

WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 47 Number 4 December 1980

Birding in Nearer Baja

by Gene Anderson
and Dexter Kelly



photographs by Herb Clarke

BAJA CALIFORNIA holds a mythical quality for Alta Californians. We think of it as a vast realm accessible only to the hardy few who own four-wheel vehicles, can repair them anywhere, and can afford to take off days or even weeks to drive thousands of miles on goat trails. Thus we tend to avoid the whole area.

Certainly, Baja can be wild. Though hardly a virgin wilderness, there are still vast stretches of undeveloped land even within an hour's drive of the border. A day in Baja is like a journey into the past; you can see what California must have looked like a hundred years ago. Even near the coast, the most thickly settled part, there is still plenty of open country, especially on top of the big coastal mesas, where grasslands stretch for miles without a house in sight. Most of this sort of countryside disappeared decades ago in Southern California. In Baja, these plains buzz with Grasshopper Sparrows in the spring dawn, while in the riparian woodland in the intervening canyons, Bell's Vireos are still easy to find — to mention only two of the birds that are all but gone from our area.

In short, there's plenty of excellent birding in Baja within fifty miles of the border, accessible by excellent roads. All that we describe here can be reached in a single day, most in half a day, even with cars as feeble, fragile and nonversatile as ours.

Start a Mexican List!

Once in Baja, you face the choice of going after life birds or just plain good birding, with the chance of augmenting a Mexican list if you keep one. The first option leads you on a simple trip — if you've seen all the regular California things, there's only one "lifer" in Northern Baja to seek: the Grey Thrasher. It is a bird of the succulent desert, and it becomes common with striking suddenness when you get to the mixed agave-cactus-desert scrub habitat which extends in a narrow band up the coast to Colónet. North of Colónet, the Thrasher does not occur; from there on south, it abounds and is quite tame. One especially good place to look for it is the area around the junction of Highway 1 and the road to San Telmo and the Observatory, about five miles south of Colónet.

The second option is more fun. Keeping a Mexican list can be especially enjoyable because suddenly all the old California "trash birds" such as Lawrence's Goldfinch and American Crow become exciting rarities to be diligently sought for. We need these reminders that all birds are worth watching, however common they may seem in one given area. A vast number of such California standards occur in Mexico only in the relatively tiny extension of typical California habitat into Baja — along the coast to Colónet and in the mountains to the San Pedro Martir range. Some surprising gaps are found in the Mexico list — Downy Woodpecker, for example — that surely could be filled by diligent birding in northern Baja.

You usually cross the border at Tijuana, which is an ornithological wasteland. (The Spotted Dove has not been found in Mexico, although it may well turn up — it gets as far as San Ysidro, almost on the border.) There is some fair birding southeast of town up the Tijuana River, especially around Presa Rodríguez, a huge reservoir that is usually almost barren, but harbors numbers of waterfowl in migration periods.



Black-chinned Hummingbird

Birding South of Tijuana

Once out of the Tijuana area, it is easiest to follow the toll road (*cuota* = toll), a modern, high-speed highway, southward. Follow signs for *Ensenada cuota*. The following locations are good:

1) **The sea points between Tijuana and Ensenada.** Once you leave the city, get off at the first exit — marked *playas* (beaches). The beaches furthest north give good views back over the border to the Tijuana Rivermouth marsh. Especially during migration, sea birds pass: jaegers, Red-throated Loons, Brant and White-winged Scoters are among birds you won't easily find elsewhere in Mexico. The points most used by fishermen are worth special attention; rocky shores have the usual shorebirds: both turnstones, Surf-birds, Wandering Tattlers.

2) **Rio Descanso.** This is *by far* the best single birding spot we know in Baja. The river is a small one, draining the nearby hills and ending in a marshy lagoon. The whole area is very much like Malibu Creek must have been before it was developed; the birding is much better than at Malibu Creek. Get off the toll road at Cantamar and follow the free road (*Ensenada libre*) to the *rio* — the first big bridge after Cantamar (one mile), with cattail swamp, willows and sand dunes evident. The highway crosses at the approximate boundary between a marine lagoon and a freshwater riparian habitat. On the lagoon, we have found such Baja rarities as Blue-winged Teal, Greater Scaup and Herring Gull. Up river in the farming country are all the expected resident and migrant birds, including the regular hummingbirds, the American Crow (this is one of the few places in Mexico where it occurs), all the goldfinches and the regular sparrows.

Most exciting is the large willow thicket just east of the bridge. Black-chinned Hummingbirds breed, as do Chats, Bell's Vireos and many riparian species. Wintering birds include not only rarities for Mexico like the Golden-crowned Sparrow and the Red-shouldered Hawk but such rarities anywhere on the Coast as the Black-throated Green Warbler (watched for two hours in December 1979 and very possibly the same bird that turned up in San Diego just after this). An American Redstart (adult male) and a Townsend's Warbler spent the entire winter of 1979-80 there. Black-and-white Warblers wintered and migrated through. Almost anything can turn up here!

The beach and marsh at El Descanso can be reached by trails which lead off from the north end of the bridge. Narrow, rough but passable dirt roads lead through the farming country on both sides of the river. The southern road was washed out by last winter's floods and may not as yet be repaired. If it is still out, just drive as far as you can (a little beyond the tunnel under the *cuota* road), park and walk in. Good birding starts immediately. The area is thickly settled, but no one seemed to mind us poking around the willow thickets, as long as we didn't get too close to the houses or bother the livestock.

You have to go back to Cantamar to get back on the *cuota* road. A few miles south of El Descanso, a paved road leads off the *cuota*, ending up by the willow thicket on the south side of the Rio Descanso. If you absolutely *must* drive to the willows, you may take this road. But beware of what must be the world's biggest speed bump set in the road as it passes through the main part of the dairy farm. Anyone with a compact car is sure to scrape bottom with this one, so just coast over it. Some meager compensation for this ordeal may be found further along the road where Grasshopper Sparrows nest in the meadows.

3) **Further south of El Descanso.** The *cuota* crosses a fine salt marsh, the mouth of the Rio San Miguel, and soon comes to another one, La Salina. Both are good for shorebirds and ducks. Some oddities can occur, such as a Common Goldeneye in a tiny roadside pond near La Salina.

4) **An alternate route.** Stay on the old highway, the *libre* road, which turns inland along the Rio San Miguel and then cuts across high, grassy meadows. Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagle can be seen, especially in fall migration. Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Rock Wrens and other birds of dry scrubby habitats abound in the slope areas. The high grasslands have breeding Grasshopper Sparrows and Lawrence's Goldfinches in lush areas (which may vary from year to year). Bell's Vireo occur along streams.

5) **Ensenada.** Ensenada is a large town with a fine harbor. The mouth of Arroyo de Ensenada is found roughly in the center of town, and has a regular halo of gulls, ducks and herons feeding where it enters the harbor. In winter, a raft of scoters (about half White-winged) floats just offshore. Small fishing boats can be chartered for a trip around the harbor, but unless you bargain you'll be charged a high fee. A couple of hours chasing birds in winter should (or can) produce such Baja rarities as Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser and Glaucous-winged Gull. Black-crowned Night Herons appear at the arroyo mouth and are surprisingly difficult to find elsewhere in Baja.

6) **South of Ensenada.** On the city's outskirts are small ponds in dairy-farming and mixed farming country. These look inconsequential, but support colonies of Tricolored Blackbirds and in migration house Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper, American Golden Plover, White-faced Ibis and much more.

7) **La Bufadora.** At Maneadero, a road turns off the main highway and heads to La Bufadora. To proceed south beyond this checkpoint you need a tourist card, which can be purchased there but for which a passport or other proofs of citizenship are required. You can go as far as La Bufadora without any documents at all.

The Bufadora road first passes through excellent landbirding country (orchards and farms: Cassin's Kingbird, Ground Dove and White-tailed Kite are common residents), and then reaches the vast *estero* that makes up the southern part of Ensenada's large bay (Bahia de Todos Santos). All the regular salt-marsh and bay birds occur here; you can occasionally find Ospreys and Tricolored Heron. Clapper Rails occur at least seasonally.



Savannah Sparrow

La Bufadora is a small town based on the tourist industry — tourists come to the blowhole that gives the place its name. Black Oystercatchers are common permanent residents on the rocks. The hill slopes above town are good semidesert habitat, with yucca, agave, cactus and sage scrub. In migration, a range of desert and lowland species occurs; the town lies on a long rocky point that serves as a migrant trap.

8) **Santo Tomas.** About one hour south of the Maneadero check station is the little wine-manufacturing town of Santo Thomas. At the end of town, stop for beer and souvenirs in a little store on the right, and then walk down the slope on the other side of the highway to the eery ruins of a Tennessee Williams-like resort around which willows and thickets of other trees should provide a good migrant trap. You can sit here unbothered (by an empty swimming pool which cautions against nude bathing) for hours.



Abert's Towhee

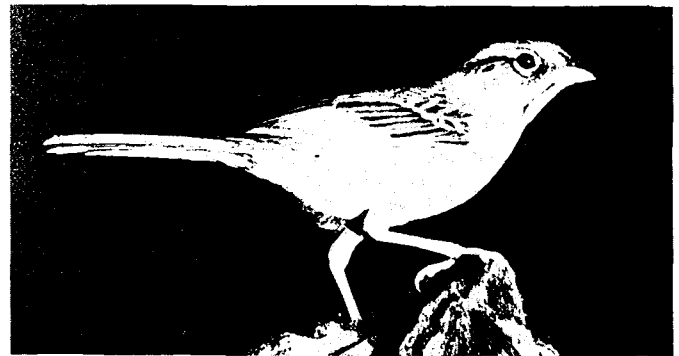
9) **San Quintin.** The next really good place to stop is San Quintin whose bay is famous as the main wintering grounds for the Pacific Coast's Brant, and also as a breeding station for Large-billed Savannah Sparrow and provided — at least in the good old days — the Black Rail. Any reasonable salt-marsh and bay bird can be expected here. Just north of San Quintin at Laguna Figueroa, you will find nesting Avocets and Snowy Plovers. There are accommodations right on the bay at motels that cater almost exclusively to Brant hunters. Anything south of San Quintin is too far to be included here.

10) **An alternate route.** Out of Ensenada you can head eastward toward San Felipe on the Gulf of California. The road up through the hills east of town is excellent for birds of oak and chaparral country. Past the summit, the road enters a huge grass plain centered on the village of Ojos Negros. Ponds and brushy places are worth checking in winter and migration periods for such birds as Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrasher. Past this plain, the country begins to shade into desert; Ladder-backed Woodpeckers enter the picture. The full trip to San Felipe is too far afield for this coverage, but makes a nice side trip. (*Editor's Note:* Although I would not hesitate to travel to any of the locations mentioned thus far on my own, and even spend several days there alone, I have been cautioned by locals that women alone or even in groups should not attempt the cross-country drives to San Felipe or Tecate without a man along.)

11) **Tecate road.** Yet another way out of Ensenada is back across the hills directly to Tecate. This road is virtually a total loss for birdwatchers; the country is dry and almost always burned over annually. Tecate itself is situated in better country — pleasant farmland with oak woods, riparian habitat, grass and chaparral. Common California oak-country species like Nuttall's Woodpecker can be found here and are surprisingly difficult to find further south.

12) **To Mexicali.** A good highway goes over the mountains from Tecate to Mexicali. This road runs through dry chaparral country, but a few groves of the rare and local Parry or Four-leaf Pinyon occur and these attract some montane migrants and winterers. The first good birding you reach, however, may well be Laguna Salada, reached by a well-marked turnoff in the midst of the desert just west of Mexicali. This vast salt-flat is usually dry, but after the unprecedented wet winters of the last few years it was full, and in the spring of 1980 we were treated to the improbable spectacle of a large flock of Brant on it — a goose almost never found inland, on a lake that almost never has water!

13) **Mexicali.** Probably the best area here is the golf course (Club Deportivo Camestre) and environs, south of the town. (*Deportivo* means "for sports" not "for deportation".) The commoner desert and oasis birds such as Verdin, Abert Towhee, Bur-



Rufous-crowned Sparrow

rowing Owl and Phainopepla are common. Water birds occur, especially in migration, on the New River which runs along the north side of the Club. The area is a natural migrant trap and anything can turn up!

Considerations of Survival

1) **Car cares.** The Auto Club of Southern California's Baja California map is almost an absolute necessity. Their guidebook to Baja is good. You can also buy Mexican auto insurance, which is *absolutely* necessary (with no alms), cheaper and easier through them than at the border, although the border agencies are good and also offer maps and other services.

Regular gas is cheap and easily available in Baja; unleaded gas is not. The big towns have it, but in Ensenada and south of there they often run out of it.

The roads described here are, by intention, those easiest to travel. Once off a main road you take your chances. In the last couple of years, unprecedented floods have made even the main roads somewhat chancy in spots, but this is unusual. Road repair is slow so a road that was out six months ago is probably still out.

2) **Language.** Some Spanish helps greatly, but in the areas described here it is not necessary. The people are helpful and friendly and are always polite even when you are trespassing on their farms. Of course their rights and sensibilities must be respected.

3) **Lodging.** Motels are readily available except on the busiest week-ends, and they are of good to very good quality. English is spoken almost everywhere in motels. They are not especially cheap. Camping for a fee is possible in several places mentioned in the Auto Club guide. ☺

Research in Review

by Kimball Garrett

IN DETAILING ornithological research being conducted in Southern California, this series benefits from the quality and quantity of local institutions which sponsor bird research. But this month we'll forsake the universities and museums to throw a fitting spotlight upon the hundreds of WESTERN Tanager readers who make up the local Christmas-counting corps.

Readers are familiar with the humble beginnings and phenomenal growth of the Christmas Bird Count, a mass-censusing endeavor sponsored by the National Audubon Society. Last winter (1979-1980), 1296 counts were conducted in North America north of the Mexican border (with several additional Middle American counts). Apart from the fun, challenge and competition, what has this passionate expenditure of energy and time done for us? I would like to briefly discuss a few approaches to using Christmas Count data, and then take a detailed look at last year's count on a very local (Los Angeles County) scale.

The Christmas Bird Count is perhaps the sloppiest bird censusing technique ever devised. Misidentifications and woefully inaccurate estimates of numbers abound; the standardization factor for effort (number of party-hours) is shaky. And because a given count is a one-day effort, conditions are scarcely repeatable from year to year. But many ornithologists have shown that, in its clumsiness, the Christmas Bird Count can give us a wealth of important, analyzable data. So many data points are amassed that the inevitable errors and inaccuracies become insignificant. A perusal of recent July issues of *American Birds* (the "Christmas Count Issue") will show how count data have been used to map mid-winter ranges of many species (with relative densities shown), to document population trends and to analyze irruptions of species such as crossbills, redpolls and Lewis' Woodpeckers.

One recent worker has even made the competition bias of Christmas Counts work for him. In studying population trends of Barn Owls, he reasons that every count has a policy of finding the maximum possible number of species. If a Barn Owl is present, every effort will be devoted to count it. But once one is found, little effort will be devoted to increasing the number of individuals counted. Therefore, the researcher used a simple presence or absence criterion and analyzed trends in terms of percent of counts (by state) reporting the species. So, however "impure", Christmas Counts will always provide bird population researchers with a lot of work and a lot of results.

I have done some simple analyses of the nine Christmas Counts conducted within Los Angeles County during winter 1979-1980. The counts include two on the desert slope of the county (Lancaster, Grass Mountain), three landlocked ones on the coastal slope (Claremont, Pasadena and San Fernando Valley), three coastal ones (Los Angeles, Malibu and Palos Verdes Peninsula), and one entirely pelagic one (Santa Monica Bay). Three hundred and fifty observers (with some repeats) took part in these counts. Let's look at some simple information provided by these counts.

- A total of 253 species showed up on the LA Co. counts (I would question the validity of about seven of these).
- The total number of individual birds? 207,605; this is an average of 25,123 birds per mainland count (range of 10,641 on the Claremont count to 47,153 on the Lancaster count).

- A total of 784 party-hours worth of count effort was made (an average of 97 party-hours per mainland count, ranging from 22 on the Grass Mtn. count to 247.5 on the Malibu count).
- An average of 128 species per count was found; this ranged from 96 species on the Grass Mtn. count and 99 species on the Lancaster count to 153 species on the Los Angeles count and 174 species on the Malibu count.
- The Malibu count had the LA Co. high individual totals for 66 species (which is not surprising, considering its unrivaled coverage).
- The most commonly counted species in Los Angeles Co. was ... the Horned Lark (18,677 individuals). This is much to the embarrassment of this writer, who served as co-compiler of the Malibu count ... a count which turned up zero Horned Larks! It should be noted that 17,845 of the larks were on the Lancaster count, and that 99.4% of the individuals were from the desert slope of the county.
- After the Horned Lark, the most commonly counted species were: European Starling (15,720), Yellow-rumped Warbler (12,368; 2% "Myrtle"), House Finch (11,241), White-crowned Sparrow (10,805), Brewer's Blackbird (10,582), California Gull (7832), Red-winged Blackbird (7660), Tricolored Blackbird (5936; 94% from the desert slope of the county), Mourning Dove (5807), Bonaparte's Gull (5581), Rock Dove (5292), American Coot (5180), Northern Shoveler (5086; 77% from Lancaster), and Cedar Waxwing (4336).

Some high counts for North America came from Los Angeles Co. (this information comes from a tabulation in the July 1980 *American Birds*). I would question the accuracy of the reports of two of these species (Pink-footed Shearwater and Black Storm-Petrel). The remaining ten species which appear to be more easily counted in Los Angeles Co. than anywhere else in North America are: Short-tailed Shearwater (three on Santa Monica Bay); Yellow-headed Parrot (11 on the Los Angeles count; doesn't that boost your civic pride?); Allen's Hummingbird (59 on Palos Verdes); Western Flycatcher (one on Pasadena count); Willow Flycatcher (one on Pasadena count; the only winter record for North America!); Holarctic Raven (929 on the Lancaster count; interestingly, this was the only mainland county count to miss Common Crow); LeConte's Thrasher (six on Lancaster count); Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler (5529 on Los Angeles count); Black-throated Gray Warbler (16 on Malibu count); and Hooded Oriole (one on Pasadena count). Unfortunately, Malibu's 923 Brown Towhees was seven shy of the total for the "Brown Towhee Capital of the World" — Oakland.

A few additional tidbits concerning particular groups of birds:

- The only inland loon was a single Common Loon on the Grass Mtn. count.
- An amazing 2540 Canada Geese were counted in the county, with 2224 of these on the San Fernando count.
- Four of the six mainland counts on the coastal slope reported more Cooper's Hawks than Sharp-shinned Hawks, a situation which I feel reflects the inability of many observers to identify these tricky species (Sharpies should predominate).
- All 18 Ferruginous Hawks, 166 Mountain Plovers, and 188 Long-billed Curlews were on the desert part of the county, as expected.
- Our two native doves (Mourning Dove, Band-tailed Pigeon) edged out the introduced species (Rock Dove, Spotted Dove and Ringed Turtle Dove) 6356 to 5710 (although one could reasonably question the accuracy of Rock Dove counts!).
- All 255 Mountain Bluebirds were on the Lancaster count, but this was Lancaster's only thrush!
- LA Co. had ten species of warblers, but four of these (Hermit, Palm, Wilson's, American Redstart) were represented by only one individual.
- 1949 of the 2180 Savannah Sparrows (89.4%) were on the desert slope of the county (mostly in weed fields and alfalfa in the Antelope Valley).

continued on next page

A New Christmas Count -- Lancaster, CA

by Fred Heath



IN MY QUEST to see as many birds as possible in Los Angeles County, I find myself in the Antelope Valley more times than I can count — usually birding the large pond and surrounding marsh in the southwest corner of Edwards Air Force Base. Quite a number of birds that are hard to come by in LA County can be found regularly in the vicinity of this spot.

Because of the unique aspects of this area, a few birders thought systematic coverage might yield meaningful and interesting results. With this in mind, Kimball Garrett and I gathered a crew of ten hardy souls to spread throughout the valley in October 1979 counting the birds. Not only did we have to brave the natural elements — cold rain pelting us most of the morning and 50 mph winds buffeting us in the afternoon — but unnatural ones as well: it was the opening day of duck hunting season. Despite the fact that Kimball named this worthy endeavor *The Last Blast*, we nevertheless found over one hundred species including a Black-throated Green Warbler and a Herring Gull (a first for the Antelope Valley).

Sometime during that miserable day the thought came to me to conduct a Christmas Count. This would limit the area to a more manageable 15-mile diameter circle and provide a consistent format and an outlet for the resulting data. And I did manage to entice eleven friends to cover the 15-mile circle centered on Avenue I between 20th and 30th Street East, just outside Lancaster. The circle was picked to include the lake at Apollo Park, the Lancaster Reclamation Center (sewage ponds), the pond and marsh on Edwards AFB, and as many farm yards as we could squeeze in.

The circle was broken into four sections and maps were distributed to the four leaders; on the day of the count, 15 December, we were to get together for lunch in a small park in Lancaster to compare notes. It wasn't until we actually met that I was sure anyone outside my party of four was diligently searching for birds on that 18°F morning. We quickly tallied our counts and found ourselves at 95 species — close enough to one hundred to make that our goal.

Tom Frillman and I decided to go to the sewage ponds after lunch looking for the Canada Geese we knew were somewhere around and which we had missed during the morning. After searching the


ponds in vain, we almost ran the 15 geese over on our way out. And we were now at 96 species!


Next, we headed off to find a gull — any gull — since our efforts had netted no gulls thus far. Larry Quinn, our Lancaster resident-counter, suggested the local garbage dump. The dump attendant told us it was okay to look for birds, but warned us that the only ones we'd find were crows. Since only one Common Crow has ever been recorded in the Antelope Valley, we were not surprised to find a few hundred Ravens which we carefully counted. But no gulls.

Next, we headed east to check every grove of trees we could for Barn Owls which we had somehow missed; we searched in vain until just before sunset. And as the sun set on the horizon, Tom found a sparrow he couldn't identify. I finally condescended to look at the bird which turned out to be a Tree Sparrow!

We were now at 98 species and it was getting quite dark. Tom noticed another "strange" bird and we changed direction and followed it. We found it and 14 others like it roosting together as darkness finally descended. They were White-tailed Kites, and we were at 99 species for the day.

Although we did not reach our goal of 100 species, we still did quite well. We had three high counts for the country — our 15 Ferruginous Hawks (including one dark-phase bird), our six LeConte's Thrashers (each of the four areas yielded at least one bird) and finally our 929 Ravens. Some of our better finds of the day included 26 Snow Geese, a female Common Goldeneye, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, six Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, a single Verdin (the Antelope Valley being the only place in LA County for the latter two species), an immature Northern Shrike, a Pink-sided Junco and a single McCown's Longspur. Five species of herons and egrets were recorded as well as 16 species of ducks and geese, and 11 species of diurnal raptors, including a Golden Eagle and three Merlins.

After the count, I was kidded because people said I had asked so few people to participate that we should have named the count the Fred Heath Invitational. This year the count is definitely by invitation only, also. But I am hereby inviting all WESTERN Tanager readers to participate. The count is Saturday 20 December. Please be prepared to submit details on any rarities you spot! See you there! 

It is clear that effort and accuracy varied greatly among the counts. For example, Claremont had six species of owls after five party-hours of owling. By contrast, the San Fernando Valley count spent no effort owling and came up with only two (diurnal) Burrowing Owls! Some of the latter count's low totals reflected poor coverage (only 19 Brown Towhees? only four Song Sparrows?). Likewise, I can't believe that only 135 House Finches could be mustered in Pasadena! (In all fairness, it should be pointed out that misprints and typos must account for many odd totals in the Christmas Count compilation issue of *American Birds*.) It seems unlikely that the sea-bird totals on the Santa Monica Bay count are accurate, since in many cases they don't come close to conforming to known distributional patterns. Nevertheless, in the larger picture, all of these data add up to a tremendous treasure for any worker interested in the geographical patterns and population dynamics of North American birds. Keep up the good work, all of you! 

Christmas Count Dates Set

Here are the dates for upcoming Christmas Counts. Don't forget Christmas Counts mean dawn-to-dusk birding plus owling. Meet at Audubon House at noon for your sandwich and for preliminary results. Final results at dinner. To participate, contact people below.

Saturday, 20 December — Antelope Valley Count. Contact Fred Heath (828-6524) for details.

Sunday, 21 December — Malibu Count. Jean Brandt (788-5188) and Kimball Garrett (455-2903) are organizing this count.

Saturday, 3 January 1981 — Santa Barbara Count. Call Paul Lehman (805/967-2450) for information.

Sunday, 4 January — Los Angeles Count. Art and Janet Cupples (981-4746) will organize this count again this year.

Topics of Conservation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

WHAT KIND OF people are conservationists, environmentalists? (These are noble words, but a little tired and over-used. We need a linguistic genius to come forward with a fresh, new word to take their place).

Whatever we're called, we yearn passionately for a world that is relatively undefiled by man. We are convinced — intellectually and emotionally — that the integrity of the web of life, the inter-relatedness of all living things, is in jeopardy today. We believe that Thoreau's astonishing statement in the mid-19th century, "In wildness is the preservation of the world" becomes more relevant with every passing year. Not only our physical health but our very sanity is at stake.

Hence the concern for a wild Alaska, the Peregrine Falcon, the rain forests of Latin America, damming the wild rivers, ORVs in the desert, open space in the city, poisons in the air and water, over-population. We are, for the most part, weak, poor and seemingly powerless compared with those "pragmatists" who oppose us. But we have energy and persistence. And the knowledge that the majority of people do not want to see this country ruined. We have millions of solid, if inarticulate, allies. The evidence is clear: though few in number, we are heard, we make a difference. Environmentalists fight on many fronts. (Sad that the language of conflict seems inevitable.) It is interesting — and dismaying — that when nearly every battle in the war is pursued long enough the forces of conservation crash into a Maginot Line of profits.

We are running out of raw materials. Bottle bills in a few states have demonstrated that mandating returnable containers and outlawing throwaways have saved great quantities of aluminum and glass. Unsightly litter has dramatically decreased. And surprisingly, more jobs have been created than lost. Yet, when a bottle bill rears its fearful head in California, cornucopias of money appear, as if by magic, to defeat it.

A Federal law was passed in 1972 prohibiting the use of the hormone DES (diethylstilbestrol) to fatten cattle. For eight years the cattlemen have been ignoring the law of the land; DES makes steers fatter and, miraculously, does the same for profits. It also may produce cervical cancer in young women. (In the 50's, DES was a common drug used in pregnant women to prevent spontaneous abortion. Twenty or thirty years later, medical investigators saw the unmistakable pattern of cancer in girls whose mothers had taken the drug.)

In Northern California the big lumber companies are clear-cutting thousand-year old coast redwoods, leaving hideous scars on the hillsides. The north coast receives about one hundred inches of rain every year and, where the trees and shrubs once soaked up the torrents of water, now entire watersheds of silt and debris are swept into the creeks, killing the fish and befouling a majestic landscape. When logging is completed, the companies are only too happy to sell their cut-over land to the National Park Service (at generous prices) to add to the patchwork Redwood National Park. The Park Service is now embarked on an expensive, long-term reforestation program.

The multi-billion dollar pesticide industry protects our food and fiber from the assault of voracious insects. It is common knowledge that powerful agricultural poisons kill not only the target insects but beneficial species that prey on the destructive kinds as well. Some of the pests survive. An Unnatural Selection thus occurs with the

more resistant insect strains multiplying and becoming dominant. In addition, with predators and parasites at a low ebb, heretofore minor pests explode in population and become major headaches to the farmer who now finds himself on the "pesticide treadmill": more destructive bugs call for more frequent and more lethal sprayings which eventually produce a new wave of *more* resistant pests. Which demand another round of spraying. And so on, to the greater glory of the purveyors of poison.

Have you ever seen the billboards in the Imperial Valley? They read like Dristan commercials: "Omnitox kills 4-ways . . ." The salesman for the pesticide companies in California passes a simple exam and is certified as a "licensed pest-control adviser." This makes him an instant professional and creates the myth that he is giving competent, objective advice. With salesmen, billboards, television and newspaper ads inundating him the farmer can't get off the treadmill. So pesticides become just another commodity. The more you sell, the more commissions you make and the happier is your company. But this commodity is not a cold remedy. It is poisoning the land and the waters, killing higher forms of life as it passes up the food chain. And the motivation for a less dangerous system of control is not very strong with all those dollars rolling in. Integrated systems utilizing biological controls, scientific monitoring of insect populations and judicious use of pesticides



Toxic Effect

have proved effective and much less expensive. But the big companies with their thousands of products on hand are not about to relinquish a lucrative market.

We could go on and on. The synthetic fuel program that will mine oil-bearing shale in vast expanses of the western states may create another Appalachia. The incredibly expensive Garrison Diversion project in North Dakota that will benefit a handful of farmers will destroy the nesting grounds of millions of birds. The Peripheral Canal that will ensure below-cost water to San Joaquin and Kern County farmers — paid for by urban populations who don't need it. The clever program of General Motors that replaced the efficient, non-polluting Red Cars with GM buses and free-ways to match. The utilities that are less than happy about decentralized solar power that might compete with their sacred monopoly. The chemical companies that dispose of their deadly by-products cheaply in urban dumps and then deny responsibility for poisoned ground-water and epidemic miscarriages. The tobacco industry that maintains its government price supports with the help of friendly subsidized legislators. Like the cattlemen with their DES, the tobacco folks don't really believe that "cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health."

Years ago on a television newscast, for all to see, a man deliberately swallowed several capsules of DDT as if they were his daily ration of vitamins. He was an official of the Montrose Chemical Company in California who was trying to convince us that his product was harmless. I don't know how he's doing today. But the alarming increase in the incidence of cancer has been widely attributed to the accumulation of environmental pollutants. It is fascinating to see to what lengths a person will go in risking his health to defend his source of income.

The ultimate paradox of this tragical, historical, anarchical black comedy is that those who gain by flouting the laws of sanity suffer the same as the powerless. They and their families inhale the smog and asbestos. Their daughters may be victims of cervical cancer. They drink the trichloroethylene in the water. An off-shore blowout oils everyone's beach. Acid rain, like the quality of mercy, is not strained. It droppeth on the place beneath. Equally upon all of us.



his is the way things are. Are we attacking the profit motive or the economic system? No. We are asking for a reasoned examination of the consequences of irresponsible treatment of our world. Capitalism has no monopoly on irresponsible abuse. The Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Sea of Azov are losing their fisheries through pollution (Russians without caviar?). The solution is unclear. As with so many of our dilemmas of the last quarter century we may be required to entertain uncomfortable new attitudes, changes in our thinking, in our lifestyle. Jobs, our standard of living, and the quality of life are at stake. Whether we like it or not we will have to make choices one of these days.

Robert van den Bosch has written: "Nature is emitting signals warning us that under the existing format the future is ominous. She is saying that we cannot continue our attempts to ruthlessly dominate her and that if we persist disaster is in the offing . . . Yes, the voices of Nature are quite easy to hear — if we will only listen. The question is, will we? And if we do, can we overcome our corrupt ways and marshal our efforts to collaborate with Nature as her brightest child and shepherd of Earth's life system?"

The Pesticide Conspiracy. Doubleday.

Massachusetts Audubon Sets Priorities

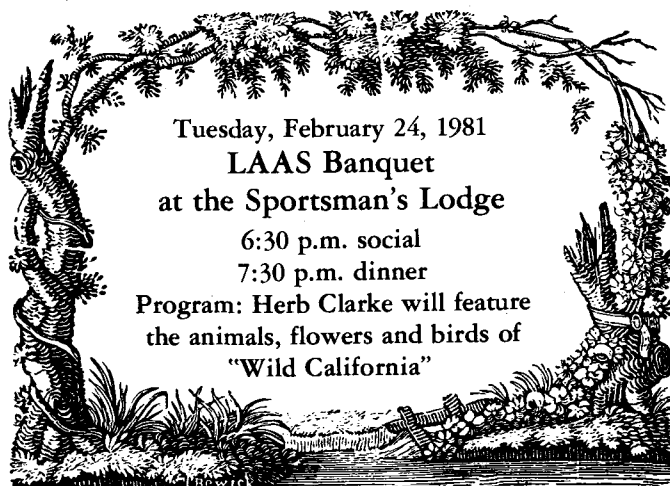
The past decade can be characterized as the learning period in America's progress toward environmental sophistication. We now know that maintaining a healthy and productive environment is a task to challenge our talents and abilities, and governmental agencies, conservation organizations and private citizens each have a role to play. No greater challenge exists than that of preserving the environment for future generations, and with this in mind, the Massachusetts Audubon Society has drafted a list of priority topics for the coming decade.

- to safeguard the quantity and quality of available water by protecting wetland areas, watersheds and wild and scenic rivers;
- to promote research on the effect of toxic substances on aquatic organisms and acid rain;
- to evaluate and protect appropriate ecological communities not represented in other groups' holdings and to continue to seek protection for endangered and threatened species;
- to assist in implementing laws for the conservation of open space and the maintenance of farmland through the tax structure, land use planning and zoning;
- to use sanctuaries, school systems, publications, mass media and special events to bring more understanding of the environment to all;
- to implement national and statewide protection of coastal resources, putting special emphasis on coastal organisms, wildlife, wetlands and education of the public concerning potential effect of an offshore and onshore development of petroleum-related structures;
- to focus on energy conservation and alternative appropriate technology resources.

From the Sanctuary, the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, October 1980.

Treasurer's Report Available

The treasurer of Los Angeles Audubon, Art Cupples, announces that the Financial Report for the past year is now available for review at Audubon House. Please feel free to come in and peruse it during working hours.



A Reliable Source

by Dorothy Dimsdale



NE of the hardest parts about birding is learning that no one is going to believe you when you announce the discovery of a rarity. I am and have been in that position for some time. However it has its lighter side and as the alternative is to bang one's head against a wall, I'm all for taking the bright attitude.

I understand how frustrating it can be; I was phoned at home one day and asked to come identify a baby owl. Without a second thought, I dropped everything and raced over to find that the baby owl was a baby mockingbird. It seemed inconceivable to me that such an obvious mistake could be made, but at least the caller was sincere.

My own position of low standing was brought home to me when Ruth Lohr and I were down at the Salton Sea four years ago. The day had started well with the sighting of an Eastern Kingbird perched on a wire, when to our delight, we discovered a paddling of Fulvous Tree Ducks and among them one Black-bellied Whistling Duck. In a daze of rapture we examined it from prow to stern and back again. Fully satiated, we drove off and I suggested to Ruth that we should phone the LA tape at once with our discovery. Ruth said in all seriousness that while they might believe the Kingbird, they'd never believe the Black-bellied Whistling Duck. I had been birding steadily only a short time and so perhaps disbelief would be understandable in my case, but Ruth has been leaping about the countryside for almost forty years! (I'm glad to say that our discoveries were accepted, but in the excitement we forgot to register our claim to the first sighting of the duck.)

Only recently at Audubon House a long-standing birder who was volunteering to help for the day told me that while on the Gaspé Peninsula this spring she and her husband had found a European Tree Sparrow. However, because there was no one else there to confirm their unusual sighting they had decided not to include it in their count!



ow one achieves true acceptability as a reliable source I don't really know, but there are several methods underway of which I am aware. Ruth, for instance, is a compulsive conversationalist and will prattle happily all day long in between calling birds. Together we argue, misdiagnose, apologize and praise each other in the field. Put her near or next to a super birder and she becomes as silent as a tomb on the theory that if she miscalls a bird she will be remembered as an incompetent. (Though now that she is accepted I've noticed that she has been identifying Song Sparrows and Coots with gay abandon, no matter who is nearby.)

Having misdiagnosed loudly before the most revered birders, I know that what she says may well be true and I must sound utterly bereft of competence. To this day I cringe remembering four years ago in Texas my hot cry of "Hermit Warbler!" which brought a stampede of eager birders only to see a common Black-throated Green.

Perhaps one way to get a foot in the door of acceptance is to indulge in oneupmanship. By learning a few useful phrases you can be ahead at least at the start and then lapse into meaningful silence. For example:




*"Ivory-billed Woodpecker.
No doubt about it."*

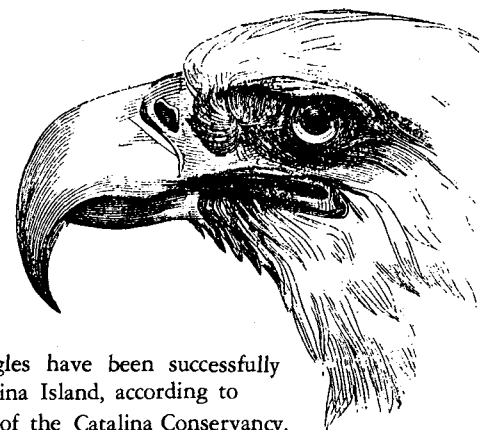
illustration by Roger Tory Peterson

1. Someone points out a Red-tailed Hawk. You say quietly, "I do love the melanistic phase." If it *isn't* melanistic you infer that you'd prefer it if it were. If it *is* melanistic, you are admiring the bird with deep satisfaction.

2. You are at the coast and someone points out a sparrow — any sparrow. You say, "I wonder whether they'll be able to save the *Ammospiza nigrescens*?" Then you rush off and peer earnestly through your binoculars in the opposite direction.

Sometimes I have a dream: I'm in Texas surrounded by Hermit Warblers. Arnold Small and Guy McCaskie are peering at a bird on a tree trunk and they're obviously unsure of the species. They look up as I approach and say, with relief, "Thank goodness you're here. What do you think it is?" I glance quite casually, without the use of my binoculars. "That? Ivory-billed Woodpecker. No doubt about it." 

Six Bald Eagles Alive and Well on Catalina Island



Six American Bald Eagles have been successfully reintroduced onto Catalina Island, according to Doug Propst, president of the Catalina Conservancy.

In an attempt to reestablish a breeding colony of Bald Eagles on the island, an historic habitat for the eagles until the 1940's, six chicks were brought in from the San Juan Islands in Washington in July. The birds were nurtured on three artificial nesting platforms and released at the end of the summer. While on the nesting platforms they were closely observed, in part via closed-circuit television, and now they are being monitored by signals transmitted from small radio units attached to the birds like backpacks.

All the birds are reported alive and healthy; one bird has left the island and has been sighted in the Newport Beach area.

The project, under the stewardship of the Catalina Conservancy, is planned to continue for four more years in order to introduce enough eagles to form a self-sustaining colony breeding on the island. Catalina Island was chosen as the reintroduction site because of its potential for isolation from disturbance and its growing reputation for conservation under the Conservancy.

Bird Texas with Golden Gate

Golden Gate Audubon Society is sponsoring a birding trip to Texas in the spring of 1981. This is a repeat of the popular 1978 GGAS trip which recorded more than 280 species of birds.

This trip will include the lower Rio Grande Valley, the coast, plus an optional trip to Big Bend National Park. The leaders for the trip will be Kenn Kaufman and Mike Wihler. The dates are 18-30 April 1981; the Big Bend extension will last until 3 May.

For information and reservations, write or call Mike Wihler at 2445 Vicente Street, San Francisco, CA 94116, (415) 665-6567, mornings.



Audubon Workshop Scholarships Offered

Scholarships to the Audubon Workshop of the West, held in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming, must be awarded early in 1981. Nothing but praise for this ecology study vacation has come back from participants in previous years.

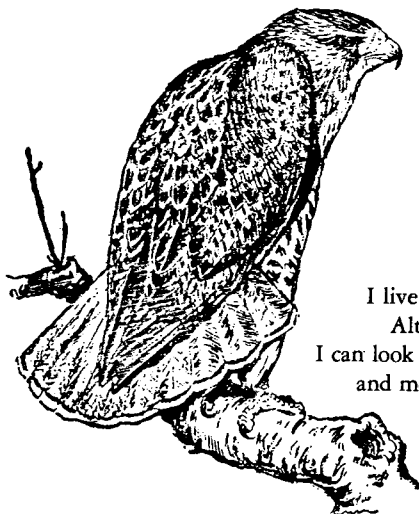
There are four sessions through the summer. Entrants must be 18 or over by July of 1981. Preference will be given to those most likely to apply their experience in future work or studies. Applications consist of a letter explaining applicants' reasons for wanting to attend this camp, and how they expect their work or study to be enhanced by the experience.

All letters of application should be received by 15 January 1981. Letters or further questions should be directed to the Scholarship Committee at Audubon House. A member of the Committee is at the House on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



Spring Plant Sale Planned

Start now to save your cuttings and trimmings — report them for the LAAS spring fund-raiser! Nora McClung will be in charge of this house and garden plant sale — watch for further details.



Eye to Eye

by Elizabeth Rhodes

I live on the top of a cliff:
Although I cannot fly
I can look down on the wide red tail
and meet a hawk eye to eye.



Year of the Coast Draws to a Close

1980 was officially endorsed as the Year of the Coast. This diverse, nation-wide campaign was designed to increase public awareness of the value of coastal resources and the need to protect them from loss. The coastal margin of the United States — over 100,000 miles of beaches, estuaries, lagoons, wetlands, bays and harbors — are invaluable.

- Acre for acre, wetlands are ten times more productive than wheat fields.
- By 1990, 75 percent of the population is expected to live in coastal counties.
- Each American spends on an average of ten days a year involved in some type of coastal recreation.
- An acre of wetland has been estimated to provide \$25,000 worth of water-purifying capability every year.
- Nationwide, less than five percent of the coast is publicly owned.

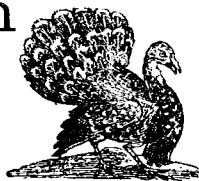
These are just some of the facts which the Year of the Coast has tried to publicize as it has supported strengthened policies and programs to protect the coast. And people all over the country did get involved: the Florida Audubon Society sponsored a one-man "canoe-a-thon" around the entire Florida coastline; the 4-H Club of Michigan sponsored a 1000-mile bike tour of the Lake Michigan coastline, the California Coastal Commission sponsored an award for projects which exemplify good coastal design. And there was much more.

The *Audubon Leader* for October 10, 1980, reports that the national coastwalk sponsored by National Audubon generated about \$5,000 (this represents 987 acres "sold" at \$5/acre) in contributions and a large amount of good will and great public understanding of the nation's coastal resources. Teams of Audubon members walked, boated or cycled, passing on three banners — one for each coast — and taking part in special ceremonies along the way. The walk ended in September with a bike trip up the coast of Washington state. The money raised will finance such Year of the Coast activities as special mailings to legislators and printing of informational brochures.

Meanwhile a bill to reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act for five more years was passed by the Congress in October and sent to the President for signature. The final bill was a compromise that failed to incorporate some of the improvements conservationists had hoped for, but it does include authorization for \$71 million in matching grants plus some other provisions to aid and encourage states to protect their dunes, beaches, estuaries, marshes and other coastal resources. And the bill includes somewhat stiffer provisions on protection of wetlands and control of improper development in areas prone to storms, flood and erosion.

Birds of the Season

by Shum Suffel



Early December birding should be a relaxing avocation after the hectic days of fall migration when every spare moment was programmed to give maximum coverage to good birding areas. Then, as the month progresses, one must plan to work several of the local Christmas Counts into a busy holiday schedule.

Late September and early October provided a bonanza of warblers, with some 36 of the possible 50 regularly occurring North American species being recorded in southern California. The week between 4 and 12 October gave us a fallout of vagrants along the coast, particularly at San Diego's Pt. Loma where some 30 species were seen. Outstanding rarities here were two immature **Connecticut Warblers**. The first was near the cemetery headquarters, and had only one tail feather (Andre Helbig, 4 October). The second bird was found later in the same location, but it had a full tail. It stayed on until at least 14 October. These were the first Connecticut birds to be widely seen here; most previous records were in remote areas or were of very brief duration. Equally rare was a **Blue-winged Warbler** (Bill Everett, 22 October) which could not be relocated, leading to intense frustration on the part of some 12 birders who made the long drive from as far away as Ventura to find only a **Tennessee Warbler** and an **American Redstart**. Also on the Point during or before the prime-week were a **Prothonotary**, two **Virginia's**, two **Magnolias**, three **Cape Mays**, two **Black-throated Greens**, five **Blackburnians**, two **Chestnut-sideds**, two **Bay-breasteds**, several **Blackpolls**, two **Ovenbirds**, and a **Canada Warbler**.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** was seen off and on in the giant sycamores along Bonsall Rd., Zuma Beach, from 28 September to at least 26 October (Kimball Garrett, Hal Baxter, *et al*), a third was near Carpinteria Creek in southeast Santa Barbara Co., and one was in Huntington Beach Central Park on 4 October (Eleanor and Bob Parsons). A male **Prothonotary** was on the Furnace Creek Golf Course, Death Valley (Mitch Heindel and Brian Daniels). Very rare was the female **Golden-winged Warbler** at Thousand Palms Oasis, Riverside Co. (Bob McKernan, 3 October). Two **Magnolias** were sighted, one near Doheny Beach, Orange Co. (Brad Schram, 29 September) and a second near Coachella, Imperial Co. (John Fairchild, 15 October). A male **Black-throated Blue** was in the trees around a ranch pond in the Antelope Valley (Jon Dunn, 21 October). Reports of **Chestnut-sideds** came from Topanga Canyon (Lee Jones, 2-19 October), from Malibu (Barbara Elliott, 11 October), from Zuma Beach (the Brodskins, 26 October) and from Santa Barbara (Bill Principe, 5 October). **Palm Warblers** were late (as usual), with one at Furnace Creek Ranch (hereafter FCR) (Guy McCaskie and Jon Dunn, 19 October), another along the Santa Ana River near Anaheim (Doug Willick, 23 October) and one inland near Lancaster (Jon Dunn, 25 October). **Ovenbirds** were at Harbor Lake, San Pedro on 27 September and at Mesquite Springs, Death Valley, on 18 October (both by Mitch Heindel and Brian Daniels, who also had a female **Hooded Warbler** at Deep Springs College, Inyo Co., on 19 October). Two **Northern Waterthrushes** were at Carpinteria Creek on 22 September (Louis Bevier) and another was at Oasis Ranch, Mono Co., on 18 October. Unfortunately, no one saw the very rare **Kentucky Warbler** (the fourth *Oporornis* this fall) which flew into a window in Goleta just above Santa Barbara on 14 October (that is, no one saw it alive). **American Redstarts**, usu-

ally our most conspicuous "eastern" warbler, were seldom reported, with one near Long Beach (Jon Atwood, 22 September), one at Zuma Beach (Kimball Garrett, 26 October) and two or three near San Diego.

As Kimball Garrett is fond of saying, "There is life after warblers". Yes, but it's not as much fun. In more or less A.O.U. order, we continue with "life after warblers". The LAAS Monterey Bay trip on 11 October proved to be the best of the four trips that weekend, with great rafts of **Ashy** and **Black Storm-Petrels** including one **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**. Also seen was a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** (but no new Zealands), a **South Polar Skua** and a **Tufted Puffin**. The **Reddish Egret** in a flood control channel near Long Beach (Jon Atwood, 26 September) was a first for Los Angeles Co., so update your LAAS county checklists. The egret could not be relocated. A **Horned Grebe** and a **White-faced Ibis** at FCR were rare birds in Death Valley (Guy McCaskie and Jon Dunn, 19 October). At least seven **Broad-winged Hawks** were observed migrating over Pt. Loma early in the month (Guy McCaskie, *et al*), and one graced the LAAS field trip to Zuma Beach on 11 October. Four or five **Ferruginous Hawks** had returned to the Antelope Valley by 21 October (Chuck Bernstein). An immature **Bald Eagle** seen at Pt. Fermin directly across from Catalina Is. (Brian Daniels, 17 October) may have been the same bird Calif. Fish and Game saw flying away from the island in September (after the attempt to reintroduce six eagles on Catalina). The status of **Clapper Rails** at Buena Vista Lagoon, Oceanside, is uncertain; thus a report of one (Doug Willick, 12 October) is interesting. A **Piping Plover** was found at Atascadero Beach, above Morro Bay, on 1 October by Gary Page while doing his Snowy Plover survey. This is only the third record for California. Two **Baird's Sandpipers** in the Edwards Air Force Base marsh on 21 October were very late for these normally early migrants (Jon Dunn). Jon also had a **Mountain Plover**, a **Stilt Sandpiper** and a **Ruff** at Harbor Lake, on 2 October. And a **Ruff** was seen at San Elijo Lagoon (San Diego Co.) on 11 October (the Parsons). A **Red Phalarope** at Harbor Lake (Brian Daniels, *et al*, 17 October) was unusual inland, and may have been a sick bird as it could be approached very closely. Reports of normally pelagic **Sabine's Gulls** inland come from Harbor Lake (Brian Daniels, 3 October), near Lakeview, Riverside Co. (Gene Cardiff, 6 October) and the Edwards Air Force Base Marsh (Ellen Strauss, 5 October).

Alcids continued their invasion of our inshore waters. The **Pigeon Guillemot** in Ballona Creek at Marina Del Rey stayed until at least 20 October. **Marbled Murrelets** were in Santa Barbara Harbor (Helen Matelson, 17 August) and off the Hermosa Beach Pier (Hal and Nancy Spear, 5 October). At least two (maybe four) **Xantus'-Craveri's Murrelets** (probably Craveri's) were seen off King Harbor, Redondo Beach (the Spears, 29 September), and from the nearby Hermosa Pier (Arthur Howe, 12 October). Arthur also reported an **Ancient Murrelet** off Redondo Beach on 19 October.

A **Band-tailed Pigeon** at Deep Springs (Brian Daniels and Mitch Heindel, 19 October) provides one of the few records east of the Sierras, and a **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** at FCR the same day (Guy McCaskie and Jon Dunn) was a first for Death Valley. The **Eastern Kingbird** at Bonsall Rd. (the Brodskins, 21 September) stayed for at least a week. Another appeared near Malibu Lagoon

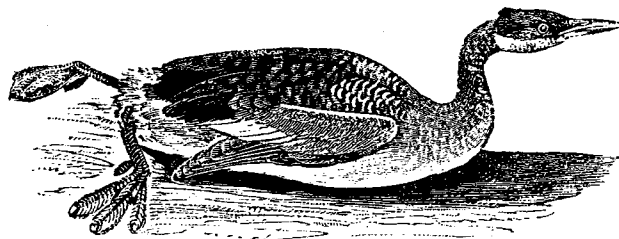
(Stan Livingston, 11 September). Unaccountably, there were no reports of Tropical Kingbirds which we have learned to expect in October. A probable Acadian Flycatcher on Pt. Loma on 27 September will be a first for California if accepted by the Birds Records Committee. It was studied by several competent observers who wrote detailed descriptions. A single Cliff Swallow at FCR (Jon Dunn and Guy McCaskie, 19 October) was very late.

Two Bendire's Thrashers is about our usual quota: one on Pt. Loma early in the month and another at Barbara Elliott's yard in Malibu after 10 October. While viewing the Bendire's at Malibu on 17 October, Monica Swartz discovered a Sage Thrasher nearby. Sage Thrashers were also found at the Arcadia Arboretum (Chuck Hamilton, 27 September), and at Mesquite Springs, Death Valley (Mitch Heindel and Brian Daniels, 18 October) where they are more or less expected. The only reports of Red-throated Pipits were near Santa Maria (Paul Lehman, 24 September), and above McGrath State Park (Brian Daniels and Mitch Heindel, 28 September). A flock of 22 Cedar Waxwings in Altadena on 18 September (Jon De Modena) was early. At least two Red-eyed Vireos were seen near San Diego, and another was at Zuma Beach, Malibu (Kimball Garrett, 27 September). Philadelphia Vireos, virtually unknown here 15 years ago, were found at Cabrillo Beach (Brian Daniels, 17 October) and at Deep Springs, Inyo Co. (Brian Daniels and Jon Dunn, 19 October).

Bobolinks were seen along the river above McGrath State Park (Richard Webster), at Zuma Beach (4-11 October) and along the Santa Ana River near Anaheim (Doug Willick, 28 September and 22 October). A Scott's Oriole on Pt. Loma in mid-October was far from its high desert home, and an immature "Baltimore" Oriole in Malibu (Gerry Haigh, 18 October) was far west of its normal range. Several Summer Tanagers were seen locally: one at Lake Sherwood ("Lee" Culver, early September), two males along Bon-sall Rd. (Hank Brodtkin, 27 September) and another male at Irvine Park, Orange Co. (Arnold Small's UCLA class, 27 September). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at Morongo Valley (Bob McKernan, late

September), in the cemetery at Pt. Loma, and at FCR (Guy McCaskie, *et al*, 19 October). Indigo Buntings were on Pt. Loma and at Big Sycamore Canyon on 4 October (Bob Doe). A Lark Bunting at Harbor Lake (John Ivanov, 11 September) was the only report this fall. The first report of a Gray-headed Junco comes from Anaheim Nature Center (Doug Willick, 23 October). An adult Harris' Sparrow at FCR was more or less expected, but four Swamp Sparrows together were unusual there (Mitch Heindel and Brian Daniels, 18 October). The only Longspur reports this fall were of Chestnut-collareds at FCR (Jon and Guy, 19 October) and the Antelope Valley (about 20 birds on 25 October).

Whether the presence of three mountain species in the lowlands portends a winter invasion only time will tell. Steller's Jays occasionally wander to the lowlands, as one did at Paul Frommer's feeder during September on Mt. Washington (really an isolated hill rising from the coastal plain). Reports of Mountain Chickadees at



La Canada (Bill Principe), Altadena (Jon De Modena), Silver Lake (David Koeppel) and West Los Angeles (Tricia Glatt), may not be significant, as they often occur in fall. Green-tailed Towhees are a different situation, and we had a minor invasion: in Westchester (Arthur Howe, 8 October), at the Arcadia Arboretum (Barbara Cohen, 19 October), in Altadena (Jon De Modena, 23 October) and at the mouth of Topanga Canyon (Kimball Garrett, 3 October).

Two amazing birds deserve mention here, even though they're not in our region. "An adult White-tailed Tropicbird landed exhausted and died in a west Phoenix (Arizona) yard on August 22. It was probably a victim of Hurricane Allen which hit the Texas coast twelve days earlier" (Maricopa Audubon Society's "Roadrunner"). The Farallon Islands added another rarity to the California state list: A Dusky Warbler, a dark brown *Phylloscopus* warbler from Asia. The only other North American record was from St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea on 6 June 1977.

If the Christmas Counts do not fill your allotted birding time in December, the bays and harbors along the coast will have newly arrived loons and grebes (possibly a Red-necked Grebe, or even a Yellow-billed Loon). Scoters and sea ducks will also arrive in numbers — look for Oldsquaws and Harlequins. Northern gulls, including a Glaucous or two, will also be on the scene. Then there are the high tides at Upper Newport Bay on 7 December (6') and again on 21 December (7'). For a longer trip try Death Valley for Harris' and Tree Sparrows, and possibly Lewis' Woodpeckers and Bohemian Waxwings. I'll see you at count time! ☺

Send any interesting bird observations to:
Shum Suffel, 1105 No. Holliston Ave., Pasadena, CA 91104



WESTERN TANAGER

EDITOR Mary Lawrence Test

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

PRESIDENT Jean Brandt

1st VICE-PRESIDENT Fred Heath

2nd VICE-PRESIDENT Bob Shanman

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Carol Friedman

TREASURER Art Cupples

Audubon membership (local and national) is \$20 per year (individual), \$25 (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 \$8.00 per year (Third Class), or \$12.00 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

CALENDAR

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, Bookstore, and Nature Museum are located at Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046. Telephone: (213) 876-0202. Hours: 10-3, Tuesday through Saturday.

Audubon Bird Reports:

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

Pelagic Trips

Starting immediately, LAAS is bowing out of the pelagic trip business north of Morro Bay. Arrangements for pelagic trips will be made through:

Debi Love Millichap
 302 Oxford Way

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Tel: (408) 425-8111, after 6 p.m.

Scheduled trips out of Monterey Bay for fall and winter cost approximately \$19.00. Trips and leaders include:

Sun., Dec. 7 — Bill Reese & Steve Bailey
 Sat., Jan. 3 — Ted Chandik & Alan Baldrige
 Sat., Feb. 21 — Ted Chandik & Arnold Small

Write for details. Space still available for all trips.



Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution

by Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn
 with line drawings by Lee Jones

Published by the Los Angeles Audubon Society

This hard-cover book contains a species-by-species account of the 500+ birds recorded in Southern California.

- month-by-month bar graphs of each species for quick reference
- maps of breeding ranges
- material on biogeography, taxonomy, population trends, bird movements

Last Chance to Purchase at a Discount

The cost of *Birds of Southern California* after 1 January 1981 will be \$18.95. Until then you can order your copy for only \$14.35 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling (California residents add \$0.86 sales tax). Make checks for \$16.21 for California residents (\$15.35 for others) payable to LAAS and mail to "Southern California Birds" c/o Audubon House.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 — Ballona Wetlands. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Pacific Avenue bridge. Emphasis on common and migrant shore- and waterbirds. Leaders: Bob and Roberta Shanman (545-2867, after 6).

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9 — Evening Meeting. 8 p.m. Dr. Ralph Schreiber, Curator of Ornithology at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, will present a program entitled "Christmas Island: Problems in Paradise." Conservation Committee Meeting, 6:45 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 1981 — Friends of Ballona guided walks; come any time between 9 and 11:45 a.m. Groups leave every 15 minutes from the Pacific Avenue bridge.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1981 — Evening Meeting. 8 p.m. Plummer Park. Natural Park Service Naturalist Larry Norris will talk about the "Fish of the Desert" — the Desert Pupfish of Death Valley. He will present problems in preservation of habitat and conservation of resources. Conservation Committee Meeting, 6:45 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 1981 — Ballona Wetlands. Same details as Dec. 6. Leaders: the Shanmans.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1981 — Evening Meeting. 8 p.m. Plummer Park. For the second year in a row, you will have a chance to meet the LAAS Board and participate in an open discussion regarding *your* society. Do come! Conservation Committee Meeting, 6:45 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 — LAAS Banquet at the Sportsman's Lodge. We will raffle a Bausch & Lomb Discoverer telescope and a Bushnell tripod. Speaker: Herb Clarke.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1981 — Evening Meeting. 8 p.m. Plummer Park. Dean Hector will describe his work with the Aplomado Falcon and will discuss its habitat, its range (formerly into the US), as well as other raptors in the region. Conservation Committee Meeting, 6:45 p.m.

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

Sherman Suter
 c/o 2202 Oakwood Dr., Apt. E
 Columbia, MO 65201

Non-Profit Organization
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Permit No. 26974
 Los Angeles, CA