

WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 44

June-July 1978

Number 9

Oxbows & Antbirds

Adventure on the Amazon

by Hank and Priscilla Brodtkin

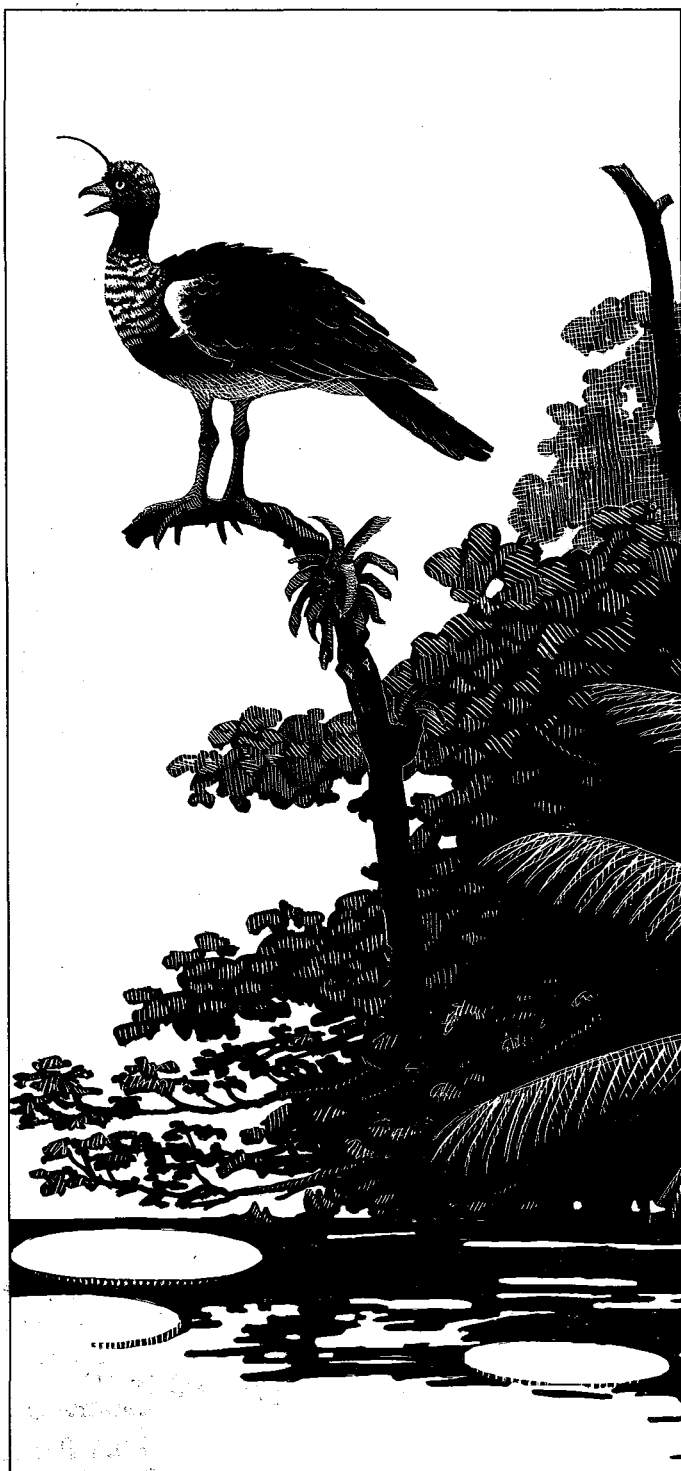


he excitement mounted as our Fawcett Airlines jet crossed the snow-covered Andean barrier and began to drop into the Amazon Basin of northeastern Peru. The thick rain forest below was broken only by shimmering oxbowed rivers and lakes—and then at last the awe-inspiring *Rio Amazon* itself was revealed to us through the clouds.

With Clyde Bergman and Bruce Broadbooks we had joined the UCLA Extension field study course: "The Tropical Ecology of the Amazon" with the unabashed hope of birding as much as possible of this, the richest area for birds in the world. Here on the upper Amazon a Christmas Count-sized circle could conceivably contain upwards of 600 species; but we were under no illusions. Finding even one third that number would be far from easy. For, as anyone who has birded the tropics knows, many of the species secret their selves high in the lofty canopy (150' or more above the forest floor), while others sulk in the swampy thickets—and some are so rare as to be known from only a handful of specimens.

Furthermore, to correctly identify many of them would be a considerable challenge. For there is no "field guide" as we know it for the upper Amazon—or, for that matter, for most of the rest of South America. As it turned out, we did see a few species we could not identify; and there were undoubtedly a few (very few we hope) that were incorrectly identified. But considering the paucity of proper illustrations and adequate written descriptions for many of the Amazon birds, we feel we did quite well.

Our basic reference work was Meyer de Schauensee's



Dana Gardner

Horned Screamer



Blue-crowned Manakin

Guide to the Birds of South America, though we also relied upon Ridgely's *Birds of Panama*. Had Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps' *Birds of Venezuela* been available in time, we certainly would have used it as well. Since many species on the upper Amazon list were pictured in neither of our guides, we photographed the plates from Haverschmidt's *Birds of Surinam*, plus the additional Amazonian parrots, hawks, trogons, and toucans pictured in Forshaw's *Parrots of the World*, Brown and Amadon's *Eagles, Hawks, and Falcons of the World*, and Gould's 19th century *Birds of South America*. A few more species were discovered in Dunning's *Portraits of Tropical Birds*. All these photos were then assembled in a notebook, along with a checklist of the 785 species—excluding North American migrants—which our research indicated might occur in the part of the basin we would be covering. Van Remsen, who had spent many months studying the birds around Monkey Island, kindly loaned us his notes, and Don Roberson contributed an annotated checklist of species encountered on a visit to the Leticia area.

We were also to benefit substantially from the expertise of Russ Greenberg, an ornithology graduate student at Berkeley and part of the UCLA staff on the trip. He had acquired valuable experience with neotropical birds in Panama, and during the trip he was to spend most of his time birding with us. In charge of the course was UCLA botanist Mildred Mathias and zoologist Hugh Rowell from Berkeley. Traveling with these energetic and enthusiastic scholars, both well-versed in the Amazon, was an educational adventure in itself. Throughout the trip they went out of their way to indulge our peculiar passion for birding, not only by permitting us to monopolize Russ, but by assigning to us the chief guide, Hugo Hoyos. Having grown up on the banks of the Amazon, where he often accompanied his father on hunting trips, Senor Hoyos

boasted a broad knowledge of the local birds, animals, insects, and plants—plus the ability to converse fluently in five languages. But most importantly from our standpoint—his enthusiasm matched our own.

Our journey down the Amazon was to begin in Iquitos, Peru and conclude in Leticia, Colombia—a distance of roughly 275 miles. Along the way we would be stopping at four rustic tourist lodges—bases from which we could explore the surrounding terrain. The trip would last from June 25 to July 5—an ideal time to travel the river—for this is the so-called *dry season* (we actually had *two* full days without rain), when the river is in its seasonal decline, permitting access to forest habitat flooded at high water.

As the water recedes the trees of this seasonally-flooded, or *varzea*, forest begin to leaf out—as in our spring—and birds which have “wintered” in the flood-free *terra firme* move into the area to nest. A similar habitat, but with smaller trees and more undergrowth, is found on the many islands in the main river—and some of the birds on these islands occur nowhere else. Further downstream in Brazil may be found the permanently flooded *igapo* forest—a habitat we were unable to visit on this trip. Though the relatively high and dry *terra firme* forest supports the greatest variety of birds, birdlife in this habitat may seem scarce—until you happen to discover a bird party working high in the canopy, or come upon an ant army on the march. Then you *know* you will find something special!

In addition to the forest habitats, several distinct aquatic habitats are found in the upper Amazon. *Varzea* lakes are formed as the river lowers, gradually concentrating large numbers of fish in a steadily shrinking area—and providing food not only for the birds but for the resident human population. These lakes are the home of the giant *Victoria amazonica* water lily; and only here is the piranha truly dangerous. The Amazon and its tributaries which flow from the Andes are heavily-laden with milky-brown silt—and thus are termed *white water* rivers. The designation distinguishes them from the *black water* streams that rise elsewhere in the basin, their waters stained with the tea of decaying vegetation.

Every niche of these land and water habitats appears to be exploited by one avian species or another; and indeed, many birds are so restricted that species of similar appearance may be separated from one another in the field from a knowledge of locality alone. Fascinating theories have been advanced to account for this incredible diversity. These are summarized in Richard Webster's fine article, *Species Diversity in South America* (Western Tanager, Feb. 1978), a discussion of the forces that have shaped this incomparable natural realm.

Our modern jet disgorged us into a rain shower at the Iquitos International Airport. Black Vultures sat in the bare trees along the runway, while Yellow-rumped Caciques flashed back and forth, and swifts—Fork-tailed Palm and Short-tailed—chased insects overhead. Visions of Francisco de Orellano—the first European to navigate the river—and of Wallace and Bates,

those literate and adventurous English explorer-naturalists, raced through our minds. A lifelong dream had come true. We were in the Amazon.

Along roads colorful with the umbrellas of native Iquitans celebrating the Festival of San Juan, we rolled by bus to the curious community of Belem, whose houseboat-type dwellings, normally afloat, now rested on the mud, while wintering Southern Martins circled overhead. Another stop in the gathering dusk found us at a riverside park, where Black-throated Mangos, White-throated Kingbirds, and an Orange-headed Tanager fed in the flowering trees. Then, serenaded by the ubiquitous House Wren, we watched the first of our Amazon sunsets—surely the most glorious on earth.

It was dark when we boarded our thatched *canoe* for a nighttime cruise up the Rio Mamón to the Amazon Safari Camp—and our first night in the Amazon.

First light, of course, found us in the field. The forest around the lodge appeared to be mostly second growth, with some slash-and-burn fields in various stages of development. Here we renewed the acquaintance of some old friends—widely distributed neotropical species we had seen before in Mexico, Costa Rica, or western Colombia: among them, Laughing Falcon, Yellow-headed Caracara, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Smooth-billed Ani, Ringed, Amazon, and Green Kingfishers, Lineated Woodpecker, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Great and Barred Antshrikes, Blue-crowned Manakin, Boat-billed and Social Flycatchers, and Blue-gray, Palm, and Silver-beaked Tanagers. New for us were Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, Black Caracara, Cobalt-winged Parakeet, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Greater Ani, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Cinereous Antshrike, Greater Manakin, White-winged and White-banded Swallows, Rufous-bellied Euphonia, and Red-capped Cardinal. And, if that weren't enough, the Paradise Tanager, Van Remsen's nominee for the most beautiful bird in the world, was fairly common in the taller trees surrounding the agricultural plots.

Before dawn the next morning we boarded our boats for the return to the main river, where we were picked up by a larger craft for the 50-mile journey down the Amazon to the Explorama Lodge—almost at the confluence with the Rio Napo. Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns kept us company along the way, and among the Black and Turkey Vultures overhead were a few Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures—the only ones seen on the trip. Other raptors observed en route included Swallow-tailed, Gray-headed, and Plumbeous Kites, plus the ominipresent Yellow-headed Caracaras. But the country here along the river appeared quite settled and civilized compared to the miles of virgin forest we would encounter below the Rio Napo.

At *Tambo Yanamono*—a *quebrada*, or channel, off the main river—we transferred into open launches for the short trip up to the Explorama Lodge, passing a Black-capped Mockingthrush in the waterside grass as a Crane Hawk circled auspiciously overhead.

If we were to choose one place to visit on the upper Amazon it would definitely be the Explorama Lodge. For about \$50.00 per day including meals and guide service one can stay in relative comfort, surrounded by the best the Amazon has to offer. Below the lodge lies a fine *varzea* forest containing a large lake, while above the lodge is a small plantation, bordered by virgin *terra firme* forest. In addition, the lodge's boats will transport you out to Yanamono Island in the main river, or to a primitive trail camp up the Napo—from which you may ride up the Rio Mazan, a *black water* river. Unfortunately our schedule did not permit us to visit either the island or the trail camp; but there was plenty to keep us occupied as it was.

As you may well imagine, the birdlife here is amazingly varied. In the vicinity of the main lodge and on Yanamono Island, Ted Parker identified 199 species in 2½ days during June 1976. Around the lodge itself we found Tui Parakeets, Green-and-rufous Kingfishers, Little Woodpeckers, a single Glittering-throated Emerald, the ground-dwelling Pale-legged Hornero (an amazing vocalist), the Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Streaked Flycatchers, Thrush-like Wrens, Black-billed Thrushes, Band-tailed, Crested, and Russet-backed Oropendolas, and the magnificent Masked Crimson Tanagers. At the forest edges and around the plantation areas there were Black-headed Parrots, Dark-billed and Squirrel Cuckoos, Black-tailed and White-tailed Trogons, Scarlet-crowned and Black-spotted Barbets, Plum-throated and Spangled Cotingas, a Spotted Tody-Flycatcher (nesting near a wasp's nest), a Red-legged Honeycreeper, Black-faced and Yellow-bellied Dacnis, and White-shouldered and Hooded Tanagers.

In the *varzea* forest were Horned Screamers; and Wattled Jacanas were plentiful at the lake. Hook-billed Kites and a Solitary Eagle flew overhead. A Spectacled Owl flushed from a thicket and Black-fronted Nunbirds, Lettered Aracaris, and a Black-banded Woodcreeper foraged in the trees. One bird party included Leaden and White-flanked Antwrens, Ocellated Woodcreepers, and a Purple-throated Euphonia. It was here, as well, that we witnessed one of the most memorable sights of the trip: Upon hearing what sounded like someone whistling three notes of a simple melody from high in a tree, we gazed up to observe a pair of orange and black oriole-like Troupials feeding on the red blossom spike of an enormous bromeliad.

Some of the most interesting birding, however, took place in the *terra firme* forest. Here we found Golden-headed and Red-headed Manakins performing on their leks, plus a Cinereous Mourner and Green-and-gold Tanagers. But the antbirds were the real highlight. This uniquely neotropical family obviously evolved in the Amazon—for our list of Upper Amazon antbird "possibles" included no less than 91 species. Of the 18 we identified on the trip, 13 were seen at Explorama, most of these in the *terra firme* forest. Some occurred singly—such as the Long-winged Antwren, the Warbling, Black-faced, and Spot-backed Antbirds, and a few more we were unable to identify. But most were in the company of columns of army ants. In the highest part of the forest we were fortunate to come upon an immense movement of ants—and we stood between two of the foraging columns and literally watched the birds parade by! Sooty, Bicolored, White-plumed, and Scale-backed Antbirds and

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the much sought-after Black-spotted Bare-eye were in a feeding frenzy, snapping up insects that the ants chased into the open – while an attending Rufous Motmot fluttered through the trees overhead.

It was not without regret, on the early morning of June 29, that we headed back down the *quebrada* to rejoin the main river. For Explorama is indeed an unforgettable place. How could we possibly forget the walks through those magnificent forests, accompanied by a pet Pale-winged Trumpeter that nipped impatiently at our heels if we lingered to look at another bird; or Charlie, the Capybara, sloshing after us through the *varzea* mud; or the wild mother and baby Three-toed Sloth moving in slow motion upside down through the canopy overhead; or the ear-splitting brays of the Horned Screammers? And when the day was over, those fantastic buffet dinners (fish that tastes like chicken, salads, manioc, fruits) followed by Mildred's, Hugh's, and Russ' evening lectures on Amazon botany, entomology, and ornithology. Not to mention the pleasure of being awakened at three a.m. by a Tropical Screech-Owl calling from the rafters over our heads. Those 2½ days were the climax of our Amazon trip, if not the climax of all our birding adventures. We will be going back soon!

At the main river the *Adolfo* awaited us – a venerable Scottish-built riverboat of 1905 vintage that was to be our home for the next five days. Aboard the *Adolfo* we would journey some nine hours downstream to the Tambo Piranha Lodge.

Don't let anyone tell you that cruising the Amazon is a waste of time birding-wise. The main channels in the river are often quite near shore, and they occasionally swing from one bank to the other. Ensconced in our deck chairs, nursing cold beers, we spied White-necked and Capped Herons, Horned Screammers, and Black Skimmers on the banks. Raptors were numerous in the great trees, as well as in the air – among them Plumbeous and Gray-headed Kites, Great Black, Savannah, and Black-collared Hawks, and Black, Red-throated, and Yellow-headed Caracaras. In addition that interesting puffbird, the Swallow-wing, was present in fair numbers, flycatching from dead snags.

At the Pituayal Army Post, near Pebas, where we stopped to be checked by the Peruvian authorities, we found Oriole Blackbirds, Collared Plover, and one pair each of Bronzy Jacamars and Double-toothed Kites. By late in the afternoon many species of parrots were on the wing, returning to their roosts, and we were able to identify Canary-winged and Tui Parakeets, plus Short-tailed and Mealy Parrots. As the towering cumulus clouds began to take on the hues of the inside of an abalone shell a few flocks of Blue-and-yellow, Scarlet, and Chestnut-fronted Macaws flapped across the river. And then, at last light, we reached the Rio Cochaquinas, along which we would make our way to the Tambo Piranha Lodge.

As we discovered, the construction of the lodge had never quite been finished – and Tambo Piranha is now rapidly being reclaimed by the jungle. In fact, it's difficult to make out where the lodge ends and the forest begins. So we spent the next three nights on board the *Adolfo*.

The less said about that first night the better. But the next day they *did* get some of the bugs out – with insect spray. And some judicious hammering here and there fixed most of the leaks in the overhead, so those of us in the upper bunks did not have to again endure the Chinese torture of rain drops dripping on our heads while we tried to sleep.

Before breakfast that first day we birded around the lodge, where we found Sulphury, Streaked, and Gray-capped Flycatchers, Lesser Seed-Finches, White-shouldered Tanagers, and Tawny-bellied Hermits – plus Chestnut-crowned Becards feeding young at a nest. Greater Yellow-headed Vultures, Slender-billed Kites, Bat Falcons, and Cuvier's Toucans seemed common along the river, as were all the neotropical kingfishers (except the Pygmy), Greater Anis, Striated (Green) Herons, and Anhingas.

A trip by canoe up a side channel yielded a Collared Trogon, plus, in the streamside foliage, a tiny Reddish Hermit, and – walking along the shore like a waterthrush – a Band-tailed Antbird. A night trip produced good looks at a Common Potoo, plus many Pauraques, and a few very small caiman in the river grass. Along a trail that took us into the higher forest, we listened in amazement to the calls of several Screaming Pihas – air-rending shrieks that seemed inappropriate from such a plain-looking bird. Here too we saw the Collared Forest-Falcon (we were, we believe, too far east for the similar but very rare endemic, the Buckley's Forest-Falcon). And then, on the second day at Tambo Piranha, we hiked to the Amazon, following a muddy forest trail across a narrow neck of land, and observing along the way White-fronted Nunbirds, Roadside Hawks, and a Long-tailed Woodcreeper. A huge fruiting tree at the forest edge hosted Purple-throated, Plum-throated, and Spangled Cotingas, plus a flock of Lettered Aracaris; and at a small village by the river a number of second-growth species were conspicuous – among them Lined and Chestnut-bellied Seedeaters, Yellow-browed Sparrows, White-throated and Tropical Kingbirds, and Yellow-crowned Tyrannulets.

On July 2 we embarked on the next leg of our journey – another day-long cruise down the Amazon, our destination this time: Monkey Island in Colombia. Though most of the birds seen en route duplicated those seen on the way to Tambo Piranha, a grove of bare white-barked trees treated us to a flock of well over a hundred Red-bellied Macaws – our only sighting of this species on the trip.

It was very late in the day when we arrived at Monkey Island, but, hoping for a glimpse of a bird or two in the dwindling light, we ran out the back door of the lodge – and there were fortunate to observe an unbelievable Long-billed Woodcreeper climbing a nearby tree. Though Undulated Tinamous called everywhere, try as we might we never succeeded in spotting one.

Eager to study the birds typical of an Amazon island, we devoted the next morning to birding around the lodge. Most noticeable were the parrots, noisily feeding in the fruiting trees – among them, numerous White-eyed, Dusky-headed and Tui Parakeets, plus Short-tailed and Festive Parrots. The Blue-chinned Sapphire was the only hummingbird we could identify. But a Plain-breasted Piculet worked a low shrub,

while its cousins, the Yellow-tufted, Little, and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers, busied themselves in the trees—and Lesser Kiskadees plus Rusty-margined and Swainson's Flycatchers fed on the flying insects.

A highlight of this phase of the journey were two memorable boat trips on the *varzea* lake system on Monkey Island. Flocks of Anhingas flew overhead, and many Striated Herons plus a couple of White-necked Herons were seen. Raptors were numerous, including Black-collared and Roadside Hawks, plus a single Great Black Hawk and a single Black Caracara. A Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl was observed calling from a tree, while Scarlet-crowned Barbets and Plum-throated Cotingas flashed in the sun. It was here too that we thrilled to one of the stars of Monkey Island—as a flock of four Amazonian Umbrellabirds flew in from the north and landed in a bare tree in full view of our canoe.

A trip around the island in a small boat—part of the time in pouring rain—yielded a White-headed Marsh-Tyrant and several Yellow-hooded Blackbirds in the grass on the shore, plus Blue-winged Parrotlets, Black-throated Mangos, and Hooded Tanagers in the trees. Then one hot noon we glopped through knee-deep mud to find a tree full of Hoatzins—that other star of Monkey Island—and for a bonus we flushed a Rufescent Tiger-Heron from deep in the marsh.

Early the next morning we left Monkey Island for a half day trip up a *quebrada* on the north bank of the Amazon, to the Ticuna Indian village of Arara. The usual species were in the grass along the banks: Red-capped Cardinals, Black-capped Mockingthrushes, and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds, plus Black-headed Parrots and Many-banded Aracaris in the

trees. Beyond the village we worked our way through slash-and-burn, getting good looks at a Blue-headed Parrot and a pair of Chestnut-capped Puffbirds. Then, as we approached the forest, we discovered a Scarlet Macaw and a Violaceous Trogon perched in the trees. The forest was unlike the others we had been in—for here we found our first tree ferns and our first rocks since we entered the Amazon. In the limited time we had we found one bird party containing an Olive Oropendola, a Black-bellied Cuckoo, a Chestnut Woodpecker, and what we believe was a Bar-bellied Woodcreeper—among a higher-than-usual number of “unidentifiables.”

That evening, in appropriate fashion, we celebrated the Fourth of July. After a few toasts, Hugh provided the fireworks display by discharging both barrels of a double-barrelled shotgun.

July 5th was to be our last day on the Amazon—and the day of our first *black water* experience. We made arrangements to go to Leticia in a small boat, traveling up the Rio Cayarú—and we requested the boatman to remove the usual thatching for better visibility. The boat departed at first light, treating us to our last pearly-pink sunrise on the river. Then we turned south into the Cayarú, leaving the light silty waters of the Amazon behind and entering a very different world.

Now, in the early morning, the Cayarú pulsed with life. Thousands of small fish—Hugo called them “walking catfish”—were visible just below the surface, and the Yellow-billed and Large-billed Terns made frequent fishing forays over the water. All the herons we had seen earlier, including Rufescent Tiger-Herons, were abundant along the banks. Agami Herons were *common*! And we even saw a Boat-billed. Kingfishers were abundant, including the Pygmy, and a mixed flock of Chestnut-eared, Many-banded, and Lettered Aracaris foraged in some fruiting trees, followed by a pair of White-bellied Parrots. Further upstream a pair of Chestnut Jacamars perched on a palm frond. A Solitary Eagle soared overhead, followed shortly by a Great Black Hawk—affording us an opportunity for a good comparison of the two—and a pair of Snail Kites perched over a quiet stretch of river. At the Indian Village of Bella Vista, a pair of Scarlet Macaws flew overhead, and above the village we delighted in our only sighting of the famous Sungrebe, swimming discretely among the mangrove-like roots at the water's edge.

As noon approached the river quieted, and the wildlife seemed to withdraw into the shadows. In the rising heat of midday we motored back to the Amazon, and on toward Leticia. Soon we encountered river traffic and the inevitable signs of approaching civilization. Since there were now few birds to be seen, it seemed an appropriate time to reflect. In our eleven days on the river we had counted over 230 birds—not bad for this type of a tour. Among the 500-odd species we missed were several we especially wanted to see—including the Red-and-green Macaw, the Cream-colored Woodpecker, the rare Harpy Eagle, and that dream-bird, the Nocturnal Curassow. But some of the birds we *did* find are on the lists of very few birders; and one day we're going back for the rest. 🐦



White-necked Jacobin

Richard Webster

A Guide to Neotropical Bird Guides

The birder heading south into the richest avifauna on earth may well find that his most frustrating experience is not the heat, the insects, or the deadly piranhas, but his inability to identify species for which no adequate illustration exists in any of the available field guides. Because of the antediluvian state of tropical field ornithology, the birder with dreams of Paradise Tanagers, toucans, motmots, and swarms of foraging antbirds would do well to determine, before he sets out, which regions are at least nominally covered by the existing guides, and what he can do to get by in the rest until they too are accorded similar coverage.

The essential bird guide for South America is Rudolphe Meyer de Schauensee's **A Guide to the Birds of South America** (Livingston Publ. Co., 1970, \$20.00). This volume covers all of the almost 3000 species known to occur on the continent, and for many countries there is absolutely nothing else. Though you can't afford to do without this volume if you're birding South America, it may often seem that you'd be better off without it. For the 50 plates, of varying quality, illustrate only 676 species, just 23% of the birds; and few guides have descriptions that are so unsatisfactory. The work of an author with an extensive museum background but little field experience, the book frequently describes characters visible only in the hand, while failing to mention conspicuous features, crucial for field identification. And what can you do about species No. 53, when the book merely tells you it is "like No. 52, but grayer?" Geographical variations within species is well covered, and is correlated with the range information, which is necessarily brief, but good. Habitat notes, however, are better ignored, and the key, to be kind, are hopeless.

Perhaps the most important thing the birder traveling to the tropics must learn is the characteristics of the common genera of South American birds. In single localities there may be, for example, as many as five species of *Automolus* foliage-gleaners, ten species of *Tangara* tanagers, or eleven species of *Myrmotherula* antwrens. Meyer de Schauensee is reasonably good at describing some characters that distinguish the members of a genus; but neither his text nor the plates are helpful at distinguishing *Automolus* from other foliage-gleaners and the rest of the ovenbirds.

My recommendation for overcoming this problem is to study the recently-published *Birds of Venezuela*, or Robert Ridgely's **A Guide to the Birds of Panama** (Princeton University Press, 1976, \$15.00) — the finest field guide to any area in the neotropics. The 32 plates in Ridgely, the work of John Gwynne, depict 650 species — 75% of Panama's total of 880 species. (It is considered unnecessary in guides of this sort, directed to North American readers, to illustrate species shared with North America). The quality of the plates is good to excellent, and the additional information for each species includes remarks on status, distribution, habits, and vocalizations. Apart from its obvious value to the birder visiting Panama, the guide, used in conjunction with Meyer de Schauensee's *South American* book, may serve as the key



Magpie Tanager

Dana Gardner

to learning neotropical birds. For example, 15 genera and 23 species of ovenbird are known from Panama. While 26 genera and 66 species are recorded from Ecuador, all 15 Panamanian genera occur in Ecuador, and these represent 51 of the 66 species in Ecuador. By studying Ridgely, therefore, the birder visiting Ecuador — or any other South American country — will be in a position to make more constructive use of Meyer de Schauensee's book.

The new **Guide to the Birds of Venezuela** (Princeton University Press, 1978, \$19.95) is worth the price for the plates alone — a fortunate fact, since the text, written by Meyer de Schauensee and William Phelps, Jr., is a disappointment. As with Meyer de Schauensee's other work, the descriptions are of little use for field identification, and the notes on range are all too brief and imprecise. Notes on habitat and calls are weak — but in the world of neotropical birding everything is helpful, especially when it fills a void. The beauty of the guide however, is in its 53 plates (37 of them by Guy Tudor), illustrating over 900 species — 70% of Venezuela's nearly 1300 species. Tudor's plates range from good to outstanding, and those by Wayne Trimm and John Gwynne are almost as good. Especially valuable to the birder visiting any Andean country

are the illustrations of montane genera not found in Panama, and depicted nowhere else. The facing-page notes written by Tudor almost render the descriptions in the text superfluous, and along with the plates they will prove invaluable to anyone visiting tropical South America or southern Central America.

Another useful volume is Richard French's **A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago** (Livingston Publ. Co., 1974, \$15.00). Though the avifauna of these islands is limited, at least relative to the mainland, many species widespread in South America are described in the text. While falling short of the high standards of *The Birds of Panama* or *The Birds of Venezuela*, the 36 plates by John O'Neill are reasonably good. Attention is paid in the text to habitat and behavior, including calls; and extensive information is presented on the natural history of most species. In short, it is a volume well worth purchasing, if only to augment the other guides.

Francois Haverschmidt's **Birds of Surinam** (Oliver & Boyd, 1968) is, unfortunately, out of print. Among its assets are 40 beautiful color plates and many fine drawings by Paul Barruel, plus a text that offers some useful notes on identification, habitat, and habits. Because of its size, however, the book is unwieldy on trips — though the plates can be photographed. C. C. Olrog's **Las aves sudamericanas** (Vol. 1: non-passerines) (Libart, Buenos Aires, 1968, \$25.00) is the only volume which attempts to illustrate all the non-passerine birds in South America — while offering the sensible feature of range maps adjacent to the text. Unfortunately, most of the illustrations are pathetically crude — and the text is in Spanish. Maria Koepcke's **The Birds of the Department of Lima, Peru** (Livingston Publ. Co., 1970, \$4.95), and Michael Harris' **A Field Guide to the Birds of the Galapagos** (Taplinger Publ. Co., 1974, \$10.95) are valuable resources for anyone visiting those limited but frequently-birded areas.

In addition to these guides there are several checklists which provide more detailed information on the distribution of birds in several countries — most notably Thomas Butler's checklist for **Ecuador**, Steve Hilty's list for **Colombia**, and Peter Alden's checklist for **Venezuela**.

Although it is not a field guide, Emmet R. Blake's **A Manual of Neotropical Birds** (Vol. 1, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977, \$50.00), will be of some use to the birder with substantial interest in the neotropics. This first volume of a projected series of three goes no further than the gulls and terns — less than 1/3 of the avifauna — and it may be a while before the work is complete. But the major drawback is the fact that the work is not oriented to the field ornithologist (only a small percentage of the birds are illustrated and few field marks are mentioned) — nor is it as detailed as comparable "handbooks" to the birds of the northern hemisphere. Yet the birder may find that despite its cost, lack of detail, and numerous small inaccuracies, it is a necessary acquisition — simply because, at 674 pages, nothing else is so thorough or up to date.

Most of the books mentioned above are available at Audubon House Bookstore in Hollywood. The others may be found in the ornithology collection of the BioMed Library at UCLA, Westwood.

The birds of Middle America are covered by two basic works: Ridgely's *Birds of Panama* and Roger Tory Peterson and Edward L. Chalif's **A Field Guide to Mexican Birds and Adjacent Central America** (Houghton Mifflin, 1973, \$8.95). Between these two volumes all but about a dozen Middle American birds are dealt with — but since Ridgely offers brief descriptions of these in an appendix, the problem is not very great.

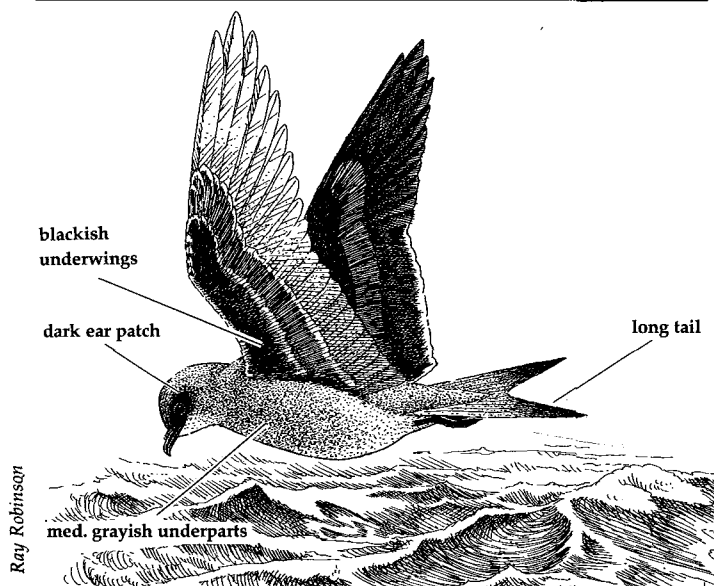
Peterson and Chalif's guide is typical of the Peterson series: reasonably good plates and a weak, though adequate text. Emmet Blake's earlier **Birds of Mexico** (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953) does offer very good descriptions, but the rest of the text is disappointing and the illustrations are of little value to the birder. Ernest P. Edwards' **A Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico** (E. P. Edwards, 1972, \$8.50) features the kind of chatty, informal text that can give a birder an idea of what a leafscraper does and where he might find one. But the plates are, for the most part, lamentable. All in all, a good book to read before taking a trip, but not the best to take into the field. L. Irby Davis' **A Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Central America** (Univ. of Texas, 1972, \$6.50) is another of these curious ornithological works whose raison d'être is hard to comprehend. Though the book has the advantage of covering *all* of Middle America, it suffers from the unorthodox taxonomic views of its author; and because of the eccentric nomenclature Davis prefers, it is difficult to use the plates or the text without expending undue effort in translation. With the exception of the voice sections there is little of value in the text — and the notes on voice are probably useful only to those with considerable musical training ("The range of the call is from F³ to C⁴"). While the plates are at times misleading, they are worthy of study before a trip — especially since there is, at present, no other way to compare all the birds from Mexico to Panama at a glance.

The birder visiting Guatemala would do well to acquire Hugh C. Land's **Birds of Guatemala** (Livingston Publ. Co., 1970, \$10.00) — the only Middle American guide offering distribution/abundance maps for every species — and Frank B. Smithe's **The Birds of Tikal** (Nat. Hist. Press, 1966, \$17.00).

When planning a trip you may wish more information about the local distribution of birds than is available in the field guides. Fortunately, for almost every country there is some sort of synopsis of the birdlife, providing details on range and abundance. These works are listed in the bibliographies of *The Birds of Panama*, *The Birds of Venezuela*, and Meyer de Schauensee's **The Species of Birds of South America with their Distribution** (Acad. Nat. Sci. Phil, 1966, \$12.50) — a detailed account of the ranges of South American birds. In addition there is a series of inexpensive ornithological gazetteers to South American countries, published by the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard and the Field Museum in Chicago. These publications contain such information as the location, altitude, and collector's name for all the published localities from which ornithological records have been obtained. Complete, up-to-date bibliographies are also included. So far, volumes for Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay have been published, and one for Colombia is in preparation. ♡

Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel



The Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel was once a fairly common bird off the coast of northern and central California, but it has declined steadily over the past two decades, and is now only rarely encountered on offshore boat trips.

In Southern California this species was probably always very rare, with the majority of valid records pertaining to dead birds picked up on the beaches. Normally, the best time to look for the species would be in late winter or spring. During the past two decades there has been no more than a handful of reliable sight records, the majority of these from the waters off San Luis Obispo Co. The spring of 1976, however, saw an unprecedented invasion of the species into So. California waters. During late May of that year up to 17 individuals in a day were encountered off Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

The Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel is our *palest* storm-petrel, but despite the impression conveyed by the illustrations in the standard field guides (notably *Robbins.*, the underparts are *medium gray* rather than whitish. As a consequence, inexperienced observers have often identified winter-plumaged Red Phalaropes as Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels — though the birds may be easily told apart not only by their coloration but by their manner of flight. Although there is some variation between species, storm-petrels basically fly with rather deep, steady wing beats, while Red Phalaropes, like other shorebirds, fly with rapid, shallow wingbeats.

The species of storm-petrel that most closely resembles the Fork-tailed is the Ashy — for its plumage has a noticeable grayish sheen, and, relative to the other species of storm-petrel that occur in California, it is fairly long-tailed. However, the Fork-tailed is *noticeably paler* than the Ashy, and unlike the Ashy it has a *blackish ear patch*, contrasting with the rest of the face. But, apart from its overall grayish coloration, the best mark on the Fork-tailed is probably the *slaty black underwing*, which contrasts markedly with the rest of the underparts. If observed, this mark alone is diagnostic. ♀

Jean Brandt/BIRDING at

Santa Anita Canyon

Of the many canyons on the southern face of the San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Anita Canyon is one of the most accessible. With its perennial stream, lush riparian growth, steep hillsides and surrounding chaparral, it is also one of the most scenic and rewarding for the birder. The area was originally developed about 1910 as a summer resort, and many of the cabins along the stream are still occupied. The last horse and burro pack station in the San Gabriels is at Chantry Flats, and provisions are hauled to the residents of the canyon below by animal. No vehicles are allowed!

From the north end of Santa Anita Avenue a paved road winds three miles up the chaparral-covered hills to the Chantry Flats Ranger Station — the end of the road. The picnic area, in a dense grove of live oaks, with a few introduced conifers, is a good place to look for Mountain Quail, both Steller's and Scrub Jays, summering Bullock's Orioles and Black-headed Grosbeaks, resident Wrentits, and migrants in season.

A steep road (one mile long and closed to automobiles) descends to the canyon floor from the parking lot. Then a one-mile hike upstream brings you to Sturdevant Falls. Dippers are resident in the canyon, nesting on the *rick-rack* below the many checkdams along the route to the falls; but they may be seen feeding anywhere along the stream.

Canyon Wrens nest under the porches of the homes, and the unsurpassed beauty of their song — with one note cascading over another — may be heard throughout the canyon. Bewick's and House Wrens are also residents, and during the winter the streamside vegetation often supports a few Townsend's Solitaires and Winter Wrens.

One quarter-mile below the falls, two trails branch off to the left from the main trail. Take the *right fork*, which leads up the west side of the canyon, high above the falls. Here you will find an ideal spot for an evening picnic. Black Swifts summer here, nesting under the falls. But arrange to be present at dusk, as it is then that they are most easily seen; and remember a flashlight for your return hike! White-throated Swifts and summering Violet-green Swallows are also common here.

The spot is particularly good for Spotted Owls, and if you do stay for an evening picnic, listen in the canyon not only for Spotted but for Screech, Pygmy, and Great Horned Owls. All have been found here in the past.

The four mile round-trip hike required to visit this beautiful canyon can be strenuous for those unaccustomed to steep trails and unrelenting sun, and a sensible plan is to arrange to make the hike back up to the parking lot in the cool of late afternoon or evening.

Good birding!

LAAS Commissions Mural

With a grant from the Ora L. Leeper Fund, Los Angeles Audubon has commissioned artist Ray Robinson to paint an 18' mural depicting the birds and habitats of the Santa Fe Wildlife Area in Irwindale. The mural will be installed in the area's newly-opened Nature Center.

Terry Clark

The Really Big Day

This time we're going to do it right!" That phrase kept cropping up every time there was a discussion of plans for the April 29th Big Day. Initially it was to be the same team that had established the national record two years ago. Jon Dunn, Kimball Garrett, Paul Lehman, and Van Remsen had identified 207 species in 24 hours. And the American Birding Association's new Big Day rules had been scrupulously followed: everyone stayed within conversation distance of one another; no walkie-talkies were used; no outsiders pointed out species; and, most significantly, at least 95% of the birds were seen or heard by *all* participants. After a gruelling effort, hindered by fatiguing heat, weekend traffic, and what has come to be known as "Dunn's Ditch" (not to mention Dunn's running out of gas), the team had set an official Big Day record. But Jim Tucker's 229, set in Texas in 1973 (only about 82% of the species had been identified by everyone) and Guy McCaskie's 227 (California 1972) (participants had been dropped off to cover areas alone) lingered in people's minds as impressive highs, perhaps impossible to top. So this time there would be no confusion about the value of the results. *This time they were going to do it right.*

First of all, the route was changed. Two years ago the south end of the Salton Sea failed to produce much that couldn't be picked up elsewhere, and it had cost too much in driving time. On the other hand, this year the north and west shores of the Sea were looking good. So the plan was, after owling Mt. Palomar, to race down to the desert in order to be at the dike of the Whitewater River at dawn. From Salton City the birders would cut across Anza-Borrego, then head up the Cuyamacas, over to Mission Gorge, then the San Diego River Channel, La Jolla, and—well, that would depend upon how much time was left.

Regrettably, one other change had to be made: Paul Lehman simply didn't have time to take part. So names were tossed around. But when Richard Webster's name came up, everyone seemed to feel intuitively that he was the perfect choice. As for transportation, the team would rely on *The Desert Warbler*, a dust-colored Volvo wagon, considered a "luxury" birding car—primarily because it was one of the few vehicles around with less than 100,000 miles. Ten months after purchase its odometer read just under 40,000. And the tires still showed at least a trace of a tread.

Mt. Palomar hadn't changed much in two years. It was black and it was cold. And it still had Great Horned, Pygmy, Spotted, Screech, and Saw-whet Owls. It was a good start, and things were going well—until the birders hit the Sea. Then things started going *great*. Not only 10 Snow Geese, but a Ross' Goose to boot. Overhead, a gorgeous adult-plumage Franklin's. The Red Knots were there. Several Ruddy Turnstones. All three crucial rails had called. Everything was there that had to be—except for the Gull-billed Tern; but that was no problem: they picked it up at Salton City. Swainson's Hawks over the Anza-Borrego Desert. Purple Martins at Lake Cuyamaca. Only the Hairy Woodpecker was missed at Paso Picacho Campground. And



The victorious Big Day team: (l. to r.) Kimball Garrett, Terry Clark (recorder), Jon Dunn, Van Remsen; Richard Webster (front).

the group cleaned up at Mission Gorge. In fact, they left the Gorge tied with their 207 record—and still twenty miles from the coast! The days of careful scouting that Jon and Van had done were really paying off.

Along San Diego Bay the birders scanned the beaches and distant horizon for still more rewards. At Point Loma, Black Oystercatcher—a double bonus: a County bird for every member of the team. Tubenoses were expected, but not Black Storm-Petrel—yet there were maybe 30 way the hell out there. And jaegers. Lots of jaegers. Both Parasitic and Pomarine. There was even time to run around for single species pick ups. Point Loma College for Red-breasted Nuthatch. The Naval Yard for Greater Scaup.

It was not yet 7:30 when the tally hit 229, but the count had till midnight to go. It was possible to reach L.A. before 10 p.m. with no problem—so why not try for scoters at Ballona Creek? Some two hours later, flashlights picked out both a White-winged and an immature male Black among the Surf Scoters bobbing in the channel. 230 and 231—that would bury the Texas tally once and for all. But why stop? Kittiwakes were known to hang around the Santa Monica Pier. Perhaps they spend the night. So, armed with scope, binoculars, and flashlights, the team made a quick sweep of the pier. But, alas, no gulls—just a lot of weirdos acting strange, getting in the way. "Only in L.A. . .," the birders muttered, half amused—and decided to call it a day. They'd settle for 231, just to get away from the crazies.

If any of this seems like a breeze, be advised that there were strong winds throughout the day—until, ironically, the birders reached the coast, where they would have welcomed a gale—to blow in bonus pelagics. Yet, as is typical of feats of great skill, it only *looked* easy. In fact, two important factors came into play. First of all, the birds were there to be found. And—more importantly—the mastery of each individual birder added up to a group achievement that surpassed the sum of the parts.

The final score of 231 represents a remarkable achievement—a new North American record. No question about it. But, on a higher level, it demonstrates the triumph of individual excellence working for a common goal. Yea, team! ♡

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



June is a month for a change of pace in the world of birds and birders, and for all but the intrepid vagrant-chaser it is a month of winding down after the excitement of spring migration. Now the wintering waterfowl are gone, and all but a few of the shorebirds have left us. But there is still much activity in the avian realm, and much good birding to be done. For this is the ideal time to rediscover the rewards of our local mountains, where the birding is now at its best.

Jean Brandt's bird-finding articles in the *Tanager* or her booklet, *Birding Locations Around Los Angeles*, can lead you to the most promising spots for mountain birds. A number of these are along Angeles Crest Highway above Switzer's Camp. Of particular appeal are Charlton Flats, a picnic area with huge Yellow Pines; the campground at Chilao (similar to Charlton Flats but a little higher); and Buckhorn — another campground, with a shaded stream. The latter area John Muir described as "the gem of the Southern Sierras." In the San Jacinto Mountains, Lake Fulmor, Humber Co. Park, and Hurkey Creek Camp offer a chance for owls, and possibly Whip-poor-wills and Purple Martins.

For the rare-birder, however, June and October are hectic times, the peak periods for vagrant birds. By definition, vagrant birds are lost birds, and lost birds often appear late. Although vagrants can be found almost anywhere, they concentrate at the so-called vagrant traps — the desert oases and offshore islands which offer a welcome refuge to the disoriented wanderer. There won't be many non-resident birds at these places, but even one rarity can make the long trip worthwhile.

On April 14, Gene Cardiff's bird class had the good fortune of sighting a **Yellow Rail** near Lakeview in Riverside Co. — the first confirmed record for Southern California in many years. The bird was refound on the 19th by Doug Morton, but two large groups who thoroughly combed the area later that week had to be content with several **Soras** and two **Virginia Rails**. A **Reddish Egret** near the mouth of the San Diego River (Elizabeth Copper) was one of four which were in that area earlier in the year. Hank Brodtkin had a **Little Blue Heron** at Devereux Slough in Goleta, April 24th. Both the **Black Brant** and the "**Cackling**" **Canada Goose** which wintered at Apollo Lake near Lancaster stayed well into April, and were joined on the 11th by two breeding-plumaged **Dunlin** (uncommon away from the Salton Sea.) Two male **Blue-winged Teal** were a pleasant surprise for Terry Clark et al at the nearby Edwards Air Force Base marsh on the 17th — though the birds are regular in small numbers at this time of the year. Five female and one imm. male **Black Scoters** and two **White-wings** lingered on with the **Surf Scoters** in Ballona Creek at Marina del Rey (Terry Clark, April 27).

Rough-legged and **Ferruginous Hawks** stayed in the Antelope Valley well into April (Jon Dunn), as did the **Broad-winged Hawks** near Santa Barbara (Paul Lehman) and the **Osprey** which wintered at the Long Beach Marina (Ron Bennett, Apr. 11). Another **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Morongo Valley, April 29 (Herb and Olga Clarke and Stuart Keith). An adult **Zone-tailed Hawk** at Morongo Valley (Steve Cardiff, Apr. 21) roosted for the night and provided an opportunity for some 30 pre-dawn watchers

to study it as it circled and flew down the canyon in the morning. It was a new state bird for most of them. Even in the Antelope Valley, migrating **Swainson's Hawks** proved difficult to find, despite many trips there by eager L.A. Co. listers. However, on April 20, Nancy and Hal Spear, returning from Saddleback Butte, watched two soaring Swainson's alight in a grove of trees, where a large nest was later found (Jon Dunn). This is the first reported nesting in decades, south of San Luis Obispo Co., the upper eastern Mojave Desert, and the Owens Valley. A somewhat late migrant Swainson's was sighted on the west side of the Salton Sea on Apr. 29 (Ian MacGregor), and five were seen the same day in the Borrego Valley. An adult **Peregrine Falcon** was at the north end of the Sea on Apr. 22.

Dick Erickson found an **American Oystercatcher** at Pt. Loma on Apr. 21, and the bird was still there 10 days later. Five **Surfbirds** at Salton City represented the third record for the Sea. During the course of the month additional Surfbirds were encountered several times at this same locality — probably different individuals as there were intervals when the birds were absent. A **Black Turnstone**, very rare in spring at the Sea, was also present for most of the month. **Ruddy Turnstones** are uncommon but regular at the Sea during migration, but up to 11 were at the North End on April 29. Individual **Solitary Sandpipers** at Santa Fe Dam, Apr. 15, and at Morongo Valley early in May represent rare spring records.

Despite decimation of their habitat one or two pairs of **Elf Owls** are still nesting above Needles — perhaps the last locality left in the state for this species. California's first **Blue-throated Hummingbird**, a female, is reported to have nested near Three Rivers in Tulare Co. Her mate may well be an Anna's, as hybrids are far from unknown in the Trochilidae. A female **Hairy Woodpecker** in the cottonwoods at Yucca Valley was unexpected at this high desert locality (Hal Baxter, Apr. 18). Although the wintering **Gray Flycatcher** at the Arcadia Arboretum was not seen in early April, it was refound on the 24th in a slightly different area (Barbara Cohen). A probable migrant Gray was also found in the Arboretum on Apr. 30 (Ian MacGregor), and another migrant Gray was seen north of Little Lake, S.Bd. Co. (Dan Guthrie, Apr. 29). **Bell's Vireos** have become scarce as breeding birds here, probably due to cowbird parasitism, and to date our only reports come from Morongo Valley (Russ and Marion Wilson) and from Mission Gorge, above San Diego (Phil Unitt).

By May 1st all the western warblers had been seen locally, plus the newly arrived **Swainson's Thrushes**; but there were few rarities among them. Riverside Audubon had a **Painted Redstart** Apr. 15 at Mitchell Caverns, and a **Northern Parula** was seen the same day in Whitewater Canyon (Sharon Goldwasser). Mike San Miguel had a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Morongo on Apr. 23, and Olga Clarke had a **Tennessee Warbler** in Glendale on Apr. 7 — identified by its white crissum. The same day Dick Erickson found a female **Orchard Oriole** at Earp, on the Colorado River.

The LAAS field trip to Santa Anita Canyon not only found the expected **Dippers** along the rain-swollen stream (there are

at least five there), but turned up one more indication of this winter's invasion of **Evening Grosbeaks**. Ten or more of the birds were in the picnic area at Chantry Flats (Hal Baxter et al, Apr. 29). The first report of **Blue Grosbeaks** were two at Morongo Valley on Apr. 25 (the Wilsons). The **Clay-colored Sparrow** which has been at the Arboretum in Arcadia since November was still present on Apr. 30, even though all the **Chipping Sparrows** but one had left (Barbara Cohen).

June is not only an excellent month for mountain birds and vagrants, but an ideal time to visit the Colorado River above Yuma — if you can take the heat. **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**, being late migrants, will have just arrived; and with luck you should also find **Wied's Crested Flycatchers**, **Crissal Thrashers**, **Lucy's Warblers**, **Bronzed Cowbirds**, and **Summer Tanagers**. The River is the best place in California for most of these birds. In 1927, Ralph Hoffmann wrote, in his perceptive *Birds of the Pacific States*, "Probably not a dozen readers of this book will ever see a **Bendire's Thrasher** in California" — and such was the belief before the high desert of eastern San Bernardino Co. was well covered by birders. Now Bendire's are found annually in the Joshua Tree areas near Cima and nearby Cedar Canyon. A search for these birds is a perfect excuse for a visit to this fascinating habitat. ♡

The ABA Convention

Over 350 hard-core birders from all over the continent converged on Riverside May 4-7th for the American Birding Association Convention, by all counts a rousing success. With all this talent on hand over 270 species of birds were sighted, including a **Tennessee Warbler** and a **Northern Parula** (both at Morongo Valley), a **Brown Thrasher** (at Yucca Valley), a **Wied's Crested Flycatcher** at the north end of the Salton Sea (the first Sea record), a **Thayer's Gull** and a **Ross' Goose** at the same site (the first summer record for So. Calif.), a very rare **Goshawk** at Lake Fulmor in the San Jacintos, a **Bald Eagle** at Lake Hemet, and the **Solitary Sandpiper** at Morongo Valley. To top it off, two **Condors** showed up at Edmunston Pumping Station. Everyone seemed to be happy.



WESTERN TANAGER

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Published 10 times a year, monthly except January and July, by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046

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The Battle of Ballona

Alarming news: The Summa Corp. — Howard Hughes' secretive holding company — is preparing an assault on the L.A. Co. Regional Planning Commission, with the object of converting the marshes and mudflats near Ballona Creek into a high density business and residential complex, with a possible marina thrown in for good measure. The staff of the Commission has already designated the Hughes property as a Significant Ecological Area (SEA 29) — but Summa disputes that decision and is throwing a legal staff and an environmental research company at the Commission to prove its point.

To oppose this Goliath a new David has just appeared on the scene: **The Friends of Ballona Wetlands**. Composed of several organizations including Los Angeles Audubon and Santa Monica Bay Audubon, The Friends are determined to slay the giant by developing a powerful public constituency, and convincing the appropriate agencies that the common weal is better served by open space and wildlife sanctuaries than by wall-to-wall condominiums. How can this puny newcomer fight the Summa megabucks? The equally modest Friends of Newport Bay outclassed the largest landholder in the west — the Irvine Company — and preserved the finest estuary in Southern California for us and for future generations. A dedicated band of partisans defending its homeland can be a powerful force.

In this case our homeland happens to be the best birding area in Los Angeles — the last remnant of a wetland estuary that once embraced the entire marina area. It would be an act of sacrilege to destroy the small bit that is left. Without it there would be no place for thousands of waterfowl, for the myriad shorebirds, the Bald Eagles, the Peregrines, the Short-eared Owls, and all the delectable accidentals that put a gleam in a birder's eye. Remember the Harlequin Duck, the Golden Plover, the Bar-tailed Godwit? You may never see them again; and the endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrow as well as the beleaguered Least Tern would be that much closer to the end of the line.

What can you do? Act now! Join the Friends of Ballona Wetlands for only ONE DOLLAR (plus anything more you want to donate), and spread the word. Send your check to Ruth Lansford, 6953 Trolley Way, Playa Del Rey 90291. And write to: Regional Planning Commissioners, County of Los Angeles, Dept. of Regional Planning, 320 W. Temple St., Los Angeles 90012. Tell them you agree with their staff that this is indeed a Significant Ecological Area and must be preserved.

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, Tuesday through Saturday.

Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318

Field Trip Reservations

To make reservations for bus and pelagic trips, send a check payable to LAAS plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope, your phone number, and the names of all those in your party to the Reservations Chairman, Audubon House. No reservations will be accepted or refunds made within 48 hours of departure. To guarantee your space make reservations as early as possible. Trips will be cancelled 30 days prior to departure if there is insufficient response.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3—San Diego Field Trip. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the Old Mission Dam. We will look for Bell's Vireos and Grasshopper Sparrows here, then travel to Pt. Loma to search for vagrants; then to the south end of San Diego Bay for nesting Black Skimmers and Elegant Terns. If there is time we'll go from there to look for Gray Vireos. The trip will be led by Phil Unitt (714-281-0653), author of the recent *Western Tanager* article on San Diego Co. birding (March 1978). Bring lunches and expect a full day of excellent birding.

SUNDAY, JUNE 11—Mt. Pinos. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the intersection of Cuddy Valley and Frazier Park Roads in Lake-of-the-Woods. Some of the birds we will look for will be Brewers, Lark, and Fox Sparrows, Olive-sided and Dusky Flycatchers, Calliope Hummingbirds, White-headed Woodpeckers, and, of course, the Condor. Go north on I-5 to the Frazier Park offramp, turn west, and travel past the town of Frazier Park to Lake-of-the-Woods. Leader: Ed Navojosky, 938-9766.

TUESDAY, JUNE 13—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Barbara and John Hopper will present a slide program on the *Flora and Fauna of Australia and New Zealand*. The Hoppers are both Biology teachers, well known for their foreign travels as well as their local conservation activities.

SATURDAY, JUNE 24—Placerita Canyon. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance to the Walker Ranch, 2 miles past the main entrance to the park. Our resident chaparral and oak woodland species will be the highlight of this trip. To reach Placerita Canyon, take the San Diego Fwy. (405) north to I-5, then Hwy. 14 toward Palmdale for 3.5 miles, exiting at Placerita Cyn. Rd. Leader: Ed Navojosky, 938-9766.

SATURDAY, JULY 1—Mt. Pinos. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the intersection of Cuddy Valley and Frazier Park Roads in Lake-of-the-Woods, following the directions given for the June 11th trip. Leaders: Richard Webster and Jon Dunn, 981-1841.

SUNDAY, JULY 9—Salton Sea. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the Federal Refuge H.Q. at Rock Hill (Gentry and Sinclair Rds.). Be prepared for extremely hot weather and exhausting walks. Among the anticipated rewards: Laughing Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Wood Stork,

Yellow-footed Gull, and possible Roseate Spoonbill, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Little Blue Heron. This is an all-day trip, limited to 20 people. Reservations are required in advance, and may be made by calling Audubon House by July 1st. Take I-10 to Indio, then Hwy. 111 south past Niland to Sinclair Rd. See last month's *Western Tanager* for details on the Sea, or the articles in the Jan.-Feb. 1977 issue of the *Tanager*. Leader: Jon Dunn, 981-1841.

SUNDAY, JULY 16—McGrath State Beach Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. by the settling ponds at the north end of the bridge. The objective here will be early fall migrant shorebirds and other waterbirds, with an opportunity for leisurely study of the varied species that frequent this important area of mudflats and beach. Take Hwy. 101 north and exit at Victoria Ave. in Ventura (1½ hours from L.A.). Pass under the freeway to Olivas Park Dr., then turn right to the traffic light at Harbor Blvd. Turn left and park by the bridge. Leader: Richard Webster, 805-487-1012.

SATURDAY, JULY 22—The San Bernardino Mountains. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Boulder Bay Dam at the west end of Big Bear Lake. An excellent opportunity to see some of the most interesting birds of this fascinating range. Possibilities include Pinyon Jay, Williamsson's Sapsucker, Virginia's Warbler, Gray Vireo, Gray Flycatcher, and Hepatic Tanager. The trip is restricted to 30 persons, and reservations must be phoned to Audubon House by Saturday, July 15. Leader: Kimball Garrett, 479-8667.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10—San Pedro to San Clemente Island. The *Vantuna* will leave San Pedro at 6:00 a.m. to return at 6:00 p.m. Red-billed Tropicbird is a possibility. Cost: \$18.00 per person. Leaders: Jon Dunn and Terry Clark.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23—Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip. The *Miss Monterey* will depart from Fisherman's Wharf, Sam's Fishery Cruises, at 8:00 a.m., to return at 3:00 p.m. Price is \$15.00 per person. Leaders: Arnold Small and Shum Suffel.



African Safari

Barbara Horton will be leading her second annual safari to Kenya (Dec. 27-Jan. 22). The cost for this outstanding natural history tour is expected to be under \$2300, all inclusive. Limit: 12 persons. For further information, contact the Hortons, 1869 Pasadena Glen Rd., Pasadena 91107, or call 213-798-8315.

The Mono Basin

UC Davis is offering a 5-day field study trip to this naturalist's paradise east of Yosemite, Aug. 26-30. The fee is \$50.00, and David Gaines is the instructor. For information, contact UC Davis Extension, Davis, Calif. 95616.

Cape May Birding Workshop

Will Russell, Davis Finch, and Rich Stallcup, three of the nation's top birders, will conduct a 5-day birding workshop, Sept. 22-26, at Cape May, N.J., an outstanding fall migration spot. The fee is \$150.00, lodging included. For information, contact N.E. Birding, Seal Harbor, Maine 04675, or call 207-276-3963.

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