

# WESTERN TANAGER

*Los Angeles Audubon Society*

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## The Joy of Birding

by Chuck Bernstein



We are standing on the deck of "Squid's" lobster boat in the Bay of Fundy. The wind-driven rain pelts our faces. The cold Atlantic waters reflect the somber gray-green sky. But this is only the second day of rain in two weeks of birding the Canadian Islands and the Northeast.

A Parasitic Jaeger harasses a Herring Gull into disgorging its meal. The Jaeger swoops down, nabs the booty, and flees, disappearing as it appeared, jet-like. Every few minutes we flush a raft of black-capped, white-rumped Greater Shearwaters. Fork-tailed Common Terns and the giant-sized Great Black-backed Gulls pass smoothly overhead.

We are close now to Moore Ledge, known to fishermen and birders as a plankton garden. The rain strikes with such force it is impossible to keep our binoculars dry. To avoid the frustrating blur we must wipe both ends just as we raise them to observe a bird.

We had come aboard armed with wads of paper towels and toilet tissue. When these are soaked useless we set up what we call our "toilet paper dryer" around the hot vertical exhaust pipe just inside Squid's cabin door. From then on we scurry fore and aft between the drying paper and the wet deck, hurrying lest we miss a good bird.

Common Eider are plentiful in fall dress, but a few are still in courtship plumage with a bit of green at the back of the head; and there are clusters of Common Puffin, many still wearing the striking red front on the lobster-claw bill even as winter approaches. By contrast, the sedate Razorbills and the Black Guillemots, stark black and white, appear as things out of the olden days, out of pre-color television.

Someone yells, "Whale ahoy!" And the chase is on to stay as close as possible to a 60-foot long Hump-backed Whale which comes up to blow first on one side of our boat and then on the other. An awesome beast that would be frightening were it not so obviously peace-loving and friendly.



*Greater Shearwater*

And even as we play hide-and-seek with the whale, close by are many white-rumped Wilson's Storm-petrels and here and there, as if on their toes, the wave-dancing Leach's Storm-petrels—while against the dark sky, white-bellied Gannets soar majestically.

Now from far over the choppy waters appears a great woolly milling cloud of Red Phalaropes, perhaps as many as five thousand of them, wheeling and turning together, then skeining off swiftly one after the other, into single-stranded threads miles long; and at last, almost as one, they all drop to the rain-splattered ocean to feed on droplets of oil filled with fattening plankton—prior to starting their long voyage south.

*Continued Overleaf*



Evening Grosbeak

**N**ow we are on Otter Point, a small spit of land reaching out into the Atlantic Ocean off the northernmost coast of Maine. It is early morning and we kick at patches of fog as we saunter toward the high cliff.

Peering over the edge, we gaze down on a billowy carpet of gray fog. Unlike the larger points and many of the islands hereabouts, there is no ancient and venerable lighthouse to conjure up the high adventure of long-gone sailing ships lost in the gloom. But just as romantic is the sound of the buoy bells, welling up above the hypnotic music of the sea breaking on the rocks below.

We are looking especially for migrating warblers, searching avidly for movement in the stunted trees and shrubs—and on the ground too, in hopes of a Mourning or even a Connecticut. There are flurries of excitement when a good bird is discovered.

Someone yells, "Black and White!"

All binoculars swing around to pinpoint the tiny bird making its way nervously down the branch of a tree; probing, nipping, hurriedly creeping on.

"Flesh-colored fists—another Blackpoll!"

"Here's a Red-eyed Vireo."

Cape Mays and Northern Parulas are soon "trash birds." By noon we have "bagged" many fine species, including 13 warblers alone.

We are surrounded on three sides by the sea, and on each side a bell buoy sounds its double tones, each bell tolling in a way that is distinct from the others. Thus, a fisherman out in the fog can determine by the buoy sounds the position of his boat and its heading.

The alternate tolling and clanging of the bells creates a remarkably beautiful carillon, the tones lingering in the heavy air. This is indeed an integral part of the normal approaching and receding litany of the sea on this storm-tossed northeast coast.

Aware of this musical phenomenon, from time to time we stand silent, listening. There is a gnawing loneliness one feels when wrapped in fog, anyway—an eeriness that quiets one's soul.

It is a strange and awesome experience, and for the moment birding ceases.

But only for a moment.

Someone shouts, "Black-capped and Boreal Chickadees together!" And the spell is broken—giving way, in that instant, to an even more magical game. 

## President's Message

### Malibu: Time of Decision

Malibu Lagoon is in the spotlight again. After more than a year of public hearings, the State Department of Parks and Recreation has consolidated citizen suggestions into three alternative plans for the future of Malibu Lagoon State Beach. The plans cover all aspects of the lagoon and creek area, with varying degrees of projected alteration and development. Among the many contributing factors to be weighed are: parking facilities, pedestrian access, nature trails, picnic tables, an estuarine museum, baseball fields, portable restrooms, and the *salicornia* marsh. Time, space, and complexity preclude a full discussion of all sides of all features of the plans, but the heart of the matter for us is the preservation and protection of an irreplaceable habitat. This, we feel, is embodied splendidly in the revolutionary idea of restoring the marsh itself. Under this plan, the ball field would be eliminated, the debris that was dumped into the marsh years ago would be cleaned out, and the western edge of the lagoon would be graded so that there will again be the normal tidal flushing that characterizes a healthy salt marsh. Best of all, the lagoon would be classified as a "Natural Preserve," with no footpath cutting through it, no motorcycles or horses intruding. Access would be by a low boardwalk to provide many observation points, and still allow water to penetrate the marsh with the rising tide. With full protection and rejuvenation, it is expected that the marsh would be able to support the kind of rich and varied store of wildlife that it boasted many years ago.

The State wants to hear from interested citizens. Individual letters carry far more weight with public officials than the pronouncements of organized groups. If you would like to see Malibu Lagoon become a more vital, exciting place for birds and birders alike, please write a letter supporting a protected Natural Preserve and a restored *salicornia* marsh. Address your remarks to: Albert Tjaden, Dept. of Parks and Recreation, P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento, Calif. 95811.

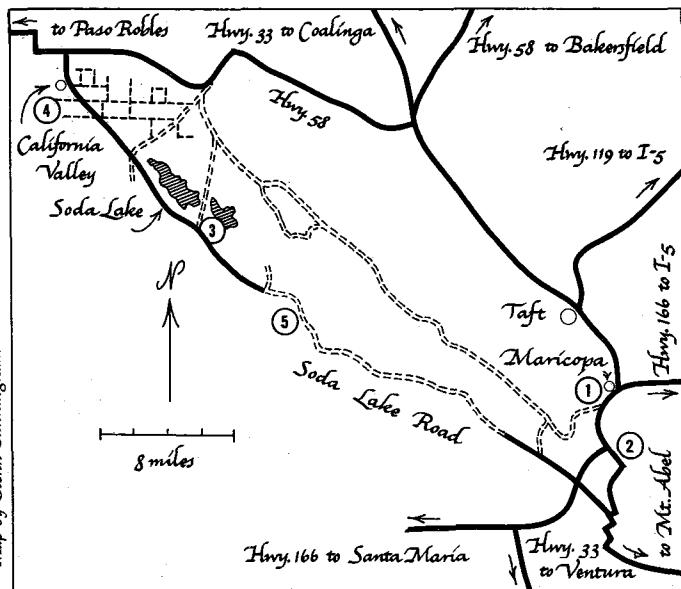
## Honors for LAAS

On Oct. 20, Los Angeles Audubon was presented with two community service awards—one from Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and the other from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (!). Both awards were in recognition of the Society's strenuous and ultimately successful efforts to create new urban wildlife habitat at Whittier Narrows.

Jean Brandt/BIRDING on

# The Carrizo Plains

Map by Glenn Cunningham



An all day trip to the Carrizo Plains in Kern County just might offer the most thrilling winter birding around. The area is noted for wintering raptors, and on one memorable December day in 1970 eleven species of birds of prey were seen: White-tailed Kite, Cooper's Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Kestrel, Short-eared Owl, and Barn Owl! In addition, Swainson's Hawks, Merlins, and Burrowing Owls have been found here—and all of these birds are possible every winter.

However, even more exciting than the raptors to many birders are the thousands of Sandhill Cranes that winter on the Soda Lakes at the north end of the plains and feed in nearby fields. A few isolated flocks of Mountain Plovers regularly winter as well, but are difficult to find. Sage Thrashers and Sage Sparrows are frequently seen, and the large flocks of Horned Larks should be checked for (rare) longspurs.

Begin your day's birding at Maricopa (110 miles from Los Angeles; buy gasoline and supplies here, as there are NO facilities on the plains). About 1.6 miles southwest of Maricopa, on Hwy. 166, at the Elkorn Grade Road (#1), stop and walk the dry wash on the east side of the hwy. to look for LeConte's Thrashers. They are resident here, but shy, and are best found in the early morning. If you miss the thrashers here, continue on 2.7 miles to Klipstein Canyon (#2) and search further along the wash.

Continue south on Hwy. 166 about 7 miles to Soda Lake Road. Turn right. WARNING: this road is unpaved much of the way and is impassable after a rainstorm! Other secondary roads shown on the map are unimproved and questionable.

As you drive along check everywhere for birds: since there are no trees on the plains, raptors are often seen sitting on the ground. (The more birders in your car, the better!)

Of geological interest: our road roughly parallels the famous San Andreas Earthquake Fault; in fact, the range of hills to the north is called the Temblor Range. Evidence of earthquake activity is to be seen in the form of fault escarpments, low, steep-sided ridges, visible across the valley from the Soda Lake Road.

Take a leisurely drive through the plains, as you probably won't find the Sandhill Cranes at the Soda Lakes until late afternoon. You may have to drive out onto the very rough road (#3) for a good overview of the lakes.

The farmlands around California Valley abound with birds and there are many ponds close to the roads. These may be birded as long as signs and fences are respected.

One other place to check before you return home is the small lake (#4) just south of California Valley. It was on this lake, in January '73 that Southern California's first Trumpeter Swan was found.

Take plenty of food and beverages with you. The traditional "comfort station" is a friendly hillside covered with sage brush (#5). This area should also be checked for Short-eared Owls. To return to Los Angeles, either continue north to Hwy. 58, and turn east (all paved from here on), or (my preference) retrace your day's journey.

Good birding!

## Join the Christmas Counts

What better way to begin the new year—or end the old one, birding with your friends and neighbors! Come join us in fun and adventure as we census the birds of the **Malibu** area (on **December 18**) and the **Los Angeles** area (on **January 1st**). The boundary of both counts are circles 15 miles in diameter. This year the Los Angeles circle has been shifted slightly to accommodate the outer breakwater at Marina del Rey (with its oystercatchers, turnstones, and Surfbirds). So the center is now at the intersection of Holt Ave. and Airdrome Street.

Each participant in the counts pays \$1.50 to help defray the costs of administration and publication of count results; and, as last year, after each count the groups will be gathering for dinner to compare notes and compile results. Many challenges lie ahead! The primary goal is to find all the birds that are wintering in our area, and from past counts it is known that certain birds might be seeable if we knew specifically where to look for them. For this reason, Nancy Spear, Compiler of the L.A. Count, is eager to know if you see any of the species listed below (or any other unusual species) inside the L.A. count circle between December 15 and January 1st: Great and Snowy Egrets, Green Heron, Cinnamon Teal, White-winged Scoter, Marsh Hawk, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Snowy Plover, Common Snipe, Dunlin, Royal Tern, Roadrunner, any owls, Poor-will, Acorn Woodpecker, any nuthatches, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, any warblers other than Yellow-rumped, any orioles, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and Sage Sparrow. Kimball Garrett would also be grateful for a staked-out Cactus Wren within the Malibu circle.

To sign up for the Malibu count (Dec. 18), call Kimball at 479-8667, or Jean Brandt at 788-5188. For the Los Angeles count (Jan. 1), call Nancy Spear at 372-7653.

**Richard Webster**

# The New Field Guides

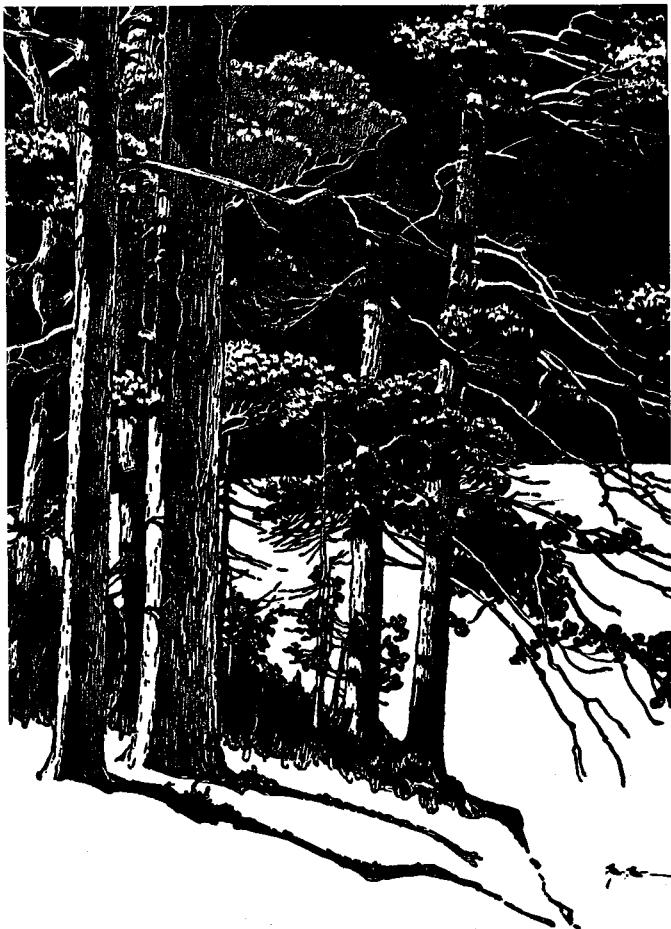
**THE AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS: Eastern Region, by John Bull and John Farrand, Jr.; Western Region, by Miklos D. F. Udvardy; Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (1977) \$7.95 each.**

As a "revolutionary field guide," this two-volume work claims to be unique on four counts. However, the radical design is unsuccessful and the execution very poorly handled.

The first count is the use of color photographs for illustrations. The avowed purpose of the photos is to present "realism and natural beauty." However, the purpose of a *field guide* should be to help identify nature, not merely to display it. It is inexcusable to include, presumably for aesthetic reasons, two pictures of Tufted Puffins in breeding plumage when there are, in all, only six shots of immature gulls. Besides, the use of a photograph often precludes emphasis upon those very marks that would help to identify the subject at hand. (An artist can show the gray rump of a Chipping Sparrow—unmentioned by Udvardy, by the way—while still illustrating the throat and bill.) In fact, the whole notion of "photography as realism" needs to be critically examined. After all, where "realism" is concerned, the *artist* has the real advantage—since his conception is based not upon a momentary glimpse, fortuitously caught by the shutter of a camera, but upon the *gestalt* of the bird—the sum total of his experience with the species. (Try snapping a photo of a friend under the kind of conditions that normally prevail in bird photography—and see how true it is to the subject.) In addition, the artist can fit many portraits of birds on a single plate. With around three-fourths of the photographs in these volumes devoted to adult males in breeding plumage, only token treatment is given to female and immature plumages. For instance, Robbins *et al* averages almost three full illustrations per species of warbler, while the Audubon Society Guide averages only one.

On top of that, many of the photographs in the books were poorly selected. Why is the photo of the Red-eyed Vireo on the dust jacket of the Eastern guide far better than the one inside? Why wasn't the same picture of the male Vermilion Flycatcher used in both guides, when one of them is so far superior to the other? And I refuse to believe that a picture of a California Thrasher which doesn't look greenish couldn't be found. The inability of the authors to identify at least half a dozen pictures points to two things: that the authors are not all that familiar with some of the birds (witness the Black-headed Oriole of the eastern guide, a member of the Old World *Oriolidae*); and if "experts" can't identify some photographs, what chance does the beginner stand of learning from them (just what is the bird labelled Solitary Vireo in the Western guide? A Hutton's Vireo?).

The second and third counts deal with the *organization* of the books. The arrangement of both text and plates departs from the standard taxonomic order, and thereby differs from that of almost every checklist and field guide in existence. Confusion can be the only result. The plates themselves are arranged by the *color and shape* of the birds. But birds are not common wildflowers. They cannot be conveniently labelled a certain color. Alarming inconsistencies arise: Why is the Yellow-headed Blackbird placed in the *black* section of the perching birds while the Red-faced Warbler goes in the *red* section? Males are separated from females, and the unfortunate immatures from either parent. The authors claim that they have grouped the photographs in order to put similar species adjacent to each other. I believe that this could have been accomplished more efficiently by leaving them in the standard order, an order which emphasizes many natural similarities, beyond color. And how can one justify splitting the western *Empidonax* between three different color sections—particularly when the Western Flycatcher is in the *brown* group? Many more problems are immediately apparent: For instance, male and female



## The Condor Fund

If you haven't done so already, it's not too late to send your contribution to the 1977 LAAS Condor Fund. Use the envelope provided in last month's TANAGER, or simply mail your check, made out to Los Angeles Audubon, to Audubon House.

## New Field Trip Chairman

After two years of outstanding service as Field Trip Chairman, Ed Navojosky has been forced to resign due to the demands of other work. Nancy Spear has now taken on the job. She invites suggestions regarding future field trips, and would especially appreciate hearing from possible field trip leaders. Those interested should call her at 372-7653.

Now Available at Audubon House

## A Cumulative Index

to the

## WESTERN TANAGER

1975 to 1977

with a Selective Index to issues  
from 1971 to 1975

\$1.00

Lawrence's Goldfinches are both in the yellow section, but not on the same page; and Say's Phoebe is shown in the *green* section!

In the text, species are listed under the "habitat where most observers encounter them." This convenient device neatly ignores the nagging fact that birds are versatile creatures and often inhabit several different habitats, especially in migration and winter (a good part of the year). The problems are insurmountable: if shorebirds are listed under an arctic tundra category, then they will not be listed under the habitat in which most people see them. But if they are to be listed under their winter habitat, the listing for any arctic habitat will be incomplete. A further product of this eccentric system is that similar, closely related species are frequently separated from one another in the text. The descriptions of Common and Lesser Nighthawks are 26 pages apart in the Western volume, and Udvardy does not even mention the Lesser in his discussion of the Common (the Eastern guide merely omits Lesser, a common bird in much of Texas).

The inconsistency of Udvardy's treatment of habitats is nothing less than astounding (Bull and Farrand do a somewhat better job). Most of the storm-petrels, nocturnal visitors to their isolated colonies, are listed for sea cliffs, as though one is most likely to view them strolling along a bluff. The Black-chinned Hummingbird is one of seven species, including White-tailed Ptarmigan, listed for alpine meadows! Cattle Egrets are, apparently, primarily birds of salt marshes; while Great and Snowy Egrets can be found in the freshwater category. Both yellowlegs can be found under coniferous forest, while the Solitary Sandpiper, which throughout the year prefers wet areas in forested lands, is found under freshwater marshes. Hutton's Vireo can be found in the same section as the yellowlegs, although the *text* correctly states that it is a bird of oak woodland.

The final count that supposedly sets these guides apart is their "compact, practical format." If this is compact, why is 40% of every page devoted to blankness; and why are there over sixty pages in the Western guide that are at least 75% blank (20 completely so)? And the three copies I have examined so far are all rapidly threatening to become less compact because of poor binding. "Practical" presumably means that descriptions of range are better than maps (the descriptions are the worst in any North American field guide). "Practical" also seems to mean that illustrations of flight patterns of groups such as shorebirds are not important. The dust jacket claim that there is "exclusive use of color photographs for identification" is all too true—neither text gives more than the most rudimentary details on field characters; the descriptions bear no relation to the marks visible in the plates; and there is no sign of the wealth of information on the fine points of field identification that has been published since the last field guide, in places such as *Birding*, *Western Birds*, and Jon Dunn's column. The dust jacket claims twice as much text as any other field guide: much of this is a remarks section, most of which should have remained in A. C. Bent's works, or E. Gruson's *Words for Birds*. (Who needs to carry into the field information on the number of mosquitoes once found in a Common Nighthawk's stomach, or the date of decease of Sir Thomas Bewick?)

One of the more inane features of the text is the use of a few common landbirds as references for size. Of course this would be less necessary if the photographs were scaled the way an artist does his drawings; but, even so, there is no excuse for writing that a Sora is Robin-sized, that the poor Solitary Sandpiper is slightly smaller than a Robin, and that Xantus' and Ancient Murrelets, given the same dimension in the text, are Robin and Quail-sized, respectively. While the biggest disappointment about the text is the lack of substance, there are also some unequivocal errors. If you expect Arctic Terns to always have red bills, it may be a long time until you see an Arctic Tern. And you can forget about identifying dowitchers by visual means, except, of course, that the Short-billed is smaller. Cheers.



Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, from Thomas Nuttall's "North American Birds" (1832)—a forerunner of the modern field guides.

Both volumes suffer from innumerable problems. But it is worth pointing out that the Western guide is much worse than the Eastern. It is not as though a good, new field guide is not needed; my regret is that the publication of this one will decrease the chances of just such a work being published. And I hope that the Audubon Society was not very involved in this misguided endeavor. Why it is entitled *The Audubon Society Field Guide*, by the way, is never explained.

Perhaps the only thing that prevents a rapid ten count of this wobbly enterprise is the pleasure that looking at all these pictures gives. The two volumes are a nice compendium of photos of North American birds. As field guides they are almost hopeless, as reference books almost worthless (a few snippets of information on habits and calls aside), but as oddly-shaped coffee table books the two volumes are almost successful. After all, where else can you get 1200 color pictures of birds for just under \$16, tax not included?

By the way, the Common Nighthawk stomach contained 500 mosquitoes, and the venerable Sir Thomas died in 1828 at the age of 75.



Shumway Suffel

# BIRDS of the Season

As November begins there is every indication of a winter invasion of the lowlands by mountain and northern birds. A probable cause is the lack of berries and seeds in the drought-stricken areas to the north of us. The Brodkins report "hundreds" of **Varied Thrushes** on Oct. 15 at Bridal Veil Camp in Yosemite, where the birds are of irregular winter occurrence. Locally, there were a few on Mt. Pinos (John Alderfer, Oct. 26), and another near San Diego. Small flocks of **Evening Grosbeaks** were widely reported from the oases in Inyo County. There were "dozens" on Mt. Pinos (Bob Pann and Cliff Pollard, Oct. 29), and a few along the Angeles Crest Hwy. in our San Gabriel Mts. (Jon Fisher, Oct. 29). Our traditional indicators—**Mountain Chickadees**, **Pine Siskins**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, and **Golden-crowned Kinglets**—were found in most well-birded areas, all of which bodes well for the winter.

A pair of extremely rare pelagic species turned up this fall in Monterey Bay, stirring up national interest, and resulting in waiting lists for two hurriedly-organized boat trips. The **Galapagos Storm-petrel**, first sighted on the LAAS field trip, Sept. 24, and confirmed by the WFO trip on Oct. 1st, was probably seen again on Oct. 9. The Oct. 9 trip, however, found the bird of the year: a **Streaked (White-faced) Shearwater**. The presence of this shearwater, known only from the seas between Asia and the islands of Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia, is completely inexplicable. Yet this is its second occurrence in Monterey Bay (the first was collected there on Oct. 3, 1975). Unfortunately, neither bird could be refound by the subsequent pelagic trips. The unconfirmed presence of an immature **Short-tailed Albatross** off San Diego in late August gives us hope that this once almost-extinct species (about 20 breeding birds in the 1930's) may once again be the common inshore albatross in California, as it was in the 1800's. Another bird of national interest was the **Eared Tropicbird** (first U.S. record) in the South Fork of Cave Creek Cyn., Chiricahua Mts., S.E. Arizona, in late October. This is the same area where Elegant (Coppery-tailed) Tropicbirds have nested in past summers.

October, as expected, presented an abundance of noteworthy birds. Rusty Scalf's trip from San Pedro to Catalina Island on Oct. 9 produced not only the more-or-less expected **Manx Shearwater**, but a very late **Frigatebird** near Avalon. Later, along the same course on Oct. 29, Jim Halferty and Ed Navojosky stopped counting Manx Shearwaters when they reached 1000. Four **Reddish Egrets** near San Diego were the largest number I recall along our coast. The first, in the San Diego River channel (Dale Delaney, Oct. 10), remained through the month. A female **Wood Duck**, obviously wild, flew off a pond at Furnace Creek Ranch on Oct. 23, and later that morning a pair flushed from a trickle of water at Stovepipe Wells and flew to the nearby sewer ponds. **Broad-winged Hawks** were almost unknown here ten years ago, but today we know them as regular but rare migrants along the coast, with a few even wintering. As many as twenty have been counted crossing the Golden Gate in a season, and several are seen on Pt. Loma each fall. Thus, three there on Oct. 10 (Dale Delaney) plus a few thereafter were not unexpected. Broad-wings are less common inland, but one was found at Oasis, Mono Co., (Jon Dunn, et al Oct. 30). A **Merlin**, which arrived in Altadena in mid-October, may have been the same bird which wintered there in '75 and '76, as it roosted in the same tree (John de Modena and Jon Fisher). Two more Merlins, a **Ferruginous Hawk**, and a **Rough-legged Hawk** were at Oasis on Oct. 30.

Two **Golden Plovers** at Goleta were of unusual interest, as one was in the drab winter plumage of the *dominica* race, and the other in the golden winter plumage of the Asiatic *fulva* race. This latter



bird was so colorful that it was sometimes mistaken for the reddish **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** which appeared there a few days earlier (Paul Lehman, Oct. 26). This was Paul's second Sharp-tail of the fall—the first was nearby on Oct. 5. Another Sharp-tailed Sandpiper stayed on a small pond in Border S.P. below San Diego for several days (Elizabeth Copper, Oct. 27). Bob Pann and Cliff P. could not find this Sharp-tail on Oct. 30, but did find a very late **Pectoral Sandpiper**. Two hard-to-see small owls were found during the month. A **Flammulated Owl** near Westmoreland in the Imperial Valley (Dale D., Oct. 4) provided one of the few records away from the mountains (they are thought to be one of the few migratory owls). Although not rare in the foothill canyons, **Pygmy Owls** are seldom seen, and Louise Commeau was thrilled to find one in the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens on Oct. 10.

According to Guy McCaskie, who has a talent for predicting such things, the **Sedge (Short-billed Marsh) Wren** should be the next new passerine to be found in California. This makes Ev Knights' report of a possible Sedge Wren at Upper Newport Bay on Sept. 25 doubly interesting. His description of plumage, song, and habitat makes this sighting believable. Great care must be taken in identification, however, as the bird does resemble the immature Long-billed Marsh Wren—but this one was singing.

The first **Red-throated Pipit** of the fall was found near the coast just north of the Mexican border (James Wolstencroft, Oct. 13), and the second about 100 miles north at the large bare field west of Dominguez State College (Jerry Johnson, Oct. 20). This is the same field where Sprague's Pipits were seen in Oct. 1975 and 1976. Two rare vireos were discovered near San Diego on Oct. 15. The **Philadelphia Vireo** appeared briefly near the Mexican border and was not seen again, but the adult **Yellow-green Vireo** in the Pt. Loma Cemetery stayed at least through the long weekend.

Those fascinating wood warblers received more than their share of birders' time in October. **Black and Whites** were widely reported along the coast, with one or two at nearby Tapia Park until November, and a few below San Diego. The **Prothonotary** is my personal jinx bird, and it should be no surprise that I missed the one inland from Zuma Beach (Kimball Garrett, Oct. 12), or that I could not get away to look for the one at Stovepipe Wells in Death Valley on Oct. 30 (Jon Dunn). Our second **Worm-eating Warbler** of the month (Joe Jehl, Oct. 15) stayed over a week in the Pt. Loma Cemetery, and was widely seen. **Northern Parulas** are rare in the spring and even rarer in the fall, so one below San Diego on Oct. 14 was much sought after. **Magnolias** showed up below San Diego (Elizabeth Copper, Oct. 14), and in Pt. Fermin Park, San Pedro (Cliff Pollard, Oct. 22). **Cape Mays** were unknown in the State fifteen years ago, but now we have several sightings—one found by Jerry Johnson in the South Coast Botanic Gardens, San Pedro, on Oct. 19 (probably a record for L.A. Co.), and two more on Pt. Loma on Oct. 23. **Blackpolls** were also unknown here in 1961, but now are considered uncommon but regular in the fall. Single birds were seen at Pt. Fermin Park (LAAS trip Oct. 9, and Jess Morton, Oct. 11) above Santa Barbara (Paul Lehman, Sept. 23), and as many as four on one day below San Diego (Hal Baxter, Oct. 16).

**Black-throated Blues** are inclined to be late, and we have only one report in October—a female below San Diego (Doug Morton, Oct. 15). **Chesnut-sides** were widely distributed along the coast—one in Santa Barbara (previously reported), one in Long Beach Recreation Park (Brian Daniels, Oct. 29), one on Pt. Loma, San Diego (Bruce Broadbooks, Oct. 16), and two or more below San Diego earlier in the month. Only two **Bay-breasted**s were found along the coast—near San Diego on Oct. 23, and at Goleta (Paul L., Oct. 26). **Palm Warblers** were seen below San Diego (Dale D., Oct. 8), at Pt. Fermin Park (Jesse Morton, Oct. 11), and above Santa

Barbara. Along the coast, **Ovenbirds** were below San Diego (Dale D., Oct. 9), and in Pt. Mugu S.P. (LAAS trip, Oct. 3). A delayed report of a **Canada Warbler** comes from Elizabeth Heath, who saw one in Pacific Palisades on Sept. 7. A showy **Painted Redstart**, found by Ken Landis on Oct. 13 at Big Sycamore Cyn., was seen for several days thereafter.

The desert oases to the north and east are birded rather sporadically, except for the almost weekly visits to Oasis Ranch in Mono Co. by the Heindels, who live in Big Pine. On Oct. 15 they found a **Black-throated Green**, a **Blackburnian**, and a **Prairie Warbler** at Oasis; and a week later they had the first two, plus a **Magnolia**. On Oct. 29, two **Black-throated Greens** and an **Ovenbird** were there; and the next day there was a **Blackburnian** plus an **Eastern Phoebe** (the only report this fall), and an early **Northern Shrike**. In Death Valley, Scotty's Castle had two **Black-throated Greens** and an **Ovenbird**. Nearby, at Mesquite Springs, there was a **Brown Thrasher** on Oct. 29. Furnace Creek Ranch produced a **Cape May** and a **Magnolia** on the 29th, and on the 30th, another **Northern Shrike**, two **Rusty Blackbirds**, an **Orchard Oriole**, a **Tree Sparrow**, two **Harris' Sparrows**, and a **Chestnut-collared Longspur**. At Stovepipe Wells was the already-mentioned **Prothonotary** and a **Bay-breasted Warbler**; and at Panamint Springs another **Ovenbird** (Bruce Broadbooks, Oct. 23). With rarities like these one wonders what would be recorded with the kind of daily coverage currently enjoyed by the San Diego area.

**Summer Tanagers**, probably of the eastern, *rubra* race, were widely reported in October. Our only **Scarlet Tanager** was a male in winter plumage (green with dark wings) in the Pt. Loma Cemetery (Jon Dunn, Oct. 17). Don Osborne reported a **Clay-colored Sparrow** along Patterson Rd. about Santa Barbara on Oct. 20. The large field west of Dominguez State College lived up to its reputation as the best local spot for longspurs and pipits. Jerry Johnson discovered a **Lapland Longspur** there on Oct. 15 and 17, plus the previously cited **Red-throated Pipit** and a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** on the 20th. While looking for the pipit the next morning, Kimball Garrett et al found a **McCown's Longspur**. Unfortunately, by the 22nd, all but the **Chestnut-collared** had disappeared.

Now, with winter well entrenched, it would be wise to check along the coast and in the harbors and bays for rarities among the loons, grebes, ducks, gulls, and alcids. And, if you did not do so in November, plan to be at Upper Newport Bay for the high tides of Dec. 10 and 11th—which should bring secretive marsh birds into view. Closer to home, cemeteries, golf courses, and city parks should attract wintering passerines. Finding longspurs and Mountain Plovers in the fields of the Imperial Valley may be strenuous work, but it can be rewarding as well. I'll see you there for the LAAS field trip on Jan. 28th.

**Late Note:** A **Streaked-backed (Scarlet-headed) Oriole** was found by Jon Dunn on Nov. 6 at Furnace Creek Ranch, for California's 6th record (the last sighting was January 1966).

### Christmas Ideas

A great way to save money on gifts and help L.A. Audubon at the same time is to do part of your Christmas shopping at Audubon House bookstore. There you'll find the best selection of nature books in the West—all at 10% discounts to members. Among the many temptations to consider are *The Birds of New Guinea and Tropical Australia*, by Peckover and Filewood (\$25.50), *Birds of Prey of the World*, by Grossman and Hamlet (\$25.00), *Owls of North America*, by Rickert (\$29.95), *The Peterson Field Guide to Bird Songs* (LP: \$19.95; cassette: \$23.95), and *Rails of the World*, by Ripley and Lansdowne (\$75.00). And remember, Audubon House is now open Saturdays from 10 to 3.



## The Los Angeles Audubon Society ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday, February 18

at the

**California Yacht Club**

Marina del Rey

**Roast Beef Buffet**

**\$12 per person**

Celebrate a memorable year for LAAS with an evening of conviviality, fellowship, and fun. Entertainment and Dancing after Dinner.

To make your reservation, send your check (payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society) to Audubon House, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046. Be sure to reserve early, as seating is limited.



**WESTERN  
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**EDITOR** Barry Clark

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Steve Maskel

**CALENDAR EDITOR** Gail Gifford

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Audubon membership (local and national) is \$15 per year (individual), \$18 (family), or \$8.50 (student), including AUDUBON Magazine, and THE WESTERN TANAGER. To join, make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, and send them to Audubon House. Subscriptions to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are \$3.50 per year (Third Class), or \$6.00 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

# CALENDAR

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, Bookstore, and Nature Museum are located at Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046. Telephone: 876-0202. Hours: 10-3, Monday through Saturday.

*Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318*

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

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Plummer Park. The speaker will be **Dr. Ted Hanes**, who will present a brief history of the **Audubon Camp of the West** (presently located in the Wind River Mts. of Wyoming), and will show photos of the workshop's programs. LAAS awards four scholarships each year for this excellent nature training program.

**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.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18—Malibu Christmas Count.** For details call Kimball Garrett, 479-8667, or Jean Brandt, 788-5188.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 1st—Los Angeles Christmas Count.** For details call Nancy Spear, 372-7653.

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

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 8—Santa Barbara and Goleta.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Goleta Beach Park in the parking lot at the base of the pier. Take Hwy. 101 north through Santa Barbara to the Goleta turnoff, marked "University of California, Santa Barbara Airport, and Goleta." Take this road (#217) (Ward Memorial Blvd.) to the Sandspit exit. Turn left, and Goleta Beach Park is on the right. Please car pool as much as possible, as the places to be visited can accommodate only a few cars. Leader: Paul Lehman, 805-968-7394.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 10—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Plummer Park. **Herb Clarke**, past-president of LAAS, and co-author with Arnold Small of *Birds of the West*, will present an illustrated program based on his recent visit to **Madagascar and Zambia**.



**SATURDAY, JANUARY 21—McGrath State Park.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. by the settling ponds at the north end of the bridge. 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. Turn left and park by the bridge. Leader: Nancy Spear, 372-7653.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 22—Pelagic Trip from Morro Bay.** The trip will be from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. People are asked to board 30 minutes before departure. The name of the boat will be announced later, but the departure will be from Virges Landing. Cost is \$15 per person. Make checks payable to L.A. Audubon and send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your phone number and the names and addresses of all persons in your party to Phil Sayre, 660 So. Garfield Ave., Apt. 306, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754. Phone: 288-0545. No refunds accepted within 48 hours of departure. For further details call Phil Sayre. Leaders: Herb and Olga Clarke.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 28th—Salton Sea.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Wister turnoff on Hwy. 111 (about 36 miles south of Mecca, north of Nyland). The trip promises spectacular birding, with large numbers of wintering geese, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Those who wish to stay over for more birding on their own on Sunday may find motels in nearby Brawley. Camping with no water is available at Finney Lake. Leader: Shumway Suffel, 797-2965.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25—Pelagic trip out of Monterey Bay.** Leader: Arnold Small. Details to be announced.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 16—Pelagic trip to Anacapa and out to sea.** The trip will be from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and will cost \$20 per person. Details to be announced.

**SATURDAY, MAY 13 and SUNDAY, MAY 14—Pelagic trip to San Miguel and the Cortez Banks.** The *China Clipper* may be boarded in the Oxnard Marina at 9:00 p.m. on Saturday for a midnight sailing. It will return late Sunday evening. The price is \$30 per person, which includes breakfast and lunch. There is a limit to the number that can be taken, and no reservations can be accepted within 48 hours of departure. Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Lee Jones.