

# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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## The Story of Plummer House

*by Glenn Cunningham*

**P**lummer House, home of the Los Angeles Audubon Society from 1937 until its tragic loss last November, was built in 1878. Qualifying as the oldest house in Hollywood, it had been designated an Historic Landmark by the California State Park Commission.

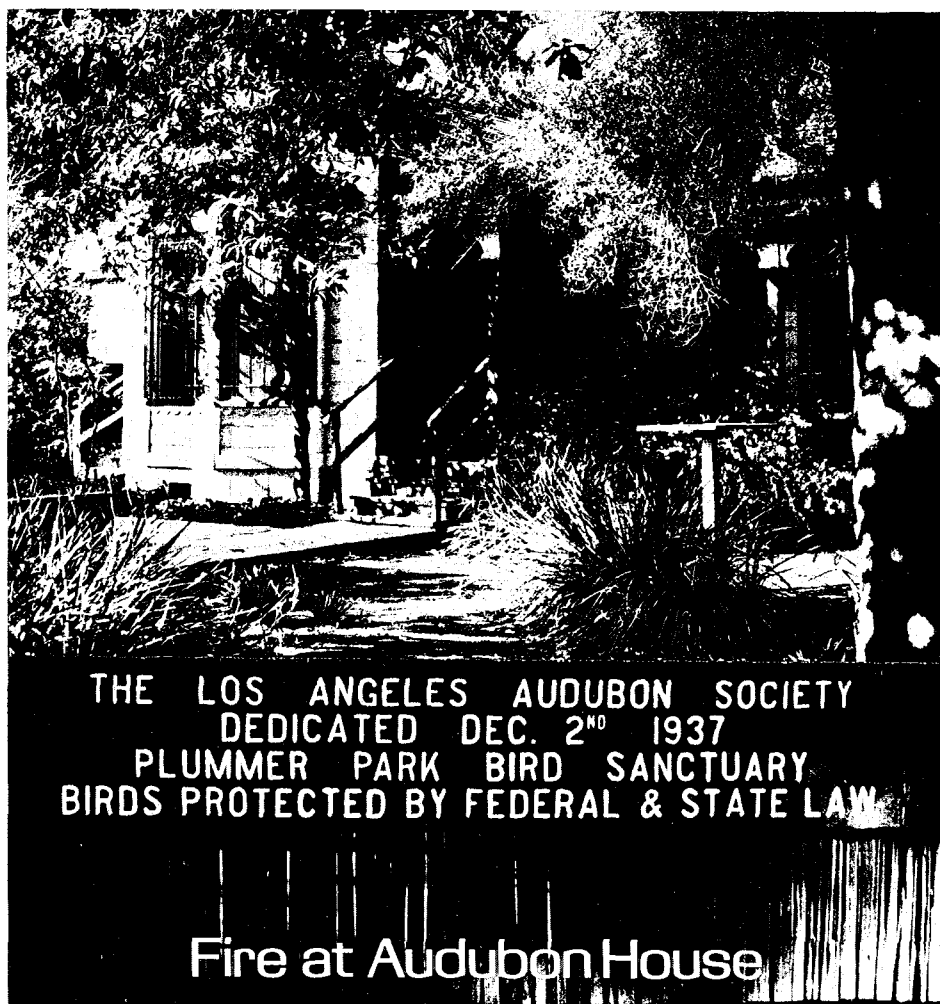
The house was the only remaining structure of a group of buildings on the former Plummer Ranch which in turn had been part of the vast Rancho La Brea granted by the Mexican Government in 1826. The Ranch, bounded by the present Santa Monica Boulevard, Gardner Street, Sunset Boulevard and La Brea Avenue, has been described as typical of the times and produced a variety of fruit and vegetable crops, flowers, dairy products and wine and brandy. The Plummer family was famous for its hospitality, and their home, known in later years as Pioneer Fiesta Center, attracted many visitors.

Senor Eugene Plummer, last of the family to occupy the premises, lived until 1943, but he had lost most of the land over the years through his generosity in signing many notes for his friends. In 1937, the last three acres, about to be foreclosed, was bought by the County of Los Angeles and became Plummer Park. Acreage of the Park has since been increased and several new buildings constructed, but the old house and garden remained intact.

The Audubon Society first entered the picture in 1937 when a letter from J.K. Reed, County Park Superintendent, to the President, Mrs. Salmon, offered a room in the old ranch house to be used as Society Headquarters, as a place to assemble scattered possessions, and for such meetings as desired, an offer free from obligations beyond furnishing and caring for the room.

On June 10 of that year, a special Board Meeting was held at Plummer Park to con-

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*by Jean Brandt*

**A**t 10:00 p.m., Saturday, November 21, 1981, Audubon House was torched by person or persons unknown. They poured charcoal lighter fluid on the outside of the building in four places, broke a window in the bookstore and poured more fluid inside. The fires were lighted. Summoned by alert neighbors, the Los Angeles County Fire Department responded immediately; yet they spent over two hours "knocking down" the flames in that gallant old bungalow.

News of the disaster did not reach us until

the next morning when Rod Wallace, Supervisor of Plummer Park, phoned with the news that the house was a total loss, and that nothing could be saved. Art Cupples, Roberta and Bob Shanman and Wayne and I went there to assess the damage. There are no words to describe adequately what we found. The memory of the burned books, the charred birds and the stench will remain with us forever.

Damage to the outside of the building was minimal but the inside was gutted and the roof heavily damaged. The bookstore was,

indeed, a total loss. All the museum displays and dioramas were lost. All audio-visual equipment, office furniture and supplies were severely damaged; everything electrical had melted, including the photocopier, the bird tape machine and the typewriters.

The library, our most treasured collection, was badly smoked and dampened, but the Fire Department had taken the precaution to throw canvas tarps over the bookshelves and some of the contents can probably be restored if replacements cannot be found. Almost everything in the building was either burned, melted, charred, smoked or water-soaked — nothing escaped this demented act of arson.

However, many of the records and files in the front offices could be salvaged, and we thought the library books represented an obvious attraction to vandals. We decided to

the past presidents and active volunteers — the very people who make our Chapter strong. Our first concern was to find temporary headquarters and return to normal as soon as possible. The bookstore would have to be restocked; the phones (particularly the Bird Alert Tape) would have to be relocated.

We decided to send a letter via first class mail to all members and friends detailing our losses and asking for help. The use of a telephone answering service was donated to facilitate the anticipated response to the letter. This response was immediate and very rewarding.

By the following week, things started to fall in place. The County Park Department offered us temporary headquarters in Long Hall in Plummer Park, which we gratefully accepted; we moved into our rooms in early December. CBS loaned us desks, chairs, fil-

work had just been completed a few weeks before the fire and we were going to restore the building and fence it adequately. We could still help with this.

Moving to another park seems out of the question. First of all, none has space for us, and secondly, none is any safer than Plummer Park. We do have good sheriff response and frequent patrols and we do have lighted parking where we are now — something not available in most areas. We are also only two blocks from the nearest fire station.

Renting office space will be very expensive, especially if we try to maintain the bookstore, library and museum. Prices today are \$1.00 per square foot per month, and up, depending on the location. Our current budget would not permit us to relocate in this manner and we would have to find some other source of income. The total sum of the



try to rescue what we could and Rod offered us the use of a large storeroom.

We needed people and we needed boxes. Marge Wohlgemuth got busy on the telephone and found us both. Some people heard the news on the radio and just showed up to help. Our eternal thanks are due to Art, Roberta, Bob, Wayne, Rod, Marge, Nora and Lester McClung, Mira Ivey, Carol Niles, Ruth and Les Wood, Carol Friedman, Coie Lakin, Maggie Klippel, Fred Heath, Willabelle Mahoney, Alice Myers, Hugh Weiser and Gail and Fritz Baumgarten. These devoted people shared a day of tears, anger, frustration, futility, disgust and hard work, filth and stench — a day we all came to feel was a day of beginning for the Los Angeles Audubon Society. In the midst of the smoldering rubble we were stronger than ever before.

#### What We Did

On Monday evening, November 23rd, we held the first of many emergency Board meetings, to which we also invited some of

ing cabinets, manual typewriters and sundry office equipment. Members donated three electric typewriters. Replacements for lost bookstore inventory were arriving daily. By Christmas we were back in business.

The most famous birdwatcher in Southern California, Jack Smith, visited our new headquarters, viewed the remains of Audubon House and wrote a very sensitive column in the LOS ANGELES TIMES detailing our plight. Many Southern California Audubon Chapters have offered aid and support. When things settle down we will acknowledge our many friends individually, but for now, we extend our thanks to each of you who has supported us so generously.


#### Where Do We Go from Here?

To date, no one has come up with a solution to our biggest problem — permanent headquarters. There are many possibilities. If the County rebuilds Audubon House, we most certainly will be offered the option of staying in the Park. As many of you know, the termite

dues we get from National Audubon (one third of what you pay annually) goes toward paying for the WESTERN TANAGER. Everything else we do is funded by the bookstore and donations.

Free rent, subsidized rent or donated property have not been offered us; however, we have been offered two small buildings if we can move them to our own location. We own no real property and this would have to be acquired if we wished to accept the houses. We still hope that an offer of free rent or property will be forthcoming.

#### Please Come

On February 9, 1982, at 8:00 p.m., we will hold our traditional General Meeting in the multi-purpose room at Plummer Park. This year the entire meeting will be devoted to the future of LAAS. There are many possibilities and there are many options. The Board asks that you, as members join us, and guide us in making the decisions that will affect us all. 

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sider the feasibility of accepting the offer. Mrs. Scott of the Park staff showed the board members through the Park and its buildings and gave an idea of future building plans and the possibilities for Society use. After luncheon under the old pepper tree in the arbor, the Board retired to Mrs. Salmon's home to deliberate and to inspect the Society's possessions — the library, valuable migrations maps, charts, and mounted specimens of birds, butterflies and wildflowers, assembled together for the first time.

The room was considered ideal and the group voted to send a letter of acceptance to Mr. Reed. A newly formed House Committee set July 1 for members to visit and inspect the room, at which time "... thirty members found all in beautiful order — maps, books, and collections displayed in bookcases and showcases on the wall."

Contents of the room were enriched when Mrs. Fargo presented a framed picture of Captain Plummer, and the Los Angeles County Museum donated over 50 mounted specimens of birds.

As predicted, the need for expansion was inevitable, and a second room was made available. For some time subsequently, the Society offices and the Nature Museum occupied the front rooms of the house while Park-sponsored ceramics classes were held in the back or the north half, an arrangement that left much to be desired. Museum exhibits were in open-fronted bookcases; a key had to be obtained from the Park Office for each entry to the house; and Society officers and committee chairmen continued to keep their records in their homes.

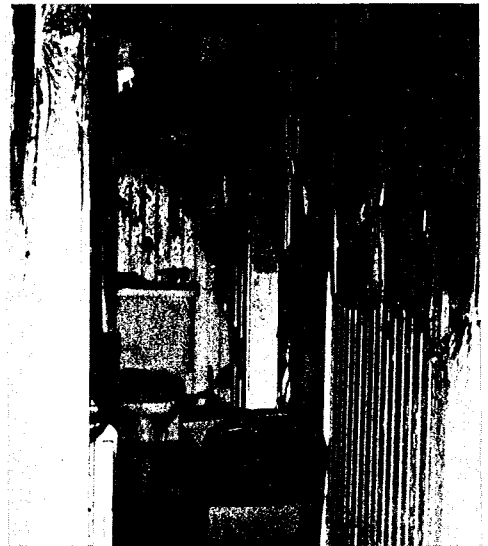
Gradual improvement followed, however, thanks to the efforts of Marion Wilson, Cura-

the pantry.

The Park Department painted and repaired the two north rooms and the former bathroom and built a fence with a locked gate around the yard, while members continued to donate their services. One, Howard Capwell, built the three large exhibit cases, for which Vernon Mangold, another member and a professional artist, painted the backgrounds.

Mrs. Scott donated furniture for the house, and the walls were papered. Mrs. Brennan offered to donate and install an air-tight heater if fire ordinances allowed, and Mrs. Shearer agreed to have the chimney inspected.

Following these improvements came full utilization of Plummer House, or Audubon House as it was better known to many. Officers brought their files and records from



Climaxing this occasion, Captain Plummer gave a talk on the original estate, speaking particularly of the soil and the plants, and Mrs. Florence Lewis Clark, representing Mr. Reed, spoke for the Recreational Department "expressing the desire to cooperate in every way stating they would gladly see to it that the Society was moved into larger quarters as they found themselves outgrowing the present one, which seemed soon inevitable."

The Los Angeles Audubon Society was off to a good start in its new home where the first regular meeting was held on September 16, 1937. Preparing for its use, a new elective office of Curator was established; contents of the room were insured for \$200 at a cost of \$3.86; and the Board decided to open the room to the public from 10 am to 4 pm on Tuesdays and Fridays, with members taking turns acting as hostesses.

It was suggested that Plummer Park be made a Bird Sanctuary and the National Audubon Society was asked about the necessary steps.


tor and Headquarters Chairman, who succeeded in acquiring keys and a telephone, and to the generous support of various members who built proper shelves and cases.

Several years later when still more expansion seemed desirable, the Society was faced with the choice of accepting space in one of the new Park buildings or remaining in the old Ranch House. Since the latter included certain attractive provisions, namely that the entire building and the surrounding garden would be turned over, and that improvements such as a new roof and the addition of heating would be made, the offer of the house was accepted without hesitation.

Eventual occupation of the entire house required rearrangement of the rooms since separate ones then became available for the Library and the Sales Office. The floor plan and the general appearance of the house remained much as it had been in Plummer's day except for the removal of no-longer-needed plumbing fixtures — a sink from the new Sales Office and an iron bathtub from

home. Board meetings began to be held there regularly as did the WESTERN Tanager mailings, and soon almost all Society activities were centered in this, the now official, headquarters of the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

At the time the house was accepted in preference to space in the new Park building, it was decided to make reservations in the latter only for special gatherings, and accordingly the monthly program meetings, which had been held in the State Building in Exposition Park continuously since 1919, were moved to Plummer Park. Board meeting locations, on the other hand, had changed frequently — from the old Los Angeles Public Library to the 8th floor waitingroom of the Broadway Department Store, the Los Angeles Federated Club's Board Room in the Jr. Orpheum Building, the new Public Library, and finally the Lafayette Park Branch Library before settling in Plummer House.

Fate has decreed that one more change is in the offing. 

# Birding Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

by Larry L. Norris

**S**equoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are located in the southern Sierra approximately 200 miles north of Los Angeles. Although not frequently birded by southern California birders, these large parks on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada offer many easily accessible birding areas. These areas are found along the several well maintained, paved roads that thread through the western sections of both parks between the elevations of 1500 and 7500 feet.

The diversity of bird species in the western part of Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks is great because of this substantial elevational difference. This diversity also occurs because there are six plant communities on the west slope within these elevations. As the roads approach the foothills of the mountains, the first plant community encountered is the foothill woodland, a region of thickly forested slopes interspersed with grasslands on the gentle slopes.

Completing the mosaic in the foothill woodland are large tracts of foothill chaparral on the south-facing slopes and, along the stream and river bottoms, riparian habitat consisting of white alder, western sycamore and various species of willows. The foothills are best for birding in Spring (March-May) when many migrants have returned from wintering south of the parks. At this time the vegetation is alive with flycatchers, kingbirds, thrushes, vireos, warblers and many sparrows.

The road continues to thread its way into the mountains and above the foothill woodland; at about 5500 feet in elevation the first conifers are encountered. These are the indicators of the lower limits of the mixed coniferous forest, the plant community through which most of the roads in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks have been built. Within the mixed coniferous forest are large areas of another plant community — the montane chaparral.

The highest plant community reached by roads in the parks is the red fir forest. Dense stands of red fir are prime habitat for some of the mountain specialties like Goshawk, Blue Grouse, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper. The high points surrounded by red fir forest in both parks are usually accessible granitic domes that are of great advantage to birders because of their wide vistas which offer increased chances for seeing hawks, eagles and swifts.

The main road through the parks is named the Generals Highway after the two largest living giant sequoias — the General Sherman and the General Grant. This road is open year round except during the heaviest snows

of winter. Four other roads in the parks lead to interesting birding localities — the Mineral King Road, Crystal Cave Road, Crescent Meadow Road and the Kings Canyon Road. Full services are available year round on the Generals Highway at Giant Forest and Grant Grove, and summer only at Silver City on the Mineral King Road and at Cedar Grove in Kings Canyon. For road and park information call (209) 565-3341. Once in the park, you will find maps available to locate the place names mentioned in this article.

**T**o approach Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks from the south, drive east on state highway 198 past **Lake Kaweah**. Several vantage points around the lake are available for scoping the wide expanse of water. California Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls are usually seen in spring and summer, and on occasion a few Common Merganser. The tall grass and weeds around the lake and along the highway provide habitat for Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Groups of Turkey Vultures can usually be seen soaring above the lake; the largest group the author has seen numbered 42 individuals.

Between Lake Kaweah and the Ash Mountain park entrance is the town of **Three Rivers**. The riparian habitat along the river-side has productive birding in the Spring, but most of it is posted "No trespassing". Some areas do have public access. Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, Downy Woodpecker, Tree, Cliff and Violet-green Swallows can be seen from the riverbank.

The Generals Highway begins at the Ash Mountain entrance station; an entrance fee is collected here. From this point the highway travels along the north bank of the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River. About a mile from the entrance is **Park Headquarters**. Stop here for information and for some excellent chaparral birding; the author has recorded forty species in an early morning walk around this area. In April the trees have many visible and active birds in their branches — Western Kingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Northern Oriole, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Wrentit, Western Bluebird, Brown and Rufous-sided Towhees, Lark, Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows. Overhead fly Band-tailed Pigeons, White-throated Swifts and, on occasion, Vaux's Swifts. Five miles up the Generals Highway is Potwisha Campground. Common Screech, Flammulated Screech and Great Horned Owls have been recorded here on spring and summer nights.

Further up the Generals Highway at **Buckeye Campground** is an excellent spring-time birding trail that starts at the east end of the campground, crosses the Middle Fork of

the Kaweah River and continues up a side canyon along beautiful Paradise Creek. A quiet stroll under the spreading live-oaks will yield Hutton's, Warbling and Solitary Vireos, Black-headed Grosbeaks, White-breasted Nuthatches, Stellar Jays, House Wrens, Nashville, Orange-crowned and Black-throated Gray Warblers. The bridge over the river is a good vantage point from which to scan the rocky banks for Dippers and Spotted Sandpipers.

From Buckeye Campground proceed up



Moro Rock

the switchbacks and hairpin turns of the Generals Highway to Giant Forest. Along the way are two signed turnouts — **Amphitheatre Point** and **Eleven Range Overlook**. These afford beautiful mountain scenery and, if it's quiet, the soft "pwee, pwee" of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher from the brush below the road.

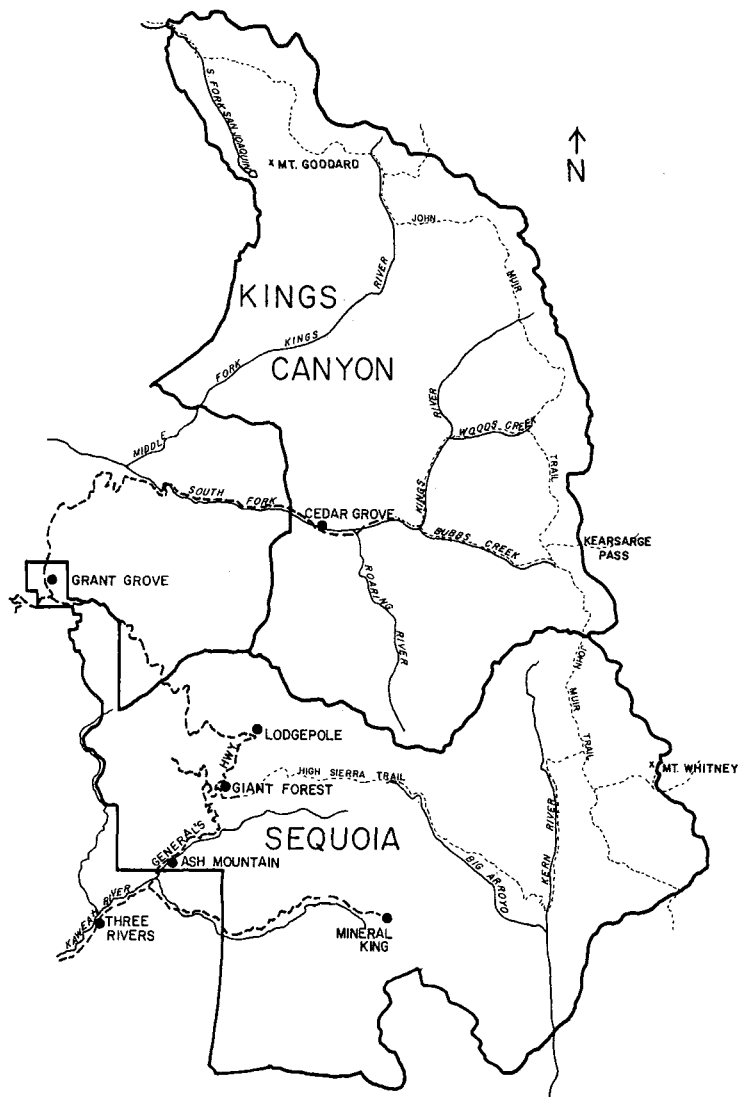
As you progress up the Generals Highway a series of spectacular views of the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River are seen and then, around a turn, as if by magic, appear the giant sequoias. The road at this point enters the cool, deep shade of the big trees, and along the nearby hazel and dogwood fringed rivulet sounds the active song of the Winter Wren and the hauntingly beautiful notes of the Hermit Thrush.

Soon you come to the **Crystal Cave Road** junction. If the road is open follow it down to the bridge over the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River and then on into the old stands of white fir and sugar pines. Here, in the densest parts of the forest, listen for the call of the Pileated Woodpecker, and, again the Winter Wren. Western Tanager, Hairy Wood-

pecker, Western Wood Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher can be seen or heard along with the occasional note of the Mountain Quail. Townsend's Solitaire is frequently found in this area. At the end of the road is the parking lot for Crystal Cave. Lazuli Bunting is seen here every late spring and into summer.

The **Giant Forest** area has three locations that should be birded besides the many trails among the giant sequoia grove. The road out to **Crescent Meadow** and **Moro Rock** threads through beautiful stands of giant sequoias surrounded by a thick ground-cover of western bracken fern. Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Siskin, Golden-crowned Kinglet and House Wren are often heard along this road, and, occasionally, the House Sparrow-like note of the Evening Grosbeak.

**Crescent Meadow** has a long list of birds because it is one of two places that are often birded by park naturalists. In the picnic area Brown-headed Cowbirds can usually be found, Stellar's Jays are always present, as are Mountain Chickadee, Cassin's Finch, Western Tanager, White-headed Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco and White-crowned Sparrows. Lincoln and Song Sparrows can usually be found at the lower end of the meadow. In the willows at the meadow's edge Yellow, Nashville, Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's Wilson's and Black-throated Gray Warblers can be seen. High overhead from the tops of the white fir is heard the song of the Hermit Warbler. Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds occur here in season. Chipping and Fox Sparrows are sometimes seen. Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper and Pileated Woodpecker are often heard in the surrounding forest.



While in this area climb the quarter-mile trail to the summit of **Moro Rock**. From this granitic dome the huge drainage of the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River can be surveyed. Watch the sky for Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Common Raven, White-throated Swift and, rarely, the Black Swift.

The third location to bird around Giant Forest is the **Wolverton Ski Area**. In summer, a variety of birdlife can be found along the meadow edge and in the open, wet areas of the meadow. Accipiters are occasionally seen here as is the small falcon, the American Kestrel. Red-breasted Sapsuckers are found in the quaking aspen along the stream. The usual complement of montane warblers and sparrows are present in visible numbers. Western Bluebirds prefer to perch on the ski lift cables, and Violet-green Swallows are common over the shallow lake. At night the call of the Pygmy Owl is sometimes heard. In late summer, Clark's Nutcrackers drift down from the subalpine forest and can be seen flying over the Wolverton ski area.

Four miles north of Giant Forest on the Generals Highway is **Lodgepole Campground in Tokopah Valley** (a small, ice-carved Yosemite). A Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker nested there during

summer 1977; the nest has not been active since. Hiking up the 1.7-mile trail to Tokopah Falls will provide you a fairly good chance of seeing the Blue Grouse; in July, a hen and several chicks can usually be seen along this trail in the dryer wooded areas that have some tall grass. Golden Eagles may be seen soaring overhead near Tokopah Falls. Williamson Sapsuckers should be looked for among the many areas of lodgepole pine in the valley.

Further north on the Generals Highway is **Little Baldy**, a granitic dome the summit of which is reached by a beautiful trail through red fir forest and small hillside patches of wildflowers. Blue Grouse are often seen along this trail as they eat the flower heads of Indian Paintbrush. Olive-sided Flycatchers give their distinctive call from high in the firs, and Calliope Hummingbirds can be seen getting nectar from the many red, tubular flowers. This dense red fir forest also provides habitat for Goshawk.

Proceeding north again one comes to the poorly marked **Big Baldy Ski Trail** in Kings Canyon National Park. In summer, this two-mile trail can be exciting birding and is always rewarding for its scenery. Williamson Sapsuckers may nest in the area; spotted



*Big Trees*

*Continued next page*

Owls have been heard here as well as in Redwood Canyon immediately to the west of Big Baldy. The view east from the summit takes in the high country of both parks and is a vantage point for viewing raptors.

The **Grant Grove** area is the northern end of the Generals Highway. One can exit the park at the Big Stump entrance or go north to Grant Grove and Kings Canyon. At Grant Grove all the expected montane birds of the mixed coniferous forest can be seen. Check the meadow behind the service station for flycatchers (Hammond's and Western) in the willows; the extent of these willows has been reduced by recent environmental burns. Hammond's Flycatcher has also been observed near the General Grant Tree.

From the Grant Grove area, the Kings Canyon Road heads north over **Cherry Gap** and then east dropping slowly into the South Fork of the Kings River drainage. A scenic overlook along this road, above the confluence of the Middle and South Forks, is in a large area of chaparral that provides habitat for California Thrasher, Rufous-sided Towhee

Swifts are seen here at times, high above and silhouetted against the gray granite walls. Violet-green Swallows have nested nearby.

**Zumwalt Meadows**, in late spring, is the best birding spot in Kings Canyon. Seven species of warbler have been observed in the large willows on the south side of the meadow (Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers). Take the **Zumwalt Meadow Nature Trail** along the meadow edge. In places the trail climbs among the boulders at the foot of the cliffs and provides a vantage point looking into the tops of the willows. Swainson's Thrush and the uncommon Red-winged Blackbird can be seen here in their respective habitats. Many of the typical mountain birds can be seen in Kings Canyon. All the various habitats are supplied in some amount — riparian, marsh and meadow areas, rocky habitats and cliffside aerie, large tracts of mixed pines and oaks and on the slopes, montane chaparral.

The areas mentioned above are just a few, but among the best, birding locales within



*Crescent Meadow*

and Wrentit. Many of the typical chaparral birds of southern California inhabit this large area of dense chaparral.

The **Kings Canyon Road** (state highway 180) finally crosses the South Fork of the Kings River at Boyden Cave (nesting rock wrens at the cave entrance) and follows the river gorge east into the heart of the mountains.

**Cedar Grove** has full services during the summer but few exciting birds. However, Goshawk and Merlin have been seen in the drainages flowing into Cedar Grove, and Green-tailed Towhees inhabit the montane chaparral on the slopes above. Leaving Cedar Grove drive on to Roaring River Falls. Park and walk the remaining quarter-mile for a spectacular scene as **Roaring River** cascades down a narrow defile and leaps over a last waterfall into a deep plunge pool. Black



*Zumwalt Meadow*

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. In a weekend of birding many interesting observations could be made; one must consider, however, the season to maximize the birding opportunities. Many of the higher locales are still under snow when birding is at its best in the foothill woodland and chaparral. Birding in the parks begins to pick up in late March.

The Generals Highway and the other mountain roads travel through rugged and beautiful scenery. Enjoy it, but drive carefully, too. Many turns come up fast, especially when there is a good bird overhead. Have a safe trip and good birding! ♡

*Larry L. Norris is a research botanist and naturalist for the National Park Service in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks and Death Valley National Monument.*

## Sea to Sierra Workshops Offered

A post Asilomar and two one-week summer workshops are being offered by Audubon's Western Education Center. These trips, focusing on issues across California, are being offered in cooperation with Yosemite Institute and make use of their facilities in the San Francisco area and at Yosemite.

The workshops start at Yosemite Institute's Headlands Campus in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. National Audubon and Yosemite Institute staff will be leading the workshops; there will be several talks by guest speakers. The first part of the week will be spent visiting sites dealing with prime agricultural land, the politics and philosophy of agriculture and the challenges of an urban environment. Time will also be spent on the natural history of the area and enjoying a night out in San Francisco.

Midweek, the group will spend the day crossing California to Yosemite, including a transect of the Delta with a focus on water issues and a visit to a wildlife refuge. In Yosemite National Park, the group will stay at Yosemite Institute's Crane Flat campus. There will be an opportunity to study some of the Sierran streams proposed for low head hydro development and discussions of the wilderness ethic and the problems facing wilderness. The trip will culminate with dinner at the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley. Participants will return to the Bay Area the following day.

The post Asilomar workshop is Tuesday, April 6 through Sunday, April 11 and costs \$275 per person. The summer workshops, one week each, July 25 to 31 and August 1 to 7, will include additional time studying the ecology of San Francisco Bay and a trip to Mono Lake; the fee is \$350 per person. Accommodations are dormitory style; towels and sleeping bags are to be provided by participants. There is excellent food at both facilities. One or two units of credit is available at \$40 per unit.

For more information and an extensive itinerary, contact the Western Education Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, CA 94920. (LAAS cannot be responsible for information given here nor for any individual undertaking such a course.)





# Topics of Conservation

## A Sepulveda Refresher

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

In a recent Sunday morning, dodging determined bicyclists and hordes of sweating joggers, I strolled along the south bank of the Los Angeles River near Balboa Blvd. The scene was the Sepulveda flood control basin in Van Nuys, owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Dowitchers and Dunlins foraged in the shallows; a Snowy Egret and a pair of Black-crowned Night Herons flew downstream; a resident Green Heron prowled in the low, green water plants. Several flocks of Canada Geese — 200 all together — took off from a plowed corn field and flew in stirring formations overhead toward Encino Reservoir. Beating along with them was a lone Snow Goose. Other days have seen Great Egrets, Kingfishers, Great Blue Herons and a scattering of puddle ducks. In spring and summer this is one of the most reliable places to see uncommon nesting Blue Grosbeaks.

This is part of the 60 acres of riparian habitat that would have been destroyed had the "recreational rowing lake" been built for the 1984 Olympics. The smoke has lifted from the battle over Olympic events and things are (cautiously, cautiously) looking up. The Olympics are definitely out and, for the moment, the unstructured open space is inviolate. The most recent master plan, however, still contains the controversial "ditch", as its opponents call the proposed rowing lake.

The coalition that defeated the Olympics is still in business, determined to persuade the City Recreation and Parks Department and the Corps to eliminate the rowing lake once and for all. But the master plan includes a welcome and unexpected bonus. In addition to the 50 acres originally designated as Wildlife Refuge south of Burbank Blvd. (near the San Diego Freeway), the plan now includes the 60-acre field to the north. This northern portion contains shallow depressions that, when filled with rain or irrigation run-off, become delightful ponds that attract all manner of birds. Listen to this list for August and September 1976 — a vintage year: Baird's Pectoral and Solitary Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Nashville and Palm Warbler, Wilson's and Northern Phalarope, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Yellow-headed and Tricolored Blackbird, Sage Sparrow, Common Snipe and Black-necked Stilt. Plus a generous assortment of hawks, ducks and sparrows. A month later came a pair of Sandhill Cranes. A year later, Bobolinks. Clearly, birders are vitally interested in the creation of a permanent wildlife sanctuary.

The Corps is doing a splendid job. Its environmental staff has a genuine interest in preserving and developing the area and is work-

ing enthusiastically to make it a success. The map here is a tentative projection of things to come. The impromptu ponds are in the section labeled "North Pond". The islands in both North and South Ponds should add another dimension of protection and attraction for some of the more wary birds. It is good to know that biologists with the Corps are aware of the importance of shallow water and mudflats for migrating and wintering shorebirds and waterfowl.

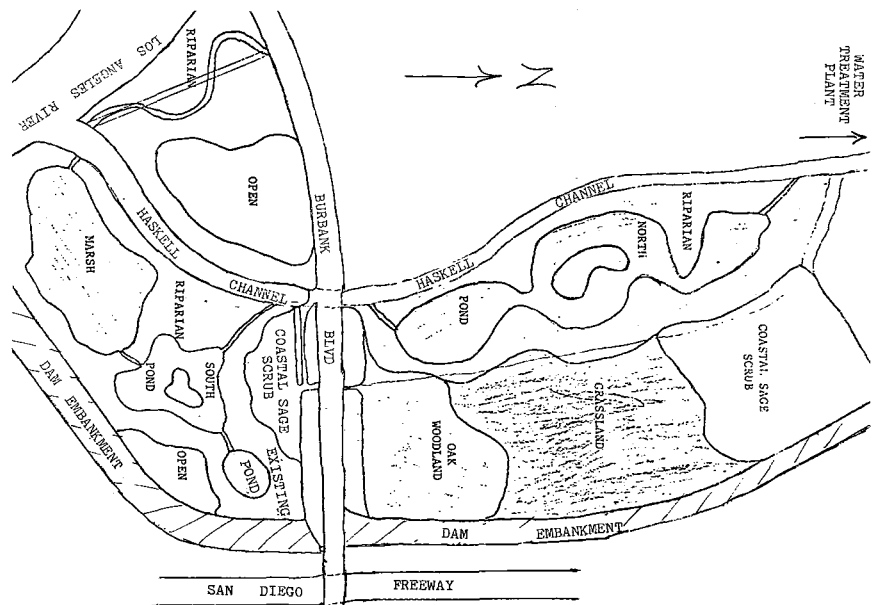
The run-off ditch known as Haskell Channel already has a straggly growth of rushes in its northern part; the southern portion has a thick stand of willows. The intention is to widen this riparian habitat. In fact, some native water-loving trees have already been planted there by the Corps. The Ora L. Leeper fund of the California Community Foundation, on the recommendation of Los Angeles Audubon, purchased in November 1981 an additional \$1500 worth of trees for this area. Col. Paul W. Taylor, District Engineer of the Corps, in a letter to LA Audubon says, "Having such large trees to work with gives us a real head start towards the planned total revegetation of the area."

Where is all the water coming from? The northeastern corner of the basin will house a 40 million-gallon-a-day water treatment plant that is already under construction and is to be completed in 1984. It will supply all the water requirements for Sepulveda including lawns, lakes, ball fields and golf courses. Land slopes gradually south from the treatment plant to the Los Angeles River. Water will flow from Haskell Channel, through the North Pond, back to the channel, then to the South Pond, to a marsh, and eventually to the river. This continuous flow of water will prevent the stagnation in shallow ponds that tends to encourage the development of botulism, a

lethal avian disease. The expanded Haskell Channel will become an all-year creek with the vegetation and wildlife of a natural stream. The bonus of a marsh offers an exciting new habitat that should support a wider range of animals and birds.

A small (0.6 acre) experimental pond was created ("Existing Pond" on the map) and stocked with native water plants. Alders and willows and mule fat were planted as well as Scarlet monkey flower, which bloomed for months. It became a very attractive enclave in what is still a flat, weedy field. For a long time the pond seemed birdless. Last November, a pair of Eared Grebes and a pair of Pied-billed Grebes appeared, apparently much at home with a handful of Coots. Kestrels and White-tailed Kites now roost in the small trees, a Northern Harrier quarters the field every day, a couple of Cooper's Hawks are frequent visitors and Red-tails are familiar presences. On one occasion a territorial kite was seen dive-bombing a Red-tail, which imperturbably continued its circling, disdainfully waving a primary at its assailant. Also in November, a Peregrine plunged into a mass of pigeons, taking one in an explosion of feathers. So the birds are still there. (Jon Dunn, who spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Sepulveda, has a list of over 200 species.)

In spite of its growth, Los Angeles is still an extraordinary city. The mountains — folded and smooth, soft and tough, green and brown and violet as the light changes — are relatively untouched. It is amazing to find so many untamed creatures alive and well, yet surrounded by millions of people. There is a great, unarticulated yearning in many of us to salvage our open space, to keep our mountains bulldozer-free. To lose it all would be to lose the flavor and character of this city. When the Wildlife Area becomes a reality it will remind us that there can be more to urban life than shopping malls and condos. And the birds will remain with us in the place that was all theirs for millions of years.



## Field Notes: Horned and Eared Grebes

by Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett

Two small, slender-billed grebes of the genus *Podiceps* occur in southern California — the Horned Grebe (*P. auritus*) and the Eared Grebe (*P. nigricollis*). Horned Grebes are winter visitors along the coast; they are rare before mid-October and after late April. They are generally quite rare inland, although they are known to be regular in small numbers on a few deep water lakes (e.g., Lake Cachuma, Lake Havasu). On the ocean they are usually seen close to shore, often around bays, piers and harbors. Eared Grebes are widespread winter visitors and transients, from coastal bays (and even the open ocean) to a variety of inland lakes, marshes and reservoirs. Eareds breed on marshy lakes in scattered localities (most notably at Baldwin Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains).

Alternate (breeding) plumaged birds are well illustrated in the popular field guides — they are easily told by the shape characters discussed below as well as by the color of the neck (black in Eared, chestnut in Horned). The remainder of this discussion will deal with basic (winter) plumage; this is the plumage we most often see in southern California. The following points are illustrated in the figures.


**Head and Neck Pattern:** Horned is considerably more “contrasty”; the blackish cap and thin dark stripe down the hindneck contrasting with the whitish face and throat give the appearance of a chunky, scaled-down Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). A slight rusty wash on the sides of the neck, present in many individuals, should not lead to confusion with the larger, yellow-billed Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*). Note that winter Horned Grebes have a white lore spot (absent in the Eared Grebe).

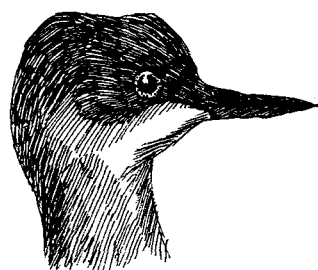
Basic plumaged Eared Grebes show much less contrast: The crown, hindneck, sides of the neck, and area around the eye (including the lores) are all dark gray, with indistinct whitish areas behind the ear and on the throat. In some birds the face and sides of the neck may be quite whitish. These birds lack the distinct blackish cap and stripe down the back of the neck found in the Horned; they may also be told by the shape characters discussed below.

**Bill Shape and Color:** See the tracings of bill shape in the figure. The pointier, upturned bill of the Eared differs noticeably from the stouter bill of the Horned. There is a noticeable pale tip on the Horned Grebe’s bill; this mark is lacking in the Eared.

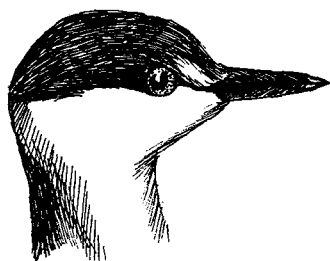
**Head and Neck Shape:** The Horned appears stouter and shorter-necked; its crown is rather flat. Horned Grebe heads appear more bulbous when viewed from above or behind. In contrast, the Eared usually shows a “bumpy” or “double-peaked” crown and a longer, slimmer neck.

**Body Shape:** Body shape characters in diving birds must be used cautiously since recent diving activity will often sleek the feathers down. Also, shape may be altered as an adaptive response to temperature and wind conditions (compare the fluffy, rounded silhouettes of coots on a freezing morning on a mountain lake with the sleek, thin, and long-necked appearance of the same species on a midsummer day at the Salton Sea!). In general, the Horned Grebe rides slightly lower on the water and is rather sleeked-down in the rear portion of the body. They rarely, if ever, show the “fluffed out” rear end that is so characteristic of Eared Grebes (see figure).

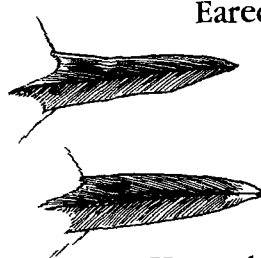
In summary, Horned Grebes should be told with caution from the similar and more widespread Eared Grebe — especially in late spring, summer and early fall, or anywhere inland. Horned show more contrast on the head, a stouter pale-tipped bill, a stouter neck and a sleeker rear-end profile. 



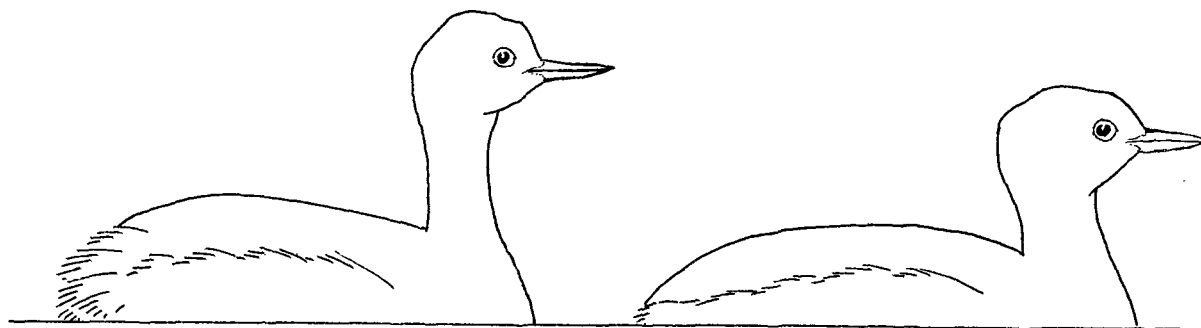
Eared



Horned



Horned



Eared Grebe

Horned Grebe



## Christmas Count Summary

The annual Christmas Bird Count ritual blends the diverse qualities of sport, social function, field ornithology and outdoor exercise; in California such counts are a unique and immensely popular experience, and this season proved no exception. Last year, some 90 Christmas Bird Counts were conducted in California alone. Eight of those counts (averaging over 40 observers per count) were located largely or entirely within Los Angeles County. The effort this year was comparable to that of last year. The count period (as determined by the National Audubon Society) ran from 19 December 1981 through 3 January 1982. Some counts at the beginning and (especially) the end of this period encountered some wind and rain, but counting conditions were generally good.

Locally, the **Los Angeles Count** (3 January) suffered somewhat from sub-par coverage but mustered a very respectable 145 species under the leadership of Coie Lakin and Ian Austin. Highlights included the sighting of a Blue-footed Booby at the Santa Monica pier (Bob Pann). This may be the first time this species has ever been sighted on a US Christmas Count. A Gray Flycatcher was present for its third consecutive winter at the Los Angeles Country Club where Kimball Garrett and Ken Kendig discovered it again.

The **Malibu Canyon Count** (20 December), compiled for the seventh consecutive year by Jean Brandt and Kimball Garrett, tallied 164 species (exactly the average for the past six years). Outstanding species included a Brant which had been present for weeks at Malibu Lagoon, a Ferruginous Hawk near Westlake (Jacob Szabo), a Black-and-White Warbler which had been present for two months along Bonsall Rd. (the Brodskins), and a good selection of seabirds from shore — including several hundred Black-vented, or Manx, Shearwaters. Bad misses included Sora and Virginia Rail, Sage Sparrow and Tricolored Blackbird; continued habitat loss may have affected these and other species.

Fred Heath and the Antelope Valley treated each other well on 19 December; in his third year of compiling the **Lancaster Count**, Fred enlisted some 20 observers who counted a record high 114 species (not bad for a count lacking a seacoast, chaparral and any native woodland). Highlights included a Sprague's Pipit which had been present since 22 November, and an incredibly late Pectoral Sandpiper (Donna Dittmann, Lancaster Sewage Ponds); both of these species were probably new to California Christmas Counts. The biggest disappointment was that no Longspur could be found among the 80,000+ Horned Larks.

Elsewhere, a remarkable **Palos Verdes Peninsula Count** (26 December) led Los

## Peregrines Make Progress All Over US

Efforts to save the endangered Peregrine Falcon are making progress from coast to coast. In the East, where the bird had been wiped out as a breeding bird, a start has been made toward establishing a new population, and in the West, the population is beginning to hold its own.

Falcon chicks are being hatched in captivity in breeding lofts of the Cornell University Peregrine Fund project in upstate New York and in Colorado, and then "hacked out" to the wild by falconry techniques allowing the birds to learn to fend for themselves. It is a cooperative venture of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and other organizations; National Audubon helped the program get started.

Cornell reports that 353 captive-bred falcons have been released to the wild in the East since 1975. Last year, two pairs of falcons released a few years earlier, mated, hatched eggs and fledged young on their own. The pairs both nested in the man-made boxes they were released from, on towers in the coastal marshes of New Jersey.

This year, four pairs nested and fledged young. Three pairs used the New Jersey nest boxes, but the fourth picked a natural site on a cliff in New Hampshire. Three other pairs were observed to be acting in a way which indicates they may return and nest in 1982, when they are sexually mature. At least 13

other unpaired subadult or adult falcons were sighted during the summer of 1981.

In the Rocky Mountain area, 50 out of 60 attempted releases were successful. Captive-bred young placed in eyries of wild falcons did not fare so well; six out of 21 were lost, and so were two adults caring for the young.

In California, there were 41 nesting pairs present in 1981. These produced 59 fledglings including 19 captively-reared nestlings placed in wild nest sites through the management efforts of the University of California, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group. The Little Butte Peregrine Eyrie in Mendocino County produced two young. Also, the only known pair in Oregon at the Crater Lake National Park fledged two captively-reared young.

Five young peregrines were returned to the wild in Southern California — two males in San Luis Obispo County near a site currently occupied by a single female. The other three birds were released on a building in Westwood (see the October 1981 TANGER), under the sponsorship of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. Two of these birds have taken up residence near UCLA where they feed on pigeons. The other one has moved south to the Bolsa Chica Wetlands near Huntington Beach.

Angeles County with about 172 species. Traditional top-runners in California continued to amass impressive totals. **San Diego** (19 December) had about 198 species. **Oceanside** (27 December) showed up its county's southern counterpart with a total of 200 species. **Morro Bay** (2 January) totalled just less than 200 species. Only the **Pt. Reyes Count** (19 December) was a disappointment among the traditional high counts; bad weather kept the total down to about 172 species.

It appears that **Santa Barbara** (2 January) will rank first in North America (north of Mexico) this year, thanks to the diversity of its habitats, the lush plantings of flowering trees and shrubs and the large and able counting crew assembled under compiler Paul Lehman. The total for that count stands at 213 — one of the highest totals in Christmas Count history. Unusual species included some stake-outs (Brown Thrasher and Ashthroated Flycatcher at Goleta) and some surprises (a female Black-chinned Hummingbird and a Warbling Vireo at Hope Ranch, and a Bald Eagle at Gibraltar Reservoir).



drawing by Rick Kline

# Birds of the Season

by Shum Suffel



November and December saw a transition from the constant change of late fall migration to the stability of winter bird populations. Unfortunately, previous forecasts of a winter invasion of northern and mountain birds proved over-optimistic. Reports along the coast were normal, except that **alcids** were fewer and **Northern Fulmars** were more numerous than last winter.

Among land birds, **Lewis' Woodpeckers** were widely reported in small numbers and **Varied Thrushes** were mostly found in the mountain canyons. There were no reports of the hoped-for winter species — Bohemian Waxwings, Evening Grosbeaks or Crossbills, and there was only one sighting of a **North-ern Shrike** (and that at Oasis in Mono County, more than 200 miles north of Los Angeles, Brian Daniels, 28 Nov.).

There were, however, several rarities and more than the usual number of overwintering migrants. A new bird for California was a male **Smew** on 19 Dec., in a park near the west end of San Mateo Bridge, which crosses South San Francisco Bay. It remained into January and has been widely seen. Despite protestations that "nobody keeps Smews in captivity", Bruce Broadbooks reminds us that there is a picture of six Smews in a backyard waterfowl collection in Seattle (AUDUBON MAGAZINE, July 1981, page 102).

A **Mottled (Scaled) Petrel** off Pt. Mugu, Ventura County, by Richard Webster on 30 Dec. gives us the first record of a healthy, flying bird in California. (They have been seen off southwestern Alaska.) Another new bird is an immature **White-tailed Hawk** at Whittier Narrows on 27 Nov. A report with sketches has been submitted to the California Bird Records Committee by John Schmitt. It may have been seen again the next day near Harbor Lake, San Pedro, by Mitch Heindel. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** on the beach in front of the Hotel del Coronado for at least a week after 8 Nov. was a southerly record, and only the fifth or sixth for the state. The adult **Black-headed Gull** returned to the Santa Ana River Channel in Fountain Valley where it wintered last year (Richard Webster, 13 Dec.).

A **Black-headed Gull** and the **Little Gull** also returned to the Stockton sewage plant for their fourth winter. Another **Little Gull** in Oceanside Harbor on 27 Dec. was either hooked or tangled in a fish line. It was transported to Sea World in San Diego where it recovered. A **Worm-eating Warbler** (rare here and usually very secretive) in Whaley Park, Long Beach (Bev McIntosh, 5 Nov.) delighted birders by occasionally feeding openly in the sycamore trees. It may winter as it was seen through December.

In Los Angeles County and vicinity, Hal and Nancy Spear, who cover the South Bay coast, had the first sightings of a **Red-necked Grebe**, and two **Black-legged Kittiwakes** at King Harbor in late Nov., plus a female Oldsquaw at the Hermosa Beach pier on 12 Dec. Also at King Harbor, Mark Hincheloe identified an immature **Franklin's Gull** on 14 Nov. which was found earlier by a lifeguard there. A pair of **Oldsquaw** was in Ballona Creek on 6 and 13 Dec., where one has wintered for the past several years, according to Bob Pann. A **Ross' Goose** at the Lancaster Sewage Plant (John Dunn *et al.*, 22 Nov.) was the fifth record for the desert areas (away from the Salton Sea). At Whittier Narrows New Lakes, Natasha Antonovitch reports three **Wood Ducks** and



a **Virginia Rail** on 24 Oct., and on 27 Dec. a female **Hooded Merganser** was found there for the third winter. A "**Cackling**" (small race) **Canada Goose**, rare this far south, was at McGrath on 1 Nov. (Henry Childs).

Wintering raptors were conspicuous in the Antelope Valley, and at Henry Childs' favorite area, the extensive, uncultivated fields east of the Chino Prison, which are crawling with ground squirrels. Here there were some 40 **Redtails**, five **Ferruginous** and two **Rough-legged Hawks** plus three **North-ern Harriers**, a **Prairie Falcon**, two or three hundred **Canada Geese** (the first 30 arrived around 1 Dec.) and 20 **Cattle Egrets**. Another **Prairie Falcon** stayed near the Torrance Airport through Oct. (Dave Roelens). Peregrine reports have increased each year recently, probably thanks to California Fish and Game's protection of eyries and captive propagation. Peregrines were seen at the Ballona Wetlands (Henry Childs, 31 Oct.) at Pt. Fermin (John Ivanov, 10 Nov.) and near U.C. Irvine (John DeModena, 21 Nov.)

At the Arcadia Arboretum, a **Merlin** perched in the same tree used by the Merlin that spent the last two winters there, but it was last seen on 18 Nov. being harassed by a Cooper's Hawk (Barbara Cohen, 4 Nov.). Another **Merlin** was seen near Caltech in Pasadena on 31 Dec. (Chuck Hamilton). A **Bay-winged (Harris) Hawk** in the Sepulveda Basin (Dave Grindell, 11 Nov.) was certainly an escapee; these birds are sometimes kept by falconers.

**Lesser Golden Plovers** dominated the shore bird scene (except for the Bar-tailed Godwit of course). They were seen at the Edwards Air Force Base marsh (Lee Jones, *et al.*, 1 Nov.) and at Marina del Rey (Starr Saphir, 8 Nov.). One was specifically identified as being of the *fulva* race, at Manhattan Beach (Arthur Howe, 27 Nov.). Fifty or more **Mountain Plovers** were west of Lancaster (Hal Baxter, 24 Nov.). A call to Bernard Wilets in Pacific Palisades revealed that the Whip-poor-will, which had wintered there for the past two years, had not returned to year's end. Two or more **Chaetura** swifts were noted in a flock of White-throats at Harbor Lake on 28 Nov. by the Heindels, Tom, Jo and Mitch. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Whaley Park, Long Beach, appeared to be of the eastern race, *S. v. varius* (Doug Willick, 22 Nov.). The only report of a wintering **Cassin's Kingbird** was a single bird at Prado Basin where small numbers have wintered previously (Henry Childs, 4 Dec.). He also found a **Vermillion Flycatcher** there. Another male **Vermillion** was on the Brookside Golf Course in Pasadena (Ro Quinn, and also Chuck Murdoch, from 28 Dec.). There have been no reports of the Coues' Flycatcher or the Olive-sided Flycatcher that have wintered in Griffith Park in the past two years.

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** found at Peck Pit in El Monte (Brian Keelin, 28 Dec.) was a rare bird in winter. Brian Daniels' coverage of Long Beach Recreation Park paid off with a second **Worm-eating Warbler** on 6 Nov., two **Winter Wrens** after 7 Nov. two **Gray-headed Juncos** after 21 Nov. and a **White-throated Sparrow** after 7 Nov. Rare on the coastal slope was a **Sage Thrasher** at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (Mickey Long, 2 Nov.). The discovery of five Sprague's Pipits in the Antelope Valley by Jon Dunn, co-leading the LAAS field trip on 22 Nov., caused a stir among local birders, who saw and photographed these pipits at close range as late as early January.

Late migrant and overwintering vireos and warblers received special attention. One of these was a **Solitary Vireo** in Gail Warwick's yard in Silverlake on 20 Nov. Two **Black-and-White Warblers** along Bonsall Rd., Malibu, were in full song on 8 Nov. and were still present on 20 Dec. (Kimball Garrett, *et al.*). Kimball also found **Tennessees** on the Pepperdine campus in Malibu on 12 and 15 Nov., and on the UCLA campus on 19 and 20 Nov. Both a male and female **Black-throated Green** were at Harbor Lake on 7 Nov. (Mitch Heindel and Jerry Johnson). A **Chestnut-sided** was apparently wintering in Riverside (Cecil Patterson), but a **Painted Redstart** on the campus of Pomona College (Bill Griffin, 12 Dec.) could not be found again. A female **Scarlet Tanager** at Pt. Fermin Park on 8 Nov. was one of the few records for LA County (Brian Daniels and Mitch Heindel).

A female-plumaged **Lazuli Bunting** at the Arcadia Arboretum on 17 and 18 Nov.

(Harold Baxter, Barbara Cohen and Arnold Small) was carefully identified, as there are "no substantiated records from Nov. through March" (Garrett and Dunn, 1981). A **Green-tailed Towhee** at Whaley Park, Long Beach (Ellen Strauss, 24 Nov.) remained through Dec. as did the one at Whittier Narrows (Natasha Antonovitch, 27 Nov.). A pair of **Western Tanagers** were in Whaley Park on 23 Dec. (Phil Sayre). In the Antelope Valley, the LAAS trip on 22 Nov. found one **McCown's** and five **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** (Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett).

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To the south of us in Orange and San Diego Counties, reports were so numerous that only a few can be cited. A **Tricolored (Louisiana) Heron** was seen at Bolsa Chica (23 Dec., David Holdridge) and is still being seen. And the **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** remained at San Elijo Lagoon, San Diego County, through Dec. One wonders whether the **Wood Stork** at Lake Elsinore on 12 Dec. could be the same bird that wandered around LA County about a year ago. An immature **Whistling Swan** stopped briefly at Upper Newport Bay (Barbara Barton, 30 Nov.). There were at least five sightings of Ospreys in Orange County and on 28 Oct. there was a **Merlin** (Sylvia Ranney). A **Parasitic Jaeger** was seen from Dana Pt.



(Brad Schram, 26 Nov.); two **Franklin's Gulls** were in the Santa Ana River Channel and three more were at Lake Elsinore on 12 Dec.

The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (*S. u. varius*) that spent last winter in Silverado Canyon, returned in early Dec. An **Eastern Phoebe** was in Huntington Beach Central Park (where one spent last winter). **Gray Flycatchers** (the most likely wintering *Empidonax*) were seen in San Juan Capistrano (Brad Schram) and in Huntington Beach Central Park. Two **Virginia's Warblers** were in their traditional place in Newport High School Ecology Park into Dec. **Scott's Orioles** seem to prefer the southern slope of the Santa Ana Mountains, as four wintered at the Ramakrishna Monastery last year, and several are reportedly back this winter. There are also two or three adults at Santiago Oaks Park some 15 miles to the northwest. Male **Summer Tanagers** were in Huntington Beach Central Park after 13 Nov. (Steve Ganley) and at the Oak Canyon Nature Center, Anaheim, where one wintered last year (Doug Willick).

To the north of us, there were many noteworthy reports. The most exciting was a **White-eared Hummingbird** at Shandon in San Luis Obispo County on 21 Dec. It was found by Eben McMillan, long-time resident and respected observer. Unfortunately, it could not be located the next day. A **Merlin** (of the dark race) was in Camino Real Park, Ventura (Onik Arian, 29 Dec.). Three **Lesser Golden Plovers** (two *fulva* and one *dominica*) were on the sod farms east of Oxnard (Doug Willick, 1 Nov.) Two **Ruffs** near Santa Maria were the only ones reported (Paul Lehman). A **Laughing Gull** (unusual near the coast) returned for its second winter at Laguna Lake near San Luis Obispo, and a **Franklin's Gull** was at the San Luis Obispo sewage ponds, in early Dec. Bob Pann's Christmas Day climb from Pt. Mugu to La Jolla Valley was rewarded with four or more **Lewis' Woodpeckers**. Two **Brown Thrashers** (one at a feeder) have been in the San Luis Obispo area since Nov. A dull immature **Cape May Warbler** was on the campus of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo (Curtis Marantz, 10-12 Dec.), and a **Canada Warbler** was found in Montanna de Oro State Park on 5 Nov. (Don Sterba). Other warblers in the area were **Black-and-Whites**, **Virginia's**, **Parula**, **Black-throated Green**, **Blackburnians**, **Chestnut-sided**, **Palm** and **American Redstarts**. It is good to see this rich area receiving the coverage it deserves with the help of three LAAS members — John McDonald, Don Sterba and Curtis Marantz. A pair of **Orchard Orioles** was

in Camino Real Park, Ventura, where an adult male wintered last year (Onik Arian). He also had about five "**Bullocks**" **Orioles** there. LAAS stalwarts Barbara Elliott, Dorothy Dimsdale and Ruth Lohr outpointed the Santa Barbara locals (not easy to do) by finding a **Scott's Oriole** on Oak Road, Montecito, where the **Grace's Warbler** is wintering for the third time.

The deserts, despite minimum coverage as compared with five or ten years ago, were very productive. A **Ross' Goose** at Tecopa, Inyo County, was unusual east of the Sierra (Doug Willick, 8 Nov.). A **Northern Goshawk** was at Oasis, Mono County, where they are sometimes seen when driven out of the nearby mountains (Bill Wagner, 23 Oct.). Harper Dry Lake, northwest of Barstow, produced two **Ferruginous Hawks** (one light and one dark-phase), a **Prairie Falcon** and a **Merlin** for Henry Childs on 21 Nov.

**Band-tailed Pigeons** were seen on the high desert, where they are casual. There were three at Yucca Valley (Bill Wagner, 14 Nov.), and one at Morongo Valley (Jerry Lacy, 25 Nov.). A male Broad-billed Hummingbird at Ione Arnold's feeder in Blythe during Oct. and Nov. was a first for that area. Another **Sprague's Pipet** was found north of Needles on 27 Nov. (Kimball Garrett). Doug Willick, *et al.* found a Philadelphia Vireo at Furnace Creek Ranch on 8 Nov. It was the third sighting there, and the latest interior record (Garrett and Dunn, 1981). A **Magnolia Warbler** at Oasis on 23 Oct. was a little late in that frigid area (Bill Wagner). **Rusty Blackbirds** are more or less expected at Furnace Creek Ranch in the late fall, and a male was there on 7 and 8 Nov. (Doug Willick). **Harris Sparrows**, also expected, were at Deep Springs (Brian Daniels, 28 Nov.), and at Furnace Creek Ranch, (Ellen Strauss, 8 Dec.) along with three **White-throated Sparrows**. The only **Tree Sparrows** reported were at near-by Mesquite Springs on 6-7 Dec. (Ellen Strauss). A few **Longspurs** were found along the Colorado River — two McCown's and about 40 **Chestnut-collareds** were near Blythe (Paul Lehman, 28/29 Nov.).

That's the summary of two productive early winter months. What can we expect for February? More of the same, but those hoped-for birds may still show up. And there are always year lists to be started and firmed up. Who knows what choice bird might show up, maybe right in your back yard. This is the fascination of birding.



Send any interesting bird sightings to Shum Suffel, 1105 No. Holliston, Pasadena, California 91104.



# CALENDAR

## LAAS Pelagic Trips

**SUNDAY, MAY 2 — San Pedro past Santa Barbara to Osborne Banks.** 5:30 am to 6:30 pm. 44 spaces plus 2 leaders: Fred Heath and Bruce Broadbooks. Take the *Vantuna* (coffee and tea available, no galley) approximately 45 miles out to sea and up the coast. Among the birds to be seen at this time of year: Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed, Sooty, Black-vented Shearwaters; Red-billed Tropicbird; Sabine's Gull; Horned and Tufted Puffins; Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets; Common Murre. Cost: \$23.

**SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 22-23 — Ventura Marina to San Miguel Island and Cortez Ridge.** 9:00 pm Sat. to 4:00 pm Sun. Sail at 1 am Sun. 48 spaces plus 2 leaders: Fred Heath and Larry Norris. Take the *Ranger 85* (galley) approximately 50 miles out to sea up the coast. Among the birds to be seen this time of year: Black-footed Albatross; Shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Jaegers; Black and Ashy Storm-Petrels; Xanthus Murrelets; Puffins; Sabine's Gulls; Artic Terns. Cost: \$40.

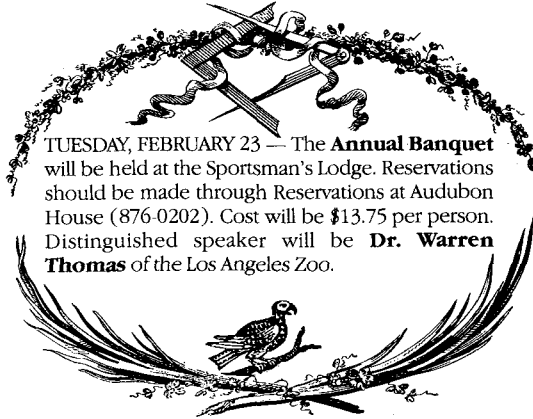
**SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 28-29 — Ventura to Cortez Ridge.** Departure and details the same as the 22-23 May trip. Leaders: Herb and Olga Clarke. Among the birds to be seen this time of year: South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger; Shearwaters; Red-billed Tropicbird; Least and Black Storm-Petrels; Craveri's Murrelet. Cost: \$40.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 — San Pedro to San Clemente Island.** 5:30 am to 6:30 pm. 44 spaces and 2 leaders: Phil Sayre and Olga Clarke. Take the *Vantuna* (coffee and tea available, no galley) approximately 30 miles out to sea along the southern coast. Birds to be seen this time of year include: Long-tailed Jaeger; Shearwaters; Least and White-rumped Leach's Storm-Petrels; Red-billed Tropicbird; Craveri's Murrelet. Cost: \$25.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 — San Pedro to Santa Barbara Isl.** 6 am to 5 pm. Take the *Vantuna* approximately 45 miles along the Coast. Leaders to be announced. Birds to be expected include: Albatross, Black-vented Shearwater; Alcids. Price: \$20.

All prices are tentative and subject to fuel cost increases. Reserve spaces early. To take part in these pelagic trips, send your reservations with the names and telephone numbers of all members of your party along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Reservations c/o Ruth Lohr  
Los Angeles Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90046  
(213) 876-0202 (Tues-Sat, 10-3)



**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23 — The Annual Banquet** will be held at the Sportsman's Lodge. Reservations should be made through Reservations at Audubon House (876-0202). Cost will be \$13.75 per person. Distinguished speaker will be **Dr. Warren Thomas** of the Los Angeles Zoo.

### Audubon Bird Reports:

Los Angeles (213) 874-1318

Santa Barbara (805) 964-8240

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.

## WESTERN Tanager

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**LAY-OUT CONSULTANT** Dana Gardner

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Audubon membership (local and national) is \$25 per year (individual), \$32 (family), \$15.00 (student) or \$17 (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 (Bulk Rate) or \$12.00 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

## Make A Difference

Your opinions matter! All political insiders agree that letters to public officials are far more influential than the average person thinks. If we accept this judgement of the experts, why not take advantage of it? LA Audubon has started a letter-writing program to help produce a flurry of letters when we feel strongly about important environmental issues.

Over 50 people have signed up for this project and have already begun writing. A good start, but the more the merrier. You will be notified by telephone, given a succinct statement of the issue and told where to write. We ask for one or two letters a month — short, to the point, and in your own words. If you want to join up, call Sandy Wohlgemuth at 344-8531 or write to him at 19354 Calvert St., Reseda 91335. Make a difference!

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6 — Beginners!** Come join **Ian Austin** (879-9700) or 398-9390) at **Upper Newport Bay**. The group will meet at the upper end of the Bay at 8 a.m. and will finish at noon at the Newporter Hotel.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9 — General Meeting** at Plummer Park, 8 p.m. For the third year in a row, this general meeting is scheduled to acquaint members with the Board of LAAS and to facilitate discussion between members about LAAS matters. This year it is urgent that everyone come to discuss the future of Audubon House (see Jean Brandt's article).

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13 — Bird the Ballona Wetlands** with **Bob and Roberta Shanman** (545-2867 after 6). Meet at 8 a.m. at the Pacific Ave. bridge. Take 90 West (Marina Fwy) to its end at Culver Blvd. Continue west on Culver; turn north onto Pacific Ave. and continue to bridge.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27 — David White** will lead a morning trip to **Whittier Narrows**. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center.

## Coming Events

There will be a trip to **Pt. Mugu** in March. Only 20 people will be allowed on the base for this trip. Reservations on a first-come, first-serve basis by calling Reservations at Audubon House.

There will be a trip to **Starr Ranch** in May. Reservations will be necessary to participate in this trip, although there will be no restriction on the number of participants.