

WESTERN TANAGER

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Birding in Santa Barbara

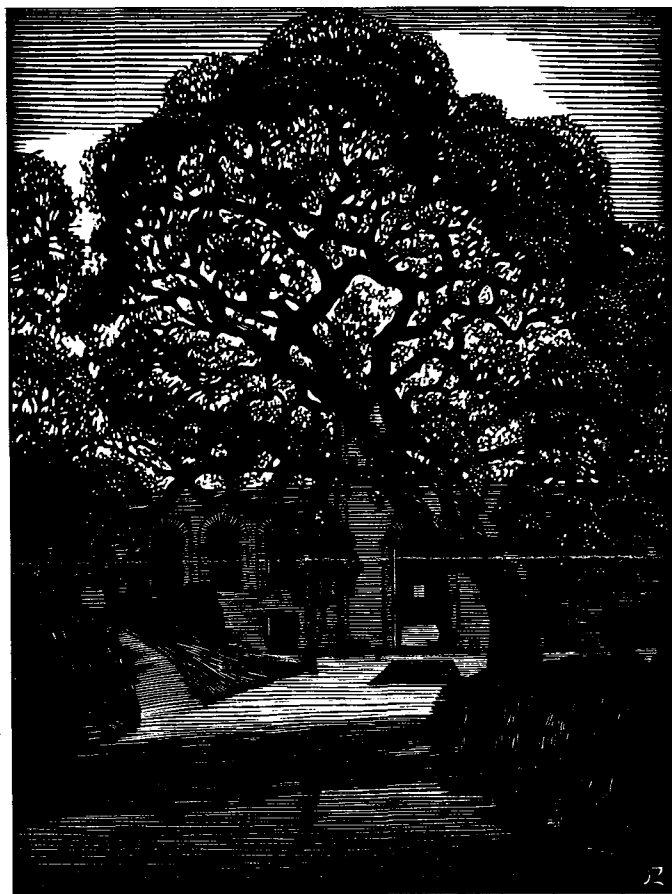
by Brad Schram



tated simply, the Santa Barbara region is an incredibly good area to bird. Of the approximately 530 species on the California list, more than 410 have been recorded in Santa Barbara County; and almost all of these have occurred at one time or another in the south coastal area, in which the communities of Santa Barbara and Goleta are located. This is all the more remarkable when it is noted that Santa Barbara County does not share, nor is it adjacent to, the desert habitat included in many Southern California counties. The annual Christmas Bird Count tallies show that it is one of only five counts ever to have recorded 200 or more species (the others are San Diego; Point Reyes; Freeport, Texas; and Cocoa, Florida), and that it has finished in the top ten for most species recorded every year since 1963. This is undoubtedly due to the abundance and variety of habitat types in the Christmas Count circle, and the mild climate enjoyed by this community—a factor which induces a number of birds to overwinter.

What follows are suggestions for the most effective manner to bird the County, with special consideration to the area's resident and seasonal specialties. The sites discussed are listed in order of their distance from Los Angeles, beginning with the closest.

1. Santa Barbara (Andree Clark) Bird Refuge, and Santa Barbara Cemetery. This area is usually worth checking through the fall and winter months. It serves as a wintering spot for ducks and gulls, and the foliage along the railroad tracks may turn up vagrant passerines. One or more Eastern and Tropical Kingbirds are usually reported from this location each fall, and occasionally a truly *rara avis* makes an appearance. Across the street to the east of the refuge is the Santa Barbara Cemetery. This is full of old Monterey Cypress and Pines, and is most productive in the same seasons as the Refuge. Bird the conifers and oaks inside the main entrance and up the hill to the right. Watch for White-Crowned Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warbler flocks on the lawns, as these may harbor out-of-range sparrows. There are usually a number of Golden-crowned Kinglets that winter in the conifers near the main entrance—but it is suggested that care be taken on



Paul Landacre

weekends not to intrude on the privacy of those visiting gravesites.

To reach the Bird Refuge and the Cemetery, take the Hot Springs Road turnoff from Hwy. 101 and cross under the railroad tracks toward the ocean (south on the Santa Barbara coastline). The Refuge is one block to the right from the railroad underpass.

2. Santa Barbara Marina and Breakwater. This location includes a pedestrian walk atop the breakwater, leading to a sandspit east of the moored pleasure and fishing boats. The Marina can be good all year round, but is most promising in fall and winter. Aside from the multitude of gulls and terns which are here at the expected times of the year, the area occasionally produces Alcids in the late summer/early fall, and is a wintering ground for diving ducks, loons, and grebes. In the fall, Parasitic Jaegers are seldom missed, preying upon the large flock of Elegant Terns in residence at the time; and flocks of Sooty Shearwaters are frequently

seen seaward. This is also a good location during spring migration, as north-bound migrants frequently stop on the sandspit for R&R.

To reach the Marina, take the Castillo turnoff from Hwy. 101 (immediately following the last signal on the freeway in Santa Barbara), proceeding toward the beach, where Castillo tees into Cabrillo Blvd. Turn right on Cabrillo to the Marina entrance.

3. Rattlesnake and San Rogue Canyons. Although the main reason for including these canyons is their routine production of Pygmy Owls during winter, they are also worth birding at any time of the year for the display of chaparral species characteristic of coastal Southern California. Both canyons contain oak groves and year-round running streams, and are thus attractive to a host of predictable (and occasionally surprising) species—especially during the fall and spring migrations. One would be well-advised to seek local guidance regarding the location of wintering owls before hiking these canyons, however, as the birds are usually to be found in excess of a mile up the trail—and, since they are small, they can be hard to locate.

To reach Rattlesnake Canyon, turn off Hwy. 101 onto Mission Street and take it toward the mountains, following the signs to Santa Barbara's old Franciscan Mission. Pass the Mission (you may wish to take a side trip to the Museum of Natural History, which has an excellent bird hall and is located immediately behind the Mission), and go up Mission Canyon to Foothill Rd. Turn right, following the signs toward the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens (another useful sidetrip). Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile below the Gardens' entrance, a sign reading "Scofield Park" points to a road tending uphill to the right. Follow this road to a stone bridge immediately above the park. Park your car on the road and hike up the trail above the bridge, into Rattlesnake Canyon.

To reach San Rogue Canyon, take the Las Positas turnoff on Hwy. 101 and travel toward the mountains. Stop at the gas station on the corner of Las Positas and State Street and ask directions to nearby Stevens Park—from the north end of which a trail proceeds into the Canyon.

Goleta

This area, the home of U.C. Santa Barbara, boasts a number of well-worked birding sites, and though it is most productive of vagrants in the fall and winter months, in spring the shoreline and sloughs regularly produce migrants. It is at this season that a spectacular migration of coastal (and some pelagic) species may be observed from Campus Point (*aka* Goleta Point) on the UCSB campus. The fall migration, however, produces, with glorious regularity, all the expected eastern vagrants, plus an occasional extreme rarity.

The following are the areas which should not be missed, together with their specialties and seasonal expectations.

4. More Mesa. In winter this grassland area can be most productive. Short-eared Owls are found here each winter, along with Burrowing Owls, and an occasional Vesper Sparrow. The area also harbors a White-tailed Kite roost which produced 97 birds on the 1975 Christmas Count.

To reach More Mesa, take the Patterson Ave. offramp from Hwy. 101, and proceed on Patterson toward the ocean, until you have gone over a bridge and around a 90° left turn. Park

your car on the road at the base of a 90° right turn uphill, and walk in on a dirt road, through a locked gate straight ahead. Follow this road until the top of the mesa can be reached by a short climb to the right. This is a large area, but footwork—especially in the late afternoon within two hours of sundown—should pay off. Indeed, if one reaches the mesa top within a half hour before sunset, the footwork may not be necessary, as the owls become active at this time, drawing attention to themselves as they flap about the fields.

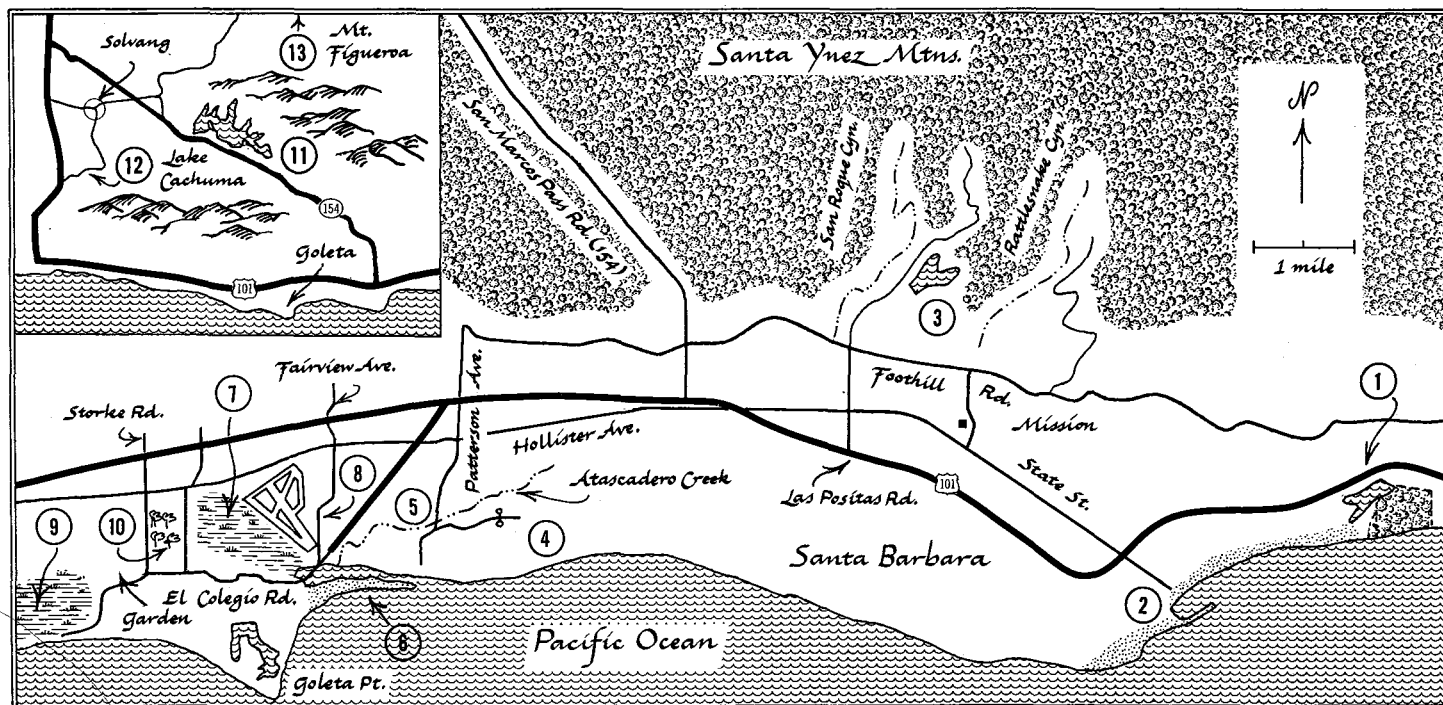
5. Atascadero Creek. Park your car by the above-mentioned bridge on Patterson Avenue. Proceed on foot down the bike path to the west (upcoast), birding the creek bottom and the vegetation on its banks. This is a good stretch to bird, especially in the fall. It regularly produces Bobolinks, buntings (with a good chance for Indigos), grosbeaks, numerous species of warblers and sparrows, and occasionally a White-winged Dove, Tropical Kingbird, or Wood Duck.

6. Goleta Beach. This area is best in the winter, although it is worth checking at any time. Diving ducks and the other usual wintering sea birds are here, and may be found in abundance around the fishing pier, as well as at the mouth of the Slough. To reach the Beach, take the UCSB turnoff from Hwy. 101, and then follow Sandspit Road approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile before entering the University.

7. UCSB/Goleta Slough. The Slough has been fenced-in recently by the Airport, which resides on much of its former surface. It may still be birded, however, by receiving prior permission from the Airport Manager—not a difficult proposition at the moment. The Slough produces fall migrant and wintering shorebirds, ducks, and wading birds. The larger species may be observed by telescope from several overlooks on the UCSB campus, particularly a small parking lot immediately to the right of the campus' main



Hooded Oriole



entrance. The campus itself boasts a freshwater lagoon facing the beach, immediately below the University Center (ask directions at the kiosk on entering the campus). The lagoon harbors the expected—and occasionally unexpected—wintering ducks and other water birds. On the farthest southern (seaward) point next to the lagoon, on top of a bluff, is Campus (or Goleta) Point. This point is a good place from which to view the spring migration of birds upcoast toward their northern breeding grounds. The best time here is mid-March through mid-May, although early March through June may produce interesting results, especially during and immediately after onshore storms. In all weather conditions during the height of the migration, the Point routinely produces incredible numbers of loons (especially Arctic), Cormorants, Sooty Shearwaters, Black Brants, scoters, Bonaparte's Gulls, and terns. Common Murres are also regularly seen, as are Parasitic Jaegers. Other Alcids (Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin's Auklet, Ancient and Xantus' Murrelet) are occasionally seen here during onshore winds in late winter and early spring, as the birds fly up the coast. Storms and heavy onshore winds may also add other pelagic species rarely seen within sight of land. Birds observed off this point during such weather conditions last spring included Short-tailed Shearwater (early March), Black and Fork-tailed Petrels (mid-May), Sabine's Gull (early May), and tens of thousands of Red Phalaropes—together with the usual numbers of Northern Phalaropes (mid-May).

8. Goleta Sewage Plant. Fortunately for those with delicate olfactory senses, the Sewage Plant has not been as productive of rare shorebirds during the last few years as it was in the late '60's and early '70's. However, in the fall it regularly produces Solitary and Pectoral Sandpipers, as well as Eastern Kingbirds—and once more the Rusty Blackbird wintered there this year, as it did two years ago. So the site should not be by-passed during the fall and winter seasons.

To reach this garden spot, cross the cattle guard through the fence 200 yards to the south of the Airport entrance on Fairview Avenue, ignoring the "No Trespassing or

Loitering" signs (the Plant tolerates birders). Park in the parking lot and walk downhill from there to the settling ponds. You will have no trouble finding them.

9. Devereux Slough and the Vegetable Gardens. The Slough is good for wading and shorebirds from late summer through spring. In winter it supports many species of ducks as well, and is easily birded. Each fall a number of Baird's and Solitary Sandpipers are reported from this locale, and Golden Plovers are rare but regular. On the bluff overlooking the Slough's northeast edge is a vegetable garden belonging to the residents of the adjacent Married Student Housing. Due to the garden's strategic location and its basically organic nature, it is abuzz with insects—and therefore, with birds. Although it has its dull days, the spot is an absolute must in the fall and winter. Within the last three fall seasons alone, it has produced Swainson's Hawk, Eastern Kingbirds, Least Flycatcher, Tennessee Warblers, Virginia's Warblers, Yellow-throated Warbler (in the neighboring pines), Blackburnian Warbler, Palm Warbler, American Redstarts, Orchard Orioles, Summer Tanager, Indigo Buntings, Dickcissel, and Clay-colored, Harris', White-throated, and Swamp Sparrows.

To reach the Devereux locations, take the Storke Road offramp from Hwy. 101, and proceed toward the ocean until the road makes a right-angle turn to the left. A small road goes off to the right at a 45° angle from this turn. Take this road and immediately park under the eucalyptus across from the check point kiosk. You may not drive further on this road without a permit, but you can walk freely beyond this point. The gardens will be 100 yards on your right, behind a screen of mature Blue-gum Eucalyptus; and the Slough can be seen from the garden's far end.

10. Storke Road Tamarisks. The list of birds found here in the past three falls almost equals that of the preceding location; but do not bother to bird it at any other time of the year. The location consists of two long, parallel rows of mature tamarisk trees, with patches of fennel between that can be quite productive of both migrants and vagrants.

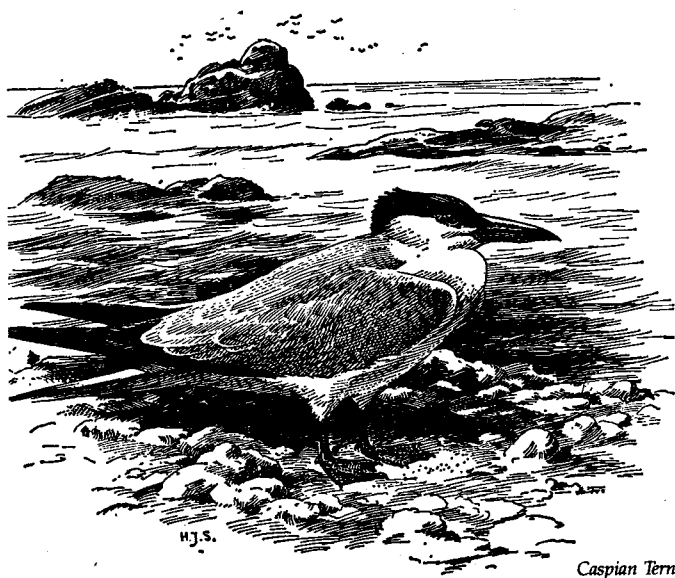
Warblers are the specialty of these trees, and on a good day in the fall the number of species can be impressive. The location is on the east side of Storke Road, approximately half way between the freeway and El Colegio Road.

Farther Afield

11. Lake Cachuma/Santa Ynez Valley. This area is best birded from the late fall through spring and early summer. After traversing the Santa Ynez Mountains on Hwy. 154, you will, within a few miles, reach a point from which, off to the right, you can see the upper end of Lake Cachuma. Stop your car on the old section of highway on the left of Hwy. 154 opposite the Lake, and view the upper end, its shore, and the oaks on the opposite bank. A telescope is most helpful here. The upper end is a wintering spot for many species of ducks and waders. Wood Ducks, and both Hooded and Common Mergansers are found here each winter, as are Ospreys, one or more Bald Eagles, and, occasionally, Whistling Swans.

Proceed further on Hwy. 154, and follow the sign pointing to the Dam Observation Site. From this vantage point one may see various wintering species of diving ducks, usually including Common Goldeneyes. Traveling further up the Valley, one begins to encounter the Yellow-billed Magpies—California's only endemic species—common residents in the Valley. In winter the open areas of the Valley support many species of grassland birds; and in December there exists the faint possibility of a Condor over the Valley. There is usually a report or two from this area each year at this time.

12. Nojoqui Falls Park. This small park (pronounced *Nah'-ho-wee* locally) has its greatest concentration of birds in the spring, during the migration and nesting seasons. But it is filled, at all times of the year, with rather tame Yellow-billed Magpies. In addition, Purple Martins also nest. To reach the Park from the Santa Ynez Valley, drive



Caspian Tern

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Song Sparrow

through Solvang on Alisos Rd. toward the Santa Ynez Mountains (this is the street with Birkholm's Bakery and the large windmill). Continue on this road for approximately fifteen minutes through beautiful ranchland to Nojoqui Falls Park. The Park closes at 8:00 p.m. daily.

13. Happy Canyon/Figueroa Mountain. Figueroa Mountain is the most accessible location for birding Big Cone Spruce and Ponderosa/Jeffrey Pine habitat while in Santa Barbara County. Driving into the Santa Ynez Valley from Lake Cachuma, turn right on Armour Ranch Road immediately after crossing the bridge on Hwy. 154, over the Santa Ynez River. Turn right on Happy Canyon Rd., and follow Happy Canyon into the foothills. After leaving the Happy Canyon ranchland, one encounters Cachuma Camp 4.3 miles up the road. In the area immediately upstream above the camp Pygmy Owls have nested the last two years, as well as Spotted Owls. One may have the good fortune to call one to a tape after dark by walking the road above the camp. Follow the road and signs above the camp to the Figueroa Mountain summit. In May, 1976 at least four Saw-Whet Owls were calling here. Mountain Quail are abundant on the mountain, calling everywhere in April and May.

For maximum enjoyment, budget at least a weekend to bird all the above locations. This should not be viewed as a drawback, however, as Santa Barbara is a beautiful place in which to spend some time. If you should have the good fortune to see any birds unusual to the region, local birders would appreciate your calling Santa Barbara's Rare Bird Alert, at the Museum of Natural History (963-7821), before leaving the area. On weekends, please call 969-4015. Paul Lehman (968-7394) or myself (968-6255) would also be interested in hearing your report.



Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

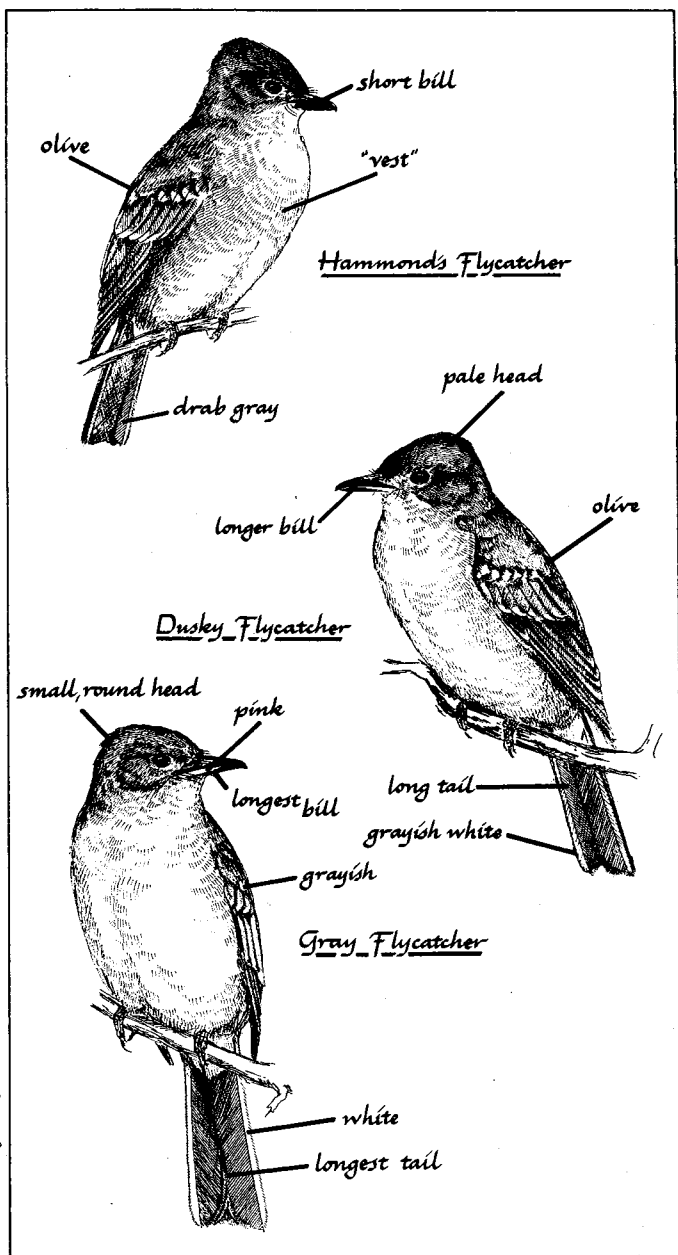
The Genus *Empidonax*

Illustration by Mary Ellen Pereyra

Next to the Western Flycatcher, the most numerous of the *Empidonax* flycatchers in our area is the **Hammond's**.

Arriving in early April, it is quite common along the coast through the spring migration; and until the Willow Flycatchers arrive in mid-May, the great majority of migrant *Empids* are likely to be either this species or the Western. In the fall, however, Hammond's is considerably scarcer along the coast, as the majority of the birds pass through the interior on their southbound migration. During the breeding season, the species summers to the north—from the dense fir forests of the central Sierra to Alaska.

In most cases, the Hammond's can be separated from the Western by its overall much grayer coloration: the species has only a slight olive tinge on the back, and the head always appears very gray, with a contrasting white eyering. In this

regard, it is best to ignore the illustration in Robbins' *Birds of North America*—as it mistakenly shows the Hammond's with a distinct rusty tinge to the cap and the back. The underparts of the Hammond's are another particularly useful field mark, as they present a "vested" appearance—a result of the contrast of the darker sides and flanks with the paler belly. (This pattern is reminiscent of that of the Olive-sided Flycatcher or the Western Wood Pewee, though here it is less distinct.)

While the underparts of spring and fall adults are largely suffused with gray, the fall immatures can be quite yellowish below; and, in fact, these are often considerably brighter than drabber individuals of the Western Flycatcher. Despite their brightness, however, these immature Hammond's retain their "vested" appearance—though now the contrast is one of dark olive with yellow. In addition, the birds invariably display a grayish throat.

When in doubt, however, the best way to differentiate the two species is by their bills: once one learns to recognize the Western's bill—long and wide—the very thin and short bill of the Hammond's should be immediately apparent. Also, when viewed from the side, the mandible of the Hammond's appears primarily dark, as opposed to the bright orange color of the Western's. Like the Western, however, in overall shape the Hammond's Flycatcher appears large-headed and short-tailed.

A far more challenging field problem is resolving the Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers. Since the characteristics which distinguish the two are of a very subtle nature, utmost caution must be exercised. Unlike the Hammond's, the Dusky is largely absent along the coast during spring migration, and even in the interior it is greatly outnumbered by migrating Hammond's. Although during the fall a few birds regularly straggle to the coast, the species is always scarce here. It is during the breeding season that the Dusky can be most readily found, for the species breeds commonly from Mt. Pinos south through the higher portions of the San Gabriels and San Bernardino to the San Jacintos. Since the Hammond's is absent at this season, singing birds on their breeding territory can safely be called Dusks.

The Dusky can be differentiated from the Hammond's by the larger bill—which approaches the length of the bill of the Western Flycatcher. Further, Dusky's underparts are uniformly pale, largely lacking the vested appearance of the Hammond's; however, both birds can show very pale yellow on the belly and undertail coverts. The Dusky also appears slightly paler-headed than the Hammond's, particularly in the cheek area; and while the immature Dusks are slightly brighter than the adults, none that I have observed have even nearly approached the brightness of an immature Hammond's. Very bright birds encountered in the fall can safely be assumed to be other than Dusks.

In addition to these distinctions, the tail of the Dusky is longer than that of the Hammond's, lending the bird an overall longer appearance; and the outer webs of the retrices are distinctly edged with grayish white. In the Hammond's, the outer retrices are edged with a less contrasty, drabber gray shade. Dave DeSante has further noted that while Hammond's and Western Flycatchers flick their tails and wings simultaneously, and with some frequency, Dusky flicks only its tail upwards—and then only occasionally.

Continued on pg. 7

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



ay birding should continue the excitement of the ongoing spring migration, after a March which was every bit as dull as predicted. So dull was the month, in fact, that most of us spent our time reviewing the three rare species which were found in February, finding a few early migrants for our year lists, and hoping for better days to come.

All of our February birds stayed well into March. The **Bohemian Waxwings** at Big Rock Creek and Valyermo were seen through mid-March, though in reduced numbers, with the largest count by far the 50 birds seen by Barbara Turner on March 13—as compared to the 100+ sighted on Feb. 5. Evidently the flock cleaned out the local mistletoe crop and disbursed to other areas. The **Common Grackle** in Carlsbad continued to be located with ease by some, with difficulty by others (Bruce Broadbooks found it on his third trip), and not at all by many of us. The **Anhinga** at Sweetwater Reservoir, S. D. Co., is presumably still there, but the Reservoir is now closed to birders, as a result of the overzealousness of a few members of our fraternity.

Very early reports of spring migrants are always suspect—since a few individuals of most migrant species winter here—but by mid-March it seemed that we had the first trickle of real migration. On March 9, after having a look at the **Ovenbird** on the U. C. Riverside campus, we were escorted by Doug Morton and Steve Cardiff to the riparian area of Riverside's Fairmount Park. Here we missed the wintering **Hepatic Tanager**, but did find a young male **Northern "Bullock's" Oriole**, a **Solitary Vireo**, and both **Black-throated Gray** and **Townsend's Warblers**. While looking for the Bohemian Waxwings in the Valyermo/Big Rock Creek area on the 13th, Barbara Turner counted several **Wilson's Warblers**—which were surely migrants, since none were previously reported from this well-worked locale. Ed Navojosky garnered a number of "firsts" a week or so later: a **Western Kingbird** near Magic Mtn. on the 21st, three **Western Flycatchers** in Tuna Canyon, plus a "**Bullock's**" **Oriole** and a male **Hooded Oriole** farther north along the Malibu coast on the 22nd. He also noted that La Jolla Cyn. had several singing **Rufous-crowned Sparrows**, a bird not always easy to find.

Aside from these "firsts," interesting reports were few and widely scattered. Migrating flocks are always of interest as indications of migration routes. In this regard, Bill Trimble's report of two flocks of dark geese was notable: 70 and 100 individuals—flying from east to west over Altadena on March 8th. Jon Dunn studied a bizarre duck near Big Bear Lake, which he judged to be a **three-species hybrid** (Shoveller x Blue-winged Teal x Cinnamon Teal)—since it had some of the characteristics of each. In this case, the slightly larger size, larger bill, and green head were Shoveller field marks; the white crescent on the face was a mark of the Blue-winged Teal; and the bright cinnamon from below the green head to the belly suggested the Cinnamon Teal. Since Blue-winged x Cinnamon hybrids are not too unusual, one may have mated with a Shoveller to create this avian oddity.

The **Wood Ducks** at Holiday Lake, between Gorman and Lancaster, have increased their numbers; there were two males in November, but there were three mated pairs on March 12 (Caroline and Don Adams). A **Merlin** in Amargosa Canyon was only our third report this winter (Jan Tarble, March 2). The **Glaucous Gull**, which has been at McGrath Lagoon, Ventura Co., since February, was still seen in late March by those who waited for it to come in (Dan Guthrie, Mar. 19). The two **Ancient Murrelets** found by Jon Dunn, March 6th, close to Pt. Dume, Malibu, evidently require stormy weather—as they could not be found during the calm weather the following day.

May offers the best birding of the year to date. Sooty Shearwaters will be streaming up the coast in countless thousands, shorebirds will be in colorful breeding plumage, and the passerine migration will continue and gradually wind down as the month progresses. Several pelagic trips, plus the LAAS excursions to Morongo Valley, should provide a good introduction for new birders to the rewards of birding. But for those who want to strike out on their own, a few suggestions are in order.

The Kelso/Cima/Cedar Canyon area is the best place for Bendire's Thrashers, with Gray Vireos in the mountain canyons, and a chance for Eastern vagrants at the railroad oasis of Kelso. North of there, the desert oases at Saratoga Springs, Shoshone, Furnace Creek, Scotty's Castle, Oasis, and Deep Springs concentrate the migrants—and the rare bird chasers.

June finds the migration virtually over, with only a few late vagrants to delight the rare-birders. The hot spots in June are the desert oases mentioned above—plus those superb migrant traps, the offshore islands—if you can get there. The pelagic trip to Santa Barbara Island on May 26 is likely your best bet. If there are vagrants on the island, this could prove to be the best birding day of the spring; if not, the boat trip alone should be well worthwhile.

In late June, the birding will be relatively dull in the lowlands, but active in the mountains. Try Santa Anita Canyon above Arcadia for an evening picnic, with Dippers on the way to the falls, Black Swifts coming into their nests at the falls at dusk, and owls on the trip downstream. Lake Fulmor in the San Jacinto Mts. provides another evening picnic spot, with Purple Martins over the lake at sunset, and—with a bit of luck—the calls of Whip-poor-wills and owls after dark. Both Spotted and Saw-whet Owls have been heard nearby. Seeing them, of course, is another story. Further afield, the San Bernardino Mts. offer Pinyon Jays near the intersection of Hwy. 384 and Forest Service Rd. 2NO2; Hepatic Tanagers and Calliope Hummingbirds where 2NO2 crosses Arrastre Creek; Gray Flycatchers in the pinyons along 2NO2; and Gray Vireos on the Tip Top Mt. road, just off 3NO3, or just east of Rose Mine Pass on 3NO3. ♡

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

FIELD NOTES/Cont'd from pg. 5

As with most of the other *Empids* (except Willow and Western), the Dusky and Hammond's sing only on their breeding grounds. While their songs are very similar, the individual call notes, heard during migration, may well be distinct. Although I've heard the Dusky give only the characteristic soft *wit* note, I have often heard the Hammond's give a piercing *peek* note—described as resembling the call of the Pygmy Nuthatch (Phillips, *The Birds of Arizona*). Unfortunately, I have also heard Hammond's give a *wit* note...

Although the exact individual call notes of Dusky and Hammond's have not yet been worked out, it's very possible that age and/or sex play a part. Careful future observations hold the key to clarifying this area of confusion.

The *drabdest* of the *Empids* is the **Gray Flycatcher**; and of the three under consideration here, it is decidedly the *largest*. An uncommon migrant through the interior, and a very scarce (primarily fall) transient along the coast, the Gray, like the Dusky, is most easily found on its breeding grounds. It is very numerous from the Pinyon-Juniper habitat of the eastern portion of the Sierra and the White and Panamint Mountains, south to include the Clark, New York, and Providence Mountains; and in recent decades it has expanded its range to include the eastern portions of the San Bernardino. Although fairly rare during the winter, of the three species discussed here, the Gray is the most likely to be found during that season—the other two being decidedly rarer. The winter records for all three of these species are scattered rather evenly between the coast and the interior.

The Gray Flycatcher can best be told from either the Dusky or the Hammond's by its distinctive habit of *dropping its tail downward (without a wing-flick)*. Although the Gray will occasionally begin to raise its tail upwards before bringing it down, the important point is that no other U.S. *Empid* flicks its tail in this direction.

The bill of the Gray is *slightly longer* than that of the Dusky (and *much longer* than that of the Hammond's); and, unlike either of these species, the Gray has a distinct *pinkish* base to the mandible. Adult Grays also lack the yellow on the underparts, although most fall immatures have a very pale suffusion of yellow on the belly. The back of the Gray is *grayish*, lacking the olive or greenish tones of the Dusky or the Hammond's—and the face is *much paler* than that of the preceding species, with the whitish eyering contrasting *less distinctly* with the rest of the head. In general, the Gray appears to me to be *smaller-headed and rounder-headed* than the Dusky or the Hammond's—and it also appears slightly longer-tailed than the Dusky, the outer webs of the outer retrices being conspicuously edged with *white*, contrasting even more sharply with the rest of the tail than do those of the Dusky Flycatcher. The call note, a soft *wit*, is similar to the *wit* notes of the other *Empids*. ♡

Tanager Schedule

There will be no WESTERN Tanager in June. By the time you read this, the Editor will be on the banks of the Danube, looking for Bluethroats.

Malibu Lagoon: A Bright Future?

The State of California Parks and Recreation Dept. is continuing on the admirable course set by Director Herbert Rose in asking for public input on planning the future of our parks and beaches. George Rackelmann, the scheduled speaker for the June 14th LAAS meeting, led the team that developed plans for the three Santa Monica Mountain parks, and is chairman of a new series of meetings on the future of Malibu Lagoon. At the March 17th gathering of interested citizens, there was much enthusiasm for the basic philosophy: *keep it natural*. The most widely-expressed proposals called for the following:

1. Restoration of the marsh habitat.
2. Scientifically-determined opening of the sand bar to the ocean, allowing regular tidal flushing, and permitting a natural balance of fresh and salt water in the Lagoon.
3. Acquisition of land on both sides of the Creek above the bridge, to preserve the riparian habitat.
4. Improvement of the quality of the water in the Creek and the Lagoon through stringent controls on the effluent of the Tapia Water Treatment Plant.
5. Massive cleanup of the Lagoon perimeter.
6. Classification of the Lagoon as a Wildlife Sanctuary.

While all of these are good ideas, the most encouraging aspect of the meeting was the prevailing feeling that the Lagoon must be preserved for wildlife. Almost miraculously, we now seem to have a public agency not only listening to us, but anxious to base its planning upon our suggestions. Perhaps we may at last be entering an era of governmental sensitivity to environmental values. At any rate, this is not a time to lose heart, but an occasion to redouble our efforts, to assure that our best expectations are realized.

—Sandy Wohlgenuth

Preserving the Sierras

The National Park Service has contracted with ecologists at the University of California to inventory natural areas in the Sierra Nevada for possible classification as Natural Landmarks. If you have suggestions for sites especially deserving of protection, you are requested to communicate these to **Dean Taylor**, Dept. of Botany, University of California, Davis, Calif. 95616.



WESTERN
Tanager

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Ann Skipper

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.

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

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

SATURDAY, MAY 7—Open House: Founder's Day at Starr Ranch.

This is a unique opportunity to visit National Audubon's spectacular oak woodland/chaparral reserve in Orange County. Access is via Caspers Regional Park, approx. 7 miles east of San Juan Capistrano on Hwy. 74 (Ortega Hwy.). Because of the locked gates, a convoy system will be used to reach the Sanctuary. Convoys will leave continuously from 8 to 9:00 a.m., and will exit at 12, 2:30, and 5:00 p.m. Camping sites are available at the Park for Friday night. A ranger will be on duty until 9:00 p.m. Leader: Norm McIntosh, Sanctuary Mgr., 714-586-6190.

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. Leaders: Russ and Marian Wilson.

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 15—Whittier Narrows Nature Center. Meet at the Center at 8:00 a.m. Waterfowl will still be there, and all the local birds, including the Cardinal, will be looked for. Walking is easy on good trails through the Center and around the New Lakes. Take the Pomona Fwy. (60) east to the Santa Anita offramp; turn south (right) on Santa Anita to Durfee Ave.; then turn east (left) to the Nature Center. Leader: Nature Center Biologist David Foster, 791-3084.

SUNDAY, MAY 29—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. The party will spend as much time as possible on the island to search for migrants. *The Paisano* departs from the Channel Islands National Monument Pier at the Ventura Marina at 6:00 a.m. You are

requested to be at the boat 30 min. before departure time. Price: \$18 per person. Make checks payable to L. A. Audubon Society, and send with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and your telephone number to Phil Sayre, 660 S. Garfield, Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. No refunds or cancellations within 48 hours of departure. Take Hwy. 101 north to Ventura, exit at Victoria Ave., and follow the Channel Islands National Monument signs to the Marina.

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

SUNDAY, JUNE 5—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. Details the same as those for May 29th.

SUNDAY, JUNE 12—Whittier Narrows Nature Center. Meet at the Center at 8:00 a.m. Instructions are the same as those for May 15th. Leader: David Foster, 791-3084.

TUESDAY, JUNE 14—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. **George Rackelmann**, Senior Landscape Architect, Dept. of Parks and Recreation—the project manager on the Santa Monica Mtns. Park plan—will discuss our **State Parks: Present and Future**. His emphasis will be on citizens' action to preserve our parks and improve the park system.

SUNDAY, JUNE 19—Mt. Pinos. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the intersection of Cuddy Valley and Frazier Park Roads in Lake-of-the-Woods. Some of the birds to be looked for include Brewer's Sparrows, Lark Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Calliope Hummingbirds, White-headed Woodpeckers, and, at the top, the Condor. Go north on Interstate 5 to Frazier Park offramp; go west past the town of Frazier Park to Lake-of-the-Woods. Leader: Phil Sayre, 288-0545.

SATURDAY, JUNE 25—Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island. Same instructions as those for May 29th.

African Birding

Barbara and Mel Horton, former conservation chairman and president of Pasadena Audubon, are organizing a leisurely, in-depth tour of the best birding spots in East Africa, with emphasis upon **Bushwhackers Safari Camp** near Tsavo Park (where the bird list tops 250 species). For information, call Barbara at 213-798-8315, or write to 1869 Pasadena Glen Rd., Pasadena 91107.

Breeding Bird Survey

This annual survey, organized by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, depends upon amateur birders to gather data from hundreds of predetermined routes throughout the U. S. In running a 25-mile route, a team stops every half mile for three minutes, records all birds seen or heard within a radius of ¼ mile, then moves on. If you would like to be part of this worthwhile and adventurous endeavor, call or write at once, to Jan Tarble, Box 67193, L. A. 90069 (213-271-7116).

Golden Trout Workshop

This year's Audubon workshop in the High Sierras will be conducted from July 23-Aug. 10, offering participants a memorable encounter with the high mountain flora and fauna, plus good meals and a stimulating series of guest lectures. Tents and meals provided. Fee: \$70-\$90 per adult. Write or call Mrs. Tomi Sollen, 825 No. Soledad, Santa Barbara 93103 (805-966-4836).

Los Angeles Audubon Society
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