

WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

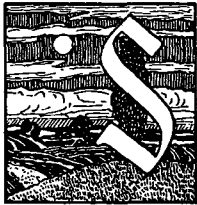
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Birding in the Bay Area

by Susanne Luther



San Francisco, shimmering like a fairy tale city on a crystal clear night, the incomparable beauty of a coastline that embraces such jewels as Año Nuevo, Pt. Reyes, and Bodega Bay, the cathedral-like quality of a walk among the *Sequoia sempervirens*, the world's tallest

trees—these and myriad other images are aroused by the mere mention of the "Bay Area." Yet for the birder, the Bay Area is even more enchanting; for the great diversity of habitats and the mild year-round climate have endowed the region with a wealth of birds, both in numbers and in species—all of which adds up to excitement and adventure in any season of the year.

Because of the abundance of aquatic habitats, looking for water birds is one of the highlights of Bay Area birding. The optimum time for viewing water birds is September through early May, when multitudes of wintering loons, grebes, ducks, shorebirds, and gulls are present. September is a particularly good time to search for stray Siberian shorebirds among the returning migrants. December and January are the peak months for numbers of wintering species, and the best months to look for such northern birds as Yellow-billed Loon, European Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Oldsquaw, and Glaucous Gull. April and early May are the times to see loons, grebes, and shorebirds in breeding plumage, and to watch the spectacular northbound spring migration along the coast. A few individuals of many water birds can be found in summer, as well as the post-breeding dispersents: the Brown Pelicans, Elegant Terns, and Heermann's Gulls.

The highlight for many Bay Area birders is the quest for eastern land bird "vagrants" along the coast, particularly during migration (Sept.-Oct., and late May-early June). Land habitats in the Bay Area range from the humid coastal forests to the dry, sage-covered slopes of Mt. Diablo. Because of the mild climate, land birding is good year-round, and there is no month when rarities have not been recorded.

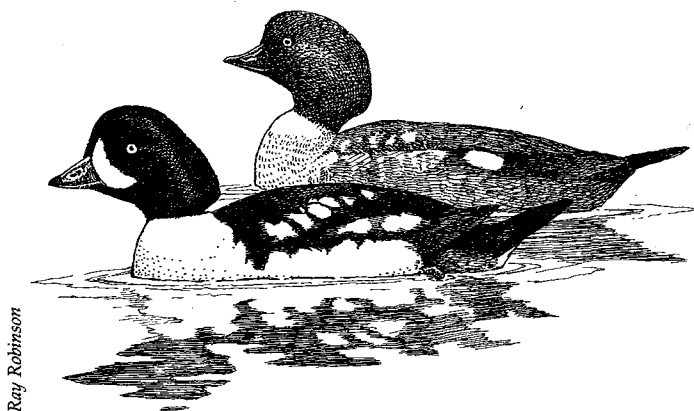
For the Southern Californian there are a number of specialties to be



Chestnut-backed Chickadee

sought in the Bay Area—species that either do not occur in Southern California or are more easily found in Northern California. These are primarily water birds, many of them northerly species—or else land birds of the humid coastal forest. The following list of waterbirds includes pelagics which can be seen from shore, on a boat trip to the Farallon Islands, or from Bodega Bay (extreme rarities that do not occur most years have not been included): Yellow-billed Loon (at least one individual most winters), Red-necked Grebe (small numbers every winter), Laysan Albatross (recorded Jan.-March in two of the past three years on boat trips from Bodega Bay), New Zealand Shearwater (every fall), Ashy Storm-Petrel (breeds on the Farallones), Whistling Swan (huge numbers in the Delta in winter), European Wigeon (a few every winter), Tufted Duck (almost of annual occurrence in recent years), Barrow's Goldeneye (winters at Lake Merritt), Harlequin Duck (winters at Año Nuevo), Hooded Merganser (every winter on inland lakes), Sandhill Crane (winters in huge numbers in the Delta), Rock Sandpiper (winters at Bodega Head), Skua (fall boat trips primarily), Common Murre (breeds on the Farallones and off Pt. Reyes; resident), Marbled Murrelet (April-August from shore; breeds in humid coastal forest), and Tufted Puffin (breeds on the Farallones and some years along the coast).

Ray Robinson



Ray Robinson

Barrow's Goldeneye

The following land birds are more easily found in No. Calif. than in So. Calif. (though many occur in the south in small numbers): Pygmy Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Allen's Hummingbird (breeds in Bay Area; resident in So. Calif. only on Palos Verdes Peninsula), Pileated Woodpecker (uncommon, ranging to Santa Cruz Co.; in So. Calif. found only in Greenhorn Mts.), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (ranges as far south as San Luis Obispo Co.), Winter Wren (resident), Varied Thrush (winter), and Golden-crowned Kinglet (resident).

The accounts that follow cover the key spots for the specialties listed above. The areas are discussed county-by-county, with numbers corresponding to those on the accompanying map. It is always advisable to call the Bay Area Rare Bird Alert at 843-3311 for the weekly report of rarities. If you see a rare bird, report it to Joe Morlan at 654-1358, the "voice" of the Bay Area Rare Bird Alert.

San Francisco County

1. The Farallon Islands

These islands, teeming with thousands of breeding water birds, and legendary for the rarities they have recorded, constitute a National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Each spring, April-June, Golden Gate Audubon Society sponsors several pelagic trips around the islands, setting out from Sausalito in Marin Co. These trips are usually advertised in the January or February *Gull*, the newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon. In order to obtain information about the trips, write (by January) to Golden Gate Audubon, at #206, 2718 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley, Calif. 94705. The voyage can be quite rough, but the trip offers an opportunity to view the largest seabird colony off the Calif. coast. Not only is there a chance to see nesting Tufted Puffins, Common Murres, and Pigeon Guillemots on the islands, but the boat ride itself often produces Black-footed Albatross, as well as other pelagics.

2. San Francisco

If you find yourself in the city only briefly, and lack the time or transportation to enjoy a full day's birding further afield, the following local spots can bring good results. All are in the NW part of town and are easily accessible by public transportation.

a) Golden Gate Park is the best place to look for land birds, gulls, and dabbling ducks. Take the Fell St. exit from Hwy. 101-North and follow it to the Park. Maps of the Park are available at the California Academy of Sciences. For a combination of land birds and dabbling ducks, North and Middle Lakes are most productive. In winter, close views of most of our dabbling ducks can be obtained on these two lakes, with the bonus of Wood Ducks. Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Red Crossbill (rare) are permanent residents of this area. Winter Wren and Varied Thrush can usually be found here in winter, and Allen's Hummingbird is resident in summer. Tropical Kingbird has been recorded at Middle Lake in winter. Spreckel's Lake is best for a variety of gulls and diving birds in winter, but Stow Lake

also offers close views of gulls and dabbling ducks. In addition, Tufted Duck and Thayer's Gull have been recorded on this lake. Rarities sighted in the Park should be reported immediately to Dr. Laurence Binford at the California Academy of Sciences.

b) Ocean Beach and Seal Rocks are at the western end of Golden Gate Park. Ocean Beach stretches along the ocean in a No.-So. direction, with Seal Rocks in the northern corner, adjacent to the famous Cliff House. The deck of the Cliff House is a good place to scope the rocks and surrounding waters for rocky shorebirds, alcids, and diving birds, and to scope the ocean for pelagics. Look for Wandering Tattler, Black Oystercatcher, Surfbird, and even the rare Rock Sandpiper among the turnstones on the rocks (Nov.-March). Brandt's Cormorant and Western Gull nest on these rocks, and Brown Pelicans and Pelagic Cormorants rest here. Common Murre can be seen at any time of year, and Pigeon Guillemots are occasionally spotted. In July and August Sooty Shearwaters are sometimes recorded in enormous numbers, and Magnificent Frigatebird is a distinct, if rare, possibility at this time of year. Ocean Beach is a good beach to walk in the early morning, for unusual species are sometimes washed up on shore. Once a gasping Horned Puffin was found along this beach! In winter look for Black Scoters from the southernmost parking lot of Ocean Beach. There is a Bank Swallow colony during the breeding season, 1/2 mile south of this parking lot, along the cliffs.

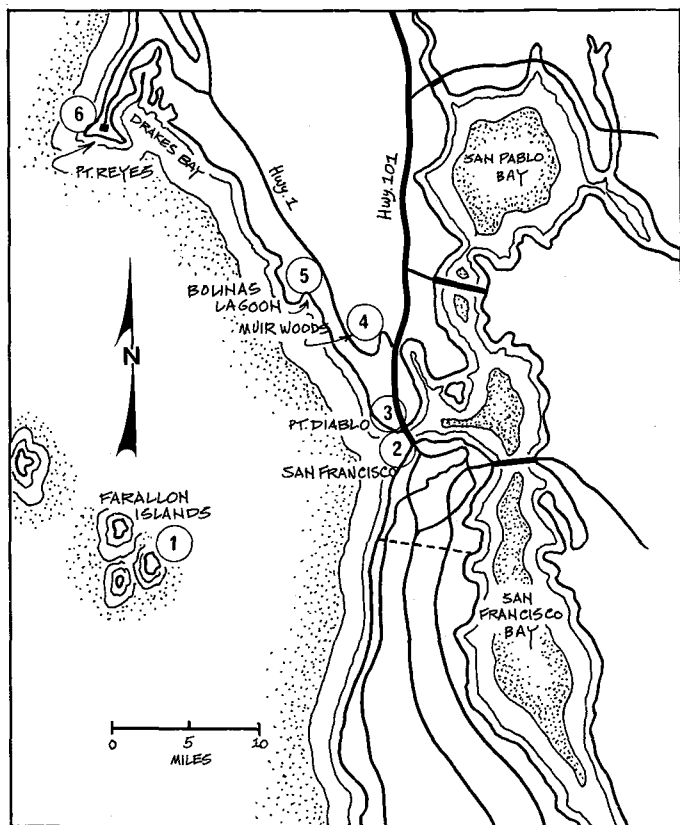
c) Fleishhacker Zoo may sound like an improbable place to look for a wild bird, but European Wigeon can often be found there in winter, grazing with the flock of American Wigeons on the lawn, just past the Zoo entrance. The Zoo, only a few miles south of Golden Gate Park, is situated at the intersection of the Great Highway and Sloat Blvd. In winter a good assortment of gulls, including Thayer's, may be seen on the ponds and lawns at the Zoo. If the Wigeon cannot be found at the Zoo, look near the boat house at Lake Merced, just south of the Zoo, at the intersection of the Great Highway with Skyline Blvd. Since this lake is much larger and deeper than the lakes at Golden Gate Park, it supports far more diving birds. Winter offers the widest variety, including an occasional Red-necked Grebe. The south end of the lake usually harbors the best assortment of species. Migrant landbirds can be found in the planted trees around the lake, particularly at the northwest corner. In the fall such eastern vagrants as American Redstart and Blackpoll Warbler can usually be found in these trees, and such rarities as Least Flycatcher and Brown Thrasher have occurred here, as well as Tropical Kingbird in the winter.

Marin County

3. Point Diablo and Rodeo Lagoon

For a spectacular view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge, **Pt. Diablo** is the place to go at any time of the year—unless it's foggy. Fall, however, holds special appeal, for then Pt. Diablo offers the birder a chance to observe a hawk migration comparable in numbers to that of many eastern hawk lookouts. California's only major hawk migratory lookout, this spot was discovered in the fall of 1972 by Dr. Binford, and it has recorded phenomenal numbers as well as an amazing variety of species since then. For a complete description of the lookout see Dr. Binford's insert in the Feb. 1977 issue of *Birding*. Turkey Vultures, plus Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Red-tailed Hawks, make up the majority of birds that move through, but 17 Falconiformes have been recorded from the spot, as well as many species of diurnal land bird migrants. Broad-winged Hawk is recorded here regularly every fall in small numbers, and Mississippi Kite has been recorded once. If you are in the Bay Area in the fall, do not pass up a chance to spend a day hawk-watching at Pt. Diablo. Not only is it an excellent opportunity to sharpen your skills at identifying raptors, but the possibility for rarities and a large variety of species (both raptors and land birds) make for an exciting day of

Susanne Luther, a Bay Area resident and a birder for the past 12 years, is beginning her 3rd year teaching birding classes at Piedmont Adult School.



birding. Clear days from Sept. 10-Oct. 31, between 10 a.m.-2 p.m., are the peak times to go to Pt. Diablo, particularly if there have been several foggy days beforehand to produce a build-up of hawks.

To reach Pt. Diablo from S.F., take the Alexander St. exit from Hwy. 101-North and turn left at your first opportunity, as if you were returning to San Francisco. This will take you under the freeway onto a frontage road. Turn right and go uphill at a sign announcing Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). If approaching from the north, take the last Sausalito exit just before going over the Golden Gate Bridge, and follow the GGNRA signs. Go about 2 miles to a sign that announces, "Begin One-way Road," and park here by the roadside. Walk up a steep driveway that takes you to the top of an old bunker. Usually the northeast corner at the top is the best for observing hawks as they come in from the north and head across the Golden Gate—but varying winds may favor other lookout sites. "Cross Hill," directly to the northeast of "Bunker Hill," is another good spot for raptor watching, though it requires a steep hike to the top. If it looks as if most of the hawks are flying over this hill, you may want to drive back down to the first intersection (which you passed on the way up), walk down the paved side road a short distance, and ascend the steep dirt road to the top of the hill. Bring a scope if possible.

A visit to **Rodeo Lagoon** can easily be combined with a hawk-watching trip to Pt. Diablo. For those interested in looking for vagrant warblers in spring (late May, early June) or fall (Sept.-Oct.), the cypress trees at Battery Wallace and at the firehouse, plus the willows by the two ponds east of Rodeo Lagoon, are most productive (Battery Wallace being the best). Blackpoll Warbler and American Redstart occur here regularly in the fall, and a host of rarities have been recorded. A variety of shorebirds can usually be found feeding at the east end of Rodeo Lagoon at low tide, with Pectoral Sandpiper and Northern Phalarope of regular occurrence in Sept., and Baird's Sandpiper in August. The lagoon and ponds provide a wintering ground for many species of ducks, among which you may find a European Wigeon or a Tufted Duck, or a Tufted Duck hybrid. At the

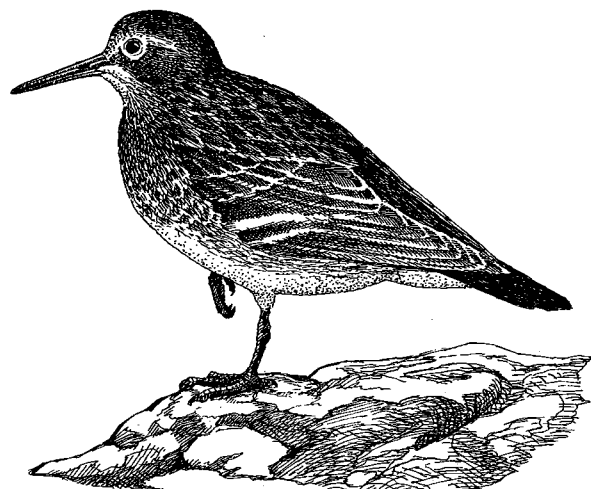
pond just east of the lagoon, a male Tufted hybrid has occurred during the past few years. The lagoon is also an excellent area for viewing other water birds, such as herons, loons (3 sp.), grebes (5 sp.), pelicans, and gulls—particularly in fall and winter. Around the edges of the ponds to the east of the lagoons, search for the elusive Sora and Virginia Rails, American Bittern, and Green Heron. In summer and early fall large numbers of Brown Pelicans and Heermann's Gulls can be seen bathing in the lagoon and commuting to **Bird Island**, the large rock at the south end of Rodeo Beach. The rock also abounds with Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, while providing breeding grounds for the Common Murre. Bird Island can be conveniently scoped from the cliffs directly above it, accessible by dirt roads from Battery Wallace. Here, with diligence, one can sometimes spot a Wandering Tattler, Surf-bird, or Black Oystercatcher on the rocks below. This is also a good lookout for pelagics. A vagrant Magnificent Frigatebird has been recorded off Rodeo Beach in the summer—a good time, as well, for Marbled Murrelets on the waters below (a scope is a necessity). Late summer through winter are the best months for Sooty Shearwater, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, jaegers, and Black-legged Kittiwakes, as well as the rarer pelagics. The hills are covered with chaparral, and it would be surprising if you did not see a Wren-tit in your birding here, particularly around Battery Wallace.

To reach Rodeo Lagoon from San Francisco, take the Alexander St. exit north of the Golden Gate Bridge, and turn left at the second left, to Fort Barry and Fort Cronkhite. Follow this road through a one-way tunnel and then all the way out to the ponds, lagoon, and beach. Maps are available at the Ranger Station near the beach. Just across the bridge from San Francisco, this area offers the adventurous birder a rich diversity of habitats and birds.

4. Muir Woods National Monument

Muir Woods is the spot to look for Spotted Owl—especially from February through April (though the birds are probably present year-round). And while enjoying your walk through the magnificent cathedral of *Sequoia sempervirens*, you may, with luck, chance upon the Pacific Giant Salamander. In spring and summer the air rings with the songs of Winter Wrens, which are quite common year-round near the streams. Western Flycatchers, Purple Finch, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Pygmy Nuthatch are all common breeders, and in winter Varied Thrushes are quite common. If you walk along the creek to the edge of the Monument you may encounter a Pileated Woodpecker—an uncommon resident.

There is a fee of \$0.50 to enter the Monument after 9 a.m. The walk to the owls is about one mile. Enter the Monument at the toll entrance and stay on the right side of the creek. About 50 yards past the bridge at Fern Creek, take the right hand uphill trail, marked "Alice Eastwood Camp." Within 100 yards the trail comes to a "T"



Rock Sandpiper

Ray Robinson

Turn right, staying on the main trail. The trail will make two sharp curves within a short distance before it straightens out again. Just after it straightens out, look for a clump of tall redwoods on your left—one by the trail with 2 porcelain insulators imbedded in the trunk about 15' from the base. Often one or two owls are seen in the vicinity of this tree or the huge redwood on the opposite side of the trail, recognized by a split trunk. Look for a large lump in the trees. Sometimes the owls are sitting fairly low, way out on a long branch, in which case they are conspicuous; but at other times they perch in the very top of one of these trees, next to the trunk. Still, there is at least a 60% chance of seeing the owls in daytime at this spot. They may call in the middle of the day, but most often they are vocal at dawn and dusk. Birders are strongly urged to refrain from playing tape recordings of the owls' calls here—for this could discourage successful nesting.

5. Bolinas Lagoon

With its rolling hills, wooded canyons, and quiet waters, Bolinas Lagoon provides exceptional—and highly scenic—birding at any time of the year. To reach the lagoon, follow the signs for Hwy. 1 from Hwy. 101-North, and continue north through Stinson Beach to the lagoon. This lagoon is censused regularly by the staff at Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO), the only bird observatory in the West, and is perhaps the "most-watched" body of water in California, because of the high density of birdwatchers who live near the lagoon or visit it. Fall and winter are particularly exciting, when water birds occur in large numbers and varieties. A good place to observe shorebirds is along the south spit (known as Seadrift). Such rarities as Curlew Sandpiper and Bar-tailed Godwit have been recorded here (once

each) in early September, and each fall hope springs eternal among Bay Area birders that another Siberian shorebird will show up. To reach the area, turn left at the north end of the town of Stinson Beach, at a small wooden sign labelled "Sea Drift" (it's rather inconspicuous, so keep a sharp lookout). Drive to the end of this road and park in the parking lot on your right. Walk through the gate and turn right. It is best to stroll along the edge of the bank on the lagoon side, just as the tide is receding, when the shorebirds will be busy feeding close to shore. The walk out the entire spit is about 1½ miles. During high tide several thousand shorebirds, gulls, and terns rest on Kent Island, in the SW corner of the lagoon.

As you proceed north on Hwy. 1 along the east side of the lagoon look for Belted Kingfishers on the telephone wires. There are turnouts along the road which afford views of herons and egrets, loons (3 sp.), grebes (look for an occasional Red-necked), shorebirds, and diving and dabbling ducks (1 or more Barrow's Goldeneyes can sometimes be spotted in winter if you search the lagoon thoroughly with a scope). Near the NE corner of the lagoon you will see **Audubon Canyon Ranch** on your right. This is open to the public on weekends, Feb.-July 1, for viewing Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons on their nests in the tops of the redwood trees. Orange-crowned Warblers and Purple Finches sing along the walk up to the lookout—from which you can study the heronry with scopes provided by the Audubon Society—an experience you are certain never to forget. May is an excellent time to visit in order to view the young of both species, but you may wish to return several times to observe the various stages of the birds' breeding and nesting cycles. From the lookout watch for an occasional Osprey or Red-shouldered Hawk.

At the NE corner of the lagoon turn left at the first road, which will take you to the town of Bolinas; then drive along the western edge of the lagoon. Park your car just before the only sharp curve in the road, recognized by a line of trees going to a point in the lagoon along Pine Gulch Creek. Check the tall silver snag on the west side of the road, a favorite perch of the Peregrine and a Merlin. Both falcons regularly winter at the lagoon. Because of the high density of dabbling ducks off Pine Gulch Creek, this is a favorite hunting and resting area of the Peregrine, but one should be on the lookout for both falcons anywhere on the lagoon. American Wigeon commonly graze in the field just north of the creek and among them one or more European Wigeon can usually be found. If the wigeon are not in the field, walk out to the spit along the creek and look among the ducks, which are generally close to shore. Both European Wigeon and Common Teal can usually be found here in winter. On the south side of the creek is a small patch of salt marsh. During the past two winters as many as 2 Sharp-tailed Sparrows have inhabited this patch of vegetation, though the birds are seen only at high tide. In order to spot them, sit or stand quietly by the boards at the water's edge, watching for the bright orange face and two white bars across the shoulder as the sparrows (and the Long-billed Marsh Wrens) flit about. Be careful not to disturb the marsh, as the habitat is fragile and easily destroyed.

For a chance to observe birds in the hand and to learn something about bird banding, you may wish to visit the **PRBO banding station** on Mesa Rd. Continue south toward Bolinas and go north on Mesa Rd. about 5 miles; the bird observatory will be on your left. Generally bird banding is done in the early hours of the morning until 10 a.m., except on stormy days. Many rarities have been netted here, as well as our common species.

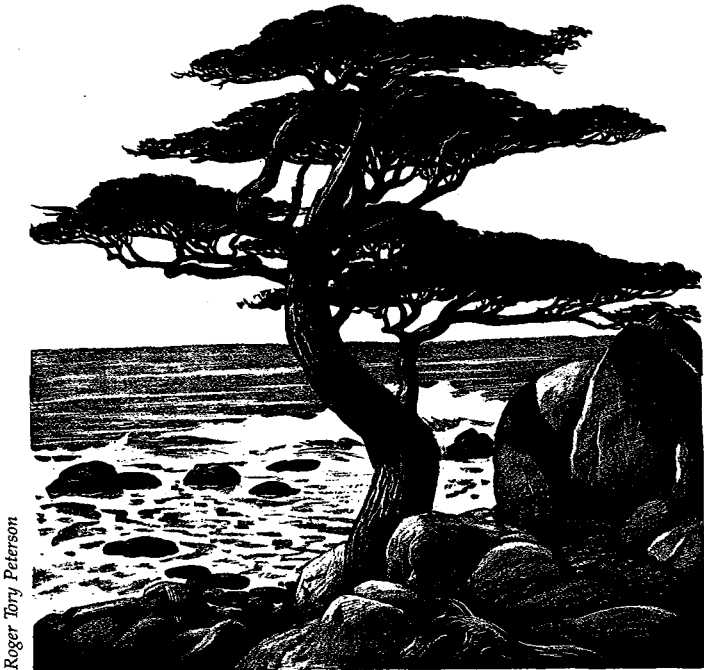
6. Point Reyes National Seashore

If you can visit only one place in the Bay Area it should be Pt. Reyes—for this area offers the best year-round birding in the entire region. Created along a fault zone, the Pt. Reyes Peninsula embraces a rich diversity of habitats, ranging from sea level to 1407' (atop Mt. Wittenburg). Since the vegetation on the peninsula differs greatly from that on the mainland, the avifauna is correspondingly distinct. On any day of the year one could see or hear well over 100 species here, and the Pt. Reyes Christmas Count generally hovers around the 200 mark.



Roger Tory Peterson

Osprey



Roger Tory Peterson

There are several routes to the peninsula from Hwy. 101 north of S.F. The quickest is the Kentfield-Fairfax exit, which is Sir Francis Drake Blvd. This takes you to Hwy. 1 and Pt. Reyes. Another route, the Lucas Valley Road exit, will take you by Nicasio Reservoir, where a Northern Shrike has been found close to the road in the past two winters. At the headquarters on Bear Valley Rd., which intersects Hwy. 1, you can obtain a map of the area.

Among birders, the Pt. Reyes Peninsula is famous for the long list of eastern vagrant passerines which have turned up in the "islands" of planted cypress trees on the point during spring and fall migration (Sept.-Oct. and late May-early June). Such rarities as White-eyed Vireo, plus Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, Connecticut, and Mourning Warblers have put in an appearance here, as well as the more common vagrants. On a good day it is advisable to check as many clumps of cypresses as possible. The best method is to bird the trees very slowly and patiently, for Monterey Cypresses are very dense (a unique challenge for So. Calif. birders!). From Bear Valley Rd., turn left (west) on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and follow it to the tip of the point. This will take you through rolling hills with small clumps of planted cypress trees, some of which are around dairy ranches. The following areas have proved the most productive:

- 1) Take the left hand turn to **Drake's Beach** and check both the willows and the conifers by the monument for vagrants. This is a spectacular beach along which to walk, and is perhaps the most reliable spot for Red-necked Grebe on our mid-Pacific coastline (winter being the best time). The fields on both sides of the road on the way down to the beach usually hold Golden Plovers in the fall, and in fall 1977 a Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen here. Wintering Chestnut-collared and Lapland Longspurs can be found in the fields of the Hall Ranch on this road, but proceed at your own risk (both the rancher and the bull are antagonistic to birders).
- 2) Continuing along Sir Francis Drake Blvd., bird the cypresses along the road at the **Mendoza Ranch**, but respect the privacy of the area around the farm house.
- 3) Check the cypresses at the east side of the **Nunes Ranch**, but again respect the privacy of the farmhouse, and restrict your birding to the cypresses.
- 4) Bird the cypresses by the residence at the **Lighthouse** at the tip of the point; then walk all the way out to the tip for a spectacular view, plus breeding Common Murres.

5) Just past the Nunes Ranch there is a left hand turn that will take you to the **Fish Docks**. This affords a magnificent view of the golden cliffs and shore of Drake's Bay. By scoping here, particularly in fall and winter, one can usually find Black Scoters and Red-necked Grebes. Both Harlequin Duck and Yellow-billed Loon have been recorded from this spot. The cypress trees around the housing complex are excellent for eastern vagrants (do not go into the yard). In summer, Grasshopper Sparrows can sometimes be heard on the western slopes, and in fall check the fields on either side of the road on the way to the Fish Docks for Golden Plover. A trail from the housing complex to the point leads to **Chimney Rock**, where rocky shorebirds can be seen and Tufted Puffins nested in 1977. Be on the lookout for whales, which often come into this bay.

A right hand turn from Sir Francis Drake Blvd., labelled "McClure's Beach," will take you to the north end of the peninsula. This road goes by **Tomales Bay State Park**, which is excellent for owling (Spotted, Saw-whet, Pygmy, and Great Horned). **McClure's Beach**, at the end of this road (Pierce Point Rd.) is a rocky beach where the surf is spectacular and Harlequin Ducks sometimes play in the winter. It is also good for rocky shorebirds. En route to McClure's Beach, along the road, are two dirt parking areas. The first is for **Abbott's Lagoon**, an excellent area for ducks and shorebirds. Baird's Sandpiper is usually recorded at the western edge during August. The second parking area is for **Kehoe Marsh and Beach**. The trail to the beach will take you by the marsh where Sora and Virginia Rails abound in winter, and where a Black Rail regularly winters (the rail may be heard, but it is very difficult to see). White-rumped Sandpiper was recorded at Kehoe Beach in June, 1978.

An excellent waterbird area on the Pt. Reyes Peninsula is **Limantour Estero**, reached from the Bear Valley Rd. near Park Headquarters. Here you will be rewarded not only with an amazingly beautiful walk, but with a bounty of birds. Hike along the spit separating the estero from the ocean, heading one way along the estero and returning along the ocean (about 2 mi. to the tip). In this manner you can look for shorebirds and diving birds in the estero and scope for pelagics on the ocean side. Allow several hours for a thorough survey. In 1977, Emperor Geese wintered in the estero, and Tufted Ducks wintered at the pond just NE of the parking lot (trail to Muddy Hollow). Uncommon pelagics have been spotted off Limantour Spit at all times of the year—with patience and a scope.

For such **land birds** of our central Pacific coast as Varied Thrush (winter), Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Allen's Hummingbird (mid Feb.-July), try the trails near Park Headquarters, Bear Valley Rd. itself, or Vision Rd., from the town of Inverness. For several years, in the early spring, Black Rail has been heard regularly in Olema Marsh along Bear Valley Rd.—though the bird is impossible to see. Swamp Sparrows winter regularly in the short wet grasses along the northern edge of Olema Marsh. Park in the large dirt area at the intersection of Bear Valley Rd. and Sir Francis Drake Blvd., cross the street, go over the fence, and walk slowly through the grass between the road and the marsh. Boots are advisable.

Tomales Bay, which forms the NE boundary of Pt. Reyes Peninsula, is a spectacular site, teeming with water birds in winter. It is possible to scope the bay from various pulloffs along both sides (from one of the pulloffs on the east side a Black-headed Gull was spotted one winter). Yellow-billed Loon has also been recorded in the Bay—four times, all in winter. The most reliable spot for observing the birds is the lookout at William Page Shields Salt Marsh Study Area, along Sir Francis Drake Blvd. south of Inverness. Walk to the edge of the marsh and scope the entire area. Swamp Sparrows have wintered in the cattails along the SE edge of the marsh.

One could spend a lifetime on Pt. Reyes and still not see everything—so, if possible, plan on devoting at least a day to exploring the area. At any season, it's bound to be an unforgettable experience. ♡

Part II of this article, covering Sonoma, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, Alameda, and San Mateo Counties, will appear in the September issue.

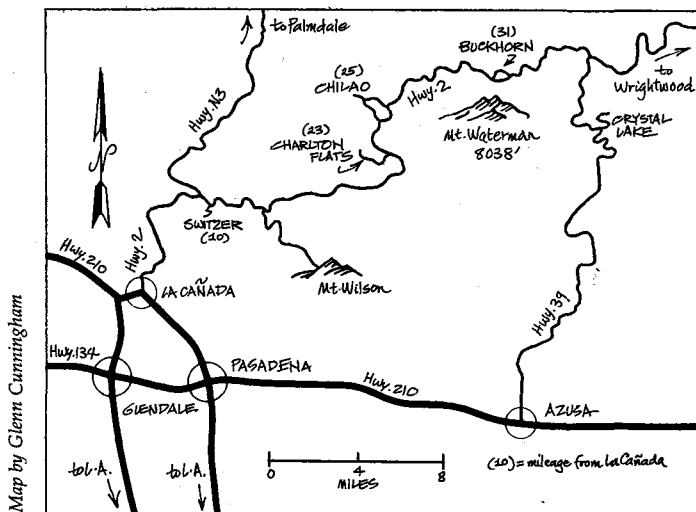
Jean Brandt/BIRDING in the San Gabriel Mts.

Summer birding in the San Gabriels, high above the noise and the smog, is always rewarding. The Angeles Crest Hwy. winds through these east-west trending mountains, from La Cañada to Wrightwood, attaining a maximum elevation of 7900' at Dawson's Saddle. Since the mountains are part of the Angeles National Forest, many recreation areas have been developed. Switzer's Camp, at an elevation of 3000', was described in the July 1977 *Western Tanager*. Charlton Flats, Chilao, and Buckhorn are reviewed here, with the really high country to follow at a later date.

Charlton Flats Picnic Area (5000'; day use only) and Chilao Campground (5300'; \$2.00 camping fee) have most of the birds typical of the Transition Zone. Red-shafted Flicker, Nuttall's, White-headed, and Hairy Woodpeckers, Steller's and Scrub Jays, Mountain Chickadee, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, plus Brown Creeper are all resident, along with the Mountain Quail, which is found throughout the montane chaparral. In summer look for Band-tailed Pigeon, Western Wood Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and House Wren. Chilao is also noted as one of the few nesting sites of the Purple Martin in Los Angeles County.

At Buckhorn Campground (6300'; \$2.00 fee for any use), one thousand feet higher, one begins to see birds of the lower Canadian Zone. From the road and down into the campground look for Pygmy Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (of the Red-breasted, *S.v. daggetti*, race), Dusky Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit and MacGillivray's Warblers (uncommon but consistent), Western Tanager, Purple and Cassin's Finches, Pine Siskin, Green-tailed Towhee, and Fox Sparrow. Red Crossbills are infrequent visitors, and Flammulated Owls *may* (if one is very lucky) be found in summer. The rare (for So. Calif.) Red-faced Warbler was found at Buckhorn June 14, 1973, and again at Charlton Flats on June 17th of this year (near Parking Area #6).

Each of the three areas has telephones and appropriate facilities, but bring along your foodstuffs and have a full tank of gas, for there are no stores nearby. Detailed maps of the whole forest are available at any local ranger station. *Good birding!* 🐦



White-headed Woodpecker

Ballona Update

The newly-formed **Friends of Ballona Wetlands** is off to a fighting start in its campaign to prevent the destruction of the Ballona Creek marsh by the Summa Corporation. Their ranks burgeoned by new members, the Friends have launched an ambitious drive to inform decision-makers of the ecological significance of the area, one of the last two salt marshes in L. A. County. In the past month, with the aid of ornithologists and marine biologists, the Friends have conducted tours of the site for members of the staff of the Regional Planning Commission and the State Coastal Commission. As a result of this effort the State Coastal Commission will hold a special workshop in September, to discuss the future of Ballona.

Letters of support are needed, however, to remind key officials of the importance of preserving the wetlands, nesting site of the endangered California Least Tern and Belding's Savanna Sparrow, and wintering ground for numerous shorebirds. Properly managed, the area may one day serve as a valuable teaching tool, to promote appreciation of nature in an urban setting.

Correspondence should be directed to the L. A. Co. Supervisors: Peter F. Schabarum, Kenneth Hahn, Edmund D. Edelman, James A. Hayes, and Baxter Ward. They're all at 500 W. Temple St., L. A. 90012. Letters should also be sent to the Regional Planning Commission, at 320 W. Temple St., L. A. 90012.

All interested persons are invited to attend a special program by Herb Clarke, on **The Birds of Ballona Creek**, at 7:30 p. m. on Tuesday, August 8th, at the Playa del Rey Women's Club, 8039 W. Manchester Blvd., Playa del Rey. To join the Friends, just send \$1.00 (or more, if you can) to Ruth Lansford, 6953 Trolley Way, Playa del Rey, Calif. 90291. For information, call Ruth at 823-9586.

Bird Walks in the State Parks

The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force of the Sierra Club has invited Audubon members to participate in the weekly bird walks they are conducting in the State Parks of the Santa Monica Mountains. For information concerning walks or membership in the Task Force Program, contact Jo Kitz, (213) 348-5910.

Don Roberson

Death Valley Days

You can feel the heat before dawn. Sleep might afford relief, but by now sleep is impossible. At the end of the morning's walk you will be sweat-soaked and exhausted. But still the ritual continues. Down the scrubby edges to mesquite pond, treasuring the shade of the tamarisk row; check the grackle palms and the remaining reed bed; stumble through sand and heat waves to the old sewer ponds. You can do it blindfolded by now. Here's where the Le Conte's Sparrow was (Remember? The really *bright* one. It stayed five days...). You shake your head. And over there—the Prothonotary. There... on that unassuming dirt pile. And remember when the shout about the *Cape May* echoed to the far corners of Furnace Creek and was translated as *Gray Jay*? Imagine a Gray Jay out here! *Hey, did I tell you about the afternoon I fell asleep on the fourth green?* A sleepy, sultry day, a day for dreams of frozen daquiris. I awakened thirsty, and as I wandered toward the water faucet flushed a Mississippi Kite! Dream-like, it began catching dragonflies with its feet.

Furnace Creek is like that. Stream of consciousness. Memories flit among the gray-green shrubs, more numerous and real than the birds themselves. Unless you count the Ravens. But robed in presbyters' black against a desert sun, these cannot be mere birds, but devil-spirits incarnate.

Death Valley is not for gentle souls.

Oh, there are those who thrive here. Guy McCaskie. Paul Lehman. Perhaps even Richard Webster. But for many it is a purgatory to be survived. October, November: they are pleasant enough. But now in late May you count the minutes to departure.

Death Valley is a vast, searing, alkali desert, surrounded by chaotic mountain jumbles and foreboding alluvial fans. A place where yesterday's terror can still be felt, despite the inroads of superhighways and air-conditioned bars. Furnace Creek—in the dead center of it all: Golf course. Palm orchards, Irrigation. Self-preservation drives most humans here. And not surprisingly, it likewise draws the avian migrants, from across the empty miles of surrounding wasteland.

Situated east of the Sierran blockade, Furnace Creek is the largest oasis to be encountered by misoriented vagrants. And indeed the list is impressive. Upland Sandpiper, Olivaceous Flycatcher, Streak-backed Oriole, Common Grackle...

But the rewards are not without costs, both material and psychological. The cafeteria prices are notorious. The heat is legendary. And today's list: Western Wood Pewee-1, Warbling Vireo-1, Yellow Warbler-2, Wilson's Warbler-3, Western Tanager-1. And Paul had an Indigo Bunting. That's the land migrants. But tomorrow promises better. *Hey, wouldn't a Blue-winged Warbler blow Jon's mind?* I could use a Wood Thrush. And what about a Swallow-tailed Kite?

The sun has not yet set, but already you can feel the cold creeping in. Against the chill the thin jacket is little more than a symbolic defense. More warmth is provided by the dying campfire, plus several shots of someone's favorite spirits. It's five thousand feet higher than where we were this morning—but it can often feel like ten. The high sagebrush slopes are dark and unprotected. But along the ice-cold creek we are sheltered by cottonwoods. That, and the unspoken camaraderie around a campfire is ample protection against the night.

I watch with silent amusement as Herb and Olga and Arnold lay out the hors d'oeuvres and mixed drinks. Our can of Dinty Moore beef stew is already scraped clean. The talk has been of bird stories, many to pass as legends into the birders' oral history. It was only last year around this same firepit that Phil Unitt had devoured the Summer Tanager found dying that day. In fairness, the tiny chunk had been burned crisp, and only consumed upon intonation of the magic words, *Piranga rubra rubra*. Even Rich Stallcup, the inventor of magic, would have been impressed. For shortly thereafter a feathered elf fluttered to fireside chasing moths. Considering the habitat, only "Poor-will" leapt to mind. But no—wait! *It perches on a low branch nearby*. A scramble for flashlights—and the dark, liquid eyes stare back at us through the gloom. A Flammulated Owl! Unbelievable! Phil's lifer. And a happy omen. The following days in the high desert bring Hooded Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher...

But this year there is no visitor. In fact, there have been few birds at all. The stately cottonwoods of Deep Springs, Oasis, and Scotty's Castle have held little. Talk instead turns to growing concerns. The desert is being overrun with birders. Already access to some of the privately-owned areas is threatened. Only a last-minute compromise with the owner of Oasis Ranch has allowed us to bird there. Birders may wander down the "diagonal" and to the pond, but no further. We discuss methods of spreading this news. We must keep people away from the orchard. Birding used to be very light-hearted. Now it is full of responsibilities. And tomorrow we face the hordes.

You can feel the times a-changing. It's been five years for me. It used to be weekends, now it's weeks. The route scarcely changes. North to south, south to north, north to south... There was more romance before. Around every corner was a State bird. The next stop could have a Swainson's Warbler. But now each Tennessee, Redstart, and Rose-breast ceases to amaze. Barely worth mentioning. It's time to spread out, to diversify. The desert needs to be approached with awe and a bit of wonder. Not all the mysteries should be unlocked at once. Explore. Gamble. Relax.

But still the memories intrude. The insolence of the first Ovenbird. The Least Bittern which the gas station attendant assured us was from Australia, since its beak pointed straight toward the sky. The lovely desolation of Stovepipe Wells...

Under the cool breeze of a sunny San Francisco beach, the desert seems long ago and far away. But the feelings and impressions remain—haunting recollections of unbounded pleasure and immense frustration. Sensations that cannot be described. They can only be experienced. ☺

Don Roberson is the author of the recently-published "Birders' California: How to Build a California Year List, and an Account of Just Such an Undertaking."

Lee Jones/BOOKS

Water Birds of Calif.

WATER BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA, by Howard L. Cogswell, illus. by Gene Christman. University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1977: 399 pp., 12 color plates, 47 numbered text figs., 2 maps. \$5.75.

For years the standard treatise on California bird distribution has been the classic *The Distribution of the Birds of California* by Joseph Grinnell and Alden H. Miller (1944). Although now more than 30 years out of date, it has remained the standard reference, primarily because of the authors' careful evaluation of observational records in the literature, and their rejection of all unsupported or suspect reports. Several recent authors have attempted to incorporate the vast amounts of data which have accumulated since the publication of *The Birds of California*. In this reviewer's opinion all such works to date have fallen far short of the mark—either because they have tried to reduce the large amounts of information available for each species to a few brief, generalized statements, or because they have failed to critically evaluate the data and carefully screen out erroneous and unsubstantiated records.

Water Birds of California is the most recent treatment of bird distribution in California. There are sections on behavior, reproduction, and species recognition. Each species' worldwide range, occurrence in California, seasonal status, abundance, and habitat preferences are also given. One-third of the book (92 pages) is devoted to detailed "graphic calendars," which incorporate in coded form virtually everything known about each species' seasonal status, abundance, nesting habitats, periods of breeding, and extralimital occurrence. The introductory chapters deal with subjects that are primarily of interest only to the beginner, such as instructions on how to observe birds in the field, the use of binoculars and telescopes, field note-taking, and identification of birds through the use of picture keys of representative family members. The picture keys, in my opinion, are much more practical than the various color keys, habitat keys, and other such gimmicks so popular in recent field guides, which ignore basic taxonomic sequence and family groupings.

Whether or not this book is intended to serve as a field guide is unclear, although the use of color plates, numerous pen-and-ink drawings, and sub-sections on species recognition suggest that this is the intent. Unfortunately, many of the birds illustrated are curiously misshapen, or in otherwise unnatural postures (see, for instance, the shorebirds in fig. 36). And there are other problems which seriously detract from the usefulness of these illustrations as identification aids. The first-year Double-crested Cormorant in fig. 8 is all black except for a circle of white on its lower belly; the female Gadwall taking flight in fig. 18 lacks the conspicuous white speculum; the Craveri's Murrelet in fig. 46 is actually a Xantus' Murrelet, with its pure white underwing coverts. And there are many other similar examples. With the wealth of talented bird illustrators in California, it is inexcusable that anyone should feel compelled to publish illustrations of such poor quality.

But what about the text? The book contains much useful

information on bird distribution in California, and it is evident that the author spent many long hours gathering and organizing the staggering amounts of data available in the literature. The graphic calendars on pp. 300-391 contain an impressive amount of detailed information which has been summarized in the species accounts. Unfortunately, the author has used the available data indiscriminately. *Many, many* records in the published literature are erroneous or insufficiently documented. It is the duty of the compiler of such material to carefully sift through and reject, or query, all such suspect material. Because of the misinformation so prevalent in the literature, many commonly-held misconceptions have arisen through the years. It is a pity that most recent publications have perpetuated these misconceptions. Most knowledgeable field ornithologists are aware, for instance, that a complete reliance on the literature will result in the false belief that Baird's and Pectoral Sandpiper occur in California in spring and occasionally in winter. Many of these records are the result of misidentifications. A quick look at *Water Birds of California* reveals the following: Baird's Sandpiper—"Occ. Rare, Nov.-Jan." (there are no valid records of this species for this period in California), and "Rare to Fairly Common, late Mar.-May" (there are fewer than 10 acceptable spring records); Pectoral Sandpiper—"Irreg. Uncommon or Rare... Apr.-May" (there are fewer than 10 spring records). And there are many other similar problems throughout the text. For instance, according to the author, "Although the dark phase (of Reddish Egret) predominates in Texas, most of the California records are of the white phase." The fact is that the white phase is unknown in the *dickeyi* subspecies of the Pacific coast.

In general, the author is much too generous in his use of the terms, "abundant," "very common," "common," etc.—which he defines on pg. 54. These categories refer to the number of individuals likely to be seen "in from one-half to one day, in the preferred habitat of that species, during a general search for various birds." I seriously doubt, for instance, that the Louisiana Heron (pg. 100) is "uncommon" (3-10 per day) in coastal southern California; that the Gadwall (pg. 126) is "abundant" (1000+ per day) in the Central Valley; or that the Semipalmated Plover (pg. 178) is ever "very common" (250-999 per day) anywhere in California.

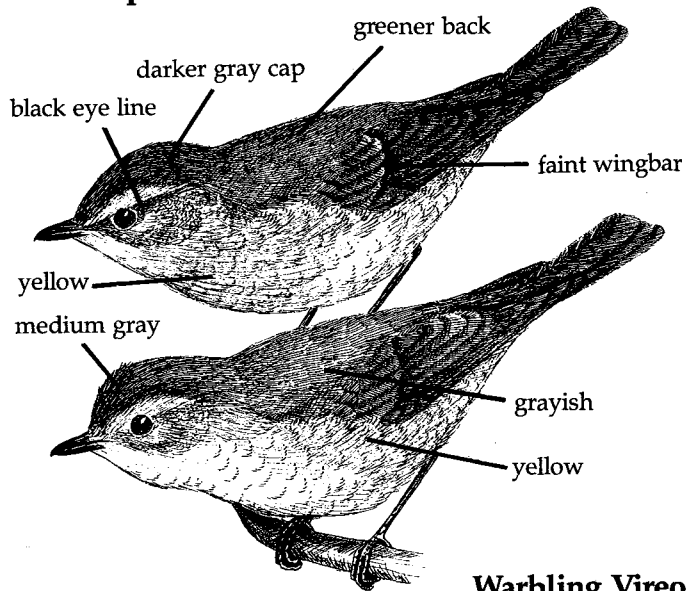
The graphic calendars in the appendix are exceedingly difficult to interpret, even after a careful reading of the 12-page introductory material (pp. 287-298), and I suspect that most readers will not take the time to wade through them. However, bearing in mind the numerous errors included, there still remains a wealth of information here for those willing to expend the considerable effort involved in decoding the data.

In summation, this volume provides a great deal of information (and much misinformation) about water bird distribution, behavior, and breeding biology in California. Though the illustrations detract from the book's appearance and overall usefulness as a field guide, and the numerous factual errors weaken its credibility as a reference book on bird distribution, nevertheless, it is probably the best single source of information of California water birds to appear since Grinnell and Miller (1944). Let us hope that the forthcoming volumes in this series—devoted to land birds—do not have Swainson's Hawks and Black-chinned Hummingbirds wintering in California! ☛

Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

Plain-winged Vireos

Philadelphia Vireo



Warbling Vireo
(bright fall imm.)

Kimball Garrett

The Warbling Vireo is by far the commonest member of its family in California. Arriving in early March, this species has a protracted spring migration that lasts through the first week of June. The bird is common throughout the lowlands of So. California during the spring, though in the interior it is most abundant during late April and May. During the fall the species is much scarcer in the interior, though very common along the coast. By the middle of October most Warbling Vireos have passed through, though stragglers are found to early January, and there are at least a couple of records of birds successfully wintering.

As a breeding species the Warbling Vireo is fairly common through most of California (with the exception of the deserts, where it is absent). Its preferred habitat is riparian and other deciduous woodland, from the coastal lowlands to the higher portions of the mountains, though in the last several decades the species has evidently suffered from cowbird parasitism, and is now scarce in the lowlands in the southern portion of the State. In our local mountains, however, the species is still locally fairly common, presumably on account of the relative scarcity of cowbirds.

The Warbling Vireo is the only regularly-occurring species of vireo in California that lacks wingbars. Typical birds are grayish above and whitish below, with a pale superciliary line, though immatures encountered in the fall can be decidedly brighter (see below). Apart from the other plain-winged vireos, the easiest species to confuse the Warbling Vireo with is a spring-plumaged Tennessee Warbler—particularly when a bird foraging high in the tree tops is

viewed from the ground far below. However, the plumper vireo shape and the distinctive vireo-shaped bill should quickly reveal the bird's identity.

The **Philadelphia Vireo** is a very rare fall vagrant, primarily along the coast. The 20 or so records from So. California for the fall are from mid-September to early November, with the majority of these between mid- and late October. It is interesting to note that of the 5 interior fall records, 4 are from Kelso, the other record being at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley. There are also 3 late May records from 1976, and from mid-May of 1978. All are from the northeastern portion of our region.

The plumage of the Philadelphia Vireo is quite variable with regard to the extent and intensity of yellow on the underparts. Some birds show strong yellowish underparts, while others are much paler, the yellow being confined only to the throat, breast, and undertail coverts. Even on the brightest birds the yellow is always paler across the belly. The problem with the identification of this species is confusion with the brighter examples of immature Warbling Vireos that are encountered frequently during the fall. These Warbling Vireos can show *extensive yellow on the side, flanks, and undertail coverts*, and can show a tinge of *green* on the back. The important point to remember is that the *center of the throat and breast* of even the brightest immature Warbling Vireo is always much *duller*. In the Philadelphia, the *yellow is evenly distributed across the entire throat and breast*. Indeed, the yellow often seems to be the most intense in these central portions. The Philadelphia can also be told by a dull black or slaty *eye line*, which runs from the bill through and slightly behind the eye. This creates the dark-lored effect mentioned in the field guides, though the area covered is more extensive than just the lores. The Philadelphia has a slightly *darker gray cap* than the Warbling, and the back is always *greener*. There is therefore more cap-back contrast in the Philadelphia. Another good mark on the Philadelphia is the dull and thin *yellowish-green upper wingbar*. This mark is similar to that of the Tennessee Warbler and is absent on the Warbling Vireo. Finally, though it is a very subjective point, the Philadelphia seems to have a plumper shape than the Warbling, and a slightly more rounded head. ♡

Santa Cruz Island

The purchase of Santa Cruz Island by Nature Conservancy has been hailed as an important milestone in the movement for preservation of representative samples of wild, natural habitat. Los Angeles Audubon members can feel justly proud of their part in this coup, for our Chapter contributed \$2500 toward the purchase of the property. With its future protection assured, it is expected that Santa Cruz Island will come to be regarded as an invaluable natural resource, one which generations of Californians may enjoy.

Help Needed at Audubon House

Volunteers are urgently needed to help keep Audubon House open for business five days a week. If you have at least one day a week to spare (10 a.m.-3 p.m.), and can assist with the phones, the library, the bookstore, or the membership department, please call Carol Niles at 876-0202.

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



It is the nature of enthusiasts to expect each new experience to be better than the last, and birders are no exception. Thus, the reports from the Memorial Day birding extravaganza at the desert oases north and east of our area were of general disappointment: no super rarities were found. But before writing off the desert this spring, let's summarize the findings:

Most of the reports to mid-May were of the expected **American Redstarts**, **Northern Waterthrushes**, and **Tennessee Warblers**, with a **Black-and-white** and a singing male **Parula Warbler** at Kelso (the Brodskins, May 13), plus, to top the list, a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Scotty's Castle on May 14 (Tom and Jo Heindel). Later in the month and in June vagrant quality improved, with a possible **Mississippi Kite** near Daggett, S. Bd. Co. (Buzz Sawyer, May 25), and an adult **Zone-tailed Hawk** (Guy McCaskie, June 17) at Ft. Piute, S. Bd. Co., where one was seen two years ago. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at Furnace Creek Ranch, D.V.N.M., and another at Ft. Piute (both Guy McC.) were not expected there. Richard Webster found two **Gray Catbirds**, the only reports this year: one at Ft. Piute on May 31, and another at Panamint Springs a few days later. A **Yellow-throated Vireo** and a **Red-eyed Vireo** (both rare birds with us) at Oasis, Mono Co., were seen widely (Bruce Broadbooks, Larry Sansone, et al, May 28). Another **Yellow-throated Vireo** was at Ft. Piute the same day (Garth Alton). Warblers, too, were much sought after during late spring, and several vagrants were found: a **Prothonotary** at Ft. Piute (Doug Morton, May 27), a **Magnolia** at Oasis (John McDonald, May 28), and another nearby at Deep Springs later that week (Richard W.). A **Prairie Warbler**, found at Tollhouse Springs about June 1, remained for at least ten days and attempted to mate with a female **Black-throated Gray** (the Heindels). Two **Ovenbirds** were reported, one at Deep Springs and one at Oasis (both Richard W.). A **Common Grackle** at Oasis (Larry Sansone, May 25) was the object of an extended, but unsuccessful search by many other disappointed birders. Clearly, our expectations have risen geometrically with our birding expertise.

There was, however, much of interest away from the Inyo-Mono oases. On May 8th, Russ and Marion Wilson discovered a singing male **Cassin's Sparrow** (second mainland record) on the high desert between Lucerne Valley and Barstow. The sparrow was seen by dozens of birders during the following week. Later in the month (May 21), Steve Cardiff found a few singing **Cassin's Sparrows** in the Landfair Valley of eastern S. Bd. Co., and still later as many as 15 were seen there (Doug Morton). But on June 17 none could be found despite an intensive search. While looking for the sparrows on May 27, Doug found nesting **Lark Buntings** nearby (the first nesting record for Calif.), and by June 17 a female with two flying immatures was present. At no time were any of the very conspicuous black-and-white males seen in the area.

Morongo Valley provided its usual specialties—a pair of **Wied's Crested Flycatchers**, several **Vermilion Flycatchers**, at

least four singing male **Bell's Vireos**, several **Lucy's Warblers**, and a pair of **Summer Tanagers**, plus some unexpected visitors: a **Tennessee Warbler** on May 6 (the Wilsons), a **Red-eyed Vireo** on May 23 (Hal Baxter), a singing male **Chestnut-sided Warbler** on June 1 (Sharon Goldwasser), and a **Parula Warbler** plus an **Indigo Bunting** on May 28 (Barbara Turner et al). Not a bad showing for our most accessible oasis!

The Salton Sea, particularly the north end, contributed a few rarities, in addition to the unexpected **White Pelicans**, **Least Bitterns**, and **Gull-billed Terns**. The **Roseate Spoonbill**, which apparently wintered at the Sea, was last seen May 27 (Bob Panne), but the two **Snow Geese** and the adult **Franklin's Gull**, which had been there since April, stayed on into June. The **Bay-winged (Harris') Hawk** north of Niland in early May (Lynn Shively), and an earlier one at the north end of the Sea, may have been survivors from the pair released at the Wister Unit in May 1976 by Calif. Fish and Game. One **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found at the north end on May 13 (Guy McC. et al, and Dan Guthrie). At the south end, Guy carefully identified an **Arctic Tern** on June 4 at the same spot where he found three in 1976. Another rare bird at the sea was a **Wandering Tattler** at the south end on June 11 (Guy McC., Linda Delaney, et al).

The LAAS overnight trip to the area near San Miguel Island, the most westerly and least-visited of our Channel Islands, found pelagic birds in good numbers, with the standouts four **Black-footed Albatrosses**, two rare **Flesh-footed Shearwaters**, six **South Polar Skuas**, some 150 **Sabine's Gulls**, and one **Arctic Tern** (scarce in the spring).

On our coastal slope vagrants were fewer, but the quality was exceptional. A sub-adult **White Ibis** (brown with patches of white, and an unmarked pink bill), was at the N.A.S., Pt. Mugu on June 6 (Ron Dow and Elmer Colley), though its status as a wild bird is in question. Evidently Busch Gardens has several **White Ibis** which have reared young, and one of these unmarked, unpinioned birds may well have escaped. Kimball Garrett reports that an identical imm. **White Ibis** spent part of March and April at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in the Malibu Hills.

Harlequin Ducks are rare here, even in winter, and one just off Pt. Fermin on May 21 was very late (Cliff Pollard). The nesting of **Goshawks** south of the Sierras has not been proven, but one in the San Jacinto Mts. on June 6 raises suspicions (Doug Morton). Doug also found a **Water Pipit** above the timberline on Mt. San Geronio on June 15. These birds are known to nest on mountain tops as far south as northern Arizona, but nesting here is not proven.

Certainly the best yard bird of the season was a singing male **Black-and-white Warbler** in Ed Navojosky's Wilshire District garden on June 8. A second spring **Prothonotary Warbler** was unusual at Windover Ranch below San Diego on May 19. Another **Parula** (more than 10 this spring) was in Riverside on June 6 (Steve Cardiff). Jon Atwood's call on May 24 told of finding a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in the tall pines of the Long Beach Recreation Center, where dozens of birders found it easily over the weekend (it sang persistently). Even

though there are only six records of **Red-faced Warblers** in the State, it is interesting to note that one has been seen in May or June nearly every year recently. This year's bird was found by Barbara Massey on June 17 at Charlton Flats in the San Gabriel Mts., not far from Buckhorn, where the second one was seen on June 14, 1973. A few days later (June 21), Jon Atwood found a pair there, raising the intriguing possibility of nesting. Though secretive, at least one of the birds was seen by most searchers through the rest of the month and into July.

An immature male **Summer Tanager** at the Trippett Ranch in the Santa Monica Mts. on June 8 (Lee and Katherine Haynes) was almost definitely of the eastern (*rubra*) race, considering the date and the coastal locality. Our last report from the winter invasion of **Evening Grosbeaks** was of "a few" in the Arcadia Arboretum on May 8 (Barbara Cohen).

Several very rare birds outside our area deserve special mention. A **White-eyed Vireo** (third State record) was found in the same tree on Pt. Reyes where one was seen on June 7, 1977 (the Ghiorso, May 19). A female **King Eider**, the first sighting in several years, was at Año Nuevo Pt. above Santa Cruz on May 7 (Garth Alton), and single **White-rumped Sandpipers** (only two previous records, both in June) were at the mouth of the Carmel River and at Pt. Reyes.

Southeastern Arizona drew two "over 700" birders from Washington, D.C. and Florida, and many "almost 700" birders from the rest of the U.S.A., to add an **Aztec Thrush** to their A.O.U. lists. This thrush, a resident of the high mountains of Mexico, has ventured into the U.S. only once before, in the Chisos Mts. of Texas (last Aug. 21), where it was photographed by the few observers fortunate enough to see it. A **Buff-collared Nightjar** above Tucson was seen by only the determined few who used tapes to lure it from its desert hillside (Herb and Olga Clarke and Arnold Small). Arizona offered still more attractions, however, including a **Rufous-capped Warbler** and a possible **Golden-browed Warbler** in Cave Creek Canyon in April. In addition two rare hummingbirds, the **White-eared** and the **Berylline**, visited the feeders in Ramsey Canyon.

Midsummer is not likely to equal the activity of May or June, but unpredictable avian events do occur to brighten this

usually dull season between the spring and fall migrations. Will it be a post-breeding invasion of the Salton Sea by Mexican species? Or a rare vagrant, like the Wood Thrush in Aug. 1968, the Red-headed Woodpecker in Aug. 1971, or the Wilson's Plover in late June last year? That tantalizing uncertainty is an essential part of the perennial appeal of birding. ♡

Subscription Rate Increase

Postal rate increases have forced us to raise the subscription rates for the WESTERN TANAGER by \$1.00 per year, to \$5.00/yr. (Third Class) and \$7.50/yr. (First Class).

Los Angeles Audubon



ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, August 19th
Charlton Flats Picnic Ground

Jon Dunni and Kimball Garrett will lead an early morning bird walk at Buckhorn Flat, 8:00 a.m. The picnickers may join the group 12-1 p.m. at Charlton Flats for an afternoon of fellowship and wholesome fun. For directions and a map, see Jean Brandt's article in this issue.

Bring Your Friends—Bring a Picnic Lunch



**WESTERN
TANAGER**

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CALENDAR

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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.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8—The Birds of Ballona. An illustrated program by top bird photographer, **Herb Clarke**, presented by the Friends of Ballona Wetlands, 7:30 p.m., at the Playa del Rey Women's Club, 8039 W. Manchester Blvd., Playa del Rey. Everyone is welcome.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12—Mt. Pinos. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the intersection of Cuddy Valley and Frazier Park Roads in Lake-of-the-Woods. This is the best time of the year for California Condor. Other possibilities include Mountain Quail, Dusky Flycatcher, Rufous Hummingbird, and possibly a late Calliope. 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: Jean Brandt, 788-5188.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19—LAAS Annual Picnic, at Charlton Flats in the pleasantly cool San Gabriel Mts. Those interested in an early morning bird walk may meet Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett at 8 a.m. at Buckhorn Flat. Picnickers should meet between 12-1 p.m. at Charlton Flat for lunch and afternoon birding. See Jean Brandt's article in this issue for a map and directions.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26—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, plus some of the best summer birding in California—including a slim chance for boobies. This is an all-day trip, limited to 20 people. Reservations are required in advance, and may be made by calling Audubon house by Aug. 15. Take I-10 to Indio, then Hwy. 11 south past Niland to Sinclair Rd. Leader: Jon Dunn, 981-1841.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4—McGrath State Beach Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the bridge over the Santa Clara River. Migrant shorebirds will be searched for, including Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers. 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: to be announced.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.



Roger Tory Peterson

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.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. **Jon Dunn** will discuss problems in the field identification of birds, with emphasis on techniques for accurate note-taking.

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 Suffer.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14—Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip. The *Miss Monterey* will depart from Fisherman's Wharf, Sam's Fishery Cruises, Monterey, at 8:00 a.m., to return at 3:00 p.m. Price \$15.00 per person. Leaders: Phil Sayre and Bruce Broadbooks.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22—Anacapa Island and out to sea. The boat (to be announced) will leave from the Oxnard Marina at 8:00 a.m. and return at 6:00 p.m. Cost: \$20.00 per person. Leaders: Larry Norris and Ed Navojosky.