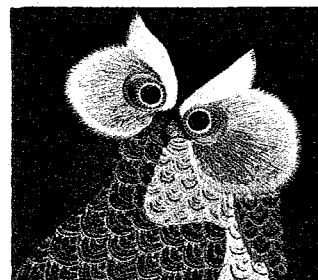


# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 41, 1974-75 No.10 July-August



## A DAY AT AUDUBON HOUSE

by Abigail King

**MY** first reaction to Audubon House was one of complete amazement searching, as I was, for a more-or-less conventional building in the Plummer Park setting. However, the sign on the redwood fence surrounding the small frame house and large shrub-filled yard stated that this was indeed the headquarters of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, dedicated in December 1937. The friendly lady in attendance explained that Audubon House is the oldest house in Hollywood, built by Senor Plummer in 1878 and is all that remains of the original ranch holdings of the Plummer family. Audubon House was given to the California Historical Society, which made arrangements for it to be used by the Audubon Society. The house is within the boundaries of Plummer Park and is under the jurisdiction of the County Recreation and Parks Department. As the Plummer House, it is also officially listed as a California State Historical Landmark.

**THE** roses along the fence date from the time of the Plummers, along with many of the trees and shrubs in the yard. More recently, thanks to the Theodore Payne foundation, an excellent selection of California native plants was added.

**WITH** a very few minor modifications, such as the removal of the bath tub from what is now the pantry or kitchen and somewhat later the removal of the sink from the present sales office, the cottage has remained very much as it was in the days of the Plummers. Cabinets for exhibits have been added, cupboards have been provided for storage and one room, with the addition of bookshelves, has been transformed into an excellent reference and research library.

Since January 1967 when I came to Audubon House, as a volunteer, the membership in the society has more than tripled and the always variable staff at the headquarters has grown from a maximum of five to a minimum of fifteen, with the individual staff members coming in from one to five times a week. This does not include the many people who generously give their time for special jobs—folding the Tanager, working in the garden, providing refreshments for the evening meetings, and helping out with many one-time situations.

We are frequently asked what we do at Audubon House, and usually after a brisk start, we find ourselves unable to make a really articulate statement on this subject. To give some idea of the various and sometimes curious activities that are undertaken there, here is a composite but quite typical day in the life of the Los Angeles Audubon Society headquarters.

Shortly before 10:00 in the morning, anyone walking through Plummer Park may see Olive Alvey, always the first to arrive, unlock the gate in the redwood fence on her way to opening the house for the day. Moments later she may be seen putting fresh water in the bird bath, setting out bird seed on the feeding tray, and starting a garden sprinkler. Then, having collected a few bits of this and that from about the yard, she will move inside and set to work to produce several very imaginative and attractive flower displays, all of them in keeping with the simple cottage background.

By this time the Executive Secretary, Dorothy Dimsdale, will have arrived and may be found answering the telephone while trying at the same time to decipher the somewhat inarticulate notes left on the desk by her assistant. Fortunately the first call, concerning the most efficient binoculars for pelagic trips, can be turned over to the Book Store. The next caller wants help in identifying a bird, this time a starling. (A surprisingly high percentage of all "unidentified birds" turn out to be starlings.)

While the membership staff is settling in for a long day of stenciling, sorting, typing, and filing and untangling the many complex problems that fall to their department, the first visitor of the day arrives. He has found a small bird, a Cedar Waxwing, collapsed under a bush and has brought it in hoping that the "ladies at the bird house" will care for it. Although Audubon House has no facilities for caring for injured birds, this one is given a little first aid and it is explained to the young man that Cedar Waxwings have a propensity of overeating, with predictable results. Hopefully, it will soon recover. (It does.)

The telephone rings steadily with a wide variety of inquiries. A report of a possible rare bird is passed along to Jean Brandt, who although not at the house that day, agrees to follow it up. A visitor from the East Coast drops in, asking for advice on where to look for birds peculiar to this area and also searching for books that will be helpful in his local birding. A student comes to use the library having been advised on the telephone that he can find material for a paper he is writing for his school science class. Since the librarian is not available, Olive takes over to help locate pertinent books and articles.

As the Executive Secretary delivers the mail to the various departments, she tells the Registrar that a message has come in from the editor, that the Tanager has gone to press and that the folding and mailing will take place at the end of the following week. The Registrar, Ruth Lohr, checks with her staff to make certain that the envelopes will be addressed and bundled in readiness. Olive, too, is notified about the Tanager, so that she can arrange to assemble the group on the designated day, who will fold, stuff, and tie the Tanager and deliver it to the post office.

Everyone convenes in the library for lunch and inevitably the conversation works around to staff—insufficiency of. The Executive Secretary, who's responsibility it is to keep the house staffed, asks first if anyone is planning to take time off during the summer—everyone, of course. It turns out that the only one staffer is expected to some in continuously during the summer in the Book Store. This is devastating news, since that is such a busy area at all times. The Membership Department will lose several members for periods up to a month, but not all at once, and it is hoped not during the busiest weeks. Everyone is relieved that only one issue of the Tanager will come out during the summer.

However, the real problem remains, how to keep a minimum of two people at the house five days a week, all through the year. The perpetual dream of the Executive Secretary is that some one will walk in the door and say, "What a nice place this is, I wish I could work here," or simply, "Can I be of help?" Fortunately this does happen but not often enough.

Lunch is interrupted by visitors to the Book Store, obviously a convenient time for people to drop in to pick up a much needed book for a trip to Africa, South America, or a closer area, such as Arizona or Mexico. There are calls from two people with injured birds. These are referred to an expert on this subject who has generously offered to help out in this area. During the day, the society is offered (1) an opossum, (2) a parrot, and (3) a gopher snake, under the misapprehension that the Society accepts unwanted pet and stray wildlife. Although we do not undertake to find homes for these, we do try to give the callers suggestions and refer them to people able to assist them with their problems.

*continued overleaf*

# SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND

Robert M. Stewart

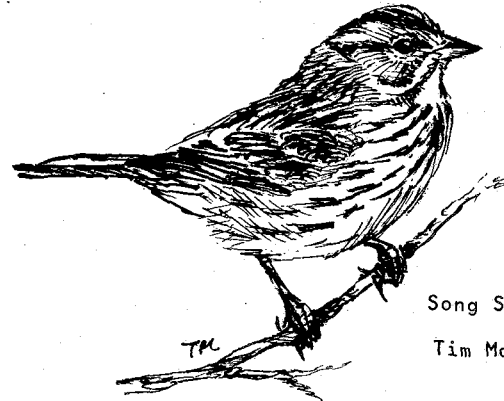
Reprinted by permission from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory Newsletter

San Clemente Island, southernmost of the Channel Islands, is about 34km long and from 2½ to 6½km wide. It is about 102km west-northwest of San Diego and about 80km south-southwest of San Pedro. The nearest island, Santa Catalina, is about 34km north.

The island has a long history of use by man and domestic animals. The first white men there in 1542 found Indians on the island. Nineteenth century farmers began introducing animals, particularly sheep and goats. By 1840 there was a dense population of goats, and later the San Clemente Sheep and Wool Company leased the island from the U.S. Government and grazed large flocks of sheep there from 1877 to 1933. In 1934 the U.S. Navy took over the island and the ranching stopped. That, unfortunately, was only the beginning of disturbance by domestic animals.

The plateau that dominates the island has been completely stripped of grass in some places. Trees and shrubs grow only in canyon bottoms on either side of the island. At first sight, the task of covering this long not-so-thin island in search of small landbirds may seem formidable. Actually, it was possible to narrow down the search considerably by simply eliminating the central plateau, which the goats have completely stripped grass in several areas and which we knew to be completely inhospitable to the two species we were looking for. In addition, we had pretty exact details of where the last

sightings of both species had been, since San Clemente has had attention recently from a number of investigators



Song Sparrow

Tim Manolis

The San Clemente Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia clementae*) was also known from Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands. On San Clemente they were "most common" in 1915, nesting in wisps of grass in *Opuntia* patches or in thorny bushes or low weeds. There were no further reports until May 1968 when two were seen by a UCLA expedition. Only two more sightings were made, both of single birds and both in the same area; one in April 1972, the other in April 1973. Although we spent much of our time combing this area we did not see or hear any Song Sparrows, and we think that the birds seen by the recent observers may have been the last remnants of a once abundant population. *continued on opposite page*

## AUDUBON HOUSE Abigail King

Concluded from page one.

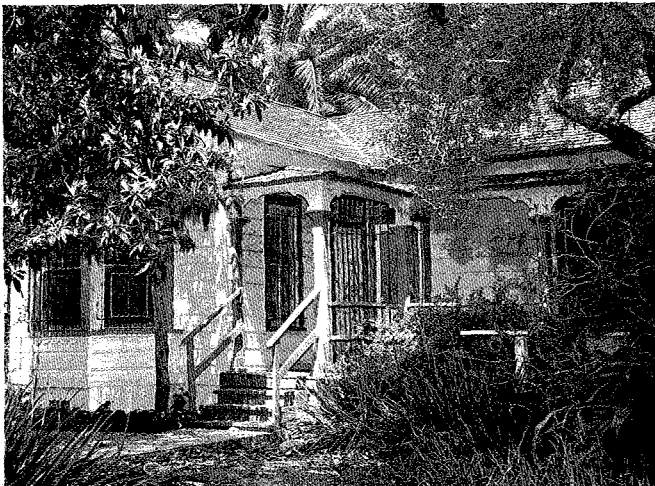


Photo by Leslie Wood

During the afternoon the Executive Secretary tries to get her correspondence attended to, between or amid interruptions. Arrangements are made for a Girl Scout leader to come in later in the week to confer with the Education Chairman about bringing in a group of Scouts for a talk on ecology, and Olive takes a group visiting historical monuments through the house, first giving them a short brochure on the history of the house.

At three o'clock, after continuous telephone calls and many visitors, ranging in age from eight to eighty, it is time to close. Soon after three o'clock the gate is locked and another day in the long and varied life of Audubon House has ended.

## NEW ORLEANS THE TRAIL OF THE LONE DELEGATE Dorothy Dimsdale

Continued from last issue

The banquet on the final night was a great success. Everyone combed the Spanish moss out of his/her hair; a Dixieland band rounded us up in the cocktail room and led the way as we clapped and danced behind it to the dining room tables. The food was delicious (I did wonder at the choice of stuffed fowl for Audubon members?) Ah, well, mustn't be picky.) Russell W. Peterson from the Council on Environmental Quality made the after dinner speech and the party was over. I know by now that I'd want to participate in future N.A.S. Conventions.

Many of us stayed after the Convention to visit points of interest. I was fortunate to be able to visit Avery Island with a friend and New Orleans native, Olive Alvey of L.A.A.S. This sanctuary is alive with birds, alligators, snakes, turtles, and armadillos as well as beautiful plants and trees. Everything is allowed to live and grow in its natural state. EGRETS and ANHINGAS were nesting close together and deep in a bush we saw a nesting LITTLE BLUE HERON. We had a very close, long look at a PURPLE GALINULE in all its glorious colouring. If you go to Louisiana, Avery Island is a 'must'.

Incidentally, no trip to New Orleans is complete without a walk down Bourbon Street to hear the jazz and have a meal at one of the many fine restaurants. The road is closed to traffic, many local people tap dance in the street to the music of the bands throbbing from the clubs and the jazz is very hot, like the peppers! I found all of the old French Quarter delightful and very picturesque.

I suppose now I should have some perspective. I think we're doing a fine job at L.A.A.S. I returned feeling very good about our own Society and its functioning. I also gained a greater understanding of both National and other Chapters.

To paraphrase our late member. I know from whence we came. Whither we go? It all depends on us — and time is running out.

## SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND

Robert M. Stewart

*Continued from page two*

As it turned out, the San Clemente Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii leucophrys*) restricted to this island posed even more tantalizing questions. Also reported as abundant in 1915, they were "evenly distributed over San Clemente, frequenting the densest thorn bushes and cactus patches." There are indications from a later report that they must still have been common in 1925. Since then, however, there is only one report; a single male "singing its heart out" in April 1973 in an area called Horse Beach Canyon. On 4 May we explored Horse Beach Canyon. At 1145 we rounded a turn in the canyon floor about 500m from the ocean and stood looking at what we considered to be the best habitat for this species on the island. Five seconds later we heard the first song of a Bewick's Wren. It was obviously a male and, judging from the way it was singing continuously in the middle of the day, it was unmated. There seems no doubt that it was the same individual seen by Lee Jones and another observer from UCLA just over a year before.

Although we followed the bird for more than an hour that day and made careful notes on its plumage from as close as 6m, it didn't seem enough. Stewart, after a few restless days back at PRBO with that lonely wren preying more and more heavily on his mind, arranged to return to San Clemente with mist nets and tape recorder. On 9 May the bird was captured, photographed in hand, and recorded at length. The astonishing outcome was that the bird was rather noticeably different in appearance from the specimens minutely described by Ridgway and other earlier writers and available for examination at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley. Of course, it is impossible to tell for sure and individual variation may account for a great deal, but the last surviving San Clemente Wren may even be an imposter from another island!

There is trouble, too, among the other breeding landbirds on San Clemente. The island form of the Rufous-sided Towhee, also common in 1915, may now be extinct. Two were seen in 1972 and one in 1973 but we saw none. The Sage Sparrow, again common in 1915, is reduced to a remnant population of 20 or 30 birds on a goatless terrace on the west side.

Why are the landbirds doing so poorly on San Clemente? To us the answer was clear-cut — goats. The most conservative estimate puts their numbers at 6000 but 10,000 is probably nearer the mark. They do such a thorough job of eating up the seedlings and young plants and stripping the leaves and bark from trees and bushes, that we couldn't find one seedling or a young bush or tree anywhere on the island. With the reduction of ground cover and the resulting erosion of the topsoil, irreparable damage may already have been done to the island. Feral swine make things worse by rooting under the topsoil that is left, and the abundant Island Fox and the feral cats benefit from the lack of cover by easily finding nests and young of species that nest anywhere near the ground.

The island flora has taken punishment for a long time; in fact, ever since sheep and goats were introduced. But before 1934 when Navy use superseded farming, sheep and goats were kept within fenced areas and there were always places where plants could reproduce unmolested. Since 1934 the goats have roamed the island at will and there has been virtually no reproduction of native shrubs or trees.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the island ecosystem is in danger unless the goats go. The Navy has

started a goat removal program under which they transport goats free to the mainland for a contractor who can then sell them at \$15 a head. During the first year of the scheme 4200 have been removed. This *sounds* good but to our thinking there is a huge flaw in the plan. If the goats could all be removed in a couple of years there would be no problem, but since profit rather than habitat protection is the motive, the easiest animals to catch will go first and the reproductive capacity of the remainder could more than make up for the number removed. Meanwhile, if any topsoil is to be left at all, a vigorous effort has to be made to fence the goats out of areas they haven't already destroyed.

We are grateful to the U.S. Navy and to Jan Larson for help in making the San Clemente Island expedition possible.



Guy McCaskie on the Channel Islands in a characteristic pose, passing on some inimitable bird lore.

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## THE SIBLEY CASE

*Editor, The Western Tanager:*

On reading Dr. Bourne's reply [WT May 1975] to my letter [WT Feb 1975] concerning his account reprinted from *Nature* [WT Oct 1974], my first impulse was to draft a detailed rebuttal and perhaps include a few retaliatory jibes. At about the same time, I received copies of an exchange of letters between two ornithologists [both good friends of mine] who take opposing stands on a conservation issue. These are terrible letters—bitter, acrimonious, full of detailed charges and rebuttals about who said or wrote or did what, and to whom—including harsh personal attacks. I wondered how two otherwise reasonable people, both sincere conservationists, could entangle themselves in such a destructive argument. I then decided to scrap my rejoinder to Dr. Bourne and spare him, myself, and WT readers from the risk of an increasingly strident debate that would serve no constructive purpose. The issues and the reasons for our conflicting views are too involved to be discussed adequately in a few hundred words. We have each had our say in print, and readers can evaluate our statements for themselves. I stand by what I said, and will be glad to discuss these matters in detail with anyone who has a further interest; I feel sure that Dr. Bourne will do the same. — Thomas R. Howell

HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE

PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046 876-0202

PRESIDENT

Dr. Gerald Maisel

Audubon House Hours 10 to 3, Monday through Friday

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Dorothy Dimsdale

**Audubon  
Bird Reports  
874-1318**

**SUN., JUL. 20. FIRST ANNUAL LOS ANGELES AUDUBON FAMILY PICNIC:** to be held at Trippet Ranch from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Bring your own picnic dinner. There will be bird walks every half hour and owling at 7:30. At 8:30 a natural history program will be presented in the club house. Refreshments will be served following the program. ALL members and their friends are cordially invited. Take Topanga Canyon Blvd. to Entrada Dr., 1 mile north of the village. Take Entrada Dr. to fork and left fork to the gate at end of road.

**SAT., JUL. 26. MT. PINOS.** Meet at any time after 9:00 a.m. at the Condor Observation Point on Mt. Pinos. Take Hwy. 5 north to Frazier Park turn-off approximately 2 miles beyond Gorman. Drive west to Lake of the Woods and make right turn indicated by signpost to Mt. Pinos. John Borneman, National Audubon Condor Naturalist, will be available to answer any questions about the Condor. Other birds to look for are Calliope Hummingbird, Red Crossbill, Green-tailed Towhee and other montane species.

**SUN., AUG. 17. YOUTH FIELD TRIP:** Trippet Range. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking area. See directions above (Sun. Jul. 20). This trip is specially arranged to introduce the younger members and friends of L.A. Audubon to birdwatching. We will be looking for chaparral birds and possible early fall migrants. The emphasis will be on how birds relate to their environment.

**SAT., AUG. 23. MT. PINOS.** Meet any time after 9:00 a.m. at the Condor Observation Point on Mt. Pinos. (See directions above.) John Borneman, National Condor Naturalist will be available to answer questions about the Condor.

**THU., SEP. 4. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING,** 8:00 p.m. Audubon House

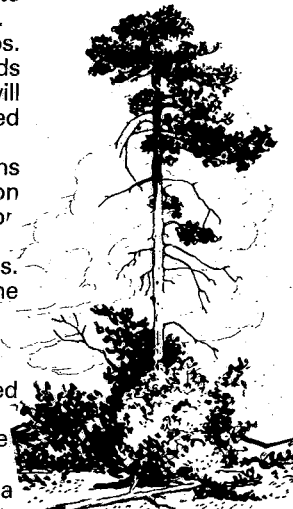
**SUN., SEP. 7. PELAGIC TRIP.** Plans incomplete. Call Pamela Axelson, 474-6205 for information.

**TUE., SEP. 9. EVENING MEETING,** 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Russ Wilson will present a program entitled "More Peregrinations of the Wilsons".

**SAT., SEP. 13. MALIBU LAGOON AND BIG SYCAMORE CANYON.** For details see September Tanager

**SUN., SEP. 14. EVENING BIRDWALK:** Trippet Ranch. See September Tanager for details.

**THU., SEP. 18. CONSERVATION MEETING,** 7:30 p.m. Santa Monica City Library, 6th and Santa Monica Blvd. Glenn Olson, Chairman.



## BOOK STORE

New items:

OWLS OF NORTH AMERICA by Eckert (large, beautifully illustrated, approx. \$30.00)

FIELD GUIDE to Western Bird Songs Cassette (about \$23.95)

DUCKS AT A DISTANCE (50 cents per booklet)

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA, by Ben King (\$17.50)

MAMMALS OF KRUGER (\$1.50, paper)

BIRDS OF TIKAL (Spanish, paper, about \$8.00) Both the English and the Spanish versions are now out of print.

BIRDS OF THE SOVIET UNION, by Dement'ev, et al (U.S. government photocopy) This is a six volume set, paperbound. The phone book size volumes will be sold only as a set for \$130.00. Only 1 set is in stock.

Just out, and also in stock, is the new American Birding Ass'n Checklist of the Birds of Continental U.S. and Canada. This is the long-awaited updated version of the A.O.U. checklist of 1957. It provides an easy way to keep a life list and will be the only authorized basis for publishing lists in birding magazine.

Going out of print is French's BIRDS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO. Our stock will not last long.

Closeout:

Cayley's WHAT BIRD IS THAT? (Australia). Originally sold at \$17.50, not just \$5.00. A bargain and a classic.

## audubon activities

PELAGIC TRIP TO ANACAPA AND VICINITY, May 11. 32 people boarded the Paisano at Oxnard at 8 a.m. and headed out through the channel between Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands. Most of the day was spent cruising about 15 miles beyond the islands where the best birds were found, namely, about 500 Ashy Petrels, 200 Black Petrels and a single Leach's Petrel. Among other birds seen were Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, Pomarine Jaegers, an Arctic Tern, 8 Xantus Murrelets and a Rhinoceros Auklet. Herb Clarke, leader.

LEGG LAKE AND WHITTIER NARROWS, May 17. 14 birders joined the leader for a successful morning's birding. The day was warm, clear and without wind. The two miles covered on foot produced sixty species, including Common Gallinule, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Swainson's Thrush. Seven species of Warblers were seen as well as other migrants and summer visitors. David W. Foster, leader.

## Mangrove Area in Florida

According to the New York Times the Deltona Corporation of Miami has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for permission to dredge channels in an area South of Naples adjoining the National Audubon Society's Rooky Bay Sanctuary. There are virtually no other significant mangrove swamplands left in this country.

## 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  
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  
House.

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS by Shumway Suffel

Continued from page six

LEAST BITTERNS showed up in two unexpected places, one on the U.C.L.A. campus on May 28 and another in a tiny swamp behind a gas station in Torrance on June 1 (Shirley W.). BLACK BRANT seldom stray away from salt water, but one was found in a huge gravel pit lake near El Monte during late May (Dave Foster). It has been years since FULVOUS TREE DUCKS have been seen in Los Angeles County, but one showed up at Devil's Gate Dam on June 8 and stayed until the lake was drained (Ian MacGregor). You guess it—a careful examination revealed a red band on its right leg—an obvious escape. A letter from Paul Lehman in Santa Barbara dated May 4 speculates that "Wood Ducks will probably nest on the Santa Ynez River below Lake Cachuma" and that "Osprey might nest at Cachuma. there are 3 birds there showing 'the signs'." Paul also gives us our only spring report of a PECTORAL SAND-PIPER—one at the Goleta Sewage ponds on May 2. Irving Rosenfeld is an attorney, not a birdwatcher, but he gives us a credible report of a CONDOR, which he studied for some time in a newly plowed field near his Zuma Beach home on June 1. A report by Jan Tarble of fifteen SNOWY PLOVERS near Tecopa in Inyo County on June 20 is extraordinary, as they are considered rare east of the mountains. FRANKLIN'S GULLS were not seen at the almost dry Baldwin Lake, as we had hoped, but the Brodskins did see one at the north end of the Salton Sea on May 17. Definite migration dates are always informative—Jerry Maisel found BLACK TERNS common at the Salton Sea on May 3, but Arnold Small had not seen them there the week before. Jerry also saw more than one hundred LESSER NIGHTHAWKS there, an unusual migratory concentration.

Caroline and Don Adams' Manhattan Beach garden attracted two stray from the desert, a SCOTT'S ORIOLE on May 17, and a WHITE-SINGED DOVE on May 28. Six BLACK SWIFTS over Flintridge on May 19 (Ian MacGregor) were probably migrants, but those in Mill Creek above Redlands probably nest under the high falls at Fallsvale. Encino Reservoir again proved to be the best local place to find CHIMNEY SWIFTS, but only when there are low clouds. Jon Dunn saw two there on June 7, a foggy day. We all have our jinx-bird and mine is the PILEATED WOODPECKER (I haven't seen one in California since 1932), but Jean Brandt sees them whenever she's in the proper habitat—first, on her only trip to the Mariposa Grove, Yosemite and then this May, Wayne found them at a nest in the Napa Valley. A MAGPIE seen in Monrovia on June 33 could not be identified at freeway speed, but was probably an escaped Black-billed, as they are sometimes kept as cage birds. Yellow-billed seldom are.

BELL'S VIREOS have become a rare bird in our area in recent years, possibly because of cowbird parasitism, but this spring we've had an encouraging number of reports. They could not be found in Duarte where two males were singing in 1974, but Justin Russell reported three singing males in Griffith Park on Mar. 28, with one remaining to June 8. There were two males singing along the stream

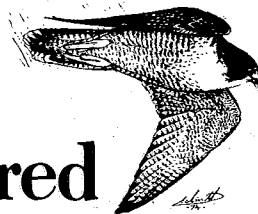
at Morongo Valley in May and June (the Wilsons et al.), one was in the South Coast Botanic Gardens on May 11 and there were several pairs above the Old Mission Dam near San Diego.

Although LUCY'S WARBLERS had not been found at Morongo Valley in April or May, there were two pairs, on territory, there on June 3 (the Wilsons and Baxters). The Monday Birders found Big Sycamore Canyon rather dull on June 2, until Hal Ferris found a singing male PARULA along the stream. While studying this parula, they heard a second male singing nearby. An OVENBIRD hit Linda Ferrier's Palos Verdes window on May 13 (it's unluckily day) and will be added to the Calstate Long Beach collection. AMERICAN REDSTARTS popped up here and there, like mushrooms after a rain. There were three at Finney Lake, in early May (Brank Becherer), a male at Morongo Valley on May 13 (Harry Kreuger) and a first year male at Yucca Valley on June 3 (Hal Baxter). An adult male was found in the San Bernardino Mountains the same day (Shirley W.) and another male was seen in Averill Park, San Pedro on June 12 (Jesse Morton).

The only BOBOLINK report away from Furnace Creek Ranch was a male at the little swamp in Torrance on May 26 (Shirley W.) Nearby in Rolling Hills, Grace Nixon found a singing male INDIGO BUNTING on May 15. A very late SWAMP SPARROW was reported by Hal Ferris near Marina del Rey on May 20.

drawing by John Schmitt.

## Endangered



CHICKEN HAWKS are still etched in the minds of the American public, despite the fact that no such species of bird has ever existed, and a national campaign to improve these birds' reputation is long overdue.

No species of hawk feeds entirely or partially on chickens, as Dr. A.K. Fisher's exhausting food study and public relations effort proved at the turn of the century.

The chicken hawk myth probably developed years later with the rise in farm settlement in the south and midwest, where large buteo hawks, characterized by their large wingspread and wide soar, frequented to prey upon wild rabbits and mice.

Farmers and ranchers became accustomed to the hawks perched atop telephone poles and fences, or lazily soaring in the open fields, and these economy-conscious men began to associate the birds with raids on the backyard chicken coop.

The target birds, usually red-tailed hawks, were wrongly branded as chicken thieves, even though Dr. Fisher's prey analyses for the Department of Agriculture had already showed the birds' diet was that of crop- and coop-destructive mammals and rodents. Still, the birds were persecuted; in many states their killing was encouraged by bounties.

The farmer persisted in his cruel attack on the hawks, sometimes including the large and powerful horned owl and sometimes-seen Cooper's hawk, all of whom he associated with his losses. He set steel-jawed traps atop convenient perches to catch the bird predators, yet often the real culprits of the barnyard raids—racoons, opossums, ferrets—escaped unnoticed by their nocturnal habits.

Even though official attitudes toward the airborne hunters have long since changed and state and federal laws now protect the hawks and owls, most states including California, still allow by permit the shooting or trapping of these birds in times of damage.

Worst of all, the often unreachable rural citizen is still certain the chicken hawk exists, and his and his neighbor's ignorance persists to perpetuate the myth and bring harm to these birds.

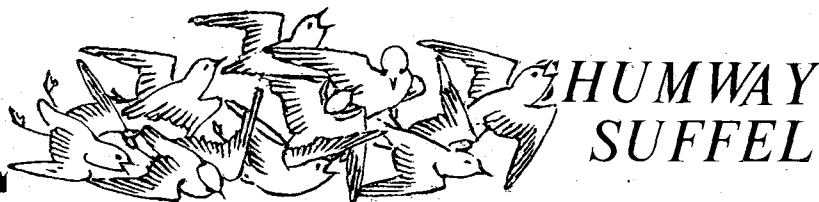
—J. Richard Hilton



Drawing by John Schmitt.

LONG-EARED OWL

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds



**MID-SUMMER** is not likely to equal the excitement of late May and early June, but unpredictable avian events do occur to brighten the otherwise dull period between the spring and fall migrations. Will it be a post-breeding invasion of the Salton Sea, despite the high water, by Mexican species, such as Blue-footed Boobies (not since 1972) or will it be a rare vagrant passerine like the Wood Thrush in August 1968 or the Red-headed

Woodpecker in August 1971? No one knows what will be found or who will find it, and this is the fascination of birding.

Memorial Day weekend exceeded its reputation for producing rare birds, as more than forty birders from as far away as Eureka and San Diego descended on the oases of Inyo and Mono counties. The often predicted "next bird to be added to the state list", the COMMON GRACKLE, was a conspicuous attraction as it pulled worms, Robinlike, from the tiny patch of green lawn between the Furnace Creek Range office and the highway. We were justifiably thrilled at finding a new state bird, only to discover that evening that Mike and Nancy Prather, the birding schoolteachers there, had seen it earlier in the week. The bird alone would have made our weekend, but there was more, much more. That same afternoon a handsome male BOBOLINK, a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER and an EASTERN KINGBIRD were the best finds. On Sunday morning with every tree and bush investigated, several noteworthy warblers were found—a singing male BAY-BREASTED, a male CHESTNUT-SIDED, a TENNESSEE, a BLACK-AND-WHITE, and rarest of all, a male HOODED WARBLER in the gardens of The Inn. On Monday morning after most birders had left, Harry Kreuger saw the grackle on the golf course, and also five BOBOLINKS, a male MAGNOLIA WARBLER and a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK. Farther north at Deep Springs and Oasis at least ten AMERICAN REDSTARTS, seven BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS, and three NORTHERN WATERTHRUSHES were found. These are our commonest "Eastern" warblers. In the rarer warbler category were a CHESTNUT-SIDED at Oasis, and a female YELLOW-THROATED and a BLACKPOLL at Deep Springs. Also there were a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK, an INDIGO BUNTING and two CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS (very rare in spring). Ed Navajosky arrived late, but reported a singing male BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (5th California record, none since 1964) and an OVERBIRD at Deep Springs on Tuesday, May 27.

The weekend of June 1 was good, but not up to Memorial Day—the Grackle could not be found, but there were nine BOBOLINKS and a PARULA at Furnace Creek. A YELLOW-BILLED COCKOO (very unusual in Death Valley) was seen, another PARULA and a SUMMER TANAGER were found at Scotty's Castle, a GRAY CATBIRD and a male YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (Tom Heindel) were at Oasis and a male CAPE MAY WARBLER and a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK were at Deep Springs.

The trip to Santa Barbara Island on May 29 confirmed what we already knew, that this was the biggest year ever for HORNED PUFFINS. We counted twenty-five on the way to the island, mostly singles, sometimes a pair and once three together. Unexplainable there was not a single one on the way back. However, we did see two bedraggled TUFTED PUFFINS, obviously non-breeders, on the return trip. Earlier pelagic trips had recorded seven Horned Puffins off San Diego on May 11, a single bird on the L.A.A.S. trip of May 18 and about twenty-five seen by Lee Jones near San Miguel Island. John Butler found them "the commonest alcid" about 100 miles off our coast in mid-May, with over a hundred sightings. John also had other pelagic birds to dream about—two LAYSAN ALBATROSS, two RED-BILLED TROPICBIRDS, a FORK-TAILED PETREL and about 160 miles off Pt. Arguelo, a COOK'S PETREL.

The landing on Santa Barbara Island proved very productive for the fifty participants. We covered the canyons and the coreopsis patches, finding a pair of INDIGO BUNTINGS, two female ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS, a RED-EYED VIREO (first record for the islands?), a BLACK-AND-WHITE, a TENNESSEE, a female BLACKBURNIAN, a MALE MAGNOLIA WARBLER, AND AN OVERBIRD. We also studied a male CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER as it followed our boat to the island. The previous week Lee Jones had other rare birds, including a very rare UPLAND SANDPIPER and six CHIMNEY SWIFTS.

As mentioned many times before, the desert oases and the islands tend to concentrate vagrant land birds, which are disoriented and lost in any case, and stay because they hesitate to fly further over the desert or the ocean. Along our more hospitable coast there is little need for birds to concentrate or to stay at one spot, and the rare vagrants are outnumbered by the regular migrants which are following their safe, traditional routes. Nevertheless, with better coverage and increased expertise we have many noteworthy reports from the coastal plain and the mountains.

Perhaps the most outstanding event of May and June was the presence of several Arizona species in our region. PAINTED REDSTARTS staged a mini-invasion with at least nine reports coming in from the Mexican border to Death Valley, but mostly from the San Bernardino Mountains. There were at the South Fork Campground, as in 1974 (Shirley Wells). One was on the headwaters of Arrastre Creek (Kim Garret), and a fourth was near Green Valley Lake (S.W.). Kim also discovered a GRACE'S WARBLER (5th California record) at the head of Arrastre Creek on June 15 which stayed until the next morning, but was not seen again. Both a WHIP-POOR-WILL (new to these mountains) and a PYGMY OWL were heard at 5 a.m. on June 17. Lower down Arrastre Creek a pair of HEPATIC TANAGERS were located by Hank and Priscilla Brodtkin on June 8. Hepatics nested there in 1973, and probably before that, but could not be found in 1974. Guy McCaskie's hardy group climbed 7,900 ft. Clark Mountain (near the Nevada border) in the pre-dawn hours of May 17, early enough to find a FLAMMULATED OWL there, and when it was light, a RED-FACED WARBLER (California's third), a VIRGINIA'S WARBLER and an HEPATIC TANAGER. These are all typical Arizona birds.

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## EDITORIAL



Two hundred years ago Gilbert White immortalized the gentle pursuit of the observation of birds in their natural habitat. Forty years ago Roger Peterson's first "A Field Guide to the Birds" crystallized amateurs and professionals into a kindly and gentlemanly activity of bird watching.

Now birding has degenerated in frantic pursuits from one end of the state to another of poor lost birds. Worse still every magazine on natural history is a sad tale of loss of habitat, robbing of nests and "collecting."

The Western Tanager too is under pressure to become a purveyor of bad news, and the editor is resigning rather than continue as a chronicler of the evils that beset the world of birds.

Perhaps all is not lost. In the last decade only one North American Species (the Bachman's Warbler) has become extinct. Best wishes are in order to the new Editor and staff, to continue to announce and record the activities of the Los Angeles Audubon Society through its publication, "The Western Tanager."

On this last page the editor records again his appreciation of the continued support of his staff, Donald Adams for Audubon Activities; Caroline Adams for the Calendar; the House Chairman and the volunteers who have managed the distribution of the Tanager; and to Shumway Suffel for his regular report of Southern California Birds.

*G.W. King*