# WESTERN TANAGER

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# *Cherchez Les Oiseaux*

*by Guy Commeau*

This year Louise and I went to France—to see my family, to eat good food, and to watch the birds.

My love for birds goes back as far as I can remember, and since my earliest years, spring was always something special to me. I used to spend hours watching such birds as Blue Tits, Robins, Blackbirds, and Magpies building their nests—but I had no field guide, no binoculars, and no one with whom to share my joy, so this was as far as I was to go. For this reason, the United States was and still is a special place for me, since it was here, seven years ago, that I met my wife. Because Louise and I shared a love for nature, we joined the Audubon Society, and then the American Birding Association—and, as a result, our lives were to change completely. Thanks to the many friends we made through these two organizations we learned more about birds than we ever thought was possible. And now, at last, with Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* and the *Hamlyn guide* by Bertel Bruun, we were ready for our first birding trip to France.

A sizable portion of the bird population of France consists of summer visitors—species wintering further south—though there also are a considerable number of winter visitors and migrants. Very few species are endemic. In the Mediterranean region, Blackcaps, buntings, and Bee-eaters are common. Terns nest in colonies along the south coast, and in the Camargue, stilts, flamingos, egrets, and night herons breed. Storks are seen especially in Alsace, while eagles, falcons, and vultures haunt the mountains (though the Lammergeyer is found only in the Pyrenees). Wood Pigeons visit the country in summer, and pheasants have become common since their introduction from Asia. Red-legged Partridge are found in the south, and Hazel Hens dwell in the eastern forests. By the middle of this century, however, the Capercaillie had virtually disappeared from France.

Lapwings nest regularly in the country, and curlews and kites are common during migration. Woodcocks and larks are frequently seen, as well as Dunnocks, warblers, thrushes, tits, Magpies, Rooks, and other passerines—plus owls, buzzards, harriers, and waterfowl of various kinds.

*Birding is good along the backroads of France, where scrubby hedgerows and patches of woodland provide sanctuary for many small passerines.*

Along the coast there are numbers of Oystercatchers, gulls, and other sea birds, many of which are also found on the East coast of the U.S. Because of the former connection of the northern continents, most of the land bird families, and a few of the species, will be familiar to the American birder. But the majority of species to be seen are certain to be new.

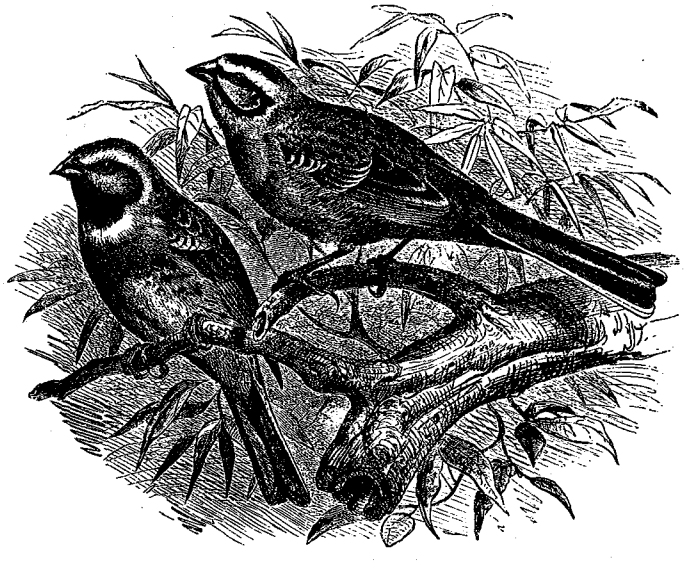
Our stay in France extended from July 5th to August 2nd. Unfortunately (for birding), I have a large family. My youngest brother came to pick us up at the new Charles de Gaulle Airport, north of Paris—one of the most modern we have seen. En route to my parents' home, in a suburb south of the city, my brother informed us that he had taken the week off, and we were free to go wherever we wished together. Louise was delighted with the invitation, especially since my brother, his wife, and his twelve year-old daughter all speak English.

Despite the nine-hour time lag, we awoke the next morning at 5 a.m., eager to begin our first day of birding in France. Just outside the house, the Blackbirds were breaking the morning silence with their loud, melodious warbling.

*Continued Overleaf*

These birds belong to the family of the American Robin, and the male is all black, with a bright orange-yellow bill and eye ring. Overhead, several flocks of Swifts were already pursuing the first meal of the day. Then I came upon a green bird, with large yellow wing- and tail-patches. According to the field guide, it was a Greenfinch—very common in open, cultivated country.

By 7 a.m., when we returned home for breakfast, we already had twelve birds on our list! The rest of the morning we spent in my father's garden—which has lots of fruit trees—and it was not long before we saw Collared Dove, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Song Thrush, and House Martin.



*The Cirl Bunting and the Rock Bunting are two of the colorful songbirds that reside year-round in France.*

Close to our home is a large park, which is private property, with two ponds and a mixed deciduous-coniferous woods. After a chat with the manager, Louise and I spent the remainder of the afternoon, plus the following day, birding in this special place. Our first bird here was a female Blackcap—whose identity was confirmed when the distinctively-marked male showed up. Wrens were very common amid the thick undergrowth (our "Winter Wren"—the only wren living in France). Then a bird whose call reminded us of our Flicker turned out to be a beautiful Green Woodpecker. It landed thirty feet from us, to feed on the ground—and it brought our list to 44. Watching the woodpecker, I suddenly felt sad, recalling all those years I spent at home, unaware of these beautiful birds!

Anyone visiting Versailles should stop *aux étangs de Saclay*—at Lake Saclay. We went there twice, on July 9th and July 31st. The most abundant bird on the lake is the Great Crested Grebe—in beautiful plumage at this season of the year. Also very common is the Little Bittern—close to our Least Bittern, but not at all shy. Along the edge of the lake, several Great Reed Warblers were feeding their young; and it is here that we found the only Nightingale of our entire trip. More French love songs and stories have been written about this bird than any other. Our two visits to the lake produced a total of 27 species, including 7 life birds.

After a few days of playing the tourist in Paris, we went on to Burgundy, 200 km south. Burgundy is well known throughout the world for its generous, full-bodied dry table wine, stronger in flavor, body, bouquet, and of deeper color than claret. But, for us, Burgundy meant birds, and in our two days there we added several new species to our list—including the Little Owl, Cirl Bunting, Chiffchaff, Ortolan Bunting, several warblers, and, best of all, two Stone Curlews.

Our next destination was Brittany, and our first birding stop was the Baie de Veys, the tidal estuary of the River Vire, on the eastern side of the Cherbourg Peninsula. Here, in the wet, open area, Yellow Wagtails and Whinchats were very common—and in the reed beds Reed Buntings were easily found.

Then we were on the road again, headed for Perros-Guirec, the nearest seaside resort to the Sept-Iles Bird Sanctuary. Boat trips tour the islands, starting from Trestraou Beach (9 a.m.-1 p.m., and 2 p.m.-6 p.m.). The Sept-Iles were declared a reserve in 1912. Lying only a few kilometers off the coast, they are visited by thousands of tourists—but very few birders. Landing is forbidden on Rouzic, Malban, and Cerf islands. These islands are not only the best place in France to find Puffins and Gannets, but they represent the southernmost breeding site of these two typical North Atlantic seabirds. Since the establishment of the reserve on Rouzic in 1939, Gannets have increased there from 2 to 4000 pairs. However, the black tide that resulted from the *Torrey Canyon* accident in 1967 killed thousands of these birds. The Puffins numbered about 6000 pairs in 1950, but they were reduced to only 400 in 1968.

Among the other species on the islands are Razorbills, guillemots, cormorants, and Kittiwakes. Storm-petrels breed, but are seldom seen, and Ravens nest on the cliffs. One pair of Fulmars came in 1960. By 1965 there were 11, and by 1970 there were 25.

The Cape Sizun Bird Sanctuary (in the Baie de Douarnenez) is the nesting ground of more than 400 pairs of Kittiwakes, and the Chough is resident. In the Gulf of Morbihan—the most important wildfowl area on the French Atlantic coast—we saw several White Wagtails, and the beautiful Hoopoe—perhaps the most exotic bird of our trip. Our last day of birding was at Lac de Grand Lieu, south of Loire, near Nantes. The lake comprises 22,240 acres of shallow water, with large areas covered by water lilies. Anyone birding there should go to the village of Passay, which has boats to rent. Our last two birds were found there—the Black Kite and the Sedge Warbler (very common along the edge of the lake).

On the entire trip we saw a total of 96 life birds, and in the month we were there I saw France in a way I had never seen it before. For me it was an unforgettable experience, and an opportunity to rediscover the country where I was born. Anyone who wishes to go birding in France should feel free to contact me. I'd be glad to give you all the information I can.

## The California Condor

# Year of Decision

*by John Borneman*

**Condor Naturalist, National Audubon Society**

Within the next few months a decision will be made that may affect the future of the California Condor—the decision whether or not to attempt captive propagation of the huge birds.

Throughout the sixties, composite sightings dropped in numbers, flock sizes diminished, and now traditional nesting areas are lacking in the few Condors that could still use them if they were so inclined. Recently, high concentrations of DDT were discovered in the tissue of a Condor found dead in the Tehachapi Mountains, and an analysis of egg shell fragments has revealed an alarming reduction in shell thickness. To top it all off, fewer than three Condors have been produced annually throughout the sixties and into the seventies.

Today the population stands at not more than fifty birds. Computer analyses using all available data show that for Condors to maintain their present level, a minimum of four, or as many as six or eight young birds must enter the population each year to replace birds that die from old age and accidents. Such a replacement rate now appears to be a biological impossibility, and extinction, therefore, seems inevitable, in spite of all our efforts to protect nesting and foraging habitats from disturbance and encroachment. Even assuming all of our dreams for protection and habitat acquisition could be fulfilled, the fate of the Condor looks bleak.

The decision of the Condor Recovery Team to propose captive propagation did not come easily or quickly. However, our responsibility as a Recovery Team dictates that we explore all methods of preserving the species. Captive propagation is one of these methods. Some have suggested that we are a little late in getting around to dealing with the issue; others say we are premature: wait until the population really gets lower. Still others say that we should, in effect, pull the plug on the Condor, abandoning all efforts aimed at preservation. To most of us, such a prospect is unthinkable.

Tremendous strides have been made in the successful introduction of raptors into the wild from captive stock, and over the past two years, Sanford Wilbur, Endangered Species Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has made extensive contacts with virtually everyone who has been involved with the trapping of Old and New World Vultures—researching the safety of various methods and the causes of death due to trapping.

For the sake of argument, then, let's assume that we were successful in trapping and breeding Condors in captivity. What are the guarantees that they could be introduced into the wild population? If they could, would they be accepted by the wild birds? And would they be able to successfully breed in their natural habitat?

There are no guarantees, and it appears that the answers to these questions will not be forthcoming until the experiment is tried.

*Roger Tory Peterson*

The Contingency Plan for Captive Propagation will be distributed soon, and public hearings will be held. A Condor Symposium will take place on October 23rd at the Marin County Civic Center in San Rafael and additional symposiums will be held by other Audubon Chapters. The opinions of our Audubon Chapters will probably be a major factor in shaping the decision that is to be made. It's a highly emotional issue that will be difficult to resolve, but it is my hope that Auduboners will take the time to study the proposal carefully, to ask questions, to constructively criticize, and to weigh the options.

In a recent letter to the Recovery Team, Roland Clement, Vice-President of National Audubon, observed that to try to put off the Condor's destiny is both arrogant and impossible..."but we have, as the dominant American civilization, insulted this bird's population so hard that we owe it a last-ditch effort to overcome debilities we have unwittingly and/or arrogantly imposed over the last century and more."

*A three-day field trip into the Condor range has been scheduled in conjunction with the San Rafael Condor Symposium. See the CALENDAR page for details.*

## The Condor Fund

Regardless of the outcome of the latest efforts to revitalize the Condor population, the Audubon Society remains committed to its program of rigorous protection. Last year our contributions helped to fund the acquisition of strategic parcels of land within the species' last major nesting area. And this year our help is needed again, to support the continuing efforts to protect the surviving population. An envelope for your tax-deductible contribution has been provided with this issue of the TANAGER.

**Priscilla Brodkin**

# The Saga of a New Birder

I am a new birder, or, for lack of a better label, a freshly-installed birder-by-marriage. I arrived at this blissful state three years ago in the month of May, at the height of the Spring Migration. The wedding took place on a Tuesday night to insure that we would make it to Morongo Valley for a weekend of birding—and, a week later, for my honeymoon, I found myself armed to the hilt with seasick pills and sunscreen, on my first pelagic trip.

Three hectic years passed, and at last, completely bitten by the birding "bug," I began to encounter some discouraging, yet predictable, setbacks—for my life list had ceased to grow. So this spring my husband and I set out in search of a few new birds to add to my list—birds he absolutely *guaranteed* I would see.

Our first objective was the Grasshopper Sparrow. Yet, after arising at the crack of dawn and enduring the usual multiple hardships of tired, aching legs, sunburn, and a definite lack of ladies' rooms in the field, I experienced the first pangs of defeat—for the Sparrow failed to show. My husband tried to console me with the suggestion that an Act of God (the cows had consumed the bird's habitat) was the problem this year. But nothing could save me from that sinking feeling when I heard his infamous words, "O.K., let's give up! Wait till next year."

The second bird on my list of "guarantees" was the Pygmy Owl. With renewed determination I set off again, following my husband down a precipitous trail into a canyon, where for what seemed like hours I paced back and forth in front of a grove of trees in which the owl was "sure" to be—only to hear once more those dreaded words, "Wait till next year."

Then, one night after work a week or so later, my husband took me to see a "guaranteed" Chimney Swift—or, at the very least, a group of Black Swifts. Sensing at last that my day had come, I went tripping merrily after him over the rocks, fearing all the while that I might stumble in my high heels. As things turned out, we had a lovely evening, picnicking beside a reservoir, but—you guessed it—there was not a swift in sight!

However, as the painful refrain of "Wait till next year" rang in my ears, I began to recall some of the birds I *had* seen this spring. For while I was missing my life birds, I *was* seeing the familiar ones, and enjoying them more than ever before: the mating of Kestrels against the mountainside, the Rufous Hummers courting among spring flowers, the Black-headed Grosbeaks butterflying, the fluffing of the white and blue feathers of the Blue Grosbeak on a telephone wire above my head, and the Vermilion Flycatcher fluttering brilliantly against a bright blue desert sky!

So I didn't add many new birds to my stubborn life list this spring, but I did catalogue some of the most beautiful bird pictures ever, in my mind's eye. And isn't that what birding is all about?

**Jean Brandt**

# BIRDING at the South Coast Botanic Garden

Thanks to the combined cooperation of concerned citizens, conscientious government, and nature itself, a unique botanic garden (and bird habitat) has been created out of a sanitary landfill on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. For some fifty years the area was the site of a diatomaceous earth mine, which, in 1956, was purchased by Los Angeles County to be used as a final resting place for the spoils of civilization. As the site filled, three feet of top soil was added, and from this sprang what is today one of the most natural and beautiful public gardens in Los Angeles.

Palos Verdes was once an island, and although it is now connected to the land mass, it remains biologically different from our usual coastal habitats. Chaparral birds such as Wrentits, titmice, bluebirds, and California Thrashers are virtually absent here, but such birds as California Quail, Brown Towhees, and Costa's, Allen's, and Anna's Hummingbirds are resident.

Since it is situated on a peninsula, the Botanic Garden is a natural place to find migrants, vagrants, and rare birds. 214 species have been seen there—most of these within the last five years.

As you enter the grounds you will walk through a meadow grass area, which in fall has hosted such birds as Bobolinks, Indigo Buntings, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and both Clay-colored and Swamp Sparrows. California Quail, Ring-necked Pheasants, and Meadowlarks nest here.

You soon come to the lake, which has waterfowl in season and gulls year round. A female Hooded Merganser wintered here in 1975-76. A stream lined with willows flows from the lake, and this is the best place to look for warblers during migration. An Eastern Phoebe was found here, as was this summer's rare bird, the Scarlet Tanager. The extremely rare Yellow-throated Warbler and the equally rare Goshawk were found in the dense "forest" of conifers above the stream.

Six species of hummingbirds are found in the gardens: Black-chins nest; Rufous are spring and fall migrants; Calliopes are often found during the first ten days of May;

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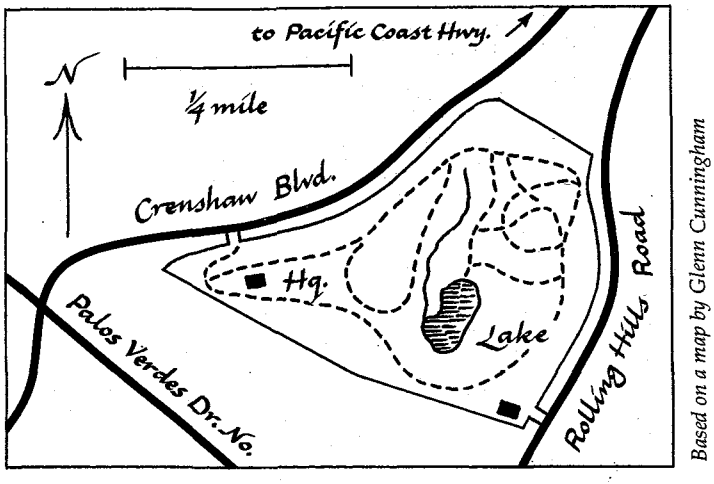


*Based on a map by Glenn Cunningham*

and Anna's, Allen's, and Costa's are residents. There is one confirmed hybrid Allen's/Anna's adult male that is also resident.

The garden management is very cooperative, adding and maintaining habitats for birds, and they have always encouraged birders. Eric Brooks, an LAAS member, is the head tour guide, and is usually available to answer any and all questions about birds in the area. The main entrance to the parking lot and headquarters is off Crenshaw Blvd. The gardens are open from 9-5 every day of the year except Christmas, but you may enter as early as 7:30 a.m. by parking outside the Rolling Hills Rd. entrance and walking in. There is no entrance fee, but donations are encouraged. The South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation sponsors an active volunteer and docent program, and membership is invited. *Good birding!*

## CONSERVATION

### Encouraging News

Armand Sariana, Superintendent of Gardens at the South Coast Botanic Gardens, recently confirmed that the annual discing of meadow grasses at the park would be delayed until after November—in order to assure optimal feeding conditions for migrating birds. According to Shirley Wells, whose advice on the matter was sought by Sariana, the decision represents something of a breakthrough, for it suggests that the staff at the gardens now fully appreciates the importance of the area to birds—and to birders.

### To Save A Marsh

During August, Governor Brown signed a $5.58 million bill to purchase ten coastal wetland areas, including San Elijo and Batiquitos Lagoons in San Diego County, and **Madrona Marsh** in Torrance. LAAS members will recall that this tiny marsh, isolated in the center of a densely urbanized area, was the scene of a long and valiant battle waged by the irrepressible *Friends of Madrona Marsh*. A grant from our Conservation Fund as well as contributions from many of our members aided the Friends in their ultimately victorious campaign. As a result of the efforts of groups such as theirs—and ours—the tide of wetlands destruction in California may at last have begun to turn.

### New Board Members

Headquarters Chairman **Ann Skipper** has taken over the duties of Executive Secretary from Dorothy Dimsdale, who has retired from the post after years of heroic service. Everyone at LAAS will miss her. Career plans have required Bill Turner to resign as Conservation Chairman, and his position has been taken by **Peter Skipper. Claudia Heller** has replaced Mary Turner as Social Chairman, and **Nancy Spear** is our new Christmas Count Chairman.

## Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

# Pectoral and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers

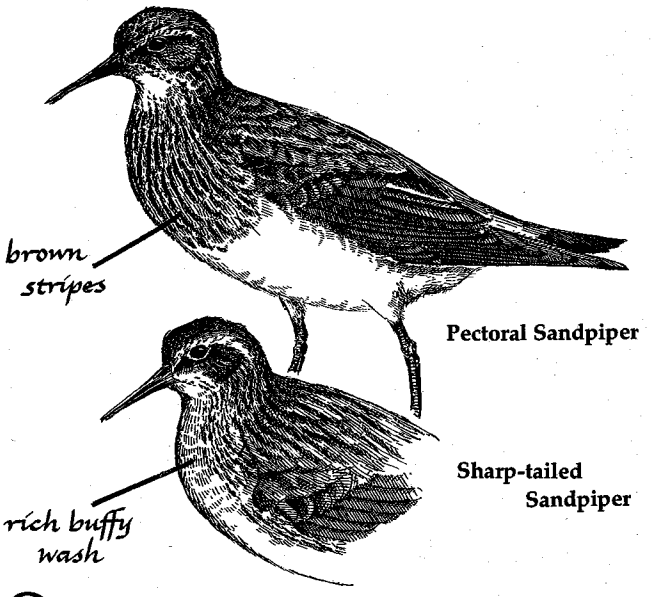


*illustration by Mary Ellen Pereyra*

One of the scarcer species of shorebirds to be found in the fall along our coast is the **Pectoral Sandpiper.** Arriving somewhat later than most of our other shorebirds (late August), they peak in late September, with small numbers present through October. While generally uncommon, occasional concentrations of over a dozen individuals have been found. The grassy edges and mudflats of our fresh or brackish-water pools are the preferred habitats of this species. Though they tend to avoid most of the salt water environs of our coastal lagoons, they often turn up in the dense *Salicornia* marshes. The Pectoral is decidely rarer inland, although a few are still recorded every fall. In spring this species is extremely rare (less than ten records), and there is no reliable record of a bird wintering in Southern California.

The Pectoral is considerably larger than our smaller "peeps," appearing almost like a miniature Golden Plover in flight. The species has very long wings, however, and tends to fly with a slower, floppier style. In this respect the Pectoral resembles the Baird's Sandpiper, though it is somewhat larger, and the longer neck gives it less of a horizontal posture relative to the ground. This mark is accentuated when the Pectoral is agitated. Then it stretches its neck into a stiff upright position—a behavior unique to the species. While the back of the immature Baird's is distinctively marked with horizontal buffy edgings, the Pectoral is vertically streaked with brown and buff. The most distinctive mark on the Pectoral, however, is the pattern of *thin vertical brown stripes* on the breast, *sharply cut off* from the white belly. The call note of the Pectoral, a guttural *churr,* is also very distinctive.

An Asiatic species that closely resembles the Pectoral is the **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.** While very rare in Southern California (only three records), the bird is more regular farther north—and in the Vancouver area it approaches "uncommon" status. All of the records from North America (excluding Alaska) are for fall immatures, and almost all of the records are from the immediate vicinity of the coast.

*Continued on pg. 7*

## Shumway Suffel

# BIRDS of the Season

October should produce the highest species count of any month of the year. A scattering of summer residents will still be with us; many migrants will continue to pass through; and one by one our winter residents will be arriving to claim their winter territories. In past Octobers about 35 species of shorebirds, 17 flycatchers, 30 warblers, and 47 seedeaters (from Cardinals to Longspurs) have been recorded in Southern California. Of course, no one person will see all of these species, but knowledgeable birders who spend their time in likely places will certainly find their share.

Interest again centered on the Salton Sea during August, despite the fact that the predicted Boobies had not arrived by Sept. 1st. The Salton Sea specialties mentioned last month stayed on, with the **Roseate Spoonbill** still difficult to find as it moved from place to place. The **White Ibis** was last reported at the south end of the Sea, after a month's stay at the north end. Although scoters are rare at the Sea, and only one—a very rare Black—was reported earlier in the summer, all three species were found there in mid-August: three **Surf Scoters** (Jon Dunn), a **White-winged Scoter** (Elizabeth Copper), and a **Black Scoter** (Guy McCaskie). The occurrence of the latter two species is particularly remarkable because White-wings were rare, and Blacks virtually unreported along our coast last winter.

**Ospreys** were widely sighted in August (as they often are at this time of year)—one at West Pond, on the Colorado River, on Aug. 2 (Dan Guthrie)—possibly resident there; one newly arrived at Upper Newport Bay on Aug. 10 (Doug Morton); and a third at the New Lakes, Whittier Narrows, on Aug. 21 (Dave Foster). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** returned to the South Coast Botanic Gardens for the third year on Aug. 21 (Eric Brooks), and another was at Morongo Valley (Doug Wilson), where it seems to have replaced the resident Red-tails. A visiting birder, Dan Boone (not from Kentucky, so far as I know) reports a pair of **Zone-tailed Hawks** in Cedar Canyon, S.Bd. Co., on Aug. 10. This is about 25 miles west of Ft. Piute, where a single Zone-tail was seen last spring.

The first **Solitary Sandpiper** was found by John Menke at a grassy pond in the Sepulveda Recreation Area on Aug. 4. It was later joined by a second bird, and one or both stayed until at least Sept. 2nd. **Lesser Yellowlegs** (a migrant with us) were in the same pond, and at several other spots with similar habitat. Two **Baird's Sandpipers** were found near the lagoon at McGrath State Park, Ventura, on Aug. 8 (Terry and Barry Clark), and six were there on Aug. 27. The barrier bar was breached on Aug. 21, and the lagoon drained, leaving a vast area of shallow ponds and mudflats, literally swarming with shorebirds and terns feasting on the now-accessible crustacea and small fish. Mainly of avicultural interest was the presence on the nearby sewer ponds of a pair of **Rosy-billed Pochards,** a South American duck with a stunning rosy-red bill and handsome black, gray, and white plumage.

**Chimney Swifts** were sighted over the Whittier Narrows New Lakes on Aug. 5 (Ed Navojosky), and Aug. 21 (Mike San Miguel). California's first **Violet-crowned Hummingbird** remained at the Bill Haggards' Santa Paula feeder through early September, and on Sept. 1st, Terry and Barry Clark turned up a **Bendire's Thrasher**—the second coastal record this season—in the ball park at Malibu Lagoon. The bird was still there the following day, but could not be found by Sept. 4.

Bob McKernan's periodic visits to the desert oases produced two "Eastern" birds among the early "Western" migrants at Desert Center, Riv. Co., on Aug. 20—an **Eastern Kingbird,** and a male **Orchard Oriole.** Even earlier migrants were an **Olive-sided Flycatcher,** and a **Warbling Vireo** at the Brock Ranch, Imp. Co., on Aug. 3. Betty Jenner, long-time TANAGER editor, enjoyed two early **Nashville Warblers** on Aug. 10 in a neighbor's tree in downtown Los Angeles. A few days earlier, Ed N., Phil Sayre, and George Ledec studied an adult **Virginia's Warbler** above the Green Valley Camp in the S. Bd. Mts. **Lucy's Warblers** have not been reported from Morongo Valley this year—a distressing situation, as they have nested there for many years. They were, however, still nesting along the Colorado River and in the oases of Inyo County. The earliest "Eastern" warbler (though probably not Eastern at all, since one race nests in British Columbia and may be a regular migrant west of the Rockies) ws a **Northern Waterthrush**—found in Tapia Park by Curt Wohlgemuth on Aug. 29. The next day his father, Sandy, found a *real* Easterner—a **Blackburnian Warbler**—at the same place. **Blue Grosbeaks** and **Lazuli Buntings** were common along the river channel in the Sepulveda Rec. Area, but the only **Indigo Bunting** reported was a full plumaged male found by Gus Gonzales in the S.C. Botanic Gardens on Aug. 22.

On Aug. 28, a hardy group of adventurous birders made the midnight hike up to the fir forest on 8,000 ft. Clark Mt. (just west of the Nevada border, between Baker and Las Vegas)—but the rewards were few compared to their spring ascent. A good assortment of western flycatchers and warblers was on hand, but the best birds were a female **Hepatic Tanager** and a **Broad-tailed Hummingbird.** Not discouraged by a sleepless night and a disappointing morning, the birders pushed on to Death Valley. At Furnace Creek Ranch they found a **Red-shouldered Hawk** (far out of its normal coastal range), a **Northern Parula Warbler** (very rare in the fall), two **Northern Waterthrushes,** an **American Redstart,** two **Bobolinks,** and a **Lark Bunting.** The best bird of the trip was a male **Cape May Warbler** at Scotty's Castle—a fitting reward for an exhausting weekend.

The Aug. 18th pelagic trip to Anacapa Island and points beyond started as a dull affair, with the sole redeeming features a juvenile **Pigeon Guillemot** near Ventura and the **American (Pied) Oystercatcher,** which has been seen on Anacapa for the last twelve years. Then the *Paisano* headed out to sea, and though the quantity of pelagic birds did not improve, the quality certainly did. First there were a few

**Xantus' Murrelets,** and a very few **Sooty Shearwaters.** And then a small, contrasty shearwater with three Pink-foots proved to be an early **New Zealand!** Next came another murrelet, strikingly black and white, with the black cap extending well below the eye and the dark upperparts going down to the water line. There was a difference of opinion on the color of the underwings, but it was eventually agreed that the hue was like that of a Sooty Shearwater—making the bird a **Craveri's Murrelet** (a life bird for our guests from Texas and for many others aboard). But the best was yet to come. Suddenly a "mystery petrel" flew across our bow, displaying a large white patch on the rump and tail. Then the bird took off northwesterly, with the *Paisano* in hot pursuit. We never did catch up with the bird, but we were close enough to observe its manner of flight. In addition we noticed it "patter" on the water, which reinforced our belief that it was a rare **Wilson's Petrel.** Then came second thoughts, and counsel from Guy McCaskie, who speculated that it might be a **Galapagos Petrel**—because of the large amount of white on the tail, and the swallow-like flight, well above the water. California's only record of a Galapagos Petrel was an exhausted bird found in a Carmel garden on Jan 21, 1969. At the moment, identification is unresolved—and it may remain so.

On the return trip excellent views were obtained of **Arctic Terns,** with explanatory comments from Van Remsen, our local expert. Two more New Zealands were sighted, and a **Peregrine Falcon** was enjoyed as it coursed over Santa Cruz Island.

## FIELD NOTES/*Cont'd from pg. 5*

The Sharp-tailed closely resembles the Pectoral, and is often found in association with it. The best mark on the immature is the *rich buffy wash* across the breast and along the sides. The breast is also largely *unstreaked* (though there are a few thin streaks along the *sides* of the breast). The upperparts of the immature Sharp-tailed are very bright, appearing quite rusty, with a few bright yellowish-orange vertical streaks. The cap is also a bright rusty color. While most Pectorals are not quite this bright on the upperparts, a few fall immatures can have the rusty cap and the richly patterned back. For this reason the underparts are the only reliable diagnostic mark for field identification.

WESTERN TANAGER

**EDITOR** Barry Clark

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Audubon membership (local and national) is $15 per year (individual), $18 (family), or $8.50 (student), including AUDUBON Magazine, and THE WESTERN TANAGER. To join, make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, and send them to Audubon House. Subscriptions to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are $3.50 per year (Third Class), or $6.00 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

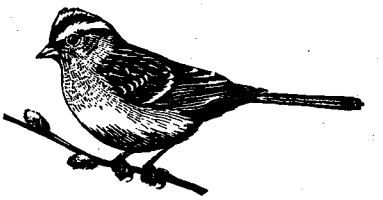
### Easy Birding in Puerto Vallarta

The beauty of distant lands is that their common birds are new to the tourist. My wife Margie and I spent an indolent week on the west coast of Mexico in the middle of May, and although we hardly stirred from our hotel, we nevertheless saw many birds that fascinated us.

Through the center of Puerto Vallarta a stream makes its way to the sea, which it meets in a tiny lagoon. Nestled against this intersection is the Molino de Agua Hotel, and from the balcony of Room B-2 we overlooked the beach and part of the lagoon, wherein lively Green Herons, Snowy Egrets, Olivaceous Cormorants, and a Louisiana Heron fished. On the grounds were several tall mango trees loaded with ripe fruit, and also with countless Great-tailed Grackles that filled the air with their noisy cries (and the staff of the hotel with ire).

By far the most impressive sight was the Magnificent Frigatebirds that hung in the sky like pterodactyls, or harrassed the Heermann's and Laughing Gulls. Next was a "V" of twenty-four Wood Storks that flew over the town one afternoon. At closer range we saw White-collared Seedeaters, Ruddy Ground Doves, Mangrove Swallows, and a Tropical Kingbird. More familiar were a dozen Least Terns who spent an afternoon working the surf right in front of our balcony, and the Brown Pelicans who sailed by—not to mention a Spotted Sandpiper and a pair of Yellow Warblers I thought should have been somewhere up north.

Every trip has its tantalizing "maybes." Was that a Long-tailed Hermit, and were those really Lilac-crowned Parrots? We'll have to go back sometime to double-check. *–Jack Winter*



## The Basics of Birding

A workshop offered by Los Angeles Audubon to acquaint beginners with the secrets of better birding.
The first class will meet at Audubon House,
**8:00 p.m., November 1st.**
Special field trips will be arranged, and additional classes scheduled at the convenience of class members.
The program is FREE, and all that is required is a field guide and a pair of binoculars.
The class is limited to 20 persons. To register, call Audubon House between 10-3, Mon.-Fri.
For additional information, call program coordinator, Ron McClard, at 450-4925.

# 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**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2—BIG SYCAMORE CANYON.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the entrance to Pt. Mugu State Park, five miles west of the Ventura Co. line on U.S. #1. This is one of the best spots along the coast for migrants and Eastern vagrants. Park outside the gate. Leader: Otto Widman, 221-8973.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7—EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING,** 8:00 p.m. Audubon House.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9—TIA JUANA RIVERBOTTOM.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. Take Rte. 5 south through San Diego, and exit at Coronado St. Go straight ahead, crossing Coronado, and continue straight on Hollister for about one mile. Meet near the school on the left side. Leader: Bob Von Bergen, 714-566-8773.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 11—MALIBU LAGOON AND 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, at the Lagoon, 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, 938-9766.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12—EVENING MEETING,** 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Everyone Welcome. **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 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. Price of the trip is $18 per person. Please send checks made out to L.A. Audubon Society, with a self-addressed stamped envelope, your telephone number, and the names and addresses of all persons in your party to Phil Sayre, Apt. 306, 660 So. Garfield, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. No refunds accepted within 48 hours of departure. To get to the Marina, take Hwy. 101 north to Victoria Ave. exit in Ventura, and follow the Channel Islands National Monument signs to the Marina. Leader: Bruce Broadbooks, 670-8210.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23—UPPER NEWPORT BAY.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. on the Back Bay Drive. Take the San Diego Fwy. (405) south to Jamboree Blvd. offramp. Go west on Jamboree to East Bluff Drive, right on East Bluff to Back Bay. Look for the group of birders along the way. This is the highest tide of the month (6.8'). High tide is at 8:27 a.m. and 9:33 p.m. Early arrivals can watch it come in. This will be the best day in October to see the rails—with the Black Rail a remote possibility. All wintering shorebirds and waterfowl should be present in numbers at this time. Leader: Freeman Tatum, 454-8839.

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29-31—The Sespe Condor Sanctuary.** A special field trip into Condor country, arranged in conjunction with the Oct. 23rd California Condor Symposium in San Rafael. Campsites are available at McGill Campground, at the foot of Mt. Pinos, on a first-come basis, Friday and Satruday nights. To obtain a detailed itinerary and map, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Condor Field Trip, National Audubon Society, 376-Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, Calif. 94920. Leader: John Borneman, 805-644-3789.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4—EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING,** 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9—EVENING MEETING,** 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. UCLA Ornithologist, **Lee Jones,** will present an illustrated program on the **Natural History of the Channel Islands.** Dr. Jones recently completed his Ph.D. under Prof. T. R. Howell, and has been studying the bird populations and the general ecology of the islands.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13—PELAGIC TRIP TO ANACAPA ISLAND.** The *Paisano* will depart at 8:00 a.m. and return at 6:00 p.m. Be sure to wear warm clothing. The American Oystercatcher will be looked for, and the boat will then head out to sea as far as time will permit, to search for pelagics. Details concerning price and directions are the same as those for Oct. 17.

### Share a Ride

We can all save energy and expense, while making our field trips more enjoyable, by sharing a ride with our fellow birders. If you're going on any of the field trips listed above, and have space in your car—or if you require a ride—please call **Sylvia Kramer,** at 886-9446. She'll put riders and drivers in touch on a shared-expense basis.

### Beginning Birdwatching

The Santa Monica YWCA is offering a five week course for novice birders, commencing Oct. 19th. Classes will be held on consecutive Tuesday evenings, with five Sunday field trips to be scheduled. LAAS Program Chairman, **Ron McClard** is the instructor, and enrollment is limited to twenty. The cost is $24 per person. For additional information, contact the YWCA office, at (213) 399-7711.

*Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318*

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90046

Mrs. Don Suter 5/73
2614 Rinconia Dr.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90068

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