

WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 43

September 1976

Number 1

The Rewards of Reptile-Watching

by Bill Turner



For those of us who like to bird, hike, camp, or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, reptile-watching can prove a source of endless fascination and enjoyment. Since, as with birds, some reptiles persist even in urban areas, the pursuit of the avocation need not require long distance travel—and although our local reptiles may not match our birds in colorfulness or diversity, the sixty or so species of snakes and lizards and the three species of turtles that reside in Southern California constitute a sufficiently large and varied group to qualify as intriguing objects for observation and for study. A knowledge of the identification and habits of the common reptiles can give the outdoor person a greater understanding of these interesting creatures, while contributing immensely to his overall appreciation of nature.

Probably the layman's prime interest is in poisonous reptiles—in order to know which ones to avoid. The only poisonous snakes native to California are the rattlesnakes, and the Gila Monster is the State's only poisonous lizard. There are no more than a handful of verified records of Gila Monsters in California (along the Arizona and Nevada borders), so one's chances of running across one in the Golden State are practically nil.

Rattlesnakes are easily identified by the rattles at the end of their tails. Even newborn rattlers have a "button," or beginning rattle, and they acquire a first segment when they shed their skins for the first time a week before birth. A new segment is added each time they shed—as often as four or five times per year.

Although six species of rattlers occur in Southern California, the most widespread form is the **Southern Pacific Rattlesnake**. This is the species found in the Santa Monica Mountains, and it occasionally ventures into foothill homeowners' yards in search of rats, mice, and gophers. It is usually a dark color (sometimes very black) with lighter, diamond-shaped markings, and it averages two-to-four feet in length. Although none of our poisonous snakes are aggressive, they will defend themselves if stepped on or otherwise threatened. However, if you watch



Should you tire of the reptiles close to home, you can tackle such tropical specialties as the Common Iguana.

where you put your hands and feet, and detour around any rattler you encounter, you should have nothing to fear.

The remainder of our Southern California snakes are harmless to humans. Due to its bright black, white, and red ringed markings, the non-venomous **Mountain Kingsnake** is often confused with the poisonous Coral Snake—which does not occur in California. The handsome two-to-three foot Mountain Kingsnake lives along streams in mountain canyons, where it feeds on mice, lizards, and other snakes, which it kills by constriction. Its larger and more widespread relative, the **California Kingsnake**, is also a constrictor, preying on a variety of small animals, including rattlers. Fortunately, kingsnakes are immune to rattlesnake venom.

Continued Overleaf

Probably the most often encountered snake is the ubiquitous **Gopher Snake**. Gopher snakes may be found from the desert through chaparral and grasslands to the high mountains. They are straw-colored snakes with dark brown or reddish-brown blotches on their backs, and they may reach a length of more than five feet. Like many other harmless snakes—such as the kingsnakes and the racers—Gopher Snakes, when disturbed, may hiss and vibrate their tails—a habit which can cause them to be mistaken for rattlers. From an economic point of view, Gopher Snakes are our most beneficial snakes, feeding on the hordes of rodents which plunder man's crops.

In our area, if you should startle a snake along a stream and it retreats into the water, the chances are it's a **Garter Snake**. These are small (two-to-three foot) dark snakes with either two or three stripes along the sides and down the back. They feed primarily on cold-blooded prey such as fish, frogs, earthworms, and salamanders.

Also found in an aquatic habitat is the **Western Pond Turtle**, a species much reduced in numbers now due to destruction of wetlands in the State. Identification is easy since the only other aquatic turtle in California is the **Spiny Softshell**, which has a flat, leathery shell. The Spiny Softshell occurs only along the Colorado River, while the hard-shelled Western Pond Turtle ranges west of the desert areas. It is thoroughly aquatic and can be observed sunning itself on logs and mudflats.

The small brownish lizards you see scurrying in the brush when you are walking are likely to be either **Western Fence Lizards** or **Side-blotched Lizards**. The Side-blotched Lizard is so named because of the bluish or black patch on the side behind the front leg. The Fence Lizard has blotches all over, and has rough, keeled scales. Also, Side-blotched Lizards stay near the ground, while Fence Lizards will climb the sides of buildings, logs, fence posts, and trees. Male Fence Lizards have bright blue throats and belly patches, and when a rival male invades another male's territory, the defender will flatten his sides and bob up and down, exposing his colorful throat and belly in an effort to discourage the invader. If the bobbing doesn't work, a real fight may ensue. The male uses a similar ritual when courting a female, and in fact his recognition of her as a female depends on her behavior—that is, her standing her ground and not running off or bobbing as a rival male would. Much of this interesting behavior can be observed at a brush or woodpile in the spring, when Fence Lizards are mating.

Other common lizards include the **Alligator Lizard**, a slender lizard with short legs and a long tail, with large scales and a fold of skin along each side of the body. These lizards commonly live in yards, even in built-up areas. They have strong jaws, and large adults can overpower baby mice. Another item in their diet is the venomous Black Widow Spider—so having one of these lizards in your yard is like having your own private biological pest control!

Horned Lizards (sometimes incorrectly referred to as horned "toads") are unmistakable, with their flattened bodies and sharp projecting scales. Occasionally, when Horned Lizards are seized, they have been known to expel blood from the sides of their eyes to discourage their attackers. Although Horned Lizards are commonly kept as pets, they usually are short-lived in captivity, since their diet demands a plentiful supply of live ants.

All of the reptiles discussed so far are found in chaparral and woodland habitats in and around Los Angeles. Some of these same species also range into the desert, along with a host of other species, such as the Desert Iguana, Zebra-tailed Lizard, Fringe-toed Lizard, Leopard Lizard, and Chuckwalla (among the lizards); plus the Glossy Snake, Lyre Snake, Night Snake, Sand Snake, and Sidewinder (among the snakes).

Space does not permit a comprehensive discussion of all our Southern California species, but there are several excellent books for those interested in further information. *A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians* (part of the Peterson Series) by Robert C. Stebbins, is the best reference for identifying western reptiles (and amphibians) and it contains brief natural history data about most forms. Stebbins' older work, *Amphibians and Reptiles of Western North America*, published in 1954, treats the animals' natural history in somewhat more detail.

Interest in reptiles is growing. The State Legislature has recognized this fact by designating the **Desert Tortoise** the California State reptile. Although protected by law, these reptiles are commonly kept as pets, since they are more responsive to their owners than are other reptiles. In the wild, desert tortoises dig burrows up to thirty feet in length, in which to spend the winter and hot hours of the summer days. The sex of tortoises can be determined by looking at their lower shell or plastron: males have a concave plastron while females have a more nearly flat one.

Unlike mammals, reptiles do not have a constant body temperature, and their temperature fluctuates with that of their surroundings. Prolonged exposure to the hot summer sun soon proves fatal, and therefore during summer many reptiles (particularly snakes) become nocturnal. Consequently, the best time of year to see our Southern California reptiles is during the spring. Most of our species are breeding then, and diurnal reptile activity is at its peak.

As with other wild animals, reptiles generally are found near suitable cover—such as rocks or brush piles, which provide them with a retreat from enemies. Frequently they are found underneath things—and a standard procedure for the reptile enthusiast is to peer under logs, old boards, sheets of tin and tarpaper. Searching along the edge of habitats is usually more productive than going through unbroken woods or fields, for it is frequently in a clearing in the forest, or where a meadow meets the trees, that reptiles (and other animals too) are found. Cruising along paved roads at night is another good way of seeing reptiles, especially the desert species—for the road surface retains the day's heat, and is thus attractive to reptiles seeking to regulate their body temperatures. It is an exciting game on a good night to try to distinguish the fan belt "snakes" and the orange peel "lizards" from the real thing!

An encounter with our local reptile fauna may begin with almost any excursion into the wilds—but for those who would like some guidance, L.A. Audubon is planning to schedule a few field trips into prime reptile country next spring, to introduce beginners to the joys and satisfactions of reptile-watching. 🐸

Bill Turner was formerly curator of reptiles at the Los Angeles Zoo. Recently he assumed the post of Conservation Chairman for L.A. Audubon.

Dorothy Dimsdale

The Voyage of the Paisano

I think I've graduated! I'm a birder! There is no other possible explanation why I would be excited about boarding a boat at 5 a.m. in order to see *pelagic* birds. There I was with 47 others, *looking forward* to eight hours on a rough and cold sea, with only a short stop at Santa Barbara Island to search for vagrant migrants.

Kimball Garrett was the leader of the group, and the boat was swarming with expert birders. Someone pointed out Guy McCaskie (the Maharishi of birding). I edged in, and in order to hear every word he said, I stood close behind him. I hoped he knew the old rule about not spitting into the wind.

The *Paisano* was barely out of the harbor when a voice from somewhere down by my knees called, "Black-legged Kittiwakes and Sooty Shearwaters!" I looked down and there was a small girl, Marilyn Myers, spotting birds and calling them out with all the authority of a seasoned birder. She didn't know Guy McCaskie from Henry Kissinger, so she felt free to tell him which birds were flying by. He seemed delighted and later when Marilyn had gone below decks he raced after her to make sure she saw a Skua—unusual in these waters.

Knowing nothing about any of the birds, I stood, pencil poised, taking down all observations. It was at this point that I got two unique birds: the White-faced Fulmar, and the Big-footed Shearwater.

Ed Navojosky, who has managed to overlook many of the unforgivable birding gaffs I have made, was at the stern throwing chum (fish bait) for the gulls, when two Franklins joined the screaming Westerns. Ed gave a creditable imitation of a windmill, frantically hurling the chum into the air so that I could get a really good look. The shore was far behind us now, and before long we had spotted a Red-throated Loon, Pomarine Jaeger, two Skuas, Black and Ashy Petrels, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Pigeon Guillemots!

Such high-power birding can prove exhausting, and as we neared land I realized I was ravenous. As I glumly prodded the unappetizing mound of food I had brought, a gentle voice whispered in my ear, "Would you care for a glass of wine?" I looked up, and there, braced against the wind, was Barry Clark, brandishing a gallon of red wine and several glasses. Terry Clark was handing out sourdough bread and cutting cheese on a cheese board. Things were looking up!

On the island one is faced with a climb designed to induce cardiac arrest, and once at the top one wonders if the effort was worth it. A panoramic view of *nothing* greets you. No water, and only sparse vegetation. A Burrowing Owl stood half-heartedly on a rock. I think it was as glad to see us as we were to see it. Otherwise there were only resident Horned Larks and Meadowlarks. After searching diligently for four hours, we found a lone Rose-breasted Grosbeak—our only vagrant migrant. A colony of sea lions provided the most delightful acrobatics, but as they don't have wings, I couldn't list them.

Hot and sticky, we trudged back to the landing area to rejoin those who were fleet of foot and had long since combed the island from end to end. Having quickly concluded that the day was a wash-out for vagrants, the big



Woodcut by Paul Landacre

birders were now engaged in an intense game of bridge—while a curious Xantus' Murrelet, nesting nearby under a slab of wood, watched their every move.

Somehow the wind seemed stronger and the waves much choppier on the way back, and I was glad to note that the prayers to my seagoing ancestors to watch over my stomach had been heeded. A Common Jaeger flew low over the boat, Sabine's Gulls soared overhead, and two obligingly sat on the water close in—as did an Arctic Tern.

The wind having loosened my tongue and my reserve, I abandoned my ploy of shiftily dodging about behind Guy McCaskie, and was now casually perched nearby—when suddenly he said, "What is that?"

It was not that he didn't know, of course, but rather that he was trying, in his way, to help me. Panic stricken, I raised my binoculars to my eyes, and praying that I would be somewhere near the mark, I blurted out in a high-pitched, nervous voice, "Is it a loon?" It was! An Arctic Loon, and another life bird for me. I was so overcome, I went down into the hatch for a dry cracker.

By six p.m. we were all rather tired, but, ever hopeful, we still gazed out to sea. Along the Ventura coast Kim Garrett leaped from his seat and cried, "Ancient Murrelet!"—at which point a styrofoam box top blew up and hit him on the head. For a moment he thought it was a reprimand from "on High," (it's unusual for this bird to be so close to land). But fortunately, others glimpsed the bird as well, and confirmed the call.

When at last we docked at the marina, I was more than ready to slump into the car and hurry home. But it was not to be. I had a flat tire. Before I could voice my despair, however, two gallant men had jacked up the car and changed the tire. To my amazement, one of them was Guy McCaskie! (I mention this in case any of our 3,000 members should find themselves in a similar fix. Guy does a quick, efficient job, and I recommend him without reserve.)

Several hours later, still feeling the pitch and roll of the waves beneath my feet, I poured over the field guides, searching for details on the White-faced Fulmar and the Big-footed Shearwater. It was then that I became aware of one or two points. Either I need a hearing aid, or Don Roberson should not drive non-stop for seven hours from San Francisco in order to go on a pelagic trip. It affects his enunciation. The birds were, of course, a *light-phased* Fulmar, and a *Pink-footed* Shearwater. Perhaps on my part one less glass of wine would be in order. 🍷

President's Message

A new season begins for Los Angeles Audubon. Shorebirds are back, fall migrants are passing through, all is well after the summer doldrums. The prospect of new and exciting programs at Plummer Park whets the appetite. Field trips beckon. And the unceasing struggle to preserve and protect the natural order calls the faithful into battle.

We've come of age as a conservation organization these past few years. The victory at Whittier Narrows and Legg Lake in establishing the New Lakes habitat was an astonishing accomplishment. In the world of movers and shakers the Los Angeles Audubon Society is now a force to be reckoned with. We are deluged with requests for opinions and input on new projects of environmental importance. And we want to rise to these new expectations—but to do so we need your help. We have a small cadre of willing volunteers who attend hearings, research the necessary facts for our "input," write letters. But to do a better job we need more hands and minds.

There is a crying need for scientific expertise. Resource inventories are requested for places like the Century Ranch, Malibu Lagoon, Baldwin Hills, Ballona Creek. Sometimes it seems as if there must be three Tom Howells (UCLA) making biological surveys, serving on citizens' committees, testifying at hearings. Are there more faculty members and graduate students out there willing to help with the work? Your reward will be the knowledge that you preserved a chunk of natural beauty—and perhaps an outdoor schoolroom for your classes.

Is there a lawyer in the house? A financial adviser? Have we teachers (retired or otherwise) with free time or daring ideas, who would like to share their ecological enthusiasm with school kids?

We hasten to say you don't have to be an expert to do your bit. In Audubon House we have the only permanent headquarters building of any Southern California chapter. And we have the only nature-oriented book store on the west coast and maybe west of the Mississippi. This means that to out-of-town birders and to the general public with bird inquiries, we are the most available resource in town. It takes lots of people to staff the House: to answer the phone, help with mailings, typing, filing, keeping records, working in the library and the bookstore. Our phones are busy with fascinating (and sometimes hilarious) requests for advice and assistance and wisdom. People drift in just to see our Historical Monument—the oldest house in Hollywood. Groups of children come in for tours of the bird displays. It can be fun. And if you have no special skills, you might pick up a few. To see things happen and to feel a part of it all can be most exhilarating.

It is an unfortunate truism but a fact of life that every organization is run by a handful of activists. But how about two handfuls? If you have a little time and energy to spare, give us a call at 876-0202. That's how it all begins.

—Sandy Wohlgemuth



Jean Brandt

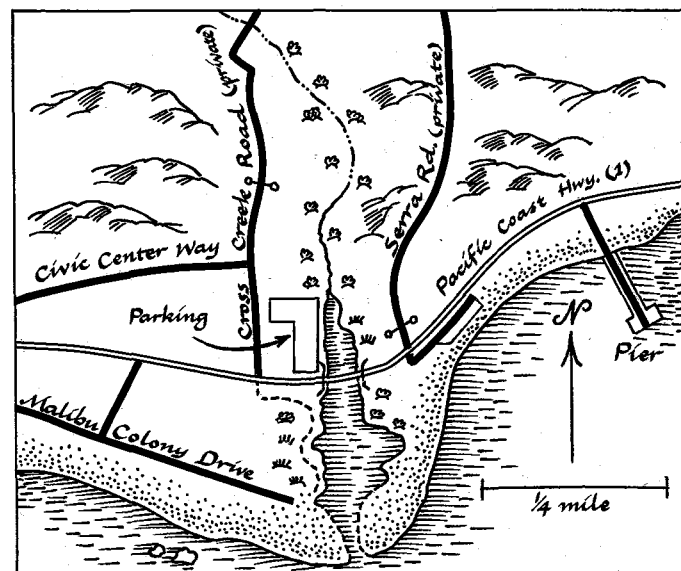
BIRDING at Malibu

Over 200 species of birds have been recorded at the Malibu lagoon, beach, pier, and creek areas in the last ten years, and an annual total of about 175 species is normal. Each fall the migration of waterfowl and shorebirds is spectacular at Malibu, and rare or unusual birds are often found at any time of the year. Park your car near the shopping center and walk. If you have never been here before you will be astonished at the varied habitats close by: coastal waters, offshore rocks, beach, a tidal estuary, a salt water marsh, riparian woodlands, and a fresh water stream.

Brown Pelicans and cormorants are usually resting on the raft off the end of the pier, and sea ducks, loons, and grebes are common in winter. (A Red-necked Grebe was found in Dec. '75, and a King Eider in Nov. '73.) From the pier, walk west along the beach, where you may find Snowy Plovers. (A Piping Plover was with the Snowys, winter '73-'74.)

You will soon reach the world famous Malibu Lagoon, the only tidal estuary left between Ventura and Orange Counties, and host to tens of thousands of migrating land, shore, and water birds. Again, fall and winter are best here, but even summer often presents the unexpected: a Magnificent Frigatebird overhead, or a pair of Red Phalaropes near the shore. The lagoon is a year-round classroom, regularly used by thousands of ornithologists, biologists, botanists, ecologists, college students, nature lovers, and both primary and secondary school field trips. Ten species of gulls (including Thayer's) winter here, and I suggest you check the annual Christmas Counts for a list of the shorebirds to be found. Be sure to bird both sides of the lagoon (there are openings in the fence on both sides, on the south side of Pacific Coast Hwy.), and check the rocks offshore to the west of the channel for Wandering Tattlers and Black Oystercatchers.

The salt marsh west of the lagoon was at one time the breeding ground of such birds as the Least Tern, and more recently the Savannah Sparrow (*P.s. beldingi*) (both are endangered species). Due to human interference, the marsh is no longer a living habitat, and no bird currently nests



Based on a map by Glenn Cunningham

there—but there is still hope that proper management of the lagoon will restore it.

Upstream you'll find mudflats (a few Solitary, Pectoral, and Baird's Sandpipers are spotted here every fall), willow thickets (excellent for spring warblers), and all along the banks of the stream there are riparian woodlands. (The roads here are all private but the homeowners have never discouraged *walking* birdwatchers.) Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks are resident, as are four species of wrens and other typical Southern California riparian species.

Food, supplies, gasoline, and telephones are found in the shopping center. *Good birding!* ♡

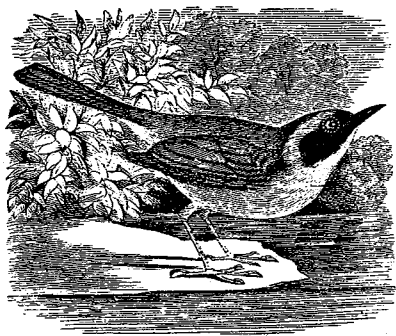
CONSERVATION

The Future of Malibu Lagoon

The past ten years have seen a shocking change in Malibu Lagoon. Due to human ignorance, mismanagement, and public over-usage, the marsh is dry and the lagoon a garbage dump of waste and occasional sewage, potentially disease-ridden. For once, however, there is hope for restoration and preservation of a once natural and ever-changing tidal estuary. The California State Department of Parks and Recreation, which owns most of the areas involved, is for the first time in its history asking for public participation in the planning of a State Park. Monthly meetings are being held, and we are encouraged to attend. Our Conservation Committee, along with a coalition of other interested groups, expects to be active at these meetings. Dates and locations will be announced on the Bird Tape (874-1318). Join us—lend your support. Now, more than ever, the time is right for a concerted effort to save one of our finest wild areas.

Good News for Malibu Canyon

As a result of a determined campaign by members of the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and other local environmental groups, the State Parks and Recreation Department voted July 9th to classify the Hope and Reagan properties as a State Park, to be included within the new Malibu Creek State Park—formerly the Century Ranch. The new park abounds in interesting birds, as those who attended the June 20th LAAS picnic can attest. Since public facilities are not yet installed, the area is still formally closed, but birders may hike there on *weekends* between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., provided the fire danger is low. Before setting out, check with the friendly park Rangers, at 991-1827. To reach the park, take Las Virgenes Rd. south from the Ventura Fwy. and turn right just beyond Mulholland Hwy.



Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

The Races of the Solitary Vireo

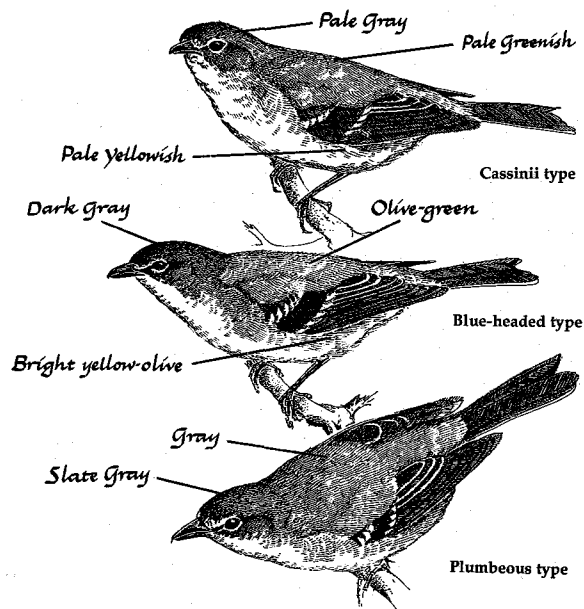


illustration by Mary Ellen Percy

The Solitary Vireo has three distinct races that occur in California. The "**Cassinii**" type is the one that is most frequently encountered breeding in mountain ranges throughout most of the State. While relatively uncommon, it can still be found in the mixed pine-oak habitat along the lower slopes and canyons of our local mountains. During migration this race is scarce, though widespread, occurring throughout the region (except in the fall along the coast, where it is rare). While the "**Cassinii**" type is rare in winter, it is the race that is most likely to be encountered in the coastal lowlands. The form is typified by a *pale gray* head, a *pale greenish* wash on the back, and a *pale yellowish* wash along the flanks.

The "**Plumbeous**" type breeds in the Rocky Mountains and in the mountains of the northeastern portion of our region, nesting in the pinyon-juniper belt (often with a few firs and yellow pines intermixed). It can also be found in the drier, eastern portions of the San Bernardino Mountains. In migration a few of this type are regularly encountered at the desert oases in the eastern part of the State, only occasionally wandering to the coast. A few have also been found during the winter in southeastern California. This race is *largely gray*, lacking the greenish tones on the back, and only occasionally having a tinge of yellow along the flanks. The head is of a darker, *slaty-gray* coloration, and as a result the white throat and spectacles seem to contrast more sharply.

The "**Blue-headed**" race is strictly an eastern vagrant, having been recorded only four times in Southern California—but it is probably overlooked to some degree, since most observers are not familiar with it. The race has the *dark slaty-gray* head like the "**Plumbeous**," prominently setting off the white throat and spectacles—but unlike the "**Plumbeous**" it has an *olive-green* back. The sides and flanks are also a *bright yellowish-olive* color, being darker in tone than the sides and flanks of the "**Cassinii**." The much darker head and the darker olive back should also help differentiate it from the "**Cassinii**" type. ♡

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



September may not be the end of summer for Southern Californians—who well know that it can be the hottest, driest month of this hot, dry

year—but for the birds it is definitely *autumn*. Nesting is long past, family responsibilities are fulfilled, and migration is underway. For birders, this is the most challenging time of the year, for not only will many rare birds be seen, but many birds, both rare and not-so-rare, will be in dull non-breeding plumage, quite different from the bright colors displayed in the spring (and in the field guides). This is a birder's post-graduate course in field identification—and an opportunity to sharpen up one's skills for the strays and vagrants which turn up in October.

In this season it's well to remember, when in the field with an unfamiliar—or rare—bird in view, to write a complete description first—then do your bookwork later. This procedure encourages a thorough study of each different bird, including details which may prove diagnostic later. In addition it minimizes the discrepancies between what we remember (or think we remember) about the bird, and what the books say about the species we think it might be (or worse yet: *hope* it might be).

Despite predictions, early summer (June and July) turned out to be quite exciting, and the focus of much of the excitement was the Salton Sea. The **Roseate Spoonbill**, found on May 5 (or possibly another one), stayed on well into July, but proved difficult to relocate. California's second **White-rumped Sandpiper** was found and photographed at the south end of the Sea on June 16 by Jon Dunn and Paul Lehman, but was not seen again. On the previous weekend, Guy McCaskie had studied three **Arctic Terns** in the same area—an amazing time and place for these strictly pelagic migrants. By early July there were at least 85 **Black Skimmers**, and 100 **Gull-billed Terns** (most of which were nesting). Then came many **Laughing Gulls**, **Wood Storks**, **yellow-legged Western Gulls**, 35 **Brown Pelicans** (mostly immatures), and at least one **Little Blue Heron**.

Finding the brightest star in this galaxy of Salton Sea specialties fell to the indefatigable Guy McCaskie. The bird was an adult **White Ibis** (So. Calif.'s first since 1935), found on July 10 at the north end of the Sea. Many LAAS members dared the neck-deep wade down to the mouth of the Whitewater River, the soft mud of the Sea itself, and the struggle against the current on the way upstream—and most were rewarded with a new California bird. While searching unsuccessfully for the Ibis on July 11, Hal Baxter and Bruce Broadbooks were partially consoled by the sight of two **Frigatebirds** overhead. Nearby at Dos Palmas Springs, Bob McKernan discovered a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** (rare and irregular here) on July 14. With such unprecedented numbers of species and individuals wandering north from the Gulf of California this summer, it seems probable that Boobies, both Blue-foots and Browns, will arrive in numbers again this August, as they did in 1972.

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).

The Sea had no monopoly on rare birds, however. **Magnificent Frigatebirds** were widely reported from Santa Barbara to San Diego: Rincon Island (oil drilling) on June 25, and Anacapa Island on June 28 (both Ed Navojosky); Point Dume, Malibu on June 28 (Dorothy Dimsdale and Ruth Lohr); another at Malibu on July 14 (Libby Robinson); off Huntington Beach on July 14, and at Newport Bay, July 29 (Marion and Russ Wilson); two over Laguna Beach on July 5 (Jerry Johnson); one near Carpinteria on July 21 (Ken Landis); plus several sightings near San Diego. Since Frigatebirds are conspicuous and wide-ranging, the same individuals may be involved in several of these sightings.

Before finding two **Condors** above the Edmonston Pumping Station on June 18, Howard Einspahr of Birmingham, Alabama visited Mt. Pinos, where he flushed an adult **Goshawk** (description on file) at the end of Fir Ridge Rd. Further observation of Goshawks in summer should be documented, as they are not known to nest south of the Sierras.

Four **Black Rails** in the Carrizo Marsh of the Anza Borrego State Park, on June 27, were the first records for the area (Van Remsen). Four **Black Oystercatchers** were seen again on the isolated breakwater at Marina del Rey on July 4. Nesting seems probable. The first report of **Baird's Sandpipers** comes from the south end of the Salton Sea, where two were discovered on July 17 (G. McC.). Two early **Knots**, still in breeding plumage, were on the barrier bar at McGrath Park on July 22 (Jon Dunn). Nearby, a second-year **Laughing Gull** (very rare except at the Sea) and six species of terns were sighted. The presence of many **Black-legged Kittiwakes** has been noted by many observers along the coast this summer. This follows a large flight last winter, and almost without exception, the ones that remained are immatures, as would be expected.

Two June records of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** in the Great Basin are of interest, since the birds are seldom seen now away from the Colorado River. One was in the Amargosa Canyon (Jan Tarble), and another at Furnace Creek Ranch (Van Remsen). **Chimney Swifts** are now known to be regular but uncommon in our area. They nested at Davis and Ft. Bragg in Northern California last summer, but not down south until this July, when John Borneman, Audubon's Cordor Warden, reported two pairs in Ventura, one of which was nesting in the chimney of a sympathetic neighbor. The "bird of the year," however, was the **Violet-crowned Hummingbird** which appeared at the Bill Haggards' well-populated feeders above Santa Paula on July 6. This is the first record for California and completely unexpected, as they are not common even in southeastern Arizona. It was seen until month's end by many LAAS members, and we all owe thanks to the Haggards for their warm hospitality.

Tom and Fran White's photographs of a **Green Jay** at Clear Creek Station, off the Angeles Forest road, confirmed their identification, but the bird was most likely an escapee. (The species is often kept in collections; it is basically non-migratory; and there are no stepping-stone records between Mexico or south Texas and here).

While not unknown along the coast, **Bendire's Thrashers** must be considered vagrants here, as their normal migration from our high deserts takes them south to Sonora and Sinaloa. The one found by Isobel Ludlom (and confirmed by Jon Dunn) at the South Coast Botanical Gardens on July 30 represents our earliest coastal record.

More spectacular was a male **Scarlet Tanager** in breeding plumage, found by a group of youngsters on a bird walk in the same Botanical Gardens on June 19, and reported to Eric Brooks. The bird lingered until June 23, and was enjoyed by many birders.

This is a busy time for birders, with so many habitats to be covered. The Salton Sea may still turn up a few surprises, and the coastal lagoons, mudflats, marshes, and grassy ponds will soon host thousands of shorebirds—including a few Baird's, Pectoral and Solitary Sandpipers, and hopefully a Ruff or a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. The pelagic trips scheduled for early fall will yield many life birds for new or out-of-state birders, with Red-billed Tropicbirds, Least Storm-petrels, Long-tailed Jaegers, and Craveri's Murrelets as possibilities. Finally, there are the passerine migrants and vagrants to fill every spare moment of our time. In this very dry year they will concentrate where there is water, particularly in the coastal canyons and wooded promontories. Eastern and Tropical Kingbirds should be looked for in September, as should rare vireos and warblers in the tamarisks and fennel along the coast. Look in the drier areas, too, for unusual seedeaters. Particularly recommended this fall is the area between the sewer ponds and the Santa Clara River at McGrath State Park, where there is abundant water, a good growth of fennel, and a fresh water stream with grassy edges for unusual shorebirds. The north side of the Los Angeles River channel east of Balboa Blvd. in the Sepulveda Recreation Area is good for seedeaters because of the excellent grass seed crop in the channel. Pt. Fermin Park in San Pedro usually attracts vagrants because of its lush vegetation and its strategic position along the coast. But go early before the crowds arrive.

Seen a Bald Eagle in California? If so, please send your name and address, the location, date, and circumstances of the sighting to Stephen Waste, School of Natural Resources, Humboldt State University, P.O. Box 937, Arcata, California 95521.



WESTERN Tanager

EDITOR Barry Clark

Published 10 times a year, monthly except January and July, by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90049

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BOOKS

BIRDS OF THE ANTARCTIC AND SUB-ANTARCTIC by George E. Watson. American Geophysical Union, 1975. (\$15.00).

One by one, field guides are appearing for the world's remote regions. This volume, by the curator of birds for the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, covers all waters, lands, and islands south of 55° S., plus a few small, isolated islands at lower latitudes in the south Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It is one of the Antarctic Research Series and meets their high scientific and publications standards.

Few species have adapted to the harsh environment of the Antarctic, although individual birds are numerous. No more than 70 species are classed as residents or breeding migrants; another 60 occur as vagrants. Conspicuous are the seven species of penguins, five albatrosses, 31 other Procellariiformes (fulmars, petrels, and shearwaters), and five terns.

Discouraging elements are the intense cold, severe storms, permafrost, and sparse vegetation. On the plus side are the abundant food resources in the cold waters (including seemingly endless supplies of krill), the constant summer daylight (permitting continuous food gathering), and the absence of four-footed predators.

The 130 species accounts provide descriptions, information on bird biology, illustrations, and distribution maps. Illustrations are by Bob Hines, Audio-Visual Chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and include 11 color plates. An exhaustive bibliography is appended.

Be prepared for the metric system and rather technical language in the discussions of oceanography and geology.

—Glenn Cunningham

HAWAII'S BIRDS, compiled and published by the Hawaii Audubon Society, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1975 (\$3.00).

This "Third Printing" actually is a revised Second Edition of the excellent guide first published in 1967 and reprinted in 1971. The revision is the work of Robert J. Shallenberger and other members of the Society. The original size and format are retained. More than 100 species and subspecies are illustrated, most of them in color. For each species, the illustration (usually a color photograph) and descriptive text are on the same or facing pages. A new feature is the use of prominent letter symbols to identify birds officially on the endangered list, as well as other endemic, indigenous and foreign species.

Many of the excellent color photographs in the original edition have been replaced with even better ones. Two new color plates by Douglas Pratt included eleven recently introduced species not treated in the earlier printings. Another illustration of Pratt's is a superb full-page painting of the Po'o Uli, the new genus and species of Hawaiian honeycreeper discovered three years ago on Maui. Two new pages of line drawings by Ronald Walker are excellent aids to field identification of ducks, pheasants, and francolins, including the Black Francolin recently established on the U.S. mainland.

Back-of-the-book features include a tabular summary of the status of the endemic birds, list of introduced species of uncertain status and migratory visitors, selected references, suggestions for birding in Hawaii, and a set of attractive maps of each island showing places to bird.

No one should try to bird in Hawaii without this booklet. And for the home reference shelf anywhere, it provides unquestionably the best and most up-to-date brief guide to Hawaii's unique avifauna. The excellent quality of the printing and color reproduction make this one of the best bargains in paperbacks to be found.

—Robert L. Pyle

Books reviewed in this column are available at Audubon House (876-0202, open 10-3, Mon.-Fri.). Mail or phone orders are welcome. Before sending check, call first to determine tax and postage.

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.

Calendar Editor: Gale Gifford

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Everyone welcome. **Herb Clarke** will show 100 of his bird slides and invite the audience to join him in an informal game of identification from multiple choices. Your score is only known to you, so don't worry about being a beginner. The birds range from the common varieties to a few "zingers" guaranteed to challenge the experts.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. The party will land on the island to search for fall vagrants. The *Paisano* will depart from the Channel Islands National Monument Pier in the Ventura Marina at 5:30 a.m. and return about 7:00 p.m. You are requested to be at the boat 30 min. before departure time. Night watch will be provided for those wishing to sleep on board Saturday evening. This will be on first-come basis. Price for the trip is \$18 per person. Please send checks made out to the L. A. Audubon Society, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and your telephone number to Phil Sayre, Apt. 306, 660 S. Garfield, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. No refunds accepted within 48 hours of departure. To get to the Marina, take Hwy. 101 north to Victoria Avenue exit in Ventura, and follow the Channel Islands National Monument signs to the Marina. Leader: Arnold Small, 275-8823.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 18, 19—Bridal Veil Campground, Yosemite National Park. All top birding spots will be visited. Some of the birds to be looked for are the Great Gray Owl, Blue Grouse, Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, and Red Crossbills. Those who wish to camp should contact Jean Brandt by Sunday, September 12, in order for sites to be reserved. She will also have information on other lodgings for those not wishing to camp. Leader: Jean Brandt, 788-5188.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18—Whittier Narrows Nature Center. This is a particularly interesting birding experience for beginners and newcomers to the Los Angeles area. The walking is easy on good trails through the Center, and along the New Lakes. Shore birds and ducks should be in, and all the local birds including the Cardinal will be looked for. Take the Pomona Fwy. east (#60) to Santa Anita offramp, turn south (right) on Santa Anita to Durfee Ave., turn east (left) to the Nature Center. Meet at the Center at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Nature Center Biologist David Foster, 791-3084.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26—McGrath State Beach and Santa Clara River Estuary. Take Hwy. 101 north and exit at Victoria Ave. in Ventura. Turn left and pass under the Fwy. to Olivas Park Drive. Turn right to the red light at Harbor Blvd. Turn left and park by the bridge. Meet at 8:00 a.m. by the settling ponds at the north end of the bridge. This is one of our best birding areas for shore birds, ducks, and gulls. Pelagic birds such as Parasitic Jaegers, Common Murres, and Sooty Shearwaters are sometimes seen. The walk is easy for any age. Leader: Nancy Spear, 372-7653.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4—Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach. This will be the 5th year for this popular Monday trip. A high count of 112 species was recorded in 1974. The day will begin at Malibu Lagoon at 8:00 a.m. Meet in the parking lot behind the market. The group will bird there, and upstream to Cross Creek Rd. Next stop, Big Sycamore Canyon, then Mugu Lagoon, and in the afternoon, McGrath State Beach. Anyone who can't spend the entire day is welcome to join the group for as long as they wish. Lunch will probably be at Big Sycamore. This trip is a fine birding experience, with easy walking all the way. Leader: Ed Navojosky, 938-8766.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. **Paul Howard**, Western Regional Representative of National Audubon, recently returned from a fact-finding trip to Alaska, will present a widely acclaimed Audubon film on the ecological problems facing the Arctic state.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17—Pelagic Trip to Anacapa Island. The *Paisano* will cruise the north shore of the island, round the tip to look for the American Oystercatcher, make a wide loop out to sea, and go along Santa Cruz Island. The boat will leave the National Monument Pier in the Ventura Marina at 7:00 a.m. and return about 6:00 p.m. You are requested to be at the dock 30 min. before departure. Take warm clothing, as it can be quite cool. See the Sept. 12 announcement for additional details on price and reservation procedure. Leader: Bruce Broadbooks, 670-8210.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12—Pelagic Trip to Anacapa Island. The *Paisano* will depart at 8:00 a.m. and return at 6:00 p.m. Details are identical to those for October 17.

Need a Ride?

Sylvia Kramer has volunteered to establish a ride-sharing service for those who need a ride or are willing to share a ride to LAAS field trips. Those interested should leave their numbers with Sylvia (886-2687). She'll put riders and drivers in touch on a shared-expense basis.

New Books at Audubon House

A Guide to Bird-Watching in Europe, Ferguson-Lees, 1975 (\$9.95).
A Guide to the Birds of Panama, Ridgely, 1976 (\$15.00).
Checklist of the Birds of Texas (\$4.00).
Enjoying Birds in Michigan (\$2.50).
Where to Go Birdwatching in Canada (\$3.95).
Field Checklist of the Birds of Kenya and Tanzania (\$0.75).
Field Checklist of the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago (\$0.50).
Birds of the Cape Cod National Seashore (\$1.50).
Where to Find Birds in Nova Scotia (\$2.25).
Checklist of the Birds of Guatemala (\$0.75).
Birder's Guide to Georgia (\$2.50).

Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318

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