

# WESTERN TANAGER

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*Bradford Torrey*

## Looking for Condors *in Pasadena*



No ornithologist, of whatever grade, ever came to California without hopes of seeing the great California vulture, otherwise known as the Condor. It is worth seeing because it is the largest

bird in North America, not to say the world, and because, if not rare, it is at least rarely met with. We all love to do what our neighbors and rivals have never succeeded in accomplishing. Difficulty and scarcity go far to set the price in all markets.

So it was that from the day I reached the Pacific coast, I kept my eyes wide open for a Condor. I knew, of course, from reading, that the bird was supposed to be found only among the higher mountains; but then, I said to myself, for a creature with wings, high mountains are never far away hereabout, and the bird might by some chance be passing overhead almost anywhere. If he were at all like other Westerners, I reasoned, he couldn't be contented to stay in the same place very long; and anyhow, there could be no harm in now and then casting a glance heavenward.

After three weeks at San Diego (in a world as new as Eden was to Adam), I made a trip to Witch Creek, a hamlet among the mountains, advised to that course by a famous local ornithologist. He promised me no Condor; I think the matter was not mentioned between us; but he assured me that I should find a totally different set of birds there from what I had been seeing at San Diego.

In such a place it seemed in order to look skyward more frequently than ever; but a professional bird-collector, who for several years had knocked about this Western world in the pursuit of his rather disagreeable calling, when I mentioned my great desire to see a Condor, responded, "Oh, doubtless I should like to see one myself!" You might as well be looking for the Dodo, his tone seemed to imply. But anon hope sprang up again. Such birds there are, I said to myself, and men have seen them. And why not I? So I continued to gaze heavenward—in vain.



John James Audubon (1838)

But now I moved northward to Pasadena, certain that here, if anywhere, my passion to see the Condor might be gratified. My window looked into the Sierra Madre Mountains; Mount Lowe, some six thousand feet high, was the nearest of them; I would go to its top and gaze about me.

So said, so done. The way was made easy. A street-car took me from the hotel door to Rubio Canyon; thence a cable-car lifted me almost straight upward to the top of Echo Mountain, a spur of Mount Lowe; and there an ordinary open trolley-car was waiting to convey me to the Alpine Tavern, at the foot of the mountain cone. A marvelous ride that was in the trolley-car, over a road hung against the precipitous side of the mountain, with numberless sharp curves and crazy bridges, while I from my end seat (which, for some reason, there was no need to scramble for) looked down, down, down into the ravines below.

*Continued Overleaf*

*This account, by nineteenth century naturalist Bradford Torrey, is excerpted from his "Field Days in California" (1913).*



Bradford Torrey

A mile or two before reaching the tavern, the road ran into a forest of spruces—the big-cone spruce, I was told afterward. A promising wood for woodpeckers, thought I; and, when the car stopped, I started instantly for the summit. I wished to be first on the trail for the sake of the birds—woodpeckers or what-not—that any one who should precede me might frighten out of sight.

I need not have hurried myself. There were no birds to be frightened: a few California Jays, by this time an old story; one or two Plain Titmice; and perhaps two or three other things (Spurred Towhees, as I now remember); and even these not in the spruce woods or the oaks, but about the open summit, where it was plain they had grown accustomed to regale themselves on picnickers' leavings. As for the Condor, I looked and looked, but might have been in the mountains of New Hampshire for all the good that came of it. On the way down, to be sure, a large bird was seen soaring high in the air; but, as well as I could make out, it was only a Golden Eagle.

One or two evenings after this, the famous Pasadena ornithologist (there are many worthy of the name, I dare say, but I mean *the* one) called to see me, and I told him of my disappointment.

"What! You have been up Mount Lowe already?" he exclaimed, then expressed surprise that I had missed the Condor. That was a new and welcome note, the very first syllable of encouragement that I had heard under this head since setting foot in California; and I determined straight-away, though I said nothing, to have that trip over again.

Five days passed; for, though the Condor is the largest bird in California, he is by no means the only one. Then, on the last day of January, I was again trudging up the cone of Mount Lowe, when suddenly, as I faced about and looked upward for the hundredth time, *there was my bird, sailing through the air!* It was *he*, the Condor himself; for on the instant, even before I had time to put my glass upon him, I saw the unmistakable marks, the snow-white lower

wing-coverts, and the yellow head and neck. Far, far up he was, moving in a straight course, with wings set!

I looked and looked, and looked again; and then, unable to contain myself, I turned to a lady and gentleman who were following me up the trail.

"There!" said I, "if you wish to see the largest bird in North America, there he is!"

They were not half so much excited as I thought they should be.

"It isn't larger than an eagle, is it?" said the gentleman, after inquiring its name.

He had seen a Bald Eagle at Catalina Island a day or two before, and seemed to have gathered that, in the line of large birds, the world had nothing more to offer.

I assured him that the Bald Eagle was nowhere in comparison (the Condor is really only half as large again as the eagle, but, you see, I was feeling enthusiastic), and rather indifferently, as I thought, he gave it another look. He was not what we call a "bird man," that was evident; and by and by, when the vulture had passed out of sight beyond Mount Wilson, he informed me that *his* hobby was astronomy. I was pleased to know he had so good a one; but, for myself, at that moment I was amazingly contented with my own.

It was wonderful how easy the grade was from that point on. Such is the power of mind over matter. I could have gone on indefinitely, and never known I was weary. If there had been nobody near, I believe I should have shouted.

For the hour or more that I remained at the summit, I took two looks heavenward to one at the earthy prospect, beautiful as that was; and all the way down to the tavern I was continually stopping to see whether peradventure the vulture might not be again somewhere above me. That, I was to learn, was asking a little too much of Fortune. For already I had received far more than my share of her favors, as the ornithologist before-mentioned gave me emphatically to understand when I narrated to him my day's adventure. Many a good Californian, I understood him, had desired to see what I had seen, and had gone to his reward without the sight. ♥



Robin Hill

# To Save the Condor

When Bradford Torrey spotted his Condor above Pasadena, the colossal birds were already well into their decline, riding a population curve that had begun its plunge some 10,000 years ago—soon after the modern species emerged, an uncertain survivor of the wave of extinctions that brought a close to the last Ice Age. 10,000 years isn't long in the lifetime of a species (the Sandhill Crane, an extreme example, has been with us at least nine million); and the question arises as to whether the California Condor was not, perhaps, one of those ill-advised evolutionary experiments, fated from the start to proceed to a premature end. Certainly the great birds were poorly prepared for the world they would encounter—for although in their heyday they ranged upwards to British Columbia and across the Southwest all the way to Florida—from the outset the species was at odds with *man*, the inveterate hunter and waster of habitats. After all, how could a creature that craves a vast, undisturbed range, secluded nesting sites, and several pounds of fresh carrion a day hope to survive the onslaught of *homo sapiens*?

Clearly, history argues against the prospect of the California Condor ever prospering in the world of man. And yet there remains the remote chance that the present relict population (now down to perhaps 50 birds) can at least hold its own—if its home range is secured, and 5 to 8 young can be fledged each season.

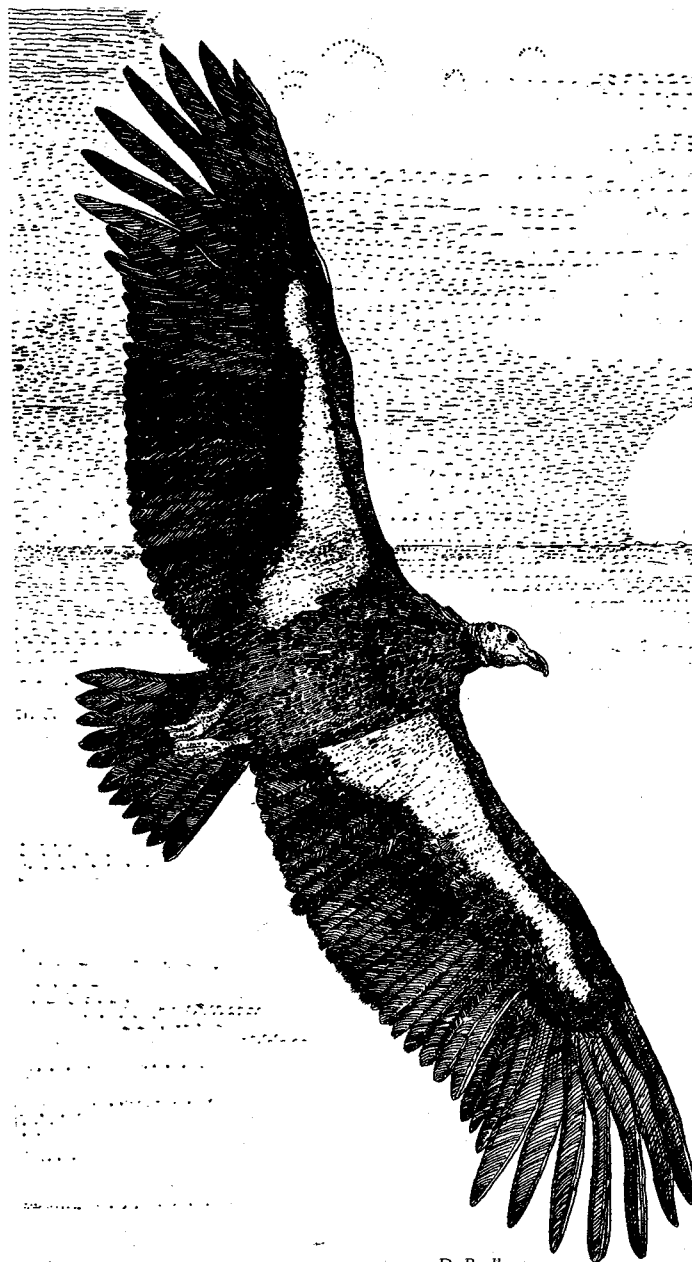
Unfortunately, one Condor was shot last year by a hunter, while only two chicks were fledged; and so far this year there has been only one report of a successful nesting.

It appears, then, that the Captive Breeding Plan, now clearing the last hurdles before approval, may swing into action none too soon. Captive breeding has proved successful with the related Andean Condor, and "zoo bank" schemes have already helped to save such birds as the critically-endangered Hawaiian Goose. Indeed, in the view of most Condor students, no alternative stands even a remote chance of prolonging the species' sojourn with us beyond the turn of the century.

During the coming year, if all goes as planned, three non-breeding Condors will be taken from the present population and bred in captivity—and then they and their offspring will be reintroduced to their native range, hopefully to breed in the wild.

And if that fails to work, for one reason or another... then we must face the sobering fact that in all probability ours will be the last generation to know the pleasure of the Condor's company.

To forestall that end, Audubon Condor Naturalist John Borneman works full time policing the Condor's home range, while tirelessly seeking to stimulate public appreciation of these magnificent holdovers of another age. If the Condor pulls through this critical phase, John will deserve substantial credit, as will each of our members who down through the years have supported the Society's efforts in behalf of the majestic birds. ♡



D. Beall

## The Condor Fund

The California Condor needs your continued support. Your contributions, however large or small, will help to maintain the on-going Audubon program of education and conservation, while adding impetus to the plan for captive propagation. Please make your check payable to Los Angeles Audubon, and return it in the enclosed envelope. With your help we can make this another milestone year in the history of the Society's efforts to save the Condor.

**Peter Skipper**

## Conservation

### The Push for Water Quality

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Public Law 92-500) is of vital interest to birdwatchers and nature lovers, for its stated aim is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters"—the lifelines of all our valuable natural ecosystems. A number of major planning programs have been designed to implement the goals of the law, among them a plan for the control of point sources of pollution through construction and expansion of public waste treatment facilities—facilities designed to incorporate the best practicable waste treatment technology, with emphasis on recycling pollutants, reclamation of waste water, and environmentally sound disposal of sludge.

Another program calls for new waste treatment plans for such areas as the Los Angeles basin, where intense urban and industrial pressure have created substantial water quality control problems. These plans are to be completed by November, 1978, and call for substantial citizen input.

A further section of the law requires the establishment of statewide water quality standards, with the states proposing water quality programs for their major river basins.

Finally, the law requires permit approval for all major dischargers of pollutants, to prevent exceeding the established standards for water quality.

In California, statewide river basin plans are already complete, and plans on an areawide and facility basis are underway. Through the Conservation Committee, LAAS is monitoring the progress of the programs, pushing for the most stringent controls. Though there is much yet to be done, the achievements to date are encouraging.

### Priority: Upper Newport

Upper Newport Bay, the largest and most important of the coastal estuaries in our area, suffers from water quality problems which could adversely affect its wildlife. The high nutrient concentration resulting from surface runoff stimulates the growth of microorganisms which form the base of the aquatic food chain—and, while the increase in biomass is welcomed by clam-diggers, fishermen, and wildlife observers, the situation may cause rapid fluctuations in dissolved oxygen which can be fatal to fish populations. In dry weather, the major flow into the Bay is return irrigation water—and concern has been raised regarding the presence of toxic trace metals and agricultural pesticides. In addition, siltation, a consequence of such inland activities as construction and agriculture, has the effect of smothering benthic communities, and breaking the Bay food chain.

These problems are common to other bays and estuaries in our area, and are sufficiently pressing to demand remedial action. It is gratifying, therefore, that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and cooperating governmental organizations in the region have decided to give Newport's water quality problems highest priority, with plans to allocate Federal funds to seek solutions which will protect its wildlife resources. ♡

**Jean Brandt/BIRDING at**

## San Joaquin Marsh

The only freshwater marsh in Orange County, the San Joaquin Reserve of the University of California, Irvine, is very close to the Upper Newport Bay salt water marsh, described in the Oct. '77 WESTERN Tanager. These two marshes, one freshwater and one salt, are the only remnants of what was once a huge wetland habitat, now encircled by urban development. Both are invaluable as study areas for the observation of natural wetland communities. Over 180 species of birds have been found in the San Joaquin Reserve, including nesting White-tailed Kites, Least Bitterns, Clapper Rails, and Tri-colored Blackbirds. The White-faced Ibis is regular, as are Cattle Egrets and Marsh Hawks; and in addition, the marsh has the potential for many unusual birds: a very rare Yellow-crowned Night Heron turned up in the spring of '77, and three immature Roseate Spoonbills spent the past summer season.

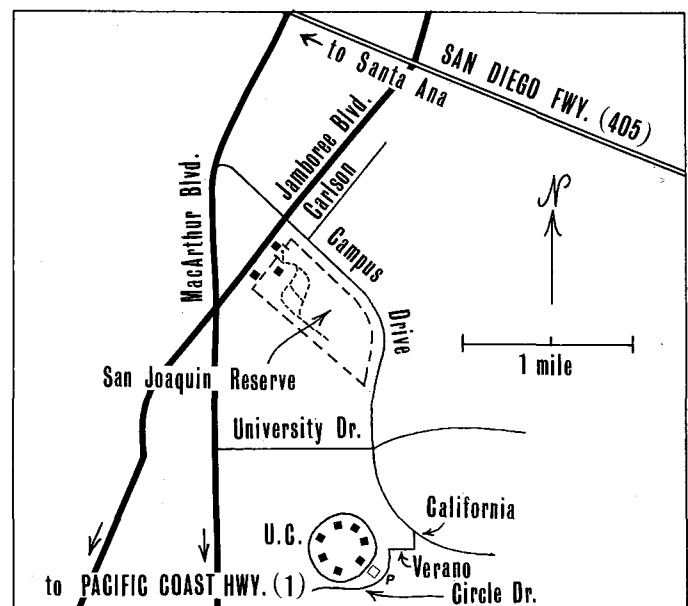
The Reserve adjoins the North Campus of the University at Jamboree and Campus Drive. Access is strictly controlled, but entry permits and keys may be obtained from Room 916, Engineering Bldg., on the main campus (open 9-5, Mon.-Fri.). From Campus Drive, turn onto California Ave., then right on Verano Way, and left on Circle View Drive to Parking Lot 18 (metered) next to the building.

Prior arrangements may be made by writing or phoning the Museum of Systematic Biology, 916 Engineering Bldg., University of California, Irvine, 92727 (714-833-6031).

Entry permits and keys to the two locked gates will be mailed. Park on Carlson Ave. north of Campus Drive, and enter the gate next to the greenhouse. On departure, leave forms and keys in the box on the outer gate.

Even without entering the Reserve, you may still view part of the area to the south of Campus Drive, as well as the privately-owned marsh to the north. An LAAS field trip to the Reserve is scheduled for Nov. 20. See the CALENDAR page for details.

Good birding! ♡



## Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

## The Catharus Thrushes

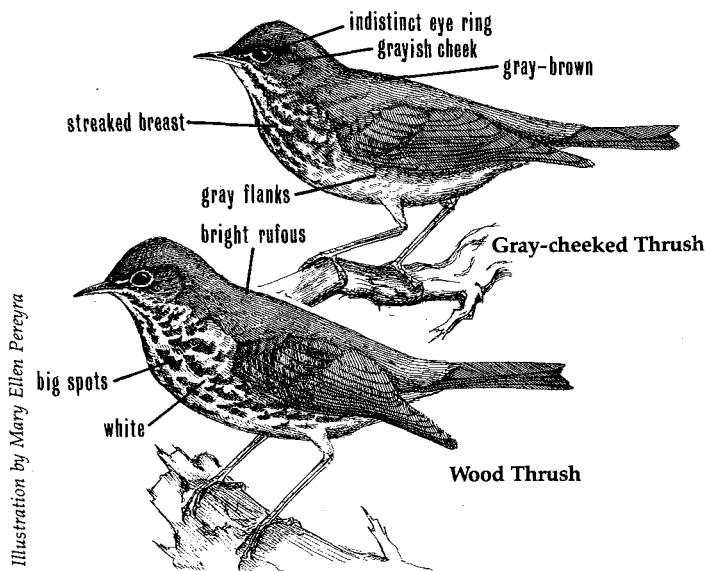


Illustration by Mary Ellen Pereyra

**The Gray-cheeked Thrush** is one of the few North American land birds to breed as far west as the northeastern part of Siberia—a range that closely resembles that of the Blackpoll Warbler. Yet the Blackpoll is a fairly common vagrant in California during migration, while the Gray-cheeked Thrush has been recorded only about a half dozen times—exclusively from the Farallons, and primarily in the fall. This paucity of records would seem to suggest that the Siberian birds, in order to reach their South American wintering grounds, must migrate due east across Canada for thousands of miles, before veering to the south.

The Gray-cheeked Thrush most closely resembles the eastern "olive-backed" race of the Swainson's Thrush, for the coloration of the upperparts is similar; but, unlike the Swainson's, it lacks the rich buff tones to the cheeks and the underparts. The *cheek* of the Gray-cheeked is always *grayish*, and it lacks the Swainson's prominent buffy eye ring—although some immatures can have a thin whitish eye ring. The underparts of the adult Gray-cheeked are quite distinctive, as the birds have *dull slaty-gray flanks*, contrasting with the rest of the grayish-white underparts. The pattern of the underparts of the immatures is similar, but most birds show a very *pale yellowish-olive wash* across the breast. The rather heavy pattern of spots (forming streaks across the breast) is similar to that of the Swainson's Thrush. The Gray-cheeked can also be readily confused with the smaller Hermit Thrush, for the overall coloration is quite similar. But, apart from its larger size, the Gray-cheeked can be told from the Hermit by its less distinct eye ring, the lack of a rusty tail, and by its call note—described as similar to the Veery's but slightly higher pitched.

**The Wood Thrush** (*Hylocichla mustelina*), is another eastern stray, recorded on only three occasions in California. The sightings to date are from late June (1977), early August (1968), and late November (1967); but the logical time to watch for the bird is during the fall vagrant season. Formerly grouped with the *Catharus* thrushes, the Wood Thrush is now in a genus of its own. It is the easiest of the spot-breasted thrushes to recognize, for it is *quite large*, approaching the size

of the American Robin. The crown, nape, and the upper back of the bird are a *bright rufous buff*; while the rest of the upperparts are only slightly duller. The underparts are *very white*, distinctly patterned with large, round black spots, set well apart from each other (as distinct from the pattern of streaks in the *Catharus* thrushes). ♡

**Note:** Please correct last month's column to include an additional record for the Veery, from Pt. Reyes, on Oct. 6, 1975.

## Education and LAAS

Under Chairman Willabelle Maloney, the LAAS Education Committee devotes its efforts to youth involvement, with the objective of encouraging children and young people to become interested in conservation, ecology, and birdwatching.

The Committee conducts tours of Audubon House for school children, gives lectures to classes on the subjects of conservation, bird identification, and endangered species, and distributes a specially-prepared series of lessons, to be used by teachers and youth leaders.

It's exciting, gratifying work—and there is lots to be done, turning young people on to the natural world that's around them. The Committee Chairman would welcome volunteers to help out with the various programs—especially individuals who could present the prepared lessons to children in elementary schools near the volunteers' homes. Write to the Education Committee, Audubon House, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A. 90046—or phone 876-0202 on Friday.

## Audubon Scholarships

Los Angeles Audubon is offering several scholarships to the **Audubon Workshop of the West**, a highly-acclaimed ecology study session held during midsummer in the Wind River Mts. 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 work. For applications, write, visit, or call Audubon House (876-0202). All applications must be received by December 15th.

## Support Against CAP

L.A. Audubon's Board has authorized a contribution of \$1000 to Maricopa Audubon (Phoenix) to aid in its fight against the massive Central Arizona Project, a waterworks plan which threatens to destroy much of Southern Arizona's unique flora and fauna.

## Audubon LEADER

Subscriptions are now available to the Audubon LEADER, a biweekly newsletter from National Audubon devoted to current environmental and conservation news. For a year's subscription, send \$5 to National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

## Volunteers Needed

Because Audubon House is now open six days a week, we have an urgent need for additional volunteers—people who can help out on Saturdays or weekdays by answering telephones, working in the Bookstore, or aiding with membership registrations. If you have a few hours of free time, please give House Chairman, Ann Skipper, a call, at 876-0202, or 276-8990.

## Shumway Suffel

## BIRDS of the Season



irding in November settles down to a normal pace after the hectic activity of fall migration. Once again we see Robins, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Chipping Sparrows on our lawns, White-crowned Sparrows and Kinglets in the bushes, and hear the high-pitched calls of Cedar Waxwings overhead. Each of these species, however, may have a rarer sybling species in close association with it. So serious birders examine each flock in hopes of finding that one odd bird—a Varied Thrush, a Gray-headed Junco, a Clay-colored Sparrow, a White-throated or Harris' Sparrow, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, or a Bohemian Waxwing.

The LAAS pelagic trip on Sept. 24 was, to all accounts, the best Monterey Bay trip ever—for not only were all the hoped-for birds seen, but they were seen well. Five alcids, all three jaegers, and four—possible five—species of shearwaters were found—including some 40 **New Zealands** and one close-in **Flesh-footed Shearwater** (rare and early). In addition, a massive flock of some 9,000 petrels (75% Ashys, 25% Blacks) over the deep submarine canyon which extends west from Moss Landing, yielded two white-rumped petrels, one of which was identified as a **Wilson's**, and the other was thought likely to be a **Galapagos**—because of the large amount of white in the tail. A week later, the W.F.O. trip found what seemed to be the same bird, and definitely identified it as a **Galapagos Petrel**.

Four pelagic trips from San Diego in mid-September added **Red-billed Tropicbirds** near San Clemente Island, with **Least** and **Leach's Petrels**, **Craveri's Murrelets**, and about fifty **Manx Shearwaters** on the way to and from the island. Most trips also found **Sabine's Gulls**, and single immature **Long-tailed Jaegers** (difficult to distinguish from immature Parasitics, except by their gray backs).

September started with some twenty hardy birders covering the Inyo-Mono oases over the Labor Day weekend. Three **Red-eyed Vireos** were located, one at Scotty's Castle, and two at Oasis. Also at Oasis was a **Cape May Warbler**, an **Orchard Oriole**, a probable **Least Flycatcher**, a probable **Philadelphia Vireo**, and a very early **Ferruginous Hawk**. At Deep Springs there were hundreds of **Pinyon Jays**, many western warblers, a **Tennessee Warbler**, and a male **Summer Tanager**. Near Tecopa, Jan Tarble saw and heard a singing male **Dickcissel**.

Birders from all over the country continued to congregate at the Salton Sea—the only reliable place in the U.S. to see **Blue-footed Boobies**. The high count was nine at the north end (Dale and Linda Delaney, Sept. 25), and a single booby at Rock Hill (Barbara Turner, Sept. 4), possibly one of the nine. The twenty or more **Roseate Spoonbills** in the Wister Unit, SESS, seemed to disburse, as no large groups were later reported. One or two reached the north end, and the three immatures were still in the San Joaquin Marsh, Orange Co., on Sept. 14 (Rich Stallcup). A single Spoonbill found at Pt. Mugu on Sept. 10 (Berg Dederian) apparently moved north to Goleta (Paul Lehman, mid-Sept.) where it remained to month's end. The three **American Oystercatchers**, originally found at Salton City, were not seen after Labor Day crowds arrived. Rich Stallcup found two birds rare at the Sea on Sept. 12: a **Sabine's Gull** (about three records there), and a **Pomarine Jaeger** (probably a first record, although Parasitics occasionally occur). Lake Havasu on the Colorado River also hosted several post-breeding wanderers. In addition to the previously reported **Brown Booby**, there was a single **Blue-footed Booby** (Jon Dunn, Sept. 14), as well as both **Parasitic** and **Pomarine Jaegers**, two adult **Long-tailed Jaegers** (Janet Witzeman, Sept. 3-5), and a **Leach's Petrel** (Ken Kaufman). There is also a third-hand report of a **Black Vulture** on the California side of the Colorado River above Earp in early

September. If confirmed, this would be a first State record for this long-overdue bird.

A fall-plumaged male **Wood Duck** appeared at Whittier Narrows in mid-September, which is early—but their status as wild birds is always suspect since many are kept in captivity. Another at Death Valley (Doug Morton, Sept. 24) was probably a wild bird. More than twenty **Sharp-shinned** and a few **Cooper's Hawks** were seen in migration over Santa Barbara (Paul Lehman, Sept. 24). Two soaring buteos near San Juan Capistrano on Sept. 9 appeared to be **Swainson's Hawks**, but prolonged study while driving the freeway is a risky business at best. A group which birded below San Diego on Sunday after the Sept. 9th pelagic trip studied a rare immature **Zone-tailed Hawk** overhead at 200 feet (Michael Gochfield and eight others). A **Rough-legged Hawk** on Sept. 11, plus a **Ferruginous** and a **Broad-winged Hawk** on Sept. 18, all at Baldwin Lake, San Bernardino Mts. were unusually early (Gene Cardiff). Another **Broad-winged Hawk** was the best bird of the weekend for a group of birders in the Pt. Loma cemetery, San Diego (Lee Jones, et al, Oct. 1). **Ospreys** were widely reported along the coast, with one staying in Long Beach most of the month (Barbara Turner). An adult **Bald Eagle** reported from Icehouse Canyon (7,000') near Mt. Baldy was far from its preferred fishing waters, and at an unusual elevation (Kate Blacet and Lois Dunn, Sept. 26).

**T**wo very rare shorebirds were found this fall, but unfortunately both were rather far from L. A. Van Remsen located a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Pt. Reyes in mid-September, and Paul Lehman found a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** along the small stream through the golf course at Goleta, on Oct. 5. **Baird's** and **Solitary Sandpipers**, being early migrants, decreased after mid-September, but **Pectorals** were still present in good numbers. Doug Morton records three shorebirds at unusual locations—a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Daggett in the Mojave Desert (Sept. 17), a **Mountain Plover** in Death Valley (Sept. 3), and a **Stilt Sandpiper** at Lake Elsinore (Sept. 25.). Another **Stilt Sandpiper** was found in a gravel pit below San Diego on Oct. 1st. **Black Terns** are abundant near the Salton Sea in late summer and fall, but are rare along the coast; thus, three at Marina del Rey (Bob Pann, Sept. 6) and two at Malibu (the Brodskins, Sept. 4) are noteworthy. A few **White-winged Doves** are seen on the coast in fall and winter, and this year was no exception, with one at Goleta (Paul Lehman), another at Malibu (Terry Clark, Sept. 1), and a third below San Diego on Sept. 22. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley, on Sept. 24 was a late migrant at an unusual location (Doug M.). Migrating **Vaux's Swifts** were widely reported as "abundant at Lakeview" S.Bd.Co. (Doug M., Sept. 9-12), "thirty at Sepulveda Rec. Area" (Sandy Wohlgenuth, Sept. 14), and common at Malibu Lagoon and Harbor Lake, San Pedro. Two **Chimney Swifts** were seen again in the South Coast Botanic Gardens, where they were first found last June (Eric Brooks, Sept. 14), and another was found at Whittier Narrows on Sept. 20, where a few are seen each fall. A report of four **Black Swifts** over Long Beach on Sept. 13 (Brian Daniels) is particularly interesting, since these high-fliers are seldom recorded in migration.

Don Sterba checked with the Bill Haggards of Santa Paula to discover that California's only **Violet-crowned Hummingbird** returned again this past season, but stayed only from June 29th to July 5th. For twelve years there were no records of **Broad-billed Hummingbirds** locally, but now we have three records since Jan. '76. The first was the well-remembered male on Mt. Washington; the second a male at Agua Caliente, eastern S.D.Co., last January; and now, a third male near the Mexican border, below San Diego, in late September.

The most tempting passerine of the month was a **Great Crested Flycatcher** (less than ten records) reported by Mitch Heindel in the willows at the northwest corner of Harbor Lake Park, on Oct. 5th. Unfortunately, the bird could not be relocated on the following day. **Tropical Kingbirds** arrived a little early on their way up the coast (as part of their regular postbreeding pattern). There were two below San Diego (Phil Unitt, Sept. 20), one near Malibu Lagoon about Sept. 25, one above Santa Barbara a few days later, and another at Pt. Pinos near Monterey, on Oct. 1st. **Pinyon Jays** are almost unknown near the coast, so one in upper Sycamore Canyon is noteworthy (Lee J., Sept. 30). A **Bell's Vireo** reported at the Arcadia Arboretum was certainly a migrant, as the birds do not nest there (Armand Cohen, Sept. 6). **Black and White Warblers** were seen below San Diego; near Daggett, S.Bd.Co.; near Westmoreland, Imp.Co.; and at Tapia Park, Malibu. Our only report of a **Bay-breasted Warbler** comes via Dr. Charles Collins of Long Beach State, whose student, Brian Daniels, studied one on the campus, Sept. 20. **Blackpoll Warblers** are regular, in small numbers, along the coast, but the only local report was of two at Pt. Fermin Park, San Pedro (the Brodskins, Sept. 13). (It should be noted that not all Blackpolls have *light legs*, so, for positive identification, one must see the back and undertail coverts.) Many other "eastern" warblers were found in the well-birded areas near San Diego—a **Blackburnian** on Sept. 12; two very rare **Grace's Warblers** (about five records, away from Clark Mt., S.Bd.Co.): one on Sept. 20 (Dick Smith), and another about a week later; two **Chestnut-sideds**; two **Canadas**; and several **Virginia's**, **Blackpolls**, and **American Redstarts**. A few eastern warblers even dared to appear *away* from the San Diego area: a rare **Worm-eating Warbler** in Santa Barbara (Richard Webster, Sept. 30); a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** nearby (Larry Ballard, Sept. 25); a **Palm Warbler** near Laguna Beach (Jerry Johnson, Sept. 5); an **Ovenbird** at Big Sycamore (Lee Jones, Sept. 30); a **Northern Waterthrush** at Tapia Park (Jerry Friedman, Sept. 3); and several **American Redstarts**—one in Tapia Park (Jerry J., Sept. 26), joined by a second (Terry Clark, Sept. 28), and another the same day at Big Sycamore (Kimball Garrett).

Fifteen years ago there was only one record of a **Bobolink** locally, but now we consider them uncommon but regular migrants in the fall. So it is not too unusual to find one at Malibu on Sept. 8, several below San Diego at mid-month, one or more at the Sepulveda Rec. Area Sept. 14 (Sandy Wohlgemuth), and one at the New Lakes, Whittier Narrows (John de Modena, Oct. 1). A male **Hepatic Tanager** at Morongo Valley (Dan Guthrie, Oct. 1) is a first record for that area, and may have been a migrant from a small nesting colony in the nearby San Bernardino Mts. A pair of **Summer Tanagers** remained at Morongo until at least Oct. 2; a female was found at Pt. Fermin Park, San Pedro (the Brodskins, Sept. 4), and a "stoplight red" male was in Big Sycamore Canyon (Ian McGregor, Sept. 27). **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** reports continued, with a female and an immature male in the residential area behind Zuma Beach (Kimball G. and Terry C., Sept. 28), and a male at Morongo Valley (Doug M., Oct. 4). A **Lark Bunting** in Joshua Tree N.M. on Sept. 5 was our only report (Doug M.). A single **Clay-colored Sparrow** stayed with the flock of **Chipping Sparrows** which winters in the cemetery on Pt. Loma (Elizabeth Copper et al, Sept. 10).

The widespread reports of **Mountain Chickadees**, and all three **nuthatches** in the lowlands or desert oases, plus the early arrival of good numbers of **Cedar Waxwings** may or may not foretell an early and cold winter; but let's hope it is a wet one. Whether or not we enjoy an invasion of northern and montane birds, there is still much birding to do. Scoters, Oldsquaws, and Harlequin Ducks should be searched-for along the coast; the Tufted Duck may return to Lake Sherwood for its sixth winter; longspurs, and possibly a Sprague's Pipit may be in the large field west of Dominguez State College; and the high tides of November 11th to 13th should bring rails and possibly a Sharp-tailed Sparrow into view at Upper Newport Bay.

## Dorothy Dimsdale

# The Eye of the Beholder

One thing leads to another. Not content with binoculars, scope, and field guide, I decided to add Bent's *Life Histories* to my birding paraphernalia. My idea was to buy one volume at a time and read it through before purchasing the next. I did very well with "Birds of Prey," Vols. 1 and 2; and "Warblers," Vol. 1. But part way through Vol. 2 my mind started to wander, and each bird seemed exactly like the last.

Did Arthur Cleveland Bent remember all this data, I wondered, or did he simply catalogue it all, put the books on sale, and go off fishing? I turned to the flyleaf and found that in fact, he died before the series was finished—a sobering thought indeed.

Before despair—or worse—overtook me, in one fell swoop I bought the remaining twenty-two volumes. They sit tidily next to one another, mostly unread and rapidly gathering dust, but available for me to dip into, should the need arise. They are my base for reference—but for more offbeat facts, I must turn to other sources.

Two Swedes provided the answer to a problem that had been nagging me for years. I was aware of birds navigating by the stars during migration, but have often wondered what happened to them during a storm or on a heavily overcast day. The sly Swedes, using radar to study cranes, Wood Pigeons, and Redwings, discovered that over the sea the birds line up with the waves, revealing thereby that they possess some sensory information about wind velocity. Aligning themselves with the wave patterns, they are able to avoid being blown too far off course—a fact which explains how the Golden Plover, *Pluvialis dominica*, manages to wing all the way from the Arctic tundra to winter in the remote South Pacific.

Over land, the birds apparently do better, as they don't have to contend with the motion of waves, but may simply cast a beady eye down at the passing landmarks. I'm thinking of spray-painting my roof in very large letters: "50 feet to the next fly-in feeder."

It also came as a shock to me to learn not long ago that the California Quail is on "the Pill." Our own *Lophortyx Californicus*, to be precise—blissfully unaware that the "forbs" on which it feeds actually control its numbers. In a wet year the forbs grow thickly, the Quail eat them and breed well. Then in a dry year the forbs are stunted, and in that state contain high levels of oestrogens. When the Quail eat them, smaller broods are produced; thus when the stunted forbs go to seed, there are still enough to feed the young birds. The ingenuity of it all is astounding!

I suppose I'm glad Arthur Cleveland Bent had heard none of this, for I suspect he'd have stayed around to write another twenty-six volumes. Come to think of it, if nature slipped something into the diet of authors when they threatened to overproduce, twenty-six volumes might be reduced to a manageable six.





# 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, NOVEMBER 3—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6—Morongo Valley.** Our first fall trip to this desert oasis last year proved successful, and more than 50 species were seen. Birding can be excellent, and rare eastern warblers are sometimes found. Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree Nat'l. Monument can be birded on Sat. by those wishing to make it a weekend. There are convenient motels in 29 Palms and Yucca Valley, with dry camping facilities in Joshua Tree. To reach Covington Park, take Interstate 10 east to the 29 Palms Highway (62), which is 2.5 miles east of Whitewater. Turn north approximately 10 miles to the Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park. Co-leaders: Larry Norris and Ed Navojosky.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park.** UCLA ornithologist, **Tom Howell**, will present a lecture on the nesting behavior of the **Egyptian Plover**, a unique African species which regularly buries both eggs and chicks in the sand. Featured in the program will be the first photographs ever taken of these birds (from Gambela, Ethiopia)—as well as slides of other species from this rarely-visited area.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13—Upper Newport Bay.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the cable crossing, about midway along Back Bay Drive from Jamboree Blvd. One of the high tides of the mouth occurs on this date (6.7' at 9:48 a.m.), presenting an excellent opportunity for seeing the rails—with the Black Rail a remote possibility. Sharp-tailed Sparrows have been seen at high tide, and wintering shorebirds and waterfowl should be present in large numbers. The Osprey is another possibility. See Jean Brandt's article in the Oct. '77 Tanager for additional details. Take the San Diego Fwy. (405) south to Jamboree Blvd. off-ramp, go west on Jamboree to East Bluff Dr., then right on East Bluff to Back Bay Drive. Leader: Freeman Tatum.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20—San Joaquin Marsh.** This trip will be limited to 20 people. Send your name, address, and telephone number, plus a self-addressed stamped envelope to Reservation Chairman, Phil Sayre, 660 So. Garfield, Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. Phone: 288-0545. The marsh adjoins the north campus of U.C. Irvine. Take the San Diego Fwy. (405) south to Jamboree Blvd. Go south on Jamboree to the corner of Jamboree and Campus Dr., turn left on Campus Dr., and left at the first street, Carlson Drive. Park on Carlson; walk across Campus Drive to the north campus and meet at 8:30 a.m. at the gate next to the greenhouse. Leader: to be announced.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26—Pt. Fermin Park and Cabrillo Beach.** Meet at Pt. Fermin Park at 8:00 a.m. The Park and cliffs will be birded first, and then the Cabrillo Beach shores and breakwater,

with the possibility of continuing on to Harbor Lake thereafter. Take the Harbor Fwy (11) south to Gaffey St. in San Pedro, turn left and take Gaffey St. to the end. Pelagic Cormorants winter on the cliffs. Leader: Mitch Heindel.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1st—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park.** Program to be announced.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17—Carizzo Plains by Chartered Bus.** A day-long excursion to this outstanding upland birding area. To conserve fuel, minimize pollution, and keep the group to a manageable number, this pilot bus trip has been planned. If it proves successful, others like it will be arranged. Space is limited, and priority will be established by date of postmark of your reservation. In order to give everyone an equal opportunity, no reservations postmarked before November 10th will be accepted. The price is \$12 per person, and checks should be sent, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and the names of those in your party, to Phil Sayre, 660 So. Garfield, Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. Meet at the Plummer Park (Audubon House) parking lot at 5:30 a.m., for a 5:45 a.m. departure, with return by 7:00 p.m. Bring your lunch. There is plenty of space for ice chests. A stop will be made at Maricopa for the LeConte's Thrasher. No private cars please. Leader: to be announced.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25—Pelagic Trip on Monterey Bay.** In February of this year, both the Laysan and Black-footed Albatross were seen, as well as the Fork-tailed Petrel and Short-tailed Shearwater. Send your check for \$15 per person, made payable to L.A. Audubon Society, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, to Phil Sayre, 660 So. Garfield, Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754.

## Field Trip Record: 121 Birds

Ed Navojosky's 6th annual Malibu to McGrath field trip set what may be a new record for LAAS trips on October 3rd, by tallying a total of 121 birds. Thirty-seven birders participated in the Monday excursion, which began at Malibu Pier at 7 a.m. and wound up at McGrath S.P. at 5:30 p.m. Highlights of the day were Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers, 2 Parasitic Jaegers, a Black and White Warbler, an Ovenbird, 2 American Redstarts, Tri-colored and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and 7 species of raptors, including Osprey and Prairie Falcon. For one of the participants the day was especially memorable, for he went home with 25 life birds.

## The Christmas Counts

With early signs of an influx of montane birds, the odds makers are betting heavily on record Christmas Counts for Southern California. The logistics are already being mapped out for the Los Angeles and Malibu Counts, both under the aegis of LAAS, and now is the time to sign up if you wish to take part in the fun and adventure. To join the **Malibu Count**, Sunday, December 18th, call Compiler Kimball Garrett, 479-8667, or write him c/o the Dept. of Biology, UCLA, LA 90024. For the **Los Angeles Count**, tentatively scheduled for Monday, January 2nd, contact Compiler Nancy Spears, 372-7653.

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