

# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S COASTAL WETLANDS Endangered Habitat

by Mary Lawrence Test

Here Today...

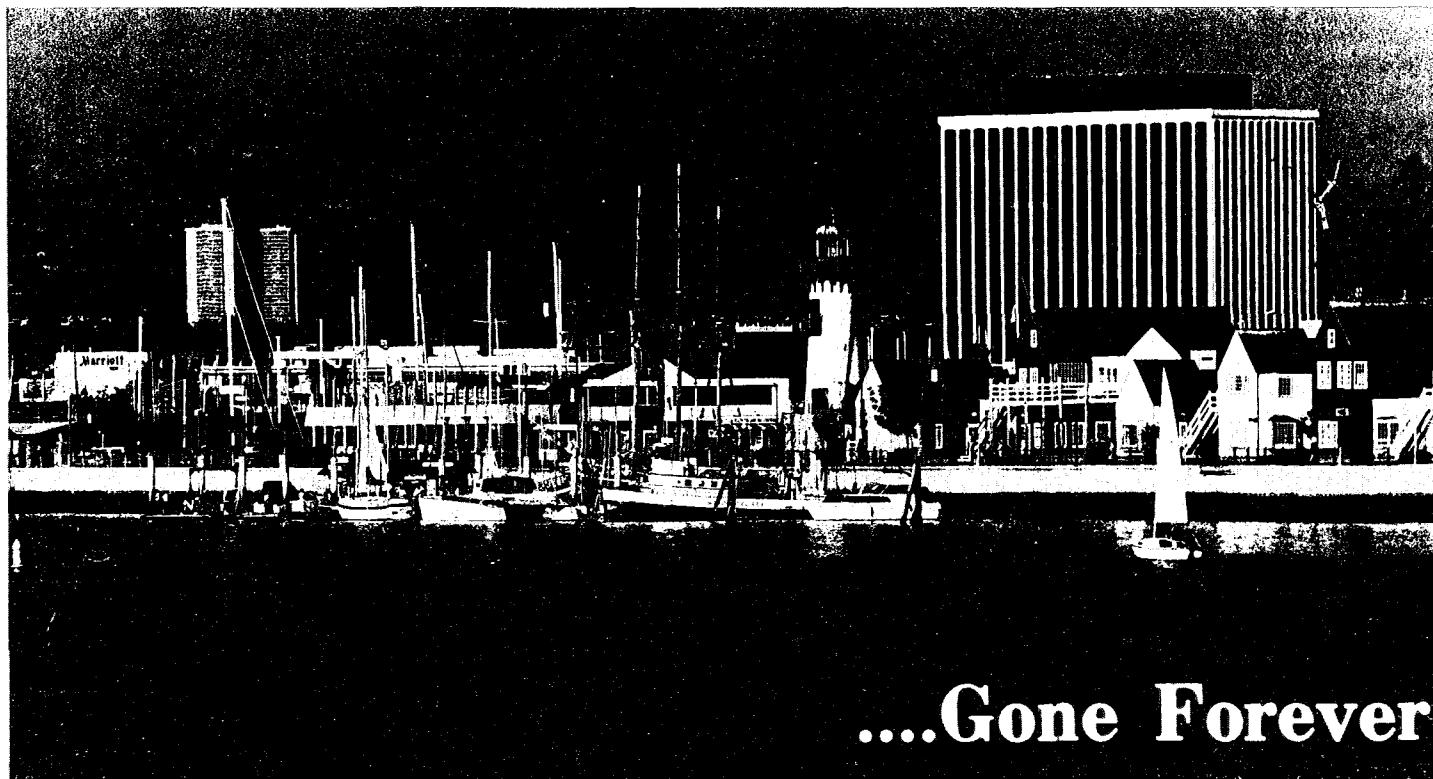


In an era when examples of abuse of our environment surround us, we hardly need be reminded of what our technologically-oriented society has done to Southern California's natural resources. The history of our wetlands and estuaries offers a prime example—and one which warrants study—of this destruction.

At the beginning of the 20th century, about 30 large estuarine areas lay between Ensenada and Morro Bay. In addition, there were numerous small lagoons and marshes at the mouth of nearly every creek. Since then, 15 of these larger areas have been modified, ten have been altered drastically and three have been totally destroyed. Many of the smaller sites have become concrete channels. Today, California's coastal wetlands comprise less than one-half of one percent of the State's land area: some 422,000 acres. This represents one quarter of what existed in 1900.



photos by Lee Jones



## ....Gone Forever

photo by Lee Jones

### BIOLOGY

**A**n estuarine zone, or an estuary, comprises all or part of the mouth of a river, stream or other body of water having an open connection with an ocean, and within which tidal water is measureably diluted with fresh water deriving from land drainage. Estuaries represent a combined interacting ecosystem of land, water, air, plants, animals, mineral and energy sources. They are remarkably diverse systems where species live in an extraordinarily cohesive habitat. Although very tolerant to wide fluctuations in salinity and temperature, many species live near their tolerance levels, and minor environmental changes which lower the efficiency of the system can threaten their existence. These areas are naturally stable environments *when not tampered with*. That they will silt up and disappear when left alone is a common misconception often used by developers with the intent of destroying a marsh.

To simplify, one can divide these ecosystems into three traditional areas which represent a gradient range: saltmarsh, intertidal flats and tidal creeks. The saltmarsh is a simple ecosystem consisting of relatively few species, generally lying between *mean low tide* and *extreme high tide*. It is often rich in organic matter. Land organisms such as insects may make up half of the diversity of the saltmarsh population. The aquatic groups are equally important to the energetics and diversity of the system. Solar energy fixed into plants becomes available to animals principally as decaying plant material (detritus), although benthic algae are eaten by some snails and birds. The abundance of energy in the form of detritus and plankton is reflected by the large number of filter feeders (clams and oysters) which are found in the mud within channels in unpolluted saltmarshes. Some "deposit feeders" (some molluscs) actually ingest the mud itself and sift nutrients from it. The quality of water in a saltmarsh depends on freshwater runoff, seawater flushing, and the biota present as well as the presence of contaminants.

Salt grass (*Distichlis*) and succulents grow on high ground where the salt content of the soil is lower. But the intertidal flats also support flowering plants such as pickleweed (*Salicornia*, spp.) and cordgrass (*Spartina foliosa*) which will withstand hours of submergence. Arrow-grass (*Triglochin*, spp.) and ditchweed are other salt-adapted grasses. Dodder (*Cuscuta*, spp.) is a ubiquitous parasite of marsh vegetation. These tide flats may look like an inhospitable and unattractive wasteland; indeed, this is often the argument set forth by those who wish to exploit wetlands for developmental purposes. However, this mixture of mud, sand and silt supports a variety of molluscs, crustaceans and worms.

The tidal creeks which meander across the intertidal flats and dissect the saltmarsh represent landward extensions of subtidal habitat and carry much of the in- and outgoing tidal water. Algae and eel-grass (*Zostera marina*), which grow and eventually decompose under water, provide an environment for a vast number of species as well as for a great amount of organic material.

California's coastal marshes and estuaries comprise some of the most naturally fertile and productive areas in the State. Wetlands owe their fertility to the nutrients brought to these sites by streams, nitrogen-fixing blue-green algae, and recycling of plant nutrients to produce plant-life and plankton. The recycling may be considered a "nutrient trap." These nutrients are not swept into the ocean, but flow with the tide among the plankton, bottom sediments and bottom-living organisms. Thus, the ebb and flow of the tide provides food and oxygen to the biomass. Waste is continuously and systematically eliminated in the same manner.

Wetlands provide the necessary habitat for hundreds of species of wildlife. Many (60 percent) of the ocean's harvestable fishes spend part of their life-cycle in an estuarine environment, and all of these depend on organisms which live in wetlands. Bays are important nursery areas for many inshore and marine fishes such as several species of croaker, corbina, sea perch, bay perch, smelt, sole, Pacific herring, white sea bass and starry

flounder. The reduction of coastal wetlands constitutes a major economic loss in terms of fish to market.

During migration several million birds, including some endangered species, frequent California's coastal wetlands which form essential resting places, feeding areas and wintering grounds for many of those birds that use the Pacific Flyway. These include Western Grebes, Snowy and Great Egrets, Brant, Pintail, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, scoters, American Coots, Black-necked Stilts, Marbled Godwits, and many species of gulls and terns. Some, such as ducks and shorebirds, are present in tremendous numbers. Some of these rely solely on one site; others feed and rest in different areas, seeking shelter in marshes or on tide flats or in open water at high tide. Endangered species which nest in the local area include the Belding race of the Savannah Sparrow and the Least Tern at Ballona Wetlands, and the Light-footed Clapper Rail at Upper Newport Bay.

### THREATS

**D**espite the essential nature of marshes, the number of our State's wetlands has nevertheless been seriously reduced over the past one hundred years—filled by developers of residential, commercial and industrial sites. Both individuals and commercial concerns seek scenic areas, and wetlands once offered cheap sources of industrial water and easy waste disposal. Dredging and filling represents an inexpensive way to create dry land from wetlands. Pressure for new marina sites constitutes a major threat to Southern California's wetlands.

But the saltmarsh channels and banks are a fragile ecosystem, and one which has historically been rapidly destroyed through public access. Diking affects current patterns and mixture of oxygen and nutrients throughout, and always causes turbidity and siltation. Water quality is degraded; photosynthesis is inhibited; eel-grass, algae and shell fish beds are often smothered or dug up. Shoaling and erosion of formerly stable environments result.

Since high levels of settleable and suspended matter are characteristic of saltmarshes, the presence of trace and heavy metals as contaminants in aquatic systems is of primary concern. Lead runoff poses the most serious threat to local wetlands; other contaminants include cadmium, chromium, zinc, nickel, copper and mercury.

### THE LAW

**E**ffective management of the wetlands of our state has been hindered by the ineffectiveness of local governments to protect these unique ecosystems—government agency jurisdiction often overlaps, and traditionally coastal zone affairs have been given low priority. At best the record is confusing.

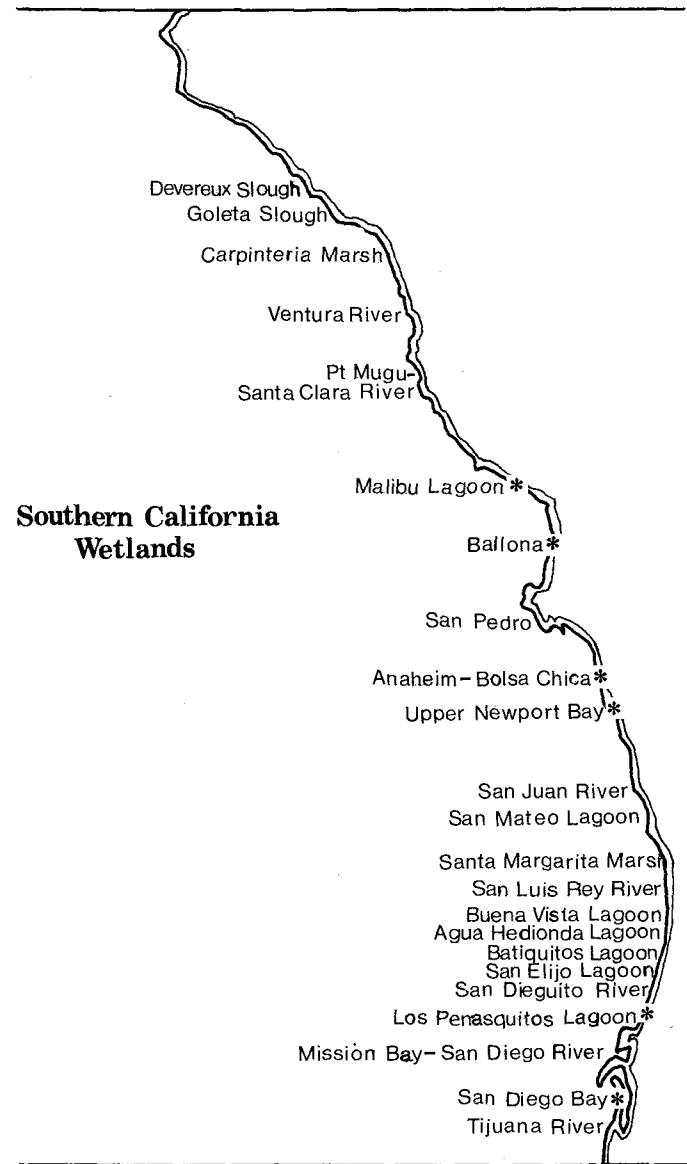
Because of their basis in both Mexican and U.S. systems, laws pertaining to tidal areas are extremely complex. Article XV of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 recognized existing, legitimate titles to both personal and real property. And under the Federal Land Claims Act of March 3, 1851, the U.S. had to confirm Mexican land grants. This Act provided that grants would be confirmed intact if there was obvious intent to include lands seaward of the *mean high water mark*. Land which private grantees filled or reclaimed might be freed from federal navigational servitude and State definition as tidelands.

In 1850, in recognition of its sovereignty, the state obtained title from the Federal Government to all ungranted tidal and submerged lands within its limits. This included the right of public trust to all tidelands then in existence. In 1853, the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey mapped the California tidelands.

Since then, the Federal Government has confirmed previously existing land grants by patent. The legislature has vested in the State Lands Commission, "All jurisdiction and authority remaining in the State as to tidelands and submerged lands as to which grants have been or may be made" (Public Resources Code, Section 6301).

State ownership of such land extends from the *mean low water mark* seaward. Thus the State holds tidelands (*jus publicum*) trust for the benefit of the public, unless specific exceptions have been made to free the public trust, which can be done only through a legislative declaration of unfitness for trust purposes, or a legislative enactment in aid of navigation, commerce and fisheries. Private land may be restored to the public trust only by the right of eminent domain.

Under common law, the State and Federal courts distinguish tidelands from uplands at the *mean high tide mark*. The method of calculating the average tidal range differs, however, for



*Remaining and Endangered Southern California Wetlands:* All of the above habitats are under threat of destruction. Those marked with an (\*) are in immediate danger. Much can be done to restore coastal wetlands; many interested groups are working in these areas to protect this valuable resource.

State and Federal agencies. Under the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, the authority of the Army Corps of Engineers "extends laterally to the entire water surface and bed of all waters subject to tidal action." Thus, even obstructed areas cut off from navigational waterways can be subject to Federal regulation. As the easement for navigation, commerce and fisheries extends to the mean high tide mark, the last-known such mark is the level critical to the state in situations where the tidelands have been modified.

Since 1976, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency have been working to protect the wetlands in the United States through authority under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972. They are guided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service through the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Anyone wishing to conduct any development in wetlands must obtain a permit if excavation or filling are involved. The applicant must prove that: the project is water-dependent, it has no alternative, it is in the public interest and full mitigation of all damage will be provided.

Since the Fall of 1976, California has been in the process of implementing the Coastal Act. Both the Coastal Act and the Federal government's policies are very specific about wetlands' protection, and favor development only for water-dependent uses which have no feasible alternative, and include mitigation. For example, the Coastal Act permits construction of marinas in degraded wetland areas only if large-scale restoration accompanies the project. Although it is specified that the marina can include no more than 25 percent of the area to be restored, criteria for the remaining 75 percent is as yet undefined. Interpretation of the Act in this regard is somewhat elastic.

The policies of the State Coastal Act of 1976 are also clear regarding public access to, and use of, public coastal resources. Development may not interfere with the public's right to access. Protection of public resources requires establishment and maintenance of open space, parks and natural areas, coastal recreation, beach access, housing, nature education, agriculture, boating, and commercial and industrial use. Planning for any area must necessarily include provisions for controlled public access to the waters and tidelands, but of course must also incorporate ample safeguards against any disturbance and abuse.

The policies of the State Coastal Act require restoration of wetlands in conjunction with shoreline development. Also, a specific mechanism for restoration implementation was written into the State Coastal Conservancy Act by the State legislature in 1976. It is recommended that planning include a specific restoration element, based as much as possible upon these authorities.

#### RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION

**A**s we have seen, even in their altered state, our existing wetlands are performing valuable natural saltmarsh functions—supporting a broad food chain and essential flora and fauna; offering open spaces; providing essential habitat for endangered species and others; serving as a refuge for migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway; providing nutrients to the sea, and sustaining marine life. These values could be vastly multiplied, however, if our wetlands were properly rehabilitated, restored and maintained. While areas of wetlands under cultivation are still valuable feeding areas for birds, they are less valuable than when they were part of a natural saltmarsh system.

The basic Wetlands Protection Policy, signed by Huey D. Johnson, California Secretary for Resources, states:

*"It is the basic policy of the Resources Agency that this*

*Agency and its Departments, Boards and Commissions will not authorize or approve projects that fill or otherwise do harm or destroy coastal, estuarine or inland wetlands."*

Wetlands may continue to offer other benefits in addition to providing important wildlife habitat; examples include assisting in groundwater recharge and surface water purification, contributing to local air quality, and providing flood control and shore stabilization. But, proper management of these areas must include appropriate restoration of altered and damaged elements of existing marsh ecosystems. Primary goals in wetlands rehabilitation must include provision for general ecologic stabilization, optimum populations of both common and endangered species, the establishment of buffer areas, and public access compatible with the aforementioned requirements.

Deprivation of tidal flushing causes some areas to become seasonal wetlands only, a problem which has been created by the presence of dikes, berms, fills, roads and tidegates installed many years ago. Restoring tidal flow where it is absent could, in many cases, be easily accomplished, thus increasing both the tidal amplitude and the volume of tidal flow within the wetlands. Often, a larger tidal inlet system is needed to enhance tidal flow. The use of tidegates should be avoided.

Some reshaping of the marsh may be necessary to assure the proper landwater interface necessary for it to function well. Channels can be improved to increase the circulation of water. Culverts can be installed under existing roadbeds to extend flushing to areas which are now cut off from the sea water. Additional channels could be constructed to increase water distribution and to ensure that the marsh surface area is alternately covered and exposed by the tides. Improvement of water circulation will help reintegrate missing vegetation. Thus, wildlife habitats will be enhanced by the introduction of a greater variety of plants.

The delicate nature of a wetlands ecosystem requires the area be well buffered. These buffer zones should include the existence of contiguous marshy areas. In addition, natural vegetation screens can cut down visual and noise pollution, and fences can be used to minimize intrusion. There should be no intrusion into breeding areas.

The present use of diesel oil and pesticides for mosquito control must be discontinued in favor of implementation of "open marsh water management" techniques with enhanced circulation of water.

There must be greater continuity in existing marshland areas. Ninety percent of California's wetlands are in the San Francisco area. It is not enough to save only the Bay area; wetlands must remain throughout the state on periodic bases, surrounded by buffer areas as large as possible.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 states that Federal Agencies must ensure that actions they undertake have no adverse impact on the habitat of endangered species. This would apply to permit actions taken by the Army Corps of Engineers. Coastal wetlands reportedly house the greatest percentage of endangered species in the State.

**P**reserving and enhancing self-renewing environments such as wetlands should be a top-priority issue for our governmental agencies, local, State and Federal. The threat of losing California's wetlands is very real. Wetlands can no longer be viewed as parcels of attractive real estate to be sold and altered to build homes, industries and marinas. They are natural resources which belong to all the people; they should be preserved and maintained as such for the people of future generations. Protecting our remaining wetlands should prove a challenge for concerned environmentalists. It is almost too late; the time for positive action is now. □

# Sandy Wohlgemuth

## CONSERVATION

Wetlands are:

*"those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions."*

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**T**his is the official definition of wetlands, the bare bones of a rich, organic community that fairly sizzles with life. Shorebirds probe the mudflats for worms and crustaceans. Ducks dabble and dive for aquatic plants and grasses. Rails prowl the cattails and the tufts. Long-legged waders stalk fish and frogs in the shallows. Short-eared Owls and harriers search out mice and other small prey. Peregrine Falcons take ducks at Morro Bay. Here is the classic food chain, the web of life vividly illustrated.

So why all the fuss about wetlands? To a birder the question is superfluous—that's where the birds are. But to a lot of people out there wetlands are, at best, a smelly wasteland; at worst, a soggy eyesore that ought to be filled in and put into productive use. Historically, our conception of wetlands has been born of ignorance and nurtured in near-hostility. In the last 200 years innumerable projects have drained, filled and dredged more than half of our wetlands. In North Dakota, Minnesota, and elsewhere the federal government has acquiesced in, if it did not encourage, draining potholes and marshes so there would be more land available for agriculture and cattle ranching. Wetlands were nuisances. These prairies were for millenia splendid nesting sites for ducks and shorebirds. As the years passed it became evident that loss of habitat was affecting the stocks of birds, particularly for the duck hunters. Refuges were established and flourished. Federal attitude towards wetlands has undergone a salutary change to one of active concern. New programs have been devised to prevent the turning of marshes and swamps into trailer parks, trash dumps and parking lots.

The Corps of Engineers has been the villain in many an environmental battle ("Dam the Army Corps of Engineers" reads the T-shirt slogan in campaigns to save wild rivers around the nation). Yet in recent years the Corps has become the most active instrument that stands in the way of wholesale destruction of our wetlands. Through the River and Harbor Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act of 1972 the Corps has developed an admirable policy that includes in its jurisdiction not only navigable waters, but all wetlands. No dredging or filling of wetlands can be done without a permit from the Corps. "That decision should reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. All factors...must be considered; among those factors are conservation, economics, general environmental concerns, historic values, fish and wildlife values...water quality...and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. No permit will be granted unless its issuance is found to be in the public interest" (Corps regulations, 1974). The Corps has taken its mission seriously and a series of landmark lawsuits has upheld the use of its permit power to control unwarranted development in wetland areas.

The heart of Corps policy has been to deny permits for private developments in wetlands that are not water-related or can be built on alternate upland sites. This rules out businesses, hotels, factories, apartments, dumps and so forth. Only if there is over-riding public benefit can a wetland be sacrificed—and

then full mitigation must be provided by the developer. When the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation decided to convert the small North Lake in Legg Lake Park to a fishing pond, Los Angeles Audubon stepped in with an injunction to prevent the loss of valuable wildlife habitat. The controversy was amicably concluded when the Corps built three mitigation lakes in the Whittier Narrows Nature Center nearby. In a short time the new area became a genuine sanctuary with a spectacular bird list.

Besides feeding and nesting for resident and migratory birds, what else are wetlands good for? Some fairly subtle and unexpected things, the scientists tell us. In flood times they hold onto stormwaters and prevent loss through run-off while recharging valuable ground water supplies. Polluted water flowing into a marsh area is purified by this natural treatment plant. Coastal salt marshes act as shields against wave action and ocean storm damage. They are also spawning grounds and nurseries for fish and shellfish and provide habitat for small mammals as well as birds. And, in these claustrophobic times, wetlands are open space. Anyone who has been to Morro Bay or the great marshes of the east coast knows the magnificent vistas of low vegetation adorned with meandering water courses and flights of egrets and waterfowl. It is the exciting proximity to wildlife that makes wetlands so fascinating. The birds are concentrated in a relatively small, defined area and, in the appropriate season, occur in great numbers. Think of upper Newport Bay, McGrath State Beach, Devereux Slough, Bolsa Chica, Imperial Beach, Pt. Mugu, Ballona Wetlands—even poor, beat-up Malibu Lagoon. Madrona Marsh in Torrance is a tiny remnant of a vast, primeval wetland and is smack up against a shopping center. Yet it is a living, natural entity, treasured by its neighbors.

The question before the house, then, is: what is to be done about wetlands? Close to home, Los Angeles County has only two remaining coastal estuaries that support wildlife: Ballona Wetlands which is threatened with extinction by Summa Corporation's development plan and the *Salicornia* marsh at Malibu Lagoon, whose future restoration is still not assured. There are no easy answers. The pressures of population growth and energy shortages are making "conservationist" a dirty word. "Preservationist" has already become one. We are going to have to dig our heels in the mud and say, "That's enough, no further." Over the long run we (the people, America) have already surrendered too much to the greedy earth movers and paving machines in the name of Progress and Prosperity. Some of the natural world must survive. It might not if we cave in. Fight, team, fight! □

What you can do:

1. Join the Friends of Ballona Wetlands. Send \$1 or more to Ruth Lansford, 6953 Trolley Way, Playa del Rey, Calif. 90291.
2. Help save Mono Lake. Contributions for L.A. Audubon's suit against the Dept. of Water and Power may be sent to L.A. Audubon, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A. 90046.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS

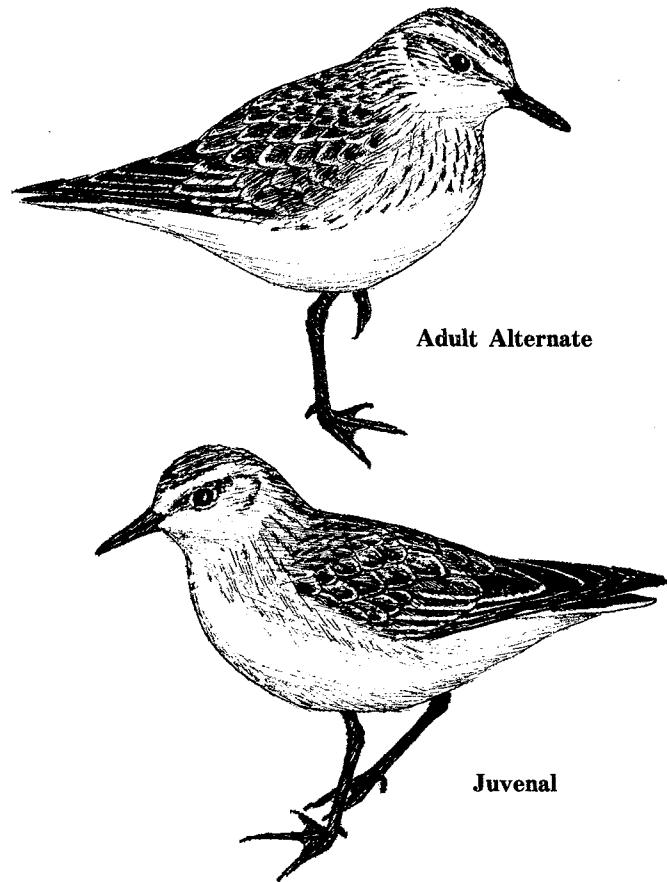
**Jon Dunn**

## FIELD NOTES

**T**he Semipalmated Sandpiper is now considered to be a rare but regular spring and fall transient through Southern California. In spring it is recorded regularly at the Salton Sea during May (exceptionally as early as late April and as late as early June) with most records coming in the middle of the month. Prior to 1978 there was only one fall record for the region; however, during the last two falls small numbers of juvenals have been recorded on the coast and in the interior between 31 July and mid-September. The majority of observations have been from well-worked, coastal Ventura Co. The increase in records, no doubt, reflects the increased ability of observers to identify this difficult species rather than a sudden change in distributional patterns.

Before attempting to identify a Semipalmated Sandpiper one should have a thorough working knowledge of all of the plumages (adult basic and alternate, as well as juvenal) of the Least and Western Sandpipers, as it is only by thoroughly familiarizing oneself with these plumages that one can safely pick out the subtly different Semipalmated Sandpiper. Since all of our records of the latter are of alternate plumaged adults and juvenals, this discussion will focus primarily on these two plumages; however, there are certain structural features that one can use to identify this species in any plumage. One of the most distinctive is its short, thick and straight bill. Further, the bill is of relatively even thickness throughout, although appearing somewhat thicker toward the base. The Western's bill is noticeably longer and thinner, often distinctly decurved towards the tip. Its bill also tends to taper more from a thick base. Unfortunately, bill measurements overlap, as the females of both species (as in all *Calidris*) have distinctly longer bills. Thus, a female Semipalmated could have a longer bill than a male Western. In these borderline situations the bill length will not be very helpful. Nevertheless, I still feel that the shape of the bill is useful, as short-billed male Westerns still look thinner-billed and show a slight decurvature while the longer-billed female Semipalmateds do show a noticeably expanded tip (horizontal broadening) to the bill. Some authors feel that this characteristic is very distinctive, especially in differentiating the Rufous-necked Stint (see below). I would, however, deemphasize its importance as a field character as it is very difficult to see when present and in many cases is not present at all. The Least's bill is always very different in appearance, being much thinner and a paler, more brownish color. Apart from bill shape the Semipalmated appears to be a chunkier bird than the Western and has a smaller, rounder head. The Western appears to be more elongated with a larger, blockier head. These characters are very subtle and may only be appreciated after extensive field experience with both species.

The alternate-plumaged Semipalmated Sandpiper is, perhaps, more similar to the Least Sandpiper than the Western as it is brownish above, lacking the rufous tones of the Western. This species most closely resembles the Baird's Sandpiper in color, being a uniform buffy brown above (dark brown feather centers with paler buff-brown fringes). The back lacks the bold pattern (pale "v's" on the sides of the back) of the Least Sandpiper, and it is a distinctly paler brown bird than the Least. The alternate-plumaged Semipalmated does show some rust tones in the cheek area, but this is never as rufous as in the Western Sandpiper. The underparts of the Semipalmated are mostly white, although there is a distinct necklace of fine dark



**Semipalmated Sandpiper**

streaks across the breast with an underlying buff tone. This pattern is very different from that of the Western Sandpiper which has bold streaks of chevron-like black spots extending across the breast and down the sides and flanks.

The juvenal plumage of the Semipalmated looks similar to the juvenal-plumaged Western, rather than Least, as the underparts are a flashy white, lacking the brownish and dull buff tones of the Least. Juvenal Semipalmateds do show a faint grayish-buff wash on the sides of the breast (usually with a few darker suffused lines), but the effect of this wash is not at all striking. While the underparts are patterned similarly to the juvenal Western, the upperparts are distinctly different. The juvenal Semipalmated has dark brown feather centers with pale buff fringes giving the upperparts a pale brown, somewhat scaly appearance lacking any sharp contrasts. At very close range the feathers of the lesser and median wing coverts and scapulars are fringed with a slightly orangish tone, but again, the contrast is still very subtle and at any distance the feathers on the back, scapulars and coverts appear to be uniformly patterned. The upperparts on fresh-plumaged juvenal Westerns are quite different with the feathers down the center of the back and on the scapulars being fringed with bright chestnut. The remaining feathers on the back and on the coverts have whitish fringes. The overall effect is of a very contrasty pattern above. Unfortunately, there is considerable

individual variation among juvenile Westerns and some birds are not so brightly or boldly marked. This is especially the case with juvenals in September that have slightly worn feathers in which the fringes have nearly worn away. However, almost all juvenals will have chestnut or rufous fringes to the scapulars that can always be detected at close range, especially when viewed from above.

Adult Semipalmated Sandpipers in fall (no documented California records), will retain their alternate plumage through July and the same criteria that are used on spring birds can be used on these individuals. Since this species is a long distance migrant, wintering for the most part south of the United States, most of the adults will have already passed south by mid-August. Thus the great majority would still be in alternate plumage. For those few individuals encountered in basic plumage, the task becomes more difficult, and one has to rely primarily on structural features (bill and body shape) and differences in vocalizations.

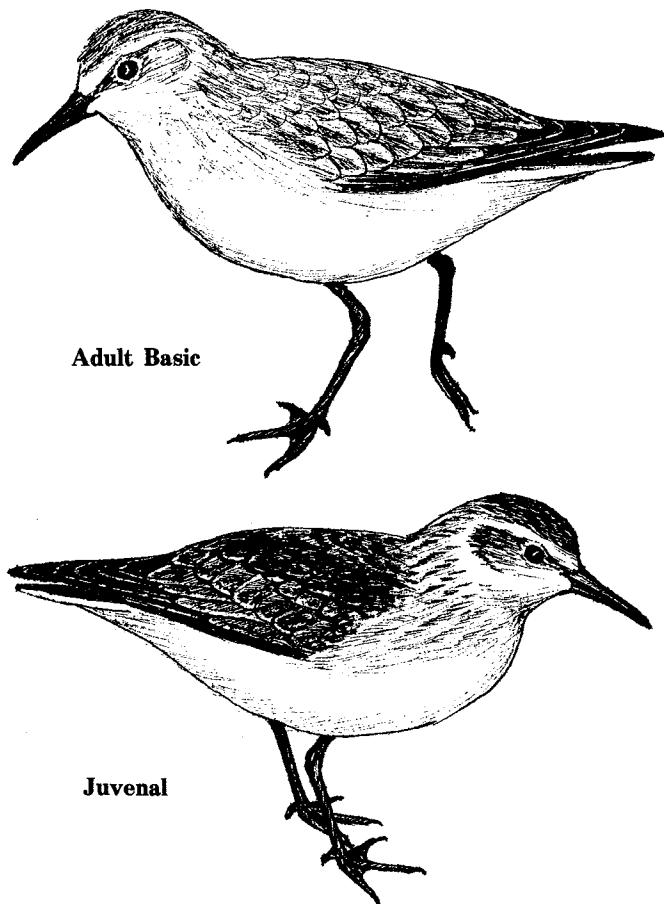
Once learned, the low "churk" call of the Semipalmated can be a great aid in field identification. This call is very different from the scratchy, sharp, high notes of the Western and sounds to my ears like a dull or soft Pectoral Sandpiper note. The Semipalmated also gives a high "chi-chi-chi-chi-chi-chi" aggression or alarm call which is, perhaps, indistinguishable from that of other peeps. The feeding behavior is also

somewhat different with the Western preferring to probe in shallow water and around the water's edge in soft mud. The Semipalmated, on the other hand, prefers to pick rather than probe and tends to feed on slightly drier surfaces. There is, however, a great deal of overlap and this character should only be used as a method of locating potential Semipalmated Sandpipers in a flock rather than as a basis for a final diagnosis.

The Semipalmated, like the Western, has black legs and feet and distinct semipalmations (partial webbing) at the base of the toes (see illustration in the November *Western Tanager*). These are the only two peeps (= stints) that have any webbing, the other five species lacking this character. This small amount of webbing can be painfully difficult to see, but at close range it is often possible to see as the bird is standing or walking on a dry surface.

**A**nother closely related species, the Red-necked Stint or Rufous-necked Sandpiper lacks webbing but very closely resembles the Semipalmated Sandpiper in other structural features (especially bill shape). The alternative plumage of this species is easily identified, but observers are still attempting to sort out the criteria for identifying the basic and, especially, juvenal plumaged birds. A thorough discussion of this species is therefore not yet warranted; however, it should be pointed out that the Red-necked Stint has turned up on at least four occasions in California. Observers are urged to note the presence of webbing in every Semipalmated Sandpiper identified that is in juvenal or basic plumage.

As a final note I would like to point out that one should not rely on the standard field guides as an aid to distinguishing these similar-appearing peeps, particularly one (e.g., Semipalmated) that is seen out of range or season. The treatment of the peeps in Robbins' *Birds of North America* is especially inaccurate and misleading. □



Western Sandpiper

Illustration by Lee Jones

## LAAS TOUR TO MEXICO

The Los Angeles Audubon Society is offering a **birding tour to Mazatlan**, the bird-rich barrancas of the Sierra Madre mountains east of Mazatlan, and San Blas, from February 22 to March 2, 1980 (9 nights and 10 days of birding). The tour includes several boat trips. The leaders are **Jon Dunn** and **Kimball Garrett**. The trip is limited to 16, including the leaders, and the cost will be \$800.00. If you are a member and would like to reserve a place, write to Reservation Chairman, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046. A deposit of \$100.00 is required to hold a place, of which \$25.00 is not refundable.

## Need a Last Minute Gift Idea?

Consider one of the following books as an ideal Christmas gift for your favorite bird fanatic:

Seabirds of Britain & World	\$15.95
Les Oiseaux De Chine, Non Passereaux	\$100.00
Birds of Paradise & Bower Birds	
(2nd printing)	\$150.00
Rails of the World	\$100.00
Herons of the World	\$65.00
Warblers of America	\$19.95

Now Available at Audubon House.

## Shum Suffel

# BIRDS of the SEASON

The start of a new decade tempts one to look back on the birding accomplishments of the 1970's. A new crop of sharp young birders has arisen: They have developed field identification into an art and high science, using their ears, as well as their eyes, to an extent scarcely known ten years ago. Intensive coverage of traditional birding areas and the discovery of exciting new ones have expanded our birding horizons. The result of all this is a much better knowledge of bird distribution in our state, with a bonus of the addition of more than twenty-five birds to the California list of over 500 species. And the last fall of the decade showed off the results of this expertise we can be proud of.

The L.A.A.S. Monterey Bay trip of 13 October found most of the expected species, including five **South Polar Skuas**, one or two **New Zealand (Buller's) Shearwaters**, thousands of **storm-petrels** (60% **Black**, 40% **Ashy**), and four species of **alcids** but no albatrosses or white-rumped storm-petrels. Another boat, out the same day, sighted an adult male frigatebird just off Moss Landing. The record, unusual because of the late date and northern locality, is of special interest because two experienced observers (Rich Stallcup, Alan Baldridge) felt that the brown bar on the upper surface of the wings indicated a **Great Frigatebird** a species unrecorded in the continental U.S. Such a find would complement an already extraordinary list of ultra-rare seabirds found off the central California coast earlier in the fall and summer (**Red-tailed Tropicbird**, **Crested Auklet**, and **Cook's Petrel**).

A whistling-duck in Reseda Park (Charlain Rice, 6 October), which was later identified as a **Black-billed** (or **West Indian**) **Whistling-Duck**, was undoubtedly from the now-abandoned Busch Gardens collection. Lake Sherwood, once known for its **Tufted Duck**, is becoming our best place for truly wild **Wood Ducks**, as evidenced by the presence of three pairs there on 31 October (Bob Van Meter). Nowadays, our **Tufted Duck** spot is Quail Lake southeast of Gorman: A male returned for its second winter on 10 November (Jon Dunn et al.). An immature **Northern Goshawk** was at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley (Guy McCaskie et al., 4 November). **Ferruginous Hawks** returned to the Antelope Valley by 30 September (Kimball Garrett, Fred Heath), but no **Rough-leggeds** have been reported. **Merlins** were seen at the Arcadia Arboretum on 27 October (Barbara Cohen), at Furnace Creek Ranch on 3 November (Larry Sansone et al.), and in the Antelope Valley on 10 November (Jon Dunn; of the pale *richardsoni* race). Population surveys of the **Clapper Rail** at Upper Newport Bay are encouraging, according to Barbara Massey and Charlie Collins.

Shorebirding in October was quite routine, with **Solitary Sandpipers** gone, **Baird's** almost gone, and **Pectorals** still in good numbers early in the month. Four **Black Oystercatchers** along the upper Malibu coast (Hank and Priscilla Brodkin, 30 September) gave us another record for the L.A. Co. coast, where they are rare. A maximum of 15 **Mountain Plovers** (greatly decreased along the coast) were on the Oxnard Plain (Richard Webster) and, locally, two were at Playa del Rey (Arthur Howe, 2 November), and three were on the large field at Cal. State Dominguez Hills in Carson (Jerry Johnson, 2 November). Several flocks were in the Antelope Valley by mid-October. Two **Ruffs** at Harbor Lake on 4 October were a surprise to Arnold Small, who teaches at nearby Harbor College. Four **Parasitic Jaegers** at the Salton Sea in late

October (Guy McCaskie, Lee Jones) was a high count away from the coast. An **Ancient Murrelet** (very rare in southern California) was sighted at Marina del Rey on 8 October by members of the Southwest Bird Study Club according to Bess Hoffman, a longtime member of that group. The **Common Ground-Dove** seen briefly near the student gardens at Harbor College (Fred Heath, 28 October) was the third report in L.A. Co. within a year (there are old records for near the L.A./Orange Co. line). Another ground-dove was at Furnace Creek Ranch (Richard Webster, Jon Dunn, 23 October). The presence of three more **Broad-billed Hummingbirds**—a female at Gaviota, a male at a Santa Barbara feeder, and one along the lower Colorado River (Sharon Goldwasser)—gives us a total of 14 in the last 4 years (the remaining records are all prior to 1965).

As is often the case, flycatchers were a close second to warblers in birding interest this fall. **Tropical Kingbirds**, as expected, were sparsely scattered along the coast, with one at Big Sycamore Canyon being seen by the L.A.A.S. field trip on 4 October. One or two very late **Western Kingbirds** were with three **Cassin's Kingbirds** near the New Lakes at Whittier Narrows Nature Center on 31 October (Hal Baxter, Shum Suffel). All previous sightings (and there have been very few) of **Great Crested Flycatchers** have been brief, a few minutes to a few hours; but the Great Crested in the Santa Barbara Cemetery (Louis Bevier, 13 October) stayed for two days over the weekend. The first **Eastern Phoebes** of the season (one or two sometimes winter here) were at Scotty's Castle on 4 November (Larry Sansone et al.) and at Afton Canyon, near Barstow on 6 November (Jean Brandt). A late and very secretive **Empidonax Flycatcher** at the Arcadia Arboretum (Barbara Cohen, 3 November) has been identified as a **Willow Flycatcher**, easily the latest record for California (Jon Dunn), it was still present at least as of 30 November, and may even winter. **Gray** and **Western Flycatcher** were also at the Arboretum in early November. Second to the Great Crested in general interest was a **Coues' Flycatcher** near the Merry-Go-Round in Griffith Park (Rolly Throckmorton, 7 November). The Los Angeles Christmas Count compilers, Art and Janet Cupples, are encouraging the bird to settle in for the winter, as previous Coues' have done. A **Common Crow** on the L.A. Kern Co. line in the Antelope Valley on 10 November (Jon Dunn) was at a locale where this "taken-for granted" species had not previously been recorded. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued to be widely reported in October and early November.

The only **Brown Thrasher** was at Willow Hole near Desert Hot Springs (Bob McKernan, 27 October). Two **Sage Thrashers** (scarce along the coast) were present—one at Harbor College for over a week (Arnold Small, 4 October), and another at Big Sycamore Canyon (Sandy Wohlgemuth, 22 October). A few **Red-throated Pipits** were seen in mid-October on the sod farms near Pt. Mugu (Richard Webster) and below San Diego (Guy McCaskie et al.), but the only **Sprague's Pipits** were at Furnace Creek Ranch (Richard Webster, 2 October and Jon Dunn, 23 October). As would be expected, the first report of **Northern Shrike** came from east of the mountains, in Death Valley, on 3 November (Jon Dunn).

The first three weeks of October belonged to the warblers, with more than 35 species seen in the state this fall. A small storm on the twentieth of October sent all but a few of the stragglers on their way. Not a warbler, of course, but part of

the same movement, was a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Shoshone, Inyo Co., (Richard Webster, Jon Dunn, 22-23 October). There were very few reports of **Black-and-White Warblers** this fall; one was in the alders at Westchester Park on 10 October (Arthur Howe). One of our rarest warblers, the **Golden-winged**, was only reported from the northwest corner of the state near Eureka (Paul Springer et al, 8 October). The tailless **Prothonotary** on Bonsall Rd., Zuma Beach, stayed well into October, and another (the fifth this fall) was at Furnace Creek Ranch (Richard Webster and Jon Dunn, 23 October). **Tennessees** were widely reported, particularly in flowering Eucalyptus trees where they occasionally stay into winter. A very late **Lucy's Warbler** (rare anytime coastally) was in the UCLA Botanical Gardens after 5 November (Kimball Garrett, et al). The only **Parula** was a male at Pt. Fermin Park for a week or more after 14 October (Mitch Heindel).

Two **Magnolias** were seen on 4 October—one at Harbor Lake (Brian Daniels) and one at Upland, San Bernardino Co. (Henry Childs). A **Cape May Warbler** was photographed at Finney Lake near the Salton Sea on 1 November (Kurt Campbell). There were more **Black-throated Green** reports than normal locally—a male at Tapia Park for about a week (Greg Homel et al, 3 October); an adult male in the willows at the north side of Harbor Lake (Mitch Heindel et al, 7 October); an immature male in the willow clump on the west side of Harbor Lake (Terry Clark and Donna Dittmann, 19-24 October); a female at Palmdale Reservoir (Jon Dunn, 20 October); and a female at Avalon, Santa Catalina I. (Kimball Garrett and Tricia Glatt, 8 November). A male **Black-throated Blue** was found at the entrance to Big Sycamore Canyon (Brian Daniels, 6 October), another was at Gaviota Beach the next day, one was at Barker Dam in Joshua Tree National Monument (Lee Jones, 7 November), and at least three were in the Inyo/Mono region in mid-October. One of California's rarest warblers, a **Cerulean**, delighted Don Roberson in the Carmel River Channel, Monterey Co., on 25 October. The only report of a **Yellow-throated Warbler** comes from Gaviota on 24 October. A female-plumaged **Blackburnian** was in the giant maple tree at Long Beach Recreation Park on 4 October (Brian Daniels et al). The immature **Chestnut-sided Warbler** found by Mitch Heindel on 14 October at Harbor Lake was found dead a few days later by Arthur Howe. Another **Chestnut-sided** was in the Antelope Valley, 7-10 October (Terry Clark and Donna Dittmann), and a third was at Gaviota on 6 October (Donna Dittmann). At least 3 dozen **Blackpols** were reported along the coast, with the nearest being 4-5 at Harbor Lake in mid-October. Jerry and Laurette Maisel discovered a **Pine Warbler** at Gaviota on 15 October; it was independently found the same day by Louis Bevier and Larry Ballard. Also at Gaviota Jerry Johnson found a dull **Prairie Warbler** on 1 October.

When one considers that there were only a few southern California records of **Palm Warbler** prior to the 1960s, the dozens reported this fall seem staggering (up to 15 were present at once at Gaviota in mid-October). Locally, one was at Harbor Lake (Pam Oetzel, 20 October), another was in Jerry Johnson's apartment complex in Marina del Rey (26 October), and a third was at the South Coast Botanical Gardens (Arthur Howe, 4 November). These numbers are now expected, and reflect the intensive fall coverage our coast now receives. A very rare **Kentucky** stayed for part of a day below San Diego (Dick Smith, 24 October). A female **Hooded Warbler** near Harbor College (Arnold Small, 11 October) could not be relocated the next day. There were three reports of **Canadas**—one at Harbor Lake (Mitch Heindel, 14 October), another at Gaviota (Paul Lehman, 25 October), and an unusual interior record at Thousand Palms Oasis (Bob McKernan, 27 October). **American Redstarts** were widely reported, the latest

being at Harbor Lake on 21 October (Cliff Pollard). A **Painted Redstart** was at the South Coast Botanical Gardens 13-14 October (Jerry Johnson).

**Rusty Blackbirds** were seen near Baker and in Afton Canyon, San Bernardino Co. (Jean Brandt, 5 November) where they are more or less expected; one was on the lawn at Van Nuys High School after 31 October (Greg Homel et al), where they are not expected! Few unusual orioles were reported, although the UCLA Botanical Garden did host an **Orchard** and a **Baltimore** (along with a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Indigo Bunting**) in mid-October (Kimball Garrett). Another **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Big Sycamore Canyon on 1 October (Kurt Campbell), and there were scattered reports elsewhere. A **Dickcissel** at Furnace Creek Ranch on 3 November (Guy McCaskie et al) was the latest report for this species. **Pine Siskins** were scattered widely through the lowlands in October and early November, with a good winter for them shaping up.

Two **Lark Buntings** were along the road to the Oso Pump Station in the western Antelope Valley on 10-11 November (Jon Dunn et al), providing one of the few Los Angeles Co. records. One or two **Gray-headed Juncos** were in the newly-arrived junco flocks in the Oak Canyon Nature Center near Anaheim (Henry Childs et al, 16 October), at the Pt. Loma Cemetery (28 October), and in Tapia Park (the Brodkins, 29 October). **Clay-colored Sparrows** were reported at Pt. Loma, in Death Valley, at Gaviota, and, most recently, in a large flock of **White-crowned Sparrows** in Mt. Sinai Cemetery near Burbank (two on 8 November, Jon Dunn). **Tree Sparrows** and **Swamp Sparrows** were found on the northern deserts, but neither species has been reported along the coast this fall. Likewise, **Chestnut-collared** and **Lapland Longspurs** were noted in the deserts, but our local "Longspur haven" at Cal State Dominguez Hills failed to produce this year.

The foregoing compendium of noteworthy birds (far from complete) has exhausted my patience, my space, and I'm sure my editor and probably my readers. Here's to the 1980s!!!□

#### SNOWY PLOVER SURVEYORS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to survey Snowy Plovers in coastal Southern California during the next six months. The Snowy Plover has declined in numbers recently and is considered a "species of special concern." Here is your chance to make a worthy contribution to the conservation effort while enjoying the birds! If you would like to contribute to the welfare of this fascinating bird please call Nancy Spear collect at (213) 372-7653.

#### MONO LAKE FUND

**Mono Lake T-Shirts** can be purchased from Joe Zell, 837-8200, in blue or beige—\$7.50, woman's; \$6.50, man's; \$5.50 child's. Proceeds go to the Mono Lake Legal Fund.

The Mono Lake Committee has prepared an excellent **slide show on Mono Lake** which is now available for presentation to any interested organization. For more information call Tom Cassidy, Mono Lake Committee representative, (213) 838-4909.

# Kimball Garrett

## A CLOSER LOOK

**A**n abundant and familiar wintering bird through most of southern California, the **White-crowned Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) actually shows a rather complex distribution in the region, with each of its four local subspecies having a unique seasonal role. This month we'll work on the recognition of these subspecies, with the usual admonition that intergradation and intra-population variation render a large number of individuals unassignable to race in the field even in the most well-marked forms.

*Z. l. gambelii* (the "Gambel's White-crowned") is the common wintering White-crown in the region, arriving in mid- to late-September (exceptionally in early September) and becoming quite abundant by the second week of October. A few *gambelii* may linger through mid-May, but this race summers in subarctic western North America.

*Z. l. pugetensis* (the "Puget Sound White-crown") is also strictly a winter visitor in the region, but it appears to be restricted to the coastal slope—mostly in the northern counties. It is probably overlooked because of its similarity to *gambelii* and especially, to the next race.

*Z. l. nuttallii* (the "Nuttall's White-crown") is a permanent resident along the immediate coastal strip from Pt. Conception north (it has nested as far south as Goleta); within its range it can be quite common. Its whistled song is a familiar sound, for example, at Morro Bay (look for the birds hopping around the base of Morro Rock), just as it is in downtown San Francisco.

*Z. l. oriantha* (the "Mountain White-crowned") breeds at or above timberline in the mountains of western North America. It has long been known to nest in the Sierra Nevada and the White Mountains, and a small breeding population was discovered around Mt. San Gorgonio in the San Bernardino Mtns. in the 1950s. The migration of this race is mostly through the deserts; spring migrants are usually noted in May, when the majority of *gambelii* individuals have departed. Only a few winter records exist, and these are generally from the south-eastern part of the region.

Nominate *Z. l. leucophrys* of Eastern North America has not been recorded in California, but its occurrence seems likely in light of the California occurrence of other birds with similar ranges. Nominate *leucophrys* cannot be told in the field from *oriantha*.

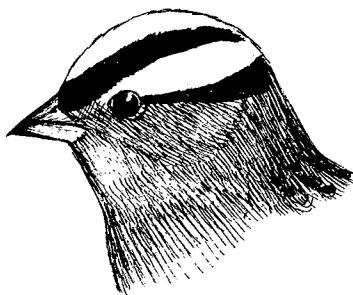
**T**he following identification discussion deals only with adult birds. Young birds in their first fall and winter have the black and white crown stripes replaced by brown and buff. A molt of body feathers replaces these stripes with the adult pattern early in their first spring. Subspecific determination of immature birds in the field should not be attempted.

*Oriantha* is easily separated from other California races by its *black lores*. This pattern gives the race what Phillips (*Birds of Arizona*, 1964) calls an "imperious mien." The bill of *oriantha* averages somewhat larger than that of *gambelii*, and tends to be pinker (less orange). In *oriantha*, the white crown stripes often look quite broad and flared.

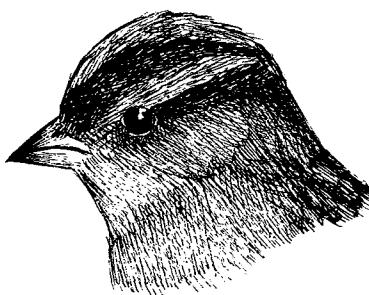
Our common race, *gambelii*, is quite gray like *oriantha*. However, it and the following races have *white lores*. This field mark should be noted carefully since its perception may depend on the arrangement of the facial feathers and on shadow.

The remaining races, *nuttallii* and *pugetensis*, cannot be told from each other in the field. They are both considerably browner than *gambelii*, being tinged on the breast, sides, back, and nape with this color. They also have brighter and more extensively brown flanks than does *gambelii*. Both *nuttallii* and *pugetensis* have a yellow carpal (bend-of-the-wing) area; this area is whitish in *gambelii* (but exceedingly difficult to see in the field). The beaks of *nuttallii* and *pugetensis* adults are yellowish (with the black tip characteristic of all races). Bill color is a poor mark on immature birds.

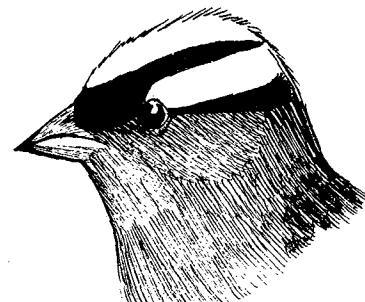
Since White-crowned Sparrows routinely sing on their winter grounds, song can be an important clue in distinguishing wintering *gambelii* and *pugetensis*. The lazy, buzzy songs (without clear whistled trills) that are so familiar in winter throughout southern California belong to *gambelii*. Clearly different are the sweeter trilled songs of *nuttallii* and *pugetensis*. Practice learning the songs of *nuttallii* along the central California coast in summer; *pugetensis* will sound similar, but again remember that most populations have their own unique dialects. And beware another complication: A White-crown on its winter grounds may learn the songs of resident White-crowns, and vice versa! Nevertheless, the best way to distinguish wintering *pugetensis* in southern California is by the *nuttallii*-like song. □



*gambelii* (*nuttallii* & *pugetensis* are similar)



immature (all spp. are similar)



*oriantha* (*leucophrys* is similar)

### White-crowned Sparrows

## Jean Brandt

# PRESIDENT'S PAGE

**D**r. Russell Peterson, President of the National Audubon Society came to California to meet with local Audubon Chapters and to learn first hand our goals and interests. His trip coincided with the release of the Three Mile Island Commission Report and, as he was one of the members of that commission, he was able to share with us his concerns about nuclear energy which he called "a major negative cumulative impact on life all over the world."

Given the complexity of a nuclear plant and human fallability, "accidents" are going to happen. At Three Mile Island, for instance, we were only 45 minutes away from a major meltdown of the reactor core and for these reasons Audubon will oppose any new nuclear development. There is only one nuclear reactor which can save us: The SUN! Solar energy is free and decentralized.

Dr. Peterson stressed that Audubon should build on its reputation of being the voice of reason. With 436 chapters, representing 600,000 members, we have a great potential to educate and inform the people and put pressure on elected officials.

The quality of life and the systems that support life are the main concerns of the National Audubon Society. Conservation of all natural resources must be emphasized. The immediate development of solar energy systems must take priority over nuclear and synfuel projects.

Dr. Peterson also spoke of National Audubon's support of the California Condor Recovery Plan and the Preservation of Mono Lake. He said that there is an interconnection between birds and all life and that birds are a good indicator of what affects life's support systems.

Those of us who heard Dr. Peterson speak, came home inspired and enthusiastic about the directions that the national organization is taking. We thank you, Dr. Peterson, and we will do our share to support your goals!



## WESTERN TANAGER

EDITOR Lee Jones

ASSISTANT EDITOR Teri Eichholz

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 1st VICE-PRESIDENT Kimball Garrett  
 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT Fred Heath  
 EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Carol Friedman

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 \$6.00 per year (Third Class), or \$9.00 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

**A**t the February 1979 meeting of the LAAS Board of Directors it was moved, seconded and carried that we become a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power over the use of Mono Lake water. It seemed appropriate that the L.A. Chapter should represent Southern California in this matter since "Los Angeles uses the water," regardless of the fact that other local chapters are equally involved. The other plaintiffs are the National Audubon Society and the Mono Lake Committee.

Subsequently, it developed that our third of the financial responsibility would be up to, but not exceeding, \$10,000.00! The law firm handling the suit is donating \$250,000.00 of legal time and expertise but direct costs are to be paid by the plaintiffs.

Fund raising would become a necessity unless "something happened" and lo and behold, it did! Along came Bird-a-thon. Whereas the monies collected by every other Audubon Chapter in the Western Regional area would go to National Audubon to be divided between Mono Lake and the California Condor Recovery Plan, we were able to gain the commitment from National that the monies raised by LAAS would go towards our share of the costs of the lawsuit.

By the time you read this, Bird-a-thon will be past history. Let's hope that everyone participated and that we made our \$10,000.00! We'll let you know where we stand next month.

□

## AUDUBON WORKSHOP SCHOLARSHIPS

Letters of application for the 1980 Audubon Workshop of the West (see last month's *Western Tanager*) are due no later than January 15th. State Park ranger Donna Gazzaniga says of last summer's workshop, "I will remember and cherish my time at Audubon Camp for the rest of my life, and am trying to figure out how I can make it to the Maine camp next summer!"

The National Audubon Society's Western Education Center will sponsor a symposium, BIRDS OF MEXICO: THEIR ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION on Saturday, February 23, 1980, at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.

Speakers for the day-long program include Alexander Sprunt, IV, Director of the National Audubon Society's Research Department; Eugene Knoder, Director of the Society's Western Environmental Science Program; Dr. Clyde Jones, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Denver Wildlife Research Center; Dr. Laurence Binford, Chairman of the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy at the California Academy of Sciences; Dr. Daniel Anderson, Professor of Wildlife and Fisheries Biology at the University of California at Davis; and representatives of the government of Mexico and the National University of Mexico.

Admission to the symposium will be by *advance registration only*. For tickets, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and your check, made payable to the National Audubon Society, for \$4.50 per person, to BIRDS, Western Education Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, CA 94920.

# 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 Reports:

Los Angeles 213-874-1318  
Santa Barbara 805-964-8240

#### Pelagic Trip Reservations

To make reservations for 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 2 weeks 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. If you wish to carpool, please so indicate, and you will be contacted two weeks prior to the trip. There should be a separate check for each trip.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 6—Morro Bay Pelagic Trip.** Departure at 7:30 a.m. from Virg's Landing at 1215 Embarcadero, Morro Bay; return at 3:00 p.m. There are 43 spaces available. Price: \$20/person. Leaders: Bruce Broadbooks and Jon Dunn.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 8—Evening Meeting,** 8:00 p.m. Plummer Park. **Dr. Luis Baptista** will tell us about his fascinating studies on song dialects and mate-selection in the White-crowned Sparrow. Dr. Baptista is a biology professor at Occidental College.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 19—Beginner's Trip to Playa del Rey.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Ballona Creek bridge at the north end of Pacific Ave. (reached via Culver Blvd.). Basic birding techniques will be stressed. Leaders: Bob and Roberta Shanman, 545-2867 (after 6:00 p.m.).

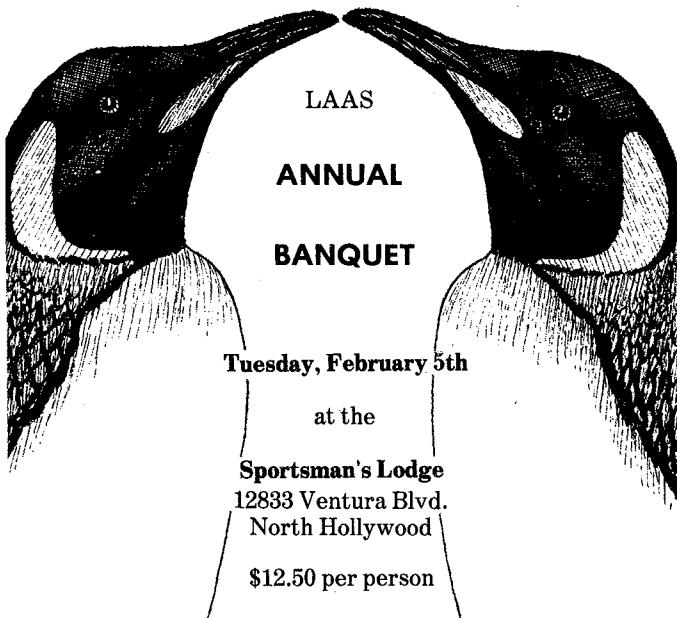
**THURSDAY, JANUARY 24—Gull Identification Workshop** at Malibu Lagoon with Jon Dunn. Limited to 20 people. Make reservations at Audubon House, 876-0202.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16—Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip.** Departure at 8:00 a.m. aboard the *Miss Monterey* from Sam's Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey, returning at 3:00 p.m.; 38 places available. Price: \$18/person. Leaders: Arnold Small and Shum Suffel.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 27—Pelagic Trip to Santa Cruz Island.** Departure 7:30 a.m. aboard the *Sunfish* from Island Packers Dock, Ventura; return at 5:30 p.m. There are 30 places available. Price: \$20/person. Leaders: Ken Wiley, Shum Suffel, and Phil Sayre.

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles, California 90046

Miss Ruth M. Price  
20932 Balgair Circle  
Huntington Beach, Calif. 92646



Well-known bird photographer Arnold Small will give a slide presentation entitled **Birds and Beasts from the Bottom of the World**.

To make reservations send your check, payable to Los Angeles Audubon to LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

#### A necessary luxury?

For the past year and a half, the staff at Audubon House has enjoyed the use of a donated copying machine. What started out as a luxury quickly became a real necessity!

Now our machine has become obsolete and therefore difficult and uneconomical to repair as it is breaking down more and more frequently. With our current expenses, a new machine is an impossible dream.

Is there an "angel" in the society who could donate a new or used machine to our office? It would be 100% tax deductible and you would really be helping your society!

#### No More Discounts

The Los Angeles Audubon Society regretfully announces that effective January 1, 1980, the 10% discount to members and *Western Tanager* subscribers on purchases from the bookstore will be discontinued because of rising costs.

We hope to warrant your continued patronage as all profits of the bookstore help support the aims and activities of your Society.

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