looked (and listened) for them.

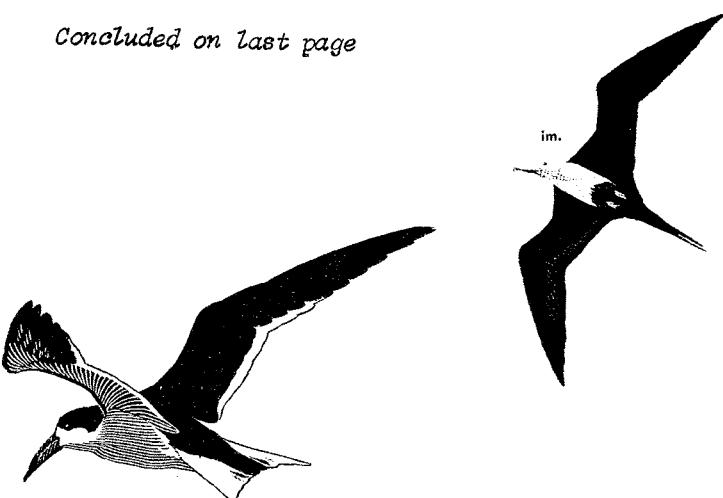
## continued

SUMMER in our lowland desert areas is a post-nesting season, but in the mountains nesting is in full swing. Most fascinating are summer reports of birds which are not known to nest south of the Sierra Nevada, and of those Mexican species which are known to nest only in southeastern Arizona. In the first category, it seems almost certain that MacGillivray's Warblers are nesting in our mountains, probable that Nashvilles are, and possible that Hermits are. Yet, no nests have been found and there is much arduous work to be done before proof is at hand. Two intriguing summer reports suggest the possibility of nesting—a BLUE GROUSE was reported on Mt. San Jacinto (they nest in the Sierras and formerly, at least, on Mt. Pinos but are not reported south of there); and a male BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD was seen and heard on the north (desert) slope of the San Bernardino Mountains (this Rocky Mountain hummer nests in the White and Inyo Mountains of eastern California, both desert ranges).

We now know, although we did not realize it until 1968, that WHIP-POOR-WILLS, of the Arizona race, have been nesting in the San Jacinto Mountains for at least fifteen years. This July for the first time a pair of HEPATIC TANAGERS were found along Arrastré Creek on the desert side of the San Bernardino Mountains in a habitat very similar to their Arizona mountains. Male "Hepatic" were seen in this same general area in 1968 and 1969. Still more intriguing was a single-observer report of an EASTERN BLUEBIRD on the desert side of the San Gabriel Mountains (they also nest in southeastern Arizona).

The Salton Sea again proved to be the most productive, and uncomfortable, place for summer birding. In addition to the BLUE-FOOTED BOOBIES (already covered in detail) there were many other post-breeding visitors from the Gulf of California—over three hundred LAUGHING GULLS (an unprecedented number); nearby fifty YELLOW-LEGGED WESTERN GULLS (might be a separate species); 150 WOOD IBIS; at least two FRIGATEBIRDS; and two BLACK SKIMMERS (only the fifth record for California).

*Concluded on last page*



# Report from Sandy Wohlgemuth

## Christmas Count 71

**T**HE 1971 Christmas Count of Los Angeles Audubon was a smashing success. What appeared a very few days in advance to be looming disaster in the form of torrential rain changed providentially on the 26th to a brisk, sunny, and transparently clear day. Our extraordinary luck was underscored by miserable weather on Count Day plus one. The rain, however, may have affected us considerably as many observers complained of the relatively small number of birds. The 58 staunch participants are to be congratulated on 30,442 individual birds and 136 species. This is 9000 birds, 7 species and 15 observers less than last year but it still remains a splendid achievement.

The most abundant bird was Audubon's Warbler (3800) followed closely by House Finch (3300). Last year's leaders—Robin (4300) and Cedar Waxwing (3900)—were down to a more normal level of 900 each. Our best birds this time around were: a Hooded Merganser and two Slate-colored Juncos at Lake Hollywood, a Cassin's Finch and a Steller's Jay in Griffith Park, the Kings' hand-fed Rufous Hummingbird and *three* fantastic Golden Plovers at Marina Del Rey. Nine Costa's Hummingbirds were seen by five different parties in our circle—an impressive statistic.

One of the limiting factors of our urban area is the scarcity of marsh and estuary habitat. Insistent importunities by the compiler drove Hal Ferris, our agent at Ballona Creek and Hughes, to unearth the first Yellowthroat in years on a Los Angeles count. And for frosting on the cake he came up with an American Bittern. Next year a Long-billed Marsh Wren?

The exciting unpredictability of Christmas Counts was dramatically demonstrated this year. The Virginia's Warbler at the Kings' seductive hummingbird feeder at Christmas 1970 showed up again in the fall but left before this year's count. But the Yellow-shafted Flicker at Rosedale Cemetery, seen in October by Ed Navojosky, not only was still there on count day but was accompanied by a hybrid Yellow-Red-shafted. Of the six birds mentioned in the December "Tanager" article that were missed in 1970, four were found this year: Lawrence's Goldfinch, Brown Creeper, Roadrunner and White-tailed Kite. A short time before the count Kim Garrett at UCLA found a remarkable Orchard Oriole in association with a Bullocks and a Hooded. They were seen up to a few days before count day but (sad to relate) were all gone when we needed them most. Some other birds that appeared this year but not last were: Snowy Egret, Marsh Hawk, Greater Yellowlegs (6!) and Caspian Tern. A Chukar was seen at the Veterans Administration in Westwood but not counted as it was assumed to

be an escaped bird. The most startling loss was the American Widgeon; not a single bird on all the lakes in the city parks in our area. Three hundred Widgeons in small Reseda Park (Los Angeles, but outside our circle) stir dark fantasies of kidnap next year. Other near misses were: Snowy Plover, Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck and Red-winged Blackbird. The most sobering absences were all loons and cormorants at the beach and the Marina, though one Red-throated Loon did show up at Stone Canyon reservoir.

The name of the game is luck and organization. There's not much one can do about luck except the proper rites of propitiation. Organization is the job of the compiler who needs all the help he can get. Like fresh ideas and new enclaves within our count circle. And stalwart volunteers who are willing to go out before count day and stake out birds we're liable to miss. Or a Special Forces Unit with tape recorders for owls? Many thanks to everyone who worked so hard and did so well. Wait till next year!

## MALIBU COUNT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30

Twenty-two observers in (generally speaking) ten parties counted a total of 135 species, approximately 11,660 individuals. There were very strong winds along the coast and up the coastal canyons, but it was fairly quiet inland and sunny all day. Durward Skiles had an immature Harris' Sparrow and a White-throated Sparrow at his feeder in Topanga. Rusty Scalf found a Gray-headed Junco, a Slate-colored Junco, and, at the Pet Cemetery north of the Ventura Feeway, a Cassin's Kingbird. A single Steller's Jay was on the grounds of the Clareville Seminary (seen by Jean Brandt, Ruth Lohr, Margie Sears, et al.). The Wohlgemuth's found a Wilson's Warbler at Tapia Park. Red-shouldered Hawks were reported by several parties—a total of fourteen. This was the best count in the history of the Malibu (Topanga) count.

Joan Mills, compiler

The Carrizo Plains Christmas Count was conducted in good weather. Seventy-two species were counted, including all five owls, the Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon and 2500 Sandhill Cranes—Robert Copper, compiler.



#### STOP ABUSES OF CLEAR-CUTTING

The Sierra Club National News Report (Jan. 14, 1972) requests that letters be sent to President Nixon protesting the dropping of an Executive Order restricting clear-cutting. The order as drafted by the Council on Environmental Quality would "not permit clear-cutting on public timber lands except" under a set of described conditions--"no clear-cutting in areas of outstanding scenic beauty" or "on sites where slope, elevation and soil type" would create severe erosion. Strong timber industry prevailed, however, and the order was abandoned at the meeting attended by Rogers Morton, CEQ Chairman Train, and Sec. of Agric. Earl Butz. Butz claimed the action would be premature because studies by CEQ and the Presidential Advisory Task Force on Timber Supply had not been completed yet!

#### 4-STEPS TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES

G. Ray Arnett, director of the State Dept. of Fish and Game, presented a report to Gov. Reagan and the Legislature calling for a new spending program supported by the general population--not just hunters and fishermen--to continue the survival of California's 19 endangered and 24 rare species of wildlife.

The report urges 1) Public funds be provided to cover financing the preservation and management of species not hunted or commercially utilized. 2) Research to pinpoint the requirements for survival of threatened species. 3) To protect by law or under public ownership, the habitats critical to survival of such species. 4) Programs must be developed and implemented immediately.

#### TIJUANA Slough-CONCRETE Flood CHANNEL

The San Diego Audubon Society and a coalition of local organizations have been battling a \$30-million proposed concrete flood control channel in California's Tijuana River Valley. Development of the valley's flood plain would depend on the river being ditched. The coalition claims that the valley is far more valuable for its wetlands and wildlife, and that there is plenty of land available nearby that is more suitable for development. (Aud. Leader, January 7, 1972)

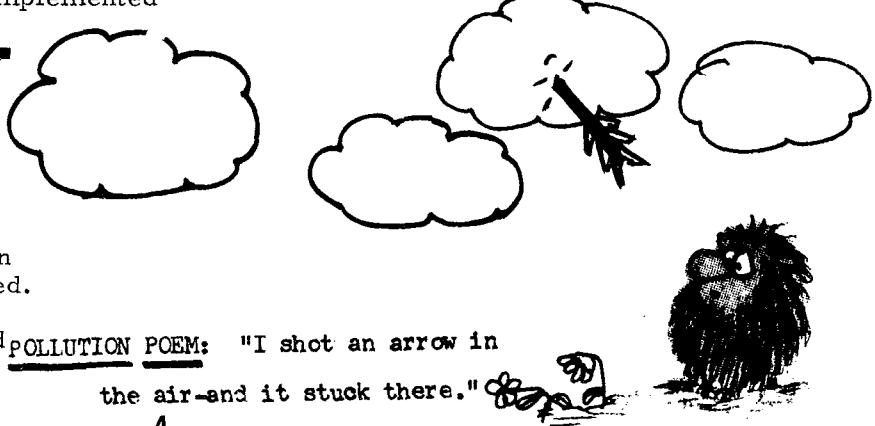
#### REFORM of PREDATOR CONTROL PROGRAMS

"A Casper, Wyoming cattle rancher who is also president of the Murie Audubon Society gave eloquent testimony on predator control at the recent hearings by Sen. Gale W. McGee's Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environmental and Consumer Protection. He is Dr. Oliver K. Scott, who conceded 'some predator control is necessary as long as we have a sheep industry,' but asked for a 'more reasonable approach.'

'The senseless use of poisons must stop,' he said. 'The killing of everything that will take bait, which means most of our western animals and birds, is not a reasonable method of control.' It was the Murie Chapter which found the poisoned eagles which set off the Congressional investigation last summer." (From the Audubon Leader, January 7, 1972)

Dr. Scott said that the coyote is really the only serious predator on sheep, not the mountain lion, bear, bobcat, nor golden eagle. He stated that most coyotes avoid sheep, with the problem lying only in the occasional renegades, individuals or small groups of coyotes, that develop a taste for sheep. Selective methods for controlling renegades should be used. He declared an end to programs designed to kill all coyotes, and which kill other forms of wildlife indiscriminately. He added that perhaps a majority of ranchers consider coyotes "economically beneficial" because of their appetite for grass-eating rodents.

The Society's Executive Vice President Charles Callison and Western Representative Robert Turner both submitted statements.



POLLUTION POEM: "I shot an arrow in the air-and it stuck there."

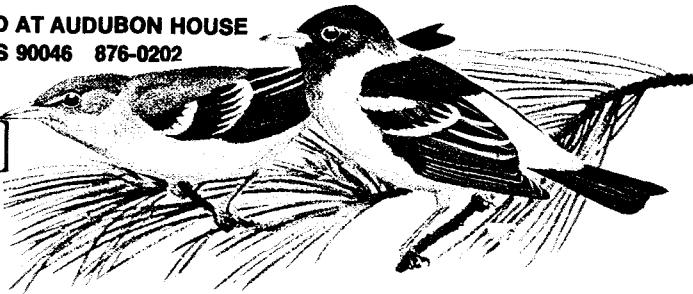
# Los Angeles Audubon Society

# 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**



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 LeConte'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 and Caroline Adams, 372-5536.

Feb. 7 MONDAY - HUENEME and POINT MUGU. Meet at 9 a.m. corner of Hueneme Rd. and Casper Rd. Take Hueneme Rd. off ramp from Rte 1, go west 1.9 mi. to Casper Rd. Leaders: Jean Brandt. 788-5188. Joan Mills 275-4821

Feb. 8 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING, 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Speaker, Jay Shepard: "Ring that Bird" Jay Shepard, a renowned bird-bander will explain and demonstrate the bird-banding program.

Feb. 12 -13 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 - alternate trip. Meet on Back Bay Road at 8:30 a.m. Freeman Tatum, leader. 454-8839.

Feb. 26 SATURDAY - PELAGIC TRIP - VANTUNA, meet at 5:30 a.m., departure at 6:00 a.m. Destination will be the Santa Barbara Island. Directions to Vantuna's berth will be sent with confirmation of reservations. Reservations are limited to 30 persons and will be accepted by mail only. Fare = \$12. Make check payable to the Los Angeles Audubon Society and send to: Joan Gabbard, 823 - 19th Street, Apt. D, Santa Monica, CA 90403. Arnold Small, leader.

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

Mar. 9 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Program to be announced.

Mar. 11 SATURDAY - TUJUNGA WASH AND HANSEN DAM. Meet at 8 a.m. on the north side of Foothill Blvd. by the bridge, 2 miles west of Sunland. Cactus Wren and Costa's Hummingbird are possibilities. Leader to be announced.

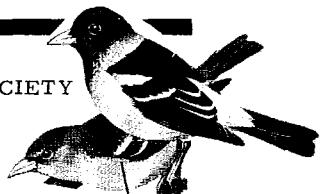
Mar. 26 SUNDAY - ARBORETUM - 8:30 a.m. Take San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd. Go north on Rosemead to Huntington Dr, east on Huntington Dr. to Baldwin Ave., north on Baldwin to the Main Entrance of the park. Bob Copper, leader. 798-8611.

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

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# audubon activities

FIELD TRIP-Dec. 4-5 - Carrizo Plain. The trip was successful despite poor attendance. After waiting until 9:15 a.m. for more birders to arrive, the three participants left Maricopa and proceeded to look for birds. The day was beautifully crisp, starting out with snow which gave way to blue sky before noon. The sightings included the interesting observation of an immature GOLDEN EAGLE accompanied by a RED-TAILED HAWK; a flock of about 100 SANDHILL CRANES soaring over Soda Lake, joined by 50 more birds before landing; and, on Sunday along Route 58 towards San Luis Obispo, additional GOLDEN EAGLES and several LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS. Larry Sansone, leader.

FIELD TRIP-Dec. 11 -Dana Point Harbor and Mesa. The WANDERING TATTERL'S teetering amid surf-washed rocks, the sweet song of a CALIFORNIA THRASHER on a toyon-covered hillside --these were the diversity of rewards for the twelve birders who braved the morning chill at Dana Point. Visibility was so good that San Clemente Island could be clearly seen on the western horizon. Noteworthy were the sightings of a COMMON LOON, two WANDERING TATTERLERS, MOUNTAIN PLOVER and flocks of WATER PIPITS. A total of 66 species was observed. Trudy Siptroth, leader.

FIELD TRIP - Buena Vista Lagoon - Jan. 8. Promptly at the appointed time on a chilly Saturday morning, 15 ardent birders assembled on Hill Street at Buena Vista Lagoon. While the group was assembling, several good birds were spotted including the BELTED KINGFISHER, AMERICAN and SNOWY EGRETS. Due to a cold wind off the water, it was decided to start the day inland at the eucalyptus grove. Here more people joined the group. A walk through the trees warmed everyone up and all were ready for lunch on the return. Two WHITE-FACED GLOSSY IBIS were discovered by R. W. Jackson and everyone present had a good look. The two Ibis were later joined by a third and then all three took off over the surf. On the way home at Newport Bay a number of birders saw the CLAPPER RAIL, bringing the day's total up to 64 species. Leslie E. Wood, leader.

ANNUAL DINNER - On the evening of January 11, more than 100 members and friends met in the grand ballroom east to enjoy the festive atmosphere and banquet fare provided by the Proud Bird Restaurant. Guests of honor included Mr. and Mrs. John Hopper of San Fernando Audubon, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Borneman, and Dr. and Mrs. George A. Bartholomew. After introducing the executive board members, President Herbert Clarke presented a check for \$1500 to John Borneman for the Condor Conservation Fund, the result of last year's fund raising drive. Mrs. Abigail King was the recipient of a plaque in appreciation of her many years

## Audubon House Sales Department

"Birds of Asia" by Gould and Rutgers has been out of print for some time but our sales department feels fortunate to have tracked down two copies of it and it's worth the buy. Another overseas book "Hawaii's Birds" has just arrived, written and compiled by the Hawaii Audubon Society. It's a very handy and informative pocket guide for only \$2. Additional checklists are being added to our already growing list including Checklists for Birds of Mexico, Alaska, and West Virginia. Finally, we now have a good supply of hard and soft cover "Birds of North America" by Robbins which is one of our most popular books. We now have a complete line on hand of the "Living World Series" which features all aspects of individual animal wildlife plus superb photography! Recommended for young readers too. Speaking of wildlife, we still have some lovely notepaper featuring black and white sketches of animals by Birchrunville. We should mention that "Birder's Life List & Diary" now costs \$2.50. The Supplement, still \$2.25, now includes a list of Hawaii's birds at the front. The fourth edition of "Between Pacific Tides" has been revised by J. W. Hedgpeth and we welcome it to our book store and our readers.

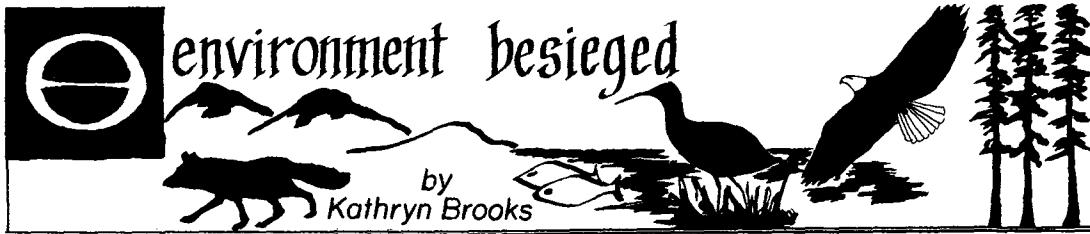
### COMMENT ON "CHRISTMAS COUNT 71"

The article on "Christmas Count 71" mentions 1033 House Finches reported on last year's counts in Massachusetts, and then continues "a bird only recently introduced in the east".

I myself saw House Finches on Long Island in 1943 and, reference to *Birds of the New York Area* by John Bull will confirm that this bird has been seen there in the wild state since 1942, with the first nest being reported in 1943. You yourself probably remember that birders used to make special trips to Long Island to see this species and the European Goldfinch.

Dudley Ross

of dedicated service to the society in her capacity as executive secretary and in her efforts in organizing the work at Audubon House. Dr. Bartholomew then presented his magnificent films of the Galapagos Islands, DARWIN'S FINCHES and THE GALAPAGOS ALBATROSS. As an additional treat, a five-minute reel on the PELICANIFORMES provided the finale to an outstanding evening.



## 1971 LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS (?) REPORT

### SACRAMENTO: BILLS PASSED.

AB 660-Dunlap. Four year moratorium on killing of mountain lion. SB 722-Behr. Protection for Tule Elk. SB 297-Marks. Create state game refuge at Farallon Islands. AB 2168-Vasconcellos. Orders state agencies to return waste paper for recycling. AB 1981-Sieroty. Prohibits governmental body or public utility from taking park land for non-park purposes without replacing it. SB 271-Beilenson. Spells out procedures, public hearings, etc. that State Parks & Recreation Commission & Department must follow concerning park system. SB 272-Beilenson. Redefines categories of units within park system to protect natural areas, allow for improved areas, off road vehicle areas, etc.

### SACRAMENTO: BILLS FAILED.

AB 1471-Sieroty. Coastline Protection Bill. Killed in Senate Natural Resource Committee. (Thank you Senator Wedworth!) AB 1056-Z'berg. State environmental quality board, land use planning and control. Killed in Senate Committee on Governmental Organization. ACA 26-Z'berg. Environmental Bill of Rights. Killed in Senate. AB 985-Z'berg. To give legal standing to class actions to stop pollution. Died in Senate Judiciary Committee. AB 1087-Sieroty. One year moratorium in St. Monica Mts. Died in Senate Gov't Org. Com. SB 107-Behr. Killed on Senate Floor. To add Klamath, Trinity, Eel Rivers to Wild River System. AB 11-Robert. Bars officers & employees of any agency discharging wastes in water from membership on water quality control boards. Died in inactive file of Senate. AB 552-Ryan. Misdemeanor to use, possess or sell DDT without approval of director of agriculture, fines up to \$6,000 a day. Died in Assembly Environmental Quality Committee.

Collecting bird-wildlife lists of POINT MUGU, Sycamore Canyon, La Jolla Valley AREA. Anytime of year (but please note the approximate date on your list). Your sightings may help save the area from development. Send to Joan Mills, 1500 San Ysidro Dr., Beverly Hills, 90210.

## URGE MORTON to SET UP ALASKAN REFUGES

"Sen. Lee Metcalf, one of the leading sponsors of the conservation provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, has written to Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, urging him to make full use of the provisions of that law which enables him to withdraw public lands in Alaska and protect them as wildlife refuges. There are marine and marshland areas in Alaska, he said, of 'great importance in the perpetuation of a vast number of migratory birds of many species from three continents.'

It will be impossible to assure that all habitat used by the birds and other wildlife in Alaska will be undisturbed, the Senator wrote, but 'there is every reason to expect that most of the most valuable habitat for migratory birds, now almost entirely public land, can be designated for special protection as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The only requirement is that the Department of the Interior act promptly and positively.' " (Audubon Leader, Volume 13, No. 1, January 7, 1972)



## REDWOODS PERILED BY NEARBY LOGGING

The L. A. Times reported that geologists and conservationists testified that short-sighted modern logging practices are destroying the soil needed to continue the reproductive cycle of California's rich redwood forests.

Dr. Wahrhaftig, a geology professor at UC Berkeley, also said that the sediment rate in the Eel River is 30 times as great as that of the Mississippi River and 10 times that of the Colorado. According to the Times (1-15-72), he stated that the Eel, Mad and numerous other rivers in northern timber country, are all producing "extremely high rates of erosion that could not have taken place over a long period of time." The UC study team found evidence that much of the erosion was due to commercial logging areas.

## THE CALIFORNIA ROADRUNNER

In the early 1890's I resided on a ranch near Bonsall, inland from Oceanside, San Diego County. Most of the land was in its original primitive, brush covered state, with skunks, rattlesnakes, and Roadrunners quite common.

The Roadrunner, as you know, derived its name from its habit of running along the few roads. When it stopped, its tail would go up almost vertically. It would lower the tail when it started again. It did not fly in the ordinary sense, but would glide without flapping its wings after a running start.

One day, when I was about twelve years old, I was surprised to see a Runner on top of a fence post about fifty feet away. As I watched, it lowered its head and tail as far as possible, and gave voice to a very loud coo-coo-coo-coo. It raised its head and tail, looked around, and then repeated the performance. It then flew away in a long glide. There was no answer from another bird. The call was loud enough to be heard half a mile away in the country quiet.

I only heard this call the one time, though seeing the birds was quite frequent.

There was a legend in those days that the Runner preyed on the rattlesnake, and that it would surround the snake with a circle of prickly-pear leaves to keep it prisoner. I have not seen this done, but I have seen unexplained rings of the leaves away from a group of the plants. It may be the bird used them as a protection for its nest on the ground.

On one occasion I was able to assist a Runner which had entangled itself in some chicken wire netting. I released it without trouble but its feathers seemed to be very loosely attached and some came away in my hands. It did not seem to be frightened at being handled. Ralph L. Walters



## Bird Count Finds New Species Near Capital

Sacramento's bird watchers conducting the annual Audubon Society Christmas bird count during the weekend came up with some species new to the area but the total count was about half the number tallied last year.

Sacramento's Audubon Society had about 100 watchers spread over 10 areas within a 15-mile radius of the Capital. They counted 139 species, including three extremely rare blue geese and one of the uncommon European widgeon.

Mrs. Betty Kimball, a member of the society, said the total count this year was 364,270, little more than half of last year.

But she said the drop could be attributed to natural fluctuations in the total bird population and to the stormy weather. A big contributing factor this year, in comparison to other years, is the fact that the Yolo Bypass, often flooded during this season, is dry.

"The birds apparently were down

in the grass or in the bushes trying to keep out of the wind and the rain," Mrs. Kimball said.

The dryness in the Yolo Bypass, she noted, could account for an abnormally low number of waterfowl, although watchers reportedly saw 75,000 snow geese, a record for an annual count.

Results of the local count, which was to continue at Lake Berryessa today, will be submitted to the National Audubon Society for a rough compilation of the nation's bird population.

## AUDUBON ACTIVITIES

### WHAT GOES ON AT AUDUBON HOUSE?

Frequent phone calls to Audubon House suggest that many people, including members, are unaware of the function of our headquarters.

It is not, for example, an animal hospital, nor do we have a veterinary service. This may seem obvious, but it is apparently not quite so, or we would not receive numerous requests to take care of sick or injured birds. Occasional callers are surprised and sometimes even upset that we cannot deal with broken legs and wings.

Unlike many chapters, we are most fortunate to have a permanent headquarters, staffed by volunteer help, from which to conduct our business of serving our members. We take phone calls and try to answer questions of all types related to birds and conservation activities. We can often put people in touch with others who can furnish more information or help than we can give ourselves.

It is a place to which mail can come and be answered. We have a sales department with a comprehensive inventory, the maintenance and associated bookkeeping of which is no small task. Handling of mail orders is an additional function of our small but dedicated staff. We have an excellent library, which requires constant attention from our librarian, a position which is important enough to warrant board membership.

It is a place where we can hold our monthly board meetings, rather than at various board members homes. A place where over 1700 Western Tanagers are folded and envelopes addressed each month by a gathering of willing helpers, some of whom may not be bird-watchers at all, but who wish to donate something of themselves to our cause.

Anyone can call 874-1318 to get information from a tape which is made there every week advising where to find the more unusual or interesting birds of the area. It is a place to which you can go after the monthly Tuesday meeting and have coffee and cake and a social hour while browsing through our latest books, records, and gifts.

In short, it is the hub of our activities, and we invite all members to make full use of it.

Laurette Maisel, Recording Secretary

# BINOCULARS PART 7 FOR BIRDING

## Field of view

is another parameter in the design of a pair of binoculars to be considered. It is conventionally measured as the angle between the left and right-hand sides of the scene which is visible without moving the head and binoculars. The naked eye sees about  $100^\circ$ , although only about  $2^\circ$  is in good focus and more than a hemisphere ( $180^\circ$ ) can be seen by easy motion of the eye. The other  $98^\circ$  is called *peripheral vision* where objects can be seen to a lesser but still useful degree of sharpness, and motion easily detected—very valuable attributes for birding. The eyes of a Woodcock are set very far apart, allowing it to see more than  $360^\circ$ —it even has binocular vision to the rear.

The early telescopes had a notoriously small angular field of view, which would make it extremely hard to locate a bird in front of a complex background or to see what is going on peripherally. As the science of optics developed, the Ramsden and Huygens eyepieces were invented to increase the field of view, from which term "Field Glasses" came (and not because they were used in a military or agricultural field).

The field of view is conventionally defined, not as an angle, but as the visible horizontal distance in *feet* at a range of *1000 yards*. The angular field in degrees is this number multiplied by  $2/100$ . For example, if the width visible at a range of 1000 yards is 600 feet the angular field is  $12^\circ$ .

The *subjective field of view* is the angle subtended by the edges of the image as seen by the eye through the eyepiece, allowing rotation of the eyeball. In modern binoculars it ranges from  $60$  to  $70^\circ$ , and gives the illusion of being able to see one-third of the hemisphere in front of the observer, whereas in fact as we have seen the actual field is at most  $12^\circ$ , or  $1/15$  of the hemisphere. The very small actual field relative to that of normal vision, and the sharp cut-off of a scene at the edges (caused by masks or edges of lenses) instead of the graceful degradation of peripheral vision puts blinkers on the birder and accounts for missing most of the activity in front of him.

Wide-angled types of eyepieces, introduced in 1937, offer a  $90^\circ$  subjective field with a modest increase of actual field ( $12^\circ$  maximum). However, since binoculars are most often used to look at a bird subtending less than a degree in the field, "extra wide-angle vision" of  $12^\circ$  (still far from the  $180^\circ$  hemisphere of peripheral vision of the naked eye) is not an outstanding attraction in typical birding. The restricted field of binoculars remains a serious defect for birding, which someday may be removed.

BY JOVE!

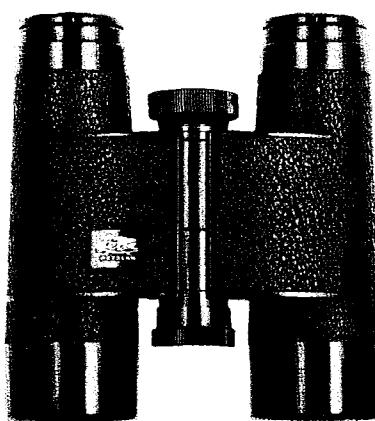
The autumn return of the White-crowned Sparrow in Southern California can start a mini-bird alert. In the East "the robins are back so it is spring" and there is the excitement over the return of the swallows of San Juan Capistrano on March 19th.

This coming and going of birds propounds many questions to the bird-minded. Why do birds return on almost the same date every year? Who do insect-eating birds fly north from areas where insects are available all year round? How are navigation problems solved?

These questions have stirred the curious to devise many methods of attempting to answer them. Banding has answered some questions and so has radar. Much time and elaborate equipment has been used to find out how birds use celestial navigation as a means of finding their way.

To try to answer the question about leaving places where food is plentiful to fly north, these are some possibilities. Summer in the far north has a large area temporarily suitable for establishing nesting territories, and while there are predators, the nesting birds can scatter widely and reduce the chance of nest disturbance. Also by migrating to high latitudes there is an increase in the amount of daylight. Longer hours mean more hours available for important activities. In the far North the possibility of prolonging the daily feeding process may hurry up the nestling phase.

The study of a robin was made at Umiat, Alaska, when the sun varied in altitude from  $2-1/2$  degrees above the horizon to  $46$  degrees at noon. A similar study was made of the same species in Ohio. While the nestlings in Ohio were fed approximately every ten minutes for sixteen hours each day, the Alaskan robins received food at about the same rate for 21 hours. The young in Alaska flew off on their ninth day after hatching—normal in size and feather development. In Ohio the other families reported from the United States the average length of the nestling period was 13.2 days. One brood of robins is not enough to settle a problem but in the absence of other information, it seems reasonable to accept the idea that the major advantage gained by the birds from their lengthy migration is the more rapid development of the young. Jo Vaughn



Continued from page two

FALL migration again provided the most exciting birding of the year. Although the *thirty-two species of warblers* seen in our area during the fall received the lion's share of the rare-birder's time, there is not space here for a detailed account such as they received in the November and December "Tangiers." The identification of at least seven CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS at six localities from Death Valley to San Diego was probably due more to the increased awareness and expertise of local birdwatchers than to a change in status (they are not even mentioned in the Southern California Distribution List of 1961). TROPICAL KINGBIRDS came through our region in small numbers (vs. none in 1970), and two SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHERS (one at Morongo and one below San Diego), along with the one in spring, was more than our usual quota. LONGSPURS received more attention this fall than ever before and the results were gratifying, with dozens of CHESTNUT-COLLARED, a few LAPLANDS, and one McCOWN'S being the final harvest.

Perhaps because they are larger and easier to see most of our reports concern water, shore and raptorial birds. A publicity loving BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER (third California record) was admired by dozens of birders during its two weeks stay at a San Pedro cemetery, and was soon succeeded by an immature LITTLE BLUE HERON at nearby Harbor Lake for over a week. A BLACK SKIMMER appeared briefly on September 6 at Upper Newport Bay (second coastal record) and ten days later another, or the same, skimmer showed up south of San Diego. PO-MARINE JAEGERS were unusually numerous off the coast, with as many as two hundred counted off San Diego in early September. On the same trip about ten PARASITIC and one, probably more, LONG-TAILED JAEGERS were seen. Single ARCTIC TERNS were found on the beach at Malibu on September 20 and again in early October. They are strictly pelagic birds in California, and their occurrence on shore was probably due to their being slightly oiled.

THIS WINTER, to be representative, must take in the winter birds of late fall as well as those in December. In mid-November FUL-MARS were being seen in large numbers off the coast and by December they were found even inside the breakwaters of our harbors—almost 200 inside Los Angeles Harbor on December 20. It is now apparent that this will be a "Fulmar winter" par excellence. Just offshore, a few OLDSQUAWS were standouts in the large flocks of scoters near the piers and breakwaters. A drab little HARLEQUIN DUCK (our rarest sea duck) spent a weekend at Malibu lagoon in mid-December, and there were four reports of HOODED Mergansers including a strikingly plumaged drake at Lake Hollywood for the Los Angeles Christmas Count. The sighting of a few scattered WHISTLING SWANS was climaxed by the finding of about fifty (a high count locally) on a small pond between Lancaster and Gorman.



## Shumway Suffel

The extreme high tides on December 1 and 2 revealed many CLAPPER and SORA RAILS, a few VIRGINIA'S, one rare BLACK RAIL, and the only local sighting of a YELLOW RAIL in many years.

Despite the storms and cold weather of early December there were few Robins or Cedar Waxwings in the lowlands at the turn of the year. Only LEWIS WOODPECKERS were present in more than usual numbers with single individuals seen in dozens of places having suitable habitat, with a maximum count of about thirty near Mt. Pinos. It seems to be common knowledge that many birds return to the same place to nest year after year, but it is less well known that many birds return to the same place each winter. This winter we have a number of repeaters—the PYRRHULOXIA and the PIPING PLOVER, previously mentioned as first state records, have returned; the VIRGINIA'S WARBLER at the King's feeder returned but left during the high winds of early December; the female KING EIDER is reported to have returned to Monterey for the third winter; and the COMMON TEAL at Lake Sherwood is back at the little pond by the fire station.

A few summer residents seemed to be wintering: two GULL-BILLED TERNS were seen at the south end of the Salton Sea on "count day" (first winter record?); an OLIVE-SIDED FLY-CATCHER was found on the Pasadena Count and photographed (second winter record?); and single WARBLING VIREOS found at Capistrano Beach and San Diego on December 5 may be late migrants (fourth winter record if they stay).

