

The Western Tanager

VOLUME 38 · 1971-72 · N° 7 MARCH



What Camera for Bird Pictures?

By HERB CLARKE

TO answer this difficult question, several factors must be considered first. What kind of bird pictures are desired? Close-up portraits? Record shots? Mood shots? Also, how much time, dedication, and money is available?

Even these preliminary questions are not easily answered because taste can change as one progresses or initial enthusiasm wanes or increases. I will tell of my preferences based on my own experience in the field. Only 35 mm photography will be discussed as this is the format that the vast majority of amateurs, including myself, use. I shall not go into basic photographic theory here because I am assuming anyone who is seriously contemplating undertaking bird photography should already know the common terms I use.

Even though there seems to be a bewildering array of cameras available, a few simple eliminations greatly reduce the confusion. A good quality camera is essential. In photography the old adage of getting what you pay for, is an excellent rule to be guided by. A single lens reflex camera is the best type to use for nature photography. The kind that allows for fully interchangeable lenses is best. I greatly prefer cameras that have bayonet lens mounts over the screw-in type. When out in the field and lens change is required, fumbling around lining up threads can be slow and frustrating. A bright, accurate view finder is a big help. Most camera view finders are not completely accurate in that they do not cover the exact field of view. This can cause problems in composition. In addition, the camera body lens opening must not be too small, for when using a long focal length lens, the small opening can cause darkening of the corners of the picture.

To summarize the main points to look for in choosing a camera:

1. A good quality, single lens reflex.
2. Bayonet mounted, fully interchangeable lenses.
3. Bright, accurate view finder.

I am reluctant to name brands, but a competent photographic salesman can show you that one of the few cameras which meet all of these requirements.

Selection of the camera is only the first step. Additional accessories are usually acquired as experience is gained. Buying a telephoto lens is the second step and one of the most difficult ones. The factors mentioned in the beginning are applicable here, also. Bear in mind that just because you have a large telephoto lens does not mean it is possible to be a great distance from the bird and get a big, sharp image.

Even with a large lens you must be fairly close to an average size bird, usually less than 40 feet, depending on the size of the bird and size of the lens. The easiest way to take bird pictures is by stalking. That is, stealthily approaching the bird, camera in hand, taking pictures as you move up. In this method the largest lens that can be hand held is best. Usually this is in the 400 mm to 500 mm range and mounted on a steady gun stock, available in various configurations. Auxiliary lens devices such as telescopes or tele-convertors have been found to be very unsatisfactory owing to deterioration of image quality.

The choice of film is very important. I use mostly color film, but most of what is said here applies to black-and-white photography as well. I have found that the faster the film is, the poorer the color and the grainier the emulsion which results in unsharp appearing pictures. Slow films, however, require fast lenses which are usually heavy and expensive. The faster the lens, the more versatile it is in various lighting situations. Selection of a lens, like many other areas in photography, is the result of several compromises, not the least of which is cost.



SURF SCOTER, chased by boat. 400 mm, F4.5, 1/250 sec. Taken at a distance of 20 feet. Requires good helmsman.

Herb Clarke

continued

"Pot shooting" birds with a long lens is fun, and excellent photographs can oftentimes be obtained as the result of a combination of skill and chance. Most bird photographers stop at this stage.

But if the desire is strong to become more deeply involved in serious bird photography, much more equipment is required. A tiny sample of this would be: extension tubes (these allow a lens to be focused at closer distance to the subject than would be possible without them); one or more electronic flashes (for more positive control of lighting); a blind (required for shy species coming into a nest, watering spot, or feeding area); equipment cases which protect but still allow ready access to the contents; several lenses for different conditions; an extra camera body in case of failure at a critical time (this can and does happen often enough to warrant having a back-up camera); a ladder to use at nests which are too high to photograph otherwise; one or more sturdy tripods which can be quickly and easily set up; possibly a remote control motor-drive for sequence shots when the camera and subject are at some distance from the photographer. The list is endless. As experience is gained, you learn to look for simplicity, sturdiness, port-

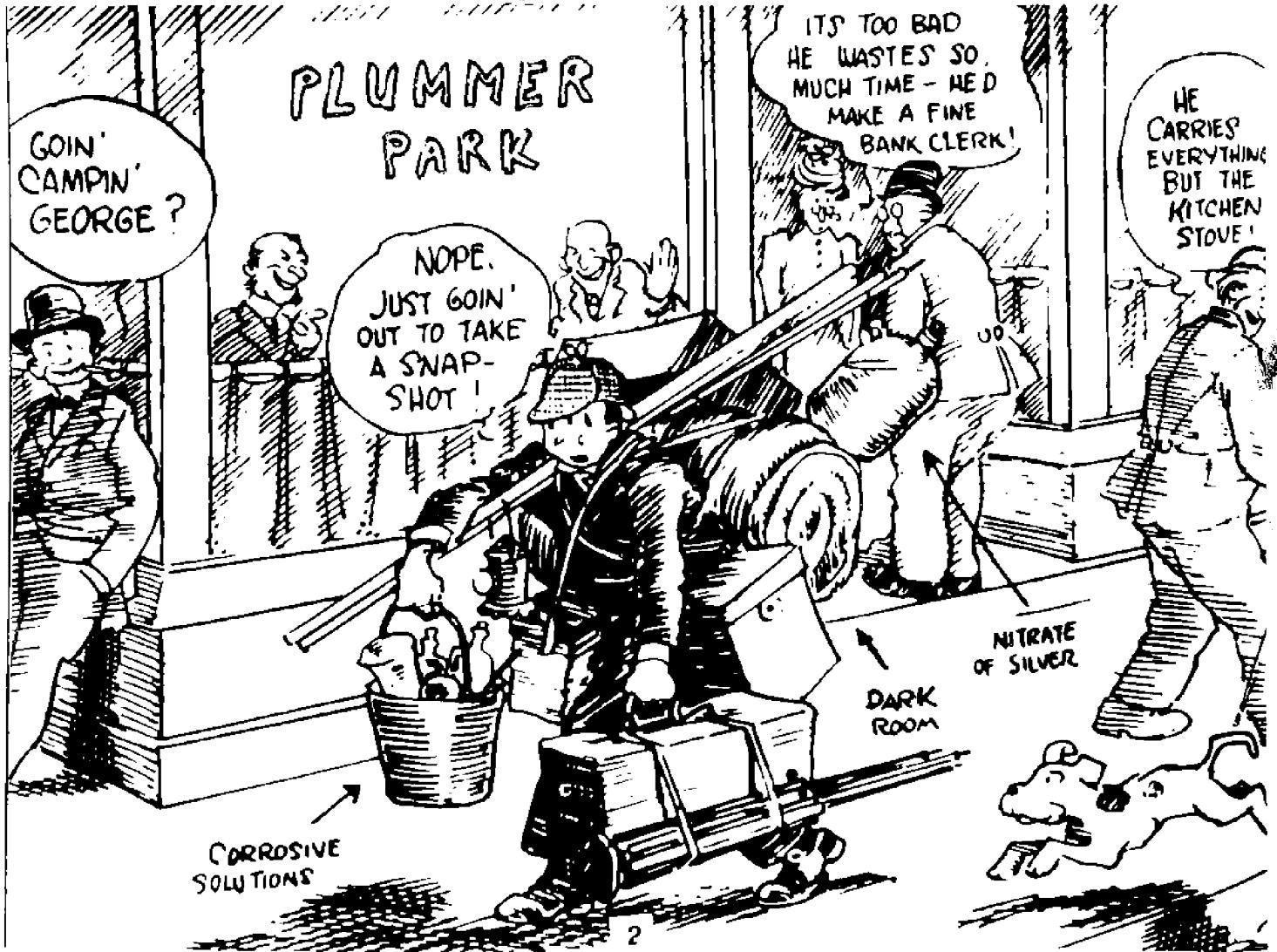
bility of the item, ease of operation under sometimes trying circumstances and does it do the job for which it is intended.

Most of the late model cameras have built-in light meters. I prefer the center-weighted or spot type. Here again ease of operation under various conditions is important. A built-in meter is better than having to use and carry an extra piece of equipment such as a separate meter. However, many times, with practice, it becomes easy to judge the correct exposure without having to take the time to make a light reading.

Continued on page three

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Herb Clarke, the President of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, has been interested in birds since Boy-Scout days in the 1940's. About 15 years ago he fortunately met with some success with his first tries at photography. Since that time, his interest in both birds and nature photography has never waned and continues to give much pleasure. Accompanied by his wife, Olga, whose enthusiasm is as great or greater than his own, Herb has traveled to and photographed birds in many parts of this country and abroad. The Clarke's frequently give programs to various organizations. Herb's pictures appear in many publications.



Perhaps the most important thing to remember is to become completely familiar with your equipment. Read all the instructions thoroughly several times. Practice with the camera, unloaded and loaded. Use only one, or at most, two kinds of films. Study your photographs to see how they can be improved. Never be satisfied. Keep trying for a better picture.

I hope this brief discussion of a complex subject has been of some help to those who might be considering entering this fascinating field.

Wildlife photography is one of the most challenging and satisfying hobbies anyone can have. Every picture you take is your creation alone. A good photograph of a bird is better than any trophy brought home by a hunter because your prey lives on. Your understanding and admiration of nature is constantly increased. Viewing your photographs will bring back fond memories that can be shared with others and the troubles encountered only add to the heady savoring of the success.

Good luck and good shooting.

All photographs by Herb Clarke



SAY'S PHOEBES, at nest entertaining young. 43-86 Zoom, F11.0, 2 electric flashes operated by remote control. Photographer was 20 feet away watching nest through a mirror.



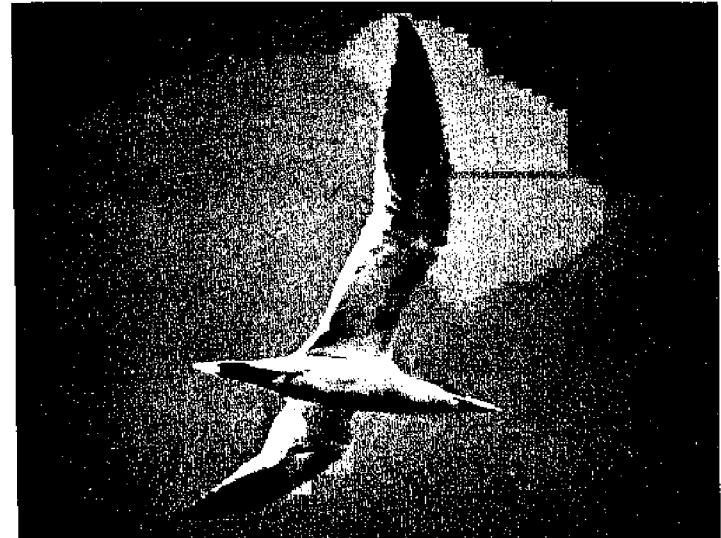
RUFOUS-SIDED (SPOTTED) TOWHEE. 300 mm, F6.3, 2 electric flashes. Taken at 10 feet from a blind set up at a feeding station in the Clarke's yard. Note the very dark plain background sets off this rather dark bird, contrasting with its spots.



LINCOLN'S SPARROW, at a watering spot in the desert. 400 mm, F6.3, 2 electric flashes. Taken from a blind. Note how the lines of the bird are in great geometrical contrast with the surrounding territory, so the bird stands out against this difficult background.



COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD, female incubating. 135 mm, F8.0, electronic flash. Taken with camera in hand at 4 feet. The good lighting brings out tiny detail of the lay of the feathers of this small bird.



CASPIAN TERN. 300 mm, F4.5, 1/500 sec. The very short exposure is needed to prevent smear in photographing a fast flying bird close at hand. The background of the sky, ideal in the color original, is difficult to handle in black-and-white printing.



ENVIRONMENTAL BILLS in the CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE 1972

Letters from concerned citizens can bring positive results. Names of your own assemblyman and senator, and chairman and members of the committee to which the bill has been referred, can be obtained from Audubon House. (AB=Assembly Bill, SB=Senate Bill, ACA=Assembly Constitutional Amendment, ACR=Assembly Concurrent Resolution, SR=Senate Resolution)

SB 4-Would forbid dams on the Trinity, Klamath and Smith rivers of Northern California. Collier, to Senate Natural Resources & Wildlife Com.

SCR 4-Requires roll call votes in all Assembly and Senate committee hearings with record printed in each chamber's Journal. Behr, referred to Senate Rules Committee.

SB 107-Would put 25-year moratorium on dam construction on Eel River and a permanent ban on the other remaining free-flowing rivers on California's North Coast. Behr, referred to Senate Natural Resources & Wildlife Committee.*

AB 99-Would require public disclosure of all pesticides used in California. Petris, referred to Assembly Education Committee.

AB 200-Would create one state and six regional commissions to oversee development along the coastline; would forbid certain types of developments without commission approval; would appropriate \$5 million for support of the commissions. Sieroty, to Assembly Planning & Land Use Com.

SB 100-Would create new Coastal Zone Conservation Commission and six regional boards with veto power over coastline development. Grunsky, to Senate Natural Resources & Wildlife Com.

AB 223-Would establish Public Environmental Advisory Committee on power plant siting and order environmental studies of nuclear plant sites. Briggs, referred to Assembly Planning and Land Use Committee.

AB 246-Would give state agriculture and public health departments joint responsibility for developing pesticide control and farm workers safety. Wood, to Assembly Environmental Quality Committee.

AB 366-Would give individuals and conservation groups right to sue to prevent pollution or destruction of environment without being required to

show they personally suffered damage. Hayes, to Assembly Judiciary Committee.

AB 391-Would make all vehicles in Los Angeles Basin subject to a mandatory annual air pollution check. Foran.

AB 392-Would place a \$250 million parks bond issue on the November ballot. Z'berg.

*SB 107-Amended to include three more waterways--the North Fork of the American River, part of the American River itself and Upper Newport Bay.

PROTECTION FOR BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

"Rep. Dingell's revised bill to strengthen federal protection of bald and golden eagles, H. R. 12186, has been approved by his Subcommittee but is still awaiting action by the full Committee. This generally admirable bill would increase the maximum penalty for each offense to a fine of \$5,000 and a year in jail, and would plug a loophole by holding a person responsible if 'negligent disregard of his act' causes the death of an eagle (he could no longer plead: 'I meant the poison for a coyote'). The bill would also permit the Secretary of the Interior to grant permits to take golden eagles for falconry.

Meanwhile the President has at last signed into law another bill that will help protect eagles and other wildlife. It is the one that provides criminal penalties for shooting wildlife from aircraft, or for knowingly participating in the use of aircraft for such a purpose." (Audubon Leader, Volume 13, Number 3, 2-4-72)

An Executive Order BANNING THE SHOOTING, TRAPPING, AND POISONING OF PREDATORS ON FEDERAL LANDS was signed by President Nixon on February 8, 1972. Three cheers. But the battle continues to stop the atrocities done in the name of predator control on state, county, and public lands.

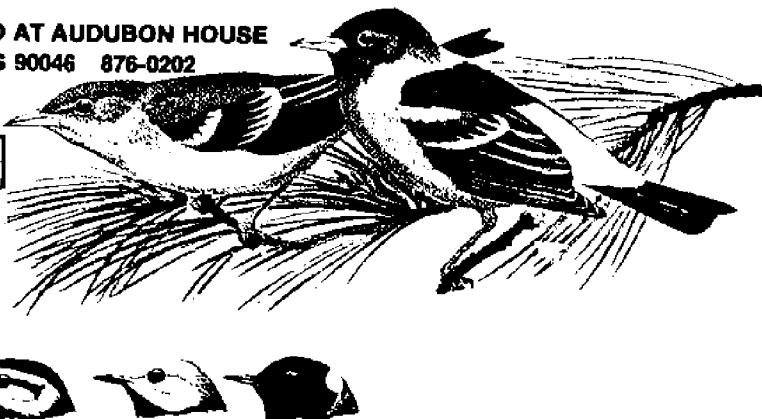
Los Angeles Audubon Society

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 Helliday Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90049

**Audubon
Bird Reports
874-1318**



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

Mar. 6 MONDAY ARBORETUM & EATON CANYON. Meet at main entrance of Arboretum at 9 a.m. See March 26 field trip for travel directions. Jean Brandt, 788-5188, Ruth Lohr, 851-4782 leader.

Mar. 11 TUJUNGA WASH & 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. Otto Widman, 221-8973, leader.

Mar. 14 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING 8 p.m., Plummer Park. "Bird Adventures in Venezuela" illustrated by color slides will be narrated by John and Barbara Hopper recounting part of their 1971 trip to South America.

Mar. 26 SUNDAY ARBORETUM - 8:30 a.m. Take San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd. 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, 798-8611, leader.

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

Apr. 8 SATURDAY CHANTRY FLAT & SANTA ANITA CANYON. Meet at 8 a.m. at the end of Santa Anita Canyon Rd. Take San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd., north on Rosemead to Foothill Blvd. east on Foothill to Santa Anita Ave., then north to the end of Santa Anita Rd. Be prepared to hike down to the canyon stream and upstream to the falls to see resident Dippers and early spring migrants. Harold Baxter, 355-6300, leader.

Apr. 11 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING 8 p.m. Program to be announced.

Apr. 23 SUNDAY - ARROYO SECO -ALTADENA Meet at 7:30 a.m. Take Pasadena Freeway to north end, continue north on Arroyo Parkway to Walnut St., west to Fair Oaks, north short $\frac{1}{2}$ block to Lincoln, left (45° northwest) to Ventura St., left (west) on Ventura St. to the parking lot overlooking the Arroyo Seco. Ellen Stephenson, 794-1764, leader.

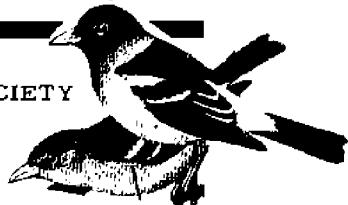
Apr. 29 SATURDAY-SUNDAY MORONGO VALLEY. Meet between 7 and 8 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. -30 Take Interstate 10 east from L.A. area to the Twenty-nine Palms Highway (State 62, 2.5 miles east of Whitewater). Go north approximately 10 miles. Excellent for migrants. Although this and is one-day trip, many stay over to bird Sunday in the Salton Sea area or in nearby Joshua Tree National Monument. There are dry camping facilities in the monument; be sure to bring water if you want to camp. There are motels in Twenty-nine Palms and Yucca Valley. Leader -7 Apr. 29 to be announced. Jim Huffman, 545-1224, leader May 6.

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 the leader is only responsible for the first day. Participants are expected to arrange their own schedules on the second.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Western Tanager

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audubon activities

Audubon House

* Sales Department

FIELD TRIP Jan. 17, Legg Lake & Whittier Nature Center. Fifteen L.A. Audubon birders met in the mist at Legg Lake where they were joined by several people from the Southwest Bird Club and Pasadena Audubon Society. The male HOODED MEGANSER was still in the lake, but no females were seen. However, there were several female COMMON MEGANSERS. Nine species of ducks, one CANADA GOOSE, WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE and WHITE-TAILED KITE were seen.

At Whittier Nature Center everyone had good look at the SCREECH OWL in the Flicker box. A few CARDINALS were in evidence but the lake and trails did not yield many birds. Forty-nine species (and the sun) were finally seen.

Joan Mills, leader.

FIELD TRIP - Jan. 22, Salton Sea. The group gathered at the Wister turnoff at 8:30. The sky was clear and the temperature was in the 70's. Nearby we found a flooded field that had several thousand SNOW GEESE and at least four ROSS'S GEESE. The entire group was able to observe the differences between the two species. Other birds in the field included several MOUNTAIN PLOVERS and three MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS.

At Finney Lake where some of us camped, we saw several WHITE-FACED IBIS and one RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER. Other unusual finds were two LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS near Brawley and a WHITE PELICAN at Rock Hill - bringing our total to 90 species.

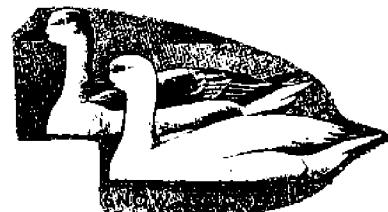
Jon Dunn, leader.



FIELD TRIP - Jan. 22, Lake Norco. On a morning when visibility was practically "zero-zero," 22 birders found their way to the meeting place for the walk around Lake Norco. After waiting in vain for the fog to lift, it was decided to go around the lake and hope for the best. Birds on the water could be heard but not seen and the main event was the flushing of two SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS from a tree. However, after an early lunch, the fog lifted enough so that the trip really began about noon. The usual ducks, cormorants and CANADA GEESE were seen, with the best birds being several REDHEADS and pair of WOOD DUCKS. One BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was observed flying and a few people had brief glimpse of an AMERICAN BITTERN. A total of 48 species was recorded. Hal Baxter, leader.

No matter where you go this summer, you are going to see hundreds of birds. In order to help you learn their names, habits and songs, we keep adding to our collection more bird books in hopes that it will make identifying much easier. East Africa is becoming a popular place to travel to see wildlife and we have just acquired a more complete checklist of East African birds called SAFARI JOURNAL by J. G. Williams. His other two books which are indispensable to the average birder and traveler, are also available in our store, A FIELD GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL PARKS OF EAST AFRICA and THE BIRDS OF EAST AFRICA & CENTRAL AFRICA.

For those of you who are armchair travelers we'd like to recommend BIRDS OF SURINAM by F. Haverschmidt which is the first complete authoritative bird book relating to this country. The book is lavishly illustrated with both color plates and black and white drawings of 537 species of birds. The new and revised edition of WORLD OF BIRDS by James Fisher and R. T. Peterson has just arrived which is large and handsomely bound, sure to attract the attention of the new and serious bird-enthusiast. In our record department SONGS OF WESTERN BIRDS and SONGS OF EASTERN BIRDS by Donald J. Borror each reproduce 60 different bird songs. Complimenting this record is a short book with illustrations and detailed information about each particular bird. A reasonable buy at \$3.



FIELD TRIP, JANUARY 29-30, SALTON SEA. The second Salton Sea Trip was also a great success. The division into two reduced the number of cars in each to manageable proportions. The birds were cooperative too—about 2500 Snow Geese were seen close by, one group having 2 Blue Geese and another having two or three Ross' Geese. A flight of 11 White-footed Geese flew closely overhead, showing the mottled black and gray underparts which is such a good field mark when presented. Fulvous Tree Ducks were reported by another group (people), associated with the Snow Geese, but not seen by us. Cattle Egrets, Abert's Towhees, Short-eared Owl, specialties of the area were also seen. —Fran Kohn, leader.

Continued on page eight



Environment besieged



by Kathryn Brooks

EPA ASKS LEGAL ACTION AGAINST MINING CO

"The National Audubon Society had pleasing advance news of an important recent development. The story begins with a letter last month from Audubon President Elvis Stahr to Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William D. Ruckelshaus, calling his attention to the Audubon magazine story in the May, 1970 issue, about the Reserve Mining Company polluting Lake Superior with mine wastes. The polluting has continued, and the company has now dumped some 67,000 tons of taconite tailings into the lake over the past two decades.

Mr. Ruckelshaus, in reply, complimented the Audubon article ("Call It Lake Inferior") as 'most informative and objective.' He added: 'We will shortly announce some action relating to this company I think will please you.' A few days later the newspapers reported that EPA had asked the Justice Department to take Reserve Mining to court and 'set a schedule of time within which the company must terminate its pollution.' (Audubon Leader, Volume 13, Number 3, 2-4-72)

Los Angeles Times, 2-9-72---"Much of the water cascading down the east side of the Sierra Nevada during the summer is so polluted with human waste that it does not meet federal or state drinking water standards. The U.S. Forest Service, which conducted a pollution survey, blames campers and summer home residents in Inyo National Forest."

Los Angeles Times, 2-72---"Electric power plants along the coast are killing tons of fish each month. . . Fish and Game's John Fitch, one of the most respected biologists on the West Coast and a veteran of '25 years of watching fish go up conveyors,' puts the combined mortality figure at between 4 and 25 tons a month

. . . estimates that Edison's plant at Huntington Beach, for example, seldom kills less than 2 tons of fish over a 5-week period and can account for up to 5 tons. . . Large intake pipes at generating plants from Ventura to San Diego counties suck in millions of gallons of sea water a minute to cool the plants' condensors. With the water go plankton, fish and even mammals. '

EQL Report #1 "PEOPLE, POWER, POLLUTION"

Cal Tech's Environmental Quality Laboratory concluded in their report on Environmental and Public Interest Aspects of Electric Power Plant Siting that:

"1. We are beginning to deal with the environmental damage caused by our rapidly increasing demand for electricity. But the environmental problems we have now are small compared to those we will face in the future if we continue to generate electricity at the present rate of increase. It has been suggested that the growth rate of electric power consumption must be curtailed. There is some indication that the rate of increase will, in fact, slacken. Yet, even assuming near zero population growth, a drop to one half the present rate of growth in individual wealth, and a corresponding 50 percent reduction in the current rate of increase in power use in the next decade, U.S. consumption of electricity will still triple by 1990.

At a time when there is scarcely a place in the country where a power plant can be built and operated without public opposition, we must plan sites for three times more electric generating capacity than we now have."

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS CONCLUDED

Errata: Guy McCaskie points out that "Our first fall report of a HOODED WARBLER" in the December Tanager was not a first fall record for Southern California, as there are three previous fall records cited in his article in The Condor of July 1970, pp. 373-4. Dr. Kenneth Stager of the Los Angeles County Museum chides me, quite properly, for conveying a false impression in stating "this is the first record (of a Laysan Albatross) by competent birders" in the February Tanager and cites three records of specimens collected off the California coast, one of which is in the Los Angeles County Museum (Condor, November 1958, pp. 404-5). I was aware of this specimen but thought it was taken by a fisherman. The point which I wished to convey would have been better stated "this is the first sighting by organized birders." My thanks go to two knowledgeable ornithologists for their comments.

On page one of last issue for bird number 4, RED-HOODED WOOD-PECKER please read RED-HEADED W.

AUDUBON ACTIVITIES

NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION OF OFFICERS

In accordance with the Constitution of the Los Angeles Audubon Society nominating committee for the election of officers for 1972-1973 was selected, by a choice of the Board and two elections from the membership at the slated Evening Meeting in February. The committee consists of

Abigail King, Chairman

Ruth Wood

Sandy Wohlgemuth

Their selection will be presented at the Evening Meeting of March, at which time further nominations may be made from the floor according to the provisions of the Constitution.

FIELD TRIP - Feb. 5, Butterbread Spring. Twenty eager and punctual birders, excellent winter weather, and an interesting predetermined destination were the winning combination of this new trip. The senseless devastation of our fragile desert lands by the uninformed, unrestricted motorcyclist was apparent to all. Let's hope we don't sit still too long.

Our first stop, Butterbread Spring, provided us with a pleasant hike, a few light sprinkles, and LE CONTE'S THRASHER. Continuing on, all 11 cars traveled sandy roads winding high above the desert, over rocky peak then down into beautiful Kelso Valley. Just before lunch we observed three GOLDEN EAGLES soaring together on the horizon.

The lunch site was a lovely willow tree grove interrupted by steady flowing stream. During a brief hike along the stream bed, a large flock of PINON JAYS flew past in the distance. BUSHTITS, PLAIN TITMOUSE, and a RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE were seen and MOUNTAIN QUAIL was heard but never made an appearance. The dauntless 20 then made their way south to a massive Joshua tree forest where they made their last foray of the day for birds, bring the total to a prodigious 21.

Keith Axelson, Don & Caroline Adams, leaders.

FIELD TRIP Feb. 7, Port Hueneme (Caspar Rd.) to Big Sycamore Canyon & Malibu Lagoon. The thirteen observers on this partly foggy Monday may have set new field trip record 105 species were seen in 5½ hours! A great many hawks were in the Caspar Rd. area, mostly RED-TAILED, but also one each of FERRUGINOUS, COOPER'S, RED-SHOULDERED, and WHITE-TAILED KITE as well as several MARSH and SPARROW HAWKS. One BLUE-WINGED TEAL was with two CINNAMON TEAL. Two WHITE-WINGED DOVES were seen, and at least one BANK SWALLOW was flying overhead with the VIOLET-GREEN and ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS.

At the Hueneme Lagoon there were two BLACK BRANT, at least one male COMMON SCOTER in with the other two species of Scoters, and one LOUISIANA HERON. Only two BROWN PELICANS were noted along the coast, but a group of RUDDY and BLACK TURNSTONES and eight species of gulls (including MEW at Malibu) were recorded.

Jean Brandt and Joan Mills, leaders

EVENING MEETING, February 8. Jay Sheppard gave a professional exposition on banding. Over a million birds are banded each year by two thousand people with permits, and ten thousand bands are returned to

BIRD BAND

WASHINGTON, D. C.

At the time of banding the records are kept including at least the following: band number, species, size, weight, moult, and when possible sex, age, fat content and other special items. These are stored in a computer, and when returns are received, the data is retrieved for various studies, such as migration and dispersion routes, length of flights, occasion of wandering, return to localities, mortality rate, sample ages of birds, pair association.

Examples of gear used to trap birds were demonstrated, including mist nets and various kinds of traps.

FIELD TRIP Morro Bay - Feb. 12-13.

On a sunny, warm morning, about 14 people met at the foot of the Rock. Seabirds and shorebirds were identified, as well as BLACK BRANT. BLUE HERONS were in the eucalyptus trees of the rookery as well as in the Bay. Close to 100 WHITE PELICANS were observed on a sand bar and in flight. BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS were in trees by the Marina, as were ANNA'S and ALLEN'S HUMMERS. Montana de Oro produced the usual BLACK OYSTERCATCHERS as well as a Sea Otter. 101 species were seen in ideal weather. We were pleased to have fine views of PEREGRINE FALCON.

--- Betty & Laura Jenner, Co-leaders.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

WESTERN CONFERENCE

ASILOMAR, CALIFORNIA

Saturday, March 25

Registration Opens 1:00 p.m. Hospitality - Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society. Art and Photo Salon - Film Festival. Keynote Address - "What Opportunities There Are For '72" - Dr. Stahr.

Sunday, March 26

Early morning nature saunter. Morning and afternoon discussion (rap) sessions. Evening Program - "Opportunity Out of Calamity" - Mr. Callison.

Monday, March 27

Morning Program - Field Trip to Point Lobos State Reserve and Ocean Boat Trip. Afternoon Program - "The West Meets the Challenge" ...Rap sessions...discussion groups...confrontations. Evening Program - Concluding address - "Using Every Opportunity."

Tuesday, March 28

Morning - Film Festival (What's New in Films?) Noon - Box lunches for all (ready at 8:00 a.m.) Tidepooling (informal). Conference Adjournment - 1:00 p.m.

For full registration information write AUDUBON CONFERENCE, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, Calif. 95825.

Although no GLAUCOUS GULLS have been reported, even in the Monterey Bay area where very few are expected every winter, KITTIWAKES are here in good numbers—twenty at King Harbor and a like number at Malibu Lagoon. This is in striking contrast to the Monterey area where they normally roost by the hundreds at Pt. Pinos, but are almost absent this winter. In the 1920's, ROYAL TERNS were considered "fairly common at any season off the coast of Southern California" by Hoffman 1927, and ELEGANT TERNS were "rare and irregular along the coast." In recent years this situation has been almost reversed with Elegants occurring by the thousand in late summer and early fall, and Royals being seen singly or in small groups, as they have this winter. It was therefore a surprise to find (with Bruce Broadbooks) an almost pure flock of about thirty "Royals" at Zuma Beach on February 5. Later the same day we found three WHITE-WINGED DOVES in the willows around the Pt. Mugu gun clubs. Strangely enough, these summer residents of the low deserts are found in very small numbers along our coast during the winter but not on the deserts.

Although there were no conspicuous invasions of northern birds this winter, LEWIS' WOODPECKERS were more numerous than usual, as cited in the February Tanager, and now there are many reports of TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE—three in Griffith Park from late November into February (Justin Russell); three at Big Bear Lake on January 17 (Herb and Olga Clarke), and several singles including one near Echo Mountain above Altadena (Lois Boylen).

VARIED THRUSHES, also, were widely reported usually in oak-lined canyons—three, probably many more, in upper Boquet Canon, six in Tapia Park, Malibu Mountains (the Guy Commeaus), and two at Westminster Cemetery, Orange County (Alice Fries). There have been no lowland reports of Siskins or Cross-bills,

but Oregon Juncos are wintering commonly in the parks and cemeteries. With the Oregons there are a few SLATE-COLORED JUNCOS—at Mt. View Cemetery in Altadena, two at Forest Lawn in the Hollywood Hills, and one or more in Griffith Park—and a single GRAY-HEADED JUNCO at Forest Lawn.

While waiting near the feedpan at Heise Springs for the PYRRHULOXIA to appear on January 15, Mike San Miguel was pleased to find a BROWN THRASHER approaching the feedpan only thirty feet away. This secretive Eastern Thrasher is a winter vagrant with us, and there are seldom over one or two sightings each year. The ORCHARD ORIOLE found by Kim Garrett near UCLA is apparently wintering there, but could not be found for the Christmas count.

Two late reports are of special interest. The grapevine brings word that there are a few SNOWY OWLS in the vicinity of Reno, Nevada. One of these has been seen frequently just off Highway #395, south of that city. The Suffels passed this spot in late January, but, unfortunately, were not aware of its presence there, and did not see it. This is "Snowy Owl Year" in the north and east, and, with the owls so near the border, they may well be found in California. They were last recorded in Northern California in 1967, and previous to that in 1917. Tom Heindel reports a single BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY at Martinez Lake on the Colorado River on February 5. This is probably one of the few survivors of the big invasion of August 1971, and may well be the last.

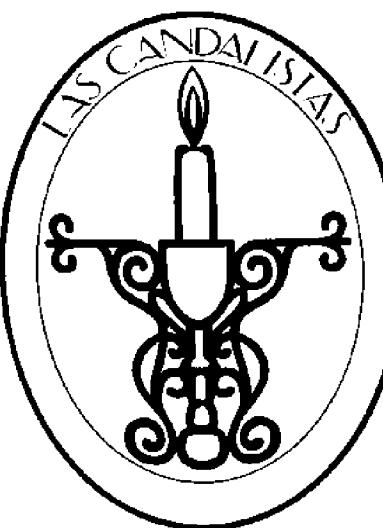
Even though March birding may be disappointing locally, this is a good month to bird the low deserts, while temperatures are still pleasant. Although most of the geese will have departed, there will still be thousands of ducks and shorebirds around the Salton Sea and along the Colorado River, and there is always the chance of finding a rarity along the river as it is not well covered by birders.

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"Walk On The Wild Side"

Bay Children's Health Center, Redondo Beach, cordially invites you to attend its annual "Walk on the Wildside," Thursday, April 6, 1972, 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Portuguese Bend-Palos Verdes Peninsula. Coastline walking tours. Picnic luncheon served from 11:30 a.m. Guest lecturers—Craft exhibits—Strolling musicians. Las Candalistas docents will accompany the tours to discuss area history, animal, plant and bird life. Participation in this important event is gratefully appreciated, and for the pleasure and comfort of tour members, it is suggested that comfortable clothes and shoes be worn. Donation \$6.50. Reservations close March 26, 1972.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

march

can be an exasperating month for birders. Maybe we are too impatient for spring migration to begin—we're tired of winter; the weather is warmer; the countryside is green and lush—yet, the migrants are not here and won't be for another month or more. Their traditional experience makes them aware that conditions are not yet right in their more northerly or mountain nesting areas. True, many of our summer residents will arrive this month. Hummers, Swallows, Kingbirds, and Orioles are among the early ones and they are much appreciated, but for the later migrants it's a time for patience. Maybe we should just enjoy the wildflowers and the butterflies, if there are any after a dry winter and the first absolutely rainless January in many years.

Jerry Johnson started the New Year right, as I learned from his telephone call on New Year's night. "Did you go to the Rose Bowl game?" "Yeah, great game—two miracle wins in a year and one day." "Uhuh, I know all that, but did you see a LARK BUNTING on the playing field with the Lark Sparrows?" I hadn't, of course, from the 76th row, but when I checked it out a few days later, there it was, white wing patches and all. It stayed in the area to the south of the bowl until at least February 8, but not inside the bowl itself after the rye grass seed had been consumed.

FULMARS continued to be extraordinarily common along the coast, and in the harbors as well. A scarcity of Loons was widely commented on in January, but in early February small numbers of all three species were sighted along the Malibu coast. At Monterey two YELLOW-BILLED LOONS were found in late January, and they seem to be regular there in very small numbers. The first West Coast sighting of this rare arctic diver occurred only five years ago.

The SURF SCOTER flocks along our coast seemed not quite as massive as usual, but WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS were present in above average numbers. Strangely enough, only one COMMON SCOTER has been reported, even in the Monterey Bay area where small numbers are expected every winter. It was an adult male—black with a butter-yellow bill found at Pt. Mugu lagoon by Ed Navajosky on February 7. HOODED MERGANSERS continued to be found in small numbers, with a small but flashy drake and two demure little ducks at Legg Lake in mid-January being the only multiple sighting (Don Partridge).

Shumway Suffel

While the thousands of Snow and Canada Geese at the Salton Sea provided the most inspiring avian spectacle in the southland, it was the twenty or more ROSS' GESE and the one BLUE GOOSE which were avidly sought and sometimes found by dozens of birders in late January. Along the coast where geese are uncommon Hank Brodkin found a single ROSS' GOOSE with the lone SNOW GOOSE at Playa del Rey and Ed Navajosky found 43 CANADA GEESE at the Mugu gun clubs.

Possibly as many as thirty RED-TAILED HAWKS were in the vicinity of the Mugu gun clubs and with them was one FERRUGINOUS HAWK (uncommon coastally). The only PIGEON HAWKS reported locally were one on the Carrizo Plains and another at the Mt. View Cemetery in Altadena, both in mid-January. An immature BALD EAGLE at Upper Newport Bay on January 13 was probably the same one that has been seen there off and on since November. A small flock of twelve SANDHILL CRANES was found in the Imperial Valley below Brawley for the first time in several years. Recently only a few stragglers have been seen in the vicinity of the Salton Sea.

Guy McCaskie points out that our wintering GOLDEN PLOVERS seem to be mostly, or all, of the Siberian "fulva" race, which is slightly smaller and has an overall golden tint even in winter. This contrasts with the migrants, of the nominate "dominica," which are buffy-gray in winter plumage. This thought was confirmed by local observations: all six "Goldens" at Upper Newport Bay on January 18 (Shirley Wells), and both of the "Goldens" near Marina Del Rey (Hank Brodkin) are of the "fulva" race. The PIPING PLOVER at University of California Santa Barbara evidently will winter there, as it remained well into February. While studying the Piping Plover, Jon Dunn sighted a BLACK OYSTERCATCHER on a nearby rocky point. In recent years they have seldom been seen on the mainland coast, but are still common on the islands.

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