WESTERN TANAGER

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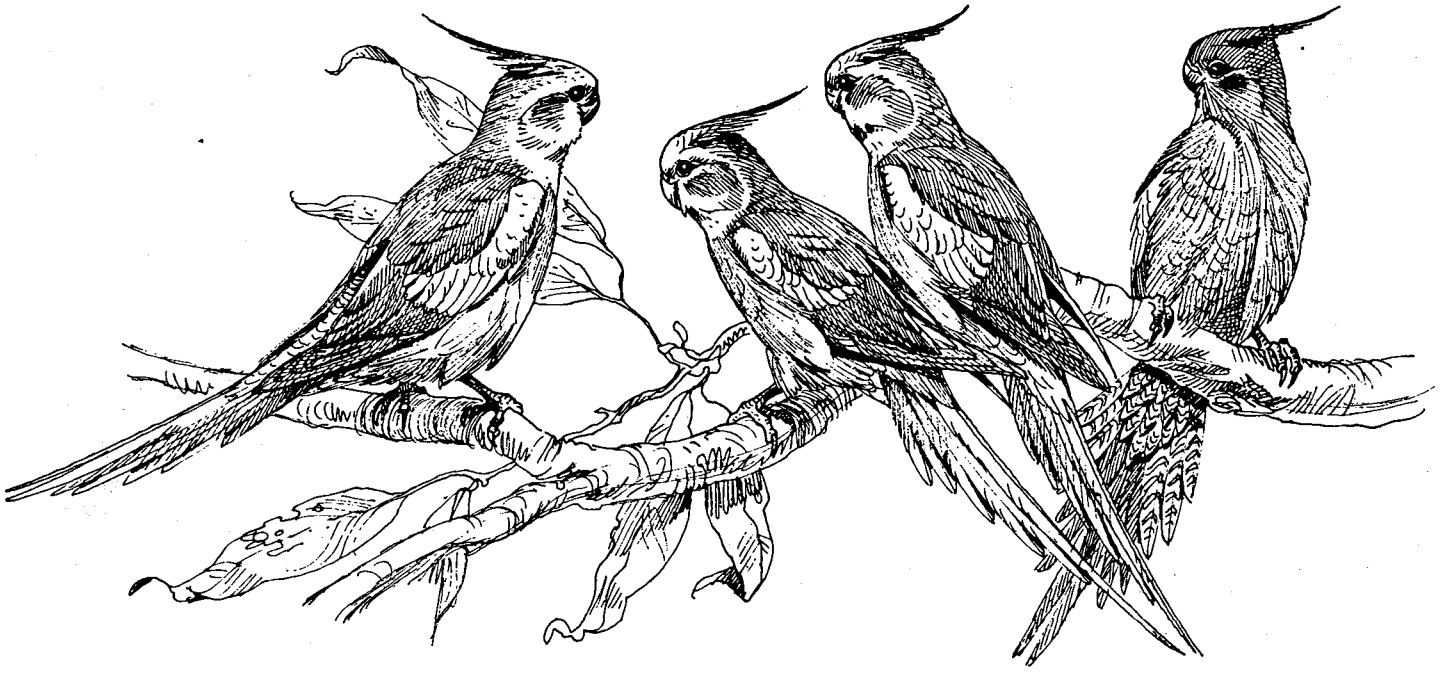


# of Wattlebirds, Megapodes, and Galahs

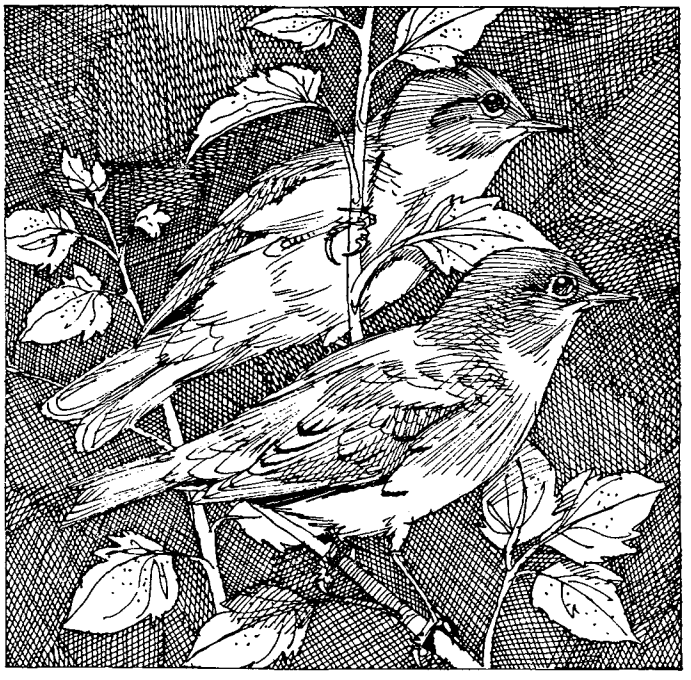
by Les Wood

"On the sandplains where heaths and mallees are flowering, there is an unceasing drifting of tenuous song, wafted lightly from far away, with accents near at hand in louder, lilting, bell-like notes—honeyeaters..." Thus does Michael Morcombe introduce us to the honeyeaters of Australia.

From the mangrove rimmed coral cays of the Great Barrier Reef to the ancient, eroded coastal sand hills of Western Australia; from the humid tropical forests of Arnhem Land to the magnificent hardwood forests of Tasmania, we find honeyeaters—and their near relatives, the spinebills, miners, wattlebirds, and friarbirds. Together they constitute the large Australian family of Meliphagans—a total of twenty genera, composed of sixty-plus species, occupying many habitats and filling most avian niches.

In size the Meliphagans range from the tiny Scarlet Honeyeaters of the east coast—measuring slightly over four inches, and resembling our Scarlet Tanager—to the twenty inch Yellow Wattlebird of Tasmania, a bird easily told by its raucous call, its long, pendulous wattles, and the yellow patch on the abdomen. A large portion of the food consumed by the family consists of nectar, supplemented by insects and occasional fruits. As a result, spring is a time of feast for these birds, as well as for the tiny nectar-eating marsupials. Unlike the tubular-tongued sunbirds of Africa, the honeyeaters have brush-tipped tongues, which they use for drawing the nectar from the blooms of mallee (shrubby, multi-stemmed *eucalypts*), mulga (various *acacia* species), and sand-heath plants. All are sturdy shrubs, capable of holding the weight of the largest of the honeyeaters. The upright bloom of the *banksia* is composed entirely of pistils and stamens, with the calyx reduced to a woody central core which can easily support the largest wattlebird. Since the *banksia* is partially dependent upon the honeyeater to distribute pollen from the long stamens to the shorter pistil, plant and bird are considered to have evolved together.

West of the Great Dividing Range, there stretches a vast, arid plateau—One of the driest regions on earth. Here are found the interior deserts, as well as the lowest point on this great, flat continent. Lake Eyre, 43 feet below sea level, is all that remains of an extensive shallow sea which in the geologic past divided Australia into two series of islands. As a consequence of this, each edge of the continent now



supports its own distinctive avian life.

The average rainfall across this broad plateau is less than 20 inches per year, all of which may come in one or two storms. As a result the land is scoured by an extensive system of dry channels, fringed by sparse growth of mallee and mulga. Over the plains are scattered clumps of *triodia*, or Porcupine Grass, while across the southern extremity of the plateau, inland from the Great Australian Bight, is an area of low sandy hills and flat sandy plains. Here, where mallee is the predominate growth, is found the preferred habitat of the renowned Mallee Fowl—one of the three big-footed mound builders, or Megapodes, that inhabit Australia. The other two, the Brush Turkey and the Scrub Fowl, inhabit the east coastal areas, York Peninsula and coastal Arnhem Land. But the most convenient place to observe the Mallee Fowl is in the sandhill mallee country of Wyperfield National Park, 280 kilometers northwest of Melbourne. Though the Mallee Fowl mates for life, the members of the pair are seldom found together, except at the mound. The male, in fact, leads a life of incessant toil—for the building and maintenance of the mound is entirely his responsibility. At the outset he scoops out a bowl-shaped pit about three feet deep and eight to ten feet across. Then down the avenues of the forest he scrapes sticks, leaves, and any plant debris he can find, kicking these into the pit. As the mound builds up, he packs it down with his feet—and then, when the pile of debris reaches about four feet high, he scoops out an egg chamber—and leaves the mound exposed to the rain. When the compost is sufficiently moist and has begun to generate heat, the bird covers the whole structure with sand, testing the temperature of the mound from time to time by probing with his bill and tongue. After a few days have elapsed and the high heat cycle has begun to subside the male scoops out the top of the mound for the first egg.

From this point throughout the laying season, the male will remain in constant attention at the mound, uncovering the egg chamber each time the hen comes to lay, and covering it immediately when she has finished. The female lays the eggs singly, the frequency of laying and the length of the laying period being determined by the amount of rainfall. In wet weather the intervals between egg laying will decrease (with as many as 30 eggs laid); and in the dry season the egg laying interval will increase (with as few as a half dozen eggs laid). When we visited Wyperfield Park in 1976, during a very dry season, the mound had not been touched for several months—and it was assumed that no eggs at all would be laid.

For the duration of the incubation period the male periodically tests the temperature of the mound, so as to balance the heat of fermentation against the heat of the sun. If the internal heat becomes too great he will remove cover from the mound; and during the hot days of summer he will add to the mound, to further insulate the egg chamber from the rays of the sun. Or he may remove the top of the mound during the early morning to interrupt the heat cycle. If opening the mound may expose the eggs to undue chilling, he will not allow the hen to approach, even though she is ready to lay.

In about fifty days the young Mallee Fowl hatch, and immediately dig their way out of the mound, to rest briefly before striking out on their own. Since they emerge from the egg with fully-developed flight feathers, they are soon able to take wing—and it is probably only by accident that they will ever encounter their parents. It is ironic, then, that the adult birds, after all their strenuous efforts, may never see the results of their labors.

The whole procedure qualifies as one of the most incredible displays of instinctual behavior in the animal kingdom— a thought provoking testament to the ingenious ways of evolution.

Unfortunately, however, the Mallee Fowl has suffered considerable habitat loss due to the inroads of wheat farming. Within the narrow, exacting confines of its niche, it is doubtful it will persist, except, perhaps, in a few National Parks and Reserves.

The birds that undoubtedly attract the most attention from the visitor to Australia are the parrots and their allies, the lorikeets, cockatoos, and rosellas. There are sixty species in Australia—more than are found in any other single area in the world, and they occupy every corner of the continent, including a wide variety of habitats. With few exceptions, the parrots and their kin nest in the hollows of eucalyptus and other trees. Numbered among the exceptions, however, are the Rock Parrot of the south coasts of South and West Australia, the Swamp Parrot of the southeast coast and Tasmania, and the Golden Shouldered and Hooded Parrots of York Peninsula and Arnhem Land.

A small bird less than twice the size of a sparrow, the Rock Parrot nests on offshore islands or on cliffs near the shore, and is often seen in the company of gulls and terns. The Hooded Parrot of the Northern Territory, and the Golden Shouldered Parrot of Cape York Peninsula are unique in their habit of nesting in termite mounds. The birds excavate a suitable hole in the mound, with a nest cavity at the base. Any damage to the corridors of the

mound is immediately mended by the termites, to maintain humidity for the larvae—and the insects and birds tolerate one another, without cause for conflict. A third species that once nested in termite mounds—the Paradise Parrot—is now thought to be extinct. Regrettably, the outstanding beauty of the bird, and its ready availability to collectors, proved to be its undoing.

Surely among the most beautiful birds in the world are the Galahs—close relatives of the Pink Cockatoos and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. So common are these birds over nearly all of Australia (they at times nest in suburban gardens) that their beauty tends to go unnoticed. Strong fliers, they will often travel ten miles to feed; and when the young leave the nest they can fly almost as well as the adults. In groups of up to 100 birds the fledglings gather in the trees near the feeding grounds, waiting to be fed by their parents who forage nearby. This ritual continues for six or eight weeks; and then the young are left on their own. Perhaps only ten percent will survive the hardships of the next three or four years, when the breeding age is reached—but those who attain adulthood may thrive for many years. To observe a flock of up to five hundred of these birds in flight, alternately flashing pink and then grey as they turn and bank in the air, is a truly unforgettable experience— one of the many high spots of any trip to the intriguing continent down under.

Les Wood is past president of LAAS and an avid birder and horticulturist. He and his wife, Ruth, have travelled extensively in Australia, studying the continent's unique birds and plants. The drawings illustrating the article are by Robin Hill, from his book, "The Corner."

Richard Spotts

The Santa Ana Estuary

According to recent studies, only 10 percent of the estuaries and saltwater wetlands which existed in this region in 1896 have survived development. The tidal system at the mouth of the Santa Ana River is one of these— an area utilized by numerous wading and shorebirds, including three endangered subspecies: the California Least Tern, the Light-footed Clapper Rail, and Belding's Savannah Sparrow.

Before this century, fresh and saltwater marshes dominated this lowland area. But various human activities have since eliminated most such habitat, and what remains is degraded by impediments to tidal flushing, dredging of the main tidal channel, and oil field operations.

Now, because of growing fears about potential flooding, especially along the river's lower stretches in Orange County, the Army Corps of Engineers has developed plans to build one dam, raise another, and channelize additional miles of streambed. Whatever the merits of these flood control measures, the Corps *has* made one unquestionably beneficial recommendation, calling for the acquisition of 92 acres of saltmarsh and adjacent lands near the river's mouth (8 acres for mitigation, 84 acres for preservation).

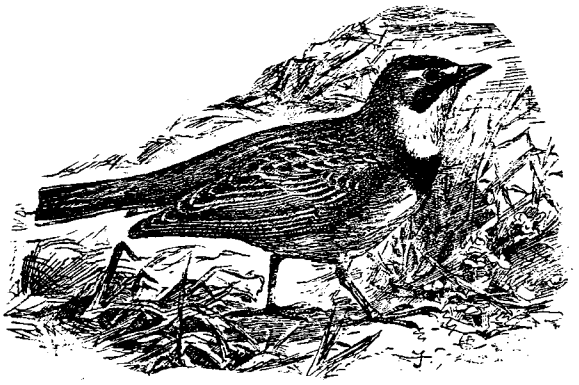
While the Corps is often criticized for its lack of sensitivity to environmental values, this is one instance where it deserves praise and support. In addition to purchasing the 92 acres, the Corps proposes to restore the area's ecological productivity by installing an improved tide gate to increase flushing action, by creating a Least Tern nesting site on higher ground, and by erecting fencing to discourage human interference.

Last August, however, the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors— a Corps reviewing body— made a disturbing announcement. While approving the 8-acre mitigation plan, the Board recommended that the 84-acre preservation plan be set aside. The effect of this judgment is as yet unclear; but the action is definitely open to criticism. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 directs all federal agencies to carry out programs to protect endangered species. While the 8-acre mitigation would replace, on an acre-for-acre basis, the marsh lands destroyed by direct Corps action, the indirect effect of the project would subject the marsh to tremendous local development pressures— once the danger of flooding is removed. Thus, upon completion, the Corp's project would virtually ensure the marsh's destruction, since the cost of acquisition of the marsh habitat would soon skyrocket out of reach of any conservation organization.

To support the original Corps proposal to acquire and restore the Santa Ana marsh, please write: *Chief of Engineers, Army Corps of Engineers, Forrestal Building, Washington, D.C. 20314.* Urge the Chief of Engineers to endorse the 84-acre acquisition proposal as a condition for approval of the Santa Ana River Project. You might also send a copy to: *The Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, Kingman Building, Fort Belvoir, Virginia 22060.* For more information, phone Richard Spotts at (213) 721-7466.

Shumway Suffel

Binoculars for Birding



There is no mystery in choosing binoculars, though at least five basic variables must be taken into account. These are: magnification, light gathering power, field of view, quality—and suitability for the intended purpose to which they will be put. Before setting out to purchase a pair, the prospective buyer would do well to carefully weigh each of these variables, selecting the right balance of characteristics for his particular needs.

Magnification normally ranges from six power (6X) to ten power (10X). The higher the power, the heavier the binocular—and the more exaggerated will be the effect of slight vibrations caused by an unsteady hand. For birding, magnification should be as great as you can comfortably, and firmly hold. If you have a steady hand, 9X or 10X is great; but if you are the least bit shaky, or excitable, 7X or 8X would be better.

Light gathering power is expressed as the ratio of the diameter of the front lens in millimeters to the magnification. Thus, the ratio for a 7x35 is 5 (35÷7), and for a 10x50, the ratio is the same; but for a 9x36 it is only 4 (36÷9). Fortunately, the eye compensates to a degree for overly bright or dark conditions by expanding or contracting the pupil, so the main consideration here remains that of magnification.

Field of view is expressed either in degrees, or in terms of the diameter of the viewing area at 1000 yards distance. Thus, 7° gives a field of 368 feet diameter at a distance of 1000 yards. A wide field of view is great for sports events or theatrical performances, but is relatively unimportant for birders, since the bird usually occupies only a small part of the whole field. It does, however, help to have a wide field when locating the bird—particularly before one is expert at aiming the binoculars.

Quality is not merely a matter of sharpness and lack of distortion; it is also a matter of good design, ruggedness, and longevity. When you begin shopping for binoculars, you will find that quality costs money. Serviceable binoculars are priced from $25 to $500, and the range of quality is as dramatic as the spread in the price. Your first pair, however, can be inexpensive, and then, as your needs become more discriminating, you can move up to a $100 pair, keeping the old ones in the car for emergencies. In the long run, the luxury binoculars should repay the investment—for the best of them are lightweight, waterproof, and precisely aligned (to prevent the headaches that can result from long hours of birding with poorly balanced models).

As important as any of the above considerations, however, is that of **design, and adaptability**—since each potential use has its own peculiar requirements. For birders, it is essential to be able to change focus fast—from a warbler in a nearby tree to a distant raptor soaring in the sky—or vice versa. And this necessitates center focusing—ruling out the individual-lens focusing occasionally found on older binoculars. Some birders even prefer models equipped with a variation of *Insta-focus*—a lever gadget which makes focusing much quicker than knob-turning—though less precise.

Though the warbler in the tree may be no more than fifteen feet away, you may still require binoculars in order to study details of its plumage; yet many binoculars—even some very expensive ones—will not focus down to less than 20 feet. If you already own such a pair, an optical shop may be able to adjust the focusing mechanism, trimming some of the unused long distance range and adding a few valuable feet on the close end. If this proves impractical, however, you may try the expedient of closing your left eye. At maximum extension, the right eyepiece will bring you in four or five feet closer.

Eyeglass wearers have a special problem with most binoculars, since the magnified image occurs at the plane of their eyeglass lenses, rather than at the plane of their eyes—a fact which works to reduce the brilliance of the image while shrinking the size of the observed field. There are, however, two alternatives available for dealing with the problem. If you are nearsighted or farsighted, all that is required is to remove your eyeglasses after you've spotted the bird, and then use the binoculars to correct for the optical deficiency. But for those with astigmatism—or for those who grow weary of the routine of switching between eyeglasses and binoculars—there is another solution. Special binoculars are available which are optically and mechanically designed to extend the exit image just far enough behind the rear lens so that it is near the actual plane of the eye, even when eyeglasses are worn. Such binoculars can be used by non-eyeglass wearers by means of the device of screw-out plastic eyecups or fold-out rubber eyecups, which hold the eye and the lens at the proper distance apart, while shading out extraneous sidelight. Unfortunately, some binoculars with retractable eyecups only partially compensate for the problems of eyeglass wearers—but they do help.

Clearly, finding the perfect binocular for your purposes can require some forethought—and, indeed, birders spend a good deal of time weighing the merits of one model or another. For myself, the light 9x36's are ideal (a brightness factor of only 4, but reasonably powerful magnification, without too much weight). For those younger, stronger, and more demanding, the heavier (36 oz.) 10x50's are preferred. But, if you're fortunate enough to be in the $400 class, there are very fine 10x40's which are also very light—yet sturdy and waterproof.

Where cost is concerned, no one in the market for binoculars should have to pay the list price—for liberal discounts are readily available from supply houses. Before you buy, however, stop in at Audubon House. The Society may be able to save you some money on a purchase—and, besides, every dime spent at LAAS goes to a worthwhile purpose.

Jean Brandt

BIRDING at Bridalveil

Yosemite National Park is one of the most spectacular scenic wonders on earth— and when you add to this the possibility of excellent birding— it is an unbeatable combination. All of the Yosemite "specialties" (except for the Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, which is a summer resident at or above snow line on the eastern side of the Sierras) *may* be found at or near Bridalveil Campground. On the Sept. 76 LAAS field trip, we had them all!!

Using the campground as a starting point, there are roads and trails in all directions that should be explored; however, an early morning walk along the trail to Westfall Meadow will produce the most variety. June through mid-September is the best time. Look for specific birds in the following places, although most of them may be found anywhere at this elevation in the western part of the park.

1. Goshawk: the trail to Ostrander Lake; edges of Peregoy, Westfall and McGurk meadows; along the road to Glacier Point. Just keep looking up!
2. Blue Grouse: the trail to Westfall Meadow; look on the flat, sandy area about ¾ mile up the trail before you go down to the meadow. They may also be looked for on the trail to Sentinel Dome, the trail from Sentinel Dome to Glacier Point, the trail from Glacier Point to Illilouette Falls and at Washburn Point. They have nested in past years in the old Ranger Station at Glacier Point.
3. Great Gray Owl: look in Westfall, Peregoy and McGurk meadows. These owls are diurnal, so mornings and late afternoons are best. They are also often found at Crane Flats (on the Big Oak Flats Road).
4. Pileated Woodpeaker: the trail to Westfall Meadow. They may also be found on the trail from Sentinel Dome to Glacier Pont, the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, Mirror Lake and the trail behind the Ahwahnee Hotel.
5. Williamson's Sapsucker: the trial to Westfall Meadow.
6. Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker: walk on the road west from the telephone booth to the junction with the

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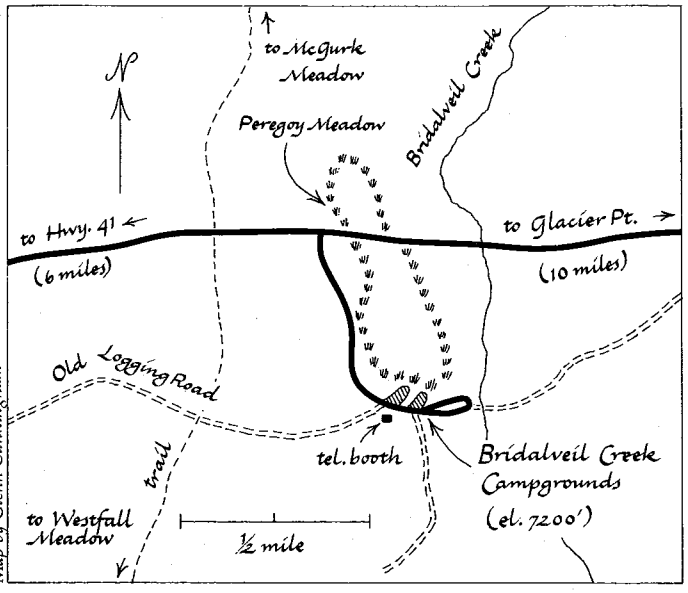


Map by Glenn Cunningham

Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

The Genus Empidonax

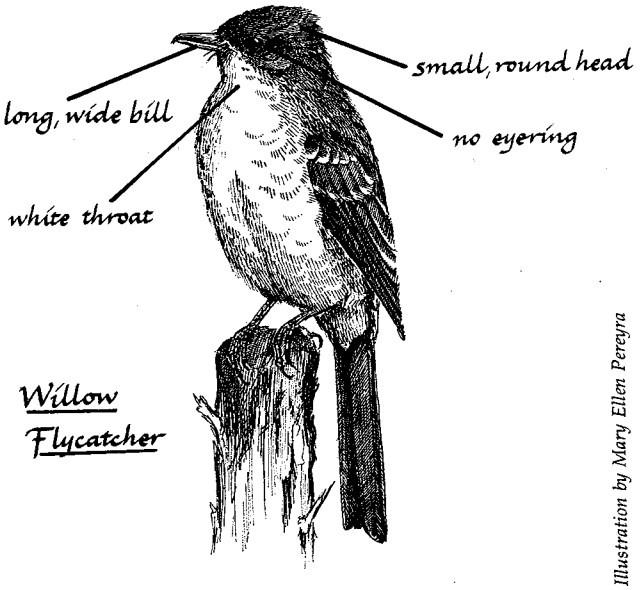


Illustration by Mary Ellen Pereyra

The Willow Flycatcher was until recently considered a race of the Traill's Flycatcher, but in the last nomenclature change (1973), the A.O.U. Checklist Committe split the Traill's into two species: a southerly and western form known as the Willow, and a northeastern form, the Alder Flycatcher (presently only separated in the hand, and by its distinctive song, a buzzy *fee-bee-o*). The Alder has yet to be officially recorded in California.

The latest of all of our regular spring migrants, the Willow Flycatcher is usually not encountered until the second week of May; and the species does not reach peak numbers until the last week of May or the first week of June. The fall migration usually begins in mid-August, and lasts through September, with a few birds persisting into mid-October. The species is unrecorded during the winter. As a breeding bird, the Willow is now very scarce in Southern California, though it was, at one time, quite common in dense willow thickets and other riparian habitats. In searching for breeding birds, the observer should keep in mind that singing birds in mid-to-late June are probably late spring migrants rather than summer residents.

By far the best mark on the Willow is the *lack of a distinctive eyering* (though it may have a very faint one). This is our only *Empidonax* that is so marked, as the rest all have rather distinctive eyerings. The head and face of the Willow is of a fairly uniform brownish-olive color, which further accentuates the lack of an eyering. The Willow has a *whiter throat* than the other *Empids*— with the exception of the Least— and its *bill is longer and wider* than either the Hammond's, Dusky, or Least. In addition, its head is proportionately smaller and rounder than that of all the other *Empids*, except for the Gray. The lack of an eyering may cause confusion with the Western Wood Pewee, and indeed many of the spring reports of Willow Flycatchers pertain instead to Pewees. The Pewee, however, can be easily told by its "peak-headed" appearance and by its

Continued on Pg. 7

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season

August weather in the southland tells us it's still summer, but for many avian species, the southward migration is already well underway.

As a class, the shorebirds are among the earliest migrants, and by late June, many had already returned. There were dozens of **Wilson's Phalaropes,** plus a few **Western** and **Least Sandpipers** along the coast during the last part of the month. An extremely early **Pectoral Sandpiper** appeared briefly on June 29 at San Elijo Lagoon, north of San Diego (Elizabeth Copper), and two breeding-plumaged **Golden Plovers** were at McGrath Park near Ventura on July 2 (Armand Cohan). It can be assumed that all of these are migrants. Non-breeding representatives of the larger shorebirds (godwits, curlews, etc.) are, however, present in every month of the year.

The most widely acclaimed rare bird in June was the **Wilson's Plover** at the mouth of the Santa Clara River near Ventura— found by Larry Ballard on June 27, and observed by dozens of elated birders during the next two days. This is the first confirmed sighting in California since 1918. **Chimney Swifts** were widely reported in late June: in Monrovia, where a pair summered in 1975 (Mike San Miguel); two in the South Coast Botanic Gardens, Palos Verdes (Linda Hale, June 19); and two more in the Arcadia Arboretum (Armand C., June 26). These sightings may indicate that the species' pioneering efforts in our area are meeting with some success. Perhaps the swifts are filling the niche vacated by the Purple Martins, now confined to a few favored spots in our mountains. As late as the 1920's, the martins were common nesters in such places as the Balboa Pavilion, and the copings of office buildings in downtown Pasadena.

Following the trend begun in May, June produced more than its quota of interesting birds. An adult **Little Blue Heron** was seen for one day only at San Elijo Lagoon, north of San Diego, late in the month. Nearby, at Camp Pendleton, three **Roseate Spoonbills** were found on June 24, and two days later presumably the same trio showed up at the San Joaquin Marsh above Newport Bay (Trudi Siptroth). These conspicuous birds are probably still in our area and should be found again. A report of one or more spoonbills near Lone Pine on the eastern side of the Sierra (Ralph Bunn, July 7) illustrates how hopelessly lost a vagrant can become. Seven more of the birds were seen at the south end of the Salton Sea (SESS) in late June and into July (Guy McCaskie et al); and at the north end of the Sea, Tom Frillman found an immature **Magnificent Frigatebird**, all three species of **scoter**, plus a few **Laughing Gulls** and **Gull-billed Terns**. Tom also reported **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** at SESS and at Finney Lake over the July 4th weekend. A single **Osprey** at Torrey Pines Marsh on July 4 was early for San Diego Co. The calling of **Whip-poor-wills** near Big Pines on the desert slope of the San Gabriel Mtns. indicates that they are now summer residents of this range, as well as the San Bernardinos and San Jacintos— where they were discovered by Lee Jones on May 2, 1968. A **San Blas Jay** at the James Andrews' feeder in Brentwood was almost certainly an escaped cagebird— as these spectacular birds are easily kept in captivity. A few **Mountain Chickadees** regularly move down from the mountains in late summer, but two in Altadena on July 1 were very early (John de Modena and Jon Fisher). John also found three **Great-tailed Grackles** on the Needles golf course the next day— north of their usual range on the Colorado River. A female **Bobolink** at the Arcadia Arboretum (Armand C., June 25) and a singing male **Indigo Bunting** in Malbu Canyon (Jon Dunn, June 23) were the only local reports of unusual passerines.

Vagrants, however, continued to be seen at the desert oases into late June. Delayed reports of a **Least Flycatcher** at Scotty's Castle on May 24, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** at Oasis on May 31, a **Gray Catbird** at Scotty's on May 26, and a **Red-eyed Vireo** at Deep Springs (Ben Parmenter, May 30) come from Don Roberson, who spent twelve days in the desert in late May. Van Remsen, who visited eastern San Bernardino Co. in late June, reported Steve Cardiff's discovery of a pair of **Pyrrhuloxias** in a wash 19 miles north of Vidal Jct., June 19; a pair of **Painted Redstarts,** with the male singing and displaying, in the white firs of the New York Mtns. (with Steve Cardiff, June 20); three pairs of **Hepatic Tanagers**, and a **Flammulated Owl**, in or near the white firs of the Kingston Range, north of Baker, on June 21 and 22 (almost certainly nesting at this late date); and, at Ft. Piute, NW of Needles, on June 23, a singing **Red-eyed Vireo**, a **Tennessee Warbler**, a **Worm-eating Warbler** (the second this year), two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, and four **Indigo Buntings**. Many of these were observed with Linda Hale or Steve Cardiff— who had a **Lapland Longspur** at Kelso on June 9th. This last is an incredible record, as Laps were nesting abundantly on the islands of the Bering Sea at that date. Obviously, in past years we have abandoned the desert oases a month too early.

If you've missed out on a birding vacation this summer, August is not too late to make amends. With a little luck, this month will bring Blue-footed or Brown Boobies to the Salton Sea— for the first time in several years; but even if there are no boobies, there will surely be Wood Storks, Laughing Gulls, Gill-billed Terns, Black Skimmers, and, possibly, Frigatebirds, spoonbills, and southern herons. Further afield, the lower Colorado River above Yuma offers Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Gila Woodpeckers, Wied's Flycatchers, Crissal Thrashers, Lucy's Warblers, and possibly Bronzed Cowbirds. And, while you're thinking of Yuma, you may wish to lengthen your expedition a bit and include southeastern Arizona. The summer rains should leave the high country green and cool by August. Jim Lane's Guide (available at Audubon House) is essential for first timers.

All sightings of unusual birds should be reported to Shum Suffel at 797-2965, or to Jean Brandt, 788-5188. Next month's TANAGER will carry an account of Shum's recent trip to the Arctic, on which three birds never before recorded for North America were found.

Birding at Bridalveil *Cont'd from Pg. 5*

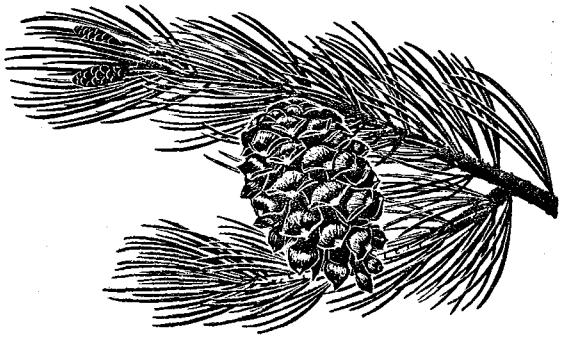
Westfall Meadow trail and then *north* along the trail to the Glacier Point Road, east along the road to the campground road and back to camp. The area enclosed by your walk harbors several pair of these woodpeckers. Also look along the trail to McGurk Meadow, the trail to Ostrander Lake, in the campground itself, and on the trail from the Glacier Point Road to Sentinel Dome. These birds drum *early* in the morning but are quietly active all day.

7. Red Crossbill: sporadic; may be found in flocks almost anywhere.

8. Pine Grosbeak: common throughout the area; easily found along the trail to Westfall Meadow.

Due to the too-frequent indiscriminate use of tape recorders I urgently request that they NOT be used. The birds are there, and it is only a matter of searching for them, and finding them. After all, isn't this what the sport of birding is all about?

Bridalveil Campground is at 7,200' elevation, so be prepared for cold nights. For this reason, except on holiday weekends, you can usually find a campsite. After the first heavy snowfall the campground and the Glacier Point Road east of Badger Pass are closed for the winter. Facilities include telephone, running water, rest rooms, tables and stoves. On summer evenings, there are excellent ranger-naturalist programs offered. *Good birding!*



Field Notes *Cont'd from Pg. 5*

darker coloration. Further, the Pewee does not flick its tail, while the Willow Flycatcher consistently does so. The Willow has also been mistaken for the Eastern Phoebe, but the bird should be easily separated by its smaller size, more conspicuous wing bars, and by its overall paler coloration. Then, too, almost all of the valid Eastern Phoebe records are in late fall and winter— an unlikely time to encounter a Willow Flycatcher.

The song of the Willow, an emphatic *fits-bew,* is often heard during the spring migration, simplifying the task of identification. The *whit* call note is similar to the *whit* notes of the other *Empids,* but it sounds a bit louder to me.

This concludes our discussion of the California *Empidonax*. Hopefully, in the future, supplements can be added on the Acadian, Yellow-bellied, and perhaps eventually, the Alder Flycatcher. These notes have been intended solely as a guide, and they will only prove useful once the observer has critically examined the species in the field. While the standard field guides are notoriously inadequate in handling the *Empids,* Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada* is a notable exception. His color plates of the genus are excellent.

BOOKS

WATCHING BIRDS: AN INTRODUCTION TO ORNITHOLOGY, by Roger F. Pasquier, Houghton Mifflin Co., (1977) 301 pp., $10.00.

In a delightful, non-technical fashion, *Watching Birds* provides the reader with an understanding of the principles and techniques of ornithology, and offers the birder a biological framework for the intelligent observation of the avian world. Emphasized is the role birds have come to play as indicators of environmental quality— and by catalyzing the conversion of the sport-birder to a keen perceiver of avian natural history, Pasquier has attempted to increase the birder's effectiveness as an environmentalist.

This is an up-to-date survey of ornithology geared to the non-biologist. Topics such as the origin and evolution of birds, flight, anatomy, annual cycle, and reproduction are treated, along with abundant examples meaningful to the North American birder (unfortunately the examples are almost invariably drawn from eastern North American birds). Margaret La Farge's attractive drawings are used liberally to illustrate key points. Discussions of taxonomy, the adaptive significance of plumage patterns and vocalizations, diversity of foraging behavior, migration, and distribution will be of particular interest to the birder. Practical suggestions for observing and attracting birds, and for recording observations are included.

Watching Birds does not pretend to be a defintive ornithology text. Much material is, of necessity, greatly oversimplified— when Pasquier states that something "is poorly known," he often means that exciting, plausible theories have been advanced but are just too complex to be considered in his book. The stimulated reader should next investigate more advanced ornithology texts and ornithological journals (Pasquier discusses the available literature in an appendix).

This book will answer innumerable questions which have nagged those birders without a background in biology. More importantly, it will contribute a new direction and sense of discovery to each birding outing.

–Kimball Garrett

WESTERN TANAGER

EDITOR Barry Clark
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Steve Maskel
CALENDAR EDITOR Gail Gifford

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PRESIDENT Sanford Wohlgemuth
1ST VICE-PRESIDENT Edward Navojosky
2ND VICE-PRESIDENT Kimball Garrett
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Ann Skipper

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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, AUGUST 21—Mt. Pinos. This is one of the best areas for our montane species. Birds to be looked for are Brewer's, Lark and Fox Sparrows, Olive-sided and Dusky Flycatchers, Calliope Hummingbirds, White-headed Woodpeckers, Williamson's Sapsuckers and Townsend's Solitaires. In the afternoon Condors will be watched for from the Condor Lookout at the top of the mountain. Go north on Interstate 5 to the Frazier Park offramp. Go west past the town of Frazier Park to Cuddy Valley Road in Lake-of-the-Woods. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the intersection of Frazier Park Rd. and Cuddy Valley Rd. Leader: Ed Navojosky. 938-9766

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25—Pelagic Trip to Anacapa and Santa Barbara Islands. This will be a trip to look for pelagic birds and we will not land. At Anacapa we will look for the American Oystercatcher. It has been found on the last 4 trips. At Santa Barbara Island the boat will circumnavigate the island and go from there out to the Osborne Banks. Some of the possibilities to be seen are Long-tailed Jaegers, Flesh-footed, Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters and Black Petrels. Last year at this time the Galapagos Petrel was seen. The *Paisano* will depart from the Channel Islands National Monument dock at 6:00 a.m. You are requested to be at the dock 30 minutes before departure time. Take Highway 101 north to Ventura, exit at Victoria Ave. and follow the Channel Islands National Monument signs to the Marina. Price: $18.00 per person. Make checks payable to the 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. Phone: 288-0545. Leader: Shumway Suffel. 797-2965.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10—Santa Clara River and Bouquet Canyon. The lush riparian growth along the river will be birded. Fall migrants are to be expected. Later the group will bird Bouquet Canyon. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of J's Restaurant at the Magic Mountain Parkway turnoff from Route 5. From Los Angeles you take 5 North. Anyone wishing to spend the weekend may do so on the property of the trip leader, Laura Jenner Vance, who lives in Bouquet Canyon. Please call her in advance at (805) 252-5261.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17-18—Pelagic Trip out of San Diego to the Cortez Banks (U.S. waters 97 miles off-shore). Some of the species expected are Craveri's Murrelets, Long-tailed Jaegers, Manx Shearwaters, Leach's Storm Petrels and Red-billed Tropicbirds. Other possibilities include Black-footed Albatross, Ashy Storm Petrels and Wilson's Storm Petrels. Bunks are available on board and the 95' fishing boat has a complete galley serving food. Price is $25 per person. Make checks payable to William Von Bergen, Jr. Send self addressed, stamped envelope with the check to him at P.O. Box 81604, San Diego, California 92138. Leader: Arnold Small 275-8823. Further instructions will be mailed upon receipt of your check.

Anyone wishing to drive or share a ride to the PRBO S.E. Arizona field trip, Aug. 6-13, please contact Sonia Appel, 457-9613.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 24—Pelagic trip on Monterey Bay. *The Sea Wolf* will depart from Fisherman's Wharf, Sam's Fishing Fleet Dock at 7:30 am. You are requested to be at the dock 30 minutes before departure time. Price $15.00 per person. Make check payable to L.A. Audubon Society and send with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and your phone number to Phil Sayre (address and phone on August 25 trip). Directions for finding the Wharf can be obtained in Monterey. Leader: Arnold Small. 275-8823.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9—Pelagic trip to Anacapa Island and out to sea. Details for reservations same as August 25th trip. Departure at 8:00 a.m. Returning 6:00 p.m.

Field Trips

For additional information, contact Field Trip Chairman, Ed Navojosky, 938-9766.

California Birds

This fall UCLA is again offering Arnold Small's popular course in California birds. The five lectures and four field trips commence Sept. 28th. Fee: $75. For information, contact UCLA Extension, 825-7093.

Annual Picnic

Sunday, August 7th

Will Rogers State Park

8:00 a.m. to dusk

Bring Your Family. Bring Your Friends.

Bring a Picnic Lunch.

Free Beer & Soft Drinks

Spend a day exploring this new addition to the Santa Monica Mountains Park system. To reach the Park, take Sunset Blvd. west from the San Diego Fwy. The entrance road is about six miles from the Fwy., on the right. The festivities will get underway with an 8:00 a.m. birdwalk, for those who arrive early.

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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