

# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 39, 1972-73 No. 6 FEBRUARY

## REVIEW OF '72 SHUMWAY SUFFEL.



**1972** will be remembered in Southern California as the year of the long drought. True, we had wonderful rains in December 1971, and a series of gentle soaking storms in late November 1972, but for almost eleven months there was no significant precipitation. Strangely enough this was not the disaster that many of us had anticipated. For the most part, temperatures were moderate; hot dry winds did not start until after the first rains so there were no major brush fires; and surprisingly, bird activity, with one major exception, was as normal as bird activity ever is.

This major exception was the invasion of the lowlands by mountain and northern birds in unprecedented numbers, both as to number of species and as to number of individuals and will set the fall and winter of 1972-73 apart as seasons to remember. The presence of MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES in the lowlands by Labor Day presaged the major invasion to come, and by the end of September

found along the coast--two near Santa Barbara and one near Hemet in San Bernardino County. five CLARK'S NUTCRACKERS were seen in Palos Verdes and a WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER was found at nearby Pt. Fermin Park right on the ocean (both unprecedented). Elsewhere PINON JAYS, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS and PYGMY NUTHATCHES were being seen sparingly on the coastal slope (all are very rare there). By November all the expected northern birds had been found--EVENING GROSBEAKS (about one winter in ten) were widely reported in small numbers, and VARIED THRUSHES (about one winter in three) could be found in almost every shady woodland. Two WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKERS in Palos Verdes were definitely unexpected near the ocean, as were some ten BLACK ROSY FINCHES (not reported in California for many years) with hundreds of GRAY-CROWNS east of Westgaard Pass in Inyo County. A few BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS were seen in Inyo and San Diego Counties but none had been reported locally by year's end. Even GOSHAWKS were



*The Pirate of Point Lobos: Richard Stallcup sights the Thick-billed Murre, October.*

found along the coast--two near Santa Barbara and one near Hemet in San Bernardino County.

**WINTER 1971-72**, in contrast to this winter, was very low on northern land birds, but one pelagic species, the FULMAR, was present in the harbors and off the coast by the hundreds, again in contrast to this winter, when only two individuals have been seen. KITTIWAKES, too, were fairly common last winter but are almost unreported this winter. 1972 was a big year for HOODED MERGANSERS--with a drake and two ducks at Legg Lake in January, a drake at Malibu Lagoon in early November and three ducks there in early December, and a drake and two ducks at Lake Lindero, near Thousand Oaks from December 20 well into January (Lee Jones). Ten in one year is far more than our usual two or three locally, if we're lucky. More than six OLDSQUAWS were found from San Diego to Santa Barbara last winter vs. none so far this winter. The finding of an adult male FRIGATEBIRD at the north end of the Salton Sea on February 26 by members of the Tucson Audubon Society was humiliating to local birders who consider "The Sea" to be their own private hunting grounds. Although there were a few VARIED THRUSHES and LEWIS' WOODPECKERS last winter, the noteworthy landbirds were not northern species. The PYRRHULOXIA (California's first) stayed on at Heisse Springs near the Salton Sea into January, and nearby a BROWN THRASHER was found. A Stanford roofer took enough time from the Rose Bowl game on January 1st to observe a LARK BUNTING feeding with the LARK SPARROWS on the newly seeded playing field. It stayed on until March, by which time it was assuming the black and white plumage of an adult male. A second LARK BUNTING found near Palos Verdes in mid-February retained the streaky gray winter plumage into March, thus showing itself to be a female. A few conspicuous "no shows" last winter

*Continued overleaf*

were European Widgeon, Glaucous Gull, Harris' Sparrow, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Red Cross-bill.

**SPRING MIGRATION** seemed quite normal with the earliest migrants--humming birds and swallows--appearing in late February, and the first trickle of the warbler migration starting in March. LUCY'S WARBLERS were present in Morongo Valley (their westernmost nesting area) on March 24th, and at China Ranch. Inyo County(a newly found nesting site) by April 5. With increased coverage each year by better observers, it is recognized that a few so-called "Eastern" warblers--Redstart, Waterthrush, Black-and-White and probably Tennessee Warblers--use a desert flightline, which explains the large numbers found east of our mountains. A male HARLEQUIN DUCK found on March 4 at Marina del Rey, apparently summered there in a flightless condition, moulted into handsome winter plumage and, even though now able to fly remained nearby to be counted at Christmas time. An OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT (second California record) found on April 22 along the Colorado River stayed for a few days only. Between ten and twenty-five FRANKLIN'S GULLS were found at Baldwin Lake during May. This is the first sighting of a flock of these mid-western gulls in our area. Four San Diego birders established a "Big Day" record on April 30 by recording 227 species (including 8 owls) in a 24-hour period, in San Diego and Imperial counties. Quite a day!

**SUMMER** brought California three new nesting species--HEPATIC TANAGERS in the San Bernardino Mountains; BLACK SKIMMERS at the Salton Sea; and a single nest of AMERICAN REDSTARTS near Eureka. The invasion of the Salton Sea by Mexican waterbirds from the Gulf of California reached new heights in August. There were not only the more or less expected Boobies (40 Blue-footed and 2 Brown) but more than twenty BLACK SKIMMERS (also a few on the coast), seven ROSEATE SPOONBILLS (very rare), two or more BLACK-BELLIED TREE DUCKS (the first in many years), a REDDISH EGRET (also one in San Diego all fall), a



*John Winter, Chairman of the Rare Bird Committee, at sea.*

LITTLE BLUE HERON (also three along the coast), and one or two FRIGATEBIRDS (also many sightings along the coast). A BLACK-HEADED GULL near Eureka in July was a new bird for California and probably for the West Coast, and a ZONE-TAILED HAWK in Inyo County on August 29 was the second sighting in ten years.

**FALL MIGRATION** was overshadowed by the arrival of mountain and northern birds, as cited earlier, but it was none the less impressive. Thirty species of warblers were observed, only twelve of which were "Western" species. The other eighteen "Eastern" species have been discussed in detail in recent "Tanagers," but the occurrence of some twenty PALM WARBLERS was so extensive and extended (one stayed at Legg Lake until Christmas--Ed Navojosky) that it deserves special mention. 1972 was a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK year with more than fifteen reports of male birds in every month from April through December. The latest record was of one at Jim Halferty's feeder on Christmas day, which stayed through the week for the Pasadena Count. The SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS found at Upper Newport Bay in November, were seen by almost everyone who looked during the extreme high tides just before the Holidays. Southern herons along the coast stayed on into December with an adult and two immature LITTLE BLUE HERONS at Bolsa Chica, five LOUISIANA HERONS at nearby Seal Beach on December 14 (Jon Atwood) and three (possibly some of the same birds) at Pt. Mugu Lagoon on December 30 (Jim Wittenburg), and the only coastal REDDISH EGRET still below San Diego.

A special kind of birding madness struck our state, particularly two birders named "Richard" in Santa Barbara and in the Bay Region--THE BIG YEAR LIST. The totals are fantastic, a virtual standoff at about 427 species (81% of the recorded birds in California) in 1972. Exact tallies are not yet in but it was a record year, and 1973 can be even better!

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 14,

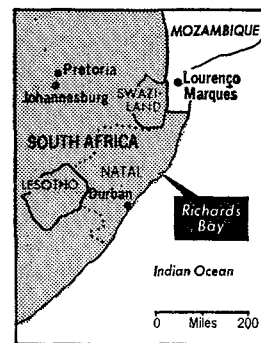
## South African Bird Haven Periled

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, Jan. 13 (Agence France-Presse)—South Africa's bird-watchers — and birds — will lose one of their favorite haunts if the Government approves plans for a major industrial port complex at Richards Bay in Natal, in the heart of the Kwazulu bantustan.

Today the wide semicircular bay, on the northeast coast, is a haven for the wild birds of this country. But it is the second largest natural bay in South Africa.

The closing of the Suez Canal after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 forced oil companies to reroute tankers around the cape, and the search began for new harbors for the giant ships.

Regional planners selected Richards Bay for develop-



The New York Times/Jan. 14, 1973

ment into a port capable of receiving ore carriers of up to 150,000 tons.

Now they have decided to develop the bay area into one of Southern Africa's major industrial complexes, including a new city.

# Is it bigger than a Breadbox?

BY

Joan Mills

Watching birds can be a source of infinite delight and discovery. Birds are a beautiful and still mysterious manifestation of the remarkable forces in nature.

The ways of birdwatchers also contain elements of mystery. Besides just watching birds, birdwatchers pursue birds with maniacal zeal, expending prodigious amounts of time and energy (even money) to observe (or merely glimpse) a rare species, one new to their "list." There are Life Lists, Year Lists, Day Lists; lists by country, state, place, etc. There are approximately 8,600 species of birds in the world, 645 of them in North America north of Mexico, and about 460 in California. To add any one of them to a list, they must first be correctly identified. Now, how?

Start by becoming familiar with your field guide, learning about the kinds of birds there are. Then, observe. Take notice of the following:

1) Where is the bird? Note the general location (mountains, desert) and the specific location (top of a pine tree, bottom of a holly bush.) Most birds have certain environmental requirements, even during migration.

2) What is it doing? Is it on the ground, walking or hopping? If it's flying, how does it fly? If it's feeding, where and on what?

3) What size is it? Bigger than a breadbox? Careful now, size is relative and things are not always as they seem. Try to compare it to another bird close to it, a jay, sparrow, anything near by.

Now for the refinements:

4) What kind of bill does it have? Thick, thin, long, short? Color?

5) What shape is it? Chunky, slender, long-legged, short, wings round or pointed, tail long, short, wide?

6) What outstanding color markings? If any. Flashes of white in the wings or tail? Spots or streaks on the back or breast? Etc.

7) What sounds is it making? If any. Does it "tick," "pseet," "chuck," "caw," or?

You may notice that color is about the last consideration in identifying the bird. Indeed, color is one of the most confusing although most important aspects in identification. Changes in plumage often occur with age or season. Many birds similar in color are not at all related. Some species can be separated by the color of their bills or legs or the color of the feathers under their tails or on their throats. Noticing these particulars comes with experience after the first points are absorbed automatically.

# ANNUAL DINNER

FEBRUARY 13, 1973

ARNOLD SMALL

"THE ENCHANTED ISLES"

\$6.25

Please make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society and send to: Joann Gabbard 823 D, 19th St., Santa Monica, Ca. 90403. Please list all members of your party.

DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS FEBRUARY 10  
NO REFUNDS THEREAFTER.

TIME Reception 6.30 p.m.  
Dinner 7.30 p.m.

Officers' Club,  
Los Angeles Air Force Station.  
Interstate 405

and

El Segundo Boulevard.

Starting at the intersection of Interstate 405 Freeway\* and El Segundo Boulevard, proceed west along El Segundo Blvd. There are stop lights at La Cienega, the entrance to the Freeway South, and at Isis Street, all within a third of a mile. Turn left and south at Isis St. (76 gas station on northwest corner) and drive around to the back of the buildings. Entrance to the Officer's Club will be on the right; and in front of you as you face north. There will be ample parking space. If you pass a missile on your left on El Segundo you have gone too far. \*the San Diego Freeway

Now, look at the bird and check as many points as possible. If you can, write down what you see. Try to decide what kind of bird it is. Then, look at the field guide. Always remember, the book will wait, the bird won't! Happy Birding.\*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joan Mills, a member of the Los Angeles County Museum Auxiliary Board, recently led two field trips to Newport Bay for members of the auxiliary. An active member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, and an excellent birder, Joan wrote an introduction to birding to be used by these groups. She has very kindly consented to share this with the members of this society. We believe that some of our newer birders will find it very helpful and all of our enthusiastic birders will find it a useful guide to species identification.

# audubon activities

## DONALD ADAMS

EVENING MEETING - Jan. 9. As usual for Jim Clements' popular programs, a good number of members and guests came out to see his "Birds of the Pampas" which was the result of a trip he and his wife, Chris, took last fall to South America. The areas they visited ranged from humid tropical rivers to vast treeless plains and high Andean peaks. The birds were also varied - tiny brilliantly colored hummingbirds, unique Hoatzins, and the large Rheas. One scene showed Black Vultures feeding on the carcass of a tapir recently killed by a jaguar. Another pictured the feared piranha caught in a river where Jim had just been bathing! A highlight was the sequence of fabulous Machu Picchu, the lost city of the Incas. Accompanying his beautiful slides, Jim's entertaining narration kept his listeners amused as well as informed.

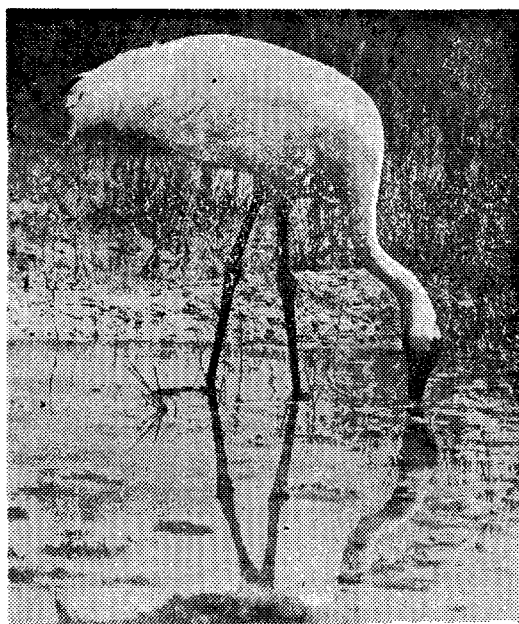


Malibu Lagoon is one of the few habitats for shore and marsh birds in the Los Angeles area, and also is one of the few birding spots near the city. We hear the part north of the Pacific Coast Highway is to be rezoned for high density residences. Please send any information about hearings (which does not seem to be made public) to Audubon House, and write your representative.



THE NEW YORK TIMES,

## Whooping Crane Loss Is Severest in Years



National Audubon Society

A whooping crane

## BIRD COURSE

I will be teaching another Advanced Bird Identification Course beginning on Wednesday, February 21 at 7:30 p.m. The course will consist of ten 2-hour sessions on consecutive Wednesdays. The cost of the course is \$25. For information concerning meeting place write Lee Jones, Department of Biology, UCLA, Los Angeles, Calif. 90024, or phone (213) 455-2398 in the evenings.

## WORKSHOP FIELD TRIPS

I can conduct workshop field trips on the following days, one on a weekday and one on a weekend each month:

February 21 and 24 -- "Waterfowl and Shorebird Workshop," Upper Newport Bay, 8:00 to 12:00; meet at intersection of Eastbluff and Back Bay Drive.

March 27 and 31 -- "Chaparral and Riparian Birds Workshop" (emphasis on song recognition), Big Sycamore Canyon, 7:30 to 12:00; meet at parking area at entrance to Pt. Mugu State Park.

April 26 and 28 -- "Mountain Birds Workshop" (emphasis on recognition of songs and calls), Angeles Crest Highway, 7:30 to 12:00; meet at Charlton Flats Recreation Area.

Price is \$3.00 per person.



## Bird watching rap for the 'tick' spotters

A NEW BREED is causing disruption in the bird-watching world, ornithologists were told yesterday.

They are the "birders" — enthusiasts who treat birdwatching as a competitive sport—said Mr. Peter Conder, director of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Their only concern is to 'tick off' their lists of rare birds and to do so they care little for the birds' welfare or private property.

Although British bird-watching standards were as high as anywhere in the world, the number of "birders" was growing. Mr Conder told the annual conference of the British Trust for Ornithology.

"They have so little general knowledge of bird life that they don't know what to look for," he said

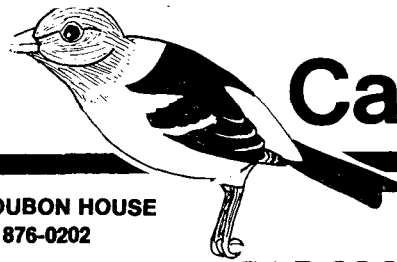
They regularly harassed rare birds and did not respect private property.

Birders recently broke into a RSPB reserve, due to open next spring, after a reported sighting of a rare purple heron.

They trampled down young alders and other trees planted by the warden in a section designed to educate schoolchildren.

Bird organisations should consider how to teach people like that other aspects of bird biology and behaviour and try to turn them into "curious naturalists" said Mr Conder.

# Los Angeles Audubon Society



# Calendar

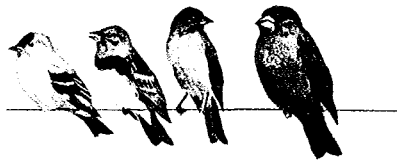
HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE  
PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046 876-0202

DOROTHY DIMSDALE  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**Audubon  
Bird Reports  
874-1318**

CAROLINE ADAMS  
CALENDAR

- Feb. 1 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.
- Feb. 10 SATURDAY-SUNDAY - MORRO BAY. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the foot of Morro rock. This is one of  
& 11 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 Sat-  
Feb. 17 urday and a half day Sunday. There is camping in Morro Bay State Park (reservations advisable)  
& 18 and good motels are available in Morro Bay and nearby San Luis Obispo. Morro Bay is approxi-  
mately 210 miles north of Los Angeles via U.S. 101. Leader Feb. 10-11, Freeman Tatum; leader  
Feb. 17-18, Jim Clements. Phone: 472-3902.
- Feb. 13 TUESDAY - ANNUAL DINNER. Los Angeles Air Force Station, Officers' Club. Program by Arnold  
Small on the Galapagos Islands, "The Enchanted Isles." Reservations necessary.
- Feb. 26 MONDAY - MOJAVE NARROWS STATE PARK. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot. Take Interstate 15  
(north from San Bernardino or south from Victorville) to Bear Valley Cut-off (approximately 6½  
miles south of Victorville); east on Bear Valley approximately 3½ miles to Ridgecrest Road  
which is obscurely marked. North(left) on Ridgecrest to the State Park. Ruth Lohr, 851-4782.
- Mar. 1 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.
- Mar. 10 SATURDAY - TUJUNGA WASH & HANSON 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: Phil Sayre; Phone: 939-7622.
- Mar. 13 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. The Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association  
will present "Endangered Species" and Bob Sandmeyer will present "Hawaiian Highlights."
- Mar. 18 SUNDAY - ARBORETUM. Meet at 8:30 a.m. Take the San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd., north  
on Rosemead to Huntington Dr., east on Huntington Dr. to Baldwin Ave., then north on Baldwin to  
the main entrance of the park. Leader to be announced.
- Mar. 31 SATURDAY - JALAMA BEACH. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the Gaviota Village on Hwy.1.  
Will caravan from this point to destination. Tidepools, shorebirds and possible wintering  
waterfowl will highlight this trip. Leader: Les Wood, phone: 256-3908.
- Apr. 10 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 spring migrants.
- Apr. 28 SATURDAY - BUTTERBREAD SPRING. Proceed out Antelope Valley Freeway through Mojave. Meet 20  
miles north on U.S. 14 at the Jawbone Canyon turnoff at 8:30 a.m. Leaders: Keith Axelson and  
Pamela Greene. Phone: 394-2255.



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

All Field Trips will start at the stated times. Party moves off five minutes later. Allow enough time to fill up with gasoline at the start. People with pets will not be allowed to join.

Annual subscription to "The Western Tanager" is \$3.50; first-class postage \$4.50. Free to members assigned by the National Audubon Society to the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

*Los Angeles Audubon Society*

## The Western Tanager

Official Publication of the LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

EDITOR  
Field Notes  
Audubon Activities  
Calendar  
Typing  
Mailing Supervision

Gilbert W. King  
Shumway Suffel  
Donald Adams  
Caroline Adams  
Hanna Stadler  
Hans Hjorth



# CONSERVATION

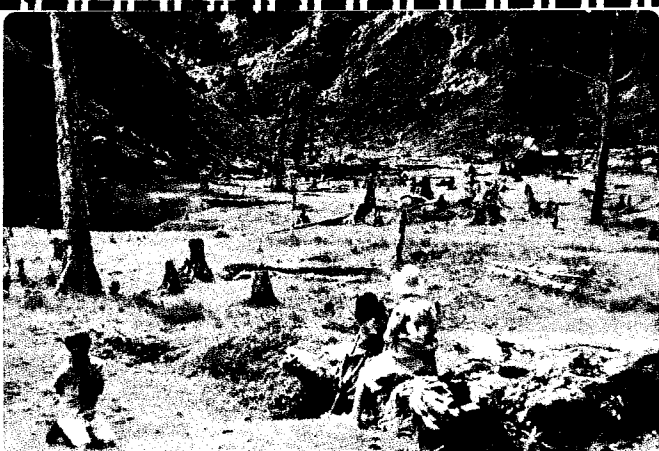
## Persistent Pesticides in the Environment

NATURE VOL. 240 DECEMBER 8 1972

The present debate about the effects of persistent organochlorine insecticides on eggshell thinning—a phenomenon reported from Britain, Continental Europe and North America—demonstrates the need to take all the relevant information into account before coming to a conclusion: unfortunately some workers have signally failed to do this.

Partial or total restrictions on the use of the pesticides provide a type of circumstantial evidence which is particularly valuable because they provide a further means of testing the hypothesis. If biologists were right in saying that the declines in reproductive capacity and of populations of birds of prey were caused by persistent organochlorine insecticides, breeding success and populations should recover after the introduction of bans on the use of the insecticides. The case of the golden eagle in Great Britain is a good example. In this species eggshell thinning and reproductive decline in western Scotland were associated with the use of dieldrin as a sheep dip: four years after the withdrawal of dieldrin for this purpose, eggshells and reproductive success had returned to normal and were similar to those of golden eagles in eastern Scotland where they did not feed on carrion sheep and so had never been affected by dieldrin.

There is very good evidence that the reproductive capacity and population size of some birds of prey have been severely affected by organochlorine insecticides. The evidence cannot be absolutely conclusive, because it is theoretically possible that some unknown substance, with exactly the same temporal and spatial distribution as the organochlorine insecticides, has been the cause. The evidence is accepted by a wide range of workers in many disciplines and by almost all who have first-hand knowledge of bird populations. No serious alternative hypothesis has been advanced to account for the remarkable phenomena observed in the field. The fate of birds of prey is the proper concern of conservation biologists, but its indication of an important new problem is of general concern.



*Chocolate-bar break; notice how the hillside is being denuded. The author and estella are seated on the log.*

# LANDS OF ETERNAL SPRING. *cont*

BETTY JENNER

## BOQUETE

There are a few remaining groves of virgin cloud forest; here and in the clearings between, we saw Spotted Tree Runner, Rusty-backed Spinetail, Irazu or Flame-throated Warbler, Collared Redstart, Yellow-throated Brush-finch, Ochraceous Wren, Chiriqui Quail-Dove, Mountain Robin, Yellow-vented Flycatcher, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Purple-throated Mountain-gem and White-tailed Emerald Hummers, and abundant Blue-and-white Swallows, among other species.

Reluctantly leaving the highlands, we drove back down the long descent to David. The elusive Scarlet-rumped or Plush Tanager, and a flock of Brown-throated or Veragua Parakeets were seen en route. Boarding the afternoon flight to Tocumen, we were at La Siesta in about an hour, and ready for some birding on the extensively landscaped grounds. That afternoon and the next morning we saw, at or near the hotel grounds, Crimson-backed, Palm, Plain-colored, and Blue-gray Tanagers; Pale-breasted Spinetail, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Streaked Saltator, Orchard Oriole, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Grayish Elaenia, White-eyed Pygmy-tryant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, White-bellied Emerald, and Clay-colored Robin.

The previous year we had spent a day on Barro Colorado Island, the Smithsonian Institution's station where conditions of wildlife habitat have been left practically undisturbed. We had seen black howler monkeys, white-faced capuchin monkeys, peccaries, and agoutis, as well as many birds; among them White-flanked Antwren, Slaty Antshrike, Golden-collared Manakin, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Blue-hooded Euphonia, Plain Xenops, Greenish Elaenia, and many Tanagers. The big Mealy Parrots we saw are really the same species as the Blue-crowned we saw at Tikal; the blue is lacking here, farther south. They were very noisy until they noticed that the big black bird in a nearby tree was a Black Hawk-eagle. We had also birded at the extensively landscaped park called Summit Gardens in the Canal Zone. Here were Long-tailed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Black-throated Mango, and White-vented Plumbeleteer Hummers; Scaled Pigeon, Yellow-backed Oriole, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Shining Honeycreeper, Slaty-tailed Trogon, and many, many more. We sincerely hope that the relatively untouched forest areas of the Canal Zone may be preserved, since they constitute practically the sole remaining sanctuary for pressure-threatened species of birds, mammals, and reptiles. The Panama Audubon Society, in partnership with the local chapter of the Sierra Club, is doing a good job of making the public aware of the amazing legacy of wildlife still remaining in Panama. More power to them in their efforts to resist pressures against this irreplaceable resource. ★ *To be continued*



# CHRISTMAS COUNT 1972 by Sanford Wohlgemuth

## AFTER EVEREST WHAT?

Sound the trumpets! Beat the drums! The Los Angeles Audubon Society rang out the old year on December 31st with a pyrotechnical display of plain and fancy birding seldom equalled in its long history. A record crowd of 103 enthusiasts gave up the delights of televised football and the Sunday funnies for the excitement of a rousing Christmas count.

Frost as thick as snow covered the grass in the city parks but when the sun rose above the hills it gave us a clear morning that warmed the birders and brought out the birds. Some 40,000 of them. And the 42 parties of observers all over the city came up with what may be the highest number of species to appear on a Christmas count in the Los Angeles area--158. (Verification of this will have to await some research into past counts by the author of this article who is tired of dodging questions like, "Has a Mountain Plover ever shown up on a count here before?") But we do know that for the first time all three local counts--Malibu, Palos Verdes and Los Angeles--have together entered the exalted realm of counts of 150 and over.

And we did get what may be our first Mountain Plover--at the Hughes runway near the marina. The marina--Marina del Rey--was our richest Christmas count resource. It yielded a bounty that included a Red-necked Grebe, a Red Phalarope, 3 Common Murres and last, but not least, our special fall and winter visitor for 1972, the male Harlequin Duck in magnificent plumage. Elsewhere we were equally blessed with Pygmy Nuthatches and Red Crossbills at the Hollywood reservoir, a Black-chinned Sparrow in the Santa Monica Mountains and a Sage Thrasher in the sagebrush in Griffith Park. Possibly the most overwhelming sight, a flight of Sandhill Cranes that cruised over the mountains in V-formation at 8 a.m., was seen by four separate parties and then vanished to parts unknown. Experienced birders were shaken right down to their shoes by this apparition and some had trouble believing the evidence of their own eyes.

Our relentless pursuit of the elusive Lark Sparrow was rewarded by a fine bag of 11 birds in Holmby Park. Other rather common birds missed last year but seen on this count were: American Widgeon, Sage Sparrow, Red-winged and Tri-colored Blackbirds, Bullock's Oriole, Cassin's Kingbird and Hairy Woodpecker. An encouraging note is the fact that we were able to pick up all the loons and cormorants at the beach and the marina this year where there were none at all last year. An estimated 200 unidentified loons were recorded at the marina.

Perhaps this means that the loons and cormorants, along with the Brown Pelicans, may be making a comeback from the effect of pesticides on their breeding success.

Besides our usual Orange-crowned Warbler, we managed to get a Myrtle and a Townsend's Warbler as well as a Hutton's Vireo. Not to be overlooked was the appearance of Varied Thrushes in so many parts of the city--a rare and welcome invasion. For the first time in several years we came up with a Barn Owl, a Vesper Sparrow and an Allen's Hummingbird. The fact that two parties found a Slate-colored Junco ( we seem to get one or two every year) indicates that these birds are probably always around but have to be filtered out from the great numbers of Oregon Juncos.

In spite of our extraordinary species count we still lost some birds we have taken pretty much for granted: Green Heron, Common Snipe, Rock Wren, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck. Though our hard-working birders at the downtown city parks got an unexpected Wood Duck, the common Ring-necked was simply not there. And within a week of the count Green Herons were seen at the marina and at Traveltown in Griffith Park. But that's the luck of the draw--all in all we were extremely lucky. We will always need luck, favorable weather and unexpected birds. But without enough eyes to see them we're not going to do very well. That's what we had going for us this year and if we can keep the same enthusiasm bubbling every year we'll do all right. Thank you, everyone, and

Congratulations, LA Audubon!



*Continued from Page 8*

governs the rate of population growth. If a population is "released," that is, if it is given temporarily unlimited resources, space, food, and other needs, it will tend to increase exponentially. In other words, the larger the population gets, the faster it grows, and the sooner it gets still larger, culminating in a situation of runaway growth. Of course, no species -- plant or animal -- can maintain exponential growth for very long. All populations, if given new resources, will experience an initial explosive growth phase; in time, however, growth tapers off, causing the number of individuals to become constant or to fluctuate around a constant value or else setting the population into a terminal decline.

In the end, the evolution of aggressive behavior, territoriality, and the whole complex of elaborate ritualistic displays is essentially a "patchy" or irregular phenomenon in nature; it occurs in some groups and not in others, apparently in response to the peculiar history of certain species, the kind of "niche" they fill, and the environmental pressures they must face in the course of their evolutionary history.

# The Queerness of Social Evolution

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#### Extracts from a lecture to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Ecological opportunism and the idiosyncratic nature of certain evolving aspects of social behavior are also demonstrated by the aggressive actions of different species. The most common characteristics of aggressive behavior in animals are 1) assertion of the male, 2) contention over territory, and 3) utilization of a wide range of specialized signals or "displays." Some groups of organisms indicate hostility with loud, ominous sounds, while birds ruffle their feathers and spread their wings; fish achieve the same deception by extending their gill covers and spreading their fins. In short, the more hostile the animal, the bigger it seems to become. Such exhibitions are often accompanied by graded changes both in color and in vocalization, and even by the release of characteristic odors.

Territorial competition, in particular, provides some of the most spectacular displays of animal behavior to be found outside of courtship. Although these disputes may persist for long periods of time, they are usually settled on the basis of displays alone; seldom are the animals themselves killed or even injured.

The peculiar features of territorial behavior as well as other forms of competitive interaction are prevalent throughout at least the vertebrate world. Male rattlesnakes are capable of killing each other with one strike of their fangs, yet their aggressive behavior is totally different from the actions they exhibit in any other context. Two males will engage in neck wrestling until one, usually the larger, prevails over his opponent; then the loser simply retreats while the victor gains the ground and presumably the female. In the case of the mantis shrimp, the males compete for territory by means of an elaborate form of fighting. Their extremely powerful claws are the crucial part of their defensive and predatory apparatus. Yet, in contending for territory, the shrimp make no attempt to kill one another with their lethal appendages. Instead

they maneuver about in such a way as to come in contact with only one portion of each other's body — the telson or final segment of the shrimp's abdomen which is heavily armored and apparently adapted especially for receiving blows from other males. It is significant that the mantis shrimp base their territorial defense almost exclusively on this mannerly form of combat; in a sense, they resemble gladiators who have chosen to avoid injury by striking one another only upon their shields. Mr. Wilson also described two male Grant's gazelles attempting to settle a territorial dispute by passing one another with elegant poses and displaying their horns in a courtly fashion. Back and forth they walk until finally one, usually the smaller animal with correspondingly smaller horns, decides that he cannot win and retreats.

Despite this evidence of ritualistic territorial disputes among vertebrates, Mr. Wilson stressed that aggressive behavior in animals is by no means always conducted in the tradition of eighteenth-century warfare. Indeed these encounters can often be fatal, particularly when they involve invertebrates. Some parasitic wasps, for instance, develop within the body of a host insect such as the caterpillar or locust. At a given point, the larvae of certain species of these wasps are transformed from sluggish, grub-like organisms into peculiar forms with large heads and sharp mandibles. Once they have assumed this fighting form, the larvae engage each other in battle until only one remains, with the victor eating all his opponents. The behavior of these wasps underlines the fact that evolution is truly opportunistic, and that mortality and even cannibalism, if proved beneficial to a particular group of animals, will be the evolved trait of that species.

Why is it that some animal species display elaborate forms of aggressive behavior while others show very little or none at all? The answer lies in a basic concept of population biology that

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