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The White-headed Piping Guan

or How I Found my 4,000th Life Bird
in Surinam

by Arnold Small

After a thousand life birds after 33 years of active birding averages out to 121.12 new birds seen per year. Actually it doesn't work that way at all—although I don't believe that a year has passed since 1942, when I first began looking at birds for pleasure, that I have not seen *any* new bird. Normally new birds come in bunches, and when I have gone to the most distant lands and out-of-the-way corners of the world they come almost too fast to write them down. My best year was 1966, when almost 1,000 new birds flew past my binoculars; and 1963 (my first African safari) yielded more than 700. While 4,000 might seem to be a lot of birds, it is still less than half of all the species occurring on planet Earth. Although some of my friends have already passed "half" (about 4,500 species), and at least one has gone "over the top" with 5000+, I remain more determined than ever to meet in life as many of the other 5,000 "strangers" as I can. For me, there is still no greater thrill than to see that which I have never seen before.

It was with this in mind, in 1975, that I embarked on a trip to Surinam—that forgotten corner of South America. At the time I was only about 150 species short of 4,000, and Surinam seemed a most likely place to try for that elusive milestone. As a consequence of that excursion, the White-headed Piping Guan was to become—for me, at least—immortal.

Surinam (formerly Dutch Guiana) is a smallish country (about 63,000 square miles) situated between latitudes 2°N and 4°N, and inhabited by the most heterogeneous mixture of peoples of any country on earth. It is located on the north central coast of South America and is bordered on the west by Guyana (formerly British Guiana), on the east by French Guiana, and 210 miles to the south by the Amazon basin of Brazil. Historically, Surinam is quite interesting, since it was acquired by the Netherlands in 1667, after the second Anglo-Dutch War, in exchange for New Amsterdam (New York). Surinam has been independent since November 25, 1975, and although the official language is Dutch, a lingua franca, "Taki-Taki," is spoken by most of the people in and



The white-headed Piping Guan

around Paramaribo, the capital city. Of the 390,000 inhabitants in the country, about one fourth live in or near the capital and the rest reside primarily along the narrow coastal strip. This mosaic of peoples is comprised chiefly of four ethnic groups. The Asian Indians (37%) were brought to Surinam to work in the rice fields and sugar plantations, as were the Indonesians (15%), after the black slaves were emancipated in 1863. Descendants of runaway black slaves endure as the Bush Negroes of today, residing in the back country and speaking a language that is essentially African in origin. Creoles from the West Indies make up about 30% of the population and the rest are a combination of Amerindians, Chinese, and Dutch.

Still 90% forested, Surinam has so far utilized little of its timber reserves, though a recent innovation is the conversion of virgin forest into charcoal for sale to the Norwegian steel industry. Bauxite (aluminum ore) remains the most valuable resource, along with rice and bananas.

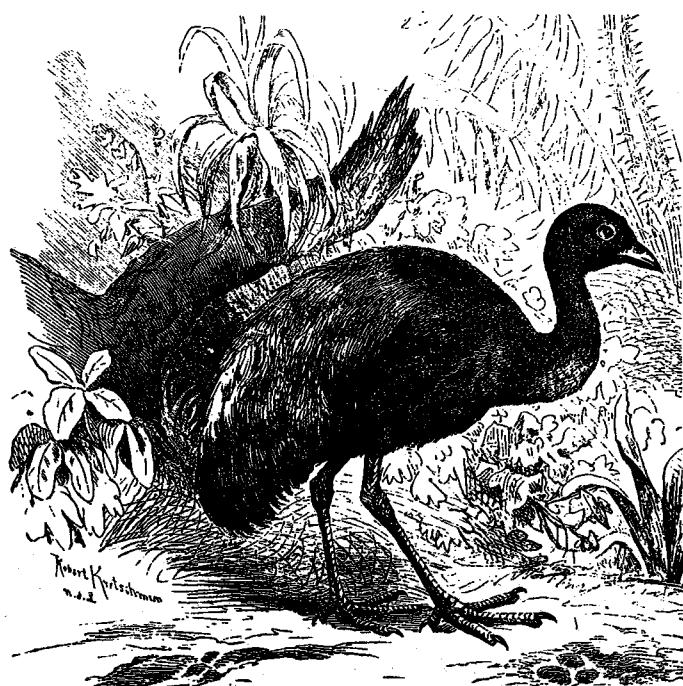
Situated in the belt of the northeast trade winds and outside the notorious Caribbean hurricane zone, Surinam enjoys a remarkably predictable climate, with temperatures ranging from 73°F to 88°F throughout the year. Rainfall is heavy (averaging 95" per year in Paramaribo), but confined to two distinct wet seasons. The short rainy period extends from November to February and the long rains commence in April and terminate in August. The intermediate periods are relatively dry, and it is during these intervals that travel into the interior is possible.

Continued Overleaf

The copious rainfall insures luxuriant forests, composed of more than 2,000 species of trees. Mangrove forests are found primarily along the narrow coastal strip, while inland, scattered savannahs, sand ridge forests, swamp forests, and lush rain forests rise gradually toward a range of low mountains, the highest of which reaches 4218 feet. The interior is largely forested and undeveloped, and boasts a wealth of animal life, including more than 150 species of mammals. The large mammals are the sloths, monkeys, anteaters, tapirs, deer, wild pigs, jaguars, pumas, ocelots, and the largest rodents in the world—the capybaras.

For me, however, the greatest attraction of Surinam is its bird life—more than 600 species in an area the size of Southern California. Although I had birded South America on previous occasions—visiting Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru—there were numerous Atlantic Lowland species I had never met.

The only way to reach Surinam by commercial jet from the U.S. is via Miami and some of the smaller Caribbean islands. Paramaribo is an old colonial port city, and yet there are numerous birding opportunities within easy drive of the town. My race for 4,000 commenced on the day of my arrival, with the Silver-beaked Tanager (#3867), White-eyed Tody Tyrant (#3868), and Violaceous Euphonia (#3869) in the *Culturtuin*, on the fringes of the city. The forests, savannahs, and marshes surrounding the city yielded such choice items as Black-headed Parrot (#3929), Arrowhead Piculet (#3967), and Epaulet Oriole (#3973). The mangrove forests at the Wia-Wia Coastal Turtle Preserve, which is reached by seagoing dugout, yielded a few more—Rufous Crab Hawk, Double-banded and Short-tailed Pygmy Tyrants, and Plain-crested Elaenia. But the real prizes lay in the interior, in the several magnificent forest reserves of the Surinam Forest Service, and administered by STINASU (*Stichting Natuurbehoud Suriname*: the Foundation for Nature Preservation in Surinam).



The Grey-winged Trumpeter, an exotic bird of Surinam's tropical forests.

In addition to Wia-Wia, Surinam has six sizable nature preserves—an impressive achievement for so small a nation. Two of these are fairly accessible. Brownsberg Reserve is easily reached by road, and lies some 90 miles south of the capital. Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg Reserve is further out, requiring a drive of some hundred miles, followed by a four hour river trip by motorized dugout up the Coppename River. But it is well worth it. The road to Bitagron (where we met the boats) runs through fine palm savannah inhabited by Red-billed Tanagers (#3976), Sulphury Flycatchers (#3981), and Red-shouldered Macaws (#3983). The virgin rain forest along the Saramacca River produced such delights as Channel-billed Toucans (#3985), Golden-headed Manakins (#3986), Green-tailed Goldenthroats (#3987), Bronzy and Paradise Jacamars (#3988 and #3989), and the incomparable Capuchinbird (#3990). The river journey provided Black-collared Swallows, Black Nunbirds, Golden-winged Parakeets, and Black-faced Hawk—but the tantalizing #4,000 would have to await my arrival at the Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg Reserve. Even the magnificent Crimson Fruitcrow at the boat landing wasn't the long sought-after 4,000th bird—but I was much closer now.

The following morning, oblivious to the chiggers in the grass bordering the airstrip, I watched in awe as pairs of incomparable Scarlet Macaws competed for attention with Red-throated Caracaras and majestic King Vultures. The birds were coming faster now, and I had almost lost track of the count as a tree full of lovely powder-blue Spangled Cotingas and wine-colored Pompadour Cotingas held me spellbound. Nearby, a bare tree wore a flock of Marail Guans—and suddenly I realized that the magnificent turkey-sized guan with the white wing patches, white crest, and sky-blue throat slipping through the treetops was the elusive prize—*my 4,000th life bird!* And what a bird it was! Actually any of the other birds I had seen that day—the Red Fan Parrots, Black-banded Woodcreepers, White-throated Toucans, Red-necked Woodpeckers, and more—would have made an acceptable #4,000—but the White-headed Piping Guan was perfect.

Now the pressure was off and it was smooth sailing the rest of the way. The Coppename River rushing by the Rest House offered a superlative backdrop for Ringed, Amazon, Green, and Green-and-Rufous Kingfishers, while cream-colored Capped Herons patrolled the banks, artfully avoiding the waiting jaws of the Caimans. Swallow-wings perched upon every dead snag and sallied out after flying insects—looking very much like large moths themselves. And always from the forest canopy came the screeching of the Scarlet Macaws and the Black Caracaras; while at dusk the bare ground on the airstrip was home to Pauriques and White-tailed Nightjars. Across the river, the trails fanned out to Raleigh Falls, Voltz Mountain, and other heavily forested regions within the park. Our best views of Great Tinamous, tiny Tyrant-manakins, Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Dusky Parrots, and Green-rumped Parakeets were obtained along these trails. Working the “edges” in the early mornings and then retreating to the cool depths of the rain forest as the day progressed proved to be the most effective birding technique. A telescope (for forest canopy birds) and a tape recorder for luring the shyer species into binocular range proved to be valuable tools.

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The Birds of Cowan Avenue

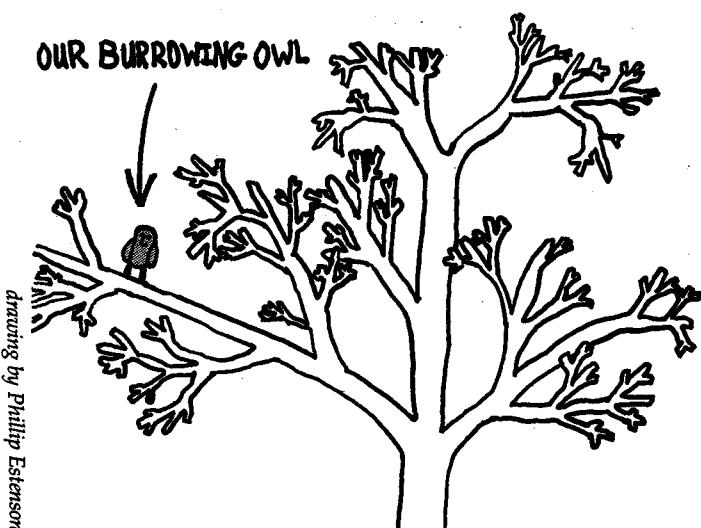


Recently Cowan Avenue School has had a little visitor. This visitor is a Burrowing Owl. At first this was a mystery. Every day the area around the tree by the office would be crowded with children and grownups trying to solve the big mystery of which kind of owl it was. One night Mrs. Rockwood went to an Audubon Society banquet. She talked to some very special expert birders. One of them was very interested and said, "I'll come tomorrow to see the owl." She did come! The whole class grew excited (at least I did!) Mrs. Brandt was the lady's name. She was not alone; three other people were with her! They all took a look at the owl. Later they came to our room. Mr. Shuffel wrote on our chalkboard in big capital letters, BURROWING OWL. Our class was full of questions but the most common was, "Why would a Burrowing Owl be up in a tree; they are usually seen on the ground?" "Well, in the canyon near Hughes Airport there was a fire," explained Mr. Shuffel. "Probably it burned out the habitat." Immediately Mrs. Rockwood said, "Now why didn't I think of that?" Our owl has been here since November. We have only seen the owl leave the tree twice. We don't think the owl will stay much longer, because our canyon is starting to get green again and it is nesting season. How much longer do you think our mysterious owl will stay?"

Julianne Beaudin

P.S.—Our owl left March 15, 1976, and we haven't seen him since.

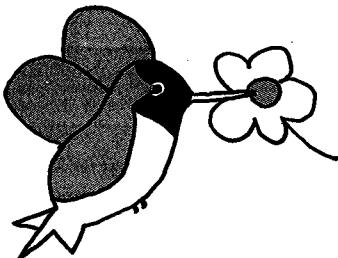
OUR BURROWING OWL



drawing by Phillip Esterman

I think I have seen a Wrentit, because it had bright eyes and it was all brown and it was in a group of sparrows but was a tiny bit bigger. It was not a Brown Towhee because there was not that much difference in size. I looked in three books and they all indicated that it was possible I'd seen a Wrentit.

Milton Todd



drawing by Tiffany Dever

Anna's Hummingbird

You could say birds are like a million jewels all put in to one. They are majestic! I like the feeling they give me deep down inside.

My favorite bird is the Meadowlark; they are beautiful colored birds. It is not that I like their brown so much but it is that nice big black V on their breast. I am really sorry that sometimes they seem scarce in our canyon because it is so frustrating when you see one, and you tell your teacher, and it's gone!

Now I am going to tell one of the experiences I have had with the Meadowlark. We were coming into Room 18 when we saw a flock of Meadowlarks on the fence, but in a few minutes they were gone. It was good and bad. I will give the bad part first, and that is—we saw them an inadequate length of time. But on the other hand we don't see things like that often, so we were lucky. That wraps up the so-called adventurous sight of the Meadowlark!

Whitney Davis

Birding is a tremendous bunch of fun, and when I find a new bird it makes me want to find more.

Tracy Ross

Birding means the suspense of thinking, "What was that bird?" I guess I'll never know, but I can try.

Miles Durfee

I like birds because they keep me occupied, and sometimes in suspense. I enjoy birding because birds help me understand Nature's plan, and I can learn their habitats by myself, or from the Peterson guide.

Kenneth Wheeler

I like birds because they don't come down and bite you.

Deon Jones

drawing by Neal Golub



GREAT HORNED OWL

Birdwatching is a popular pastime among students at Cowan Avenue School in Westchester, and the source of all the enthusiasm is Fourth Grade teacher Adelle Rockwood, an Audubon member who for years now has been sharing with her pupils her own love of nature. To express some of their feelings about birds, the boys and girls of Mrs. Richmond's class (ages 10 and 11) contributed the words and pictures on this page.

Jon Dunn

FIELD NOTES

The Grasshopper, Leconte's, and Sharp-tailed Sparrows are similarly shaped, possessing big heads and short, sharply-pointed tails. While their plumage patterns are distinct, a great deal of confusion still occurs concerning their identification.

Of the three species, the Grasshopper Sparrow is by far the most widespread. Largely a migrant and summer resident, it arrives in late March, but remains rather local, occurring only on rolling hillsides that have a good growth of native grasses. The species can be found every year in the hills above Dana Pt. and the grassy slopes adjacent to Mission Gorge in San Diego Co. The best way to locate the birds in spring is to listen for their song: an insect-like buzz, generally delivered from a conspicuous perch. After the breeding season the birds become secretive and hard to locate, while during fall migration they are rare, but more widespread. In recent years the species has been found regularly in October and early November at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley; and the bird has been reported a few times in winter in the Imperial Valley.

The short, sharply-pointed tail, the proportionately larger head and the *unstreaked underparts* should separate the Grasshopper Sparrow from **Savannah Sparrows**, which occur in the same areas during winter and spring. While the juvenal Grasshopper Sparrow does have a streaked breast, the streaks are lost within a very few weeks.

The **Leconte's Sparrow** is strictly a vagrant in Calif., having been recorded on only three occasions (during the last three weeks of October) at the traditional vagrant traps: Farallon Is., Pt. Pinos, and Furnace Creek Ranch. The preferred habitat of the species is wet grass—and that is where we found the two individuals at Furnace Creek.

While the Leconte's is very distinctive, it has been confused on a number of occasions with the Grasshopper Sparrow. This is largely due to the inaccurate drawings in the two major field guides. Both show the Leconte's with a very pale buff superciliary strip and a buff throat and breast—whereas the actual coloration of these areas is a *bright orange*. The Grasshopper Sparrow lacks this orange shade, and even the brightest fall immatures never get any brighter than a fairly intense buff. The guides also emphasize the *white median stripe* on the crown on the Leconte's and the *vertical magenta stripes on the dull gray nape*. While these marks are very useful in separating Leconte's from the Sharp-tailed Sparrow, they are not helpful in differentiating it from the Grasshopper Sparrow, as both species share these characteristics. The *thin, distinct black stripes along the sides and flanks, the darker back (blackish), with more distinct buffy vertical stripes, and the grayish cheek patch* are useful marks for separating Leconte's and Grasshopper Sparrows. The Leconte's also has a *powder blue eye ring*, while the eye ring of the Grasshopper is *whitish*.

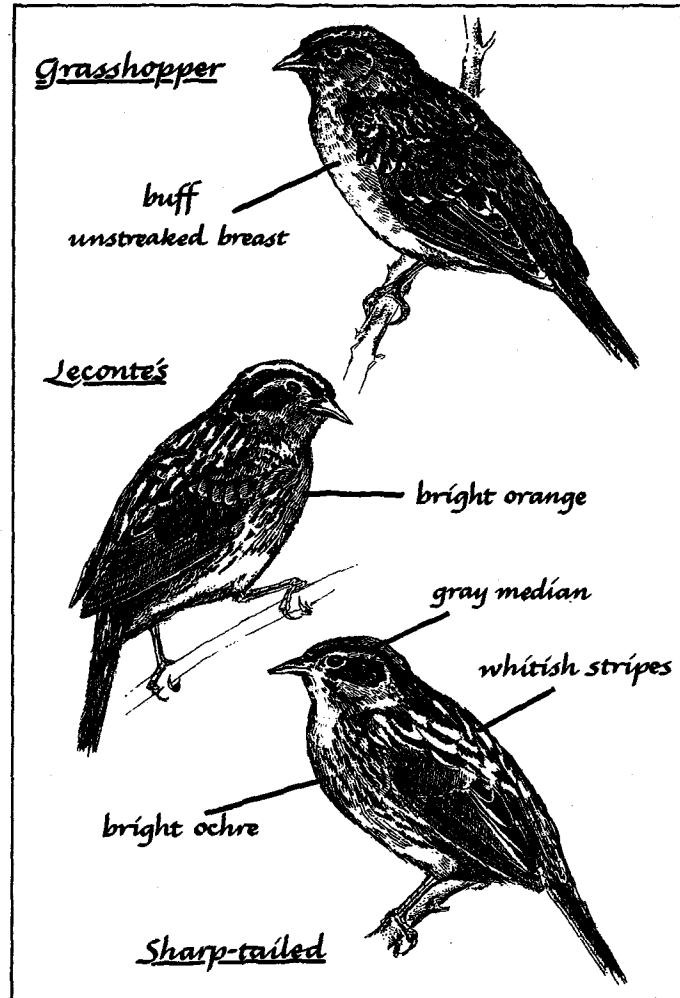


Illustration by Mary Ellen Poreyra

The Sharp-tailed Sparrow occurs here during the winter, but is very rare. Almost all the records are from the brackish parts of our coastal salt water marshes. In recent years the species has been found consistently during high tides at the Submarine Crossing on the south side of Newport Bay, and it seems likely that a very small population may regularly winter in this habitat.

There are several races of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and the one we get here is the bright, inland Great Plains race, *A. o. nelsoni*. The Sharp-tailed most closely resembles the Leconte's in having dull blackish upperparts and an orangish breast and superciliary. However, the *gray* rather than *whitish* median crown stripe and the *unstreaked darker-gray nape* should separate the two. In addition, the vertical stripes on the upperparts are *whitish*, and the streaks on the flanks of the Sharp-tailed extend to the sides of the breast. The streaking, however, is less distinct than on the Leconte's, tending to blend more with the background hue. Also the orangish coloration of the underparts is not so bright as on the Leconte's, shading more towards a *bright ochre* color. While the Leconte's has a *sharp demarcation line* between the orange breast and the white belly, the contrast in the Sharp-tailed is not nearly so distinct.

In summation, the Leconte's is the brightest of the three sparrows, showing the most contrasts, and the Grasshopper is the dullest of the three. 

Jean Brandt

Summer Birding in the San Bernhardinos

Grace's Warbler? Hepatic Tanager? Gray Vireo? Williamson's Sapsucker? Saw Whet or Pygmy Owl? Pinyon Jay? All of these specialties plus dozens more have been found in the past few years in the San Bernardino Mtns. The following paragraphs describe a loop that hits only the high spots, but the region has myriad roads and trails that offer excellent birding if you've got the time to explore.

Leave Redlands at the beginning of Hwy. 38 and drive east 14.7 miles to the Fallsville Road. (Hwy. 38 makes a sharp left turn here.). Go past Fallsville to the waterfall at the end of the road. Look for Black Swifts (which may nest under the falls) and for Dippers.

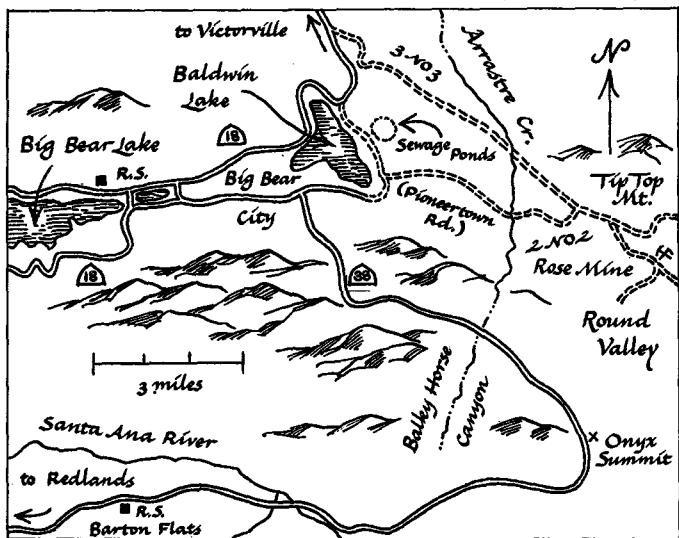
Return to Hwy. 38 and continue up the mountain. Campgrounds are excellent throughout the forest and the South Fork Campground has had Painted Redstarts the past two years. About 3 miles past Onyx Summit, Hwy. 38 crosses Arrastre Creek at Balky Horse Canyon (unmarked). One mile down the canyon on a terrible dirt road there is a good stand of trees and willows along the creek. This is where Kimball Garrett found the Grace's Warbler last year. Subsequently, a Painted Redstart, a Pygmy Owl, a Whip-poor-will, Red Crossbills, and a Common Nighthawk were also either seen or heard nearby. (The Pacific Coast Trail crosses Arrastre Creek here and anyone interested in hiking will see better habitat and birds than those of us who depend on our gas hogs).

Go back to Hwy. 38 and continue toward Big Bear City. In about 4 miles start looking and listening for Pinyon Jays. You will come to a "T" intersection soon where Hwy. 38 makes a sharp left turn. You should turn *right* at this intersection and drive around the south side of Baldwin Lake to National Forest Road 2N02 (a good dirt road). Go east on 2N02, and stop where the road crosses Arrastre Creek. Walk up and down the stream to look for the Hepatic Tanager. You may also find the Plumbeous race of the Solitary Vireo, Calliope Hummingbirds, and Gray Vireos here. If you don't find the Gray Vireo, continue easterly on 2N02 to where the road crosses a high desert flat. Play your tape recorder. If you still can't find it, walk up the dirt road to the Tip Top Mine. Again play your tape. (Scott's Orioles are also found in this area). If you haven't found the vireo by now, give up and return to Baldwin Lake on 2N02, listening all along the way.

When you get to the lake (which may be dry), turn right (north) and drive along the lakeshore. Look for the sewage ponds. As usual, these afford excellent birding. (In fall, Baird's Sandpipers and Franklin's Gulls are often seen at the ponds, and the surrounding grasslands are good for Chestnut-collared Longspurs). Watch for Brewer's Sparrows, Pinyon Jays, and Common Nighthawks.

Return to Hwy. 38 and *stay on 38* (turn right and then left) heading west along the north side of Big Bear Lake. (Maps of the area are available at the Ranger Station on the north side of the lake). Take a dirt road north out of the town of FawnSkin to the Hanna Flat Campground. Saw Whet Owls have been seen here.

Based on a map by Glenn Cunningham

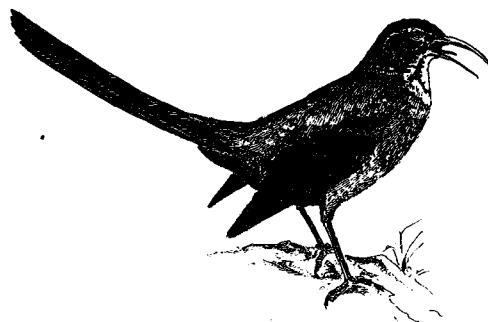


Continue west on Hwy. 38, which becomes Hwy. 18 at the west end of the lake. Stay on Hwy. 18 for 10.2 miles to the Green Valley Lake turnoff. Go up the road to the campground. Red Crossbills and Williamson's Sapsuckers nest here.

Return to Hwy. 18 and head for home—or stay as long as you can and explore. You won't find better summer birding in Southern California! Motels, restaurants, supplies, and gasoline are available all along this loop. *Good birding!* ☺

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An up-to-date directional guide to over 100 of the best birding locales in the L.A. area, compiled by Jean Brandt, and published this month by the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Pocket-sized. \$1.50, at Audubon House Bookstore, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles 90046. (213-876-0202). Mail or phone orders are welcome.

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



ay is the month we've been waiting for—since in these next couple of weeks the spring migration will hit its peak. Then, later in the month, quantity will give way to *quality*, with some of the best birding opportunities of the year. But first, the late winter wrap up:

The **Bar-tailed Godwit** remained in the Ballona Creek channel until March 2 (Bea Becker), and the two **Curve-billed Thrashers** were still near Finney Lake in Imperial Co. on March 22 (Harry Kreuger). Further down Ballona Creek, the drake **Harlequin Duck**, missing since November, was rediscovered in mid-march (Mike Carmody), and the **Tufted Duck** was seen through late February on Lake Sherwood. A **European Wigeon** apparently wintered at Furnace Creek Ranch, as it was still there March 13 (Van Remsen). The third **Red-necked Grebe** of the winter was found by Charlie Collins and Jon Atwood in the Navy harbor at Pt. Mugu (March 19 and 22); and Lake Cachuma in Santa Barbara Co. hosted three **Whistling Swans**, a pair of **Hooded Mergansers**, and two **Bald Eagles**. Jim Stewart brings us our third report of a **Merlin**, on Mt. Pinos, March 25. The **American (Pied) Oystercatcher** seen at Anacapa Is. on March 7 by the LAAS pelagic trip was first found there 12 years ago—May 8, 1965. Such longevity among large shorebirds is well documented, however, as a banded European Oystercatcher is known to have lived over 30 years.

Jerry Maisel's early trip to the Colorado River was well rewarded, as a **Black Rail** flew over his tape recorder several times at West Pond, March 28, and several more were heard nearby. **Kittiwakes** continued to be common in the coastal harbors (more than 20 at Oceanside March 30). But Hank Brodkin's sighting of one at Legg Lake (March 8) is unusual. The seventh **Eastern Phoebe** since November was found during March at the Long Beach Nature Center (Barbara Massey), and the wintering **Wilson's Warbler** was still in the South Coast Botanic Gardens on March 18. Another Wilson's, seen by Madeline Falsetano in Temple City, March 10, may have been a very early migrant. The sole report of **Evening Grosbeaks** since the single bird in November was of two in Claremont March 8 (Dan Guthrie). A very few **Red Crossbills** apparently wintered in the Aleppo pines on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Jean Muller has seen them a few times, most recently March 16 (two males and a female). Perhaps they will nest there, as they did in 1968. Two **Grey-headed Juncos** were found March 10 in a large flock of juncos at Brock Ranch, Imperial County, one of the more reliable spots for this Rocky Mt. species.

Among our first reports for the spring migration were a few **Vaux's Swifts** at Big Sycamore Canyon, March 6 (Dan Guthrie); an **Allen's Hummingbird** at Olga Clarke's Glendale feeder, Feb. 17; and a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at the Tucker Sanctuary, March 23 (Olga Clarke). Olga also reported **Ash-throated Flycatchers** above Laguna Dam and at West Pond, both near the Colorado River, March 28. Every year we note the scarcity of **Swainson's Hawks** compared with their former abundance

(“a company of 50 to 100 large hawks in a field”—Hoffman, 1927), so our two reports deserve mention: a dark-phase bird near Valyermo on March 20 (Bill Mack), and a light-phase bird flying north over Oceanside, March 29 (Don Sterba). **Rusty Blackbirds** are uncommon in the fall, rare in winter, and almost unknown in the spring; thus Van Remsen's sighting of one at Kelso, San Bernardino Co., March 25, is noteworthy.

Orioles were reported frequently in March. A few **Scott's Orioles** were seen in December and January, but the pair at Morongo Valley, March 9, could have been early migrants (Helen Dickenson). Jean Brandt moved into her new home in the hills above Encino on March 18, and the next day she found that an early pair of **Hooded Orioles** had moved in at the same time. **Northern (Bullock's) Orioles** were widely seen after early March.

One has only to reread the TANAGERS of ten years ago to realize how much “rare-birders” have learned about the so-called “vagrant traps”—those places which because of isolation, vegetation, water, or prevailing winds concentrate and hold migrants and vagrants during migration. Ten years ago there was little mention of such places as Deep Springs, Oasis, and Death Valley in Inyo County; of China Ranch, Kelso, and Clark Mtn. in San Bernardino County; or of Desert Center and nearby Corn Springs in Riverside County. In those days, we were concentrating on the southern desert oases—Morongo Valley, Thousand Palms, Brock Ranch, and the mouths of the mountain canyons from Whitewater to Borrego Springs. These locales still deserve high priority, but if you're after real rarities, you'll be hitting the northern oases this month. Between the scheduled trips to Santa Barbara Island and the traditional excursions to the desert hot spots, May ought to produce the best list of vagrants ever. But should you tire of land birding and require a change of pace, try the coastal marshes and lagoons. The ducks and divers are gone, but shorebirding ought be at its best, with the more familiar species in high plumage. In addition, there's always the chance of finding something rare—a Baird's, Pectoral, or Solitary Sandpiper—or even something truly unusual, like a White-rumped or Curlew Sandpiper (the sole reports are for late May and early June). May is also a good month for owling, and our local mountains from Pinos to Palomar provide many excellent spots to try out your tape recorder. Whip-poor-wills, a rarity in California—are also worth looking for. They're easy to hear but hard to see at Lake Fulmor, between Beaumont and Idyllwild, or by upper Arrastré Creek, off Hwy. #39, in the San Bernardino Mtns.

Finding rare birds is a formidable challenge, requiring persistent, intelligent birding. But if ever the time was right, it is now. Spring is here and the birds are waiting! 

Unusual bird sightings for inclusion in this column, or for the weekly recorded **Bird Report** should be reported to either Shum Suffel (797-2965) or Jean Brandt (788-5188). Punctuality in reporting is essential, so that other birders may share your observations.

Surinam *cont'd from pg. 2*

About three-fourths of a day's journey away from Voltzberg is the Brownsberg Reserve, situated at an elevation of about 1500 feet. The change in elevation is evident in the quality of the forest and in the bird community itself. Here a new avifauna awaited us. Woodpeckers were especially numerous—Spot-breasted, Yellow-throated, Golden-collared, and Blood-colored. Brownsberg is the only known residence in all of South America for the White-throated Pewee. Army ants of several species occur here, and a birder can count himself fortunate if he finds a raiding swarm in action. One huge ant army we found was attended by a variety of marvelously-colored antbirds—Fasciated Antshrikes, White-flanked Antwrens, Slaty Antshrikes, Cinereous Antshrikes, Long-winged Antwrens, Black-headed Antbirds, Rufous-throated Antbirds, and the incomparable White-plumed Antbirds. All day long, at Brownsberg, the arresting "chonnnnggg" of the Screaming Piha filled the forest, but the White Bellbirds were silent. Along the forest trails scurried Black Currasows, Little Tinamous, and Gray-winged Trumpeters—this last species being a completely new family for me.

"Collecting" new families is as gratifying to me as seeing new species—only much more difficult. In fact, there is only one *order* of the 28 living orders of birds that I have not yet met in the wild—and that is the Rheas. But when the great day finally dawns that I see my first wild Rhea, it will be like #1 or #4,000 all over again, only more so—for the Rhea will represent not only a new species, but a new family, and a new order—in short, a *brand new bird* in the fullest sense of the word. And for me, I know, finding that bird will be one more incredible thrill in a lifetime of exciting adventures in birding. 

Arnold Small was 16 when he recorded his first life bird—a Red-winged Blackbird—in New York's Van Cortlandt Park on July 2, 1942. During August of this year, he and LAAS President Dr. **Gerald Maisel** will conduct a UCLA Field Study Tour to Surinam and Panama. Details on the course (Biology X417.5) may be obtained from the University Extension Office, 213-825-3839.



WESTERN TANAGER

EDITOR Barry Clark

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Gail Gifford/FIELD TRIP REPORTS

PELAGIC TRIP TO ANACAPA/SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS—March 7. Leader Ed Navajosky and 30 elated birders enjoyed a memorable day of birding under ideal conditions, recording a total of 42 species. A short distance at sea the group encountered a Fulmar eating a jellyfish, numerous Black-legged Kittiwakes, several Rhinoceros Auklets, Common Murres, Brandt's Cormorants, and many Western Gulls. Soon after, the birders were treated to a rare sighting of a 20' Basking Shark, and a school of Pacific White-sided Dolphins. Along the north shore of Anacapa were Wandering Tattlers, Black Turnstones, Black Oystercatchers, several Belted Kingfishers, a Surfbird, and 3 Great Blue Herons. There were also some Harbor Seals among the Calif. Sea Lions on the shore. But the most exciting find of the day was the American Oystercatcher, spotted just around the western tip of the island. A lop out to sea produced Xantus' Murrelets, 2 Cassin's Auklets, a Pigeon Guillemot, dozens of Eared Grebes, and a few Pomarine Jaegers. Along the shore at Santa Cruz the group sighted 3 Island Foxes and 3 Island Scrub Jays. On the trip home a spy-hopping Gray Whale appeared—and at the dock the last bird was seen: a first year Thayer's Gull.

TUJUNGA WASH AND HANSEN DAM—March 7. On a superb day 45 birders under leader Jim Stevens listed a total of 55 species. While Rock Wrens and Water Pipits were inexplicably absent, for the first time in years both the Costa's Hummingbird and the Cactus Wren were seen. The best bird of the day was a distant Golden Eagle, but other unusual birds for the area included a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker upstream and two Common Mergansers on the lake.

MALIBU LAGOON AND TAPIA PARK—March 13. Some 30 people joined leader Ed Navajosky at the lagoon for a day of excellent birding, recording a total of 80 species. In the group were birders from Denver, Duluth, Washington, D.C., and Ontario, Canada. On the beach there were Mew Gulls, Kittiwakes, Ruddy and Black Turnstones, Glaucous-winged Gulls, and Forster's Terns, plus a Red-breasted Merganser. The rocks offshore had Double-crested Cormorants and one Pelagic Cormorant, while on the water there were both Common and Red-throated Loons. On the beach a dead dark-phased Fulmar was found, which gave everyone an opportunity to study the tube-nosed bill. A walk upstream produced a Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Blue-Grey Gnatcatcher, and Acorn Woodpeckers, while afternoon birding at Tapia Park turned up an immature Myrtle Warbler, Western Bluebirds, and White-breasted Nuthatches.

STARR RANCH SANCTUARY—March 21. 70 birders under Ranger Norm McIntosh caravaned into the Sanctuary on a hot, windless day, to observe such resident species as Cactus Wrens, Roadrunners, and Western Bluebirds, plus a few early migrants and a Lewis' Woodpecker. Unfortunately, due to communication problems, the caravan departed early, and several birders were left behind. This situation will be rectified in the future. Those wishing to visit the Sanctuary on their own may do so by contacting Mr. McIntosh at 714-586-6190. The area, under Audubon management for the past three years, features excellent examples of oak woodland, riparian woodland, grassland, and coastal sage. The bird list for the Sanctuary, to be published shortly, now totals over 140 species. Due to the extreme fire hazard, the best time to visit is after the winter rains.

Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318

CALENDAR

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

SATURDAY, MAY 1—Morongo Valley. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. Take Interstate 10 east to 29 Palms Hwy (62), 2.5 miles east of Whitewater, then go north approx. 10 miles. This is one of the renowned birding spots of the west, a trap for migrants funnelling into the Pacific Flyway from the Sonoran Desert. On a good day over 100 species can be found, including Vermillion Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, Lucy's Warblers, and Weid's Flycatchers—four species which reach the terminus of their breeding ranges here. Dry camping facilities are available in Joshua Tree National Monument, and there are convenient motels in 29 Palms and Yucca Valley. Many birders traditionally stay overnight to explore the oases in Joshua Tree on Sunday.

MONDAY, MAY 3—Little Rock Dam. This area is on a migration route through the San Gabriel Mtns. into the Mojave Desert. Last spring 6 species of flycatchers were seen in one day. Scott's Orioles, Townsend's Solitaire, and Black-chinned Sparrows are also likely. (See Jean Brandt's column in the April TANAGER). Take Antelope Valley Fwy. to Pearblossom Hwy; cross the Calif. Aqueduct and meet at the intersection of Pearblossom Hwy. and Barrel Springs Rd. at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Jean Brandt. 788-5188.

THURSDAY, MAY 6—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

SATURDAY, MAY 8—Morongo Valley. For details, see Saturday, May 1st. Another big weekend in the desert. Leader: Dr. Gerald Maisel. 472-7897.

SATURDAY, MAY 8—Fern Dell Cyn., Griffith Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance to Fern Dell. Take Western Ave. to Los Feliz Blvd. and turn right to the first traffic light. An artificial stream flows here, creating excellent riparian habitat. The first known nesting of Swainson's Thrushes in L.A. occurred here last year. Spring migrants should be in abundance. Leader: George Ledec. 465-3867.

MONDAY, MAY 10—Ojai Loop Trip, including Foster Park and Lake Casitas. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in Foster Park near Ojai. Take Rte. 101 north to Ventura, then Rte. 33 to the park. The lush riparian area along the Ventura River is ideal for warblers and other migrants. A large grove of live oak supports Western Flycatchers, Hutton's Vireos, and Purple Finches. Camping is available in Foster Park, \$1.50 per night, for anyone coming up Sunday. Leaders: Guy and Louise Commeau. 349-4540.

TUESDAY, MAY 11—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Everyone welcome. James F. Clements, inveterate birder and author of the checklist, *Birds of the World*, will present an illustrated program entitled "Birding at the Bottom of the World"—a record of his travels in southern South America, including Tierra del Fuego and the Straits of Magellan.

SUNDAY, MAY 16—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. This trip is full. Note that the *Paisano* departs from the Channel Islands National Monument Pier at the Ventura Marina at 5:30 a.m. and returns at 6:00 p.m. You are requested to be at the boat 30 min. before departure time. Leader: Arnold Small. 275-8823.

MONDAY, MAY 17—Mojave Narrows Nature Center. An excellent area along the Mojave River, similar in many ways to Morongo Valley. On previous trips, Lucy's Warblers and Winter Wrens have been found. The area can be reached either via Hwy. 15 toward Victorville, exiting at Bear Valley Cutoff (east); or via the Antelope Valley Fwy. to Pearblossom Hwy (138), then Hwy. 18 to the intersection with Hwy. 15, right (south) to Bear Valley Cutoff, then east to the Nature Center. Meet at the Center at 9:00 a.m. Leader: Ruth Lohr. 851-4782.

SUNDAY, MAY 30—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. This trip is also full. Note the departure details listed for May 16, above. Leader: Shumway Suffel. 797-2965.

THURSDAY, JUNE 3—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

THURSDAY, JUNE 3—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. The party will spend about 4 hours on the island to search for late migrants. The *Paisano* departs from the Channel Islands National Monument Pier at the Ventura Marina at 5:30 a.m. and returns at 6:00 p.m. You are requested to be at the boat 30 min. before departure time. Please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a check for \$18 per person, made out to L.A. Audubon Society, to: Mrs. Joann Gabbard, 1318 Euclid Avenue, Apt. #7, Santa Monica, Calif. 90404. Be sure to list a number where you can be reached in case of cancellation. No refunds accepted within 48 hours of departure. For further information, call Mrs. Gabbard at 395-1911 or Ed Navojosky at 938-9766 (evenings). Leader: Kimball Garrett. 479-8667.

TUESDAY, JUNE 8—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Everyone welcome. John and Barbara Hooper will present an illustrated program entitled, "Birding in Botswana." Barbara Hopper is Prof. of Biology at Pierce College and John Hopper is a Biology teacher in the L.A. School District. The Hoppers have travelled widely in South America, Africa, and the Arctic.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 12,13—Greenhorn Mountain. An overnight camping trip. Details in the next TANAGER. Leader: John MacDonald.

Introduction to Birdwatching

The Experimental College at UCLA is sponsoring a free series of lectures and field trips designed to acquaint the beginning birder with the fine points of the art. The 8-9 week course, which commenced April 16, meets from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the Westwood campus. Information on the day and location of classes can be obtained from the Exptl. College Office, 213-825-2727. The series, organized by Ron McClard, features guest lectures by top birders and ornithologists. In the past, speakers have included Arnold Small, Tom Howell, Jon Dunn, and Kimball Garrett. Among those scheduled for this season are Ed Navojosky and Lloyd Kiff.

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