

Los Angeles Audubon Society

The Western Tanager

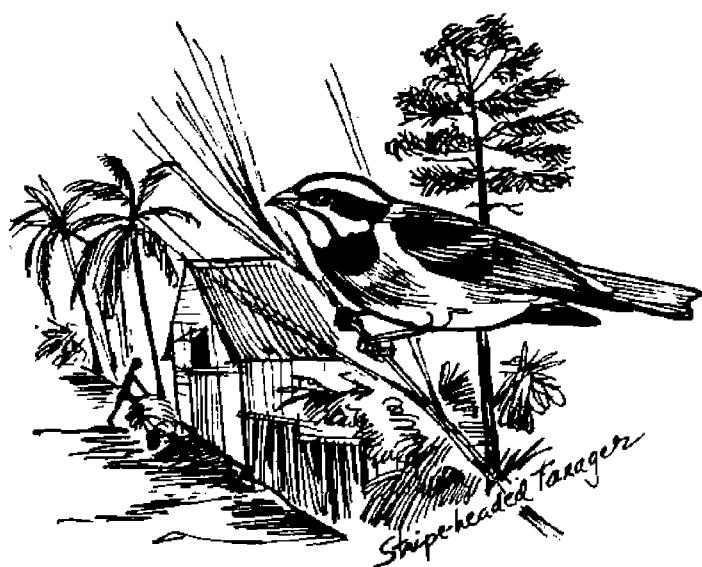
VOLUME 41, 1974-75 No. 8 May

BARRY CLARK BIRDING IN THE BAHAMAS

A WORKING vacation took my wife, Terry, and me to Nassau from mid-July to late August of this year. This provided us with an incomparable opportunity to become acquainted with the fascinating birds of the Bahamas. New Providence Island, on which Nassau is located, lies just 200 miles southeast of Miami, yet the island supports a community of birds that is distinctly different from that of southern Florida. In fact, at least 2/3 of the land birds resident in the Bahamas are unknown even in the Florida Keys --- a result of some two million years of isolation of the islands from the mainland of North America.

ALTHOUGH the 700 Bahama islands stretch out across 750 miles of ocean, there is surprising uniformity among the birds from one island to the next. But this situation can be understood upon consideration of the topography of the surrounding seafloor. Most of the Bahamas lie within the 100-fathom line, and 40,000 years ago, when the northern ice sheets had lowered the sea level by hundreds of feet, the islands would have formed one contiguous landmass --- though still separated from Florida by a gulf of 50 miles. It is a testament to the unexpectedly low dispersability and colonization potential of most bird species that a gap as narrow as this could still serve as an effective barrier between the two avian communities.

AT ONE TIME in the dim past a physical connection existed between the West Indies and North America, but seems to be no evidence that the area was ever linked with South America. So the birds of the Bahamas trace their origins essentially to tropical North America, and in technical terms the Bahamas (with the rest of the West Indies) comprise a subregion of the Nearctic Faunal Region. Even though on the subspecies, species, and generic levels the Bahamian birds are distinct from those of the north, the resident families of birds in the Bahamas will all be familiar to visiting birders from North America. Essentially, then, what we see in the Bahamas is the diversifying work of evolution in operation throughout a couple of million years of isolation.



THE VEGETATION of the Bahamas is almost a direct extension of that of Florida --- but then, plants colonize more readily and speciate more slowly than the birds. The island of New Providence is only 20 miles long and 5 miles wide, and, like other small islands, it possesses a limited number of habitats for birds. About 70% of the island is forested with lush tracts of seemingly virgin Caribbean pine and saw palmetto, while another 20% is subtropical woodland, dominated by exotics like the royal poinciana, silk floss, and banyan trees. There are no freshwater habitats at all, and there is no zonation by rainfall or altitude. As a consequence of this ecological uniformity, only about 50 species of land birds are resident on the island --- but each of these is interesting.

AMONG the birds of New Providence there are no jays, crows, hawks, wrens, or orioles --- a result of some historical accident. But on the positive side, there are no starlings or house sparrows either, and very few rock doves. Despite the presence of human population of over 100,000, New Providence still offers miles of wild, empty country, where it's possible to wander for hours along rough dirt tracks through forests seemingly unaltered since the coming of Columbus. Here in the tangled pine-and-palmetto woodlands the greatest abundance of Bahamian birds can be found, most of them amazingly curious and tame --- in fact, so tame that it's almost possible to coax the ubiquitous *Bananaquits* and *Greater Antillean Pewees* to perch on your outstretched arm. This is also the favored habitat of the spectacular *Stripe-headed Tanager*, the bizarre *Red-legged Thrush*, the *Greater Antillean Bullfinch*, the *Black-faced Grassquit*, and the *Great Lizard Cuckoo*. *Thick-billed Vireos* and *Pine* and *Yellow-throated Warblers* are also abundant here, while the tropical woodlands of the island are full of *Cuban Grassquits*, *Black-whiskered Vireos*, *Smooth-billed Anis*, *Grey Kingbirds*, and the dazzling *Bahama Woodstar* hummingbirds. Most of these birds are remarkably sedentary in their ways, and only the Black-whiskered Vireos leave the Bahamas, to spend the winter in South America.

THE BAHAMAS are poor in resident warblers, but from as early as late July onwards, Eastern wood-warblers appear regularly in the woods, fresh from their flight across the Florida Straits. We were fortunate in having accommodations at the old Montagu Beach Hotel, adjacent to 200 acres of dense second-growth woodland, and when we couldn't get out to the pine forests, morning strolls through these woods rarely failed to turn up a few new species. Among the foraging bands of *Bananaquits* and *Grassquits*, we were surprised to find, in midsummer, wintering *Prothonotary*, *Continued on page 5.*



BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS

Dorothy Dimsdale

For ten years I have patrolled the wild canyon adjoining my back yard. Patrolled it with my binoculars, that is. The binoculars were a later development; at first I sat motionless in the bushes watching a flicker's nesting hole, but the local ticks found me a happy hunting ground and a pleasant change from the furry beasts of the canyon I retreated to my garden and the binoculars.

Initially the only bird I was reasonably sure of was a scrub jay and my conviction could have been shaken if anyone called it a pheasant. With the acquisition of Roger Tory Peterson's field guide and 'Birds of N. America' a whole world opened up and a 'new' bird became a sight to set the pulse racing.

I realized that differentiating between the various sparrows, warblers and finches was too refined a task for a lone amateur, so I stuck basically to the obvious identifications, rufous sided towhees, cedar waxwings and so forth. I suddenly had a hobby I was hooked!

When it comes to birding, ignorance is bliss indeed. Not knowing what is a rare or common bird in California makes life much simpler. One can become delirious over the first sighting of a black headed grosbeak because it is so beautifully colored and dismiss a Cassin's sparrow simply because it looks, to the untrained eye, like every other sparrow. I have two very untrained eyes and so far a brightly colored bird is much more appealing to me to look at, even if it is very common.

It was in Mazatlan, Mexico that I learned that one has to be restrained with the non birding public. I had watched the trees weighted down with boat tailed grackles and been awakened by their loud cries every morning. They seemed to be everywhere; even at the airport as we waited in line. A 'typical American tourist' behind me made a somewhat unflattering reference to the 'crows'. Here was my chance! With fanatic intensity, (at least, it must have sounded that way) I gave him the full benefit of my newly acquired knowledge. I told him not only the correct name of the bird, but also of the marvelous horny protrusion in the bird's mouth, on which it is able to crack open the hardest shells. I was about to ask if he had noticed the different coloring of the female, when I saw that he was watching me with suspicion and uneasiness. I slowed down my lecture and realized how I must appear. Here I was, in tennis shoes and a straw hat, holding forth in a clipped English accent (I am English, hence the accent). My sentence trailed away and I stood unhappily, worrying about 'little old ladies in tennis shoes.' The man was muttering urgently to his wife; when we boarded the plane, they both sat at the point as far from me as they could get. The damage was done; not only had I failed to interest the man, even peripherally, in grackles; I had made him an enemy of all birds for life, not to mention the fact that he thought I was crazy. Now, if approached when alone, by a non birding stranger, when I'm happily preoccupied peering through my binoculars, I murmur politely that I'm a student of Purple Nephritis - and I move

My rapid progress in birding then brought me to Audubon House as a volunteer. I'd found my proper place amongst my peers. Naturally I was prepared to share my wisdom and unique experiences. Unfortunately my glad cries of 'Hey! There was an osprey perched on our old hawk tree for four hours!' or 'Would you believe six varied thrushes have come every evening this winter to our little waterfall?' whilst greeted with friendly congratulations, left me with a feeling that some small doubt about the accuracy of my observations nibbled away at my colleagues' enthusiasm. This doubt might have been rooted in the remarkable frequency with which I alone spotted unusual birds, or just possibly, the fact that I had never been on an official field trip could have aroused very valid questions. Finally some generous birders asked me if I'd like to go to Mt. Pinos and who knows, maybe see a Condor! This was a L.A.A.S field trip.

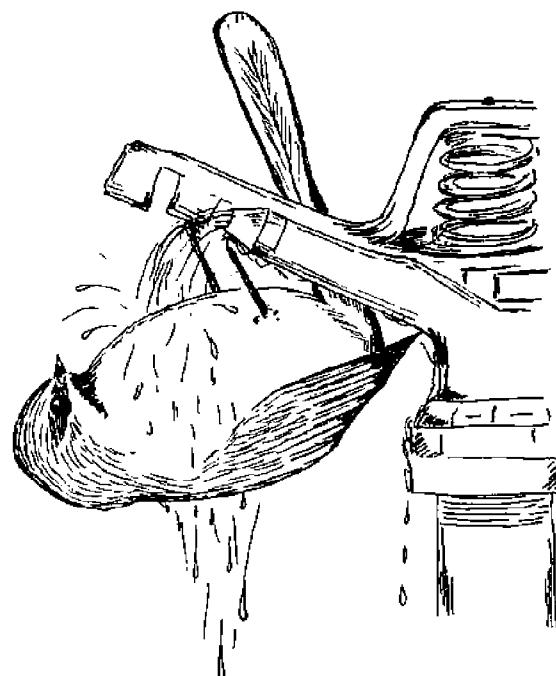
Like a new girl at school, armed with a gigantic thermos flask, and with enough food for five people crammed into a large cumbersome bag, I donned my newly bought hat with the L.A.A.S. emblem proudly displayed and left for Mt. Pinos.

I was unprepared for just about everything. The quiet, friendly greetings as cars full of birders arrived at the lower meadow and fanned out looking for varieties of sparrows. The eagerness of experienced birders to help me see all birds which were new to me. The extensive knowledge of many, of the flora and fauna of the area. The care which was taken not to disturb a bird unduly and to leave the terrain as untouched as possible. The large number of species to be seen and last, but not least, Iris Meadow. It was in bloom. From a distance I thought it was a lake, so deep was the blue of the flowers and so thickly massed. There amongst the flowers was a Calliope hummingbird, a rare bird in that area. It was here that I learned the secret of real birding. To be absolutely certain of the identification of a bird, at least two people should see it at the same time. Here, there were many people and the pleasure of having new birds pointed out to me without having to leaf frantically through my identification books was a delight.

It was a wonderful day - sitting atop Mt. Pinos, I ate all my lunch, emptied the gigantic thermos and had sixteen new birds. There were no Condors that day. One is never guaranteed the sight of a Condor which adds to the excitement if one finally sees one. On a subsequent trip I saw two of them and my first reaction was one of awe and incredulity at the size.

This first field trip for me was last July and I have been on several since. I have a smaller thermos, my new hat is suitably bedraggled, and whilst I'm still a beginner, my old claim that I wouldn't know a hummingbird from an ostrich no longer holds. I've come to understand the need for corroboration. The strictness with which the sightings of unusual or rare birds are monitored makes the hobby of birding a pleasant challenge.

I know now that even though my husband and I feel that we positively identified a turquoise browed mot mot in a tree on the side of the sacred pool at Chichen Itza last December, a little skepticism from other birders is understandable since the bird is elusive and neither of us is experienced or expert. I suppose the accuracy of our identification is really of minor importance. We saw an exotic-looking bird, we were thrilled and excited, we've widened our horizons and expert or novice, we're enriched by our hobby.



Drawing by William Nicholas

audubon activities

LAKE NORCO, February 1. Unfortunately the news that the Lake Norco field trip had been cancelled reached all but five persons who met at the gate on time. Although the gate guards had no record of the former reservation, they kindly admitted this small group. The day was clear, cool and windless with many birds on and over the lake. Forty-six species were observed including Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a life bird for us all. A Cassin's Kingbird close by provided good descriptive views. We also watched a Shrike impale a caterpillar on a half-inch thorn-like projection of a low dry annual. We were unable to locate a single Violet-green Swallow among the hundreds of Tree Swallows. Richard W. Jackson, substitute leader.

LOS ANGELES ARBORETUM, February 22. We met under cloudless skies, cool and windless, and waited half an hour for a leader who failed to appear. I was elected and we proceeded to the pond where we found part of the jungle area fenced off for construction work which we fear may cause the loss of some of the best habitat. The Sora and the Bulbuls often seen here could not be found even after a diligent search. The Eastern Phoebe was found south of the pond instead of at his usual station by the upper pond. After some searching I was able to locate an Anna's Hummingbird nest found previously and we were lucky to see a fledgling and its mother nearby. They allowed very close observation and photographs. Ray Robinson, who has led the monthly bird walks at the Arboretum for the past two years, will be leaving shortly for Iraq where he has accepted a new position. He will be missed by the many birders who enjoyed his leadership. Bob Johnson, leader.

TUJUNGA WASH & HANSON DAM, March 2. Surprising most of them, our attendees were rewarded with a shining sun as they reached Sunland through a generally foggy basin. A comfortable day lay ahead for the 31 of us and, although we had dwindled to 6 by early afternoon, most had seen the majority of our Heinz (57) varieties before departing. Despite several misses such as Red-winged Blackbird, White-throated Swift, and seeing only one kind of swallow, the group surpassed last year's total by a whopping 16 species. Best were the several Rufous and possible Allen's Hummers, and the last member of the large flock of Common Mergansers seen previously at Hanson Dam Lake. This female obliged by remaining an hour or so, then took off, circling for altitude then leaving the area as we watched. This was fortunate timing for those seeing a life bird. Upstream, those seeking Cactus Wrens for their lists were not disappointed. John McDonald and Jim Stevens, co-leaders.

EVENING MEETING, March 11. Dr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Birds at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History, took us on a tour through the labyrinth of the "Exotic Bird Trade." From figures and demonstrations we learned of the magnitude of this traffic and the threat to the native birds of the world. The number of species and individuals involved in this trade is tremendous; the loss during transit is appalling. Although air traffic has decreased the loss in transit, it has correspondingly increased the number of birds being shipped. The bulk of these birds are not intended for the zoo trade; rather, they go to the pet shop trade where the more rare and exotic species are in greater demand. Dr. Stager pointed out the effect of Newcastle's Disease as a landmark and reference point in bird traffic. Legal action at that time was a lifesaver for many endangered species of birds. Dr. Stager's lecture was attended by a very enthusiastic and attentive group.

FERNDELL, March 15. Twenty-two birders met in Fern dell to enjoy a very pleasant morning walk that yielded 35 species of birds. The apparently resident Band-tailed Pigeons put on a good aerial display. A Lincoln's Sparrow was seen on a moist hillside. Purple Finches were quite common and afforded good comparison with the abundant House Finches. One Yellow Warbler and 3 Orange-crowned Warblers among the hundreds of Yellow-rumped seemed to indicate the early beginning of spring migration. We walked far up the canyon to a Great Horned Owl roost that unfortunately had apparently been abandoned. Two Turkey

books

FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF GALAPAGOS should be available from our bookstore soon.

ANNOTATED FIELD LIST BIRDS OF NO. CALIF., by McCaskie, is out of print. We have just a few in stock.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

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Respectfully submitted, Jean Brandt, Chairman

Marge Wohlgemuth - Herb Clarke

EARLE R. GREENE

Earle R. Greene, long a member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, died March 12, 1975, at his final birding station, St. Simons Island off the coast of Georgia, at the age of 88. Earle will be remembered by many for his early recognition and fame, in the mid-thirties, for his suppression of poaching in the Florida Keys, and consequent rescue from oblivion of the endemic Great White Heron and the Key Deer. While a member of LAAS Earle instituted and led every year, until his departure, the Malibu Christmas Count. In recent years, he has stimulated the interest in birding of residents and visitors to the islands of Georgia. His contributions to bird life and to bird lovers have been appreciated all over the country.



Earle R. Greene at the helm of the 36ft patrol boat in the Florida Keys back in the mid-30's. His knowledge of the birds here has led to many articles in ornithological publications.

Vultures, a Common Raven, and Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks were compared and admired, as were many chaparral birds. George Ledec, leader.

MALIBU LAGOON & TAPIA PARK, March 23. Our group met under the clearest skies of the year following the previous day's wind and rain. The best bird was a Black Brant, but the Black-bellied Plovers coming into mating plumage were beautiful. A red-shouldered Hawk with jesses was being harassed by three Red-tails. Bob Johnson, 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**

Thu., May 1. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

Sat., May 3. 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 National Monument and motels available in Twenty-nine Palms and Yucca Valley. Vermilion Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Lucy's Warbler and rare spring migrants are possibilities. Leader, George Vanetta.

Sat., May 10. LIEBRE MTN. CAMPING TRIP. For reservations and direction, meeting time and place please send self-addressed envelope to Pam Axelson, 3262 Midvale Ave., L.A. 90034. We expect to see chaparral birds, montane species and spring migrants. Leader: Ken Campbell.

Sun., May 11. PELAGIC TRIP AROUND ANACAPA & SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS. The Horned Puffin has been seen on this trip. The Paisano leaves at 8:00 a.m. from Oxnard Marina. Fee \$12 per person (48 passengers). Send check with full names of all in party to Joann Gabbard, 1318 Euclid Ave., Apt. 7, Santa Monica, CA 90404 (Tel. 395-1911) together with stamped, self-addressed envelope, and telephone number where you can be reached in case of cancellation of this trip on account of bad weather. Leader: Herb Clarke.

Tue., May 13. EVENING MEETING. Guy McCaskie will present a program entitled "Why does California have so many Rare Birds?"

Wed., May 28. CONSERVATION MEETING, 7:30 p.m., Santa Monica City Library, 6th and Santa Monica Blvd Program: Coastal Wetlands, the Tia Juana Riverbottom, and the Least Tern Recovery Program. Glenn Olson, Chairman

Sat., May 17. LEGG LAKE & WHITTIER NARROWS RECREATION AREA. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Take Pomona Frwy. to Santa Anita offramp. Go south on Santa Anita and turn right into first parking lot indicating Legg Lake. Meet at north end of lot near fenced lake. Leader: Michael Long.

Sun., May 18. PELAGIC TRIP AROUND ANACAPA & SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS. The Horned Puffin has been seen on this trip. The Paisano leaves at 8:00 a.m. from Oxnard Marina. Fee \$12 per person (48 passengers). Send check with full names of all in party to Joann Gabbard, 1318 Euclid Ave., Apt. 7, Santa Monica, CA 90404 (Tel. 395-1911) together with stamped, self-addressed envelope and telephone number where you can be reached in case of cancellation of this trip on account of bad weather. Leader: Arnold Small.

Sat., May 24. MT. PINOS. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Frazier Park turnoff by restaurant next to Shell Station. Frazier Park turnoff is approximately 2 miles beyond Gorman on Hwy. 5. A good trip for montane species such as Red Crossbills, Cassins' Finches, Calliope Hummingbirds, and possibly Condors. Leader: Ed Navajowsky.

Thu., June 5. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

Tue., Jun 10. EVENING MEETING. Jim Clements will present a program entitled "A Birdwatcher Down Under" illustrated by his slides from a recent birding trip to Australia.

Wed., June 25. CONSERVATION MEETING, 7:30 p.m. Santa Monica City Library, 6th and Santa Monica Blvd. Glenn Olson, Chairman.

GOLDEN TROUT CAMP

Week-long sessions sponsored by Southern California Audubon chapters at a cost of \$70.00 Located near Lone Pine at 10,000 feet, it is reached by a 2½ mile hike. Children welcome. For detailed information write Paul Howard, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, Ca 95825.

BIRDING TOUR TO DENMARK, SWEDEN, AND FINNISH LAPLAND

Arnold Small, author of *The Birds of California* and former president of the Los Angeles Audubon Society will be taking a small group of birders to northern Scandinavia from June 19 through July 10 (22 days). Total cost of this first class tour (Los Angeles to Los Angeles) is \$1770 (all inclusive). Birds of this area include those of both eastern and western Europe as well as the subarctic and high arctic species. There are a few spaces available. Call Arnold at 275-8823 if you are interested. Places to be visited include Denmark, Sweden, and Finnish Lapland.

BIRDING TOUR TO COLOMBIA, SOUTH AMERICA

Herb and Olga Clarke, longtime members and officers of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, are leading a birding tour to Colombia, a nation which contains the greatest variety of birds of any country in the world. The dates are August 11/24, 1975. Habitats to be visited include the llanos (plains), tropical rain forests, marshes, the Andes up to the paramo region above timberline. Some of the bird probabilities are Andean Condor, Cock-of-the-Rock, Horned Screamer, dozens of bright colored tanagers, parrots, and hummingbirds. Accommodations will be the best available and the number of participants will be limited. The local guide will be Dr. Kjell von Sneider, who assisted de Schauensee in writing the *BIRDS OF COLOMBIA*.

Olga L. Clarke (213) 249-5537

2027 El Arbolita Dr.
Glendale, Calif. 91208

Point Reyes Bird Observatory is planning three Sierra trips during the summer, led by experienced naturalists. Each trip is about a week. For information write Meryl Stewart, Box 442, Bolinas, Calif. 94924.

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 Suffel National Audubon Society assigned to the Los Audubon Activities Donald Adams Angeles chapter. For all others annual subscription is Calendar Caroline Adams \$3.50. For first class mailing, send \$1.00 to Audubon Mailing Supervision . . . Hans Hjorth House.

CONSERVATION TOPICS

Glenn Olson

Audubon Society Conservation Meetings

The Audubon Society Conservation meetings strive to mollify man's momentary disharmony in this ongoing symphony of life here on earth. We can use your help. The meetings are open to the public and all interested persons are heartily encouraged to attend. Bring your opinions and enthusiasm — we will put our collective energy into purposeful conservation work. We meet on the third Thursday of each month at 8 PM in Plummer Park. Need more info or notes on upcoming programs? Call Glenn Olson at 472-4737, or listen to the Audubon Bird Tape, 874-1318, during the week of the program.

Birders who use the lagoons, estuaries, and coastal strand of San Diego County will enjoy the conservation program May 28 (see Calendar). Mike Evans, who is a member of the Dept. of Fish and Game's Least Tern Recovery Program, will present a program on some of the sensitive conservation problems of our coastal wetlands.

The Santa Monica Mountains potential for open space, recreation, and preservation of ecological values is coming, more and more, into focus. In Congress, S-759, Tunney-Bell sponsored bill, was recently introduced to both houses. It would create an 80,000 acre Santa Monica Mountain and Seashore National Urban Park within 5 years. This bill is in the Interior Committee of both houses. In the State Assembly, Howard Berman and Herchel Rosenthal have proposed a Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission (A.B. 163) to prepare a comprehensive and enforceable plan for conservation and development of the Santa Monica's.

Nationally, President Ford has asked 12.5-million dollars for the Garrison Diversion Unit, despite recommendations to the contrary from the Office of Management and Budget. This half-billion dollar boondoggle was the subject of a March AUDUBON MAGAZINE article. The project would "engender huge economic costs far out of proportion to benefits, would violate two international treaties with Canada, disrupt seven national wildlife refuges and take more land out of agriculture production than it would put in."

THE BAHAMAS

Continued from page 1.

Worm-eating, Cerulean, Prairie, Parula, and Black-and-White Warblers --- and if we could have lingered just one more week, the *Kirtland's Warblers* from Michigan would have joined us.

SIDE TRIPS

by boat to some of the Bahamas Out Islands may turn up some interesting

pelagic species, like the *Blue-faced Booby*, the *Brown Booby*, and the *White-tailed Tropicbird*, as well as a few land birds that happen to be absent from New Providence, like the *West Indian Red-bellied Woodpecker*, the *Pearly-eyed Thrasher*, the *Black-cowled Oriole*, and the *Cuban Emerald* hummingbird. But some of these islands are so densely wooded as to be nearly impenetrable --- and if time is limited, New Providence itself, just 45 minutes by plane from Miami, offers just about everything a birder could desire. In two or three days, outfitted with a copy of James Bond's "Birds of the West Indies," and a \$25/day rent-a-car, it's easy to discover at least 90% of the local birds, including a couple of dozen species that are bound to be new to North American birders.

THE SIBLEY CASE

Reply by W. R. P. Bourne

Since Dr. T.R. Howell accuses me of various misrepresentations (February 1975), I would be grateful if you would allow me to reply. The news item from *Nature* for 28 June 1974 which you reprinted in October to which he chooses to take exception was not, as he must be well aware, the first contribution on the subject, but a comment on a long article published in the London *Sunday Times* for 16 June and the widely-circulated American magazine *Sports Illustrated* at much the same time. It describes in great detail how when a series of egg-collectors were caught defying the law in this country they were found in possession of some very incriminating correspondence with Professor Charles Sibley of Yale University, some of which was quoted and has not been denied. Instead, when he was asked for an explanation, Professor Sibley abused our hard-won conservation legislation and claimed "the experts" would agree with him, so I arranged for this to be refuted in the most authoritative place possible, *Nature*. Since Dr. Howell complains of misrepresentation, I may say that with inside knowledge I cannot see that either article commits any error of fact except that perhaps I should have made clear that the infinitely more damaging original one, which Dr. Howell chooses to ignore, apparently originated in North America and not Britain at all. But we agree with it.

Perhaps it should also be made clear that while we do not have an "endangered list" for threatened species as claimed by Dr. Howell, the status of the Peregrine Falcon, which he appears to think is a passerine, is much the same with us as with everyone else. Together with the Stone Curlew (which is not a passerine either, and which is stated in the legend to the portrait accompanying the original account to be reduced to less than 200 pairs in this country) it receives the highest grade of protection on Schedule 1 of our Bird Protection Act, accompanied by special penalties including not only fines but up to three months' imprisonment for each egg taken. In the circumstances the statement originally attributed to Professor Sibley that he was "both impressed and delighted to find the beautiful material from *Falco peregrinus* safely to hand. Also, needless to say, I will make no further comment on the source of the specimen!" was not well received here. The people convicted in connection with this incident have been requested to resign from our ornithological societies before they are expelled, and in the circumstances we find it strange that the American Ornithologists' Union promoted Charles Sibley to First Vice-President last October.

NASSAU has its attractions, too. Even in summer, the climate is not intolerable, and bothersome insects seem to be absent. The vegetation is fascinating, the flowers and butterflies are spectacular, and there are myriads of beautiful fish in the crystal-clear water. All-in-all, the Bahamas offer a great natural history adventure, a convenient opportunity to encounter a new avifauna, and to acquire at the same time an invaluable insight into the interplay of geography and evolution in this hemisphere.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

by Shumway Suffel

MAY should be the most exciting month of the year for birders — the early part for the quantity of spring migrants, and the latter part for the quality of rare vagrants. With April behind us most of the "firsts" of the year have been recorded by someone, somewhere in our area, but even if you missed April birding there is still time to find all but the very earliest of the spring migrants. The only real problem is finding the time to cover all the promising places. As Lee Jones once said, "this is the time of year when I wish I could be everywhere at once."

The desert oases, suggested last month, should be equally productive in early May, and, although the quantity of migrants will decrease later in the month, the chances of finding a vagrant passerine — an eastern warbler, flycatcher, thrush, or thrasher — will greatly increase.

Along the coast and at the Salton Sea the shore birds will be in their "courting clothes" — the Avocet's rusty head, the Dunlin's black belly, and the Phalarope's "coat of many colors" are all breeding-season phenomena. Our three sandpipers, which are uncommon even in fall — Solitary, Baird's and Pectoral — are almost unknown in the spring but should be searched for, studied carefully, and reported. In addition there are four very rare sandpipers which have been found in May or early June — Semi-palmated, Curlew, White-rumped, and Rufous-necked. These four sandpipers, fortunately, have distinctive summer plumages but are almost identical in fall and winter with other commoner species.

One of the great avian spectacles of the world occurs off our coast in early May. This is the annual counter-clockwise migration of hundreds of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters around the north Pacific. This, of course, is best seen from a boat, and the pelagic trips should provide that opportunity. It can also be observed from coastal promontories, such as Point Fermin, Point Dume, and the breakwaters at Port Hueneme.

March, as expected, was uninspiring for birders. Very few people were out, owing to the extended rainy weather. Those who were in the field were generally disappointed. Nevertheless, one ultra-rare duck made this March a month to remember, but unfortunately for only a few of us. On Wednesday morning, the 19th, Barbara Massey rediscovered a former acquaintance, a male GARGANEY TEAL, on the south lake of the Long Beach Nature Center. News went to Audubon House, then out to a few of us who were at home, and then by the grapevine to a few others who skipped lunch or took an hour off work to see one of the world's most beautiful waterfowl. The Bird Tape broadcasted the news on Thursday, but the Garganey could not be found. Barbara had seen this same drake at this exact spot on April 4, 1974 and on March 15, 1972. To my knowledge, there are only two previous mainland records in North America ("American Birds," spring 1971), a drake (beautifully pictured) at the South-east corner of Lake Manitoba on May 23, 1971, and another drake at Two Hills, Alberta, on June 24-26, 1961. Those who missed the Garganey have only one slight compensation, they do not have to struggle with their listers conscience "Was the Garganey an escapee?" Even if it was, it is wild now, as its migration has taken it to Long Beach for four springs now. Maybe we'd best say "origin uncertain" and hope it returns in March 1976 to be admired by a larger audience.

Despite persistent rumors that the EURASIAN (COMMON) TEAL had returned to Lake Sherwood for the fifth winter, we are unable to find anyone who actually saw the bird. However, one was found at Legg Lake, El Monte, on March 8 and confirmed by Dave Foster over that weekend. Subsequently it proved difficult to find but remained there until at least early April. Our TRUMPETER SWAN put in one more brief appearance on a sterile flood control basin in Covina about March 20, but by the time the news was out it had moved on, much to the disappointment of several Bay Area birders who made the long trip down to see it.

The field identification of DUSKY and HAMMOND'S FLY-CATCHERS is notably difficult and just when we think we have the problem solved new ones arise. Two winter reports were made last month, and both of these now defy specific identification. Ed Navajosky saw a flycatcher at Big Sycamore Park on March 17 and gave a credible description of a Hammond's Flycatcher — small dark bill, back and tail the same olive-gray color, grayish throat and belly, etc. I assume this to be the same bird found by Jerry Johnson at the same place on February 23. When I mentioned to Jerry that Ed had seen his flycatcher and thought it was a Hammond's, he disagreed and said that he favored Dusky. To further confuse the issue, two top field men, Guy McCaskie and Jon Dunn, have studied a flycatcher in Presidio Park, San Diego. Guy thinks "Hammond's" and Jon thinks "Dusky." So we just have to leave them Dusky/Hammond's until everyone can agree or we get better fieldmarks.

There were surprisingly few first reports for the migration to early April. Marion and Russ Wilson, still in Barrego State Park, found a male SCOTT'S ORIOLE on March 4 and a WARBLING VIREO on March 6, both of which may be early. Along the coast Shirley Wells had two WESTERN KINGBIRDS, a WARBLING VIREO and a WILSON'S WARBLER in the South Coast Botanic Gardens on March 21. Joan Mills and Abigail King found our first WESTERN FLYCATCHER and a WILSON'S WARBLER in Tuna Canyon, Malibu on March 24. At least four SOLITARY VIREOS were sighted in Santa Anita Canyon on April 1, and Dave Foster adds that the DIPPERS are resident at the falls there. Helen Dickenson writes from Palm Desert that a male INDIGO BUNTING visited her seed feeder in early March. Since this is more than a month early for Buntings, and an Indigo is "out of range" in any case, its migratory status is uncertain.

Two letters dated March 31, one from Kathryn Drake, Los Angeles, and one from Paul Lehman, Santa Barbara, tell the same story — Death Valley was bitter cold with high winds during Easter Week. (Paul camped near Bishop at zero degrees temperature.) Both of them found ROSY FINCHES, Kathryn at Westgard Pass and Paul at 6,000 feet in the Sierras. Because of the storm the SAGE GROUSE did not strut on their snow covered grounds but several ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were seen nearby.

Two water-oriented species of winter sparrows are quite secretive and therefore seldom seen. In past winters two or three rare SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS have been found near the cable crossing at Upper Newport Bay, but this winter the single bird there proved difficult to find even at extreme high tides. The only other report in recent years comes from Fred Heath who found one at Westpond near the Colorado River on March 29. SWAMP SPARROWS while not as rare as Sharp-tails are normally seldom reported but either this was a very good winter or our expertise is improving, or both, as these eight sightings will attest — up to three at Furnace Creek Ranch during the fall and winter, one in Goleta (Paul L.), one in the South Coast Botanic Gardens (Hank Brodin and Shirley W.), one in the San Joaquin Marsh, Irvine (Jerry J.), and two below San Diego (Guy McC.).

At a time when almost any natural place offers good to excellent birding it may seem superfluous to suggest looking for a particular species, but it is surprising how many enthusiastic birders need Franklin's Gulls and Grasshopper Sparrows for their life list, and both species are best looked for in May. Franklin's Gulls are a stunning gull in spring — black head, rosy breast, etc. — and should be found either at the north end of the Salton Sea, or at Big Bear or at Baldwin Lakes. (There were twenty-five there on May 7, 1972.) Grasshopper Sparrows are difficult to see except when singing from a weed stem or dried artichoke plant. They will be on the hillsides above Dana Mesa Rd. this month, just west of the old road from San Juan Capistrano to Dana Point.