WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society Volume 49 Number 2 October 1982

The California Condor?

by Harrison Truitt Starr

Illustration by Lee Jones

The history of the California Condor's decline and the efforts to save it are beset by conflicts, not only between those old enemies, exploiters versus conservators of the earth, but much more tragic, conflicts between conservators fighting among themselves about who has the proper scientific method, and/or the right philosophical attitude to effect that salvation. There are two facts, however, that all conservators agree on. The first is the awe-inspiring majestic power of the bird as it soars vast distances across the sky on its great unmoving 9-foot wings, like a being powered by some unearthly force. The second is that the birds' population has declined drastically in the last 30 years, from about 60 in the 1940's, to less than 30 today. That decline, coupled with a recent grievous accident, has focused and intensified the conflict to the boiling point, the outcome of which will now determine whether the condor lives or dies.

Let us take up these issues in ascending importance. Why so much fuss over a vulture, some ask. Couldn't we do better by spending our time and money elsewhere, on larger issues such as acid rain, atmospheric inversions, and nuclear proliferation which affect all life on earth? No, others answer, because to act on one issue does not preclude vigorous action on the others. In fact, they are interrelated, because to save the condor, we must save a viable part of its extensive range, and by so doing, we are working to save the whole environment. The money? Small by today's billion dollar standards. In actual research and fieldwork, $300,000 a year over a period of 25 years equals $7,500,000. Most agree that the effort is worth it . . . which brings them to the central issue, and its dividing line, "hands-on" the birds or "hands-off."

"Hands-on" means: That because we don't know enough about the condors' decline, extinction is sure unless a captive breeding program is initiated immediately to develop a stock with which to replenish the wild population, that pataginal (leading wing edge) tagging of wild birds for radio telemetry is necessary to increase our knowledge of their lives and the reasons for their decline, and to consequently develop a knowledge of the specifics of their habitat.

"Hands-off" means: First and foremost, the vigorous protection of the habitat as a key to a self-sufficient regeneration of the wild population. The proponents believe we know enough about the causes of the condors' decline: i.e., shooting, poisoning, nesting disturbances and encroachment and degradation of habitat by man. They firmly believe that the risks of the "hands-on" approach are excessive and a threat to the birds' natural ability to recover, and that there is great doubt that captive-bred birds can be successfully introduced into the wild.

There are persons of proven qualifications and great integrity on both sides. Who they

are, and their words on the subject follow.

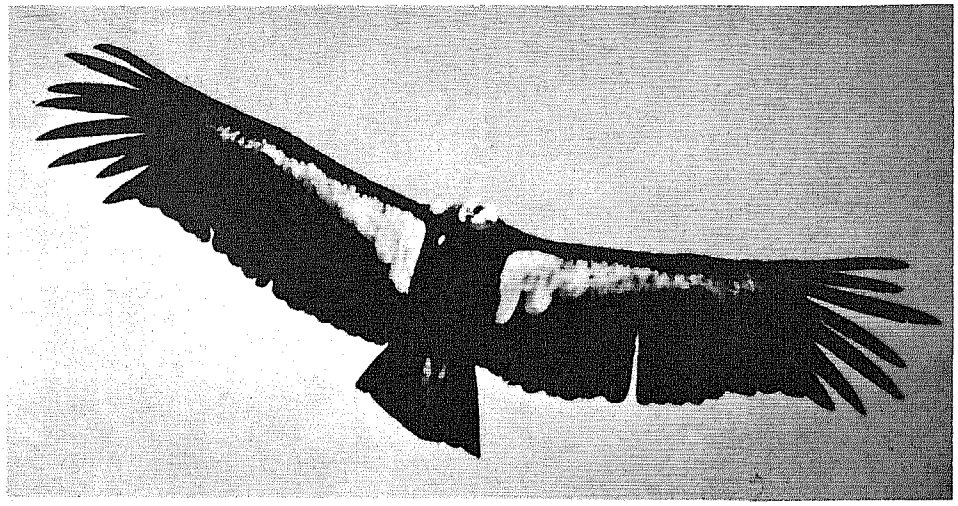
The late Carl Koford, a Ph.D. in zoology, University of California at Berkeley, spent three years in condor fieldwork in the 1940's and published the "The California Condor" in 1953[1], a book long considered by many to be the bible on the species.

In 1979, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of its Endangered Species Program, in conjunction with the National Audubon Society, proposed a "hands-on" Condor Contingency Plan, Koford responded.

> "When the health of an individual fails, the normal course of action is to review life history, examine current conditions and symptoms, diagnose cause of abnormalities, prescribe remedies, and monitor the course of treatment. The condor population is like a delicate organism, and the same course is logical. But the capture plan largely neglects the first three steps and prescribes heroic measures which have ugly side effects... These dramatic artificial methods seem too expensive and controversial for efficient action. And then, overall benefits are doubtful, whereas their esthetic and biological harm to the wild population seems certain."
>
> "Do we want to replace wild condors with cage-bred hand-raised birds? A wild condor is much more than feathers, flesh, and genes. Its behavior results not only from its anatomy and germ plasm but from its long cultural heritage, learned by each bird from previous generations through several years of immature life. A cage-raised bird can never be more than a partial replicate of a wild condor. If we cannot preserve condors in the wild through understanding their environmental relations, we have already lost the battle and may be no more successful in preserving mankind."[2]

Dr. Telford Work, Professor of Infectious and Tropical Diseases, University of California at Los Angeles, studied the condor in the field in 1945 as a sequel to studies of breeding birds of prey, including the other California cathartid, the Turkey Vulture.

> "The objective of survival by habitat preservation and protection so idealistically and sincerely mandated by the expertise of Carl Koford, Alden Miller and the McMillans* and substantially implemented under the strength of John Baker and the National Audubon Society, has failed. The species' continued population decline in recent decades reflects the impact of human population growth in California from seven million to twenty three million. Whether habitat shrinkage, poisoning, shooting, insufficient carrion or obsolescence — or a combination of these — is the cause, it appears essential to rescue the precious gene stock by one or several means which have been proposed. (Captive breeding.) That a creature of such aesthetic and emotional impact should be allowed to disappear without effective attempts at intercession by human intelligence denigrates the one quality of the human species which is supposed to lift man above his dependent companions in the vertebrate creation."[3]



Photograph by Herb Clarke

Ian McMillan is a lifelong rancher in condor country, a tall, spare man, the kind Levi's were invented for. In the 1940's, he aided Koford's research and in 1963-1964, he and his brother Eben conducted for National Audubon an extensive study of the bird, which led to his book, *Man and the California Condor*.[4]

> "We have no real, genuine effort [to protect the condors' habitat]... You go out today, they're still spreading the 1080 poison over the ranges of the condor — with its being questionable from the time we made our study (1963-1964). The big Enduro Motorcycle Race goes on right here in our own condor country, with the Forest Service promoting it — and Ballinger Canyon — this is a known foraging range of the condors and BLM has set it up as a place for the operation of these off-road vehicles, pouring over into adjacent National Forest Land. These are just some of the things I point to to show that there's been no real effort. The condor is just one part of our local ecosystem that's going."
>
> "You take these quail here on the ranch. The wild coveys make it on their own, those near the house get supplemental feed. One year I cut feeding a little early, it got cold again and, in a few days, they were starving, weak. Flightless. The wild coveys knew where to go. A place they might only use once in ten years to survive. These are things you think about when you start talking about taking the condor captive, which of all species most symbolizes wildness, symbolizes those subtle workings of survival more dramatically than any other species I know."
>
> "The consideration of what is natural and what is artificial hasn't been given enough concern in this. I don't think there's been enough philosophy, enough real basic ecology represented in these decisions as there should be."
>
> "The condor has been one of the leading symbols of survival, but even if it goes, there are other animals, other symbols coming up. And as they come, one by one, as they come into line for artificial propagation, are we going to have a great big cage for the whole thing and end up with ourselves right in there with 'em?"[5]

Lloyd Kiff is Curator of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, a West Virginia country boy, an ornithologist from the age of 2, and with Ed Harrison (a founder of the Western Foundation), coauthor of a forthcoming book on the California Condor.

> "The non-hands-on people seem to have no suggestions that would increase the number of condors. By simply saving habitat, that's not going to increase the number of condors. They don't have the reproductive capacity to increase. It's simply the demography of the species. This can be shown by even the most elementary student of life tables. A species with an intrinsic reproductive rate that's so low once you get down to that level (20 birds) it would take a hundred years for them to get back up to a hundred birds, even given an ideal situation. So we favor propositions that will increase the number of birds. Captive breeding is one of them."[6]

Back and forth the argument goes, Koford and McMillan, a scientist and a rancher, both with extensive condor experience, firmly believing that the habitat's protection is of primary importance to the birds' ability to survive by its own power, and something more, something underlying this ability, an almost mystical belief in the power of wildness.

Work, a physician and teacher, and Kiff, an experienced field biologist, are concerned that it's too late to rely on habitat alone. There is too much decline and only active captive breeding can save the species. Let us listen to two more voices, both deeply embroiled in present decisions concerning the condor.

David Phillips has a B.S. in Environmental Biology, is Wildlife Program Coordinator for Friends of the Earth, and is co-editor of their very pro hands-off book, *Captive or Forever Free? The Condor Question.*

> "I have no grudge against Noel† in terms of his biological background. I do think that the species he's studied tend to be very, very hands on. For a lot of things that may work. It happens to be our contention that the condor is one species that wouldn't benefit by that approach. That's where the difference is."[7]

Noel Snyder is a quiet, very sincere, determined man in his early 40's with over 20 years of field experience. He is a Ph.D. in Ornithology from Cornell and Project Leader for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's California Field Station.

"Another misconception. The captive bird is instantly changed and you'll never get it back to the wild. To us, this is just a matter of lack of information. We were participating in the Andean Condor Release Program in Peru.

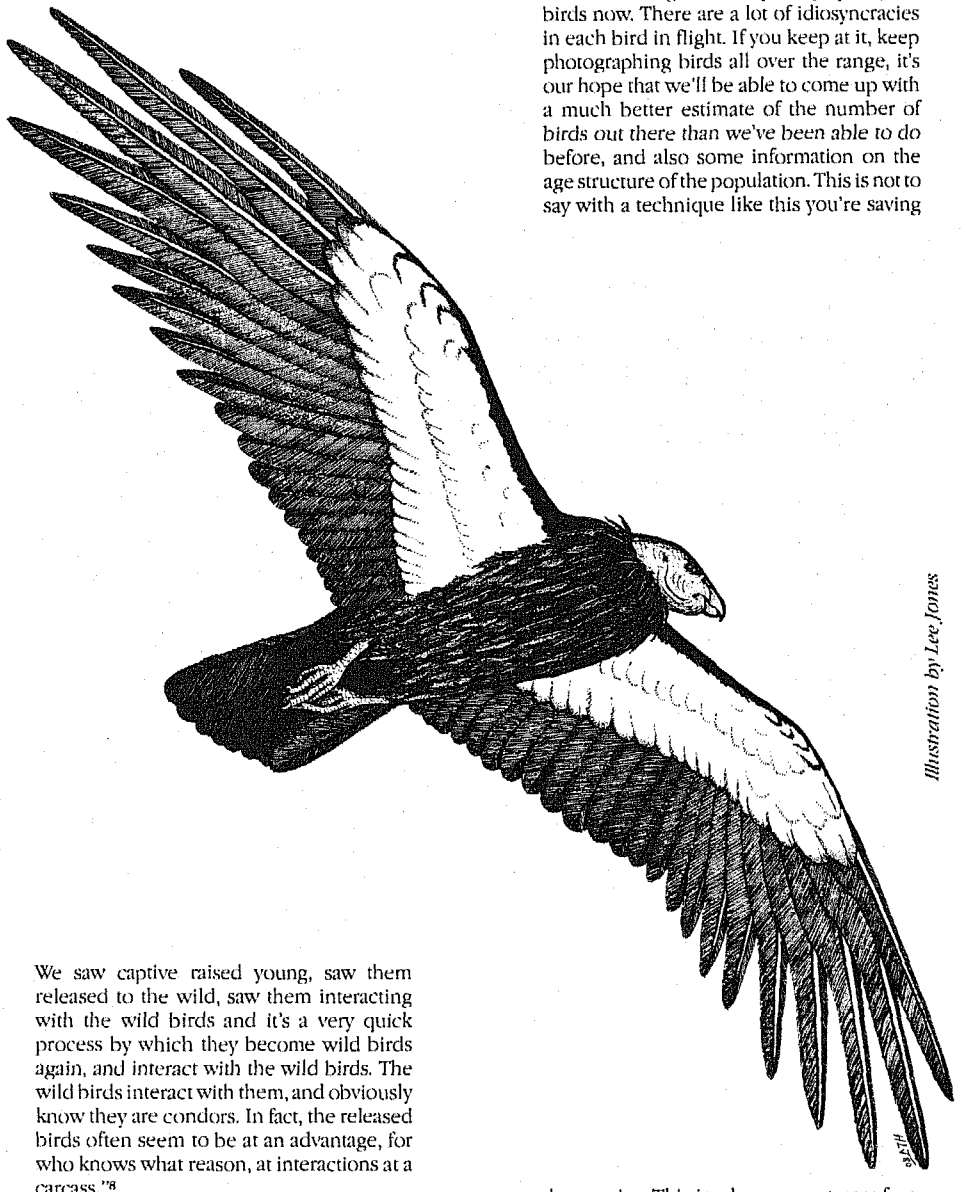


Illustration by Lee Jones

We saw captive raised young, saw them released to the wild, saw them interacting with the wild birds and it's a very quick process by which they become wild birds again, and interact with the wild birds. The wild birds interact with them, and obviously know they are condors. In fact, the released birds often seem to be at an advantage, for who knows what reason, at interactions at a carcass."[8]

David Phillips:

"The focus of research in the proposed program is on breeding condors in captivity. Experiments are proceeding with capture methods, double clutching of captive Andean condors (forcing a condor to lay two eggs by removing one for incubation), and studies of the effects of radio telemetry devices on captive and free-flying vultures. Though this augments the general body of knowledge of condors, important and long-neglected studies pertaining to the survival in the wild of the California Condor has been given lower priority. Many historic nest sites have not been checked for evidence of reproductive activity and nesting success. Intensified observation is needed, by methods that do not disturb the condors, to provide better data on the present status of the wild population, unburdened by the trauma engendered by hands-on biological technicians."[9]

Noel Snyder:

"We're doing a lot with photographing the birds now. There are a lot of idiosyncracies in each bird in flight. If you keep at it, keep photographing birds all over the range, it's our hope that we'll be able to come up with a much better estimate of the number of birds out there than we've been able to do before, and also some information on the age structure of the population. This is not to say with a technique like this you're saving the species. This is where we get very frustrated. It's a very useful technique — it's going to teach us something, but it's not telling us what the limiting factors are for the population out there. Why it's declining? It's not going to tell us that. And yet, you have people out there who are so afraid of anything where you touch a bird that they'll leap at a development like this and say, 'Well, see, you don't need to do radio telemetry, you don't need to do captive breeding. See what you can do with traditional "techniques".' They really don't understand what the limits of these techniques are."

"We're pleased as can be to be developing these things that are going to help, but they're not enough to do the job. For example, we've been watching nests intensively since we've gotten out here and we have full-time coverage on active nests — every one we can find. We learn a lot from this. But we don't learn everything there is to learn, even about nesting biology, by watching nests because a lot of the things that relate to nesting success are actually taking place away from the nest, where you can't see it because you can't follow the birds. They go much too far, and too unpredictably, to give you an example. Mostly, we're seeing birds that seem to be relatively successful in nesting. We're not detecting big reproductive problems at this point. But the sample size is still small."

"But in the last month, we have a pair we've been watching and one adult disappears on us for 3 weeks. And there was tremendous concern generated over this, because normally adults are in there every other day feeding their chicks. So the chick is getting fed on the average of every 30 hours, by one or the other of the adults, and for one adult to disappear for 3 weeks is extremely unusual and we'd never seen anything like it. We very much feared we'd lost an adult. And yet after 3 weeks, that adult came back."

"We don't know what was going on. We suspect that there was something very odd and perhaps detrimental. For example, the bird might have been poisoned, and went through a recovery phase. Perhaps it was, for some reason, having a great deal of difficulty finding food for a long period of time. If that bird had a radio on it, of course, we'd have the potential for answering these questions."[10]

Who are we to believe? Those who say, "Don't touch the bird, you'll just drive it further towards extinction!" Or those who say, "Unless we touch the bird, using all our scientific skills, it's doomed to extinction." Or, among the complex strands of the argument, is a synthesis possible? Or even necessary or desirable?

By 1979, the agencies legally in control of what's done to or for the condor and its habitat (the California State Commission of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its Endangered Species Program, The National Audubon Society, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management) after listening to these arguments decided to establish the Cooperative California Condor Conservation Program in December, and by early 1980, the Condor Research Center in Ventura County was in operation, headed by Noel Snyder and John Ogden, Senior Staff Biologist of National Audubon, who like Noel, had a good deal of field experience.

The program they planned was definitely hands-on. Among its proposals were the following: (1) The capture of five breeding pairs of birds in order to build up the genetic stock; (2) The capture and radio tagging of two birds

on a one month trial basis, then, all going well, the tagging of eight more birds in increments by the end of 1982. Depending on good results, further tagging of the population until all birds capable of carrying a radio are tagged; and (3) The entry of fledgling nests for the purpose of chick examination.

Many condor people at this time believed that it was very possible that the condors were not breeding, so when two fledgling nests were discovered in mid-1980, the biologists were both pleasantly surprised and anxious to obtain as much information as possible. Lloyd Kiff has said that the five most important moments in the history of the condors' decline are: (1) The advent of Man on the North American continent and his killing of condors for religious purposes; (2) The arrival of Lewis and Clark at the mouth of the Columbia River where they shot condors as both curiosities and specimens and presaged European man's westward surge; (3) The assault of modern technological man in the forms of hunter, egg collector and agriculturalist from the 1870's to the 1920's, and beyond; (4) The failure of the San Diego Zoo to act effectively on its 1950's permit to capture a breeding pair of condors to build a captive reserve; and (5) The grievous accident that I referred to in the opening of this article — the death of a condor chick while being weighed and measured by an assistant to the field biologists on June 30, 1980, just as the Condor Recovery Program was getting under way.

If there had been arguments before, strong feelings, conflict and strife concerning how best to handle the California Condor, they were nothing compared to the tempest now aroused, which brought the program to almost a complete halt, while the opposing sides grouped for a legislative showdown.

END — PART I

[1]C. Koford (Dover, 1953).
[2]"Forever Free," C. Koford, Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society Newsletter, 1979.
[3]Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Newsletter 53, Spring 1981.
[4]E.P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1968.
[5]Interview with author, August 6, 1982.
[6]Interview with author, July 29, 1982.
[7]Telephone conversation with author, August 26, 1982.
[8]Interview with author, August 7, 1982.
[9]*Capture or Forever Free? The Condor Question*, FOE, San Francisco, 1981.
[10]Interview with author, August 7, 1982.
*Miller — Director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California; The McMillans — brothers Ian and Eben, ranchers and naturalists, authors and long-time students of the condor.
†Noel Snyder, Project Leader, Condor Research Center.

The Desert Sparrows: Black-throated and Sage

by Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett

Illustrations by Kimball Garrett

In the arid open scrub habitats of the southwest are two widespread sparrows of the genus *Amphispiza,* the Black-throated Sparrow *(A. bilineata)* and the Sage Sparrow *(A. belli).* (A third species, the Five-striped Sparrow [*A. quinquestriata*] barely makes it north to the Arizona/Sonora boundary.) In light of the tendency of both species (especially Black-throated) to wander outside of their normal range, and the confusing similarity of the juvenal plumages of these two species, a detailed discussion should be of interest to the birder. Furthermore, the Sage Sparrow shows interesting geographical variation, and observers should be aware of the declining status of its coastal and (especially) insular races.

The standard popular field guides treat adult Sage and Black-throated Sparrows adequately (although the guide by Robbins, *et al,* shows a Sage Sparrow well beyond the dark extreme of the species). True to form, the guides by Pough and Hoffman offer the best accounts. Our discussion will augment the material found in the standard field guides, with an emphasis on the identification of juveniles.

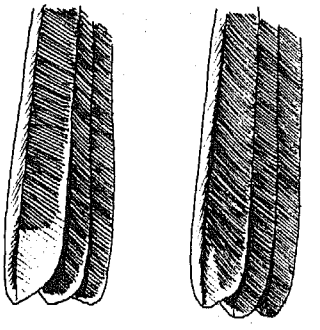
The **Black-throated Sparrow** breeds almost throughout our deserts, although it avoids sparsely and simply-vegetated lowlands and flats. Small populations even exist west to the area around the junction of Ventura, Kern, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties. This species is rather migratory; the vast majority leave our deserts during the winter and those that remain are primarily encountered in the succulent scrub of the western edges of the deserts (e.g. Anza-Borrego State Park). Vagrants are regularly noted west to the coast in fall, and there are many spring records for birds west and north of the normal range. It should be noted that *Amphispiza* in coastal areas (away from the breeding range of the coastal subspecies of the Sage Sparrow) are likely to be Black-throated.

Sage Sparrows breed in areas of sagebrush *(Artemesia)* and saltbush *(Atriplex)* on our northern and western deserts and adjacent mountains (up, for example, to the area around Baldwin Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains). This applies to the pale desert race, *A. b. canescens.* The dark coastal race, *A. b. belli,* is resident locally in low, arid chaparral dominated by chamise *(Adenostoma fasciculatum);* it is locally common in the coastal ranges (e.g. the canyons north of Valencia/Saugus), although it has undoubtedly declined through destruction of habitat. The San Clemente Island race, *A. b. clementeae,* is endemic to that island, and has declined to a dangerously low level because of habitat destruction by goats. Pale Sage Sparrows of the races *canescens* and *nevadensis* (the latter breeding in the Great Basin areas east of California) occur through a large portion of our desert lowlands in winter. The nominate coastal race is quite sedentary. See Garrett and Dunn's "Birds of Southern California, Status and Distribution" for a more thorough discussion of the distribution of both species.

Adult Black-throated Sparrows are unmistakable; the diamond-shaped black throat patch and the dark cheek patch bordered above and below by white stripes are unique.

Head of adult Black-throated Sparrow

Black-throateds may perch conspicuously, especially when singing, but spend most of their time within or at the foot of desert shrubs. When on the ground they move about by short hops. The song is a pleasant short musical trill, preceded by a couple of high notes. Typical call notes (throughout the year) are high tinkling sounds.



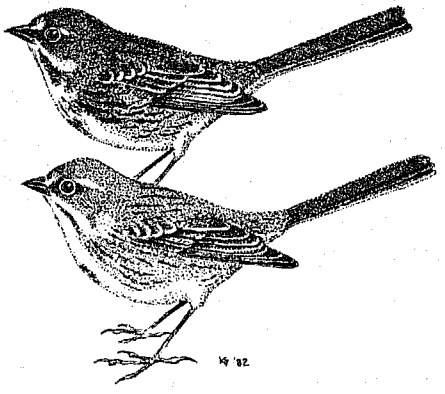
Tail patterns of adult Black-throated (left) and Sage (right) Sparrows. Note the more extensive white in the Black-throated tail.

Note the tail pattern of Black-throateds illustrated in the figure. The narrow outer web of the outer rectrix is white, as is the tip (about ¼") of the inner web. There are also narrow white tips and margins to the next two pairs of rectrices. Some individuals (especially juveniles and worn adults) may show less white.

Adult Sage Sparrows differ from adult Black-throateds in the following ways: (1) they are larger; (2) they lack the black throat, but instead have a variable dark malar stripe below the white moustache; (3) there is an irregular dark "stickpin" in the center of the breast; (4) the cinnamon-tinged sides and flanks are streaked; (5) the wing coverts, tertials, and

secondaries are edged with cinnamon; and (6) the white supercilium of the Black-throated is replaced by a white loral spot and a narrow white eye-ring. As the figure shows, the tail of the Sage Sparrow has the white almost entirely restricted to the outer web of the outer rectrix (and juveniles have this white replaced by pale brown). But even before these plumage differences are noted, the Sage Sparrow should be easily told by its behavior. As Phillips *et al* note in "Birds of Arizona" (1964), " ... the Sage Sparrow is a relief. He runs around waving his long black tail in the air above his back, so anyone can identify him who can tell a sparrow's beak from a wren's. Even better, he does this on open ground with good visibility". This habit of flipping and raising the long, contrastingly dark tail (like a miniature thrasher) sets the Sage apart from all other local sparrows.

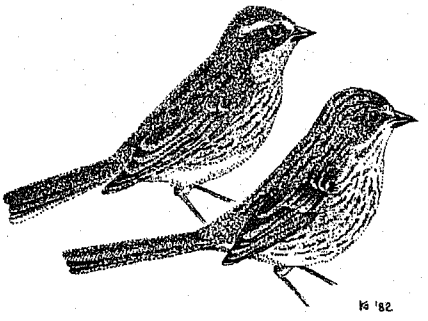
The song of the Sage Sparrow is a jerky, finch-like series, roughly "cheedle-chee-cheepy-chee"; there is often a tinkling quality to the higher notes. Typical calls are junco-like twitters and tinkles (slightly, but not strikingly, different from the calls of the Black-throated).



Adult Sage Sparrows of the races belli (above) *and canescens* (below). *Note the darker overall coloration and thicker dark malar strip in* belli.

While many or most Sage Sparrows certainly cannot be allocated to subspecies in the field, it should be noted that the coastal chaparral race *A. b. belli* differs from the interior races in being considerably darker gray-brown on the upperparts (with the fine streaks on the back largely obscured), having a thicker dark malar stripe, and in having a darker and more extensive wash of color on the streaked sides and flanks. *Belli* also shows less white in the outer tail feathers. In this last regard, and in the darker overall color and more extensive cinnamon on the flanks, note how the plumage pattern of the coastal Sage Sparrow (*vis a vis* the desert races) parallels the variation found in the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher *(Polioptila melanura)*. The interior races *canescens* and *nevadensis* are essentially identical to one another; the former may be distinguished in the hand by its slightly smaller size and darker coloration. The San Clemente Island race is similar to *belli,* but is somewhat paler and browner in at least the juvenal plumages. See the figure for a comparison of nominate *belli* and interior *canescens.*

Identification of juveniles. As most birders are aware, juvenile sparrows usually differ from adults in (a) lacking highly contrasting dark and light areas of the adults (or having such areas obscured), and (b) having finer and more extensive streaking throughout. Thus, in our *Amphispiza,* the typical adult head patterns are not found on the juveniles, and the underparts are finely streaked. It should be noted that Black-throated Sparrows in juvenal plumage can be found well away from breeding areas (even to the coast); the streaking of juvenal plumage may be retained well into fall. This is also true to a lesser extent in the Sage Sparrow. In considering the identification of juveniles, keep in mind that the shape and behavioral characters noted above are still valid.



Juvenile Black-throated (upper left) and Sage (lower right) Sparrows. Note the more patterned head of the Black-throated (including a prominent supercilium) and the more conspicuous streaking on the upperparts of the Sage.

Juvenile Black-throateds are best told from juvenile Sage (of all races) by the prominent white supercilium behind the eye. Juvenile Sage Sparrows lack a distinct supercilium, and instead have a variable (and often obscured) white loral spot. The supercilium and the largely unmarked throat set off a more prominent auricular patch in the Black-throated. (The general effect on the Sage is of a patternless head, although there is a rather well-defined thin dark malar strip.) Juvenile Sage Sparrows have sharp, fine streaks on the back and crown; in the Black-throated the streaking is limited to the back, and is largely obscured. The ventral streaking is more extensive on the Sage (and includes the throat). The Black-throated has a blacker tail, with (usually) a distinct whitish edge and corner (as in adult); the tail of the juvenile Sage is browner and edged with light cinnamon or buff.

As would be expected, there is some geographical variation in the juvenal plumage of the Sage Sparrow. The coastal *belli* race is somewhat darker and slatier than the *canescens* or *nevadensis* birds from the interior, and its malar streak is heavier.

THE BIRDS OF WESTERN MEXICO: MAZATLAN TO SAN BLAS

December 1 to 9 (Orientation session November 4th, 7:30-10:00 p.m.) Fee: $175*
Instructors: **Kimball Garrett** & **Lee Jones**

Explore a rich variety of habitats from the marine coast to the mixed oak-conifer and thorn scrub of the Sierra Madre Occidental to the lush tropical lowland forests around San Blas. The bird life of this region is fascinating and diverse. Christmas bird counts around San Blas alone have recorded nearly 300 species. Transportation by private motorcoach.

For exact itinerary, write or call Department of the Sciences, UCLA Extension, P.O. Box 24901, Los Angeles, CA 90024, (213) 825-7093.

*Fee includes tuition, instruction and instructional materials. Fee does not include transportation, meals, accommodations or other program expenses. Arrangements have been made with a travel agent to provide a package plan covering these tour costs for approximately $825.

The National Audubon Society 77th Annual Dinner

This dinner should not be confused with the annual dinner sponsored by the Los Angeles Audubon Chapter. For the first time in its history National Audubon is having its annual dinner away from New York City and Los Angeles Audubon has been asked to act as the host chapter for this event! Our very own Bob Shanman will be welcoming those in attendance on behalf of LAAS and the Southern California Audubon Coordinating Council. I hope to see many of you there.

WHEN:
Thursday, November 4, 1982
Cocktails at 6:30 p.m.
Dinner at 7:30 p.m.
WHERE:
The Biltmore Hotel
515 South Olive Street
Los Angeles
COST:
$30.00 per person

FEATURING

Address by Dr. Russell W. Peterson, President of National Audubon Society

Presentation of the Prestigious Audubon Medal

New Audio-Visual Presentation on Mono Lake by David Gaines

Informal. The Biltmore Hotel will validate Pershing Square parking at a reduced rate. For further information call (213) 441-3466. Send checks made out to National Audubon to:

National Audubon Society
1414 Fair Oaks Avenue, Suite 6
South Pasadena, CA 91030

Send before October 29. Reservations will be confirmed at the door.

Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Proposition 11

"The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November" is the way we used to remember it (like "Spring forward, Fall back" for the mystery of Daylight Saving Time). All Election Days are important, I suppose, but this might be a crucial one. The nature and strength of the Reagan "mandate" at the half-way point will be in the spotlight. The state of the economy — unemployment, military spending, taxes, interest rates, inflation — looms large in the choices we make. Certainly a candidate's stand on environmental issues will not go unnoticed. Not discretion, but the IRS, forbids us to endorse individuals for office, but we are free to recommend or decry propositions on the ballot.

Let us consider Proposition 11, the California Can and Bottle Recycling Initiative coming up on November 2nd. If it is passed it will require a five-cent deposit on all beer and soft-drink containers. This simple law will do many things:

Litter. A substantial portion of the debris that decorates our streets and highways is made up of beverage containers. Most of us are going to continue as good and thrifty citizens and get our deposits back. It's still a free country so litterbugs will retain their right to be big spenders and toss their bottles and cans out the car window. But a whole race of free-enterprise recyclers will emerge to pick up after them. The first big industrial state to pass a bottle bill was Michigan in 1978. According to the authoritative General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, in the first year after Michigan required deposits, litter from cans and bottles dropped 87.4%. More than 90% of the containers sold were returned for deposit.

Landfills. The recycling of containers will reduce dramatically the amount of wastes that must be buried in our rapidly-filling landfills. Some cities in states with bottle laws report a 6% reduction in the volume of solid waste.

Energy. A refillable bottle can be used about ten times. The cost of returning, sterilizing and re-using it is small compared to making ten throwaways, and the energy saved is considerable. Though aluminum cans are already being recycled, the lure of the deposit will increase the rate of return manyfold. It takes far greater energy to produce aluminum from ore than from crushed cans. The savings in electricity is estimated at 80%. A study made in New York State determined that recycling plus the increased use of refillable bottles would save at least 11 trillion BTU's of energy a year.

Oregon pioneered the first bottle bill ten years ago. Many people felt that the success of such a law in that environmentally conscious state was not a fair test for the entire country. Since then, eight more states have adopted bottle bills — including urbanized, heavily-populated states such as Michigan and New York. The results have been spectacular. Litter has been dramatically reduced, energy and resources have been conserved, and new jobs have been created.

Large corporations — brewers, container manufacturers, supermarket chains, soft-drink companies — have opposed all these bills. They have cried doom: dreadful inconvenience for the consumer, unemployment in the container industry, sanitation problems in the grocery markets, additional costs. None of these terrible things has happened. There has been no groundswell of complaints about inconvenience in any of the states with deposits. The GAO reported more jobs were gained than lost. More people were needed to move the empties, work in the recycling plants and handle the refilling process. In Maine, the state Department of Agriculture inspected over 5000 retail food stores and not one citation was issued for violations related to the deposit law. Consumers Union asked the president of a large grocery chain with outlets in Oregon and Washington state (which has no bottle bill) whether beverages cost more because of deposits. The answer was, "The Oregon law hasn't created any hardship for us. Prices haven't gone up and sales haven't gone down because of it."

Official polls say that 83% of Californians are in favor of a deposit bill. So it looks as though Proposition 11 will have smooth sailing, right? Wrong! The August 4th *LA Times* had a headline on page 3, "Proposition 11 Campaign Could Become One of the State's Most Expensive" with a subhead, "Opponents of Anti-litter Measure Have Raised $1.4 Million; Backers, $227,000." And this is three months before the election! Already anti-Prop 11 commercials are being heard on radio with TV ads starting in September. Huey Johnson, state Secretary for Resources, who rarely takes sides in political controversies, says, "(The opponents) will spend an estimated *10 million dollars* to defeat this common sense measure." These same interests have succeeded in quashing bottle bills in the California legislature several times in past years with intensive (and expensive) lobbying. This time around the lawmakers have been bypassed by the initiative process and the voters will be able to make the decision. But ten million dollars will buy a lot of billboards up and down California and slick, misleading TV ads. We can expect some dirty pool, as well. As early as August, a Superior Court judge ordered a change in the arguments against Prop 11 in the November voters' pamphlet. Statements of the chairman of the Association of Oregon Recyclers were taken out of context to make it appear that he was against Proposition 11. The gentleman said in a deposition that he is a *supporter* of the initiative and that he would never consent to be a part of the opponents' arguments against it.

The arguments against the Anti-litter Law have been roundly disproved. Evidence from the states where they are in force shows a remarkable acceptance by the public. Not a single state has rescinded the law. In 1976, Maine voters approved the deposit law by 58%; an attempt to repeal it in 1979 lost by 85%! In our view, the opponents of Prop 11 are being short-sighted. They are reacting against the initial expense of converting from a throw-away philosophy to a refilling/recycling philosophy. In the long run they will save money because it costs less to make containers from recycled materials than starting from scratch. The beverage people will pay less for their containers and will save by refilling their bottles.

Passage of the California initiative is particularly vital. Coming on the heels of the success of the New York deposit law, a victory in this state — now the most populous — would create a powerful push for a *national* anti-litter law. A national law would establish uniform procedures that would eliminate minor differences in the various state laws and would make it more convenient and more economical for the beverage people. In the past, in testimony before Congress, some members of the industry have said that though they oppose state bills, they would not oppose a national bill.

We all know the power of money in an election campaign. No matter how strong the sentiment for a good measure, enough people can be swayed by saturation advertising to make them vote against their own interests. The question is, how many? If all the good guys get out and vote and get their friends and family to pop out of their chairs and into the voting booths, Proposition 11 has an excellent chance to win. Fight, team, fight!

In this David and Goliath battle, contributions to the unselfish citizens behind the initiative will help neutralize the phony arguments against it.

Citizens Against Waste
P.O. Box 289
Sacramento 95816

Victory at Malibu!

The bulldozer is usually the roaring symbol of the black hats, the eager developers chewing up precious open space for condominiums or nuclear plants. The bulldozers today are at Malibu Lagoon and we're cheering.

Six years ago the State Parks and Recreation Department initiated the public meetings that culminated in a great plan for the lagoon. The marsh, which was badly run down, was to be graded and replanted with channels dug to allow tidal flows to nourish the natural vegetation. The marsh and lagoon were designated as a Natural Preserve with limited access. An interpretive center was planned. The historic Adamson House on the east side of the lagoon was to be a museum of Chumash and early Spanish cultures. Everything was ready to go in August 1981 when Little League, which had been allowed to build two ballfields there 11 years ago, decided it didn't want to leave and went to court, halting the project the day before it was to begin.

It was a frustrating year. Delay and media events were Little League tactics: suits against the Parks Department and the Coastal Commission, picketing the governor on television, packing courtrooms with placard-bearing kids in baseball uniforms. A classic dog-in-the-manger situation.

The years of hearing had produced a remarkable unanimity of opinion. Malibu residents, historical society people, environmentalists and just plain, unaffiliated people agreed that the rebirth of a natural estuary was highly desirable. The Little League parents agreed, accepted the obvious fact that they would have to leave, and made no significant objections. The Parks Department gave them a generous gift of $10,000 and offered to help with relocation. New leaders took over the parents' group in the summer of '81 and launched the legal action.

After the long delay, the denouement was swift. In late July this year, the full State Coastal Commission unanimously tossed Little League's arguments into the ashcan and reissued the permit to begin the project. The very next workday, the bulldozer was scraping off the trash and the well-worn path. A week or so later, to avoid an expensive trial, a settlement was reached giving Little League a level site on the Malibu bluffs opposite Pepperdine University, on the ocean side of Pacific Coast Highway. They will finish their season at the lagoon and then leave forever.

In a few years, with luck, we'll have a rejuvenated marsh, a protected Natural Preserve, and, once more, a great wetland habitat teeming with wildlife.

Congratulations to everyone! To the Parks and Recreation Department for hanging tough throughout. To Lloyd Kiff and Tom Howell for valuable scientific information they contributed to the planning process, as well as their testimony at many workshops. To Giles Welch, president of the Malibu Township Council, and Susan Rossie, of Assemblywoman LaFollete's staff, who steered the project through rough political waters. To LA Audubon members who grasped the importance of preserving a rare estuary and worried it through to a successful conclusion. To all those faithful souls who signed petitions and wrote letters and may have accomplished more than they thought.

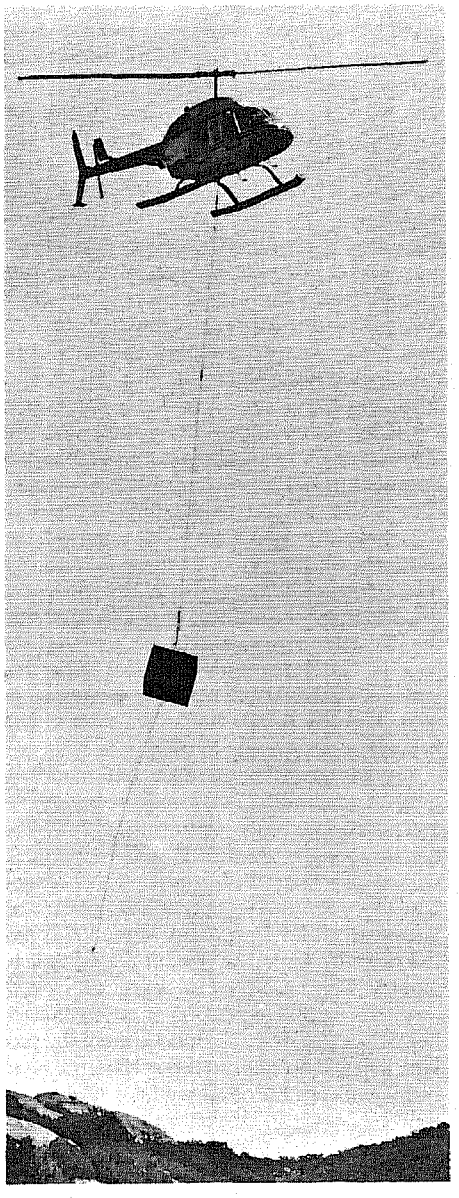
We're not used to winning. Victories come hard in the environmental game. So let us savor this one. It tastes like more.

Peregrines of Boney Ridge

The meeting took place north of the Newbury Park back entrance to Pt. Mugu State Park, in a broad flat field. Brian Walton drove up in a small covered pickup with the three birds — out of sight in containers. One was in a wooden box with a hinged lid, fitted with straps that could be slung over the shoulders like a backpack. The others were in simple cardboard orange crates. Brian brought out the wooden crate and opened the top for the LA Times cameraman and the Channel 2 team. We could see a heavily streaked head surmounted by a scattering of comical wispy down feathers. The peregrine was remarkably calm, turning its head this way and that, staring at the people and equipment with what seemed fearless interest. We were all struck by the enormous, fathomless black eye that one day would look down from a great height and, with the genetic wisdom of eons, direct its owner's projectile body at some prey below.

In a rush of wind and noise, the helicopter arrived. Five at a time, two loads of people were flown to a spot not far from the release site. For some of us it was a new and exciting experience: seat-belts fastened, headset intercoms adjusted, watching the chaparral and boulders passing swiftly beneath as we circled and landed in the primitive terrain of Boney Ridge Wilderness. We settled down gently, piled out, and bushwacked through a couple of hundred yards of dense brush toward a rugged cliff of pink shale. The TV cameramen carrying their heavy equipment sweated and swore as the thorny branches tore at their clothing and scratched at their eyes. We scrambled from the brush just as the helicopter returned carrying the large wooden hack box that dangled from a cable like a pendulum with a mind of its own.

The helicopter carefully lowered the box down on a bare stone outcropping about 50 feet below our cliff. The peregrine experts were there to guide it down and set it with the open end facing the ocean a mile away — beyond the valley and hills and the coast highway. The hack box houses the the three birds behind bars for the week they are confined. They are fed through a chute so that they cannot see the person supplying the food. In this way, they do not become caged, dependent, tame zoo animals.



Photograph by Bob Chamberlin/Los Angeles Times

Roost box dangles below helicopter en route to peregrine site wilderness of Ventura County.

The next helicopter trip brought the birds to the landing spot where they were carried up the cliff. A rope was secured and a climber rappelled down the face of the cliff with one of the peregrines in the wooden backpack. This was repeated with the other two birds without incident and they were all placed in the hack box. All in all it was an outstanding feat: the first use of a helicopter to return peregrines to

a wild habitat. On Thursday, July 15th, the bars were removed and the birds were free to leave the box. At this writing they are in excellent shape, strengthening their wings and getting ready to become fledglings. They are being fed Coturnix quail (*not* California quail) obtained from a nearby farm and this feeding will continue for five or six weeks. When they become more proficient flyers they will begin to chase smaller birds and eventually will make their own kills. The presence of the quail will not make them less eager to pursue their own prey. It is part of the miraculous natural programming of these wild creatures that when it is time for flying, it is time for hunting. The attendants are more than just feeders. They have to be concerned with harassment by great horned owls and golden eagles, and carry guns with blank shells to frighten off these predators should they appear.

A great experiment is in progress. The Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Group has released about fifty peregrines this year; eighteen from hack boxes, the balance returned to the wild in established nests where they are fed by wild adult birds. For the second successive year three peregrines were established atop the Westwood Center building by the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. One bird, shortly after release, crashed into a building and died. Such losses are to be expected: the pioneers in peregrine work at Cornell are happy with a 50% survival rate. The remaining two birds are flourishing. It is expected that the Westwood release will be repeated for four or five years with the great hope that some of the birds will return to Westwood to nest. Perhaps Boney Ridge Wilderness will become a nesting site in the future.

The payoff will be the first confirmed fledging of offspring of two captively-bred western peregrines. If we are to see this, it will be because of the dedicated and determined people like Brian Walton and his co-workers. Like Lloyd Kiff and Ed Harrison of the Western Foundation and Dave Hess of the California Community Foundation who are willing to gamble with hard cash on a precarious venture. Los Angeles Audubon is proud to have been the catalyst that helped activate the project: a noble attempt to repay Nature a small but significant bit of all we have taken from her.

Bald Eagles Reintroduced onto Catalina Island

Until the 1940's, Bald Eagles were commonly sighted on the Catalina Island, but disturbances by man and environmental pollutants such as DDT caused the eagles to disappear. A recent program sponsored by the Catalina Island Conservancy hopes to make the Bald Eagle a common sight once again.

The Conservancy is an independent, nonprofit foundation that owns and maintains 86% of Catalina Island. Since the Conservancy receives no governmental funding but depends upon revenues from its limited operations and contributions from the public and Conservancy membership dues, the Bald Eagle reintroduction program had to be financed almost solely by donations from the public.

The idea for the Bald Eagle reintroduction program came from David Garcelon, founder of the Institute for Wildlife Studies. Mr. Garcelon has spent a large portion of his academic career becoming an expert on this species and felt that since the Catalina Conservancy has been successful in other environmental and wildlife projects since its beginning in 1972, he proposed to the Conservancy that they might enable the birds to return to Catalina.

Six eagle chicks which had been removed from their nests in the Pacific Northwest with the approval of the Washington State Department of Game, were brought to Catalina in the Spring of 1980. When they arrived it was hoped that the birds would be able to grow and learn to be able to forage in the presence of human activity on and around Catalina. The six birds were placed on elevated platforms where their activities were monitored on closed circuit television by the project director, Dave Garcelon and volunteers. Once the eagles had left the platforms and began flying freely, the team tracked their movements by signals generated from small radio transmitters attached to the bird in back-pack fashion. Garcelon pointed out that the transmitters will fall off within a year, leaving the birds unemcumbered. Of the original six chicks, five birds still remain on the island. The sixth eagle left the island nine days after being released. The lone bird was thought to have found a temporary home somewhere on the South Coast near a bird sanctuary in upper Newport.

Garcelon said that Bald Eagles in the Wilderness typically experience a mortality rate of 50% in the first few months and 70% in the first year. "In fact," said Garcelon, "the mortality rate of eagles can reach as high as 90% by the time they reach the fifth year of life when they normally start breeding." A large part of the success of the reintroduction program is attributed to the existence of the Catalina Conservancy and its responsibility for protecting the island and its environment. Dave Garcelon, the project director, says the Conservancy offered the best chance for eagles to grow and thrive with the least interference. The ultimate aim of the program is to establish a breeding colony of eagles that is able to maintain its population without help. It is estimated that Catalina once supported about a dozen Bald Eagles before they began to disappear from the Island. "With this number in mind," said Garcelon, "another six birds were brought to the Island in the summer of 1981."

Garcelon explained that the six new birds were treated in much the same manner as the original group, except that the new birds were fitted with orange wing markers showing individual identification numbers along with the usual back-pack transmitters. Since their introduction, the new crop of birds has been getting along well except for one tragic incident where one of the birds was deliberately shot and killed by a hunter, who has been prosecuted. Since the eagle has been a protected species in the United States since 1973, anyone who kills such an animal faces possible fine and imprisonment.

Young Bald Eagle on elevated platform.

Garcelon indicated that the 10 birds may be enough to form a self-sustaining colony. "With continued luck, nesting, pairing and breeding should begin as the birds reach maturity in 1985 and 1986," he said. As an added safety factor to insure against the high mortality rate of eagles, Garcelon said that four new chicks were recently brought to the Island. The birds were placed on the elevated platforms and were released in the latter part of July when they were about 12 weeks old.

President's Corner

by Bob Shanman

It is always nice to start a column with good news — and this month, we get a double dose. First, the fight to save Malibu lagoon has been won and restoration has started. Congratulations to Sandy Wohlgemuth, Lloyd Kiff and all the others who worked so hard on this effort. Sandy's column this month contains more details. Second, The Carpenter Bill to exclude Bolsa Chica from Coastal Commission jurisdiction (which would have made development of the area easier) has been withdrawn from the legislature due to lack of support.

October begins our annual Condor Fund Raising Drive. This month's lead article by Harrison Starr is the first in a two-part series. In Part 1, he recounts the history of the controversial effort to save the Condor, and the ongoing struggle to start the captive breeding program and continue the field research plan, up to the tragic loss of the chick in 1980. Next month, he will conclude the article with the recent hearings, and the ongoing effort to have the Fish and Game Commission reconsider its decision to severely restrict the entire program.

Over the years, LAAS has strongly supported the Condor Recovery Program. This past year, LAAS members and the chapter donated $4,000 to this effort. We would like to do better this year and with YOUR support, we can. If every member donates *one dollar* (more if you can) the total contribution from the individual members and the Chapter could be in excess of $5,000. The amount of LA's contribution could be influential in encouraging National to continue with this program. Use the enclosed envelope to send in your donation. Don't delay — do it now while you are thinking about it! Every contribution helps.

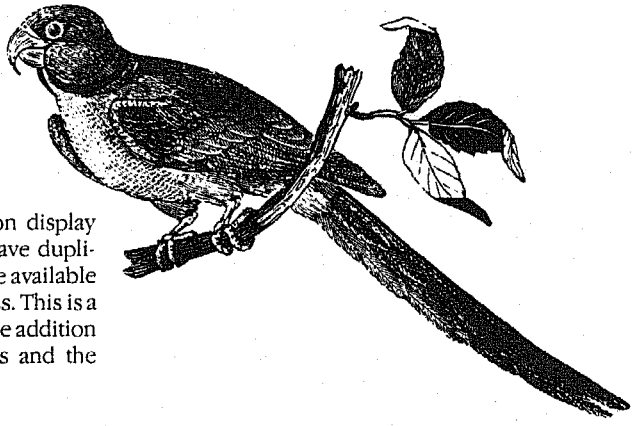
Sandy's telephone tree is working — and thanks go to all participants. Recent environmental victories in which public response played a major part include the Endangered Species Act, the Clear Air Act (this will go to the full Senate without any amendments), and, it looks like the Pesticide Act may be reauthorized by Congress. Join those working with Sandy to write letters to our legislators — it works.

The National Audubon Society Annual Dinner (separate from our Chapter's Annual Banquet) will be held November 4, 1982 in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Hotel. The featured speaker will be David Gaines on Mono Lake and the Audubon Medal will be awarded. The donation is $30 per person. Reservation information and other details are on page 5. Join us for what should be an exciting evening.

Two publications which might be of interest to members are the *Audubon Leader* and *Audubon's Action Alert*. The Leader is published every other week, and summarizes the status of major environmental programs and legislation of importance on a regional and national level. The current subscription rate is $10.00 per year, and is available from National Audubon Society — Audubon Leader, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

The Action Alert is a no-fee publication put out by the Washington, D.C. office. Published as necessary, its purpose is to alert Audubon members when critical environmental support is needed from the public in Congress. The Alert describes the particular legislation, its goals, and Audubon's position. Information on key Congressmen to contact is also provided. The Washington office will add you to their mailing list by writing to them at National Audubon Society, 645 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. I urge everyone to subscribe to both of these publications.

Fire Sale and Rare Book Auction



On November 21, 1981, Plummer House, known to most of us as Audubon House, was set on fire by some unknown vandal or vandals. The Los Angeles County Fire Department responded immediately and was able to save most of our library, our records and some of our book store inventory. Many books were dampened and most were smoked to one degree or another. Our insurance company has settled with us and allowed us to keep these books. We will be offering them for sale at substantial discounts during a fire sale to be held on Saturday, October 16 in the Great Hall just opposite to our offices in Plummer Park. This sale will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

In addition to offering some great savings on some slightly damaged books, we will be giving away some new lithographs to anyone donating $35 or more to our Fire Fund. These numbered lithographs by Teri Matelson were donated to us by the Wing Gallery, where they were selling for a minimum of $150. There are two different lithographs—one depicting a Brown Pelican and the other an American Kestrel.

Also at the sale, we will have on display eight library books of which we have duplicates. These collector's items will be available for sale through a sealed bid process. This is a rare opportunity to acquire a valuable addition to your personal library. The titles and the minimum acceptable bids are:

MEXICAN BIRDS—FIRST IMPRESSIONS, George M. Sutton	$ 50
LAS AVES SUDAMERICANAS, Claes Olrog	$ 35
DISTRIBUTION OF THE BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA, Grinnell & Miller	$ 60
MANUAL OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS—4th ed., Robert Ridgway	$ 30
A NEW DICTIONARY OF BIRDS, Sir A. Thomson Landsborough	$ 45
THE BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA—4 vol. Deluxe edition, William L. Dawson	$500
HUMMINGBIRDS, Crawford H. Greenwalt	$350
BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC STATES, Ralph Hoffman	$ 30

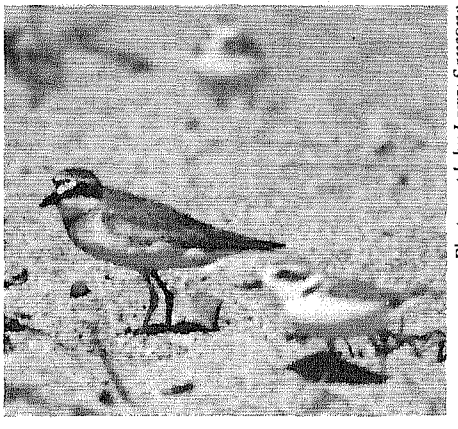
Bids must be submitted by Friday, October 22 with your name, address and telephone number. Bids below the minimums will not be accepted. Mail bids to:

Stump, Davis Greenberg Accountants Inc.
8405 Pershing Drive, Suite 301
Playa del Rey, CA 90291
Attention: Jack Valensky: Audubon Auction

Birds of the Season

by Shum Suffel

October should produce more species of birds than any other month of the year. For it is a month of change, with a few summer residents remaining, all but the earliest migrants still moving through, and the first winter birds arriving. It should be possible to record over 300 species in this one month alone, although an individual would need all of October's thirty-one days to accomplish such a record. During this month over forty-five shorebirds, twenty flycatchers, forty warblers, and almost fifty "seed-eaters" have been seen in southern California. It's not too late for three of our rarer shorebirds — Sharp-tailed and Buff-breasted Sandpipers plus Ruffs. Field birds, too — Red-throated and Sprague's Pipits and three species of longspurs — have been found in extensive open areas with flocks of Horned Larks and Water Pipits.



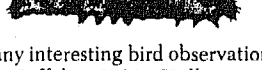
Photograph by Larry Sansone

Mongolian Plover at Santa Clara River Mouth

Late July and early August were expectedly dull except for shorebirds and a few non-passerines. The bird of the month was a **Mongolian Plover,** still mostly in breeding plumage, at the Santa Clara River estuary from 7 to 13 August (Andrew Starrett). It was widely seen, as it was only the second record for California and one of a very few for the lower forty-eight states. California's fifth **Olivaceous (Neotropic) Cormorant** was found at the north end of the Salton Sea (N.E.S.S.) by Greg Homel on 8 August (remaining to at least 15 August). The previous records were from West Pond near Imperial Dam on the Colorado River (most recently in September 1981). Unfortunately, no boobies or spoonbills were found at the Salton Sea to mid-August. Even **Magnificent Frigatebirds** were scarcer than usual, with only two reports — an immature at N.E.S.S. on 18 July and another at S.E.S.S. on 29 July (both Mike Wihler). Coverage of the Salton Sea by Guy McCaskie and Richard Webster on 7 August revealed some 50 **Brown Pelicans,** 350 **Wood Storks,** a summering **White-winged Scoter** (N.E.S.S.), 250 **Yellow-footed Gulls** (now a full species, according to the new A.O.U. Check-List), 800 **Laughing Gulls,** three **Ruddy Turnstones,** and a **Baird's Sandpiper;** on 31 July they had an adult **Stilt Sandpiper** and an adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at S.E.S.S.

Along the coast **frigatebirds** were at Aliso Beach, Orange Co. (Wayne Gochenour, 29 July), at Pt. Fermin, near Carlsbad, San Diego Co. (Elizabeth Copper and Guy McCaskie, 1 August), and at Dana Pt. (John Lavia, also 1 August). The **Little Blue Herons** below San Diego fledged three young, and were sometimes seen with a third adult and a "calico" immature (probably from last year's nesting).

Saturday, 7 August, was a banner day for **California Condor** watchers, both in number of watchers (possibly 200 between Mt. Pinos and "The Sign" on Mil Potrero Rd.) and in numbers of condors (at least ten sightings, with individuals passing not 100 feet overhead at both localities). Also seen were **Golden Eagles,** plus **Red-tailed** and **Cooper's Hawks.** A light phase and a dark phase **Swainson's Hawk** in the Antelope Valley produced at least one juvenile this year (Brian Keelan *et al*). Two immature Swainson's Hawks were found by Tom Wurster just south of Santa Maria; nesting in this area has not been recorded recently. Brian Keelan reported a careful count of 2000+ **Wilson's Phalaropes** and 235 **Northern (Red-necked) Phalaropes** at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 7 August. At the nearby Edwards Air Force Base marsh he found an adult **Red Knot** in alternate plumage. The only report of a **Red Phalarope** was a molting bird about five miles inland in Oragne Co. 21-26 July (Doug Willick). An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds in early August (Jon Dunn); an early **Solitary Sandpiper** was below San Diego on 2 August (Richard Webster). By mid-August both Solitaries and Semipalmateds were widely but sparingly reported. The earliest report of a **Pectoral Sandpiper** comes from Brian Daniels in the Los Angeles River channel just above Pacific Coast Highway on 14 August. Brian also found several **Baird's Sandpipers** there, and up to thirty Baird's per day were found near Lancaster by 22 August. Even after a careful search in late July the **American Oystercatcher** (which has been on West Anacapa Island since 1964) could not be located (Henry Childs).



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

Dave Povey's trip ten to fifteen miles off Pt. Loma, San Diego Co., on 4 August yielded three **Black-vented Shearwaters,** two **Sabine's Gulls,** 25 **Pomarine Jaegers,** two **Xantus' Murrelets,** and a **Rhinoceros Auklet.** The upcoming L.A.A.S. pelagic trips should be much more productive because of the later dates and the longer itineraries. **Common Murres** were unusually numerous near our coast, with 36 off Doheny Beach (Brad Schram, 4 July) and about eighty between Newport Harbor and Catalina Island (Doug Willick, 29 July). Two **Marbled Murrelets** were at Pt. Sal, northern Santa Barbara Co., on 8 August (Doug Willick).

Until now there was only one certain nesting record of **Chimney Swifts** in southern California (Ventura, summer 1976). But now (16 August) the Lewis Hastings of La Cañada, thinking that the flying objects in and around their chimney were bats, lit a fire in their fireplace which flushed out two young *Chaetura* swifts. One of the young was recovered, placed in a bag, and replaced in the chimney that evening. Just at dark an adult Chimney Swift dove headlong into the chimney, and a second adult made several passes then made a kamikaze-like dive after its mate. Let's hope the youngster was well fed after its day-long fast in a paper sack.

The early departure of male hummingbirds from our mountains was obvious on 7 August at Mt. Pinos; hummers were abundant in the red penstemon there, but all were in female or immature plumage. The ***Selasphorus*** (probably mostly Rufous) were therefore not identifiable — only adult male Rufous and Allen's hummers can be safely separated in the field. Previous comments on the sad decline in nesting **Purple Martins** brought responses from Don Sterba of two nesting sites in the San Luis Obispo area, and from Gerry Haigh of an adult and two juveniles at Bear Valley Springs, just west of Tehachapi in Kern Co.

The **White-eyed Vireo** (very rare at any time of year) was still present in Goleta for a first summer record (Paul Lehman). A **Lucy's Warbler** below San Diego on 19 July was the only summer record for the coast (Richard Webster). Mid-August saw passerine migration

getting into full swing, with numerous western migrants such as **Willow Flycatchers, Warbling Vireos, Nashville Warblers, Hermit Warblers,** and **Wilson's Warblers** being reported.

The continuing story of range expansion by **Great-tailed Grackles** reached a new level with proven nesting along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim. The female was found on 22 July by Steve Ganley, who watched her carrying food to a hidden nest in the cattails. Later Sylvia Ranney and Arleta Patterson found the female, two juveniles, and another female, but no male was seen at any time. There were many **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** in the vicinity. A male Great-tailed Grackle was observed briefly but well at the Arcadia Arboretum on 16 August (Shantanu Pfuken). There were no previous reports from either area. Recent reports of **Summer Tanagers** away from known nesting areas come in at the rate of two or three a month. The latest are one, thought to be an immature male, at the Arcadia Arboretum (Shantanu Pfuken, 29 July, and Barbara Cohen, 14 August), another immature male near Baldwin Lake (Chuck Murdock, 25 July), and a third near Santa Barbara in late July (Louis Bevier).

Pyrrhuloxias are rare birds in California — all eight records are from the southeastern deserts — thus a male and a female perched on a century plant in Maggie Mellor's garden in Corona on 23 July is of great interest. One of the pair was seen nearby later the same day by Don Hoechlin. A male **Indigo Bunting** was at Topanga State Park in the Santa Monica Mountains on 1 August (Gerry Haigh), and another was near Bishop, Inyo Co., in early August (Jon Dunn).

We are fortunate to live in one of the best birding areas in the country, and October is the best month for rare birds (especially vagrant passerines). For less experienced birders the technique of finding unusual birds may bear repeating. First scan the field guides to familiarize yourself with unfamiliar species. Then choose a likely location with vegetation and water — e.g. a nearby park, cemetery, or golf course, a coastal canyon or promontory, a desert oasis, or an agricultural area with trees or other vegetation. It's essential to check every bird, even if you just sweep a flock with your binocular. The real expertise of birding is the knack of extracting that one odd bird from the horde of commoner species — that one odd shorebird among a hundred waders, the lone Clay-colored Sparrow in a flock of *Spizella* sparrows, or the longspur flushed in a flock of Horned Larks.

Though there is no substitute for field experience, there are a few shortcuts. If you have a good "ear", learn the calls of the commoner species. For example, if you know the "chip" of an Audubon's Warbler you won't have to check out each bird, and can concentrate on identifying that warbler with a different "chip". And if you hear the rattle of a longspur, you'll know that flock of larks is worth pursuing.

But when it comes to developing your birding skills, the best thing is to get out with more experienced birders. From them you'll pick up the fine points of identification which are best learned in the field. A fine way to begin is with one of L.A. Audubon's organized field trips, or the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. We are fortunate to live in an area with a wide range of habitats, most of them easily accessible, and we should be grateful to the hard-working conservationists who are helping to save a bit of wilderness for us all to enjoy.

From the Editor

I'm not happy with the title of my column. I had hoped to use *The Editor's Corner*. It had a nice folksy ring to it. Unfortunately Bob Shanman got the corner on the *Corner*, so I'm temporarily using the title from his last issue's column. I thought of the folksy *Ramblings with the Editor*, but it had a bit of a negative connotation. Next, I considered *The Editor's Edge*, but it reminded me I was on the edge of a nervous breakdown near *TANAGER* deadline time. *The Editor's Spot* was rejected because it sounded alternately like I was either a sloppy eater or I was writing a column about my pet ant.

Instead of getting fancy, I thought to myself why not simply call it *The Editorial*, but it really is not an editorial in the true sense of the word. Keeping to the simple (very apropos for me) I considered *The Editorial's Column*, but that was a little too bland. Next came the very basic. *The Word*. This sounded very Biblical and I could never limit myself to a single word (maybe *Ramblings* fits after all). By now, I can hear you saying, "How about *The Editor's Excess*?" Thus I'm going to finish this discourse with a small plea: If anyone out there can think of a decent name for my column, please let me know. I'll make it a contest with the winner to get his name in **bold face** in the *TANAGER*. Such a deal! I promise to spell your name properly too.

By now you may have noticed this issue of the *TANAGER* has a lot to do with birds of prey. First it is our annual issue to ask for funds for the Condor Recovery effort. You will notice a convenient envelope in this issue in which to send your contribution. To emphasize this, our lead article discusses the whole issue of Condor recovery programs. Part II of this article will be found in the next *TANAGER* and bring us up to the present. The other two articles on birds of prey also carry forward the theme of man helping a species recover, rather than the opposite role we humans all too often play. Sandy Wohlgemuth covers reintroduction of Peregrines as part of his column and a small article based on a Catalina Island Conservancy news release describes their Bald Eagle program. I tried to get Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn to do their identification article on a bird of prey. However, Kimball suggested that with all of these articles on birds of prey, they should, in all fairness, do an article on birds that *are* prey. This, of course, gave me food for thought and the desert (not to be confused with dessert) sparrow article was born.

Although I've only been at it (playing editor) a short time, I still haven't heard from many people on their ideas, and suggestions for articles and features for the *TANAGER*. I got a volunteer for the calendar page. Peggy Pantel will be handling that job starting with the November issue. Aside from that and the regular columns, I am desperate for other material. Remember it's bad enough that I'm wasting space with this column. Try to imagine how bad things would be if I started writing lead articles also.

The Condor Fund

Donations to the California Condor Fund aid the National Audubon Society in its efforts to preserve the condor. These funds are used to meet salary and equipment needs, to produce and distribute informational materials, and to support an active and ongoing public education program.

Your tax-deductible contribution to the LAAS Condor Fund is urgently needed. Please use the enclosed envelope and make your check payable to the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

CALENDAR

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3 — Zuma Beach. Kimball Garrett will lead a morning excursion of the creek mouth and nearby Bonsall Drive in search of various and sundry migrants. Meet at 7:30 a.m. along Westward Beach Road at the south end of Zuma Beach.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9 — Ballona Wetlands. Join **Bob and Roberta Shanman** (545-2867, after 6) for a morning of birding in this threatened wetland. Ducks, shorebirds, gulls, terns and other water related species will be in evidence. 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.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10 — Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach. For the eleventh straight year, **Ed Navojosky** (938-9766) leads this famous coastal tour. Includes Big Sycamore and Pt. Mugu. Bring lunch and meet at 7:30 a.m. in the market parking lot at Malibu Lagoon.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 8:00 p.m. — Evening meeting. A change in programs. **Herb Clarke** presents another of his famous **Bird Quizzes** illustrated with some of his excellent slides. This will be a fun program and learning experience for the expert and beginner alike.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16 — Fire Sale and Rare Book Auction. From 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. A sale of books which were in Audubon House during the November 1981 conflagration. Substantial saving. See full details on page 9 of this *TANAGER.*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16 — El Dorado Nature Center. Discover the joy of birding this fine little area with **Marge Pamias** of the El Dorado Audubon. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the south side of Spring Street for a pleasant morning bird walk.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23 — Whittier Narrows. David White will lead a morning trip through this unique area along side the San Gabriel River. Meet at the Nature Center at 8 a.m.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4 — The National Audubon Society 77th Annual Dinner. Audio-visual presentation on **Mono Lake** by **David Gaines.** See page 5 of the *TANAGER* for full details.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 8:00 p.m. — Evening Meeting. Interested in migration in Southern California? **Bob McKernan** will discuss his studies of the subject in the local deserts, with an emphasis on **Nocturnal Migration.**

All Evening Meetings are held in the meeting room on the south end of Plummer Park.

Call the tape the Thursday before all scheduled trips for changes or verification.

Leaders Needed

We need people to lead field trips. Do you have a favorite birding locale? You don't have to be an "expert" to show other birders, especially beginners, a few nice looks at some of our common species. Your trip doesn't even have to be long . . . you can opt for a short morning excursion. Call our Field Trip Coordinator—**Ian Austin** to make arrangements (Day 879-9700, Evening 452-3318).

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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PRINTER Artisan Press
CONSERVATION EDITOR Sandy Wohlgemuth
ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT Kimball Garrett

Published ten times a year by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

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Audubon membership (local and national) is $25 per year (individual), $32 (family), $15 (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 at the above address. Members wishing to receive the TANAGER by first class mail must send checks for $5 payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Subscriptions to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are $8 per year (Bulk Rate) or $13 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Pelagic Trips

LAAS Sponsored

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 — San Pedro to Santa Barbara Island. 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. 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)

Cancellations must be made a minimum of two weeks before a scheduled trip to receive a full refund.

Shearwater Trips

Debra Love Shearwater runs a series of regular pelagic trips out of Monterey and Morro Bay. The following is a list of the scheduled trips from Monterey Bay for the balance of the year:

October 9	Ted Chandik/ Guy McCaskie	$24
October 10	Alan Baldridge/ Storm-petrel Tour	$32
October 16	Steve Bailey/ Keith Hansen	$24
October 17	Keith Hansen/ Joe Morlan	$24
November 7	Alan Baldridge/ Marbled Murrelets & Harbor Porpoises	$35
November 14	Jeri Langham/ John Luther	$24
December 4	Alan Baldridge/ Ted Chandik	$24

Reservations are made by sending a check payable to Debra, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Debra Love Shearwater
362 Lee Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(408) 425-8111

A detailed brochure is available which describes these and 1983 pelagic trips. Write or call Debra for further information.

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