

WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 45

November 1978

Number 3

Mono Lake Paradise in Peril

by David Gaines



ast of Yosemite National Park, a landscape of volcanoes, glacier-scoured canyons, and snow-laden peaks is dominated by the blue expanse of Mono Lake. Its waters, filled with tiny brine shrimp, nourish millions of birds. However, its wildlife and scenic grandeur, even the air quality in the vicinity, are in serious jeopardy.

Those of us who return to Mono Lake year after year, who know a little of its magic and mystery, are heartbroken at the prospect of unrestricted water diversion to serve the needs of the City of Los Angeles. For hundreds of thousands of years, clear, rushing torrents have flowed from the flanks of the Sierra Nevada into its waters. But now, all but one of the major tributaries are diverted into the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Unless diversions are curtailed, Mono Lake will become a birdless chemical broth thirty times more alkaline than the sea.

A Lake Without an Outlet

Mono is an immense lake, a conspicuous feature on maps of California, exceeded in volume by only one natural lake within the state. Roughly circular in shape, it extends thirteen miles east-west, by nine miles north-south, and lies at an elevation of over 6,000 feet, where rolling, sagebrush-covered hills abut the steep, granitic escarpment of the Sierra Nevada.

Throughout most of its existence, Mono has been landlocked by peaks and volcanoes—a lake without an outlet. When Sierran glaciers advanced, the lake waxed to several times its present size and depth. As recently as 13,000 years ago tongues of ice reached its shores, and icebergs drifted on its surface. During interglacial periods it retreated into its closed drainage basin, but never fell much below its current level.

Evaporation leaves behind the salts and minerals carried into Mono Lake by its tributary streams, and through the



H.J. Stinner

Eared Grebe

eons its water has become twice as saline and ten times as alkaline as that of the sea. Nineteenth-century travelers extolled its soap-like qualities, claiming a brief soaking could cleanse the dirtiest laundry!

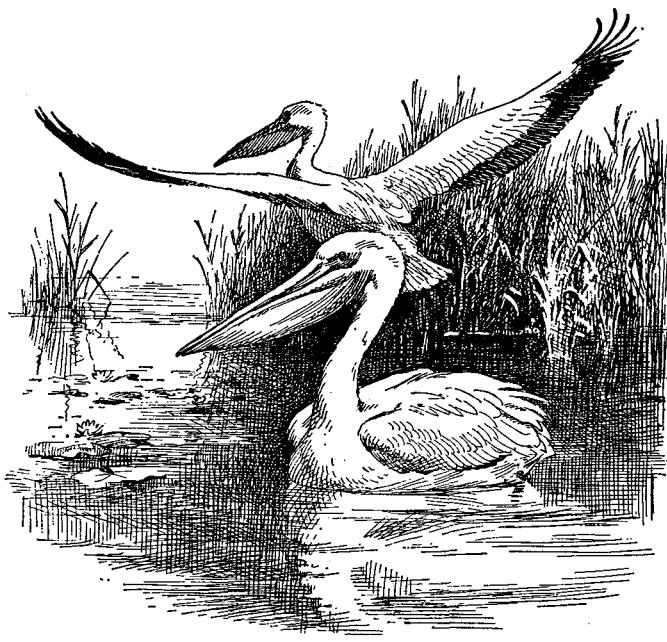
Mono Lake has long been famous for the peculiar mineral formations, called *tufa*, scattered along its shores. Words alone fail to describe the singular shapes—sometimes delicate, sometimes bizarre—into which nature has sculpted these chalky white, calcareous deposits accumulated over the course of the years, as the lake receded.

Although most of the *tufa* has been left high and dry, many of the lake's springs still flow. At several places along Mono's perimeter, water gushes from *tufa*-lined pools, flowing through gardens of mosses, sedges, and flowers into the lake. These freshwater springs and creeklets are of critical importance to the birds.

Of Birds and Brine Shrimp

The lake which Mark Twain once called "solemn, silent, and sailless," and the "dead sea of California" is, in reality, neither dead nor silent. Although too saline for fish, Mono Lake is teeming with other forms of life. Brine shrimp swarm in its waters, and few places on earth host greater numbers of birds.

Aquatic habitat is scarce in the arid interior of western North America, and water birds crossing this region depend



White Pelican

on Mono, Great Salt, and a few other lakes for survival. Every year millions of birds visit Mono's shores during their migration, relying on the lake's bounty for the energy they need to cross thousands of miles of hostile desert.

For thousands of years, California Gulls have crossed the Sierra Nevada each spring to raise their young on Mono's islands. The colony of 50,000 gulls comprises over 95% of California's breeding population, and in August parents and their young may be seen soaring westward over the crest of the Sierras on their journey to San Francisco Bay and other coastal wintering areas.

In late summer and fall, shorebirds, waterfowl, and grebes descend upon Mono Lake to rest and feed during their migratory journeys. The lake is especially important to the Wilson's Phalarope and the Eared Grebe. In fact, a birdwatcher surveying the scene may well imagine that all the Eared Grebes in western North America congregate on Mono's briny waters. Peak populations, which number at least three quarters of a million birds, mark the lake as the species' most important migratory stopover in California. More than 90,000 Wilson's Phalaropes have been tallied in a single day, and it is estimated that at least one-third of the world's population alights on the lake during their southward migration. In addition thousands of shorebirds and ducks—especially Pintail, Shovelers, and American Avocets—visit Mono's shores during migration. Altogether, thirty-one species of shorebird have been recorded at the lake.

Birds visiting Mono are faced with the problem of eliminating salt from their bodies, ingested while feeding. Accordingly, many of the birds drink and bathe at springs, ponds, and creeks along Mono's shores—to dilute their salt intake with fresh water. Without these fresh water sources, few birds would visit the lake.

David Gaines has spent the last several summers studying and photographing the life of Mono Lake. He is the author of "Birds of the Yosemite Sierra," and will be the featured speaker at the Nov. 14 meeting of LAAS.

An Endangered Environment

Unfortunately, the limitless thirst of a burgeoning megalopolis 300 miles away has placed the future of Mono Lake in jeopardy. Since 1941, water from Lee Vining, Walker, Parker, and Rush Creeks—four of the five major streams feeding the lake—has been diverted into the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and any traveler along Hwy. 395 can easily see the consequences: Mono's shores are marked by a conspicuous band of white, barren, alkali-encrusted rocks and sand, a "bathtub ring" left by the shrinking lake.

Since diversion began, Mono Lake has fallen at an average rate of one to two feet per year. By 1978 the lake had dropped more than 35 feet, salinity had almost doubled, and 10,000 acres of alkali-encrusted lake-bottom had been exposed.

In immediate jeopardy are the Negit Island California Gull rookeries. Gulls, like other colonial water birds, are highly susceptible to predators. Until this year, Mono's briny water protected Negit's gulls from coyotes, weasels, raccoons, snakes, and even rats and mice. Now the emergence of a landbridge has breached their sanctuary. No major rookery exists on a peninsula. Unless Negit is restored as an island, it is only a matter of time until the colony is destroyed.

Fortunately, Negit's gulls have received a brief reprieve. In March 1978, the National Guard blasted a channel through the landbridge. But this is only a short-term solution, for within a few years the island will once again be connected to the mainland. Unless the lake's level is stabilized, the gulls are doomed.

If the diversion of water is not reduced, Mono Lake will continue to shrink until the middle of the next century, when it should finally stabilize at one-fourth its present volume. Then it will truly have become a "dead sea." Salts and minerals will become an intolerable burden to birds before the end of the century, and even the brine shrimp and brine flies—the birds' present sources of sustenance—will probably disappear.

In the place of the birds we will have dust. Already windswept alkali clouds have been mistaken by airline pilots for volcanic eruptions. As Mono recedes, it will expose another 20,000 acres of fine-textured, lake-bottom sediment to the sun and the wind. The dust's alkaline chemistry threatens the health of plants and animals—including us.

A compromise must be reached between human water consumption and environmental preservation. If Mono Lake were maintained at its 1976 level, it would still permit an average annual diversion of approximately 25,000 acre-feet for human use. The islands would remain islands, millions of birds would still have a place to nest, rest, and feed, and the eastern Sierra would not be plagued with air pollution. Future generations of Californians would inherit, not a sterile wasteland, but a living lake, in a setting of incomparable natural splendor.

Mono Lake Needs Our Help

There is still much we can do to forestall the fate which seems to await Mono Lake. **The Mono Lake Committee** (P.O. Box 2764, Oakland, Calif. 94602) is working to inform our elected representatives of the lake's plight. By writing to the Committee you may find out more about how you can help; and by visiting the lake you may learn firsthand why this fragile and awesomely beautiful part of our natural heritage must be preserved. 

David Gaines

Birding Around Mono Lake

The intriguing avifauna of the Mono Lake area deserves far more attention, for, unlike many birding "hot spots," its birds are still poorly known. Exciting birds await discovery, and exploring so dramatic an area is certain to prove a memorable adventure.

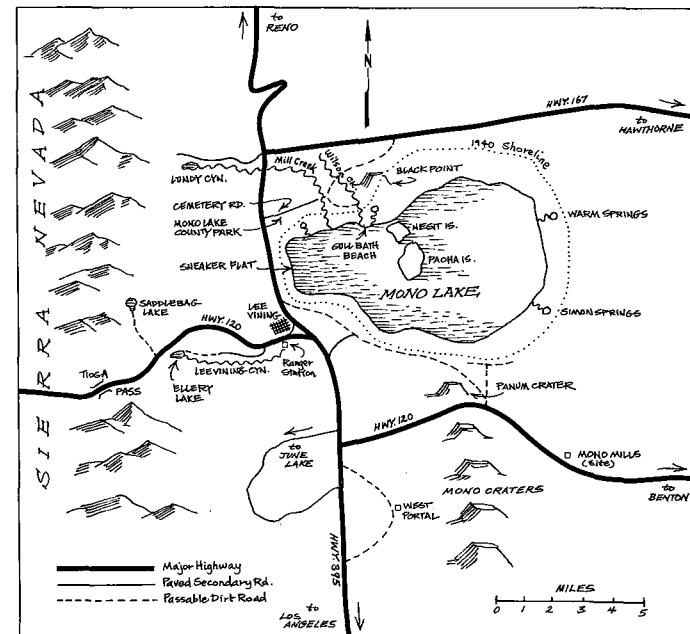
Wintertime, while relatively dull, is also the least birded season, but a probable Trumpeter Swan observed last December hints of discoveries in store. Things pick up in April with the arrival of a host of northbound shorebirds, grebes, ducks, and such nesting species as Spotted Sandpiper, American Avocet, Common Snipe, Snowy Plover, Killdeer, and, of course, the California Gulls. The southbound migration begins in July and continues into November, bringing even greater numbers of transients to the lake. Peak populations of Eared Grebes, Northern Phalaropes, Wilson's Phalaropes, and California Gulls exceed those anywhere else on earth. Among the less common, but regular, species are White-faced Ibis, Sanderling, Baird's, Solitary, and Pectoral Sandpipers, Red Knot, and Ruddy Turnstone. The Golden Plover, Wandering Tattler, Sabine's Gull, and Parasitic Jaeger have all reached the lake on more than one occasion, and there is a probable record for the Hudsonian Godwit.

In general, birding is most productive where fresh water drains into Mono's briny waters. Water diversion has destroyed the best areas, but five excellent spots still remain: **Warm Springs**, **Simon Springs**, **Gull Bath Beach**, **Sneaker Flat**, and **Mono Lake County Park** (see map). Of these, only the latter two are accessible by car. These will be the destinations of most one-day birders.

Sneaker Flat and vicinity may be birded from turnouts along Hwy. 395. A scope is very helpful. At the **County Park**, leave your car in the parking lot and walk to the lakeshore. The route can be soggy, so come prepared, and beware the "Mono muck," a viscous mud left by the receding lake. Flocks of gulls and shorebirds group on the mudflats around the stream deltas. Thousands more typically dot the dry alkaline flats. And don't neglect to check the park's willows and cottonwoods. Yellow Warblers and House Wrens are tunefully obvious, while such rarities as Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Wood Thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, Orchard Oriole, Summer Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting have all made an appearance. At sunset Common Nighthawks hunt over the lakeshore meadows, while Common Snipe winnow high overhead.

If you have more time, **Gull Bath Beach** is well worth the 1.5 mile walk from the locked gate just east of Mill Creek on Cemetery Road. Follow Wilson Creek to the shore of the lake and work eastward toward Black Point. A Black Brant visited this area this spring, and a Rusty Blackbird appeared last autumn. **Warm** and **Simon Springs**, perhaps Mono's finest shorebird habitat, require overnight backpacking expeditions. Parts of the south and west shores are accessible by dirt road and are frequently productive. But stick to well-traveled routes; it's easy to get stuck in the sand.

In the Mono Lake environs the birder can find all of the Great Basin's characteristic avian inhabitants. One can hardly



traverse the sagebrush without raising protests from Green-tailed Towhees and Brewer's Sparrows. Sage Sparrows and Gray Flycatchers are more local, but can almost always be located at **Panum Crater**, **West Portal**, and along the **Hawthorne Road** (Hwy. 167) about 10 miles east of Hwy. 395. The buffaloberry thickets at the latter locality support a family of Long-eared Owls and are a favorite with Sage Thrashers when the fruits ripen in August. Another good spot for the thrasher is at the north end of **Lee Vining**, just beyond the High School athletic field. Lewis' Woodpeckers, Pinyon Jays, and Pygmy Nuthatches haunt the Jeffrey Pine forests—such as those east of Hwy. 395 along Hwy. 120, in the vicinity of **Mono Mills**.

To the west of Mono Lake, glacier-carved **Lee Vining** and **Lundy Canyons** harbor both Great Basin and Sierran species. Calliope Hummingbird, Red-breasted Sapsucker, House Wren, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, and Cassin's Finch are typical of the nesting avifauna. Willow Flycatcher, which has declined catastrophically in California, still nests along **Lee Vining** and **Mill Creek**. Two Rocky Mountain species, Broad-tailed Hummingbird and Virginia's Warbler, and an eastern species, American Redstart, may nest here as well, for territorial birds are seen almost every summer. Then there are always surprises, such as this year's trio of Parula Warblers! En route to **Tioga Pass** (9941'), Gray-crowned Rosy Finches may usually be found below the north-facing cirque, near the outlet of Ellery Lake. Not far away, near **Saddlebag Lake**, is one of only two known California nesting sites of the Water Pipit. Goshawk and Golden Eagle breed in the vicinity, and are sometimes seen soaring overhead.

Public campgrounds are situated in Lee Vining and Lundy Canyons, and reasonably-priced motel accommodations are available in the town of Lee Vining. The Inyo National Forest Ranger Station in Lee Vining Canyon is a good source of road and campground information. (K)

Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

The Myiarchus Flycatchers

The Myiarchus flycatchers are a very difficult group to distinguish, demanding great caution and the careful consideration of a number of visual and vocal characteristics before a definite identification should be attempted. In California, four members of the genus occur. Two, the Ash-throated and the Wied's Crested, are regular summer visitors. The other two species, the Great Crested and the Olivaceous Flycatcher, are accidental vagrants. As with so many other difficult groups of highly similar birds, there is no substitute for field experience with the species involved. A midsummer trip to southeast Arizona, particularly to Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahuas, should provide an opportunity to study, in one locality, all the members of the genus except the Great Crested Flycatcher. But even for the experienced observer, caution is required before identifying either of the two accidental species in California, or a Wied's outside its usual range.

The most numerous representative of the genus in Southern California, the **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, is a fairly common summer resident through much of the state, occurring in a wide variety of brushy and dry woodland situations—from coastal sage scrub through open montane mixed coniferous woodland, to desert riparian and yucca woodland. This species arrives in late March in the southeastern desert, and by mid-April on the coast. Southward migration begins in late July, and most individuals have departed the state by the 1st of September—though a very few regularly pass through to the first week in November. A few also regularly winter in the Colorado River Valley, but away from this area there are only a handful of reliable winter records. The species is frequently reported on Christmas Counts, but it is probable that the majority of these reports are in error.

The Ash-throated is a medium-sized flycatcher, with grayish-brown upperparts, a very pale gray throat and breast, and a pale yellow belly. Like the Great Crested and Wied's Crested, the species shows extensive rustiness in the wings and tail, a mark which is particularly distinctive in flight. The most frequent call of the Ash-throated is a non-musical *ka-brick* (Phillips, *Birds of Arizona*, 1964), sharply accented on the second syllable. Often (and particularly on migration) the bird gives only a soft *prrt* call that closely resembles the introductory note of the longer version.

The **Wied's Crested Flycatcher** is a locally fairly common summer resident along the entire length of the Colorado River Valley, arriving in early May and remaining through early August. Away from the Colorado River in California, it is known to breed only at Morongo Valley, though recent summer records from the Mohave River and the north end of the Salton Sea indicate that birds may also be breeding at these localities. To date the sole extralimital record of this species was a bird observed at Furnace Creek Ranch on May 23, 1973.

The Wied's Crested is *substantially larger* than the Ash-throated Flycatcher, and, most importantly, it has a much *longer, thicker*, and somewhat *broader bill*. Except for the tail pattern, however, its plumage is virtually identical to that of the Ash-throated, though it does show a somewhat *brighter*

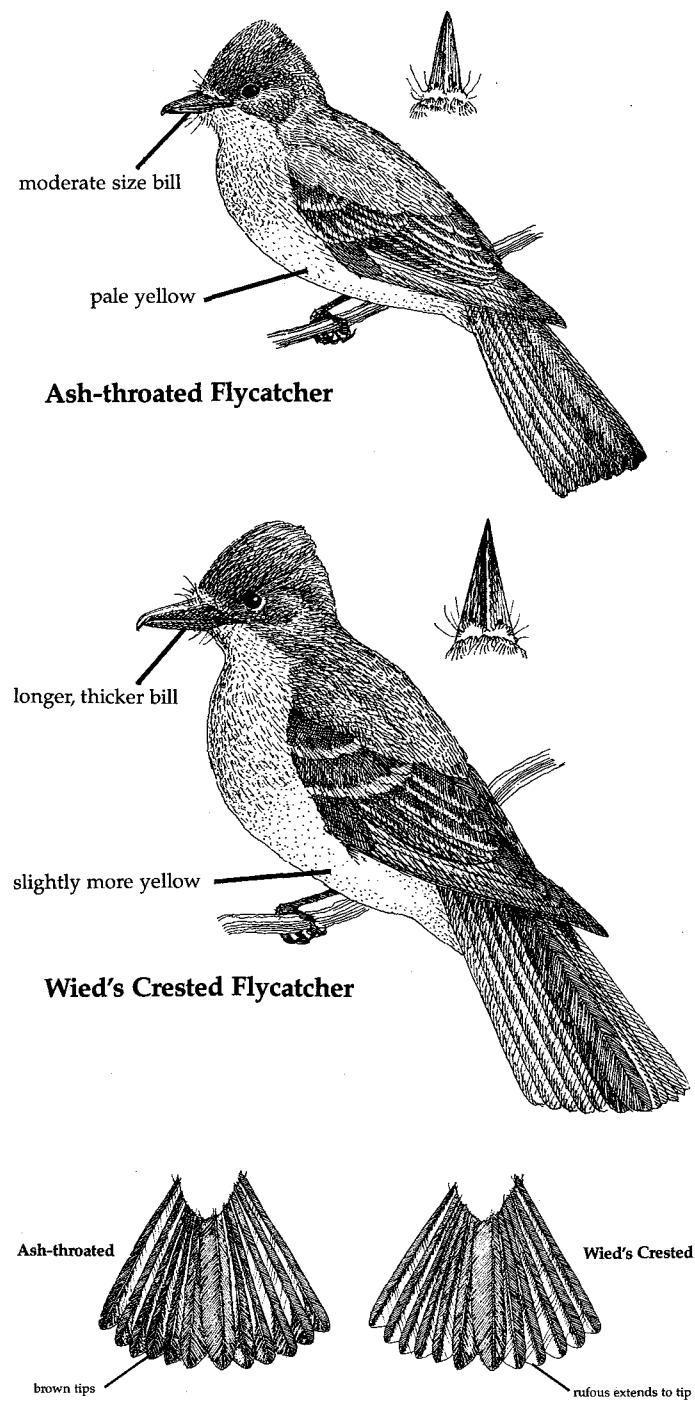
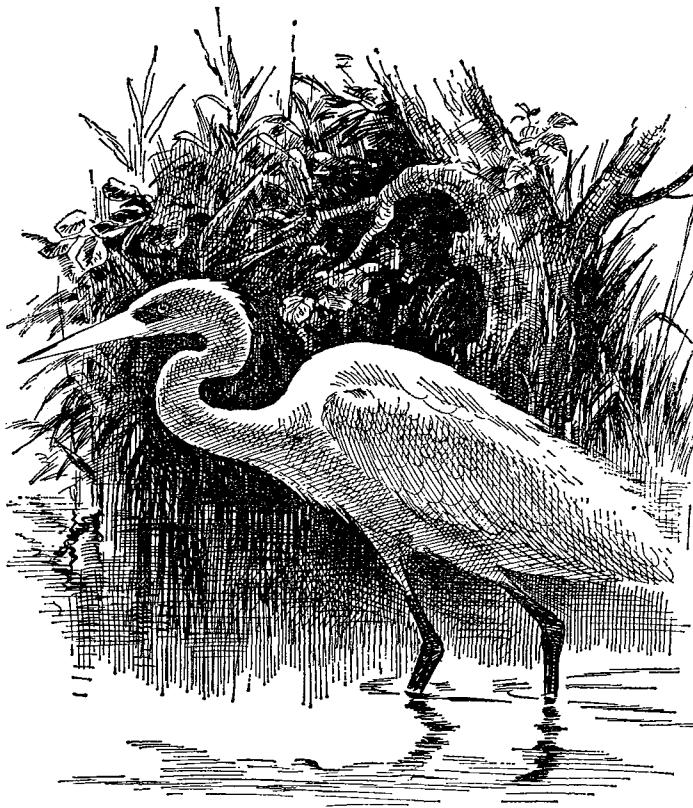


Illustration by Ray Robinson

shade of yellow on the belly. The call of the Wied's is particularly distinctive, and it is often the best way to locate the species, as it is somewhat secretive, preferring to remain in the tops of the cottonwoods. The most common call is a musical, three-part, whistled *pre-le-lip*, often rolled out into a longer series of calls. In addition, the Wied's gives a loud *weep* call. All of these lack the "burriness" of the calls of the Ash-throated.

Much has been said concerning the respective tail patterns of the members of the *Myiarchus* group—and, indeed, for *banders* the tail pattern alone may, in most cases, serve to identify the species. For the field observer, however, ideal viewing conditions would be necessary in order to distinguish the subtle differences in the patterns of the tails. In the case of the Ash-throated and Wied's Crested, the tail pattern—except on juvenal birds—is distinctly different, and, when visible, may prove useful in field identification of the species. The Ash-throated has rufous on the inner web of the tail, extending all the way to the center shaft of the feathers, except for the *tip* of the inner web, which is *entirely brown*. In the Wied's Crested the *rufous* extends *all the way to the tip* of the inner web, but it does not extend to the shaft (see illustration). In both species the central pair of tail feathers are entirely brown. Since the rufous is restricted to the inner web, the distinctive pattern is most noticeable in flight—though on a flying bird the pattern on the tail is difficult to detect. Unfortunately, this field mark fails to hold for juvenal birds, since in juvenals of both species every tail feather is almost entirely rufous—a characteristic which seems to remain until mid-September. Apart from this, the tails of the juvenals of both species appear thinner and more delicate than those of the adults. It should be pointed out that the tail pattern is most distinctive in the fall, when birds are in fresh plumage, having just completed their molt. Conversely, the patterns are least distinctive in late summer, when the feathers are extremely worn and often faded. Fresh fall birds also appear brighter overall, particularly with regard to the yellow hue on the belly. [•]

Next month: Olivaceous and Great Crested Flycatchers.



Great Egret

Suspense at Sepulveda

As almost everyone knows by now, there is a distinct possibility that Hollywood Park will be permitted to build a race track on part of the 1527 acres of public land behind the Sepulveda Dam in the San Fernando Valley—land leased to the city by the Army Corps of Engineers for "recreation use."

L.A. Audubon has joined with other conservation groups and the Valley property owners' associations to form **Save the Basin**, a coalition to fight the proposal—which would destroy some prime urban wildlife habitat, while removing much-needed recreation land from the city. In addition, indications are that the track would be costly to city residents, rather than provide a "tax benefit," as some supporters claim. Furthermore, the city would be faced with the burden of added traffic and parking problems created by the track. Pressure to derail the proposal is currently being brought to bear by the new coalition, motivated by the conviction that if this plan is allowed to go through, then no park in the city is safe.

Malibu: Under the Gun

On a positive note, the Calif. State Dept. of Parks and Recreation Commission recently approved the Resource Management Plan for Malibu Lagoon, providing for management of the area as a "natural preserve." Unfortunately, however, the victory may be short-lived, since some state officials have openly opposed the expenditure of the \$250,000 allocated to accomplish the task. If the plan is deferred this year, there is a good chance that it will never be set into motion. But there is belief within the Dept. of Parks and Recreation that the project *can be saved* by an immediate and spirited public response, urging immediate implementation of the Resource Management Plan. Please write to any or all of the following: Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor; Huey D. Johnson, Sec. for Resources; and Russell W. Cahill, Dir., Dept. of Parks and Recreation. All are at P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento, Calif. 95811.

Ballona Bulletin

The fledgling Friends of Ballona Wetlands is continuing to gather support to preserve the embattled marsh at Ballona Creek. The future of the marsh will be the topic of discussion at the South Coast Commission public hearing, 7:00 p.m., Nov. 6, in the Torrance City Council Chambers, 3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance. Opinions are welcome—expert or otherwise—and anyone willing to provide input should contact Larry Sansone (463-4056) or Ruth Lansford (823-9586). During the following month informal walks around the marsh are planned, under the leadership of marine biologists and ornithologists. Ruth Lansford can supply details on the dates and times of the hikes.

Audubon Scholarships

Once again this coming year, L.A. Audubon is offering several scholarships to the Audubon Workshop of the West, the highly-acclaimed ecology study session held in midsummer in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming. Entrants must be 18 or over by July 1979, and preference will be given to those who can apply what they learn in their studies or work. For applications, write, visit, or call Audubon House (876-0202). All applications must be received by December 15th.

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



September weather and bird activity provided a study in contrasts. The first half of the month was unseasonably cool and damp, with even a bit of measurable rain, and the last two weeks were hot and dry, with 10 days over 100 degrees, even in the coastal areas. Unfortunately, this hot, dry weather came just as the migration of western passerines should have been at its peak—and there was statewide disappointment with the quality and quantity of birds—particularly the warblers. Few vagrants were reported, and even western migrants were in short supply.

Shorebirds, however, were seemingly unaffected by the weather, and occupied much of the local birders' time. Richard Webster's daily coverage of the lagoon and mudflats at McGrath State Park near Ventura provided impetus for many trips to that area by other birders. Richard, with the help of others, found 5 **Golden Plovers** (the first on Aug. 16); 14 or more **Solitary Sandpipers** (the first on Aug. 8); 40 to 50 **Pectoral Sandpipers** (the first on Aug. 24); over 60 **Baird's Sandpipers**, with 24 on Aug. 22 (the first on July 31); a probable **Rufous-necked Stint**, from Sept. 1-4 (the determination is tentative only because the field identification of this rare vagrant in fall plumage is imperfectly known); three **Semipalmated Sandpipers** between Sept. 9-15; two **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** on Sept. 3; and a **Ruff** from Sept. 17-24.

Because of saturation coverage by the active birders, the Ventura area held the spotlight during September—but interesting shorebirds also turned up elsewhere along the coast. More than 18 **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** (including 12 in central Calif.) doubled the aggregate of all previous records for the state. One **Black Oystercatcher** (Sandy Wohlgemuth) in the salicornia marsh at Pt. Mugu, and, later, two more, sighted by Paul Lehman on Sept. 30, were unexpected away from their preferred rocky shores. A **Golden Plover**, probably the same bird which has wintered at Goleta for the past two years, returned in August. Another **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found below San Diego on Sept. 12 (Guy McCaskie), and nearby two **Golden Plovers** were seen on Sept. 27 with a horde of large shorebirds feasting on a pile of overripe tomatoes. All of these Goldens were of the *dominica* race, not of the brighter *fulva* race which winters at Marina del Rey and elsewhere. Our only report of a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was at the mouth of the Santa Maria River on Oct. 1 (Louis Bevier).

A last minute change of plans, due to shelling at the Navy's San Clemente Island, sent the Sept 10 LAAS pelagic trip to Santa Barbara Island, with no loss of quality birds. Aside from the expected abundance of **Sooty Shearwaters**, there were many **Pink-footed Shearwaters**, about 10 **Manx Shearwaters**, three **Ashy Petrels** (which breed sparingly near the island), and 40 **Least Petrels** (a large number for this area). All three jaegers were seen, including a hoped-for subadult **Long-tailed Jaeger**. The star of the trip, however, was an adult **Red-billed Tropicbird** on the water with its long white central tail feathers arched up to keep them dry. The LAAS Monterey Bay trip had an abundance of **Ashy** and **Black Petrels** (although the large flock of petrels could not be found), many



Sooty and **Pink-footed Shearwaters**, two individual **New Zealand Shearwaters**, and a probable **Pale-footed Shearwater**, which flew directly away from the boat—thus hiding its dark underparts and pink bill from most viewers. Alcids seen included many **Common Murres** and **Pigeon Guillemots**, a few **Cassin's Auks**, and two **Rhinoceros Auks**.

A late, and probably our last report of a **Magnificent Frigatebird** was the one at Red Hill on the Salton Sea, Sept. 15 (Henry Childs). An early **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Pt. Loma, San Diego, on Oct. 1 (Elizabeth Copper and Phil Unitt), and a probable **Broad-wing** was seen soaring at great distance near Pt. Mugu the day before (R.W. and P.L.). Several **Ospreys** were seen along the coast, but one, perched in the waterless Tijuana River valley, seemed strangely out of place. Every observation of a **Peregrine** is noteworthy: On Sept. 5, Dan Guthrie sighted one flying over the freeway near Thousand Palms; and Henry Childs studied another harrassing an Osprey at Finney Lake, Sept. 16.

A **Ground Dove** in Altadena on Oct. 2 (Jon De Modena) was the first L.A. Co. record in many years, possibly since the 1860's (Grinnell & Miller, 1944). It could not be located the next day. A few individual **White-winged Doves** wandered to the coast as far north as Santa Barbara in late September. A **Groove-billed Ani** (second Calif. record) in the Oak Canyon Nature Center near Anaheim (Doug Willick, Sept. 13) was last seen on the 17th; and on the 19th Don Roberson, down from the Bay area, found several black feathers which could indicate that the bird fell prey to the resident Horned Owls or a migrant Cooper's Hawk. The meeting of the Breeding Bird Censusers at Big Sycamore on Sept. 16 produced more than reminiscences, as Lee Jones discovered a **Broad-billed Hummingbird** there. This is the sixth record for the species since Jan. '76, with only five sightings prior to that date.

Two noteworthy flycatchers were in Ventura Co.: a somewhat early **Tropical Kingbird** at Big Sycamore on Sept. 24 (the Brodkins), and a **Least Flycatcher** there from Sept. 19-24. A very early **Winter Wren** was along the stream at Big Sycamore on Oct. 2 (Hank Brodkin), and several early flocks of **Cedar Waxwings** were seen in September, including some forty in Altadena on Sept. 16 (Jon De M.).

It should be noted that the report of a juvenile **Townsend's Warbler** in Glendale on July 25 was due to a misunderstanding. The bird was a **Townsend's Solitaire**. At least two **Red-eyed Vireos** were in the Inyo-Mono area over Labor Day weekend (many obs.), and another was found later at Valyermo (John McDonald). Warblers were particularly disappointing in late September when their migration should have been at its best. Nevertheless, there were a few reports. A female **Black-and-white Warbler** at Big Sycamore on Sept. 19 and 20 was widely seen, and on the 24th another was there. Two **Lucy's Warblers** (rare on the coast) were found—one in Goleta on Sept. 7 and 8th (Louis Bevier), and another at McGrath from Sept. 18 to 24 (Jon Dunn et al). **Tennessee** and **Virginia's Warblers**, **Northern Waterthrushes**, and **American Redstarts** (usually widely seen in late Sept.) were reported singly or in very small numbers. A dull immature **Cape May Warbler** near Morro Bay (Larry Sansone, Oct. 1), and a

Painted Redstart at Morongo Valley (John Menke, Sept. 10) were the best warblers of a disappointing lot.

Bobolinks, too, were in small numbers—five in Goleta (Jon D., Sept. 8), one at Pt. Mugu (R.W., Sept. 11), one at McGrath (Jon D., Sept. 18), and another below San Diego later in the month (Guy McCaskie). An adult male **Summer Tanager** in Zuma Canyon, Malibu (Terry Clark, Sept. 12 and 23) was very probably of the eastern *rubra* race, rather than *cooperi*, which nests in S.E. California. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** are among our more spectacular, though regular, strays; the one in Long Beach Recreation Park (John McDonald, Sept. 17) and the other at Big Sycamore (R.W., Aug. 26) were more or less expected. **Dickcissels**, though less regular, are recorded every autumn. There was one in Goleta on Sept. 22 (P.L. and L.B.), an adult on Pt. Loma, San Diego, on Sept. 16 (David Bradley), and another near San Diego in early October.

Two birds new to the state were noted in northern California—a **White-winged Crossbill** near Redding in early September, and a **Yellow Wagtail** at Abbott's Lagoon, above Pt. Reyes, on Sept. 16. Both birds were seen briefly and not again.

During November we can expect a change in emphasis—with the flurry of fall migration gradually giving way to the more stable conditions of the winter season. Certainly we can hope for the return of the more unusual waterfowl—the European Wigeon, the Hooded Merganser, and the Harlequin and Oldsquaw Ducks. And the Antelope Valley (see last month's *Tanager*) should boast six or seven species of hawks, as well as Mountain Plovers and Mountain Bluebirds, plus Lapland and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. In addition, the big field west of Dominguez State College might turn up as many as three species of longspurs and three species of pipits (yes, even Sprague's and Red-throated). At Upper Newport, the high tides on Nov. 13, 14, 15, 29, and 30, plus Dec. 1 and 2nd should bring several secretive marsh birds into the open. Four species of rails plus Sharp-tailed Sparrows have been seen there in past winters. The occurrence of a winter invasion of the lowlands by mountain and northern birds is as yet too early to predict (Oct. 3)—but hope springs eternal, and such an eventuality is eagerly awaited. 



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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Audubon membership (local and national) is \$18 per year (individual), \$21 (family), or \$13.50 (student or senior citizen), including AUDUBON Magazine, and THE WESTERN TANAGER. To join, make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, and send them to Audubon House. Subscriptions to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are \$5.00 per year (Third Class), or \$7.50 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Steve Strann

BOOKS

A GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRD CLUBS, by Jon E. Rickert, Avian Publications, Inc., Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 1978: 565 pp. \$15.00.

THE BIRDS COME FLOCKING: A FIELD GUIDE TO SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FOR BIRDERS AND OTHER TRAVELERS, by Helen Matelson and Teri Matelson. Santa Barbara, California, 1978: 56 pp. \$3.50.

WILD GEESE, by M.A. Ogilvie. Buteo Books, Vermilion, South Dakota, 1978: 350 pp., 16 color plates, 41 tables. \$22.50.

The birder is a strange breed. He will travel thousands of miles for just a glimpse of that once-in-a-century find. But often, when this fanatic arrives at his destination, he is in completely unknown territory. Sure, there are the Pettingill books, or such regional guides as the Lane books; but what if our birder wants up-to-date local information about the object of his quest? Now there is a book that supplies such information. **A Guide to North American Bird Clubs** is a composite listing of over 835 birding or quasi-ornithological organizations extending from Panama to Alaska. The book is divided into states or provinces, and at the beginning of each section is a map showing the location of each organization within that state. Under each club listing is an absolute gold mine of information. First, the name and address is listed, then the club's publication is described. Information on taped bird reports, organized field trips, favorite birding areas, and club meeting places and times are also included. The book provides a service that has been for too long non-existent—by bringing together in clear, concise form a wealth of accurate information about bird clubs. I can highly commend it to all birders intent on doing any traveling in North America.

Along the same lines, Helen and Teri Matelson have put together a regional guide to the birding areas around Santa Barbara. The purpose of **The Birds Come Flocking** is to give the birder some idea of *what exists where*, which the best sites are, and how to get to the hot spots within a 50-mile radius of that famous birding city. The book is divided into two sections, the first dealing with the major areas of Santa Barbara Co., and the second dealing with the habitat zones of the region, with a simple explanation of each zone and a list of the species residing in it. Each section in the first part includes a map with directions, and a discussion of the major attractions of the area. The book adequately covers the Santa Barbara area, but I would recommend its use in conjunction with Brad Schram's article on Santa Barbara which appeared in the May-June 1977 *Western Tanager*. Between the two, the interested birder should have a good idea of where to go and what to look for in Santa Barbara County.

Wild Geese is an enigma. I feel I should like it, but my gut reaction is that I do not. Ogilvie set out to discuss all the world's geese (for some inexplicable reason he left out the Ne-Ne of Hawaii) in a manner befitting an expert on the subject. But the book simply does not live up to expectations. Of course, there is much useful information: The sections on migration and ecology, food, and feeding are well done. But the book seems to have been put together too hurriedly. You have to search in three or four places in different sections to find information on a particular species, and the color plates are, at best, mediocre. For my money, at \$22.50, the book is an unnecessary expense. 



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.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

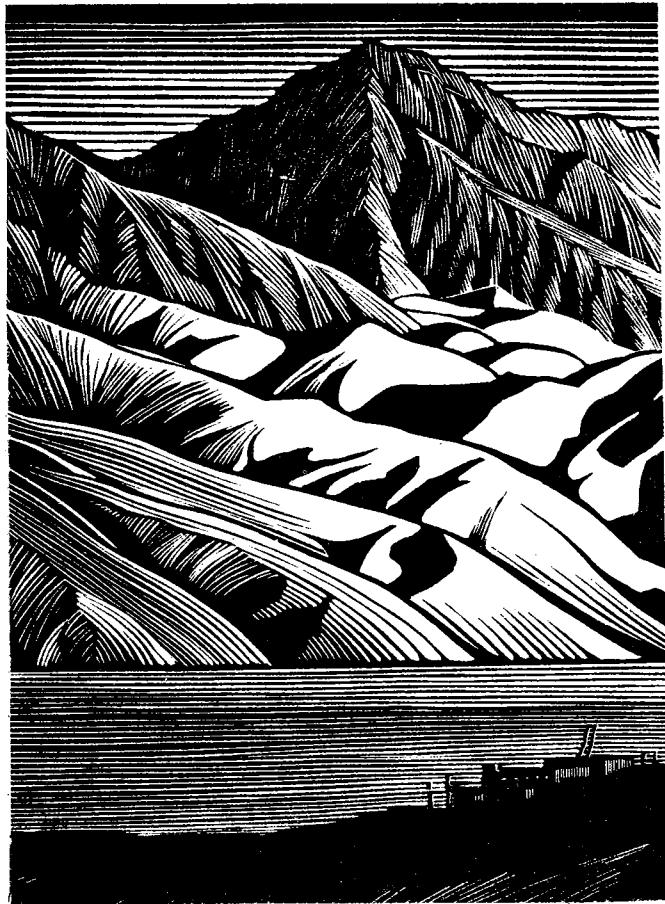
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4—**Tapia Park and Malibu Lagoon.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the picnic area at Tapia Park. Late fall migrants and possibly a rare vagrant or two will be searched for. Leaders: Art and Jan Cupples, 981-4746.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11—**Antelope Valley.** Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the west side of the Avenue A offramp on the Antelope Freeway (Hwy. 14), north of Lancaster. Ferruginous Hawks, longspurs, Prairie Falcons, and Mountain Plovers are all possible. See Jean Brandt's article in the October 1978 *Tanager* for details. Leaders: Kimball Garrett, 477-5769, and Jon Dunn, 981-1841.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14—**Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Plummer Park. Biologist **David Gaines** will present an illustrated program on the **Natural History of Mono Lake**, the incomparable haven for birds east of Yosemite National Park.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2—**McGrath State Park and the Oxnard Plain.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the bridge over the Santa Clara estuary. A great opportunity to study wintering gulls and shorebirds. 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: Larry Sansone, 463-4056.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5—**Malibu Lagoon.** Meet at 1:00 p.m. on the north side of the lagoon, on the west side of the bridge, for a thorough study of wintering gulls. Leader: Jon Dunn, 981-1841.



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

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12—**Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Plummer Park. **George Bryce**, a Ph. D. candidate in entomology at UCLA, will present a slide program on **The World of Insects**—an introduction to this varied and endlessly-fascinating life form.

Channel Islands

From Dec. 16-23, UCLA ornithologist, **Dr. Lee Jones** will lead a natural history cruise to **five** of the Channel Islands. The expedition should provide an opportunity to study such endemics as the Island Fox, the world's largest colony of seals and sea lions, plus many species of birds and wildflowers. The cost is \$470, all inclusive. For information contact H. & M. Landing, 2803 Emerson St., San Diego 92106, or call 213-626-8005 or 714-222-1144.