

# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 40, 1973-74 No. 8 May

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

GERALD MAISEL

Our Society continues to grow. We now have over 2600 memberships, many of which consist of two or more individual members, and therefore our actual membership is probably well over 3000. The interest of these members, however, vary greatly in direction, intensity, and degree of participation, and there is room for all.

As is so often the case in volunteer organizations such as ours, the preponderance of the work of establishing and implementing policy, and of performing the numerous day-to-day tasks required to provide the services and activities for our members is done by a small but highly motivated group of individuals. Most members are content to leave it at that, and to give us their moral support in addition to the financial support of their membership and, perhaps, an occasional donation for a particular cause such as the Condor Fund. For this, of course, we can all be grateful.

But there is another segment, to whom this appeal is directed, who would like to take a more active part in the affairs of the Society, but who do not know quite how to start. Some may feel that there is an "inner circle" of a "select few" which must be "broken in to". And it is true! There is an "inner circle" ...composed of all who have the time and wish to belong...of a "select few"...all too few according to those who, year after year, are selfless enough to accept a board post or committee chairmanship for "just one more year" because no-one else visibly available. How does one "break in"? Just walk through the front door of Audubon House and say, "I have a few hours to spare one day or so a week".... and you're IN!

What can you do? First of all, two or three willing workers (one day or part of a day each, mind you!) will make the job of running Audubon House a breeze for the House Committee, as well as allow us to expand the services we can offer members. If you appear a bit extra willing, you may wind up Executive Secretary, or House Chairman, or President! Most of the officers and committee chairmen have served in many offices over the years, and would be only too willing to step aside for an eager volunteer the following year.

Almost every function of our Society would benefit from a little extra help. The Sales Department could operate to greater advantage to all if only one more person would join them. The Registrar's load in keeping track of our burgeoning membership would be greatly eased by just one extra assistant. The Librarian could use help, and it need not be on a regular basis. The Education Committee can absorb number of volunteers, particularly those experienced in teaching children, as we are attempting to expand our efforts to carry the environmental message to the schools. At present, we have no Publicity Chairman, and would be delighted to have someone take over this function, particularly if experienced in media activities. Conservation Committee, Field Trip Committee, once-a-month Tanager folders....you name it, they can use you!

Also, there are several fields in which we could use some professional help....an attorney, an insurance agent, an accountant....not to perform their specialties directly for us, but rather to be available to advise the Board informally from time to time in these areas.

And the reward? Only the acquaintance of a grand bunch of people, and the satisfaction of a valuable service performed. Speak to the Chairman of the committee which interests you, or to myself, or to any Board member. Or if you're only just curious for more information, come in and speak to any of the workers in Audubon House.

TRY IT! YOU MAY VERY WELL LIKE IT!

## CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

### WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST SPEAKS ON RAPTOR MANAGEMENT

DIXIE MOHAN

At the March 28th Conservation Committee meeting Bob Millette of the California Department of Fish and Game presented a talk and slide program on Raptor Management. After a brief history of raptors and their relation to man, Mr. Millette discussed California raptor management programs.

Throughout much of our history raptors have been important to man. They have played a symbolic role in our own country in our currency and the rituals of American Indians. The aesthetic value of raptors has long been recognized. From Leonardo da Vinci's 15th century studies of flying machines to current scientific studies of raptors as indicators of the condition of our environment man has learned much from the study of raptors. Some raptors such as the Golden Eagle act as a control on mammals that compete for food with man. In the past raptors have been stereotyped as competitors to man and their values have been overlooked.

An era of partial protection for birds of prey began in 1901 with a California law that protected all raptors, except falcons and accipiters. Federal protection of raptors began in 1940 with the Bald Eagle act and continued with the Endangered Species Preservation and Conservation Acts (1966-69), and the Migratory Treaty Act with Mexico. There are now proposed falconry regulations. In 1957 California extended its protection to accipiters and falcons. The Ecological Reserves Act (1968) and the Endangered Species Preservation Act (1970) dealt primarily with three raptors—the Golden Eagle, California Condor, and Peregrine Falcon.

There has been increasing activity in raptor management in the Western states. The state of California, according to Mr. Millette, has the most developed program. The Department of Fish and Game's raptor management program is concerned with endangered species, falconry, breeding, rehabilitation, and public education. Mr. Millette is optimistic we are entering a management era.

The California Condor Management program takes a census every three years, provides supplemental feeding to stimulate successful breeding, and works for the acquisition of condor lands. Other programs have been set up to aid the reproducing success of Peregrines, Bald Eagles, and Ospreys.

*continued overleaf*

# HARBOR REGIONAL PARK

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District is planning two flood controls projects for Harbor Regional Park, one at the north and one at the south end of the park (Wilmington Drain and Harbor-Bixby Slough Outlet). Both of these projects will have a disastrous effect on Harbor Lake if carried out. The park has been designated as a priority site by the Los Angeles County Environmental Resource Committee because of its value as a preserve for vegetation and wildlife.

To complete this project it will be necessary to remove all of the trees at the south end of the lake and replace them with a concrete drain. The freshwater marsh north of Pacific Coast Highway and west of Harbor Freeway will dry up completely, leaving a barren area coursed by a storm drain. At the north end of the lake the entire riparian woodland will be removed and with it all the natural habitat for nesting bird species, leaving in its place, a concrete ditch which inevitably will soon be filled with an unspeakable collection of trash.

At present the park is still a haven for many birds, including a number of species on the Blue List for 1974 (American Birds, Vol. 27, No. 6). Among those known to nest in the area are the Black-crowned Night Heron, Loggerhead Shrike and Yellow Warbler. One bird of special interest is the Least Tern, an endangered species which used the lake regularly as a feeding area during the summer of 1973. The lake is a well known wintering area for many water fowl and on occasion rare bird species have been found there, the Glaucous Gull for one.

Aside from birds, some now very rare botanical specimens have been found within the park boundaries. Thus, to anyone interested in the preservation of wildlife and natural vegetation, the destruction of Harbor Lake Park, one of the few remaining freshwater marsh and water habitats remaining in Los Angeles County will be an irreparable loss. More than this, however, is the fact that Harbor Regional Park has been designated by the Los Angeles County Environmental Resource Commission as a priority site, to be protected because of its unique value in terms of vegetation and wildlife, and a portion of the funding, both Federal and state, was based on that concept.

The reason given by the County Flood Control District for the Harbor lake projects is the possibility of endangering the lives of school children through flooding, and the potential flooding of the County Sanitation facilities located east of Harbor Freeway

Continued from page one

## RAPTOR MANAGEMENT

The Department of Fish and Game sees Falconry as a legitimate sport. Mr. Millette said he felt California had better control over the sport than other Western States. The number of Falconry licenses has been steadily increasing. 814 licenses were issued in California in 1973. Falconers are required to report the raptors in their possession. In 1972, 339 raptors were registered by licensed falconers, and 434 raptors in 1973.

Mr. Millette thought the biggest issue in raptor management is education. A preservation of raptor populations is needed, but this information is not reaching the masses of public.

Dr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Birds and Mammals at L.A. County Museum of Natural History, and Arnold Small, author of Birds of California, questioned why falconry at all and whether or not the Department of Fish and Game had proper control over falconry and the taking of raptors from wild populations. The issue of non-game licenses to provide a wider base of funding for the Department of Fish and Game was also brought up by the audience. Ray Quigley a representative of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology and an expert on Golden Eagle, was also present.

The next Conservation Committee meeting is May 16, 8:00 p.m., at Plummer Park. Anyone interested is invited to attend.

near Sepulveda. Approval for the projects has been obtained and plans are going ahead to complete them, using the Flood Control District's own funds. Assuredly no one wishes to risk the lives of school children or the possibility of a health problem, but it has been pointed out by responsible citizens that both the school and the Sanitation facilities have been in the same spot for many years, and there has never been any history of serious flooding.

There appears to be no change in conditions in the area since Harbor Lake Regional Park was designated by the Los Angeles County Environmental Resource Committee as a priority site.

Shirley Wells, member of the Harbor Regional Park Advisory Board informs us that there is little awareness of the extent that the park is used by visitors for birding or other nature study. It is suggested that if you wish to continue to be able to enjoy Harbor Regional Park and feel strongly that it should be preserved as a nature preserve, that you write to one or more of the following people stating your objections to the Flood Control Projects. If you are a regular visitor to Harbor Park, please make a point of mentioning it, stating approximately how often you visit the area, and for what purpose. Incidentally, Shirley would like to have any reports of birds you consider unusual, and right now she would especially like to hear from you if you see a Rufous-sided Towhee there!

Mr. A. E. Brueington, Chief Engineer, L.A. County Flood Control District

P.O. Box 2418, Terminal Annex Cal. 90051

Mr. William Frederickson, Jr., L.A. City Parks & Recreation  
250 E. 1st St., L.A. Ca 90012

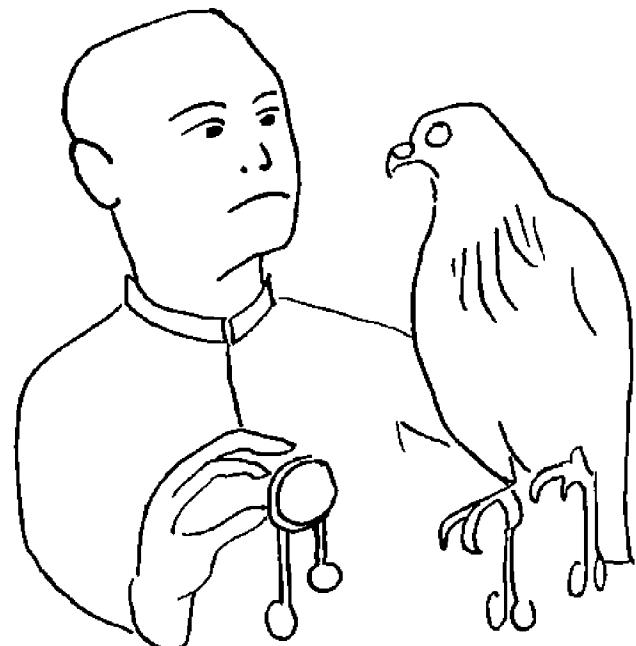
Mr. James Hayes, L.A. County Supervisor

Hall of Administration, Rm. 822, 500 W. Temple St., L.A. Ca. 90012

Mr. John Gibson, L.A. City Council, City Hall, 200 N. Spring, L.A. Ca. 90012

Mr. Bruce Eliason, Cal. Dept. of Fish and Game

Mrs. Shirley Wells, Harbor Regional Park Advisory Board  
30443 La Vista Verde, San Pedro, Ca. 90732



# audubon activities

## BOOK STORE MARION PICKETT

**MALIBU LAGOON, March 23.** Although the sky was slightly overcast and the gasoline shortage continued, twenty-four birders turned up for the trip. A search of the lagoon rewarded us with **BLUE-WINGED TEAL**, **CINNAMON TEAL** and **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER**. A **COMMON TERN** was discovered among the dozens of **FORSTER'S TERNS**, and several **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES** with the more numerous **BONAPARTE'S GULLS**. Above the bridge many female **AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES** were seen singing in the willows. A melanistic **RED-TAILED HAWK** was seen and was the darkest anyone in the group had ever observed; Since it hovered repeatedly in the wind it was thought to be a young bird. Tapia Park was not good birding, although we did add **JUNCOS**, **LARK** and **CHIPPING SPARROWS** to our list for a total of 57 species. Les Wood, leader.

**HARBOR REGIONAL PARK, April 1.** Shirley Wells, leader, met the group at the edge of the lake and started working on gull identification. There were five species present, including **Glaucous-winged** and **Mew**. She then led the group around the edge of the lake where **Orange-crowned Warblers** and **Yellow-throat** were found. She pointed out a stand of plant species rarely found in Los Angeles County any longer. At the south end of the lake, among the willows in the swampy area, **Yellow Warblers** were heard. This section will be turned in to a storm drain if the present plans for **Flood Control** are carried out. A total of more than thirty-five species of birds were counted for the day.

**LAKE MATTHEWS, April 7.** The small group of birders were glad to be out on such a glorious spring day at the blue lake outlined by green grass right down to the water's edge, but the sighting of two immature **BALD EAGLES** really made the trip. **GOLDEN EAGLES**, providing comparisons, were also sighted, and some **DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS** were sporting their seldom seen white superciliaries. A huge raft of **WESTERN GREBE**, probably 800 or more, was on the lake. In all, over 60 species were listed for the day.

**EVENING MEETING, April 9.** Arnold Small gave a colored version of his recently published book, "Birds of California." His photographs are really magnificent, and his commentary as he led us through the families to be seen in California was of great interest to old and new birders. His final photographs of the agonies gone through to take these pictures made the audience appreciate the value of the evening's presentation.

**SLATE FOR ELECTION OF OFFICERS, 1974-1975.** In accordance with the By-laws of the Society, the slate selected by the Nomination Committee was presented by the President at the regular Evening Meeting, April 9 at Plummer Park. There were no further nominations from the floor.

### REPORT OF THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE

President:	Gerald Maisel
1st Vice-President:	Freeman Tatum
2nd Vice-President:	Sandy Wohlgemuth
Executive Secretary:	Dorothy Dimsdale
Treasurer:	Mary Stewart
Registrar:	Ruth Lohr
Recording Secretary:	Mary Clements

With the early splash of spring color upon us in southern California, we do want to remind you of a wide selection of flora books in our Store to name a few:

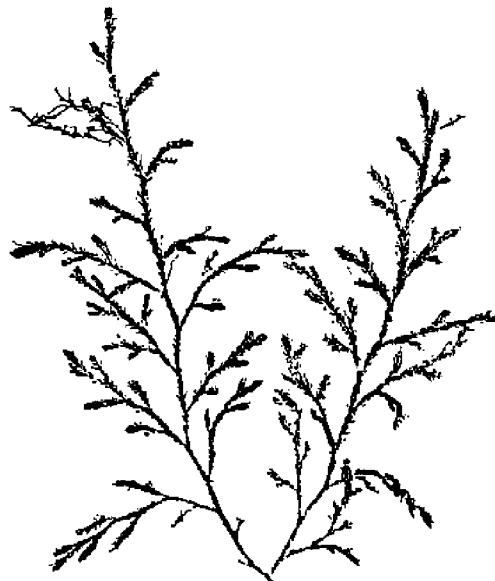
Desert Wildflowers . . . . .	Jaeger
California Desert Wildflowers . . . . .	Munz
California Mountain Wildflowers . . . . .	Munz
Shore Wildflowers Calif. Or. Wash. . . . .	Munz
California Spring Wildflowers . . . . .	Munz
Wildflowers of California . . . . .	Parsons

We also carry some very unique California wildflower stationery, each note different including identification. Also, we have Alaska wildflower stationery.

A guide to the "Birds of Trinidad and Tobago" by T. French is now available with over 300 birds illustrated in color. This book is also a useful guide to many of the species in Venezuela and the Guianas. We also stock "Finding Birds in Trinidad and Tobago" with helpful maps and birding information.

We jump to another island in the north Pacific where David Stirling has compiled a list of 297 birds sighted on Vancouver Island intended to be scientifically accurate and up-to-date. "Birds of Vancouver Island" is the title of this collection which has taken years of close observation.

Lastly, we now have the fourth edition of "Ornithology in Laboratory and Field" by O. S. Pettingill, Jr. intended as its predecessors as an aid to ornithological study at the college or university level.



### Mae Wilson

We announce with regret the death recently, of Miss Mae Wilson, an active member of the society for more than twenty-five years. For a number of years she held the position of Education Chairman on the Executive Board and will be remembered by many members for her work with children at Audubon House.

# 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 House Hours 10 to 3, Monday through Friday

Dr. Gerald Maisel, PRESIDENT

**Audubon  
Bird Reports  
874-1318**

Thu, May 2, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House. Sat, Sun, May 4 & 5, MORONGO VALLEY. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. Take Interstate 10 east from L. A. to the Twenty-nine Palms Hwy (State 62, 2.5 miles east of Whitewater). Go north approximately 10 miles. Dry camping facilities in Joshua Tree Natl. Mon. and motels in Twenty-nine Palms and Yucca Valley. Lucy's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Wied's Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Crissal Thrasher, and Bell's Vireo have been seen. Leader: Jerry Maisel, 472-7897.

Sat, May 4, PELAGIC TRIP, San Diego to San Clemente, by California Field Ornithologists, 5:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., \$15 to members of CFO or subscribers to "Western Birds of California," \$16 to others. Mail self-addressed stamped envelope, together with names of all members of the party, to Cliff Lyons, P. O. Box 369, Del Mar, CA 92014.

Sat, May 11, FERNDELL. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in parking area in the center of the park. Leader: George Ledec, 465-3967.

Sun, May 12, PELAGIC TRIP TO CHANNEL ISLANDS ON BOARD THE PAISANO OUT OF OXNARD. Fee \$12. Send check, self-addressed envelope and list of members of party and phone numbers to Joann Gabbard, 823 - 19th St., Apt. D, Santa Monica, CA 90403, phone 395-1911. It is still largely a mystery what pelagic birds will be seen on a given pelagic trip, but new birds are periodically discovered. Leader: Gilbert King.

Tues, May 14, EVENING MEETING. "THE CALIFORNIA CHANNEL ISLANDS," by Lee Jones, 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park.

May 14-20, SOUTHEAST ARIZONA. Trip planned by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. For information write PRBO, P. O. Box 442, Bolinas, CA 94924. Leaders: Rich Stallcup, Bill Crow, Peter Marshall, Arthur Earle. Funds gained from educational courses are used to support the observatory's general program.

Thur May 16, CONSERVATION COMMITTEE. Meets at 8:00 p.m. at Plummer Park.

Sat, May 18, TUNA CANYON & MALIBU LAGOON. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the supermarket parking adjacent to the lagoon. For further information call Pam Greene, 398-2955.

Sat, May 18, PELAGIC TRIP by California Field Ornithologists, from Moss Landing in Monterey Bay. Fee \$10. Write Bill Principe, CFO, Box 4218, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Sun, May 19, PELAGIC TRIP TO CHANNEL ISLANDS ON BOARD THE PAISANO OUT OF OXNARD. Fee \$12 (48 passengers). Leader: Arnold Small. See above for reservation information.

Sun, May 26, MT. PINOS. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Frazier Park turnoff by restaurant at Shell Station. Frazier Park turnoff is approximately 2 miles past Gorman on Rt. 99. This is a trip for montane species such as Red Crossbill, Cassin's Finch, Calliope Hummingbird, and possibly Condor.

Sun, June 2, McGRAH STATE PARK.

Sat-Sun, June 8-9, GREENHORN MTNS.

Jun 21-27 or Jul 12-18, TRANSECT OF CALIFORNIA. Point Reyes Bird Observatory is offering an exciting way to learn more about the natural history of California's major habitats on an east-west transect from Mono Lake to Monterey. Last year 233 species of birds and 46 other vertebrate species were observed. The course includes mammals, reptiles, birds, trees and flowers - all in unpopulated areas of California. Only 16 people with leaders Rich Stallcup, Bill Crow, Bob Stewart, and Art Earle \$185 - For further information write Meryl Stewart, Box 422, Bolinas, CA 94924.

**Field Trip Information:** The society cannot be responsible for transportation. Always bring binoculars and lunch. No pets or collecting permitted. On weekend trips leader is scheduled for Saturday only. The Los Angeles Audubon Society and its authorized leaders accept no responsibility for the protection or well-being of persons attending field trips, or for any accident, personal or otherwise, incurred during a society sponsored trip. For last minute changes or cancellations always call the Bird Report 874-1318 on the Friday before a scheduled trip.

"The Western Tanager" is free to members of National Audubon Society assigned to the Los Angeles chapter. For all others annual subscription is \$3.50. For first class mailing, send \$1.00 to Audubon House.

*The Editor will be pleased to receive photographs or line drawings for publication in The Western Tanager. High contrast glossy prints are preferred, but we can also work from colored slides. All material will be returned after publication.*

## The Western Tanager

Official Publication of the  
Los Angeles Audubon Society

EDITOR  
Field Notes  
Audubon Activities  
Calendar . .  
Mailing Supervision

Gilbert W. King  
Shumway Sufel  
. Donald Adams  
Caroline Adams  
. Hans Hjorth

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

Continued from back page

Locally some of the coastal lagoons and inland reservoirs were still producing many good waterfowl, gulls and raptors through March. McGrath State Beach had a BLUE-WINGED TEAL on March 3 (Lee Jones), another was reported at Legg Lake on March 8 (Ed Navajosky) and still a third was at Buena Vista Lagoon on March 16. Jean Brandt and Shum Suffel had five CATTLE EGRETS, 16 WHITE-FACED IBIS and 1 VERMILION FLYCATCHER at Pt. Mugu Gun Club on March 14. Among the BLACK BRANTS at Chula Vista in March there was an (AMERICAN) BRANT on the 23rd and 24th. BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES and MEW GULLS were still plentiful through March and Elizabeth Copper had an amazing 85 kittiwakes on the jetty at San Pedro on March 16. As usual Lake Matthews proved to be the place to go for wintering raptors, both BALD and GOLDEN EAGLES reported as late as early April, as well as a nest of BARN OWLS (Richard Hilton, John Schmidt, Kim Burroughs). Lake Henshaw, though not producing the large numbers of Bald Eagles seen last year, did have a fairly large concentration of waterfowl, including 1200 CANADA GEESE at one time (Alice Fries).

Some of the better birds found locally in March included a very probable FORK-TAILED PETREL NEAR Anacapa Island on March 11 (Lee Jones), only three days after a storm blew 50 to 100 into Monterey Harbor (Ann Kahle). A SAW-WHET OWL was found by Pat Sullivan and Dave Foster in Eaton Canyon Park on March 8; all three races of FLICKER were seen at Parker Dam on March 17 (Lee Jones); a LEWIS' WOODPECKER was at Lake Henshaw on February 26 (Alice Fries). Two EASTERN PHOEBES were found, one at Mesa Grande on February 26 (Alice Fries) and one in Tuna Canyon March 13 (Sandy Wohlgemuth), which was

seen the following day by several others. A STELLER'S JAY came to Jerry Haig's feeder in Topanga in late February and early March; a female YELLOW WARBLER was seen at Earp on March 17 and probably wintered there (Lee Jones) and was found at Agua Caliente on March 10 (Jon Dunn, Guy McCaskie).

March is the time when many of our summer residents begin appearing on the scene and, from the early returns, it looks like an early spring. A LEAST BITTERN was seen by Alice Fries at Buena Vista Lagoon on March 16, but may have been a wintering bird. The first WESTERN KINGBIRD was reported on March 3 at Rancho Santa Fe (Alice Fries) which is about ten days earlier than normal. The first ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER appeared in Topanga on March 8, but only stayed a day. This is a good three weeks earlier than normal. The first WESTERN FLYCATCHERS were seen simultaneously at Diamond Bar Ranch (John Schmidt) and Tuna Canyon, (Ed Navajosky) on March 5, again about ten days earlier than normal. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS were first reported coastally on February 17 (about a week early) though a few wintered on the Colorado River this year. PURPLE MARTINS were first reported in Bundy Canyon on April 1 by Abigail King. A small flock of WARBLING VIREOS were seen in Anza Borrego State Park on March 10, a little early, but more significant because of the number seen. The first LUCY'S WARBLER was seen at Earp on March 17 (Lee Jones) and the second a week later at Morongo Valley (Jerry Maisel). A BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER in the Pauma Valley on March 10 (Alice Fries) was exceptionally early and may have wintered nearby. Another one on March 23 at Malibu Lagoon was still several days ahead of schedule. An early SCOTT'S ORIOLE was seen in Anza Borrego State Park on March 10 and another was seen in Sunland on March 31 (J. B. Stevens), an area away from their usual desert haunts.

## THE SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER

### FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Janet Witzeman

The Short-billed Dowitcher on the cover of this issue is the one mentioned in Dick Todd's Colorado River Field Trip report in the last issue of *The Roadrunner*.

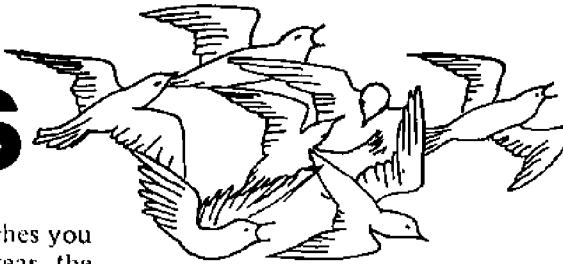
The photograph is especially interesting in that it shows one of the diagnostic features which separates this species from the Long-billed Dowitcher in breeding plumage—i.e., the Short-billed has primarily spotted flanks, whereas the flanks of the Long-billed are primarily barred. Also on the April field trip the two and three note "tu tu" or "tu tu tu" call of the Short-billed was heard. It was noted that it was different from the one note "keek" or repetitive "keek" which is given by the Long-billed. We were glad to have the opportunity to study these features at such close range, and we hoped we could put them to good use someday in Maricopa County where the Short-billed Dowitcher is only a casual transient. The opportunity came sooner than expected. On August 29 Gene Bauer and Bob Bradley spotted a Short-billed Dowitcher at the Riggs Rd. ponds. Although it wasn't calling, they were able to see spots on the flanks, since the bird was still in primarily breeding plumage. The following day while Bob Witzeman was photographing it, it did give its two- and three-note diagnostic call which Bob was able to record on tape. On Sept. 5 while we were observing the original Short-billed, a second one in non-breeding plumage began giving the diagnostic call a short distance away. A significant fact we noticed from hearing both these calling Short-billed Dowitchers is that both were calling while feeding, and not in flight. Members of ABA may recall the article in the March-April issue of *Birding*, pg 75, that might lead one to believe that the call of the Short-billed is given only in flight and that only the Long-billed call is given in flight or from the ground.



Short-billed Dowitcher. Photographed by Dick Todd, biologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, 28 April 1973 at West Pond, California-side of the Colorado river.

Reprinted from "The Roadrunner", Maricopa Audubon Society.

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds



LEE JONES

By the time this issue of "The Western Tanager" reaches you spring migration will be at its peak. Depending on the year, the greatest numbers of migrating land birds come through southern California sometime between the last week in April and the first week in May. Where should you go to see the more dazzling displays of migrants? Generally, the western edge of the desert is best, especially where there are mountain streams with cottonwoods and willows extending down into the lower elevations, or even the dry washes where there are good islands of mesquite and Palo Verde. Some of the more popular places to go at this time of year are Anza Borrego State Park (Agua Caliente Springs, Yaqui Well, Borrego Springs, Palm Canyon, for example), Morongo and Yucca valleys, Mojave Narrows and the area around Pearblossom (Valyermo and St. Andrews Priory). Some of the more interesting birds that can be found at these places in early May are Lesser Nighthawks, Vaux' Swift, as many as six species of hummingbirds (if you're lucky), all six California Empidonax flycatchers (a great time to practice telling them apart, but you'll need more than a field guide to do it!), up to six species of swallows in a day, Swainson's Thrushes, Solitary and Warbling Vireos, all eleven of the regular California Warblers (and, perhaps, one or two of the rare ones), Scott's, Hooded and Northern Orioles, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings and Black-chinned Sparrows. Morongo Valley offers a special treat in the way of such goodies as Wied's Crested Flycatcher and Vermilion Flycatchers, Lucy's Warblers, Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks and, occasionally, a Bell's Vireo. Morongo Valley has a tremendous variety of flycatchers in early May (I have seen 14 species in a day here.) For these reasons it is many people's favorite area in spring.

To give you some idea of the potential that southern California has in spring, two groups of people, one party covering Imperial and San Diego counties, the other covering Riverside and Orange counties, recorded nearly 250 species of birds in one day on April 29, 1972! It took careful planning but, it can be done. That's nearly half of all the species that have been recorded in California, so this is definitely the time to be out.

If you can't get this far afield, there are many good areas near the coast. All of the coastal canyons in the Santa Monica Mountains are good, as are the city parks, Big Tujunga Wash and the canyons of the San Gabriel Mountains, though none of these areas quite equals the desert localities mentioned above.

From mid-May through the first week in June, after most of the regular migrants have gone through and local residents are rearing their young, the so-called "strays" or "vagrants" begin to show up. These are the birds that normally migrate east of California, but a few which get lost or disoriented drift off course and show up in out of the way places. These are the species that make the avid birder's blood run hot, the excitement runs high, the hell with the energy crisis, to them it's definitely worth going 400 miles just to see a Golden-winged Warbler. Most of the excitement is in the unknown, not knowing what to expect, but expecting the rarest. You may find a first record for California or you may find nothing. Since these birds are very, very rare, one would be lost among the thousands of common birds in most areas. There are two places where these rarities are most likely to be found—isolated desert oases and small, offshore islands. Why? Because birds migrating (or, if lost, wandering aimlessly) at night, land in the first convenient place at dawn. Since neither a barren desert nor the open ocean are very convenient, they fly until they find an oasis or island, thus these areas have a tremendous concentrating effect. All the birds lost over a thousand square mile area in the Mohave Desert are likely to end up in one of just two or three oasis.

Some of the better places to go for these rare eastern species are Deep Springs, Scotty's Castle, Furnace Creek Ranch and Shoshone in Inyo County; Saratoga Springs, Kelso, Yuma and Morongo valleys in San Bernardino County; Desert Center, Hayfield and Cottonwood Spring in Riverside County; and Brock Experimental Farms in Imperial County. Unfortunately, most of the islands are inaccessible to the public; however, San Nicolas and Santa Barbara islands have proven extraordinarily good for strays and may even prove to be as good as the Farallones. If you have a boat, a trip to Santa Barbara Island anytime between mid-April and early June can be quite rewarding, both for pelagics and migrant land birds. The island is completely accessible to anyone with the means to get there.

Again, for those less ambitious, or who simply can't get away, you aren't likely to pick up any of the real rarities in most coastal areas (wait until fall), but late May is a good time to hit the local mountains before the big summer crunch or to check out a few of the local nesting birds and learn a little about their breeding biology. This is a good subject to take careful notes on, incidentally. Such information as date of egg-laying, clutch size, length of incubation, nest location, fledgling period, etc. is severely lacking for many species.

In March people were still scrambling around to see the wealth of rare birds that we were blessed with this winter before they took off for parts unknown. Some were lucky, some were not, but many found not only what they had come to look for, but additional rarities as well. There is an axiom among bird-watchers that the rare birds are where the birders are. A prime example of this is the RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN at Imperial Dam. The Colorado River area is seldom covered, but this winter scores of people flocked there to see the robin and in the process found such things as a CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (Arnold Small), HEPATIC TANAGER (Jon Dunn), ORCHARD ORIOLE (Jerry Johnson and Shum Suffel), a wintering TENNESSEE WARBLER (Lee Jones), California's first winter record of SWAINSON'S HAWK (Guy McCaskie and Jon Dunn), a CARDINAL at Earp (Kim Garrett, the Luthers and Bill Principe), among others, making this by far the best year ever along the Colorado River.

The RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN was still being seen as late as March 23, the PIPING PLOVER at Malibu Lagoon was still present at the end of March, the COUES' FLYCATCHER in San Diego until early March and the REDDISH EGRET was still present in San Diego until the end of March. The CURVE-BILLED THRASHER at Bard apparently left in early March, being last reported by Gene Cardiff. The SNOWY OWLS never quite made it into southern California, but did manage to come farther south than ever before, and in unprecedented numbers. One was found as far south as Monterey Bay. After several very frustrating attempts to find one in the San Francisco Bay area, I finally called Ron LeValley in Eureka, grabbed my girl friend, and flew up for the afternoon, whereupon Ron showed us two at very close range—a lifer for me and the first owl ever for Gale (what a way to start!).

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Lee Jones, who is writing "Southern California Birds" while Shum Suffel is in Africa, is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Biology at UCLA, and is doing his thesis on the birds of the California Channel Islands.