WESTERN TANAGER

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Portrait of a River

Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide; The Form remains, The Function never dies.

It begins in the clear springs and grassy ciénegas below the ancient Limber Pines of our southern Sierras, a wild mountain stream that plunges down granite canyons through bowers of columbines, *epipactis*, and *Woodwardia* ferns—but by the time it's run its sixty-mile course to the sea, it's become the most manhandled of all of California's unnatural rivers.

This is the storied San Gabriel River, a venerable waterway some million years old, whose fortunes during the last two centuries have been inextricably wound up with those of the colossus known as L.A. In fact, there's probably no better way to grasp the grand sweep of our history than to seek out the elusive San Gabriel and ponder it's curious fate.

But should you go looking for the river, be prepared to do some work, for to find the real San Gabriel you'll have to backtrack the stream from the streets of the city clear up to its lonely sources, high in the fractured canyons of the San Gabriel Range.

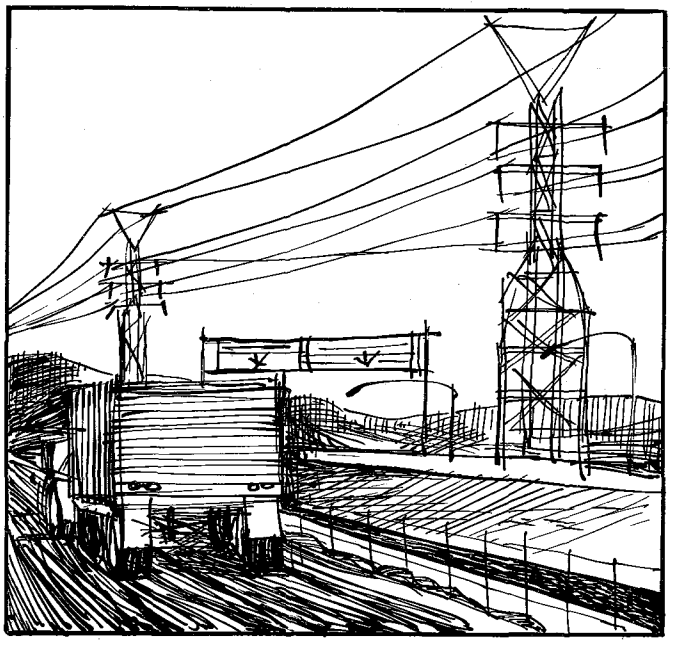
Like the Nile, the river has several sources, but eventually the tributaries merge into three main branches that drain altogether some seven hundred square miles of the Angeles National Forest. The West Fork is born in the shadow of Mt. Disappointment, while the North and East Forks arise on the lofty slopes of Mt. Islip and 9400' Mt. Baden-Powell. The higher headwaters may be reached at the end of a half-day's hike along trails that take off from the Angeles Crest Highway, a trek that transports the explorer into the dizzy realm of the Boreal Zone, just below the tree line. Up here, snow may remain from one year to the next—and here, amid alpine gardens of *arenaria* and *bryanthus*, a handful of our hardiest birds find forage: birds like Clark's Nutcrackers, Cassin's Finches, and Mountain Bluebirds.

But the river has miles yet to go, and at least three more Life Zones to visit on its way to the faroff Pacific—now lost on the hazy horizon. Tumbling down canyons where Bighorn Sheep graze, the stream leaves behind the Lodgepole and Limber Pines and descends into the cool forests of the Transition Zone. Here, around 8000', among the Incense Cedars and Sugar Pines, we encounter a new community of birds—including the White-headed Woodpecker, the Townsend's Solitaire, and the raucous Steller's Jay.

along the East Fork, near Alder Gulch

Now a series of cataracts sends the stream hurtling down through a realm of deep ravines where alders and sycamores crowd its banks. Here the world is hotter and drier, and at 6000', Canyon Live Oak, *ceanothus*, and Whipple Yucca replace the last of the conifers. Now the hiker discovers himself among the birds of the Upper Sonoran Zone—species like Scrub Jays, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds. From here on down, chaparral is the dominant vegetation, and Wrentits and California Quail call from the Chamise-covered hills as the stream carves its way through the chasm torn by the San Gabriel Fault, to spill at last onto the gravelly plain below Azusa.

Here in the spring the cholla blooms, and Cactus Wrens and Black-throated Sparrows sing—just as they have for millenia—but beyond here the natural history of the stream is actually a chronicle of human events—a tale that is best told in the history of the San Gabriel's *floods*.



the channel through South El Monte

The story begins in 1769, when Gaspar de Portolá laid claim to L.A. Descending into the grassy valley, he pitched his camp by the stream, on a plot of land now bounded by the Pomona and San Bernardino Freeways. In those days, Yellow-billed Cuckoos still sulked in the streamside woods, and Dippers haunted the mountain canyons. But all that was soon to change. Padre Crespi, the cleric with the Portolá party, noted the local Shoshones residing in "a delightful place among the trees on the river"—and within two years those same Indians were attending Mass on a branch of the San Gabriel now known as the Rio Hondo. But no one had taken the whims of the river into account, and in 1776 the infant mission was removed to its present location, on high ground above the flood plain. Today the original site is unobtrusively marked by a solitary oil derrick, commanding the corner of Lincoln and San Gabriel Boulevards.

By 1845, L.A. was the proud capital of Alta California, and the Governor, Don Pio Pico, chose to build his hacienda by the river's willowy banks. But on a fateful day two years hence, the U.S. Army met the forces of General Flores in the San Gabriel Wash, and the skirmish that ensued settled the contest for control of the State. And from then on the old stream was to see some *real* changes.

With the coming of the railroad in '81, the Spanish ranchos were carved into farms and townsites—but the river was no respecter of contracts, and periodically it swept the shacks of the settlers down into Whittier Narrows. Yet, despite these setbacks, the pioneers persisted—and things eventually came to an untenable pass—for at last a vast population sprawled in the path of one of the West's most profligate streams.

The gravity of the situation seemed to call for exceptional measures, and all it took was a few killer floods to kick off the frenzy of dam-building that commenced in 1924 with the construction of Morris Dam, and was only to run its course 32 years, 4 dams, an $172 million later, with the sealing of Whittier Narrows.

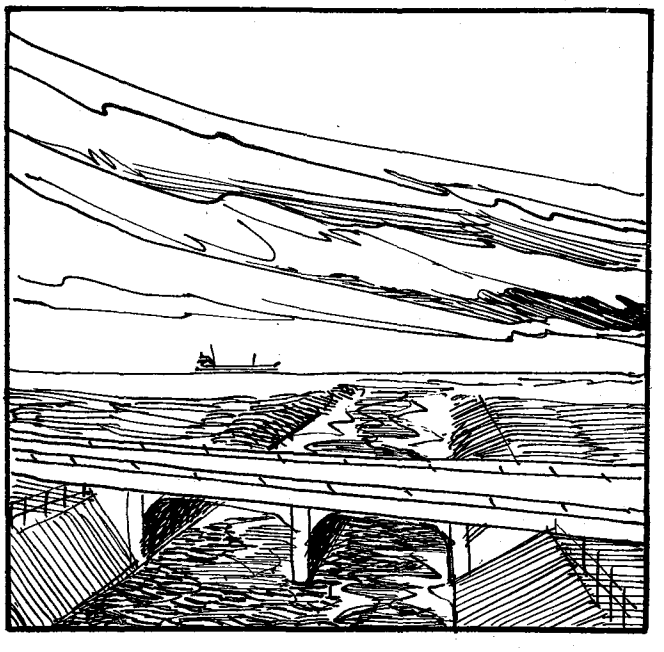
Today, as a result of this stupendous effort, the specter of flood has been banished and the residents of the valley may rest secure. But progress exacts its price—for the San Gabriel is now a far cry from the "delightful" old stream it once was. Confined throughout a third of its length to a clean concrete channel, the river is witness to wonders never dreamed of by Padre Crespi—from petro-plants, to giant mobile-home lots, to maniacal mini-golf courses. The Morris Dam did in the Dippers, and the last of the Cuckoos departed in the early fifties, after the Santa Fe Dam rearranged the course of the river. Now, for many Los Angelenos, the memory of the sorry San Gabriel is kept alive by the 605 Freeway, which follows the wash all the way from the mountains down through a dozen suburbs to Seal Beach—where what's left of the wild mountain stream slips unnoticed, with all of its memories, into an indifferent sea.

But that's not the end of the San Gabriel's story, for here and there along the way, an echo of the old world of the river lingers on. Back in 1939, the Audubon Society reclaimed 100 acres of scrubby streamside woodland in Whittier Narrows, and as a result of last year's litigation, that area is now enjoying a dramatic expansion. Already, in fact, the first Black-necked Stilts have fledged their young by the shores of lakes located on what was arid farmland four months ago.

Below the Narrows, along a stretch of the stream that winds down toward Downey, the San Gabriel has been permitted to retain its natural bottom—a device to assure percolation into the water table. And as a result, for a few miles along here, the river has decked its banks in stands of willow and bamboo—thickets where skunks and weasels hide, while White-tailed Kites and Burrowing Owls find nesting sites nearby.

Strolling these woods, you can almost picture the stream as it used to be—before anyone had heard of L.A. To be fair, after 200 years of tribulations, it's not quite the way the old Padre described it—but it's nonetheless heartening to realize that despite all its hardships, the San Gabriel still survives.

at the mouth of the river, Seal Beach



Conservation/Pamela Axelson

Showdown at Butterbread Spring

In 1973, the Bureau of Land Management began an inventory of the vast California desert system, with the objective of classifying portions of the desert as, a) open to off-road vehicle (ORV) use without restrictions, b) for ORV use on designated roads and trails only, and c) closed to ORV's, owing to the need to protect valuable resources. Understandably, much controversy has arisen regarding the project.

Of primary concern are the Jawbone, Butterbread, and Dove Canyon lands, located about 20 miles north of Mojave off Highway 14. Jawbone Canyon, encountered first as you turn west from the highway, is a cornucopia of natural history. A wide canyon with many places to explore, it offers everything from abandoned mines to Indian pictographs—and, naturally enough, it's become a popular haunt for the mobilized American. On most any weekend, clouds of motorcyclists race through the wide central wash, taxing their mechanized power as they tear up the steep canyon walls. Once an oasis for wildlife and native flora, Jawbone is fast becoming a dustbowl, bearing a remarkable resemblance to a freeway construction site.

Dove Canyon enjoys equal popularity to Jawbone, and suffers comparable abuse. Though Butterbread—sandwiched between the other two canyons—has yet to suffer the same fate, it too has received its share of destruction. It seems the bikers believe the tiny spring flowing down Butterbread Canyon is a roadway, and, in the absence of vehicular restrictions, the natural habitat almost overnight disappears in their path.

Until recently a gentle oasis set amid Joshua Trees and Junipers, Butterbread once boasted a resident Virginia Rail, plus Chukar, LeConte's Thrasher, Cactus Wren, and a family of five Long-eared Owls. Shading the pond by the spring was a grove of old cottonwoods that provided an attractive habitat for waves of spring and fall migrants—including birds like the Gray Vireo and the Eastern Phoebe. My husband, Keith, has been prowling the area for over 30 years, and our own list of species numbers over 170. Together we've introduced many friends and Audubon members to the unique charms of this desert canyon—and all who have visited the spot have been struck by its solitude, and by the stark beauty of the sage-covered hills. But that solitude disappeared when the first motorcycle left its dusty scars. And now, year by year, human activity has increased. Someone set fire to the *tules* in the pond by the spring—and after that the Rail disappeared. Ravens that once nested in the rocks have not nested for several years, and it's been a long time since either LeConte's Thrasher or Cactus Wrens have been observed near the spring. Lately, careless shooters have been practicing in the canyon—and everything from Barn Owls to Bobcats have been found shot, as well as dove and quail out of season. But just as lethal as the shooters are the litterbugs, who are doing their part to degrade the desert.

With a few facts at hand, the BLM biologists began a resource inventory of the region, relying largely on information gathered by volunteers. Keith presented them with twelve years of Butterbread bird observations, the only known records, and a proposal that "the entire length of Butterbread Canyon from Blue Point through to Kelso Valley Road be protected as a habitat range for resident and migratory birds, wildlife and the natural flora." He recommended that the motorcycle trails that have appeared within the last few years be allowed to revert to the land, or simply become hiking trails.

The initial response to this proposal was gratifying, drawing support from a wide spectrum of organizations and concerned individuals—and it prompted the BLM, during its preliminary presentation to the public, to characterize Butterbread Spring and Canyon as a wild, natural habitat range, in which vehicles must be confined to existing roads. But this is not their *final* decision.

It happens that only a portion of Butterbread Canyon is in public hands, and the BLM must secure the private lands if it wishes to enforce land-use regulations. The difficulties lie in the details of the land exchange; and if the BLM gives in to the proposed conditions, unlimited overgrazing and ORV use may well result.

The final ruling has not yet been made, but the deadline is swiftly approaching—and we can only hope that the Bureau of Land Management will not be swayed by the hue and cry of the off-road enthusiasts, and instead will recognize the value of this unique resource. Sheer ignorance has permitted the interpretation of the desert as a "wasteland"—and it's lamentable that the majority of desert users have yet to take the time to appreciate a realm which has taken millenia to create, yet only a few short years to destroy.

Data Bank

The need has come to our attention to provide up-to-date biological information for incorporation into Environmental Impact Statements and Reports. All members are urged to participate in this important new program. No prior experience in collecting data is necessary, and all you need is a sharp pencil and a pair of eyes (the more eyes the better, of course). We ask you to record *every species of bird* seen on any day at any location within Southern California. And most importantly, list the total numbers of each species seen.

If you are out in the field enjoying our natural wonders, you can contribute to this worthy cause with very little effort. Just think, the birds you see today may help in the continuing struggle to preserve the environment.

Forms for the purpose are available at Audubon House, or can be obtained by sending a large self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Mrs. Pamela Axelson, LAAS Data Bank, 3262 Midvale Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90034.

Dorothy Dimsdale

Lesser Known Facts

I thought I'd got it made. I've been happily collecting new birds for my life list. Don't ask me how many I have as I simply haven't had time to count. As a beginner I'm just pleased to add each new bird as I see it. However, as with studying Latin, clink knobs, or tap dancing, there is always a point when it stops being as simple as it first appeared, and for reasons never foreseen, complications set in.

With the hot weather I felt it would be fun to race to the beach and count a few seagulls—until I learned that some seagulls, to my disgust and frustration, take five years to mature—and each year they look totally different. While I accept that female *hummingbirds* are almost impossible to tell apart (and have, at this stage, ignored them from an identification point of view)—to have to add heaven knows how many immature gulls to my list of "don't knows" simply goes against the grain.

So I decided this summer should be spent in the hot interior, looking for less-difficult species. But unhappily, all is not sweetness and light in that area either. I saw a Ladder-backed Woodpecker (in Baja), and a Nuttall's Woodpecker (in my garden), and the only reason I knew which was which is because the books say they're not found together. Otherwise, a quick glance can be confusing. For a while, this knowledge was a wonderful comfort. But then it came as a major blow to learn that more reliable birders have seen both species in the same area.

Now, in an effort to combat these—and I'm sure countless more—contradictions and difficulties, I've embarked on a study of all kinds of avian peculiarities and lesser-known facts. (After all, as I see it, why should I be the only frustrated birder?). Anyway, I've now gathered my first *two* lesser-known facts—and here they are...

Fact No. 1—Consider the Golden Plover. It fattens itself on bayberries in Labrador, then flies 2,400 miles non-stop during migration to South America, and loses only 2 oz. of body weight. It's enough to boggle the mind—though the opportunities to introduce such a subject into casual after-dinner conversation may be limited.

Fact No. 2—Experienced birders make a strange sound, like, "Spsh, Spsh," when trying to flush *passerines*—vireos, warblers, orioles, and such. And the funny thing is that it *works*. Well, now, I've discovered *why*. "Spsh" mimics the calls of certain tropical birds that our northern birds encounter during migration. These tropical residents know the whereabouts of fruit and nectar, important staples for visiting North American species. But a word of caution: don't try this trick with Old World birds as their food requirements in Africa are different. The discoverer of this information (on the off chance you suspected I dreamed it up) is Neal Griffith Smith of the Smithsonian Tropical Institute in the Canal Zone, and to him I'm most grateful. Now I know why the old, "Chirrup, chirrup," or "Polly want a cracker?" never seems quite sufficient.

BOOKS

THE BIRDS OF THE SEYCHELLES AND THE OUTLYING ISLANDS by Malcolm Penny. Taplinger Publishing Co., 1974 ($11.95).

This guide to the small group of islands in the Indian Ocean (Seychelles, Aldabra, Amirantes) is much more than just a field guide. It probably covers one of the most exciting ornithological areas on the face of the earth, if we consider the quality of the avifauna of these islands.

We will not concern ourselves with the 30 species of sea birds that regularly visit these islands in great numbers, as most of them are widespread in tropical seas. But of the 45 species of land birds to be found, almost one-third (14) are endemic to one or another of these islands. And if we include birds from the Comoros and Madagascar that reach the Seychelles, we can add nine more species. That is, a total of 23 of the 45 land birds can be seen nowhere else in the world—a remarkable total when one considers that the largest island of the Seychelles group covers only 53 square miles and is below 3000' in altitude.

Among the 14 strictly endemic species are some of the rarest birds in the world. The Aldabra Brush Warbler *(Nesillas aldabranus)*, a new species discovered in 1967, has probably been seen by less than 10 birders! Many of the others are reduced to total populations of less than 100 birds, and are on the endangered species list.

This volume is really a natural history of the Seychelles, a well-written guide to island ecology. Even if you have no intention of ever visiting this remote corner of the Indian Ocean, anyone with an interest in conservation will want to own this well-illustrated, 160-page book.

—James F. Clements

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF THE GALAPAGOS, by Michael Harris. Taplinger Publishing Co., 1974 ($10.95).

"It is only a wise man or a fool who thinks that he is able to identify all the finches," cautions the author of this new guide. Much attention is given to the Darwin's finches, and the text details taxonomy, identification, and general distribution—as well as hybridization, which can make positive identification almost impossible. Those of us who have been to this archipelago and had difficulty with the finches will now understand why.

The text also includes keys to identification, flight, voice, feeding, and breeding habits, (and, most important: distribution ranges) for each species found on the islands. The black and white drawings are excellent and the color plates are good, but the printing quality has caused them to suffer. The quality of the text paper also leaves much to be desired for a field guide. The wearing prospects are not good. It hardly justifies the price, which I deem to be exorbitant.

Still, the book is difficult to criticize, since it is the only one available on the subject to date. If you can pay the price, the guide is a requirement for the Galapagos visitor, and a welcome volume to add to anyone's library.

—Keith Axelson

Jean Brandt

BIRDING at McGrath

In late summer, all through fall and into winter, McGrath State Beach has enough birds to dazzle even the most jaded birder. Because the park comprises various habitats—beach, salt marsh, mudflats, lagoon, grassland, riparian, and fresh water lake—on any day at this time of year you might see at least 60 species.

Looking out toward sea, you may spot Sooty Shearwaters, Common Murres, three species of loons, Pigeon Guillemots, and sea ducks. Parasitic Jaegers may be seen zooming overhead—and this is one of the best places locally to look for them. Hundreds of Brown Pelicans can be found resting on the dunes, and an occasional White Pelican is spotted.

The salt marsh, mudflats, and lagoon provide protection and food not only for many resident birds such as the Snowy Plover, Black-necked Stilt, Cinnamon Teal, and Great Blue Heron, but they're among the best places around to witness the annual fall migration of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds. Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers are found here every year, as are Golden Plovers (both races), Knots, and an occasional Osprey. Some of the rare birds that have been seen in these areas are the Trumpeter Swan, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Black Skimmer, and one of the only White Wagtails ever reported in the "lower 48." Add to this list the *eleven* species of gulls (including Glaucous and Thayer's) and the *seven* species of terns, and you can begin to see why McGrath is so exciting.

East of the bridge over the Santa Clara River, you can stroll alongside the stream and look for warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats, and a possible Tropical Kingbird. There is no reason why such birds as the Northern Waterthrush and the Ovenbird have not been reported here. It is perfect habitat and just hasn't been birded enough.

The grassy fields between the campground and the salt marsh are a good place to see White-tailed Kites, and plenty of Savannah Sparrows. If you're lucky you might even flush a Short-eared Owl along the trail. North of the entrance to the park there's a substantial stand of willows, which should be checked thoroughly for vagrants in the fall. Such unusual birds as the Philadelphis Vireo, Blackburnian and Palm Warblers have been reported here.

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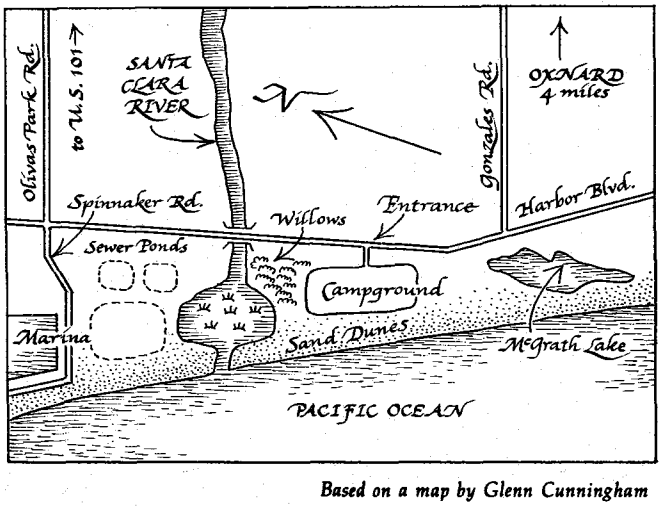

Based on a map by Glenn Cunningham

Jon Dunn

FIELD NOTES

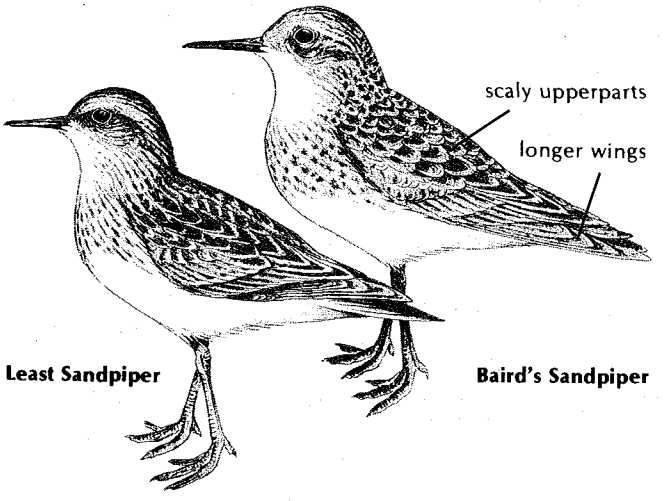

Illustration by Jim Davis

The Baird's Sandpiper causes many birders a great deal of confusion. A regular fall migrant through Californa, it arrives in late July or August, and reaches a peak around the end of August, when small numbers (up to 10) can be found on the more brackish portions of our coastal lagoons.

Among the sandpipers collectively referred to as "peeps," the Baird's is the largest bird regularly occurring in California. Beyond its obvious size difference, the species has proportionately longer wings, projecting beyond the tip of the tail. On the ground, the long wings give the bird a more horizontal stance, as opposed to the more vertical posture of the smaller peeps—while, in the air, the Baird's has a slower, floppier style of flight.

Apart from its size, the best mark on the Baird's is likely the *scaly upperparts* on the immatures (the only age type found in California during the fall). These buffy and blackish horizontal bars are lacking on the smaller, similarly-colored Least Sandpiper.

The legs of the Baird's are a grayish black, and while the Least has greenish legs, they often become dark due to soiling from the mud. Because of this, I'd advise the observer to use leg color only as a secondary characteristic. Too often these dark-legged Leasts are mistaken for Baird's.

The buffy coloration and the dark legs have also caused some confusion with the breeding-plumaged Sanderling. However, the latter species has a very bold white wing bar which is absent on the Baird's. The harsh "creep" note is also very unlike the higher pitched "kip" note of the Sanderling (very similar to the note of the Northern Phalarope). The Pectoral Sandpiper is also similar to the Baird's—but it has a very streaked breast which contrasts sharply with a white belly—and it lacks the scaly upperparts. The Pectoral, larger than the Baird's, also has a longer neck, which it frequently extends when agitated.

By late September the immature Baird's are well into winter plumage, having lost much of the rich brownish coloration on the breast and the upperparts. But despite this "frosty" appearance, the birds retain the scaly pattern on their backs, which should make identification fairly simple.

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season

September puts the birdwatcher in the position of a gourmet who finds himself a guest of his favorite chef, with an irresistible menu of expensive entrees that he could not otherwise afford. What shall he order—there's only this one chance! Where shall he go—migration time is so brief! The shorebirding is great, but the coastal canyons and promontories concentrate the passerine migrants and probably an out-of-range vagrant or two. Pelagic trips are most productive this month. And there were a few mountain birds we missed this summer—maybe the **Flammulated Owl** is still calling at Buckhorn Camp... The possibilities are more than a gourmet birder can stand.

This summer, to early August, was a rather dull time, especially after the exciting birding of May and early June. Even the Salton Sea failed to produce unusual Mexican wanderers: the **Black Skimmers,** except for one pair, deserted their former nesting site on the New River delta and proved difficult to locate (until Steve Cardiff found eighteen Skimmers at the north end of the Sea in mid-July. He suspects a new nesting site in Whitewater Cove, at the extreme northeast corner of Salton Sea). **Wood Storks** and **Laughing Gulls** arrived, as expected, in late June, but the hoped for boobies, spoonbills, and southern herons were not found. However, August is not too late for these wanderers from the south. On July 27 Fred Heath was surprised to find fifty **Common Mergansers** on the Colorado River, just below Parker Dam. I've seen them there in winter but presumed they would go north, as other ducks do.

West of the deserts, birding was rather quiet too. Ed Navajosky studied some 50,000 **Sooty Shearwaters** off McGrath Park, near Ventura, on July 21. Apparently, these birds were not migrating, as most large concentrations have been previously, but were milling around and presumably feeding. Other observations of Shearwaters in the San Pedro Channel during June and July amounted to "a few birds." Lee Jones' sighting of a **Red-billed Tropicbird** near Santa Rosa Island in late June gives us hope that the three pelagic trips in September may be equally fortunate. George Ledec hobbled on crutches out to the end of the Playa del Rey breakwater and was amply rewarded with an immature **Magnificent Frigatebird** on July 13. Another immature, flying down the coast at Malibu on August 4, brightened the day for Joan Mills and the Monday Birders.

Further south, Guy McCaskie saw an adult female Frigatebird at the north end of the Salton Sea on July 20, and Joe Jehl sighted an adult male off La Jolla later that week. So keep an eye on the sky as you travel along coast. Our perennial **Harlequin Duck,** now in eclipse plumage, was still at the Marina on July 15, as was an early **Osprey** (Jerry Johnson). Another Osprey was at Upper Newport Bay on July 29 (Hal Baxter). In the early 1930's **Wood Storks** were seen regularly in the coastal lagoons of San Diego County during the summer, but their wanderings have changed, and now they are rare and irregular there. Thus, Bob and Eleanor Parsons' sighting of a single Wood Stork (even though it was a raunchy immature) at Buena Vista Lagoon in mid-July is noteworthy; by the end of July it had moved down the coast to San Elijo Lagoon, below Carlsbad. **Wilson's Phalaropes** and **Long-billed Dowitchers**—many still in breeding plumage—were the earliest and most conspicuous returning shorebirds during July, although most species were back in small numbers. Several places along our coast hosted six species of terns in late July: **Caspian, Elegant** and **Forster's** in good numbers, with **Commons** and **Leasts** variable, and, surprisingly, a few **Royals,** which are usually winter birds.

Certainly the best "yard birds" of the summer and probably of the year were the two **Chimney Swifts** at Mike San Miguel's home in Monrovia. They flew over his house and the adjoining pastures every night, just at dusk, from July 12 to the end of the month. Another noteworthy "yard-bird" was a male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** which appeared briefly in Shirley Wells' Palos Verdes hilltop on July 31 and was seen again on August 3. Charlie Collins writes that he and Dave Foster, "...checked **Black Swifts** at Santa Anita Canyon (Sturdevant Falls) last night (July 25). Three pairs present, at least one with a young chick. We caught and banded three adults." A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** reported by Dave Marqua and Dean Harvey in a field near Legg Lake, El Monte, on July 23 was seen but once; it could not be found again. Al Driscoll brings us a fascinating possibility: a **White-necked Raven** twenty miles east of Lancaster in mid-July. He saw it among other ravens in an alfalfa field and noted white feathers on it's nape when a strong wind ruffled the bird's plumage. Unfortunately, identification of this raven is so difficult that having the bird in hand is almost a necessity.

I was taken by surprise when I read Fred Heath's report that **Bendire's Thrashers** were, "... easy to find: a half dozen June 7 in yuccas along the road from Yucca Valley to Arrastre Creek." I've driven this road many times in the last five years and have never seen a thrasher of any kind, nor have I heard of one there. Of course, a Bendire's nested near Yucca Valley in 1974, and a few have been reported every year just west of there; so with that in mind, plus Fred's sharp eyes, I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. Ed Navajosky located two nests with four young **Swainson's Thrushes** along a man-made stream in Griffith Park on July 12. Swainson's Thrushes formerly nested in our fast-disappearing riparian habitat; it is interesting to know that they are adapting to a more artificial environment.

Warblers, except for resident **Orange-crowneds,** were few and far between in our area. The **Grace's Warbler,** reported last month, was found again by Hank and Priscilla Brodkin about a quarter mile up Arrastre Creek, and it was seen the next day by Bruce Broadbooks, but could not be found again. While looking for the Grace's Warbler on July 3, Harry Kreuger found a first year male **American Redstart.** At long last there is definite evidence that **Hermit Warblers** nest in our mountains. On July 5, Kim Garrett found a Hermit feeding a juvenile near Green Valley Camp. It is only a matter of time until the nesting of both **Nashville** and **MacGillivray's Warblers** in Southern California is proven.

While almost any area with vegetation and a little water will attract birds on migration, the best areas in the fall will be along the coast. The coastal bays, lagoons, and mudflats from Goleta to south San Diego Bay will attract hordes of shorebirds and waterbirds this month, but don't neglect flooded fields and sewage ponds for the rarer sandpipers: **Baird's, Pectoral, Stilt,** and possibly even a **Buff-breasted,** a **Sharp-tailed** or a **Ruff.** We learned last fall, with the finding of two new California birds at Big Sycamore Park, that the coastal canyons must be covered. But we must also remember that the coastal promontories such as Point Dume, Point Fermin, and Point Loma have been big producers of migrant and vagrant passerines in past years.

Otto Widman wrote some years ago, "Let's face it, wanderlust is in our blood and we can't suppress it. Birding areas throughout the world have become our pastures . . ." So, with a kindly nod from above, the Baxters and Suffels will be off for Australia in mid-September. After September 10 please send observations to Jean Brandt, 5139 Densmore St., Encino 91436, or call her at 788-5188.

Book Request

If you have a copy of Haverschmidt's out-of-print, "Birds of Surinam" (1968), and you wish to sell it, please contact Marilyn Hornstein, at 670-2515-X5168 or 654-9516 (evenings).

"From San Gorgonio's summit all Southern California is spread below us, though not all is visible, for it is a land of haze deepening with distance into an impenetrable murk."
—*Charles Francis Saunders,* **1923**

Birding at McGrath *Continued from Page 5*

South of the entrance a mile or so is McGrath Lake, a brackish fresh water pond which supports no life itself (pesticides leached from nearby farms drain into it), but it does attract birds like the Ruddy Ducks and the Pied-billed Grebes, which manage to breed despite the lethal environment. And speaking of noxious waters, the sewer ponds just north of the bridge should always be checked for phalaropes, swallows, and peeps.

To reach the northern end of the beach, leave the park, drive north along Harbor Blvd. to Spinnaker Road, turn left and drive 7/10 mile to the end of the divided road. Make a U-turn and park, then walk over the dunes and south along the beach to the bluffs overlooking the lagoon. This is the best place to be in the afternoon, because you'll be looking down on the lagoon and mudflats, with the sun behind you. (Check the nearby marina too—a Wood Stork was found there several years ago.)

McGrath State Beach is part of the California Parks and Recreation System and has full facilities for camping and picnicing. There is a $1.00 charge per day to park inside ($3.00 for camping), but you can park on Harbor Blvd. near the bridge and walk in. Motels, restaurants and gas stations are found a few miles north on Harbor Blvd.

Condors

It is believed that only one young condor was successfully fledged last year, but John Borneman, the Audubon Society Condor Warden, has just reported the possibility of two successful nesting pairs of condors this year. More details will appear in the October TANAGER.

WESTERN TANAGER

EDITOR Barry Clark

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CALENDAR

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, and Nature Museum are located at Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046. Telephone: 876-0202. Audubon House hours: 10—3, Monday through Friday.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6—Pelagic Trip. We will explore the ocean around **Anacapa** and **Santa Cruz Islands** for fall pelagic migrants. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Oxnard marina to board the Paisano. Boat will leave at 8:00 a.m. sharp and return at 4:00 p.m. $14 per person, 38 passengers. Send check with full names of all in party to Joann Gabbard, 1318 Euclid Ave., Apt. 7, Santa Monica, Calif. 90404 (Tel. 395-1911), together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Be sure to include a telephone number where you can be reached in case of cancellation of trip due to bad weather. Leader: Shum Suffel.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Well-known bird photographer **Russ Wilson** will present a program entitled, "More Peregrinations of the Wilsons." Russ is one of America's top birders, and his program will document his discoveries while prowling the continent in search of rare species.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13—Malibu Lagoon and Big Sycamore Canyon. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the supermarket parking lot on the west side of the lagoon. Take Hwy 1 to Malibu Creek Bridge. We expect to see returning winter resident shorebirds and waterfowl. The group will leave the lagoon in time to eat lunch in Big Sycamore Canyon (Point Mugu State Park). Afternoon will be spent looking for fall migrants. Brown Thrasher, Veery, Blackpolls, and many other unusual birds were seen here last fall. Leader: Jerry Johnson.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14—Evening Bird Walk at Trippet Ranch. Meet at 5:00 p.m. in the picnic area near the entrance. Take Topanga Canyon Blvd. to Entrada Dr., 1 mile north of Topanga Village. Take Entrada Dr. to the fork, then go left to gate at the end of the road. Come early and bring a picnic dinner. This is an excellent area for chaparral birds and will feature an owl-walk at dusk, to see the resident Long-eared, Great Horned, and Screech Owls. A program on chaparral habitat will follow in the club house. Leader: Harvey Kirk.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18—Conservation Meeting— Everyone Welcome. 7:30 p.m., Santa Monica Civic Library, 6th St. and Santa Monica Blvds.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20—Cabrillo Beach. Meet in front of the Museum at Cabrillo Beach at 7:30 a.m. After birding Cabrillo, we will go to Pt. Fermin to hunt for eastern vagrants. For those so inclined, we will stop at the Botanic Gardens after lunch. Leader: to be announced.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27—Pelagic Trip to San Clemente Island. Onboard the Vantuna out of San Pedro. Departs at 6:00 a.m. Look for the rare pelagics such as Red-billed Tropicbird, albatrosses. Fee $18 per person (35 passenger limit). Send check with full names of all in party to Joann Gabbard, 1318 Euclid Ave., Apt. 7, Santa Monica, Calif. 90404 (Tel. 395-1911), together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Be sure to include a telephone number where you can be reached in case of cancellation of trip due to bad weather. Leader: Arnold Small.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28—McGrath State Park. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the entrance to the park. Take Hwy 101 to Victoria off-ramp, between Oxnard and Ventura. Go under the freeway to Olivas Park Rd., turn right on Olivas to Harbor Blvd., turn left on Harbor to McGrath (on right). Parking is available inside the park at a fee, or on the north side of the bridge. Look for returning resident shorebirds and water fowl, and fall migrants. Leader: Ed Navajosky.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4—Big Sycamore Canyon. Meet at the entrance to Pt. Mugu State Park at 8:30 a.m. Parking is available near the entrance. Look for fall vagrants and migrants. Leader: Larry Sansone.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5—Upper Newport Bay. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on Back Bay Drive. Take San Diego Fwy south to Jamboree Blvd. offramp. Go west on Jamboree to East Bluff Dr. Right on East Bluff to Back Bay. Look for birders along the bay. We expect to see wintering shorebirds and waterfowl and resident rails—and, if extremely lucky, the Black Rail. Leader: Freeman Tatum.

SAT-SUN, OCTOBER 11-12—Tijuana Riverbottom. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at restaurant parking lot on right side of Palm Ave., Imperial Beach. Take Route 5 south to Imperial Beach, Palm Ave. turnoff, and proceed ¾-mile to restaurant. Returning fall migrants should be in abundance. This area is in jeopardy of becoming another channelization project of the Corps of Engineers, so let's enjoy it while we can. Leader: John Rieger.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m. Plummer Park. Details to be announced in the October TANAGER.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18—Goleta Slough, Santa Barbara.

SAT-SUN, OCTOBER 25-26—Butterbread Spring.

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Arnold Small, M.S., Instructor in Biology at Los Angeles Harbor College, Wilmington. Fee $65. 3 units (quarter system credit may be earned.

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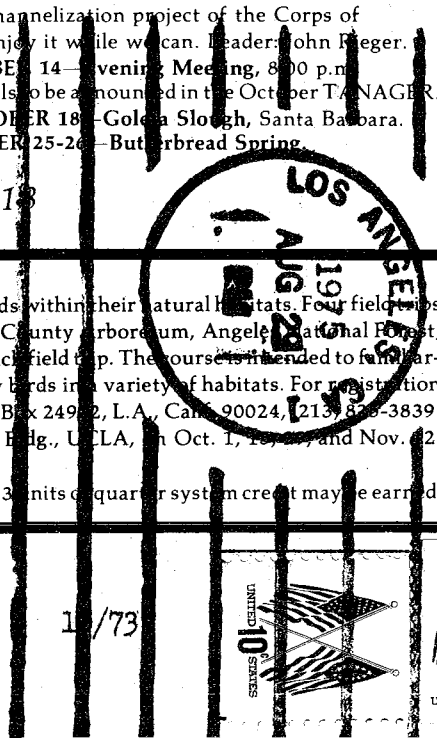

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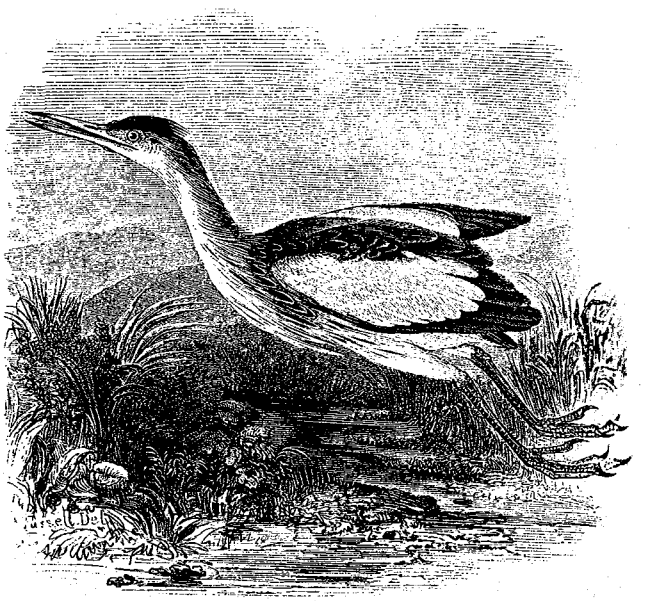

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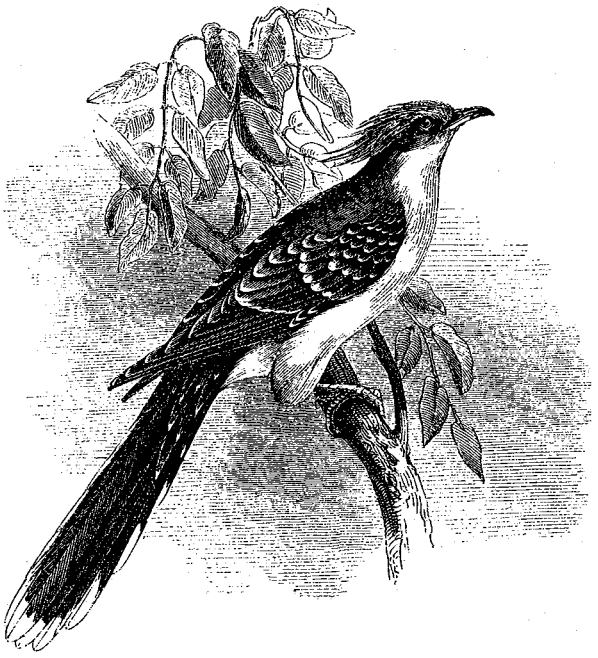

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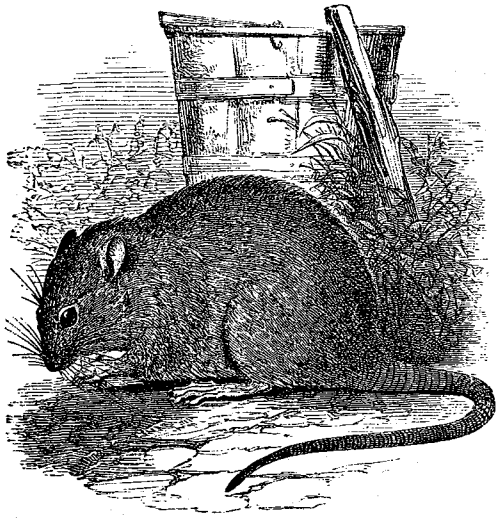

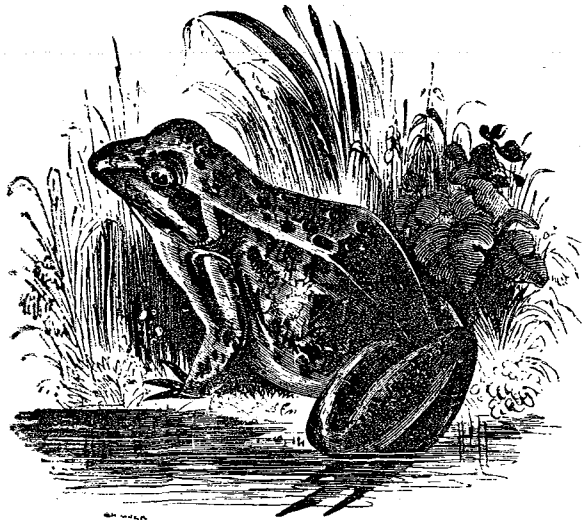

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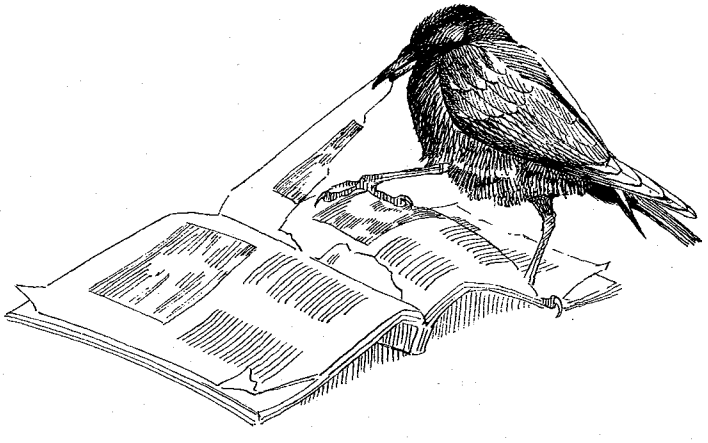

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