

WESTERN TANAGER

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Paul Landacre

Discovering the Santa Monica Mountains

by Steve Maskel



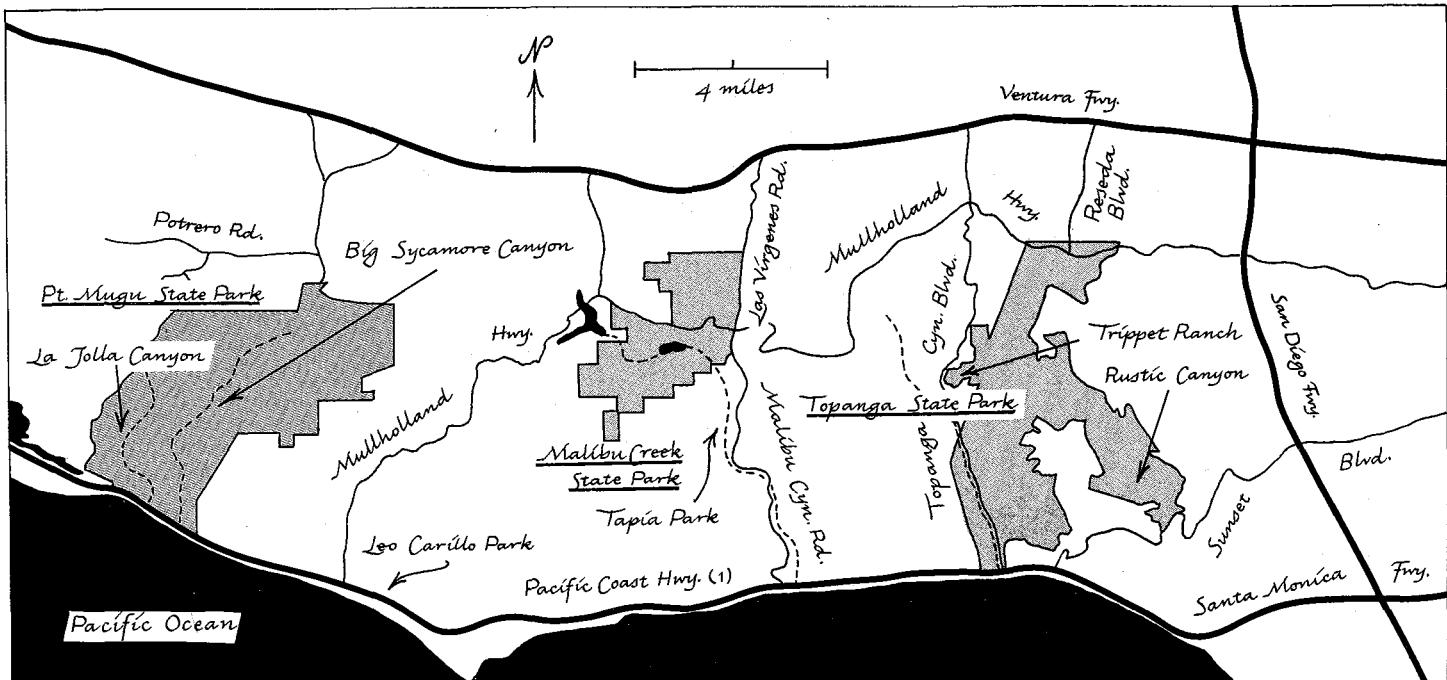
hen compared with the Sierra Nevada or even our local San Gabriels, the Santa Monica Mountains may, at first glance, seem insignificant. To the hundreds of thousands of motorists who commute daily through the Cahuenga or Sepulveda passes, or skirt the Santa Monicas on inland U.S. 101 or coastal California 1, the chaparral-covered slopes, cut by freeways, fire roads, and hillside housing hardly appear worthy of closer inspection. Perhaps it is for this reason that the mountain range remains, for most Angelenos, a relatively ignored and unexplored region.

My own ignorance of these mountains was awesome. But when last year my wife and I rented a Santa Monica apartment, we began, little by little, to take a possessory interest in the low range of hills, visible, on a clear day, directly to the north of us. And, over the past months, I've watched my initial apathy for the Santa Monicas grow into an ever-deepening appreciation and respect.

Fortunately for these mountains, their future was not dependent upon my own limited awareness. For, as I soon discovered, a lively public debate has for many years centered around alternative plans, both public and private, for their development. It was last summer, however, when the critical moment was reached—for it was then that a decision came due on the fate of three newly-acquired State Parks—Topanga, Malibu Creek, and Point Mugu. How would these areas be developed? And, more pointedly, what type of development did the public really want? The resolution of these questions, it became evident, could have considerable bearing on the philosophy of development for public lands in the years to come.

To their credit, the staff of the State Parks and Recreation Department vigorously solicited public opinion on the direction development should take. Numerous public hearings were held Statewide, letters were encouraged, and a special Sacramento telephone number was activated, to stimulate even more response. Then, in September of last year, at a meeting in Watts, the State unveiled three preliminary Alternative Plans, ranging from the most

Continued Overleaf



intensive to the least intensive uses of the land. The reaction of those in attendance was immediate and unequivocal.

Almost without exception, representatives of various community groups went on record in support of minimal park development and maximum preservation of the natural character of the parks. The conservation/preservation *tour de force*, exemplified by the Watts meeting, was reflected in the final tally of letters received by the State. Out of 723 letters received, a total of 711 supported minimal development.

To the delight of conservationists and to the dismay of the trail bike and ORV lobby, the final development plan, approved in January of this year, called for low intensity use, stressing the maintenance or enhancement of existing natural features. An important local environmental battle had been won—a battle from which, ultimately, all of us would emerge as beneficiaries.

Arrayed from east to west, Topanga, Malibu Creek, and Point Mugu State Parks differ dramatically from one another—for each, in its way, is unique, with its own mixture of vegetation types—and hence, its own complement of birds and animals. In addition, the diversity of plant communities within the parks—particularly in evidence at Malibu Creek—insures a wide diversity of birds and other wild life.

Topanga State Park covers 7,830 rugged acres of chaparral and oak savanna in the region east of Topanga Boulevard, including within its boundaries the old Trippet Ranch in Topanga Canyon, plus Will Rogers State Historical Park in Pacific Palisades. Plans call for development of a Los Angeles County-operated native plant arboretum (Los Liones), and an educational farm for school children in Rustic Canyon, with Park Headquarters at Trippet Ranch—where there will also be an American Indian Education Center.

Since periodic fires are a natural part of the chaparral ecosystem, park policy will be to let them burn until they threaten housing. Existing fire breaks will be allowed to

revegetate, and construction scarring will be kept to a minimum. The final plan includes 26 miles of trails, overnight camping and lodging, picnicking facilities, and five nature interpretive centers.

The predominance here of chaparral vegetation, with a small amount of "soft chaparral" and riparian woodland, may limit the enthusiasm of some avid birders for the park; but for those who are interested in gaining a perspective on the birds of the chaparral community, there could hardly be a better place to begin. On a brief visit there in late January, I found Wrentits, Loggerhead Shrikes, Bushtits, Rufous-sided Towhees, Brown Towhees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, California Thrashers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Red-tailed Hawks, a Common Flicker, and a Kestrel.

Malibu Creek State Park, located just west of Malibu Canyon Road near Mulholland Highway, was created through State acquisition of Century Ranch—recently a location site for Hollywood films. Many sets or their damaged remains are located throughout the park; but because of the potential hazard these present, they will be dismantled and removed before the area is opened to extensive public use.

From a botanical point-of-view, Malibu Creek State Park boasts an impressive mosaic of plant communities—including oak woodland, grassland, soft and hard chaparral, riparian woodland, and fresh-water marsh. A small stand of Valley Oak grows in Liberty Canyon—at the southernmost limit of its range—plus a small population of Giant Chain Fern, better known as a garden ornamental.

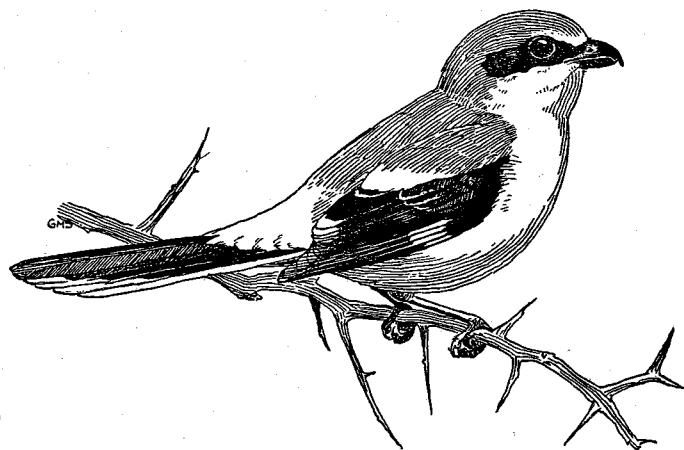
Development calls for strict protection of Malibu Creek and the rich natural biota that it supports. To encourage public appreciation of the area, six major interpretive facilities are projected, with 22 miles of trails and 210 picnic tables. Family camps and tent camps are also planned—to be integrated unobtrusively into the natural setting—as well as a hostel and equestrian center.

Vallarte Adobe, part of the former Hope Ranch, will become an interpretive center, emphasizing the Spanish period in California's history; and raptor enthusiasts will be pleased with plans for an Animal Rehabilitation and Education Center, stressing the treatment and later repatriation of injured birds to the wild. An additional education center, devoted to ecological concepts, will be constructed on the Hunter Ranch, another subunit of the park.

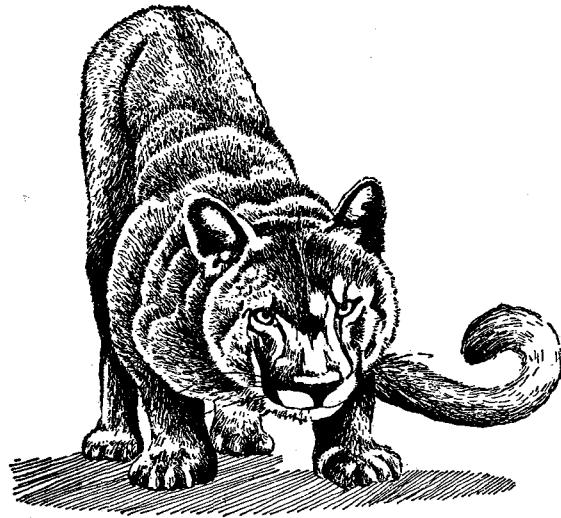
The unusually diverse mix of vegetation types within the 3,750 acres of Malibu Creek State Park insures excellent birding. The list of raptor species is particularly impressive: Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Kestrel, Marsh Hawk, and White-tailed Kite. Extensive open grasslands with many rodent species (particularly the ubiquitous California Ground Squirrel) support a large predator population—including such larger species as Mountain Lion, Bobcat, Gray Fox, Ring-tailed Cat, and the ever-present Coyote.

Moving further up the coastline to the western limits of the Santa Monica Mountains, we come to **Point Mugu State Park**. The park consists of a 3.8 mile stretch of sandy beach and rocky headland, plus 13,360 acres of inland coastal valleys surrounded by extensive mountainous terrain. The largest of these inland valleys, Big Sycamore Canyon, runs northward through the length of the park, providing easy access to the interior. Soft chaparral predominates, featuring various species of sage (*Salvia* spp), California Buckwheat, and Lemonade Berry. Riparian vegetation is also well developed, particularly along Big Sycamore Canyon by the park entrance on Pacific Coast Highway.

The 1973 Potrero fire swept through the park, incinerating most of the existing vegetation, and today post-fire succession is very much in evidence, with an abundance of herbaceous species not usually found in mature soft chaparral. A recent botanic survey listed more than 150 plant species within the park, representing many families. Of particular significance is the small disjunct community of Central Valley Prairie native grasses, located in the arid La Jolla Valley (reached via a steep trail across from Mugu Lagoon). The abundance of forage in the park lures herbivorous animals and their predators in larger numbers than before the Potrero fire—and probably no local area is so productive for the birder. On a good morning in late April or early May, it is possible to find as many as 60 species of birds in Big Sycamore and La Jolla Canyons alone.



George Miksch Sutton



Development plans for the area call for restoration of all biotic communities within the park to their pristine state, with a minimum of physical disturbance during the construction phase of the project. Sixty miles of trails, four interpretive centers, one hostel, and four small trail camps are projected. Picnicking facilities (125 tables), family camps (330), hike-in camps (12), and an equestrian center will all be linked by an interpretive tram.

On a chilly winter morning, fortified with cups of hot tea and coffee, my wife and I set out to bird Point Mugu State Park. Before long, the sounds of Pacific Coast Highway were replaced by the soft chirps of Yellow-rumped Warblers, and the loud trills of Wrentits, as we made our way up Big Sycamore Canyon. After four leisurely hours of birding, our list had grown to include four species of woodpeckers (Nuttall's, Acorn, Downy, and Hairy), four raptors (Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Kestrel, and Marsh Hawk), plus many other birds that were new to us. It was also a good morning for wrens—for the woods and adjacent cliffs hid four different species—Canyon, Winter, House, and Bewick's.

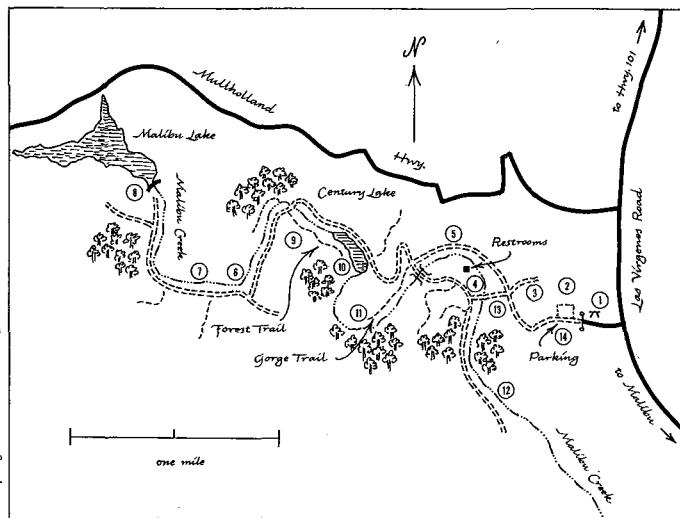
Whether you are a beginning birder or intent upon setting a new Big Day record, these new State Parks offer something special. And if you have not already discovered them, I recommend that you promptly clear your calendar, and arrange to do some exploring this spring. If you should prefer expert guidance on your trip, make a point of attending the LAAS Field Trip to Malibu Creek State Park, on April 3rd.

While the new parks represent a laudable example of the attempt to balance natural values with the requirements of a restless urban population, it as yet remains to be seen how well the plans will work. To a considerable extent, the success of the experiment depends upon the attitude of the public, and its willingness to approach these areas with an appreciation for and sensitivity to wildlife and wilderness resources. Throughout the development period—likely to take several years—we can continue to influence the shape and direction of the projects, by contacting the Regional Office of the State Parks and Recreation Dept. whenever we have a complaint, or a word of praise. Those interested should get in touch with Department Director, Dick Felty, State Parks and Recreation Dept., 128 Plaza Street, Los Angeles, Calif., 213-620-3342. 

Jean Brandt

BIRDING at Malibu Creek

Map by Glenn Cunningham



Our newest State Park, less than an hour's drive from downtown Los Angeles, is a relatively unspoiled area, rich in history, and host to a wealth of resident and migratory birds. The land has had a dramatic past. Radiocarbon dating indicates that the site of the park has been occupied since 5,000 B.C., serving, during the past 2,000 years, as home to the Chumash Indians. The 19th Century saw the eviction of the Chumash, however, and in recent years the site has seen service as a country club, and, since the 1950's, as a location for such Hollywood extravaganzas as "Sand Pebbles," "M. A. S. H.," and "Planet of the Apes."

Although the park has been birded regularly on recent Malibu Christmas Counts, surveys at other times of the year have been infrequent at best, and migrant information is as yet unavailable. So, in a sense, you are on your own; and whatever you turn up could prove to be exciting. However, if you choose not to go exploring alone, join the LAAS Field Trip on April 3rd. It should be a fine introduction to this great birding area.

The entrance to the central portion of the park is 3/4 of a mile south of the intersection of Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Hwy., reached via a short road to the west, marked "Century Ranch." Free maps of the park are available at the gate. At the present time, access is possible only on Saturdays and Sundays, from 8:00 a.m. to dusk, but plans call for the park to be open daily in the near future. The best birding areas are indicated on the accompanying map, starting with the north side of Malibu Creek, and concluding on the south. Since this is a walking park, be sure to carry water with you. Round trip is about five miles, but most of the birds should have been found by the time you reach Century Lake, cutting off half the hike. Golden Eagles and White-throated Swifts nest on the high cliffs, so remember to watch the sky now and then as you bird your way along.

1. **The Picnic Area**, in the oak grove: the location of the annual LAAS Summer Picnic.

2. **Concrete Ponds**: good for ducks, including Ruddys and Buffleheads.

3. **Hills with oak trees**: Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks are usually found here.

4. **Grassy fields**: look for Western Bluebirds and interesting sparrows. The only restrooms in the park are here.

5. **High Road**: watch for California Quail and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Barn Owls roost in the "Sand Pebbles" set.

6. **Sycamore grove**: take the short trail; look for woodpeckers and Winter Wrens (in winter).

7. **Streambed**: check along the creek for the Hermit Thrush, California Thrasher, and possible warblers.

8. **Malibu Lake Dam**: walk to the base of the dam and look in the rocks for Rock Wrens.

9. **Forest Trail**: check in the willows and reeds at the west end of the lake for warblers, wrens, and rails; the tall willows are good for sapsuckers. The oak grove behind the lake is good for owls, Red-shouldered Hawks, and woodpeckers. Canyon Wrens are resident on the high rocky buttes.

10. **Century Lake**: good for ducks, including possible Redheads, Wood Ducks, and Hooded Mergansers. Sora Rails, Great Blue Herons, Phainopeplas, and Marsh Wrens are resident.

11. **Gorge Trail**: the pines at the beginning of the trail are good for woodpeckers and kinglets, and the riparian streambed should be checked for migrants.

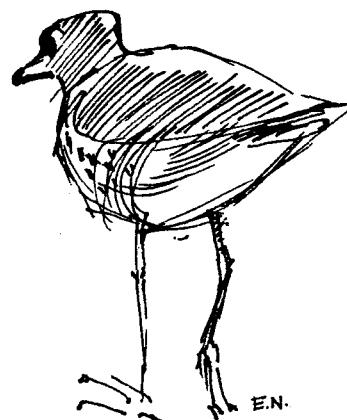
12. **Streambed**: the willows and rushes are good for rails and American Bitterns. The Belted Kingfisher commutes from here downstream into the Salvation Army Camp.

13. **Brush and chaparral**: good for Wrentits, and all the other chaparral species.

14. **Grasslands**: look for Roadrunners here.
Good birding! 

Audubon Scholarships

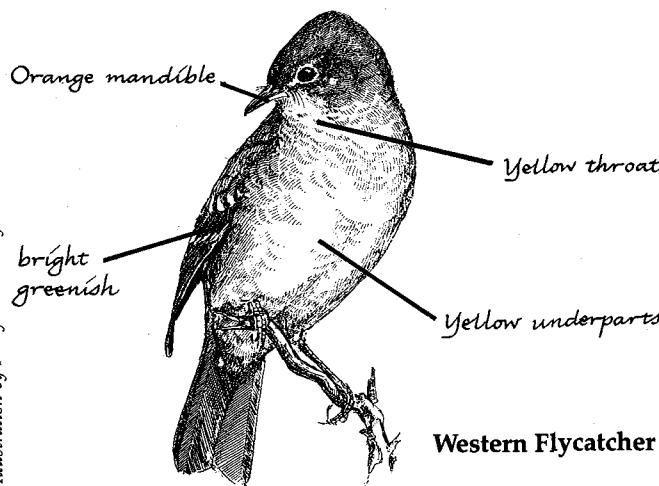
LAAS has awarded four scholarships to this summer's Audubon Workshop of the West, a two week ecology encounter session conducted in the Wind River Mts. of Wyoming. The recipients are Frank Nakatani, a City of Los Angeles Park Ranger; Glenda McClung, an elementary school teacher; Jeffery Hook, an educational assistant at the South Coast Botanic Gardens; and Anne Johnson, a high school student. Those interested in applying for next year's scholarships can obtain information and descriptive brochures at Audubon House.



Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

The Genus *Empidonax*

Illustration by Mary Ellen Perry



The identification of the *Empidonax* flycatchers represents one of the most complex problems in field ornithology. Apart from differentiation by song on the breeding grounds, the field identification of the genus was not, in the past, attempted unless the bird in question was collected. In the mid 1960's, however, a breakthrough occurred—when Guy McCaskie, Pierre Devillers, and Dave DeSante began to trap *Empids* and observe the field characteristics of birds keyed-out in the hand, then banded and released. Much of what we now know about the identification of the genus comes directly from this pioneer field work.

For the next four months I will be discussing the various *Empids* that have been recorded in California. It is important to note that not every member of the genus can be called in the field with certainty; and sometimes not even the most experienced observer will succeed in identifying a particular bird. At present, the system for the identification of *Empids*, particularly the confusing species (Least, Hammond's, Dusky), remains imprecise—and a number of professional ornithologists have questioned the validity of all sight records for these three species. It is essential, therefore, that the observer exercise extreme caution before arriving at any conclusions concerning identification. The articles to follow are designed not so much to supply a definitive solution to the dilemma as to serve as an exploration of the problems to be encountered in confronting this frustrating and challenging genus.

When dealing with *Empids*, it is vital that the observer bear in mind that many of the differentiating marks are of a subtle nature—and since these marks are often variable, it is generally imperative that a *combination of characters* be taken into account before arriving at a conclusion as to species. Frequently, voice and behavior will prove to be as important clues to identification as plumage characteristics.

By far the most common and widespread *Empid* in the west is the **Western Flycatcher**. Arriving from mid to late March, it is our earliest representative of its genus by several weeks. The bird's spring migration is quite protracted, as small numbers can still be found migrating in early June. Similarly, the fall migration is also lengthy,

beginning in early August and lasting through early November. The species is abundant along the coast in the fall, far outnumbering any other *Empidonax*. A number of the birds remain to breed in our local coastal and mountain canyons, and a few winter regularly in the coastal district.

The Western Flycatcher is usually the easiest *Empid* to identify, as it is the brightest of the group. The largely *yellow underparts* (shading to olive on the sides), the *yellow throat*, and the fairly bright greenish back color will identify any bird displaying this plumage. Unfortunately, a few fall birds can be very drab, lacking almost all traces of yellow on the underparts. In dealing with these birds, the most useful character is the *bill*—which is proportionately much *longer and wider* than that of the other similarly-sized *Empids*. Also, when viewed from underneath (the usual position), the bright orange mandible should serve to identify the species.

The call notes of the Western, once learned, are diagnostic. The call commonly given on the bird's breeding grounds is a whistled, upslurred *su-wheet*. Unlike the other *Empids*, this call is also routinely given in migration. The other call note of the Western, a soft White-crowned Sparrow-like *peet* is very unlike the *wit* notes that most of the other *Empids* give.

In addition, the behavior of the Western Flycatcher is quite distinctive—for it actively *flicks its wings while flicking its tail upward*. Although tail-flicking is a typical *Empid* trait, the Hammond's Flycatcher is the only other U.S. member of the genus to flick both wings and tail at once. 

Richard Spotts

The Desert Tortoise

The Desert Tortoise, California's State Reptile, is in trouble. Although classified as fully protected by the California Department of Fish and Game, tortoise populations are declining throughout much of their range. Like most wildlife species of the Southwest deserts, their fate is tied to that of their fragile habitat. And this habitat is being drastically altered, if not destroyed, by swarms of off-road vehicles (ORVs), excessive grazing, and rampant development.

After comprehensive studies by Dr. Kristen Berry of the BLM's Desert Plan staff, an unusual and exciting discovery was made. While tortoise densities mostly average between 5 to 50 tortoises per square mile, the slopes of the western Rand Mountains and a portion of Fremont Valley (north of California City in the Mojave Desert) were found to support average densities of 200 per square mile—and one locality had a density of 1000-2000! As a result of this finding, a proposal was sent to the BLM's State Director in November 1972, urging that the area be set aside as a Desert Tortoise Preserve.

In November 1973 the BLM released their Interim Critical Management Program for ORVs, awarding a "Closed" status to the area proposed for the preserve. While this was an encouraging step forward, some ORV races nevertheless occurred on the preserve site in subsequent months—a fact which gave impetus to the organization, in the summer of 1974, of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC).

Continued on Page 7

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



Despite unseasonably hot and dry weather, with some days in the high 80's, a few rare birds managed to keep local birders busy in February. The first and rarest of these was the **Anhinga** at Sweetwater Reservoir, S. E. of San Diego (the first definitive record for California)—discovered by Bill Everett about Feb. 4th. The only previous California report was of two birds above Laguna Dam on the Colorado River on Feb. 9 and 12, 1913. These were sighted by William Leon Dawson and Allan Brooks, author and illustrator of the four-volume *Birds of California* (1923). They speculated that Anhingas "may prove to be of fairly regular occurrence in that locality." How could they have guessed that it would be 64 years before the next one was reported? A single individual was, however, seen on Lake Merced, in San Francisco, in June 1939—but this bird was believed by Grinnell and Miller (1944) to have escaped from captivity.

As frequently occurs when good birders gather to chase a rare bird, other noteworthy birds turn up nearby. And near the Anhinga was an extremely early (or over-wintering) **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, a **Great-tailed Grackle** (the first for S. D. Co.), one or more **Grasshopper Sparrows**, an equivalent number of **Swamp Sparrows**, and a single **Lark Bunting**. This private reservoir may be the only place in Southern California where **Western Grebes** nest regularly, and even at this early date the birds were incubating, carrying chicks on their backs, and escorting fully-grown young around the lake. Their courtship displays involved much head-bobbing and dipping—and even dancing on the water—a scene made famous in the early Disney nature films.

At about the same time as all this was occurring, Kimball Garrett, working his way up Big Rock Creek (15 miles S. E. of Palmdale, L. A. Co.) was astonished to find over 100 **Bohemian Waxwings**, with a lesser number of Cedar Waxwings, feeding on mistletoe berries in the sycamores overhead. Bohemian flocks are known here only once in ten years or more, and are often associated with Cedars—but, strangely, this was a poor winter for Cedars locally. Nearby, there was a **Pygmy Owl** perched high in a sycamore, several **Townsend's Solitaires**, and both "Red-breasted" and "Red-naped" **Sapsuckers**. The third rare bird, a **Common Grackle** (about the fifth Calif. record) in Carlsbad, S. D. Co. also drew a crowd—though most of the birders returned disappointed after the first two days of sightings, Feb. 12 and 13.

Most other reports were of "firsts" for the year, birds so early that they might best be regarded as wintering birds. **Poorwills** were calling in Big Sycamore Canyon (Pt. Mugu State Park) on Feb. 6 (Barbara Turner). This is normal—though seldom noted—as the birds sometimes awaken from hibernation on a warm evening. Two **Eastern Phoebe**s were wintering in the San Diego area, and the male **Vermilion Flycatcher** had returned to Morongo Valley by Feb. 21 (the Doug Wilsons). Bob McKernan reports a **Gray Flycatcher** at Arrastré Creek in the San Bernardino Mts. on Feb. 13, while the area was still in the grip of winter. Barbara Cohen's report of a **Warbling Vireo** at the Arcadia



Arboretum on Feb. 18 called for a second visit the next day—when two were seen in the same area by other observers. Jerry Friedman's trip to Big Sycamore on Feb. 6 was remarkable for several western warblers—2

Black-throated Grays, 2 **Nashvilles**, 2 **Wilson's**, and a **Townsend's**. Unfortunately, they were not found by later observers. Most unusual was a wintering **Ovenbird** on the U. C. Riverside campus (Steve Cardiff and Doug Morton, Feb. 22).

The Monterey Bay pelagic trip on Feb. 26 missed the "most-wanted" **Laysan Albatross**, as did the four-boat fleet of the C. F. O. trip on Feb. 20—but the expedition was a great success nevertheless, as 18 of the 21 birders aboard had the opportunity to study a life bird at close range—the **Fork-tailed Petrel**. More than fifteen sightings of **Black-footed Albatrosses**, with four in view at once, gave everyone a chance to admire these pelagic giants.

Rhinoceros Auklets and **Common Murres** were abundant at sea, as were **Northern Fulmars**; but other tube-noses were scarce, with only three or four each of **Short-tailed**, **Sooty**, and **Pink-footed Shearwaters**. Before and after the boat trip L. A. Auduboners dispersed over central California in search of several staked-out birds. Most found the **Ruff**, which has lingered in Pacific Grove since October, and some went north in quest of the **Yellow-billed Loon**, located by Jon Dunn Feb. 21, and the **Rock Sandpiper**—both at Princeton Harbor, south of San Francisco. Still others sought out the **Barrow's Goldeneye** on Lake Merritt in Oakland. And a few stopped on their way home to wait patiently for the male **Dickcissel** to make its noon appearance at Mrs. McNair's feeder in Los Osos, near Morro Bay, or to look for the **Rusty Blackbird** at the Goleta Sewage Plant.

April is an exciting month for birders, who should plan for a maximum number of days in the field. Early in the month, **Sage Grouse** will be strutting on their *leks* (strutting grounds) above Bishop. Directions to one lek are on a signboard at the turnoff just beyond the little church above Crowley Lake; but there are other leks to the east and north of there. By mid-April the spring migration will be building toward its traditional climax at the end of the month. The desert oases—Morongo Valley, Whitewater, Twenty-nine Palms, Cottonwood Springs, and similar spots in eastern San Diego Co.—are always good, as strong winds from the north and west tend to dam up the coastal-bound migrants and keep them in favorable habitats. Coastal promontories and canyons with water and trees are also productive, and much closer to home. Cloudy days should bring **Vaux's Swifts** and several species of swallows, flying low enough to be easily seen; and this month, on the coast, shorebird migration will be in full swing.

But April is not only a good time to look for interesting birds. It is also an excellent occasion to meet interesting birders, on the many field trips LAAS has planned for the season. ↗

Note: All observations of noteworthy birds sighted during April or May should be reported to Jean Brandt, 3846 Sapphire Dr., Encino 91436 (213 788-5188). Shum Suffel is going birding in Alaska.

Desert Tortoise /Cont'd from pg. 5

As a deterrent to ORV encroachment, the DTPC launched a campaign to fence the area of the proposed preserve, supported in their efforts by the enthusiastic membership of the Desert Empire District of the California Garden Clubs. The campaign was capped by the appropriation, in 1976, of Federal funds to permit the BLM office in Bakersfield to construct the fence.

Now the DTPC focussed its attentions on the crucial task of acquiring the 12-16 sq. miles of private lands within the boundaries of the preserve—a drive which recently gained a vital boost when the DTPC joined forces with the Nature Conservancy's prestigious Southern California Chapter. To date, the DTPC has transferred \$23,000 to the Conservancy account for land acquisition, and about \$9000 of this amount has already been used to acquire an option on 120 acres of private land.

Considering its few short years of existence, the DTPC has made great strides in its efforts to protect the tortoise and bring to fruition the Tortoise Preserve. Yet much still remains to be done—for as long as private enclaves persist, the preserve's integrity will be compromised.

To join, contribute, receive a pamphlet describing the efforts of the Committee, or request a list of fund-raising items (they make great gifts) write: Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc., P.O. Box 453, Ridgecrest, Calif. 93555. The DTPC also offers a slide presentation and conducts spring tours of the preserve. 

Non-Game Decals

The California Dept. of Fish and Game's Non-Game Wildlife Conservation Decal program—a refreshing variation on the Duck Stamp theme—has completed its first year of operation, and the profits from contributions has already helped provide protection for the Peregrines at Morro Rock, plus improved watering facilities for wildlife in the high deserts. Plans for the year to come include a continuation of the Peregrine project, as well as a program to aid the Bald Eagle in its efforts to nest in the State. To participate in this satisfying endeavor, send \$5.00, payable to "Nongame Wildlife," to **Box DFG, Sacramento, Calif. 95801**. They'll send you a decal which you may proudly display on your car.

Support for Wildlife Area

Our chapter has received a grant of \$2448.85 from the Ora L. Leeper Fund of the California Community Foundation, with the request that it be used for support of the Whittier Narrows Nature Center and the Santa Fe Dam Wildlife Preserve—two of our finest urban wildlife areas.

Arctic Birding

If you are interested in birding Arctic Canada this July, you'll be glad to know that **Ron McClard** has agreed to organize and lead a group up to Bathurst Inlet on July 18-25, 1977 (other dates, on an individual basis, are also possible), provided there is sufficient interest. The minimum size group is 10 persons, and arrangements must be made as soon as possible. Call Ron McClard at 450-4925, or write for information, to 2422-34th St., "A", Santa Monica, Calif. 90405.

Jim Halferty**Birder Watching**

What is the big attraction of birding?

Much as I like getting out and watching birds, one of the most appealing and satisfying aspects of it all, to me, is watching the people I have met—the birders. In my experience these are, almost without exception, people who are friendly, considerate, patient, and helpful—people who are willing, even eager, to share with others what they know and what they have seen. In a world increasingly ruled by competition, it seems to me that birding represents an anomaly—an activity in which one gains rather than loses by giving. The birder, in fact, has nothing to lose in giving of his knowledge and expertise; on the contrary, he gains—for the whole activity is reciprocal: a shared experience that touches, I think, on the real values of life.

But what of the birds themselves? These amazing creatures continually express, through their every day lives, the ideals of beauty, joy, and industry—all the qualities that suggest to us a Creation much different from the imperfect one we see around us. Can we watch birds at work and at play and still feel depressed, discouraged, unhappy? Quite the opposite—because we are watching living manifestations of that which seems, somehow, basically good. Certainly, the birds give us much more than we can ever give them—a change of pace from civilized society, and a sense of direction to encourage us to make better the world in which we live.

What, then, is the attraction of birding? It seems to this watcher of birds and birders that the crazy, adventurous, seemingly frivolous avocation of ours may permit us a glimpse, however faint, of the real qualities of man and Creation—a glimpse of the real world, if you will. A birding trip can be a real "trip" in the best of senses—a big plus to the plain and simple pleasure of exploring the beaches, fields, and mountains for birds. 

The song of the waters is audible to every ear, but there is other music in these hills, by no means audible to all. To hear even a few notes of it you must live here for a long time, and you must know the speech of hills and rivers. Then on a still night, when the campfire is low and the Pleiades have climbed over the rimrocks, sit quietly and listen for a wolf to howl, and think hard of everything you have seen and tried to understand. Then you may hear it—a vast pulsing harmony—its score inscribed on a thousand hills, its notes the lives and deaths of plants and animals, its rhythms spanning the seconds and the centuries.

—Aldo Leopold

Audubon House: Open on Saturday

In order to better accommodate the needs of our growing membership, it has been decided to operate Audubon House on a six-day basis. Effective immediately, the House will be open not only on weekdays, but on Saturdays as well, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The new hours should permit all members to avail themselves of our Library, our Bookstore, and the Nature Musuem.

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 Saturday.

Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318

SUNDAY, APRIL 3—Malibu Creek State Park (formerly Century Ranch). Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot near the entrance. This spectacular area is one of the newest to be opened to birding. Early migrants will be looked for. Take Pacific Coast Hwy. (#1) north to Malibu Canyon, turn right into the Canyon, and go about 6 miles. Or take the Ventura Fwy. (101) north, and exit at Los Virgenes Rd., and go about a mile toward the coast. Leader: Ed Navojosky, 938-9766.

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

TUESDAY, APRIL 12—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Dr. Ralph Schreiber, the new Curator of Ornithology at the L. A. County Museum of Natural History, will present a program on the birds of the **Dry Tortugas**, off the Florida keys.

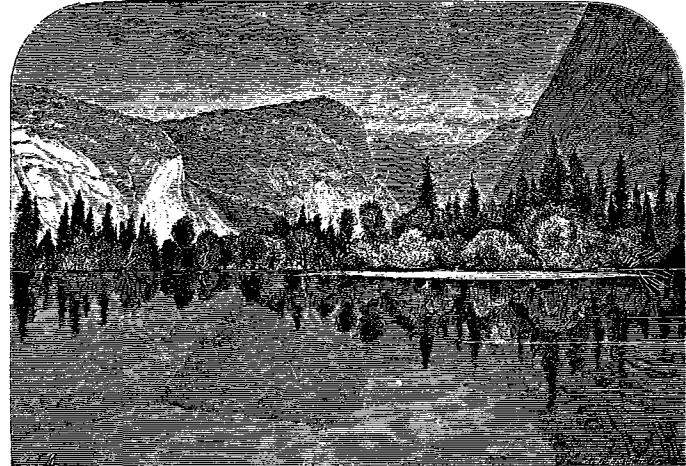
SATURDAY, APRIL 16—Pelagic Trip to Anacapa Island. This trip has been **CANCELLED**.

SUNDAY, APRIL 17—Whittier Narrows Wildlife Sanctuary. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Nature Center. In addition to the ducks and shorebirds attracted by the New Lakes, this is the only place to see the Cardinal locally. Directions to the Sanctuary are found in the notes on the March 19th trip. Leader: Dave Foster, 791-3084.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23—Chantry Flat and Santa Anita Canyon. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the end of Santa Anita Canyon Rd. Be prepared to hike down to the canyon stream, and upstream to the falls to see the resident Dippers, Canyon Wrens, and spring migrants. This is a strenuous hike, but rewarding to those who take it. Take the San Bernardino Fwy. to Rosemead Blvd., go north on Rosemead to Foothill Blvd., east on Foothill to Santa Anita Ave., then north to the end of Santa Anita Rd. Leader: Hal Baxter, 355-6300.



SATURDAY, APRIL 30—Mojave Narrows Nature Center. This is an excellent area along the Mojave River, similar in many ways to Morongo Valley, and promising a good selection of desert residents and migrants. Camping is available for anyone who wishes to spend the weekend. Take Hwy. 18 toward Victorville, exiting at Bear Valley Cutoff; and then go east. Or you may get there via the Antelope Valley Fwy., to Pearblossom Hwy. (138), then along Hwy. 18 to the intersection with Hwy. 15; then right (south) to Bear Valley Cutoff, and east to the Nature Center. Meet at the Center at 9:00 a.m. Leader: Ruth Lohr, 851-4782.



THURSDAY, MAY 5—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

SATURDAY, MAY 7—Morongo Valley. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in Covington Park, in the town of Morongo Valley. This is one of the renowned birding spots of the west, a trap for migrants funneling into the Pacific Flyway from the Sonoran Desert. On a good day over 80 species can be found, including Vermilion Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Lucy's Warbler, and Weid's Crested Flycatcher—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 choose to stay overnight to explore the oases in Joshua Tree on Sunday. Take Interstate 10 east to 29 Palms Hwy. (62), 2.5 miles east of Whitewater, then go north approx. 10 miles. Leader: to be announced.

TUESDAY, MAY 10—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Gilbert Grant will present a program on **Black Skimmers** and other nesting birds of the Salton Sea. Gil is a Ph. D. student in ornithology at UCLA, and has been studying the nesting habits of birds at the Sea—including Lesser Nighthawks, Gull-billed Terns, Forster's Terns, and Snowy Plovers.

SATURDAY, MAY 14—Morongo Valley. Meet at 8:30 a.m. The directions are the same as those for the May 7 trip.

SUNDAY, MAY 29—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. The party will land on the island to search for vagrants. The *Paisano* will depart from the Channel Island National Monument Pier in the Ventura Marina at 6:00 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: to be announced.

Los Angeles Audubon Society
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