

The Western Tanager

VOLUME 39, 1972-73 No. 10 JUNE

CAPE HATTERAS

PROLOGUE

by C. C. STEIRLY

A winter bird trip to Cape Hatteras is always a pleasant experience to me—for the birds as well as for the fellowship with a few kindred spirits. So despite the bitter cold and gale-force winds four of us went down for a three-day trip. On the way down one of the fellows, Ed Ames, told us that at Pea Island the previous week he had seen a Ross' goose and suggested that we might look for it. On arriving at the north end of Hatteras Island, we began a bit of a search for the one lone Ross' goose among tens of thousands of Snow and Canada Geese.

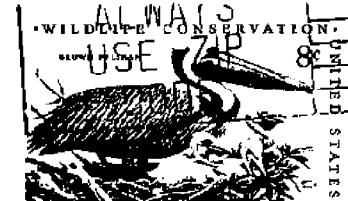
I am not one to go running all over the country looking for a reported rare bird, but it did make something of a trip objective. While eating our lunch in a sheltered place near Bodie Island Lighthouse, I browsed through a pocket bird book, Peterson's Guide to the *Birds of Eastern North America*, and found it was not even mentioned, for it is a western bird. Ed tried to describe it but the rest of us were a bit skeptical. It is supposed to look like a Snow Goose except that it is considerably smaller and has a much shorter red bill. Down there one finds immense flocks of Snow Geese and searching for one more white one among them is rather tedious business while out in the cold with a strong wind blowing.

We moved on southward stopping at several favorite places and at each stop adding birds to our trip list, now and then arguing over an identification until we could bring the telescope into action. Along the way we had met up with fellow enthusiasts—two fellows from New Hampshire dressed as though they were going to climb Mt. Washington. They too had heard of this rarity and were anxious to see it. Later we met two more fellows with binoculars and telescopes. They were from Georgia and had made this a sort of pilgrimage. We travelled on and were dumbfounded to find that the gale force west wind had pushed the waters of the sound over the road making it impossible to proceed farther. There was nothing to do but double back to Manteo and on the way back we began blaming Ed for everything—the miserable weather, water on the road and a wild goose chase. I accused him of having too vivid an imagination and stirring up bird people all along the Atlantic Coast. During the night the wind shifted, and coming from the north we figured that it might blow the water southward off the road. We were delighted to notice vehicles moving northward and we soon passed the flooded area. We took the ferry over to Ocracoke and back, picking up a few more kinds of water birds.

Next morning after viewing the sunrise over the sea, we moved up to the cape area and "worked" a good bit of bird country there. I had long since regarded Ed's Ross' goose as a figment of his imagination especially after looking in the New Hampshire man's bird book, which covered

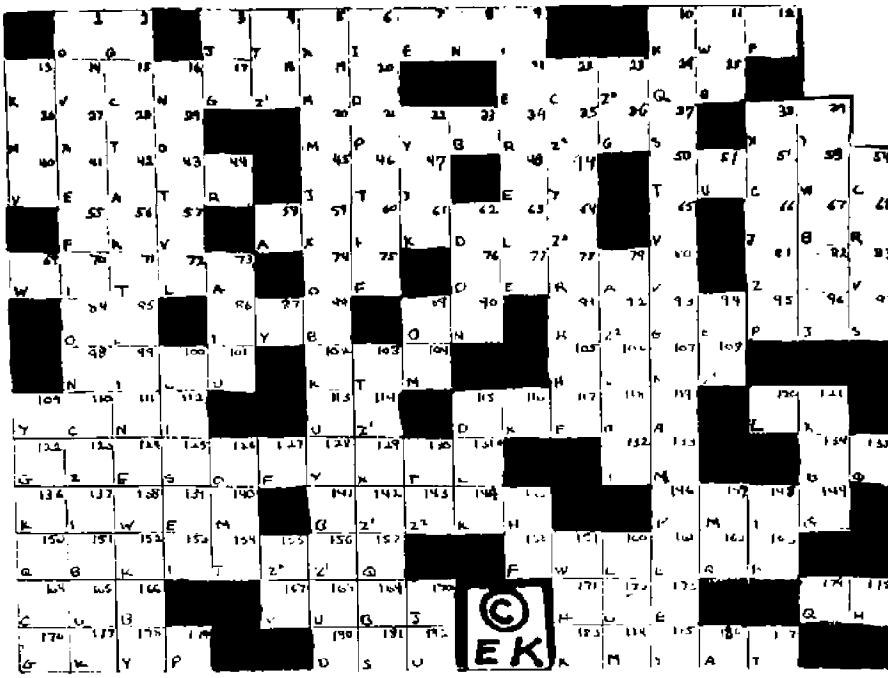
east and west. Coming on up from Rodanthe to the place where he said he had seen it, we saw another kindred spirit, a man with a telescope, camera, binoculars, and a bird book protruding from his pocket. His parked car revealed that he was from North Carolina. Yes, he had seen the Ross' Goose nearby an hour before and had gone up to the overlook to search over the seas for a Gannet or some scoters. He said the Raleigh Bird Club had practically made a pilgrimage to the place a week before.

We studied meticulously a flock of Snow and Canada Geese. The search looked hopeless, but finally Ed found it and quickly had it in his telescope. Being the chief antagonist and tormentor of Ed, I was given the first opportunity to view. It was a Ross' Goose. The first I had ever seen, so I turned to Ed and said, "Sir, I own myself an utter ass." I then mentally kicked myself for lending to someone (and never having returned) my copy of Peter Scott's *Wild Geese and Eskimos*—an account of his stay in that area after the war. It was all about the Ross' Goose. Scott, an Englishman, son of Captain Scott of Antarctic fame is one of the world authorities on waterfowl and a magnificent painter of birds.



ORNITHOLOGICAL DOUBLE-CROSTIC

by Mrs. Elisha Atkins



Fill in the definitions A to Z²
and transfer the letters to the numbered
squares in the pattern. Black squares
indicate word endings. The filled pat-
tern will contain a quotation reading
top to bottom, left to right. The
first letters of the definition words
when read down will form the author's
name and title of his work.

- A. Small European finch, a favorite of the bards.
- B. Flies as does the woodpecker.
- C. Poetic name for star likley to be seen on dawn bird walk
- D. There is one of these sandpipers and terns.
- E. A bird lover.
- F. Non-avian adult female
- G. Leg color of a large long-legged European sandpiper.
- H. European shorebirds in Elizabethan dress.
- What a mockingbird does to another bird (2 words)
- J. The old Indian lady of the duck family.
- K. Natural protection of bittern.
- L. A branch of bird study disparaged in the field.
- M. Small intoxicating swallows.
- N. Fish food for a skimmer.
- O. Pertaining to birds (uncommon).
- P. A small member of the Picidae.
- Q. Swallows nest under these.
- R. The wives of H.
- S. Home from a birds-eye view.
- T. Indispensable equipment for a bird watcher.
- U. Where the thrush is found (2 words).
- V. Spoonbills turn this color.
- W. Fellow countrymen of bird painter Liljeofors.
- X. Shoulder feathers of birds.
- Y. Brightly-colored New World song birds.
- Z. Native land of *Mimus polyglottos polyglottos*.
- Z¹. English name for loons.
- Z². A cry of birds.

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151 88 166 67 169 134 141 33 25
15 110 100 54 9 164 52

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176 93 122 17 2 22 36 149
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STA BARBARA

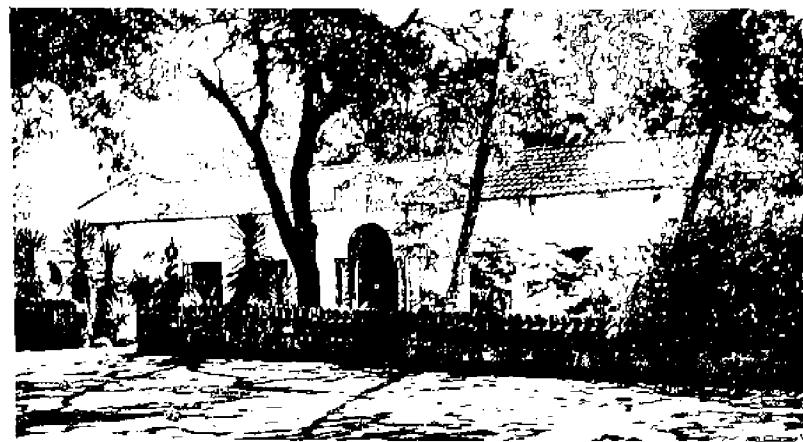
by NELSON METCALF

A fourth fine ornithologist, Waldo G. Abbott, has been on the Museum's staff for 36 years. He is a man of many talents. He served as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds throughout the Museum's most rapid growth period. He was Rett's assistant in Mammology and Ornithology and succeeded him as curator of these departments and as leader of the Bird Study Group. On two occasions he served as Acting Director of the Museum while a new Director was being selected. People are always amazed at the breadth of Abbott's knowledge of the birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, invertebrates, and the flora of the region. His friends marvel at how much work he gets done in spite of the fact that he is called on the phone every few minutes to answer questions. They are also astounded at the skill with which he drives a car, bus, or truck over rough mountain roads and at the same time spots and identifies more birds, trees, and flowers than those riding with him.

The Museum is financed by gifts from its many financial "angels" and by the annual dues of about 1000 members. Admission is free. About 150,000 people visit the Museum annually. The Education Center of the Museum conducts a most elaborate program. Each year more than 20,000 students from private and public schools and colleges in Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties are bussed to the Museum on school-day mornings. They are taken on tours of the Museum, and hear lectures on a wide variety of subjects. The Museum also has many after-school classes which involve over 8000 pupil teaching hours annually.

In the spring of 1963 the 86 members of the Museum's Bird Study Group became the Santa Barbara Chapter of the National Audubon Society. It has grown rapidly and about 1000 people are now affiliated as individual or family members. The Society has an excellent program of weekly or biweekly field trips, plus special trips for children and novice birders. In addition to the half-day and one-day trips within fifty miles of Santa Barbara, the schedule includes two- and three-day trips to such places as the Los Banos area, Morro Bay, Carrizo Plain and the Monterey Peninsula on the north, and the Tijuana River Valley, Salton Sea, Morongo Valley, and Joshua Tree Monument to the south.

Like other Audubon groups, the Santa Barbara Society has become more and more involved with local problems connected with pollution and the destruction of natural habitats. Some of these have been oil pollution; open pit mines; dams on the Sespe and Santa Ynez rivers; and undesirable development of coastline property. We are especially proud of the part the Society played in the creation of the San Rafael Wilderness in Santa Barbara's "back country". This was the first Wilderness authorized under the Wilderness Act of 1966. National Audubon



Front entrance.

tells us that the San Rafael Wilderness Bill would not have passed in Congress had not a team of four from Santa Barbara made two trips to Washington, D. C., to testify at the House and Senate hearings, and to lobby effectively for the bill.

Concluded on page six

BOOK STORE

We are constantly striving to select and collect as many bird books from adjacent states of California as possible. Since not all the western states have individual up-to-date bird books, we have chosen a number of books that overlap and cover most of this part of the country with detailed information on all the species. *A GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI* by Pettingill covers twenty-two states with special emphasis on where and how to find the birds characteristic to the area one may be traveling through. *BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC STATES* by Hoffman is a very complete accurate reference book with special attention given to field identification, both for the amateur and student. *BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC NORTH WEST* by Gabrielson & Jewett has special reference to Oregon. This has to be one of the most comprehensive studies ever published about birds of this area with 400 species described

Moving down to the southwestern part of the country, we include *A FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF TEXAS & adjacent areas* by Peterson and *NEW MEXICO BIRDS & where to find them* by Ligon. The latter while being a complete field guide for 399 different species, includes the Rocky Mt. region and the entire southwest.

BIRDS OF CANADA by Godfrey being one of our luxury books is also one of our most popular "north of the border" bird books. Besides *BIRDS OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR*, it is the only Canadian bird book we stock as it covers all the northern provinces completely.

BIRDS OF EUROPE by Bruun & Singer we highly recommend for those of you going to Europe this summer as it covers over 3 million square miles. This is the first field guide to present all relevant information including illustration and description, a distributional map on a two page spread. Quick and simple when you're a traveler!

audubon activities

DONALD ADAMS

BIG Sycamore Canyon, Apr. 23. It was a clear, cool day in the canyon, and numerous HOODED and BULLOCK'S ORIOLES and BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS brightened up the morning. A WESTERN KINGBIRD, several WESTERN FLYCATCHERS and WESTERN WOOD PEWEEs were seen and heard as well as a single HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER. A lively encounter between an ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER and two VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOWS interested in the same nest hole attracted attention. The hoped-for "wave" of warblers was not forthcoming, although we did see several C RANGECROWNED, NASHVILLE and WILSON'S WARBLERS plus one TOWNSEND'S and a YELLOWTHROAT. Sixteen observers tallied forty-eight species by lunch time. Joan Mills, leader.

BUTTERBREAD SPRING, Apr. 28. A group of 22 enthusiastic birders walked downstream from the spring admiring the abundant and varied wild flowers and enjoying the sight and songs of passing migrants and resident birds including LAZULI BUNTING, BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK, ROCK WREN, WARBLING VIREO, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER and many more. At Kelso Creek seven species of warblers were seen including HERMIT, TOWNSEND'S and BLACK-THROATED GRAY. SCOTT'S ORIOLES, BREWER'S SPARROWS and a GOLDEN EAGLE were highlights in the Joshua tree forest. A total of 79 species was logged. Keith Axelson, leader.

MORONGO VALLEY, May 5. Birding was difficult and disappointnng because of a strong, bitter cold wind blowing down from the snow-covered mountains, and many of the usual spring migrants were not to be found. WILSON'S WARBLERS were abundant, however, and YELLOW, NASHVILLE, ORANGE-CROWNED, and CHAT were also seen. Two CLARK'S NUTCRACKERS were surprise find, a WIED'S CRESTED FLYCATCHER was compared with the abundant ASH-THROATEDS and CASSIN'S KINGBIRD with the WESTERN. In spite of the wind the VERMILION FLYCATCHERS were busy establishing territory near the picnic area. Jim Huffman, leader.

EVENING MEETING, May 8. Mr. Ed Harrison gave splendid talk on the preservation of the California Condor, including a spectacular movie of the Condor, master of sailing, in its habitat. (A prelude was some comical sequences of White Pelicans on their breeding grounds.) As most of us know, the California Condor had a range from the Columbia River to central Baja California. Now its sole nesting grounds are in a 53-square mile sanctuary near Fillmore. The size of the population of Condors is limited by several factors. Single eggs are laid every two years and the young bird is fed for two years, taking three more to become a breeding adult. Natural disasters, such as a cold spell, could wipe out a whole colony, a storm of hail as big as golf balls killed two birds few years ago. Steady attrition by shooting by hunters is causing a serious decline.

Although food supply is not a basic problem for Condors, Mr. Harrison proposes to provide supplements (from the 200 deer killed a day on California highways) to increase the egg laying to one a year. He also proposes establishment of new colonies elsewhere to avoid the possibility of disaster to the entire flocking local group.

Seventy years ago the Condor became effectively extinct in Baja, California, but there have been 20 credible observations in the last 15 years. Of the five recent expeditions to San Pedro Martir, in Baja, only one was successful, sighting one bird and collecting eight feathers.

PELAGIC TRIP, OXNARD TO SANTA CRUZ IS.

— May 13. Thirty people took the "Paisano" on a dull cold day, with flat seas, providing excellent visibility. COMMON, FORSTER'S and CASPIAN TERNS were seen in the harbor, and at sea DOUBLE-CRESTED, BRANDT'S and PELAGIC CORMORANTS were seen, with a few NORTHERN PHALAROPES and a SABINE'S GULL and a POMERINE JAEGER. Thousands of SOOTY SHEARWATERS were approached closely as they fed, with a small percentage of PINK-FOOTED. A flight of ARCTIC and a few COMMON LOONS went by.

At Santa Cruz Island the SANTA CRUZ JAY was seen quite well from the boat, and several other passerines and shorebirds too. Nesting BROWN PELICANS and WESTERN GULLS were viewed at close quarters on Anacapa Island. Many BLACK OYSTERCATCHERS were seen but the American seen in previous years was not spotted. Five alcids were seen—many pairs of XANTUS' MURRELETS, a few CASSIN'S AUKLETS, many COMMON MURRES, and several PIGEON GUILLEMOTS in full plumage, possibly nesting on the cliffs on Anacapa. And the highlight of the day

and of the year—a HORNED PUFFIN, a flightless bird, but otherwise in good health and plumage. It dove and reappeared several times near the boat. This was a bird for the World, AOU, and State life lists of all aboard, except Bruce Broadbooks.



HORNED PUFFIN

CONDOR FUND

Each year the Los Angeles Audubon Drive conducts a drive for the Condor Fund. The proceeds are forwarded to the National Audubon Society, who apply it to the support of the protection of the California Condor, by field work, appearance at hearings and discussion with neighboring mining and ranching interests. John Borneman is the Condor Naturalist appointed by the National Audubon Society. We hope this fund will be well supported this year. Condors are still worth saving—many local naturalists visit the refuge and observation fronts every year, as also many visitors from the East.

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

**Audubon
Bird Reports
874-1318**

June 2 SATURDAY MALIBU LAGOON. Meet at 8 a.m. in the supermarket parking lot adjacent to the lagoon. Leader will meet group there. Call Audubon House for further information.

June 7 THURSDAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 8 p.m., Audubon House.

June 9 SATURDAY-SUNDAY GREENHORN MTN. This is an overnight camping trip and will involve about 350 miles of driving. Meet at 8 a.m. at Rancho Bakersfield. From Freeway (Rte. 99) take 24th St. turnoff east about 15 blocks to H St., turn left (north) on H which runs directly into the Rancho Bakersfield located on old Hwy. 99 (business). Be prepared to leave at 8:15 sharp as there will be a lot of driving and birding ahead. Motels are available in Kernville 15 miles east of Greenhorn. Leaders: Don & Caroline Adams, phone: 545-6406.

June 12 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Program by Herb Clarke: Costa Rica.

June 17 SUNDAY PELAGIC TRIP CHANNEL ISLANDS. Board "Paisano" at Channel Islands Harbor at 7:30 a.m. Directions and instructions will be sent with reservation confirmation. Fare \$10. Make check payable to L.A. Audubon Society and send with stamped, self-addressed envelope to Joann Gabbard, 823-19th St., Apt. D, Santa Monica, CA 90403; phone: 395-1911. Please list all members of your party. Leader: Herb Clarke.

June 23 SATURDAY MT. PINOS. Meet at 8 a.m. at Frazier Park turnoff by restaurant at Shell Station. Frazier Park turnoff is approximately 2 miles beyond Gorman on Rte 99. A good trip for montane species such as Red Crossbill, Cassin's Finch, Calliope Hummingbird and California Condor. Leader: Bob Blackstone, phone: 277-0521.

July 7 SATURDAY BUCKHORN FLAT. Meet at 8 a.m. at the entrance to the campground. Follow Angeles Crest Highway, Rte. 2 (state) from its intersection with Foothill Blvd. in La Canada, about 35 miles to Buckhorn Flat. Good area for resident mountain birds. Leader to be announced.

July 15 SUNDAY IRVINE & O'NEIL PARKS)

July 28 SATURDAY MT. PINOS) Details for these trips will appear in July-August issue.

ALASKA

Last call to join us on the tour to see ALASKA wildlife and wilderness. Among the places we will be visiting will be the Nome area, St. Lawrence Island, McKinley National Park, and Kodiak Island. We expect to see many birds, animals, and wildflowers, as well as savor the magnificent scenery of this far northern state.

For information, call or write the tour leaders: Herb or Olga Clarke, 2027 El Arbolita Drive, Glendale, Calif. 91208, (213) 249-5537.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Beginning on July 4, Audubon House will be closed on Mondays throughout the summer. The house is desperately in need of help in the office this summer. Many members of the staff will be leaving for from one to three months starting in June, so that the already inadequate staff will be seriously depleted. The Sales Department is asking for at least two people and would like to add to their permanent force. The Registrar's department will need at least one additional member. The Executive Secretary should have at least two assistants and would like more to cover all the areas under her control. If anyone has a few hours a week and would like to join the usually hard-working and always interested group at Audubon House, please call us. We assure you that we can find just the spot for you and that any and all talents are needed, from typing to helping prepare and repair displays. Call Agnes Evans or Dorothy Dimsdale any Thursday or Friday between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., at 876-0202.

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.

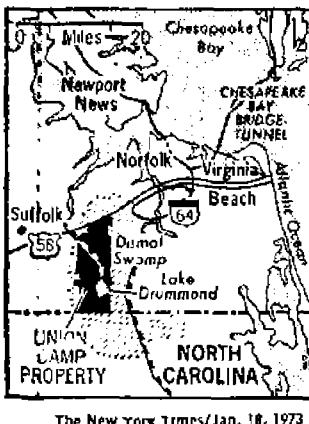
Los Angeles Audubon Society

The Western Tanager

Official Publication of the LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Audubon Activities	Donald Adams
Calendar	Caroline Adams
Typing	Hanna Stadler
Mailing Supervision	Agnes Evans
	Hans Hjorth

CONSERVATION



The New York Times/Jan. 18, 1973

CONSERVATIONISTS GET 50,000 ACRES

Tract in Dismal Swamp Is
Given to Nature Group

By GLENN FOWLER

One of the largest remaining tracts of natural wilderness in private hands on the Eastern Seaboard—an area comprising one-fifth of the Dismal Swamp that lies in Virginia and North Carolina—has been donated to the Nature Conservancy by a forest-products concern.

SANTA BARBARA

from page three

CONCLUDED

This article has contained no information about the good birding spots in the area. Those who are interested can find quite complete information in a recent revision of the Birds of the Santa Barbara Region, published and sold by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Some of you are familiar with it. The revised edition includes 26 species that have been added to the Santa Barbara list since 1967. Two more, the Black Skimmer and the White Wagtail have been found since the revision was published.

Birding has been my chief hobby for 57 of my 83 years (from 1902 to 1914 and from 1928 to 1973). I have birded in all of the United States except Alaska, and for brief periods in ten other countries. But there is no place I would rather be in my remaining years than Santa Barbara. The only thing I really miss in this area is the tremendous concentrations of migrating land birds that I knew in the Midwest and Eastern flyways. One of my fondest memories is the time in May, 1908, when Lynds Jones and I had slept under a small spruce tree on the Cedar Point Sandspit on the south shore of Lake Erie. We waked at dawn, sat up in our bedrolls, and recorded 55 species before we stood up. There were birds in every bush and tree, and in the lake on one side and the marsh on the other. Our count of 108 species that day was my first over 100. We had similar experiences when we camped on Point Pelee and Pelee Island in Lake Erie during fall migrations when there were dozens of birds in every tree and swallows were passing at about 5000 per minute.

Birding has been a very fine hobby for me. For most of my life I worked under good deal of pressure—eleven years as coach of university football and track teams, and 34 years as Director of Athletics. In many of those years my early morning and my Sunday birding was most relaxing and valuable therapy.

QUETZALITIS CURED by

REGINALD DENHAM

On the way to San Isidro we were in Quetzal territory for the last time. We were lucky in one respect. There were no clouds enveloping Cerro de la Muerte and our expert Costa Rican guide, Juan Jose Bonillo, told us that he nearly always found Quetzals at a stand of "Quercus" trees at the side of the road at about five thousand feet up. We decided to waste a little time there.

Alas, it was a waste. Though we heard Quetzals calling all around us (we estimated there were four of them) we experienced the frustration that so many bird people suffer from when trying to catch a glimpse of this bird. Like Hudson's Rima they lead you on and on, deeper and deeper into the forest. They stubbornly refused to put in an appearance.

One of our number said facetiously, "We're here at the wrong time. If we were eating lunch they might deign to show up."

Silly, of course. But was it? I couldn't help wondering. Was it some form of avian curiosity that had caused the birds to descend from their dizzy heights on the two occasions when we'd seen them? Or perhaps it was a case of appetite or a super-acute sense of smell. Had they scented from on high the oranges, the papaya, the pineapple and the bananas in our lunch boxes?

It is well established that Quetzals have voracious appetites and consume quantities of tree fruit for miles around. Perhaps they suffer from hyperosmia induced by polyphagia. Mr. Stuart Keith might do well to enlist one of his colleagues at the Museum, say a non-field fragmentary expert in picking over the bones of dead birds, to investigate. His findings might be startling. He might even come up with a permanent cure for Quetzalitis.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

Continued from back page

dicate nesting there. Jan Tarble brings word that the Romeros reported a CARDINAL at China Ranch, Inyo County on April 21. It would be interesting to know if this is the Arizona race, which is rarely seen along the Colorado River, or the Eastern race, which was introduced and is established in El Monte. Mrs. Russom was delighted to find a male ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (our only 1973 report) in her garden in the north part of Glendale on April 24. Late reports of EVENING GROSBEAKS in our area are probably migrants as very few wintering birds have been reported since December. Peppy Van Essen saw a flock of about twelve several times on April 26 in Temple City and Hank Brodkin found eight at the Yucca Valley Golf Course on May 6. Our latest HARRIS SPARROW was an adult which Andrew Hazi studied at U. C. L. A. on April 2, 5 and 16, and the last WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS, in two different plumages, were seen by Shirley Wells in San Pedro on April 21 and May 3.

Most observers seemed to think the passerine migration was rather dull except for April 10 and 20, when there was good warbler activity coastally, but those who were in the field later reported great activity one day and none the next at the desert oases. This is typical of May on the desert, with the migrants grounded by high winds one day and then moving on during a windless night.

Among the things we always wanted to know, but didn't think to ask was why we didn't see Oystercatchers on San Clemente Island. Lee Jones says

it's because there aren't any there but why there aren't puzzles me. Lee also reports a BEWICK'S WREN on San Clemente on April 15. This may not seem noteworthy, except that the endemic race is thought to be extinct.

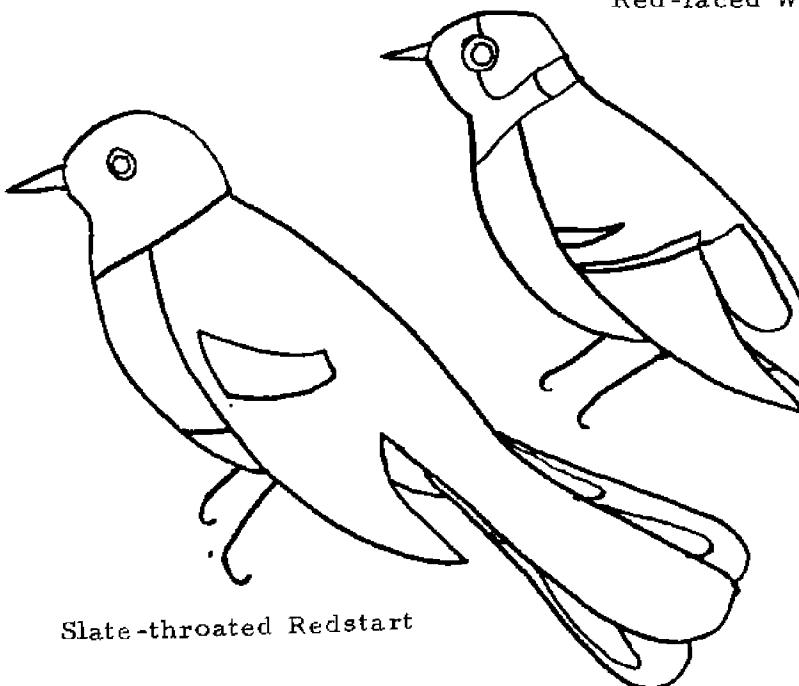
For late migrants (Traill's Flycatchers, Swainson's Thrushes, Yellow Warblers etc.) and for passerine vagrants (who knows what may turn up?), the desert oases, particularly those in the eastern part of our region Deep Springs, Scotty's Castle, Furnace Creek and the Colorado River and the coastal canyons and parks with water from Pt. Fermin to Santa Barbara should be the best, but don't expect many birds. Unless you're an obsessive rare-birder, as I am, you'll do better to work the local mountains. A late afternoon to early evening picnic above the falls in Santa Anita Canyon should provide Dippers along the stream, Black Swifts at the falls, and Spotted Owls on the way down in the evening. The area east of Big Bear Lake might provide Franklin's Gulls and Pinyon Jays at Baldwin Lake, Hepatic Tanagers and Caliope Hummers at Arrastrre Creek and Gray Vireos and Gray Flycatchers in and beyond Round Valley. The coastal marshes and bays will be almost birdless in June, and the season is late in the Sierras, so these areas are better left for later in the summer.



THE WESTERN TANAGER COLORING BOOK.

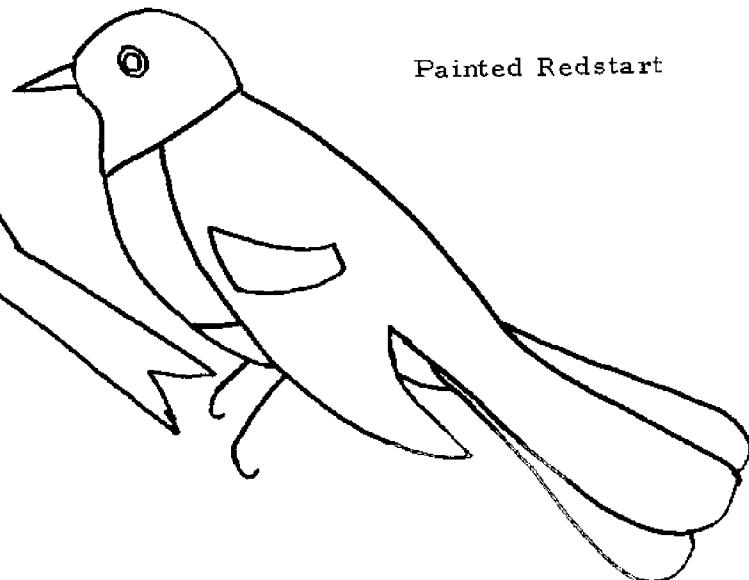
FILL IN THE AREAS WITH COLORED PENCILS FROM MEMORY

Red-faced Warbler



Slate-throated Redstart

Painted Redstart



JUNE can be a frustrating month for birders, possibly it's a better time for reminiscing about the migration just past, or for anticipation of summer trips being planned, than it is for "here and now" birding. True, the first part of the month has the tag end of the passerine migration - the latest migrants and possibly a real rarity. As one looks back through the records, it is amazing how many rare birds have been found in early June, some of them only then, as examples: California's only three Mississippi Kites were found in June, two of them on June 3rd; California's only White-rumped Sandpiper was found at the Salton Sea on June 6th; and records of rare warblers abound in early June. Do Magnolia, Bay-breasted and Golden-winged Warblers, Ovenbird, and Red-eyed Vireo make you reach for your binoculars and yearn for a desert oasis to use them in? They've all been found in early June, but don't expect many birds - it's quality not quantity you're after this month.

April continued our parade of first reports. SOLITARY SANDPIPERs, which are rare in spring, were seen at the Yucca Valley Golf Course on April 21 by Guy McCaskie and on April 28 by Bruce Broadbooks. No phalaropes were reported, although they should have been seen before May 1st. Flycatchers, in general, are late migrants, as they depend on the insects which thrive in the warmer weather of late spring. The L. A. A. S. trip to Big Santa Anita Canyon on April 14 studied the first OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, and while scouting the area on April 9, Hal Baxter sighted five VAUX'S SWIFTS there. An early WESTERN WOOD PEWEE was found in Altadena on April 19, and by that date ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHERS were commonly seen in our area. Jean Brandt and Ed Navajosky found at least two GRAY FLYCATCHERS in the willows at Marina del Rey on April 25, (they are seldom reported along the coast). They were there to study the Scoters females of all three species together in the channel - which Ed had found a few days earlier. Although Bruce B. did not see them, he heard that the WIED'S CRESTED FLYCATCHERS had returned to Morongo Valley by April 29. The SUMMER TANAGERS also had returned on that date. A pair of PURPLE MARTINS at Jim Halferty's home near Pasadena on the 22nd was our only April report. SWAINSON'S THRUSHES (late migrants) arrived simultaneously on May Day in Downey (Madelaine Caforio) and at the El Monte Nature Center (S.S.). In past years BELL'S VIREOS was a common nesting species, wherever there were willows and water, but today they are news, (chiefly aural as they are vocal but hard to see). Mike San Miguel found two singing males along a little stream near Duarte on April 15, which stayed through the month and gave every indication of being "on territory". Despite continued searches, no LUCY'S WARBLERS were reported to early May at Morongo Valley, where a few pairs usually arrive in late March and where they have nested

for the last several years. An early YELLOW WARBLER was found in the Eaton Canyon Nature Center on April 14, and nearby at the Arcadia Arboretum a handsome, but secretive male MAC-GILLIVRAY'S WARBLER was glimpsed on the 13th. HERMIT WARBLERS are not common migrants in our area, but ten or more at Upper Franklin Canyon Reservoir on April 24 outnumbered all other warblers. Herb and Olga Clarke and Arnold Small spent four successive weekends at Corn Springs near Desert Center, where they took excellent pictures of ELF OWLS but little else, until April 28 when the migrants arrived en masse, including two YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS and a well described female VARIED BUNTING (by Olga only, the photographers were too busy to look). Not a "first", but "a most" was Eric Brooks' report of 500 to 1,000 BULLOCK'S ORIOLES swarming over the wildflower display at the foot of the Ridge Route on April 19. The first WESTERN TANAGER was seen by Bryan Torfeh at Malibu on April 17, and others were reported within a few days thereafter.

Other noteworthy reports came in during April and early May. The courting of the SAGE GROUSE was late this year owing to four feet of snow on the strutting grounds in early April, but Bill Weddendorf walked in from the paved road to watch their display on April 17. The sighting of a SWAINSON'S HAWK in the Antelope Valley on April 28 by Hank Brodkin only emphasizes their rarity now as compared with their former status as "common migrants". Another SWAINSON'S and an adult BROADWINGED HAWK were seen by Guy McCaskie on April 21 at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley. A male SURF SCOTER at Little Rock Dam on the desert side of the San Gabriel Mts on April 30, was a surprise to Jean Brandt, Ed N. and Ruth Lohr, and to all of us who know their marine bias. A breeding plumaged ARCTIC LOON at a reservoir in the Santa Monica Mts. on April 27 reported by Jean B. falls in the same category. Kim Garrett spotted about twenty COMMON MURRES off Torrey Pines Park (San Diego Co.) on April 29, (a large number and a late date for so far south). Our latest sighting of an EASTERN PHOEBE comes from Pam Greene who reported one at Butterbread Springs, Kern Co., April 30 (most records are for Fall and Winter). Madelaine Caforio knows the birds in her tree-filled garden in Downey, and on April 25 she was surprised to see a much larger Waxwing with her usual flock of Cedars, which, because of its size and the "rouger, purring song" she believes to be a rare BOHEMIAN WAXWING (our only 1973 report). The only "Eastern" warblers reported were two BLACK-AND-WHITES at the south end of the Salton Sea on April 28 (Guy McCaskie), a PAINTED REDSTART (rare in Calif.) in Cottonwood Canyon, Death Valley in mid-April (Rich Stallcup), and a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH at Camp Pendleton on May 3 (the dedicated banders Jean Muller still had both RED-BREASTED and WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES in Rolling Hills, Palos Verdes, in early May which may in-