

VOLUME 41, 1974-75 No. 4 December-January

NOTICE: The next issue (Number 5, February) of "The Western Tanager," will be mailed January 24, 1975.

ANNUAL DINNER FEBRUARY 11
Reservation Slip enclosed.

COME ALL YE FAITHFUL!



Sandy
Wohlgemuth

WELCOME to the 75th Christmas Bird Count of the National Audubon Society! All you lucky participants will be in there making history; you'll be part of the largest, longest-running, eye-poppingest field trip in the world. Not only will you be helping compile scientific data on the birds of America, you'll be having a lot of fun doing it. And by not flying off to Malaysia or West Africa think how you'll help our balance of payments by staying within our cozy, 15-mile diameter circle in Los Angeles. And the energy you'll save! Instead of burning all that gas going back and forth to Santa Barbara or San Diego you'll be birding in your own back yard. So we'll take the advice of Candide and cultivate our own garden this year, digging out all the birds we can and hoping to unearth an unusual specimen as a reward for our industry.

AND the industry of 24,863 birders last year moved relentlessly onward and upward. Seventy-eight million birds in 1973, up 7 million over the year before. More counts every year, more birders in the field, more feeder-watchers, more counts with 150 species and over. Unlike the mindless drive for "Progress" that wipes out open space and creates environmental pollution of all kinds, the growth of birding is a healthy indicator of a more widespread involvement with nature. If more of us care we have a better chance to avoid an ecological doomsday.

SO as we have since 1915 in Los Angeles, the faithful, the audacious 75 or a hundred of us will rise early on December 28th and explore the 176.7 square miles of a circle with its center at Pico and LaCienega. For birds. All kinds of birds. Even House Sparrows and Starlings (boo, hiss). We'll be at the Marina and at Playa Del Rey, at Griffith Park and Elysian Park and most of the smaller parks scattered about this sprawling city. We'll try to cover the cemeteries and tree-lined streets from Inglewood to North Hollywood, from Brentwood to Pershing Square. We'll probe the spine and the canyons of the Santa Monica mountains and try for ducks and loons in the reservoirs there. When one thinks of the rich birding mines of Florida and Texas and the special California lodes in San Diego, Santa Barbara and Pt Reyes it is nothing short of miraculous that Los Angeles has gone over 150 species the last two years. This triumph over concrete and condominiums has been achieved by the intensive birding, persistence and dedication of

many enthusiastic observers. Last year our 926 Anna's Hummingbirds was the highest count in the country and our 242 California Thrashers was the all-time high. Oakland, California, had 20 of the highest counts of common birds in 1973. This was not because they have a more productive circle than ours (they do, with 188 species to show for it) but because they had 74 parties of 224 observers — plus 36 feeder-watchers. That's coverage, man! There is a tendency to think a count isn't worth the trouble unless we get over 150 species. Perhaps we should be just as elated if we count more waxwings or nuthatches than we ever have before. If we can't compete with Freeport, Texas or Cocoa, Florida in number of species we can have a friendly contest with our own past records.

Let's get down to some of the specifics of a Christmas count. The big day for us is Saturday, December 28th — one day out of an 18-day span ending December 31st. Each party of one or more observers has a fixed territory in which all birds are counted from early morning to late afternoon. Ideally the area is scouted in advance and any unusual species are staked out in the fond hope that they will like the neighborhood and hang around till Count Day. Each party receives a check list which is filled out and turned in to the compiler at the end of the day. The check list includes a consolation corner labeled, "Seen during count period but not on count day." This now means a bird seen anywhere within our 15-

ALLAN CRUIKSHANK

Every member of the Audubon Society will deeply regret the death of Allan Cruikshank, a legendary figure in birding. He had been on the staff of the Audubon Camp of Maine for 22 summers and on the Audubon Lecture circuit for at least 15 years. As such he was known to tens of thousands of Audubon people. He was official staff photographer for the National Audubon Society and was considered the outstanding black-and-white bird photographer in the country and was author and co-author with his wife of several books. One of these books, "Flight Into Sunshine," won the John Burroughs Medal for nature writing in 1949. He was also the recipient of the Arthur A. Allen Medal, an award given by the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. He was with the National Audubon Society for nearly 40 years.

OPERATION 'SILVERLAKE'

Dorothy Dimsdale

Picking up the phone at Audubon House is like dipping into a trick or treat bag; you never know what you're going to get. It's a great way to be reminded of how little one knows. Even the most educated birder might have difficulty with instant recall when asked the mating song of the African Crested Crane, or have patience and understanding tested, trying to deter a caller from immediate annihilation of a mockingbird who sings loudly and promptly every morning at 5:00 a.m. outside the caller's bedroom. Then there is always the caller who has found 'a little gray bird' and 'what is it?'. Mostly the callers are concerned and the questions are legitimate, so that it becomes a fascinating challenge to try to know all the answers — of course one never does, even some simple ones — its a very humbling task to answer the phone at Audubon House.

One day in mid-October the phone rang and an anxious voice asked if grebes could take off on land. I hated to admit it, but I didn't know. A quick glance in the library didn't tell me either. It was obvious that the caller was not asking out of idle curiosity. He told me his name was Roger Harmon and explained that Silverlake had been drained a few days previously, and a large number of grebes had remained in the muddy bottom. Mr. Harmon did not want to interfere if the birds were staying there voluntarily, but he wanted to be certain that they were free to fly when they wished.

I said I would find out and would return his call. Most of our experts were unavailable, so I called Dr. Stager's office at the Museum of Natural History. Dr. Stager answered the phone himself. He told me that grebes must have water from which to take

Concluded from page one

mile circle three days before or three days after count day. Previously "count period" was the full 18 days but the editors figured a bird seen two weeks from count day could be a thousand miles away and irrelevant to a count. Rock doves, by the way, were readmitted to the family of birds last year and are to be counted.

To help finance this gargantuan undertaking fees must be charged. Back before World War II it was 10 cents an observer and, as the project grew, the fee went to 50 cents and finally a dollar. With the Christmas count issue of "American Birds" running over 500 pages and deeply in the red it was found necessary to change the fee schedule to what it is today. ("American Birds", formerly "Audubon Field Notes" is an excellent bi-monthly publication dealing with all aspects of the study of North American birds including the fascinating regional reports of unusual bird sightings.) Subscribers to "American Birds" (\$8 a year) and members of their families who take part in Christmas counts still pay only \$1 for each count. Non-subscribers pay \$2 for the first count and \$1 for any subsequent counts they take part in. (Yes, many birders find Christmas counts irresistible and grab all they can get.) But for their \$2 the non-subscribers get the big Christmas count issue for free — a \$4.50 bargain. This is an intriguing volume with complete details of all the 1000-plus counts including weather conditions and the names of all observers. You can see how your old home town made out last December and if any of your friends back there took part. Or you can marvel at the great birds that showed up on outstanding counts like the Pt Reyes (Pink-footed Shearwater, Black Rail, Tufted Puffin and Snowy Owl!) It makes fine browsing material. And the editor's raised eyebrows and sometimes caustic asides at dubious reports add considerable zip to what at first glance looks like a telephone book.

So there you are, sports fans. If the rain doesn't fall and the winds don't blow and all you lucky volunteers man your battle stations — we might just have us a Christmas count. The recruiting office door is wide open. Step right in. Sandy Wohlgemuth, 19354 Calvert St., Reseda, CA 91335, 344-8531.

off and that they found it difficult even to walk on land. He was most helpful and offered to call the Department of Fish and Game to see if something could be done to rescue the birds. I was delighted and returned Mr. Harmon's call. He was as pleased as I and assured me he would let me know the outcome.

Dr. Stager went into action immediately. The birds were inspected and a decision was made to transfer them to Long Beach, the headquarters of the Department of Fish and Game. By this time a number of people had heard of the situation and were eager to help. When the time came to wade into the mud to capture the birds, Mr. Earl Laupe of Fish and Game had several students from Pierce College, people from Water and Power and Bob Simmons from T.V. Channel 2 with a film crew on hand.

It was a messy job but 81 Eared and Pied-billed Grebes, more than 30 Ruddy Ducks, 1 Mallard, 1 Teal and 1 Pintail were captured and washed off. They were taken to Long Beach to be released there — there is no problem with regard to transferring these birds from fresh to salt water. Mr. Laupe had intended to free them a couple at a time, but they were so lively and in such good condition, that he freed them all at once.

By the next day, nearly all had flown away, but about 30 birds remained on the water close by. Mr. Laupe declared the project 100% successful. There was a report of the event on the 11:00 p.m. T.V. news by Bob Simmons and that was that.

When I spoke with Mr. Harmon after the event, he was full of praise for Dr. Stager, Mr. Laupe and all the helpers and was happy with the outcome of his phone call.

Obviously not every phone call has such dramatic results, but it was a very satisfying solution and as I said — its a very humbling task to answer the phone at Audubon House.

MALIBU LAGOON NEXT

The Audubon Society

RE: Malibu Lagoon, Malibu, California

TO GO

I have been informed that the State of California, Department of Parks & Recreation, have developed plans to pave and plant over a large area of natural wetlands included in what is generally described as The Malibu Lagoon Area.

As a resident of the area, but more importantly, as a citizen concerned with the preservation of our natural resources, I am directing this letter to you, with copies to appropriate authorities, to offer my support and aid in any action you are intending to take in this matter.

I will not go into the history of the Malibu Lagoon and it's value in it's natural state as a wetland and bird, fish and small animal sanctuary. Suffice to note to your attention, that previous illegal dump and fill operations have already destroyed many of the natural ponds and living areas thereon.

There appears to be sufficient statutes already on the books to give this area legal protection. Your attention is respectfully called to 33 U.S.C. Section 403 through 412; to the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899; to the Federal Environmental Policy Act of 1972; and to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972.

It appears that the Federal Government itself has been awakened to the need and protection of vanishing wetlands. Attorney General William Saxbe has stated his intention to "stop 20th Century Buccaneering of the illegal destruction of wetlands." The Federal Government has filed over 200 cases in the past 18 months which relate to this problem.

The House Committee on Government Operations has issued a comprehensive report on Increasing Protection for our Waters, Wetlands and Shorelines, H.R. Rep No. 1323, 92nd Congress 2nd Session at 7 (1972).

The purpose of this letter is to let you know there are aroused citizens who are prepared to join in the fight to save one of the last, if not the last, wetland area in Los Angeles County.

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audubon activities

books

FIELD LIST of the BIRDS of CALIFORNIA

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

Finally—the L.A.S. Field List of The Birds of CALIFORNIA compiled by Guy McCaskie is available at the Book Store. Needless to say, it is complete with the 520 authentic species recorded in California. The names are in order presented in the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds, Fifth Edition, 1957, as amended by the 32nd Supplement (Auk, 90: 441-419, 1973). Fortunately the vernacular names of the readily identifiable subspecies are given separate lines. Each list provides 10 columns, and 10 places to enter details of separate field exercises.

NEW BOOKS

NEW ARRIVALS

RAND McNALLY ATLAS OF WORLD WILDLIFE
FIELD LIST/BIRDS OF DELAWARE VALLEY REGION
by D.V.O.C.

BIRD BEHAVIOR by John Sparks

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Splurge on a beautiful boxed 2 vol. set of WILDFLOWERS OF THE U.S.: THE NORTHWESTERN STATES by H.W. Ricketts. Fine quality, large print, one page beautiful color photos for each page of text. Includes flowers of California to the desert region.

INTRODUCE A CHILD TO BIRDS

We have a few carefully selected childrens' books for your Christmas gifting.

GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP FOR CHRISTMAS

The gift of six issues of Audubon magazine and a membership in the National Audubon Society would please a friend. An individual membership is just \$15.00. A family membership is \$18.00. This also includes membership in a local chapter (either the Los Angeles chapter or one in the area where the recipient resides). Please designate. Make your checks payable to the National Audubon Society but MAIL it to the Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Ca. 90046. Be sure to enclose your name and address too. A card announcing the gift will be sent.

LEGG LAKE Barry Clark

WANTED: AUDUBON ACTIVISTS

The resolution of the Legg Lake dispute is a testament of the tireless efforts of a handful of volunteers, backed up by the generous support of all those who contributed to the Conservation Fund. We should all take encouragement from this success. Now, with the Legg Lake victory behind us, we can push on with the fight to preserve the remaining pieces of Southern California's natural environment.

***** YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

If you have some ideas and some time to spare, join us in the Conservation Committee. Contact: Glenn Olson, Committee Chairman, at 000-0000 or call Audubon House 876-0202.

bird watchers. The final highlight of the day was watching the BROWN PELICANS dive for fish off the Malibu Pier. A total of 46 were counted in one flock, which is the most that have been seen locally for a long time, and a good sign of the increase in numbers of this exciting bird. Jim Clements, leader.

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

PRESIDENT

Dr. Gerald Maisel

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Dorothy Dimsdale

HOUSE CHAIRMAN

Abigail King

Audubon House Hours 10 to 3, Monday through Friday

**Audubon
Bird Reports
874-1318**

Sat., Dec. 7. CARRIZO PLAINS. Take Hwy. 5 north to State 166 (Maricopa turnoff), go west on 166 to Maricopa, turn south on Hwy. 33 1.6 miles to Elkhorn Grade Rd. Group will look here for LeConte's Thrasher and leave at 8:30 a.m. Be sure to have a full tank of gas before leaving Maricopa to join the group as we will not pass through California Valley. The California Valley lodge is no longer in service. Motels are available in Taft for those who wish to stay overnight. Sandhill Cranes, Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plovers are usually there. Other possibilities are: Sage Thrasher, Bald Eagle, Barn Owl, and Short-eared Owl. Leaders, Keith and Pam Axelson.

Mon., Dec. 9. UPPER NEWPORT BAY. Take San Diego Freeway 405, south to Jamboree Blvd. offramp. Go west on Jamboree to East Bluff Dr. Right on East Bluff to Back Bay. Look for group along the bay 8:30 a.m. or later.

Tues., Dec. 10. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Dr. Jared Diamond of the U.C.L.A. Department of Zoology will present Birds of New Guinea, illustrated with slides taken during his search in the highlands.

Mon., Dec. 16. MALIBU CHRISTMAS COUNT. To participate phone Joan Mills before 6:00 p.m., GR 25435.

Sat., Dec. 28. CHRISTMAS COUNT OF LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY. To participate call Sandy Wohlgemuth, 344-8531.

Sat., Jan. 4. MALIBU LAGOON & TAPIA PARK. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on west side of lagoon in lot adjacent to the lagoon. (Take Hwy. 1 to Malibu Creek Bridge.) Shorebirds and wintering waterfowl to be seen. Leader, Glenn Earling Olson.

Thu., Jan 9. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

Sat., Jan. 11. HORSE CANYON CAMPING TRIP. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Jawbone Canyon turnoff on Highway 14, approximately 20 miles north of Mojave. There are absolutely NO facilities such as toilets, water, picnic tables and electrical hook-ups. Dirt roads are passable with caution. We will camp in the high desert surrounded by Joshua trees and pinon pines at a primitive area in Horse Canyon. Pinon Jays, LeConte's Thrasher and the usual desert species to see. Leader, Keith and Pam Axelson.

Mon., Jan. 13 UPPER NEWPORT BAY. Take San Diego Freeway, 405, south to Jamboree Blvd. offramp. Go west on Jamboree to East Bluff Dr. Right on East Bluff to Back Bay. Look for group along the bay 8:30 a.m. or later.

Tue., Jan. 14. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Dr. Gerald Maisel, president of Los Angeles Audubon Society, will present a program on his recent trip to South Africa illustrated with slides featuring the birds and animals seen in Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park, the game parks of Transvaal and Natal, and others.

Thu., Jan. 16. CONSERVATION MEETING, 8:00 p.m. at Plummer Park. Glenn Earling Olson, Chairman.

Sat., Jan. 18. McGRATH STATE PARK. Meeting at 8:30 a.m. in the park entrance, between Oxnard and Ventura. Take Hwy. 101 to Victoria offramp. Go under freeway to Olivas Park Rd., turn right on Olivas to Harbor Blvd., turn left on Harbor to McGrath Park entrance (on right). Park in McGrath for a fee, or north of bridge for no fee. Shorebirds and wintering waterfowl. Goldeneye, Oldsquaw, White-tailed Kite 73. Leader, John Schmitt.

Sat., Jan 25. SALTON SEA. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Wister turnoff on Highway 111 (about 36 miles south of Mecca) north of Niland. Camping is available at Finney Lake (no water) or Wister Campground. There are motels in Brawley. Please be sure to register at Wister. Excellent trip for wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. Ross's Geese are usually seen. Leaders, Harold Baxter and Shum Sufel.

Sat., Feb. 1. MORRO BAY. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the foot of Morro Rock. There is excellent birding in wooded areas and canyons in the vicinity. Many people go up Friday night in order to have a full day Saturday and a half day Sunday. There is camping in Morro Bay State Park (reservations advisable) and motels available in Morro Bay and nearby San Luis Obispo. Morro Bay is approximately 210 miles north of Los Angeles via U.S. 101.

Sat., Feb 8. MORRO BAY. Same as above. Leaders for both dates will be announced by the February "Tanager"

Thu., Feb. 6. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

Tue., Feb. 11. ANNUAL DINNER MEETING. Program will be given by John Goddard, internationally known explorer, naturalist and adventurer, who will show his film "Exploring African Wonderland." filmed in East Africa. See insert for reservation information.

WANTED

Volunteer spokesman and administrative assistant needed by national bird organization. Some paid travel. Must be good public speaker, Credentials not as important as willingness to learn and interest in birds of prey. Call (213) 476-6261, Sat.-Tues., for interview appointment.

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

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

Official Publication of the
Los Angeles Audubon Society

EDITOR Gilbert W. King "The Western Tanager" is free to members of Field Notes Shumway Sufel 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 Calendar Caroline Adams Mailing Supervision . . . Hans Hjorth House.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS / continued

(Jon D.) and a third on San Nicholas Island, Nov. 3 (Lee J.). Reports of ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS in late fall outnumbered our only local report of a late BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK at Tapia Park on Oct. 21 (Joan Mills). "Rose-Breasts" were found at Big Sycamore on Oct. 14 (Kim G.) and again on Oct. 21 (Larry Sansone); and at Morongo Valley Oct. 5 (Jim Stevens) and again Nov. 9 (Hank Brodkin). TREE SPARROWS are more or less expected in Death Valley in November, and several were there early in the month, but they are very rare west of the mountains (only two previous south coastal records), so one at the Starr Ranch Oct. 26 (Dan Guthrie) and one in the South Coast Botanic Gardens in early November (S.W. and many obs.) were noteworthy. As mentioned last month, CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS have apparently been over-looked here, and these additional sightings bear this out: one stayed at Lloyd Kiff's Pacific Palisades feeder for a week in late October, another was in South Coast Botanic Gardens for a few days after Oct. 26 (S.W.) and a third was on Catalina Island Oct. 27 (L.J.).

Lee Jones and others have noticed that many birds seen on the offshore islands are tailless, which, he theorizes, may be the result of near misses by jaegers during their long overwater flight. He actually saw such an attack, with tail feathers flying, after which the intended victim landed in desperation among the people on the boat.

At long last, in Mid-November there seemed to be a significant movement of winter birds into our area. On Nov. 14 PURPLE FINCHES and CEDAR WAXWINGS were moving in the Palos Verdes area, and JUNCOS were widespread and in good numbers. Earlier there was a GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET at Tapia Park on Oct. 28 (Sandy Wohlgemuth), a WINTER WREN at Morongo Valley on Nov. 9 (Hank B.), a VARIED THRUSH in South Coast Botanic Gardens on Nov. 6, and a WHITE-THROATED SPARROW had returned to Irma Rogers' feeder in Monrovia by Nov. 12. These few single individuals hardly suggest that we will have invasions of northern and mountain birds this winter, but only time will tell. Perhaps, even though the quantity is small, the quality will be high and thus add a spark to our winter birding.

Note: In November "Tanager" — re albino Phalarope "seen again a mile away and three weeks later (a long way for a shore bird on migration)" should read "a long stay".

DISCOVERED AT LAST

A marbled murrelet nest and nestling bird were discovered in Big Basin State Park on August 7 by Hoyt Foster, a tree surgeon. Although he did not recognize the bird, he acted to save it. The next day Ranger Dan Driend, Ranger Denzil Verardo, and I enlisted Mr. Foster's help in documenting the find and preserving the nest site. The nest was about eight inches in diameter. It consisted of a slight depression showing exposed bark, located atop a large moss-covered limb of a Douglas fir, 148 feet above ground. Shell fragments and droppings were present. The nestling was about seven inches long and covered with down. Prior to August 7 the marbled murrelet was the only North American breeding bird whose nest had remained undiscovered. —Steven Singer, Santa Cruz Bird Club (Condensed from The Albatross).

Continued from page two

Please inform me if you intend to take any action in this matter. This request is extended to all who are receiving copies of this communication.

I, and others, refuse to stand by and allow the wanton dumping of waste, garbage, asphalt, unnatural fertilizers, and other foreign elements on our public lands. Yours truly,

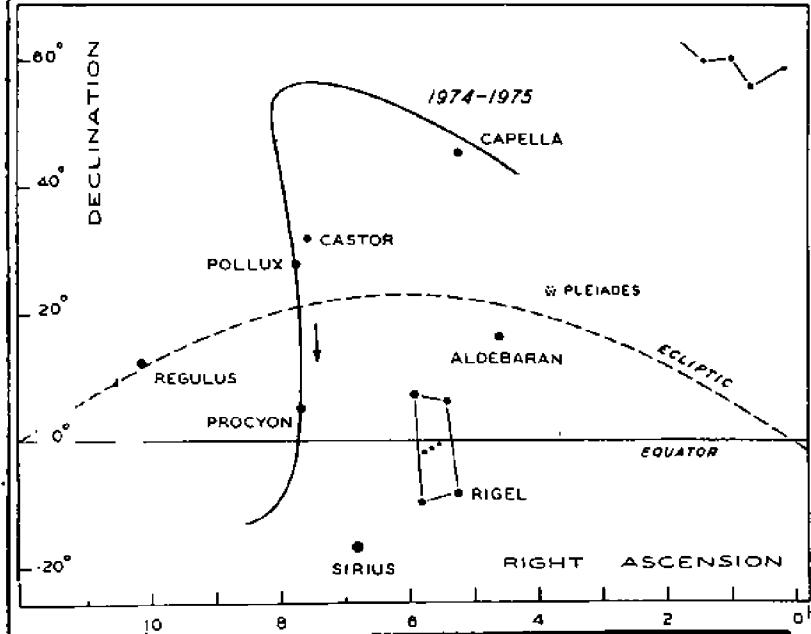
Albert R. Linnick, Attorney at Law

Eros Close to the Earth

Although Comet Kohoutek was considered a flop by the national press, it was in fact a very beautiful sight in birders' binoculars, and was clearly visible many nights in the western skies over the ocean. This winter we have another visitor from space. The minor planet Eros will pass closer to the earth than at any other time this century, the least distance being one-seventh that to the sun. From the beginning of January to mid-February Eros will be visible in binoculars. It will be descending due south through Gemini passing Pollux 20 minutes east on January 20 at 7:00 p.m. PST and Procyon only 4 minutes west on February 9 at 8:00 a.m. PST (too late to be seen here, but data with which to estimate its position during the month).

The most spectacular event will be the occultation of Kappa Geminorum on January 22 at 0.5 hours Universal Time (8 hours later than PST). At the instant Eros covers Kappa observers with binoculars will see this small piece of rock obscure the light of the star. In a few seconds the star will be visible again. Naturally this occultation is visible only in a narrow path whose location cannot be calculated precisely at this time. It may lie on the eastern side of the United States.

Eros is an elongated rock 35 by 16 by 7 kilometers, rotating with a period of 5 hours. Although it approaches the Earth every two years, the orbital dynamics seem to indicate a relatively stable path and it is unlikely it would ever collide with the Earth in the near future.



GULF COAST REFUGE

According to "The New York Times" of November 10, 1974, the Nature Conservancy has won a race against developers and purchased for two million dollars 1700 acres on the Gulf Coast of the State of Mississippi. The area will serve as a refuge for the surviving 40 specimens of the Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), the great savanna crane of Bartram's "Travels".

These cranes are hunted, but their principal problem is the general encroachment on their living and nesting area. According to the "Times," "Potential developers of the area where the cranes live have been described as 'Arab-backed speculators,' although details have been lacking."

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds



Shumway Suffel



DECEMBER Holidays are times for superlatives, the best of this, the most of that, but for rare birders it is unlikely that anytime soon will exceed the superlatives of October and early November. We have already extolled California's first SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER; and made brief mention of California's first verified VEERY at Big Sycamore Oct. 12 to 19; but now, in just two weeks, we have California's first two, maybe more, SPRAGUE'S PIPITS below San Diego from Oct. 19 to at least Oct. 25 (Guy McCaskie et al); Southern California's first two LECONTE'S SPARROWS at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley from Oct. 26 to 31, also Guy Mc. et al; and now, most unbelievable of all a GROOVE-BILLED ANI in the San Jacinto River channel, east of Riverside, from Nov. 5 to at least the 13th (Gene Cardiff's friend Mr. Price)!

Even after this galaxy of new birds, there are many more which need reporting. A BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY was picked up in a South San Gabriel yard on Oct. 15, according to Dave Foster who is caring for it prior to its release in a more favorable habitat. This is our only record of a live "Blue-foot" since the invasion of summer 1972. About 200 migrant WHITE PELICANS stopped briefly at Little Lake on Oct. 23 as reported by Dick Neuman, who also saw two early Snow Geese there, one of them in the blue phase (formerly a Blue Goose). The male TUFTED DUCK returned to Lake Sherwood on Oct. 30 (Mrs. Dickinson and "Lee" Culver) and hopefully will spend its third winter there. Our first local report of a FERRUGINOUS HAWK comes from Mike San Miguel who found one on Nov. 8 near Lake View on his way to find the Ani. Only two BROAD-WINGED HAWKS were reported: an immature at Averill Park, San Pedro, Oct. 24 (Ed Navajosky), and one at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley two days later. Neither one could be found again. The PIPING PLOVER which returned to Malibu lagoon in mid-October could not be found later in the month, possibly due to flooding of the lagoon, or to continued heavy beach use during the summer weather of late fall. FRANKLIN'S GULLS have been unusually scarce this year even at the Salton Sea where they are usually seen but we have two late reports: an immature along the Ballona Creek channel above Marina del Rey on Oct. 31 (Hal Ferris) and another at Malibu lagoon on Nov. 10 (John Menke). TROPICAL KINGBIRDS were scarcer and later than normal with our second one for the fall on San Nicholas Island Oct. 20 and the third one below San Diego Oct. 21 (Jean Brandt and Ruth Lohr). Five lucky L.A. Auduboners were the only ones to see an elusive GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER on Pt. Loma, San Diego on Oct. 20. (This is only the third mainland sighting in Calif.) A SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER was found at the now dry San Elijo Lagoon above Carlsbad on Nov. 8 (Jon Dunn et al). Five GRAY CATBIRDS have been found in Calif. this year, which equals the aggregate of all previous sightings. The latest two were one at Scotty's Castle, Death Valley, in late October (many observers), and a tailless one on San Nicholas Island, Nov. 2 (Lee Jones). Several RED-THROATED PIPITS were found below San Diego on Oct. 19 for the first time since 1968, with two more on San Nicholas Island being the only Southern California sighting away from the San Diego area.

Both the quality of vireo and warbler reports this fall were simply astounding when judged by the standards of previous years. Increased coverage by more knowledgeable observers accounts for much of this, but even taking this into account, it was an unprecedented season. Lee Jones discovered California's fifth YELLOW-

OUR POLICY ON NAMES

The scientific names of several of our North American Birds have been changed by the American Ornithological Union, and will be used in these pages when they are approved by an International Congress Committee of Zoology. The birds themselves have not changed their appearance and their common or vernacular names continue to be used by people in order to distinguish them. It is these names, which by definition are in the vernacular, which appear in dictionaries, and they continue to serve a useful purpose for us. Many of us would be interested in reports of a Yellow-shafted Flicker, a rarity in Southern California, with colorations readily distinguishing it in the field from the local Red-shafted. To call it a Common Flicker is a disservice to our readers.

To distinguish a Myrtle from an Audubon's Warbler in the field is an interesting challenge to many of our readers, and reports by those who, unable, to distinguish them, call them both by the unimaginative name of Yellow-rumped Warbler are not acceptable, especially as there are other yellow-rumped warblers. (It is hard to vocalize the capitals.)

We would go further and encourage the perpetuation of vernacular terms, such as Spotted Towhee, in appearance and song so different from the Eastern subspecies, Rufous-sided Towhee. The Desert Sparrow is a much more appropriate name for our local species of black-throated sparrow.

THROATED VIREO on Catalina Island on Oct. 27. Guy McCaskie found a very late PHILADELPHIA VIREO below San Diego on Oct. 19 and Jon Dunn saw a rare RED-EYED VIREO nearby a week or so later. More than twenty sightings of TENNESSEE WARBLERS in our area make this species and the REDSTART our commonest "Eastern" warblers this fall. MAGNOLIA WARBLERS too, were often seen with several on the offshore islands and below San Diego, one at Pt. Fermin Park on Oct. 13 (Shirley Wells) and another at Big Sycamore Park in mid-October (Ed N.). At least three on San Nicholas Island and a fine male near San Diego on Oct. 13 (Fred Haerich). Another male was seen in Alice Jenkins' Bel Air garden on Oct. 19, another male in Tuna Canyon on Oct. 27 (R.R. Bredin and J.B. Anderson) and a fourth male was found in the South Coast Botanic Gardens in early November (Shirley Wells and Ed N.). There were no local reports of females - how about that expertise? Only two BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS were seen - one at Otay Mesa, San Diego in Mid-October and one in the South Coast Botanic Gardens on Oct. 26 and 27 (Shirley W. and Hank Brodkin). Phil Sayre and Ed N. reported a very late YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER in the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens on Oct. 17 (there are less than ten California records). In addition to those reported last month, there were two CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS at Laguna Beach on Oct. 10 (Jerry Johnson) and one on San Nicholas Island, Oct 21 (Kim Garrett). A BAY-BREASTED WARBLER below San Diego on Oct. 20, and another in Long Beach Recreation Park on Oct. 24 (Don Atwood) were a normal fall number for this rare warbler. PALM WARBLERS are usually late and such was the case this fall with two in Big Sycamore Park on Oct. 18 (Jim Stevens et al.), one at Pt. Fermin on Oct. 13 (Shirley W.), with a few more below San Diego and on the islands. A NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH at Big Sycamore, after Oct. 21 (Ed N.) traded places in the streambed with the recently departed VEERY and was later reported independently by several observers. The only CANADA WARBLER of the fall stayed few days after Oct. 23 below San Diego.

There were more RUSTY BLACKBIRD reports than normal with one or more at Furnace Creek Ranch from Oct. 28 well into November (many obs.) another on Pt. Loma, San Diego, on Nov. 9

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