

WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 44

September 1977

Number 1

Siberia— 50 Miles Away

by Shumway Suffel



outh of the Bering Straits and two hundred miles west of Nome, Alaska, lies one hundred mile long St. Lawrence Island—with the Eskimo village of Gambell at its extreme northwestern tip. To the west and northeast of the settlement is the frozen Bering Sea, and to the southeast rise the snow-covered Sevuokuk Mountains. South and east of the town are the "boneyards," the sites of ancient villages, recently exhumed by the Eskimos in their search for old walrus ivory. Except for these sites, enriched by the refuse of past generations, there is little vegetation near Gambell. At this latitude (three degrees south of the Arctic Circle) there are neither bushes nor trees—and few annuals manage to produce seeds in the sterile gravel waste that surrounds the village. But on a rare clear day the snow clad mountains of Siberia rim the western horizon, less than fifty miles away—and therein lies the secret of Gambell's appeal. For it is here that birders come—to the northwest frontier of the continent—in search of strays that find their way across barriers of mountain, sea, and tundra, to leap the gap between Eurasia and North America.

Looking for birds on the edge of a continent is always an exciting pastime—but at Gambell, where the avifauna of the Nearctic realm meets that of the Palaearctic, birding has all the elements of high adventure.

There were twenty-seven of us altogether, comprising two groups, banded together for a combined assault on the birds of Gambell. Each of our leaders—Ben King, Will Russell, Davis Finch, and Rich Stallcup—qualifies easily as a legend in his own right; and each brought to the task immense natural ability, combined with field experience in Asia and Alaska. Backed up by such high-caliber expertise and armed with scopes, binoculars, and walkie-talkies, we were ready for whatever challenge might come our way.

The initial challenge, we discovered, was getting there in the first place. Flying to or from Gambell is a gamble—to say the least—as the airstrip is often weathered in, and there are no navigational aids. There is radio communication



Black Guillemots

with Nome, but the small planes which make the flight must be assured of clear landings at both airstrips. So the first of us arrived a day early, and the last left four days late.

But once you're there on the island the game really begins. For the big gamble then is whether wind, weather, and nature will all conspire to bring in the Asiatic and Arctic vagrants. For us the time was the first week in June, late in the migration season, and a strong west wind blew across from Siberia, moving the pack ice toward the shore—conditions that were to transform an exciting Alaskan trip into the birding experience of a lifetime.

When we arrived, there were two days of relatively clear weather, with enough new birds to keep us in the field sixteen hours a day—enough birds, in fact, to permit American Birding Association president, Arnold Small, to add twenty-five new species to the 650 species on his pretrip A.O.U. area list!

Davis Finch met our first small party with news of two McKay's Buntings (much sought after and often missed), which he quickly tracked down for us. The Point, with cold blue water behind the shore-ice and a white line of sea-ice in the distance, provided all four eiders, a few Emperor Geese, and hordes of auklets, mostly Crested and Least, with a few Parakeets. Thanks to Davis' expertise, we saw a very unexpected Dovekie, which stayed until

afternoon—when the second wave of birders arrived.

The Point is the most northerly tip of the level, gravelly triangle on which Gambell sits, and it is from here that sea birds can be most readily seen. Landbirds and shorebirds are mostly found after a three mile hike to the meadows that lie south of a rather large lake—or more easily, in the boneyards near the town. It is at these sites that we concentrated most of our time.

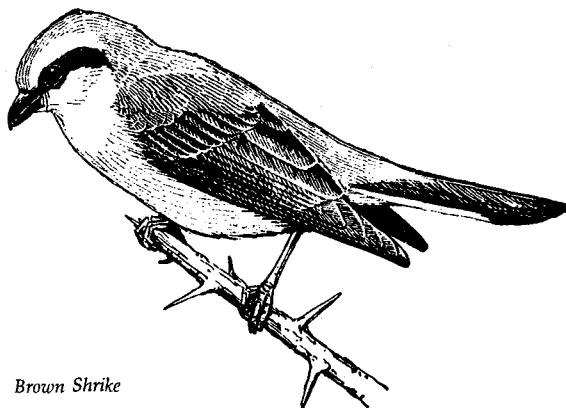
In the boneyards we were excited to find Mongolian Plovers, Rufous-necked Sandpipers, "Eurasian" Whimbrels (with a light rump like a dowitcher), both White and Yellow Wagtails, Red-throated Pipits, and our first five-star bird—a Common Rosefinch. Later we located a second Rosefinch, which prompted Rich to declare, "That's the largest flock ever seen in North America—two!" Little did we suspect that within four days we'd raise that two to eighteen!

Then the weather deteriorated and the birding improved. The strong west winds increased, and, aided by the current, brought the pack-ice into shore in a matter of hours. There it ground against the shore-ice with an awesome grating noise, created great pressure ridges just offshore, and covered our clear blue sea with glistening white ice which seemed to extend all the way to Siberia. The return of the pack ice brought us three gulls which are rarely seen south of the Arctic Ocean. First, on the ice, there were large dark-mantled gulls with striking red legs—undoubtedly Slaty-backed Gulls. Then next morning we were awakened by irrepressible Ray Hannikman, with the good news that there was an Ivory Gull on the ice near the Point. So, foul weather gear over pajamas, we were on our way—and there it was: pristine white with tiny black markings on wings and tail—the first of several Ivories we were to see in the next few days.

Later, at dinner, another call came—this time of a Ross' Gull at the landing! Dinner forgotten we struggled through the loose gravel to the shore, where two Eskimo hunters were skinning and cleaning the day's catch of walrus and seal. There, attracted by the blood and offal, was a pastel pink dream come true—a first year Ross' Gull, coursing up and down within twenty feet of the shore.

During the next two days the strong west wind brought a veritable bonanza of Asian "overshoots"—spring migrants destined for breeding grounds in northeast Siberia, and transported, by fortune, our way.

Wood Sandpipers and Polynesian Tattlers became more common than their New World counterparts. A Dusky Thrush flushed from a boneyard landed at a good distance, was identified by those with scopes at the ready, and then flew on. Wheatears and Bluethroats were an everyday occurrence. Then there was a shrike, rufous brown where



Brown Shrike

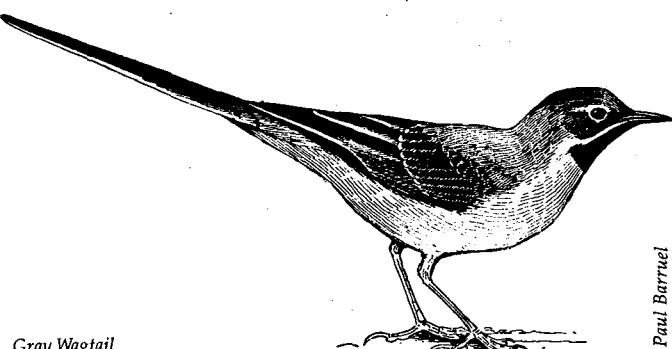
ours are gray; and again we were grateful for the background of Ben King, author of *The Birds of Southeast Asia*, who identified it as a Brown Shrike, our first new species for North America. Then the next day Ben located a small Eurasian flycatcher, dull brown with a reddish throat and a blackish tail, showing white at the base of the outer feathers—a Red-throated Flycatcher. This was our second A.O.U. area record—or so we thought until we later learned that a trio from University of Alaska had collected one on Shemya Island near the tip of the Aleutians four days earlier.

The following day at the east boneyards, the walkie-talkie "beeped," informing us that Rich Stallcup had found a rare Gray Wagtail at the south end of the lake. We hurried across the ice-covered surface—a scary journey, as there were soft spots—only to find that our quarry had flown onto a mushy hillside. There we spent an hour in an unsuccessful sweep of the area—but the bird was gone. Fortunately, however, it, or another one (highly unlikely, considering the rarity of the species) appeared near the village that evening and was seen by nearly everyone.

After our fruitless search on the hillside some of us joined another group which was intently studying a small brown bird actively feeding near the ground—a bird with a short rusty-buff supercilium. After a quick conference, it was concluded that it was a *Phylloscopus* warbler, one of a notoriously difficult Old World genus, known in North America because of the nesting in Alaska of the Arctic Warbler. But this was not an Arctic Warbler—not a hint of olive anywhere, and an eye stripe too short for an Arctic. Ben narrowed it down to either a Dusky or a Radde's Warbler—and a later examination of specimens at the American Museum of Natural History confirmed his judgment that it was a Dusky Warbler—another new North American record.

Certainly this should have been enough, but before we were through one or more of the group saw Yellow-billed Loon, Bean Goose, Common Sandpiper, Great Knot, and Indian Tree Pipit.

With a list like this it would seem that Gambell is a sure bet in early June. But unfortunately, such is not the case—as top field observers have spent all of late May and early June there with little more than the expected seabird specialties and a few of the more usual Asiatic strays. We, however, were three times blessed—by the weather, by the birds—and, most importantly, by the fact that we were there! 



Paul Barrieu

Gray Wagtail

Sandy Wohlgemuth

The Convention

On June 9-11 five of us from L.A. Audubon were in Estes Park, Colorado at the National Audubon Convention, joining over 950 delegates from chapters in 47 states in a non-stop, action-packed round of workshops and general meetings, all set against the dramatic backdrop of the snowy peaks of the Rockies.

For most of us, our only contact with the National Society is an occasional Letter from the President in *Audubon Magazine*, and it's easy for it all to seem vague and remote, unrelated to our lives. But one of the most vivid impressions we brought home from the convention was of our leaders—real pros in every regard. No longer will Elvis Stahr seem to us just a distant name. On the platform he comes across as a plain-spoken, no-nonsense leader who knows the score, understands the political facts of life—and moves in the higher circles of power. With a constituency of 350,000, that's as it should be. But the talent doesn't stop at the top. At the workshop level it was revealing to talk with the lower echelon of the staff and see so many bright young people who have done their homework—people who can look a congressman in the eye and present a convincing case for a better environment.

The workshops were two-hour, intensive sessions, during which small groups of us focussed our attentions on national problems and chapter problems. Among the topics mulled over were strip mining legislation, the Clean Air Act, coastal zone management, Alaska National Interest Lands, lobbying, building membership, and Audubon educational approaches. There was ample opportunity for productive give-and-take, and I think we all came away with some valuable information and insights.

But the message of the convention—loud and clear—was a finger pointed at every one of us: *Your voice must be heard!* This admonition came from every direction—from Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus down to the most obscure panelist in a workshop. You may not believe it—they told us—but that lowly letter to your congressman *does* make a difference. Andrus made it clear that we have an ally in the White House, that most of our goals are their goals—but that it is up to us to push both Congress and the Administration in the right direction. Senator Gary Hart of Colorado (the environmental Mr. Clean), in open western shirt and cowboy boots, warned of a tough fight ahead. But with a fistful of facts and figures he attacked the argument that there is a basic conflict between jobs and the environment. These are phony alternatives, he said. "Environmental and conservation measures are not only compatible with solving our economic and energy problems, they are essential ingredients of that solution."

Though there was little said about birds during the three day session, we did see many delegates up before breakfast to search the YMCA grounds for Evening Grosbeaks, Williamson's Sapsuckers, Dippers, and Golden Eagles.

None of us, however, had come to Colorado to bird. We had come to reaffirm our common hope that the natural world will be preserved. And on this level all agreed it was a good convention. Good to meet people from across the country who share our philosophy. And good to know that we are not alone.



Roger Tory Peterson

Questionnaire

Ten years ago the number of Audubon members in all of California was about equal to the membership of L.A. Audubon today. Our organization is growing fast—doubling in size every five years. In order to keep abreast of the needs of our membership and to fulfill our commitment as a conservation organization, we need input and assistance. That's why we are asking each of our members to fill out the enclosed questionnaire. By learning more about who you are and how you view our organization, we will be better equipped to plot a positive course for the future, a course that will strengthen our Chapter and the Society.

CONSERVATION

Roadless Areas

On July 30th, a workshop was held at Pasadena City College to provide public input on an inventory of National Forest Roadless Areas. Part of a national survey being undertaken by the U.S. Forest Service, the inventory will help determine the suitability of these areas for wilderness or non-wilderness use, providing data for proposals to be presented to Congress.

The occasion offers an excellent opportunity for us to influence plans for use of our valuable forest resources. Any of our members who have favorite birding areas within So. California's National Forests are urged to pass along their recommendations for preservation of these sites, by communicating as soon as possible with Los Angeles Forest Supervisor, William T. Dresser, 150 South Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101, telephone: (213) 577-0050—or by contacting Conservation co-chairman, Peter Skipper (276-8990).

The Conservation Challenge

At the present time there are a number of pressing conservation issues which could have a major impact upon birding as well as on environmental quality in Southern California. Luckily, however, the political climate at the moment is favorable to conservation legislation—a fact which has recently been reiterated by national officials:

Activities which are wasteful, unsafe, or economically or environmentally unsound simply cannot be pursued.

—President Carter.

Conservation has now become indispensable.

—James R. Schlesinger.

Most of all, we have an opportunity to bring our government back around to the practice of protecting and enhancing the environment instead of leasing or damming it or ignoring it away.

—Cecil D. Andrus.

Today, not only at the national level, but at the state and local level as well, planning commissions and agencies are literally begging for responsible guidance in the area of environmental planning.

It is the obligation—and privilege—of L.A. Audubon to play an active role in this new push for environmental quality. To exercise this responsibility, our Chapter is currently mobilizing its resources to tackle the Southern California conservation issues head on.

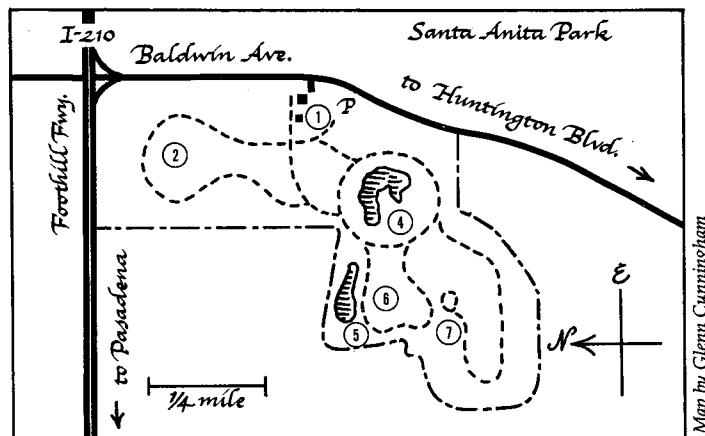
But to do this we will need all the help we can get—from birders with information on an area of particular interest, to volunteers who can ride herd on issues and attend hearings and planning commission meetings—to those with the time to write a letter or two for an important cause. More than ever before, the challenge is exciting; and the rewards are many—and within reach.

Your input is essential to the success of our efforts, and for this reason we are asking that our members fill out and return the enclosed questionnaire. Or if you wish you may communicate your suggestions directly to Conservation co-chairmen Peter Skipper (276-8990) or Steven Cole (981-4840 or 475-3812).



Jean Brandt

BIRDING the Arboretum



A diversity of plant life plus the presence of water promises excellent birding in any arboretum—and the L.A. State and County Arboretum in Arcadia is no exception. The best birding areas there are described below, with numbers corresponding to those on the map.

1. Entrance: three species of introduced parrots (Red-crowned Amazon, Lilac-crowned Amazon, and Yellow-headed) may be found in the early morning or late afternoons in the tall eucalyptus trees west of the coffeeshop.

2. Australian section: large flocks of Robins and sparrows winter here, and in past years the Dusky Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Varied Thrush, and White-throated Sparrow have been found. In spring, tanagers, orioles, and migrants are abundant.

3. South African section: look in the clumps of bottlebrush for hummingbirds in season (Anna's, Black-chinned, Costa's, Rufous, and Allen's), and watch for the resident covey of California Quail.

4. Lasca Lagoon: in winter look for Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead (one record only) and Wood Ducks. Green Herons, Least Bitterns, Gallinules, Spotted Sandpipers, and Sora Rails are found in the reeds. Near the adobe a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks is often seen; and check the wintering flocks of White-crowned Sparrows for possible Harris' and White-throated Sparrows.

5. Upper Lagoon: in fall and spring, warblers are abundant in the willows on the west end, and Hammond's, Western, and Olive-sided Flycatchers are not uncommon in fall. Look for the introduced Red-whiskered Bulbuls here. An Eastern Phoebe once wintered, and a Northern Waterthrush was seen during fall migration. Chimney Swifts were found here during June and July 1977.

6. Meadowbrook: in winter and spring look for Water Pipits and kingbirds, as well as resident Killdeer.

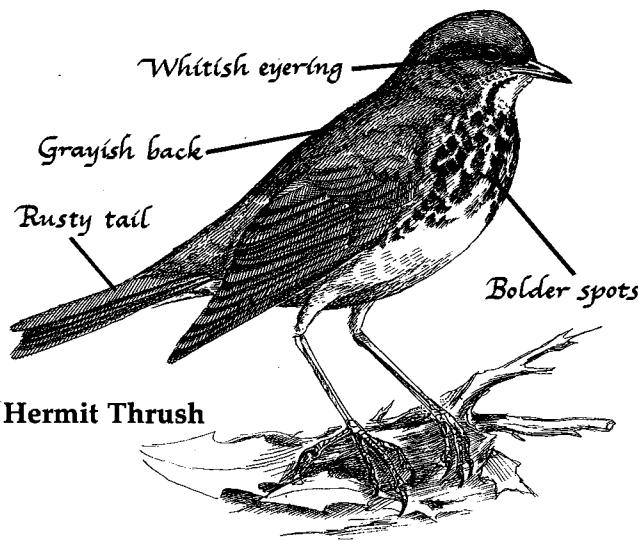
7. Tallac Knoll: Hutton's Vireos nest in the oaks, and as this is the wildest part of the Arboretum, look for hawks and owls. A good place for migrants.

Located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of Interstate 210 on Baldwin Ave. in Arcadia, the Arboretum is officially open from 9 a.m. to dusk; however, birders usually may enter the grounds earlier in the morning. Bird lists and maps are available at the gate and there is no entrance fee. Good birding!

Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

The Catharus Thrushes

Illustration by Mary Ellen Pereira



One of the more frequent winter sights in our parks and gardens is the **Hermit Thrush**. From late September to mid April, the Hermit Thrush is a common winter visitant throughout the lowlands of California, though it is decidedly less numerous in the eastern and southeastern deserts. During the breeding season the bird nests in the Canadian zone (above 7000') from the San Gabriels to the San Jacinto Mts.; and a much paler Great Basin race also nests from the White Mts. in eastern Inyo County south at least to Clark Mountain.

The Hermit Thrush is the smallest of the *Catharus* (formerly *Hylocichla*) thrushes, and it is the only one that has the frequent habit of *flicking its wings* while perched. The best mark on the bird is the *rusty-red tail*, which *contrasts with the rump and back*. This mark, however, can be difficult to discern, particularly when the bird is in bad light—and too often the inexperienced observer makes the rapid and often inaccurate assumption that the thrush under observation is not a Hermit, because it appears to lack the reddish tail.

The other common *Catharus* thrush in California, the **Swainson's**, is known only as a migrant and summer resident. From late April to early June (peaking in mid to late May) the species can be seen throughout the lowlands of California; but the largest concentrations—at times numbering well over a hundred birds—are encountered at the interior desert oases. The fall migration lasts from mid September to mid October, and it is almost *strictly* confined to the coast. This species also nests locally in the well vegetated riparian areas along the coastal slope south to San Diego County. There is not a single reliable winter record of a Swainson's Thrush for California. Though there are well over a hundred Christmas Count reports for this species, not one of these sightings has been properly documented, in the form of a photograph or a full description—and therefore all the records must be considered in question.

The Swainson's Thrush is *larger* than the Hermit, and the typical western race, the "Russet-backed Thrush," has a much *richer rufous-brown coloration* to the upperparts. The Swainson's also has a distinct *buffy eyering*, as opposed to

the Hermit, which has a thinner *whitish eyering*. The Swainson's, in addition, has *fainter spotting* on the underparts than the Hermit, which has *bold, distinct spots*. In both species the rows of spots on the breast tend to form streaks. The cheek, breast, and flanks of the Swainson's is shaded with a *rich golden-buff*, as opposed to the *gray* coloration on the Hermit. There are a couple of records from the traditional vagrant traps of Swainson's Thrushes with olive-colored backs, totally lacking any rufous tones. These records are certainly not of the typical "Russet-backed" race, and some might represent birds of the easternmost race, the "Olive-backed Thrush." Hopefully a positive determination of race can eventually be achieved through proper documentation of these atypical birds.

The typical call note of the Swainson's, a soft *wink*, has often been compared to the sound of a droplet falling into a pool of water. The Hermit Thrush gives a variety of calls, the most common of which is a low *chup*, or *chup-chup*, but none are even remotely similar to the call of the Swainson's Thrush.

Next month—another *Catharus*, the Veery. 



Audubon Scholarships

This year L.A. Audubon will again award several scholarships to the Audubon Workshop of the West, a highly-acclaimed two-week ecology study session held during midsummer in the Wind River Mtns. of Wyoming. Entrants must be 18 or over by July 1978, and preference will be given to those who can apply what they learn in their studies or their work. For information or applications, write, visit, or call Audubon House (876-0202). All applications must be received by December 15th.

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



hirty days hath September—and they are far too few, for this is the month when we must plan carefully to even partially cover the multitude of birding opportunities which present themselves. Pelagic trips are scheduled from Monterey and San Diego, the Monterey trip offering a chance to see the massive flock of storm-petrels which congregates off Moss Landing each fall. These are mostly Ashy Petrels, with some Blacks and the possibility of a single Wilson's or Fork-tailed Petrel thrown in. In addition, there should be three or more species of shearwaters, five alcids, several gulls, two jaegers, and a chance for an albatross or skua. On the San Diego trip to the Cortez Banks, 97 miles offshore, there is also a good chance for something really rare.

Shorebirding is at its best in September, at least where quality is concerned. In terms of quantity, it will be hard to match the more than ten thousand shorebirds—mostly dowitchers—on the mudflats of Upper Newport Bay on July 29. Firsts for the season were an early **Stilt Sandpiper** at the south end of the Salton Sea on July 19 (Guy McCaskie), an "always early" **Baird's Sandpiper** at McGrath State Park, Ventura, on July 27 (Ruth Lohr), and another at Seal Beach on the 31st (Rusty Scalf). Top honors, however, will go to the discoverer of a very rare Buff-breasted or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. The few previous sightings were in September.

July's hot, dry weather spawned destructive brush fires which fortunately had little effect upon local birding. **Frigatebirds** continued to be found at the Salton Sea: an immature was near Salton City on July 8 and 9 (John de Modeno), and another was at SESS on July 24 (Larry Sansone). More unusual were the many reports from the coast—three individuals soaring over Pacific Palisades on July 10 (Freeman and Marge Tatum); three (possibly the same trio) at Malibu on July 12, and one at the Santa Maria River mouth the same day (Jon Atwood); two over Laguna Beach on July 23, and one on Aug. 1 (both Jerry Johnson, who has seen ten there since 1972); one over the Silver Strand, Coronado, July 29 (Lewis Bevier); another at McGrath S.P. on July 31 (Kimball Garrett et al); two over Marina del Rey July 30 (Jerry J.); and, finally, sightings of three and then two (thought to be the same birds) at Huntington Beach on Aug. 3 (John de Modeno).

An adult **White Ibis** was seen on two occasions at SESS—first at Unit 1, and then across the Sea at the Wister Unit. The seven **Roseate Spoonbills**, previously reported at Unit 1, apparently moved several miles south where they were seen in late July along the New River, near Seeley (Guy McC.); and the three immatures in the San Joaquin Marsh, U.C. Irvine, stayed through July. A lady who once lived near the extensive Playa del Rey marshes told me last February of having seen four or five "large pink birds" there in the 1920's. I hope she will supply me with written details of the sighting, as these older records are important. Gambel's (1849) record (small flocks "have several times extended up the coast even as far as San Francisco") quoted in *Distribution of the Birds of California* by Grinnell and Miller



(1944) was viewed with skepticism prior to recent coastal occurrences—but it now seems more credible.

A report of a **Masked Duck** (Larry Ballard, July 17) at Unit 1, SESS, broke up Don Roberson's house party in the mountains as birders from San Francisco to San Diego hurried to the scene. Unlike Larry's discovery of a **Wilson's Plover** (first since 1918) in June, it could not be confirmed. While the birders were searching for the Masked Duck, a **Peregrine Falcon** flew in from the Sea, stooped on a cattail-bordered pond, flew off with a **Black Tern** in its talons, and was immediately pursued by a fearless **Forster's Tern**. Conclusions about "one good tern," etc. are not appropriate. Later that day an early **Swainson's Hawk** was soaring overhead near Indio (Kimball Garrett et al, July 19). Swainson's Hawks normally migrate in mid-September. **Ospreys** were reported from the Long Beach pier (Brian Daniels, July 27), and from Border Park below San Diego (Lewis B., July 28).

The LAAS trip to Mt. Pinos on July 23 found not only our largest bird but also our smallest—two **California Condors**, and many **Calliope Hummingbirds**. Don Tiller of the U.S.F.&W. Service estimates that there are now about 300 **Black Skimmers** on the Salton Sea, a dramatic increase from the first five skimmers found there only nine years ago. Along our coast they are rarely seen except at the south end of San Diego Bay. Thus two at the mouth of the Santa Maria River on July 15 (Helen Matelson of Santa Barbara) and two at McGrath S.P., Ventura, on July 16 and 17 (*fide* Sue Stout) are particularly interesting. If they were the same pair, and if these dates are correct, they would be moving south, and might be found in our area again. Following his recent study of the **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** in the Sacramento Valley, David Gaines searched our area for cuckoos, checking several places where they once nested, but were presumed to be extirpated. He found at least one pair in the riparian growth along the Santa Ana River near Riverside in July, and confirmed Jan Tarble's observation of cuckoos near Tecopa, Inyo Co. in June '76. Jan believes there may be three pairs there this July. She also found **Summer Tanagers** feeding young near Tecopa in July—a northward extension of their known breeding range.

A **Green Violet-ear** (a large neotropical hummingbird) found on July 31 by Doug Morton at Iris Meadows near the top of Mt. Pinos was probably an escaped bird, even at this highly improbable location. Rick Rundel of the L.A. Zoo and Don Bleitz of the Bleitz Wildlife Foundation both advise me that Violet-ears were imported in large numbers up to four or five years ago. Don further remembers that about eight years ago the roof blew off an importer's aviary and about forty tropical hummers escaped, some twenty of which were Violet-ears. It was probably one of these which visited a feeder in Altadena near my home. Since they are sturdy, long-lived birds (Don kept one for more than twelve years), it seems more probable that a few have lingered here, supported by local feeders, than that this non-migratory species could have survived the 1,300 mile journey over the inhospitable deserts from its home in central Mexico.

The presence of **Western Tanagers** along the Colorado River on July 11 is inexplicable, as they are mountain nesters and should not move to the lowlands until September. Male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** have appeared in unprecedented numbers this summer. Several were seen at the desert oases in May and June as expected, but then Jim Clements had one at his home in Mandeville Canyon, Bob Johnson found one in the South Coast Botanic Gardens on July 30, Jan Tarble saw one near Tecopa on the 31st, and Alan de Tuerioz had one in his Mt. Washington garden on August 1st. Did the roof blow off another aviary?

The problem in September is not where to go, but how to find time to cover all the birdable areas—for interesting birds will be everywhere this month.

Coastal lagoons should host hordes of birds, but don't neglect grassy areas—even extensive lawns—or fresh water marshes, as several less common shorebirds favor such habitats.

Then there are the passerine migrants which come through in maximum numbers this month. We can normally expect eighteen species of flycatchers, seven vireos, more than thirty warblers, and about forty-five fringillids (Cardinals to longspurs) in September and October. The coastal canyons and promontories with trees and water are favored stopping points in the fall, but the desert oases are also productive—though not exclusively so, as they are in the spring. Fennel clumps are a neglected attraction for warblers and other small birds in the fall. Large stands of fennel can be found near the mouths of the coastal canyons, in the area between the highway and the Marineland parking lot, and east of Pt. Fermin Park in the nature area. *

All sightings of unusual birds should be reported to Shum Suffel at 797-2965, or to Jean Brandt, 788-5188.

Changes in the LAAS Board

Kimball Garrett is now 1st Vice-President of the Chapter, and Jerry Altman has joined the Board in the capacity of 2nd Vice-President. Jean Brandt has taken over as Program Chairman, and Steven Cole has joined Peter Skipper as Co-chairman of the Conservation Committee.

New UCLA Courses on Birds

"*Birds in the Suburbs*," a program to enrich the experience of observing birds in suburban backyards and neighborhoods, includes a workshop on the techniques of improving backyard habitat and providing food and nesting opportunities. **Jeffrey Froke**, new Manager of the Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary, will instruct. Tuesday, October 4 to November 8, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., 5117, Math Sciences Building, UCLA. Two Saturday field trips are planned. The fee is \$30.

"*Birds of the San Francisco Bay Region*," a four-day field study tour on the Thanksgiving holiday, will view the birds of the coastal habitats north of San Francisco. Included are Rodeo Beach and Lagoon, Stinson Beach, Bolinas Lagoon, and the Point Reyes National Sea Shore. Top birders, **Herb and Olga Clarke**, will lead the tour. An orientation meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 10, 7 to 9:30 p.m., at UCLA. The field trip is scheduled for Thursday, November 24 to Sunday, November 27. The fee is \$135. For additional information and applications for either of these courses, contact the UCLA Extension, 825-1901.

BOOKS

CROWS OF THE WORLD, by Derek Goodwin, Cornell University Press, (1976) \$28.50.

This volume is one of the latest of a recent rash of monographs devoted to the major avian families—many of which have not been reviewed in this fashion in almost a century. The corvids are especially conducive to such treatment, for they're widespread and diverse—ranging from the somber Raven to the flashy oriental magpies and the lark-like ground jays of Asia—and in behavior and biology they're probably as well known as the members of any avian family.

Goodwin describes all 116 species, with range maps for each—his accounts varying in length from the 23 pages assigned to the Eurasian Jay to the 1/2 page devoted to the obscure Celebes Pied Crow. Though less than half the species are illustrated, only a few of these by color plates, the highly readable text is full of seductive suggestions about corvid evolution and the adaptive significance of plumage, voice, and behavior. Altogether a fine book for anyone curious about crows and jays, or intrigued by the ways of evolution.



RAILS OF THE WORLD, by S. Dillon Ripley, David R. Godine, Publisher, (1977) \$75.00.

Along with Forshaw's *Parrots of the World*, this has to be one of the most spectacular bird books ever produced. The collecting of such volumes has become a popular passion; and in its second printing, *Parrots* is likely to double in price—proving the value of the books as an investment alone.

Relative to the conspicuous and ingratiating corvids, the rails are a secretive, little known lot, and for this reason, I suppose, Ripley's text lacks the latitude of Goodwin's. His species descriptions are cryptic, with comments on voice and behavior for only the commonest species—and few range maps are included.

But never mind that. The value of the volume is in Fenwick Lansdowne's superb illustrations of all 129 species in the family—plates which stand by themselves as works of art.

Still it remains for each of us to decide whether the pleasure to be derived from poring over this collection of beautifully executed (but necessarily rather redundant) portraits of rails is worth the stiff asking price.

—Barry Clark

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

Field Trips

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

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.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Bill Turner, former Curator of Reptiles at the Los Angeles Zoo, will speak on **Reptiles—Fantasy and Fun.** Mr. Turner is an avid believer in the notion that reptiles can be every bit as exciting as birds, and he'll devote part of his talk to answering audience questions about reptiles.

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.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17-18—The Second Annual Wildlife Fair, sponsored by Encino's *Wing Gallery*. 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., at Encino Park, 16953 Ventura Blvd. (between White Oak and Balboa), in Encino. A nature carnival, held outdoors under the oaks, and featuring displays and presentations by many local environmental organizations.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18—Whittier Narrows Nature Center. Fall migration will be in progress and the waterfowl returning to this popular wildlife area. An ideal trip for beginners, as all the local birds will be looked for, including the resident Cardinal. The walking is easy in the Center and around the New Lakes area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Center. 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: Dave Foster, 794-1866.

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 a.m. 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, 660 So. Garfield, Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. Phone: 288-0545. Directions for finding the Wharf can be obtained in Monterey. Leader: Arnold Small, 275-8823.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6 to TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11—California Birds: a six-day natural history tour from Monterey Bay to Condor Country, led by Jon Winter, an outstanding Northern California birder. Cost: \$295 per person, including all meals, lodging, and transportation. For registration and information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to National Audubon Society, George Whittell Education Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, Calif. 94920.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8—McGrath State Beach. This is an excellent birding area for shorebirds, ducks, and gulls; and the walking is easy. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the north end of the bridge by the settling ponds on Harbor Blvd. To reach McGrath, take Hwy. 101 north and exit at Victoria Ave. in Ventura. Turn left and pass under the Fwy. to Olivas Park Drive. Turn right to the red light at Harbor Blvd., then left and park by the bridge. Leader: Nancy Spear.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9—Pelagic Trip to Anacapa Island and out to sea. *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 Hwy. 101 north to Ventura, exit at Victoria Ave., and follow the Channel Islands 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 phone number to Phil Sayre, 660 So. Garfield, Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. Phone: 288-0545. Leader: to be announced.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22—Peregrine Falcon Symposium: a day-long program sponsored by National Audubon and conducted at the Oakland Museum. Representatives of public and private organizations will report on population trends and efforts to restore Peregrine populations. To register, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and \$3.50 per person to: Peregrine Falcon Symposium, National Audubon Society, Whittell Education Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, California 94920. Checks should be made payable to National Audubon Society.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Bob Witzeman, President of Maricopa Audubon Society (Phoenix) will discuss the **Central Arizona Project**, a colossal water-diversion scheme which promises to wipe out the best birding areas in Arizona. One of the leaders in the fight against the project, Dr. Witzeman will illustrate his talk with slides of rare Arizona birds. Make a point not to miss this important program.