

# WESTERN TANAGER

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## The California Condor? Part II

by Harrison Truitt Starr

I ended Part One of this article (*WESTERN TANAGER*, October 1982) on the accidental death of a condor chick while being weighed and measured by a field assistant to the biologists heading the Condor Recovery Program, because it was a major turning point for this joint effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society dedicated to the "hands-on" approach of captive breeding, radio telemetry and habitat research and protection. More important, it may also be the turning point in the life or death of this rare species, *Gymnogyps Californianus*, that they are trying to save.

A storm of protest and outrage engulfed the leaders of the program, Noel Snyder of U.S. Fish and Wildlife and John Ogden of National Audubon, much of it from dedicated "hands-off" people who had long opposed any other conservation approach to the condor except rigorous habitat protection as a means for the bird to recover in the wild on its own. Among the milder things said about Snyder and Ogden were: they were blindly ignoring all previous condor research; they were insufficiently experienced to deal with this unique bird; they were soulless biological technicians interested only in Frankenstein-like experiments which would lead to the bird's extinction.

How could two experienced field biologists like Snyder and Ogden cause the death of one of the most precious birds in the world? Janet Hamber, Assistant Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, has been studying condors in Santa Barbara County since 1976, and it was her group that discussed the nestling that Snyder, Ogden, Mrs. Hamber, a field assistant skilled at rappelling, and a motion picture cameraman, set out to weigh, measure and photograph on June 30, 1980. Five days earlier they had entered another nest and weighed and measured the chick



Photograph courtesy of The Los Angeles Zoo

easily, but this second chick was a month older and much larger than expected. The field assistant who, with the cameraman had rappelled down the steep cliff, couldn't weigh it in the bag used previously and had to improvise his knapsack. This prolonged the handling and the chick began to show signs of severe distress. The cameraman stopped filming, moved in to help, but it was too late. The chick died in their hands.

Buried in the avalanche of criticism that ensued, very few of the details of this tragic loss reached the public.

The facts are that the way this chick was handled was the same as the techniques used by all the field men who preceded the Condor Recovery team, Carl Koford included. They, upon several occasions, hog-tied chicks and hoisted them up the sides of cliffs in burlap bags to accomplish their weighing

and measuring. Janet Hamber who was at the top of the cliff when the chick died said, "The thing that bothers me is what's been said, things like 'Cold-hearted scientists who only want to manipulate the birds for their career advancement—,' if only they could have seen that camp when they brought the chick in, could have seen the faces of the people involved, they would have never made that accusation. Everybody there was totally wiped out—devastated. It was like a wake."<sup>1</sup>

Emphasizing how much there is to learn about the condor, no one yet knows exactly why this chick was so vulnerable to stress, why it died, that there should have been either a trained field biologist and or a veterinarian skilled at rappelling at the nest, instead of a young assistant and a cameraman is readily acknowledged by both John Ogden and Noel Snyder. Although Ogden has handled over 300 offspring and 1,200 Wood Stork nestlings, and never had a chick die, both he and Snyder were insufficiently prepared for what might happen to a condor chick, a very different bird. They took too casual an attitude, and for this crucial neglect they, and the Condor Recovery Program, have paid dearly ever since.

In the early 1950's, before the condor became a magnet for all the conflicting views of how men should treat the environment, and before that debate came to the forefront of public attention, the California Department of Fish and Game issued to the San Diego Zoo, which had successfully bred Andean Condors, a permit to trap a pair of California Condors for the same purpose. But before the Zoo could move effectively, the McMillan brothers, Carl Koford, U.C. Berkeley, National Audubon (on the other side of the argument then), and others formed a powerful political coalition that resulted in the revocation of the permit by the California Legislature and the establishment of strict procedures for any other permits to work with the great vulture. This was a tame rehearsal for what was to follow the chick's death thirty years later.

Beset by furious, vociferous "hands-off" advocates, Huey Johnson, Secretary of the California Department of Resources under whose aegis Fish and Game and its five-member Commission operates, added another state body, The Condor Advisory Committee. Its purpose was to carefully examine all activities of the Condor Recovery Program and make recommendations to the Commission and the Department of Fish and Game. But it was headed by Steve Herman, a doctorate in zoology from U.C. Davis specializing in pesticides/wildlife relationships and endangered species, who had recently testified at a state hearing against "hands-on" proposals. It was obvious, and understandable considering the intensity and diversity of opinion, that the State had, in the Advisory Committee, put a brake on The Condor Recovery Program. What

was not understandable was that, although Snyder and Ogden continuously requested it for six months, no meeting could be arranged between them and the committee because the five members couldn't find a convenient date! What also was not understandable was the kangaroo court nature of subsequent hearings at which, after submitting their plans and requests in writing, neither Ogden nor Snyder could respond while their critics and opponents, responsible and irresponsible, could testify at will. Nor were Ogden and Snyder allowed to approach the Commissioner because it would be considered "lobbying." They were in a kind of purgatory: on the one hand leaders of a program to save the condor from extinction; on the other, continuously under a shadow of doubt and recrimination, unable to act except in the most proscribed fashion. It took a year and a half to get state permission to enter an *inactive* nest for DDT testing.

Burr Herman, editor of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory Newsletter made an admirable attempt to introduce reason into the battle in the Spring 1981 issues by balancing some of the more knowledgeable contending voices. But in the same year, Friends of the Earth published a book, "Capture or Forever Free? The Condor Question . . .," which was an anthology of some of the previously published informed thinking from "hands-off" people but it was unfortunately peppered with a lot of irresponsible allegations from other sources.

The book claims to be, "a loving portrait of an extraordinary creature: the California condor . . .," but, in fact, it slanted with misinformation and inane anthropomorphisms in an attempt to sanctify the F.O.E. "hands-off" position. Following are quotes from some of the more egregious examples:

1. "... the birds are excruciatingly sensitive to human interference." Fact. The birds in the air are often recklessly curious about human beings and will on land sometimes tolerate people to within 50 feet of them. They have been observed feeding 200 yards from a major highway. And, sometimes, particularly during nesting, they are extremely sensitive to human interference.
2. "... and there is no proof that the condor population is presented in decline. We suspect that population counts have been juggled to give an illusion of steep decline and to allege urgency." Really! The scientist charlatans of the Recovery Program in their Machiavellian maneuvering have lied about the condor's decline in order to further their destructive captive breeding plan!! Fact: All field biologists agree that in the mid-sixties there were probably a minimum of 40 birds. Until September 25 of this year the estimate was between 20 and 30 birds. That's a decline of at least a bird a year, but it's much more serious than that as I will show later in this article.

3. "What use to us is a great soarer that has been handled, marked, laparotomized, popcorned by zoo crowds, and radio tagged?" Facts: Laparotomy (a sex determining operation) had been replaced in the program by a less radical method. "... Popcorned by zoo crowds!" Where, but in the writer's perverted imagination was this to take place, as the San Diego Zoo's excellent breeding pens, where the Recovery Program proposes capture breeding, are not open to the public. The only honest question in this sentence. What use to us is a radio tagged bird?", is a serious one obfuscated by propagandistic rhetoric.

I could go on but it would only exacerbate a characteristic of the argument that we can well do without.

The "hands-on" people have often been accused of being indifferent to habitat protection, and Snyder replies:

"We've been branded as technological manics. All we're concerned about is putting radios on birds. This has evolved I think because those are the only techniques we need special permits to use, so, when we go to the Fish and Game Commission, we're not talking about the whole Condor Program, we're talking about the part we need a permit for. The opposition comes to these permit hearings and attacks us for not talking about other parts of the program. All we hear from these people, is 'You're unconcerned about habitat. You're indifferent to the traditional methods.' They have no idea what we're doing day-to-day out there. Our major concerns are such things as habitats."<sup>2</sup>

This seems to be as much a comment on lack of communication as it is about habitat.

By August 5, 1982 when the annual permit review hearing was to be held in Sacramento the Recovery Program was in low gear, and there still was very little dialogue between the opposing factors. Snyder and Ogden wanted to take the two nestlings discovered that year for captive breeding; wanted to take first eggs of the next nestings in order to induce double clutching, and wanted to capture three immature birds in order to provide sufficient genetic diversity in the capture program, and to build a captive population as quickly as possible to avoid a truly dangerous situation where there might be no wild birds left to introduce them to. They also wanted to proceed with radio telemetry. The Advisory Committee was against practically all of this and critical of lack of habitat emphasis in the permit. There had even been talk of a Habitat Specialist hired separately to remedy this supposed deficiency.

Jesse Grantham is an Audubon field man in the Recovery Program specializing in habitat. He told me that a 10,000-acre ranch in the country near Mt. Pinos where the condors spend 3 to 4 months a year recently sold for \$11,000,000 They also frequent two adjoining

ranches, one of 245,000 acres, the other 15,000 acres. He says: "You can't go out and buy it. It would take millions, even a billion dollars. They move over 200 miles at least — we don't yet know what the critical habitat is. It's taken 2½ years to get data on this one. Exactly where else they go the other 9 months we don't yet know. I've been out there 2½ years, walking, crawling, running, driving and flying through it, seeing it, looking at it carefully, and sleeping in it and those guys are not out there looking at the habitat and looking at the birds. Now how can they get up (at these hearings) and tell me, tell us how to run the project, or what's needed. It's absurd!"<sup>3</sup>

The results of the hearing were: the field biologists could take one egg, one nestling (since taken and now in the San Diego Zoo) and one immature bird as a mate for the only

definitely that they could account for only 19 birds in the wild. There was a slim possibility that there were 1 or 2 more, very slim, because for the first time in condor history, there'd been more than 3 or 4 people involved in the study.

These results were based on the most complete information we've ever had. With a wild population of even 22 birds, the California condor, the most magnificent soaring bird on the North American continent, is within a breath of extinction.

When I began research for this article in July 1982, I told Bob Shanman, our new Los Angeles Audubon President, Fred Heath, our new Western Tanager editor, and the people that I interviewed that I had no position, pro or con, concerning the condor, that I wanted to let the parties speak for themselves, and

be back in the wild in 10 years, soon regaining its magnificent powers. Ian McMillan once said that, "The moment it's (the condor) down to the point of no return then, although I'm not interested, I wouldn't oppose it (captive breeding)." I wish he would reconsider, for without the interest of men like him, without that kind of human partnership, the bird has no chance at all.

The second thing I suspected and then found to be true was that in addition to the condor's easily identifiable worst enemies: the irresponsible hunters, the commercial poisoners of the land, the ambitious oil men and dam builders, Ronald Reagan and his front man, Watt, ORV recreationists, the developers and those particularly vicious people who believe that shooting condors will further any of the preceding interests, there was another, more subtle, much more evasive and powerful enemy, not so easy to identify because it was not a whole body, an entity that could be singled out and dealt with directly. It was the egos of the humans who, all with the best intentions, and some with considerable skills, had set out to save the condor, disagreed, and then made that disagreement into a crusade, complete with the bankers of and personum arguments, fluorescent rhetoric and obstinate misunderstandings of their self-created opponents' positions. An egocentric crusade that prevented them from acting effectively with each other to achieve their proclaimed goals.

Can we save the condor? Our "hands-on," can-do ingenuity at its worse has inflicted terrible havoc on the bird and its habitat but at its best can be employed judiciously by knowledgeable humans in redemptive acts. Yet that ingenuity can be used only if those knowledgeable humans will recognize that they must give up their "hands-on" versus "hands-off" positions and sit down in good faith and reason out common ground on which to proceed vigorously to save the bird. And, by so doing, not save ourselves—that's too much to ask—but simply gain a little self-respect, and perhaps be able to reverse the poet's cynical line from, "Where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile", to "Where many of the remaining prospects are pleasing because man isn't so bad after all." The condor?

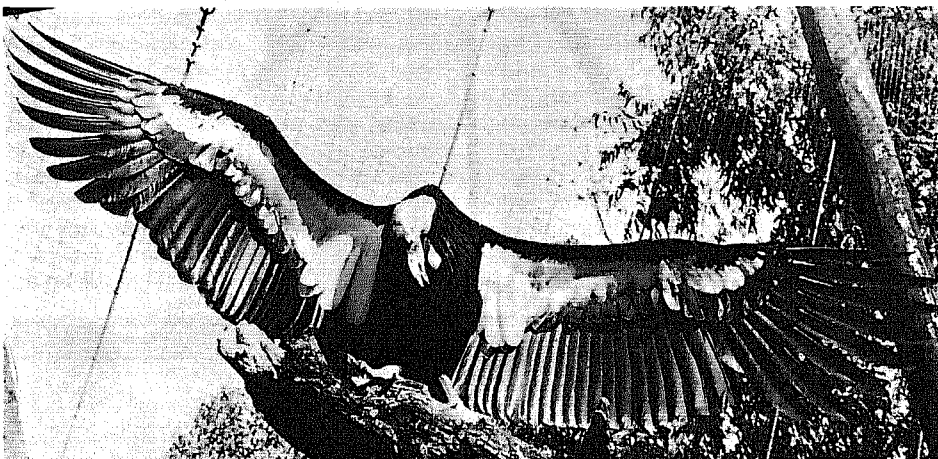
<sup>1</sup>Interview with author August 10, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with author August 7, 1982.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with author August 8, 1982.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with author September 14, 1982.

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Photograph courtesy of The Los Angeles Zoo

captive adult condor, Topa Topa, a male residing in the Los Angeles Zoo. There was to be no telemetry, except, if the first immatures captured were males, they could be radioed and released. There was still talk of a separate habitat effort.

National Audubon which had committed \$500,000 to the Recovery Program in the belief that decisions would be made on the basis of biological information began to have second thoughts. They had never been involved in an endangered species program before where there was such contention. Noel Snyder, although disappointed felt that at least the need for captive breeding had been recognized, though in an almost inadequate way. As in habitat, he felt that without more telemetry they were going to have a difficult time even knowing what was happening to the birds. He said, "The whole problem out there could be one blasted oil sump, sopping up birds. It could be that's what we're dealing with, and a loss of even one bird at this stage is crucial."<sup>4</sup> He knew whereof he spoke because he was close to the most certain knowledge we've ever had of just how many condors there were out there.

By September 25, 2½ years of intense field work and photography throughout the range paid off, and Snyder and Ogden could say

allow the readers to make up their minds. And that was pretty much true. Pretty much, because like the McMillans, I too come from Scottish-Irish immigrants who four generations ago pioneered hot dry ranching country in this State. I too grew up in the country with a reverence and profound respect for wild things. And I too felt heartsore and grim about the rabid exploitation of my native land increasingly evident all about us. So, feeling as the McMillans did, and suspicious of the blessings of big government and the fruits of man's scientific efforts (i.e., DDT, PCBs, 1080, acid rain, culminating with the possibility of nuclear holocaust), I had an innate bias, but I thought in the interest of fairness I could overcome it. I would read, listen and transmit the voices that I heard to you.

I tried to do that, but even before I learned of the precariously small number of birds, I was beginning to suspect two things. First, that captive breeding, with as little depletion as possible of the wild stock was, as Noel's wife, Helen Snyder, said, "Hay in the barn, wood in the shed." It was a way to ensure condors. No, not the same wild bird who with the almost unseen flick of a few feathers can alter its course 10 miles in a few minutes, but a bird that with a little luck, and a faith in the vast power of the genetic reserve might

## ABA — 1982 — Florida

by Dorothy Dimsdale

For fun and a great learning experience I do recommend a biennial rendezvous with the American Birding Association (ABA). Preferably with a pre- or post-convention trip to really *wallow* in birds.

In April this year at Plantation, Florida, the workshops which came before the birding trips were outstanding, with color slides to see, skins to examine, and above all, masterful speakers. Arnold Small, Guy McCaskie, Ron Naveen, Tom Davis and Bill Clark were superb. I learned more there than I have with hours of solitary reading and as the speakers were also leaders on the field trips, one had the opportunity to exercise practical application of what one had learned, with the presence of the teacher.

Most of us were eager to see new species, naturally, but that was far from the only reason to attend. Florida has unique habitats to explore — from the Dry Tortugas to the Everglades, to Lake Okeechobee and places between. There is also the pleasure of greeting other birders whom one has met only at previous conventions. It becomes like "old home week."

I started at Marathon on a pre-convention trip. Frankly the prospect of spending almost three days on board ship, with my unseaworthy record, and actually sleeping there did not gladden my heart. However, the *Reef Rover 11* skippered by Ed Davidson is a lovely craft. There were 15 of us and, for some reason I'll never understand, through rough seas, on 10 to 15 foot waves, I managed not only to stay well, but to have a marvellous time. The food on board was excellent. Fresh orange slices were served during the day and cold drinks were always available. There were strawberries and pineapple, fresh and cold for breakfast — cereal too, if you wanted it. Apples and bananas for the taking and the meals cooked by the skipper and his mate were delicious and included fresh homemade ice-cream!

I mention it because anyone who has had "boat food" knows how unusual this is. In addition were the birds! Roseate and Bridled Terns, Audubon's Shearwater, Brown Booby, and then on the Dry Tortugas, Sooty Terns and nesting Brown Noddies, an estimated 80,000 of them. They all seemed to be arguing at the tops of their voices — maybe the Peregrine Falcon which made periodic sorties to the nesting area caused a little extra cocophany.

There was a White-tailed Tropic Bird over Fort Jefferson immediately before we arrived, and it appeared again as soon as we had left, but a large number of conventioners saw it well. Fort Jefferson is a fascinating piece of Americana and alone is well worth a visit. Magnificent Frigatebirds hang over it like

paper kites in the sky. Round a fountain inside the fort grounds sat about 20 Cattle Egrets, but there was no food for them and unless they took wing they would die there, as had several before them. Their bodies lay littering the ground. Here nature takes its course; nothing is touched. Numerous vagrants pause for rest and we saw Magnolia, Bay-breasted and Prairie Warblers among others, plus Black-whiskered and Red-eyed Vireos and a Gray-cheeked Thrush. Later we sailed off again and came upon Masked Boobies and Sandwich Terns on one of the small sandy keys while the sea seemed to teem with flying fish, very easily mistaken for pelagic birds.

After we left the Tortugas, we saw the Mangrove Cuckoo on one of the Keys and at the Marathon airport the Antillean Nighthawk flew round us, giving its distinctive call, which was particularly fortunate as the species has just been recognized by the AOU. The next evening on Everglades Park Research Station Road, after hearing the Chuck-wills-widow calling very loudly, one flew to

and fro across the road catching the bugs attracted to our headlights and giving us an excellent view at the same time. So ended our pre-convention tour.

There is a severe drought in Florida at present and it was sad on our first ABA birding day to see Corkscrew Swamp without water. It was lush and green but the large number of birds and animals usually so prevalent were nowhere to be seen — just a few alligator tracks in the drying mud. No standing water at all, and no Wood Storks.

Florida and alligators go together and we saw large numbers of them on the way to Plantation. One must take great care to look where one is stepping anywhere near water. On our trips we saw Swallow-tailed Kites over the Everglades and a Short-tailed Hawk (light phase) in the Palmdale area. At Saw Grass Recreation Camp on the way back from Okeechobee we watched four Snail Kites eating snails (of course!) and at other locations there were Smooth-billed Anis, White-crowned Pigeons, and lovely views of Limpkins and Caracaras. There were several

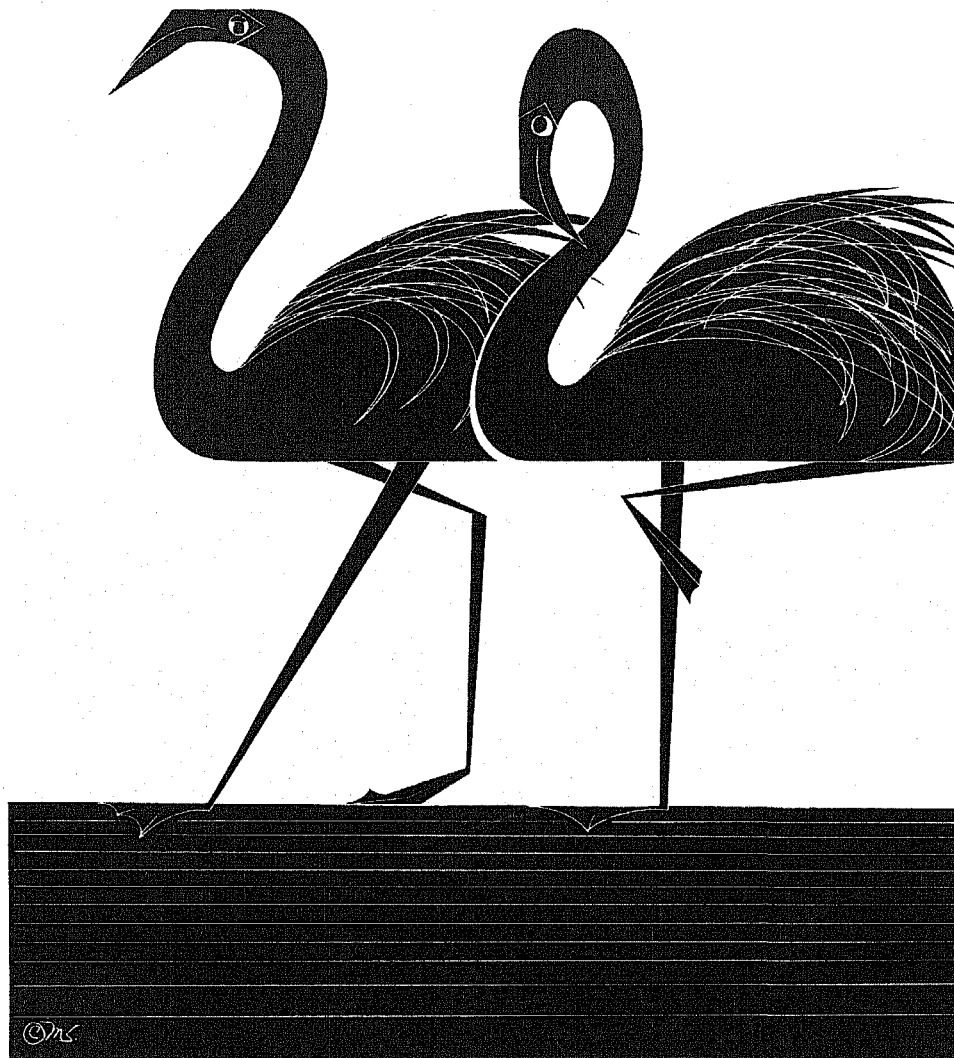


Illustration by Marie Sansone

"Wurde mann's" Herons; no one seems certain where they belong in the taxonomic order.

Some memories will remain. One of 92 year-old birder John Frost holding up barbed wire with both hands while standing on one leg — the other one treading down more barbed wire as I scrambled through the fence looking for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (permission had been obtained). We didn't find any, but we easily saw a number of Bachman's Sparrows in that area, singing loudly, as well as Red-headed Woodpeckers and Pine Warblers.

The two people I enjoyed meeting this time were Scotty Cowherd aged 20, and his grandfather, Arthur Baker. Their mutual interest in birds and respect and affection for each other was a pleasure to see.

The last morning, after two previous days of excellent birding, was a glorious one. We birded Greynolds Park, near Miami and towards the end of the morning, there, hopping about in the brush, appeared a Connecticut Warbler. At almost the same time a call went up that there was an Eastern Screech Owl (now a separate species from the Western Screech Owl) in one of the trees in the park. Jerry Maisel was watching over it till we arrived. We saw and heard it call — a faint oscillating wail as though far in the distance, and then, as it called, the bird's body quivered from neck to tip of tail — and so did we, with delight. We moved on to a flooded field near Belle Glade where Fulvous Whistling Ducks and a Monk Parakeet (which is not a recognized AOU wild bird in Florida) were seen close by and even closer in Jerry's Questar.

What more could one want? In the hotel-bound bus, Lee and Polly Hall of Dayton, Ohio, had a suggestion.

"How would you like to take a quick drive to see the Spot-breasted Oriole before your final lunch?" I don't need to tell you the answer. We went and we saw it and we were so high we truly didn't need a plane to fly us home to California!

The best bird of the convention was the rare Black Noddy and there was a spontaneous round of applause when George Venatta, with a wide grin, announced the sighting at the penultimate dinner. My best bird? It's hard to say. I saw 154 species, 24 of which were life birds and I'd be hard put to pick a best. I treasure each one.

It was a super convention and thanks go to all concerned. In particular to Will Russell, who led our pre-convention tour — I'm going to have a hard time in the future choosing between Will (Wings) and Victor Emanuel (Vent) tours, both are so highly commendable. Now I'm waiting for the next convention which they hope to hold in Vancouver in 1984. See you there!

## Audubon Camp in the West

by Joe Zell

Once again, it is time for the L.A. Audubon Society to consider prospective candidates to receive scholarships to the Audubon Ecology Camp in the West. I would like to relate some of my experiences and impressions from this summer and urge those of you who may be interested to look into it and apply for a scholarship to attend in 1983.

Like many of you, I had sat for years at monthly Audubon meetings and heard the announcements regarding Audubon Camp. Last year they struck a new chord and I listened more attentively. It sounded interesting, and since I'm a teacher, I'm always looking for an inexpensive vacation. I asked for and read a brochure, and it started looking even better. I am a Social Studies (that covers everything) teacher who likes to expose my students to more than names, dates, and battles. I try to stress conservation and ecology, human involvement and the quality of life. Audubon Ecology Camp looked just great. I applied and lo and behold, received a scholarship to the first session of 1982.

With two other campers-to-be, I drove off to Wyoming. The Torrey Valley to be more precise. We camped along the way and finally got to the end of the paved road outside of Dubois (pronounced: Doo-boys) Wyoming. After some nine miles of "interesting" dirt road, we arrived at the Trail Lake Ranch, a place owned by the University of Wyoming and leased every summer to the National Audubon Society. It didn't look like the Wyoming I had seen before: no Tetons with their lush, dense forest. It was Great Basin Sage Brush all around. But in the next 12 days, I came to love the Torrey Valley and hated to leave when the session was over. The Torrey Valley is a textbook example of a glaciated river valley with a diversity of fauna and flora from high desert to alpine varieties (even Rosy Finches).

Audubon is an ecology camp. The program emphasized the relationships of wildlife, plants, soil and water; the need for their conservation and the relation to human progress to their treatment and wise use. It was a lot more than a pretty place to go birding, although birding we did go. We were immersed in a total program covering such subjects as ecology, ornithology, aquatic biology, vertebrates, invertebrates, botany and geology. We took the time to look at the world of the Torrey Valley and put each community, each life zone, and each alteration into historic and present day perspective.

The Ecology Camp In The West is staffed by an assortment of well qualified and highly accessible instructors. Their individual and collective expertise was most impressive. They were not only competent and thorough

but they were able to make learning and exploring nature fun. Through many simulation activities and about 50 hours of field study, the staff presented a comprehensive and diverse educational program. The "campers" were of all ages and walks of life giving a refreshing mix and variety. There was time to be alone and explore, hike or just relax; nightly volleyball games and even two spirited sessions of square dancing.

But wait a minute! This is an Audubon camp. What about the birds? How about a Whooping Crane with its Sandhill "parents" spending the summer away from their Gray's Lake, Idaho captive breeding program home.

All in all it was a wonderful experience I shall not soon forget, and I owe it all to the L.A. Audubon Society for supporting such a program with its funds. I heartily recommend it to you as an enriching experience you'll long appreciate. And you might even see a few good birds.

## Books

Now available in the book store at Audubon House:

GULLS: A GUIDE TO IDENTIFICATION, P.J. Grant, 1982. Enlarged and revised from the author's articles in *British Birds*. World distribution maps for each species and 376 black and white photographs. Price \$29.00.

A CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL MONUMENT, Larry L. Norris and William Schreier, 1982. This little booklet coauthored by our own Larry Norris covers one of the birding hot (not too much of a pun intended) spots in California. It lists the 346 species recorded in the Monument and gives their relative abundance during the four seasons. Price \$.60.

## By-laws Change

In order to bring field trip leaders under the insurance umbrella of the Board of Directors (which includes all committee chairpersons and members), it is necessary to change the By-laws to include field trip leaders on the Field Trip Committee while leading their trip. The By-laws require that the membership be informed at least 30 days before voting on the proposed change. This change will be voted on at the December General Meeting (Dec. 14), and will appear in the November and December 1982 *TANAGER*. The proposed change was voted on by the Board at the September Board meeting and affects Article 4, Section 14 of the By-laws. The motion, which passed unanimously, reads as follows:

*For the purpose of inclusion in insurance coverage for officers and directors, all leaders of officially sanctioned field trips shall be considered as officers of the Society while acting in such capacity.*

Copies of the complete By-laws may be reviewed at the House.



# Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

It is hard to believe, but two years have passed since the present administration won it overwhelming victory at the polls. Appointments to cabinet positions were announced and the country watched and waited as a new political entity took form. Many were hopeful for positive change; a new broom was going to sweep clean. By an large, the environmental movement examined the credentials behind the new faces, sighed deeply, and exhibited strong anxiety symptoms. Wise heads counselled, "Now let's give the President a little time, things will work out . . ." Conservation leaders sat around tables and talked with new people, hoping to establish a basis for communication and compromise. As it turned out, there wasn't any. The Secretary of the Interior, after the first round of preliminary sparring, came out swinging in the second round. He's taken a few counter-punches since then, but he is still the aggressive, dangerous fighter with a determined manager in his corner.

Most of us are familiar with the catalogue of disasters that have been visited on the land and the people since that fateful November. What has emerged from the pattern of atrocities is a determined effort to take from the poor and give to the rich. We will not dwell on the inflammatory and debatable subject of cutting social programs for the disadvantaged while smothering the Pentagon with money. It is of a piece with the same philosophy revealed in the approach to the environment. We are faced with a deliberate, daring and radical attempt to destroy the environmental gains made in the last two decades under the cover of "getting government off our backs" and balancing the budget. When it has not been possible to do away with legislation that protects our health and natural resources, the administration has simply refused to enforce the law or eliminated personnel and pleaded lack of staff.

The Environmental Protection Agency, once considered the most efficient and productive of all federal agencies, is in a shambles. Its former reputation was the result of dedication to its mission and to the non-bureaucratic freedom given its scientific and regulatory staff. Under Anne Gorsuch many of its most valuable people have been fired or have resigned in disgust. Administrators with solid environmental experience have been replaced by former industry honchos and Reagan campaign organizers. Though the workload had increased sharply in the last two years (EPA is responsible for clean air, clean water, pesticides, hazardous wastes,

toxic substances, ocean dumping) the work force and the budget to pay for it have been drastically cut. It is the inescapable conclusion of competent observers that EPA is being consciously dismembered because of the short-sighted views of an administration responsive mainly to the interests of short-sighted polluters.

The headlong pursuit of profit is clearly demonstrated in the leasing program of the Interior Department. Offering the entire Outer Continental Shelf to an oil industry that is glutted with oil means that bidding for drilling leases will be relatively low — and so will the government's income. Interior wants to sell vast acreages of public coal and timber lands to private interests — again in quantities that will ensure the lowest prices and the highest potential profit to the private sector. Thus a new and formidable approach to public land is developing. In graceless bureaucratese it is known as "Privatization." It is put forth as a sure-fire means of balancing the budget, of overcoming the astronomical deficit. an aide to Senator Paul Laxalt (R-Nev) says, "You can make an analogy to business. When a business gets in trouble, it sells off excess capital. Some of these public lands are excess capital." This view is shared by many key officials in the Administration. They aren't talking about little bits and pieces of land here and there, but up to 100 million acres of OUR property! This is no wild fantasy spun off in a bull session over a fifth of scotch, but the real McCoy. (Interesting that the business analogy comes so easily to the lips.) The key element here is the prospect of delicious profits. Forget about other values: scenic beauty, scientific and historical data, archaeological exploration, wilderness, wildlife habitat. In short, the very quality of life is subordinated to a mythical economic emergency. Besides, everyone knows that the private sector is more efficient . . . One further comment: a business can replenish its capital when things get better; can a nation ever replace the precious capital of its land?

The thrust of the first half of the administration's tenure challenges many assumptions held by most Americans. We are asked to consider the question: what is the function of government? Calvin Coolidge said that the business of government is business. Is it symbolic that Ronald Reagan replaced the picture of Thomas Jefferson in the Oval office with that of Calvin Coolidge? (Not Teddy Roosevelt or even Eisenhower, but Coolidge.) Is the vision of government as an aloof bystander to the morality of the marketplace valid for our time? Is the private sector ade-

quate or equipped or motivated to think of future generations and health of the ecosphere? Or the health of the present generation?

The bipartisan efforts of the Congress and the presidents for the last forty years reflect the deep desire of the American people for a livable world. The Reagan record clearly runs counter to that yearning for a clean and pleasant land. It is a radical attempt to return to an *unregulated* 19th century laissez-faire economy when children were perfectly free to work a 12-hour shift in the mines. When the captains of industry paid no income taxes and disclaimed any responsibility for the safety of their employees. When no one seemed concerned about the destruction of virgin forest or the massive consumption of Eskimo curlews and other "market birds." None of these dreadful spectres will materialize, of course, but the current Washington nostalgia for a hands-off government is heading in that direction. Let us hope that the taxpayers and voters catch on in time.

If your *TANAGER* reaches you before November 2nd, Los Angeles Audubon urges you to vote YES on:

## Proposition 11 — The Can and Bottle Recycling Initiative

1. Saves energy
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1. Stops over-pumping of groundwater
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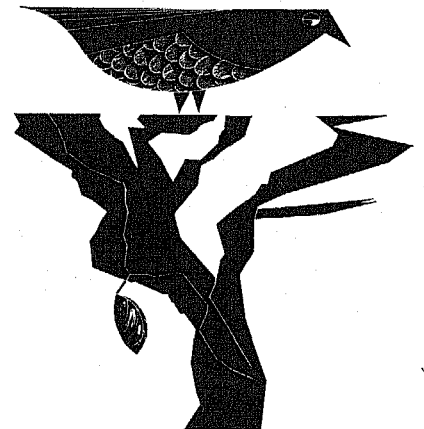
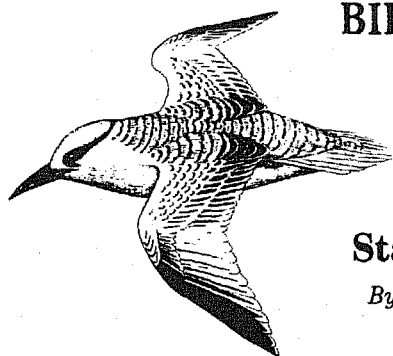


Illustration by Marie Sansone



## BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

### Status and Distribution

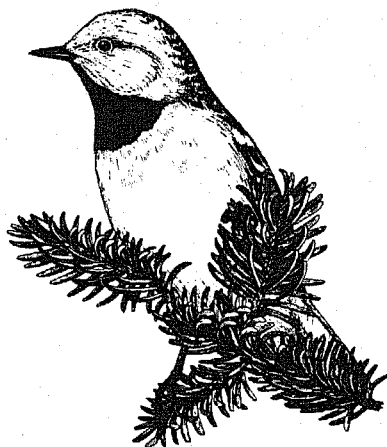
By Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn

with line drawings by Lee Jones

Not since Grinnell and Miller's *The Distribution of the Birds of California* was published in 1944 has there been such a definitive treatment of the status and distribution of southern California's birds. This 400 page book contains species by species accounts of the 500+ birds recorded in this rich area. Essential for the casual birder as well as the serious student of distribution; a must for the occasional visitor as well as the long-time resident.

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### Excerpts from reviews for **Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution**

*British Birds* (Vol. 75 No. 4, April 1982)

"A model avifauna for a defined region, comparable to the best of our familiar county avifaunas" "... this book is obviously a 'must' for anyone intending to visit San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and environs"

*Wilson Bulletin* (Vol. 94 No. 2, June 1982)

"The authors have done their homework"  
"In summary, this is a well-conceived and

well-executed book, enhanced by the fine line drawings of H. Lee Jones. Perhaps better than any other recent book it illustrates the sophistication of well-trained birders and the ever-increasing contribution they are making to knowledge of the changing patterns of avian distribution. It is a strong addition to the regional literature and will be a standard reference for California for a long time."

*The Linnaean Newsletter*

(Vol. 35 No. 8, January 1982)

"This is a very sophisticated and tightly-edited work and would be of great value to members planning California birding vacation trips".

*American Birds* (Vol. 35, September 1981)

"More than 30 line drawings by Lee Jones are precise, detailed renditions which subtly express the character of each of the birds illustrated". "This is a job very well done and a pleasure to recommend"

*Sunset* (November 1981)

"Garrett and Dunn are heavyweights in the birding world, and they've joined to produce a first-rate work"

*The Chat* (Vol. 45 No. 4, Fall 1981)

"This is an attractive and informative book—a must for any bird student who lives in southern California, visits or plans to visit there, or simply wants to be well-informed about the bird life of the West Coast" "Los Angeles Audubon Society is to be congratulated for publishing an outstanding book..."

*Continental Birdlife* (Vol. 2 Number 4, August 1981)

"The combination of bar-graphs, maps and detailed text guarantees that the user will never be in doubt as to the significance of his or her own observations in Southern California." "We hope that someday all bird book authors will practice the same level of scholarship—and produce books as thorough and reliable as this one."

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## Book Reviews

by Kimball Garrett

### WOODPECKERS OF THE WORLD

by Lester L. Short

Delaware Museum of Natural History Greenville, Delaware. Monograph Series No. 4, 1982. xviii + 676 pp., incl. 101 color plates by George Sandstrom. \$99.95.

### THE PLOVERS, SANPIPERS, AND SNIPES OF THE WORLD

by Paul A. Johnsgard.

University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1981. xvi + 493 pp., plus 57 color photos, 3 color plates, 135 maps, 80 figures, 60 black-and-white photos; numerous line drawings by the author. \$45.00

Both books available through L.A.A.S. bookstore.

Monographs covering major bird groups have shown a marked resurgence in recent years, a trend welcomed by those book-minded birders and ornithologists who are able to budget considerable sums of money to their pursuit. Treatments have ranged from relatively spare (such as Goodwin's nevertheless excellent *Crows of the World* at \$28.50) hundred bucks elsewhere, but those who wish to be stimulated by a model treatment to decidedly lavish and downright unaffordable (consider the upcoming work on kingfishers and their allies by Forshaw and Cooper—the six volume set will command a few hundred bucks *per volume!*). The recent works reviewed here cover, on a worldwide scale, two diverse and fascinating groups which have become "favorites" of countless students of nature.

The need for comprehensive treatments of woodpeckers and shorebirds (or "waders" if you will, but I, too, am baffled by the title "plovers, Sandpipers, and Snipes") can't be questioned. The ways in which Drs. Short and Johnsgard have fulfilled this need exemplify two disparate approaches to the writing of major treatises, and I'll hasten to point out that Short's approach has served us far better in this instance.

To say that Les Short has been thorough and painstaking in the development of *Woodpeckers of the World* is to understate the care that went into the production of a virtually flawless work. It also understates the frustration I felt, as a sometime student of woodpeckers for the past seven years, awaiting year-by-year the 'imminent' release of this major work. Short has been studying woodpeckers since 1955, and the evolution of his new work goes back to at least the mid-1960s. The results certainly vindicate his "patient" (but obviously hard-working) approach: the text is essentially error-free, the design and layout is simple but clean and attractive, and the plates by George Sandstrom are beautiful and accurate rendi-

tions which properly draw attention to the birds themselves while still placing them in a habitat context. It is clear that this book was written by someone who has given much thought to the biology (and no doubt the aesthetics) of woodpeckers; to quantify this, I might point out that 44 of the approximately 430 references listed were authored by Dr. Short (most of these being scholarly papers dealing directly with woodpeckers).

Short presents an introduction to woodpeckers (family Picidae), covering plumages and structural adaptations, behavior (with an emphasis on displays and vocalizations), and zoogeography and evolution (culminating in a classification of the Picidae which has, incidentally, been followed in the new A.O.U. Check-List). These topics cover virtually all aspects of woodpecker biology, and receive much elaboration in the species accounts (which average some 2½ pages per species for just under 200 species). Short hints of a planned future treatise which will cover comparative woodpecker biology even more thoroughly. Species accounts contain sections titled Range Summary, Diagnostic Features, Description, Distribution and Habitat (no range maps are provided), Foraging Habits, Voice, Displays, Interspecific Interactions, Breeding, Roosting, and Taxonomy. Specific references are provided for nearly all species. The accounts feature liberal biological comparisons with related species. Each color plate illustrates one to six species, showing all major intraspecific variations (both sexes and various subspecies are frequently shown; even hybrids—such as those involving the Nuttall's Woodpecker—may be shown). Those of us with limited or no field experience outside of North America will be impressed by the variety in woodpecker plumages and the range of color shown within a family whose North American representatives are predominantly black, white, and red.

It should be noted that measurements given are generally restricted to within-species ranges for weight and wing-length; one might have wished for a more generous dose of measurements (e.g. culmen length and breadth). I bring up this point because of the fascination ecologist and have for a comparative view of such measurements, and because I couldn't find fault with any other aspect of this treasure-trove of knowledge and beauty. Those just interested in a coffee table bird book may elect to spend their hundred bucks elsewhere, but those who wish to be stimulated by a model treatment of a unique and fascinating group of birds (a treatment which wouldn't shame any coffee table, by the way) will certainly want to start saving their pennies to buy this work.



Paul Johnsgard has given us a much-needed world-wide treatment of the shorebirds, that intriguing and varied group which fascinates us here in southern California through its complex pattern of migrations. Treated are the plovers (*Charadriidae*), sandpipers and snipes (*Scolopacidae*), and the smaller families which include the avocets and stilts, the ibis-bill, the oystercatchers, the Magellanic Plover (given family status here), the Painted Snipes, and the Jacanas. Missing are the Thick-Knees, the Crab-Plover, the Pratincoles and Coursers (of which the Egyptian Plover has been the subject of a recent monograph by U.C.L.A.'s Dr. Thomas Howell), the Sheathbills, and the Seedsnipes; Johnsgard emphasizes the uncertain relationships of these families to the "typical shorebirds" in his decision not to include them.

Unlike Les Short and his woodpeckers, Dr. Johnsgard is not a veteran student of shorebirds. He is best known for his works on waterfowl, and has contributed much to our understanding of comparative waterfowl courtship behavior. He has also published major works on North American game birds and on the birds of the Great Plains. One feels, in fact, that he is a publisher's groove, and that shorebirds seemed like the logical next step after waterfowl and gamebirds. The seeds of this shorebird book go back only to 1977, and one wishes that the University of Nebraska Press had given Johnsgard another year or so to more thoroughly compile and proof the book. And in contrast to Short's scholarly devotion to woodpeckers, it is alarming that Johnsgard's 500 references contain only one authored by himself (and that was the Great Plains book which didn't deal directly with shorebirds). This book's numerous annoying errors would have been minimized were the author more familiar with his subject.

On the positive side, I should strongly stress the wealth of information to be found in this work. Johnsgard's review of the habitats, foods, social behavior, reproductive biology, and evolutionary relationships of each species make this book and invaluable addition to the library of any serious bird person. This is the prolific Johnsgard at his best. Less satisfactory are the descriptions (Holarctic species are covered better elsewhere, but there's still a lot of information here which is especially valuable for the non-Holarctic species) and the range descriptions. In the latter case, breeding ranges are rather well described and mapped, but non-breeding ranges and migration routes are treated sketchily. The birder will be disappointed to find that Johnsgard has not considered extra-limital records or minor migration pathways. From reading this book, one would have no way of knowing, for example, that Ruff or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper had ever been recorded in North America!



The world-wide scope had caused the author to modify some well-known names (e.g. "Sandplover" for our Snowy Plover), but his choices can often be annoying. Our common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, is simply called "Snipe", a throwback to a unfortunate British custom. *Calidris tenuirostris* is called "Great Knot" in the text but "Eastern Knot" in the plate caption. Annoying is the author's policy of using English names for subspecies; because of this I'm at times hopelessly confused as to what he considers a subspecies versus a full species (without referring to the text). This policy also leads to some rather cumbersome names—e.g. "American Lesser Golden Plover" or "African Spur-winged Lapwing".

*Plovers, Sandpipers, and Snipes* is liberally illustrated with attractive (though not always accurate) pen and ink drawings, and color and black-and-white photos. Color paintings illustrate downy plumages of selected species (by Jon Fjeldsa) and an adult Eskimo Curlew (James McClelland). The rush job rears its ugly head as photo plates of Black-tailed Godwit (plate 55) and Lesser Golden Plover (b&w plate 6) turn out to be Bar-tailed Godwit and Black-bellied Plover, respectively. Perhaps the publisher is at fault here, as in the reversed caption on p. 246 or the incorrect caption on p. 267. But only Johnsgard can be blamed for sticking an extra toe on a Little Ringed Plover (p. 182) or for reversing the text descriptions of the races of Bar-tailed Godwit.

Johnsgard's field identification hints are of little value. In fact, his "Summary of Field Marks of Confusing 'Peeps'" (p. 228) will virtually guarantee that the reader will remain (or become) confused for a long time: in this table the author hopelessly mixes the three major plumages worn by shorebird species—basic, alternate, and juvenal.

I've learned a great deal from this book. Johnsgard has brought together more shorebird biology than has ever graced a popular English language book. Especially enlightening are his accounts of unfamiliar southern hemisphere species, and of that great mess of snipes. The usefulness of the book is diminished by its numerous sloppy errors (the combined product of a rush to publication and Johnsgard's relatively recent entry into the world of comparative shorebird biology), but such shortcomings can be partially overlooked because of the book's strengths.

*Reviewed by Kimball Garrett, Section of Ornithology, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.*

## President's Corner

by Bob Shanman

National Audubon's first ever Annual Dinner outside of New York will take place this week at the Biltmore Hotel. If our mailing schedule is good, you should be reading this on November 1st or 2nd, and still have time to make your reservations for this big event. Contact Doug Buckmaster at National's Pasadena office at 441-3466 by November 3 to make your reservations. We are looking forward to seeing many of you at this exciting event.

This month's lead article concludes Harrison Starr's 2-part series on the current crisis of the California Condor. Harrison has done an excellent job of researching this story, traveling up and down the State to interview the key people involved in the captive breeding controversy, and summarizing the past history of the Condor. Harrison had planned to stay neutral in this fight, but, as he points out, he was forced to take a position on the weight of the information that he gathered—a position that many others have already taken. After reading the article, why not drop a line to the editor and let him know your position on this extremely important effort.

On the same subject, it appears that National will continue to stay involved in the Condor Program for at least this coming year, in spite of their displeasure with their current Fish and Game permit. Your Board of Directors has taken the position of encouraging National to continue for at least this year, as we feel too much is at stake or them not to be involved. And we, as the key chapter in the effort to keep them involved, must continue to show National that we support this program. As I pointed out in last month's column, each of us can show our support by contributing to the LAAS Condor Fund. If you have not done so already, why not mail in your contribution to the fund today. Use the convenient envelope provided in the October issue of the *TANAGER*. Send your contributions to Audubon House.

November begins our annual search to find five deserving recipients for scholarships to Audubon Camp of the West, held each summer in Wyoming. Joe Zell, one of last

year's winners, briefly describes his experience in an accompanying article in this issue. If you know someone 18 years or older who is concerned about our environment, why not nominate him or her for a scholarship. For more information, contact this year's Scholarship Chairperson, Andrea Kaufman, on Tuesday or Friday at the House, 876-0202.

Another series of events which we begin planning for in November are the annual Christman Bird Counts. Our newest count—the Antelope Valley—will again be led by Fred Heath. Jean Brandt and Kimball Garrett, traditional count leaders, will again be leading the Malibu Count. Ian Austin and I will attempt to organize the Los Angeles Count. More information on the counts will be on the tape beginning about the middle of November, and in the December *TANAGER*. In the meantime, if you are interested in helping or participating, contact the count organizers.

Two other upcoming events which we are looking forward to include the Member's Photography Contest, to be held at the January meeting and our own Annual Banquet in February. More details on both in the December *TANAGER*.

Don't forget that November 2 is Election Day. Regardless of your stand on the issues, remember to vote.

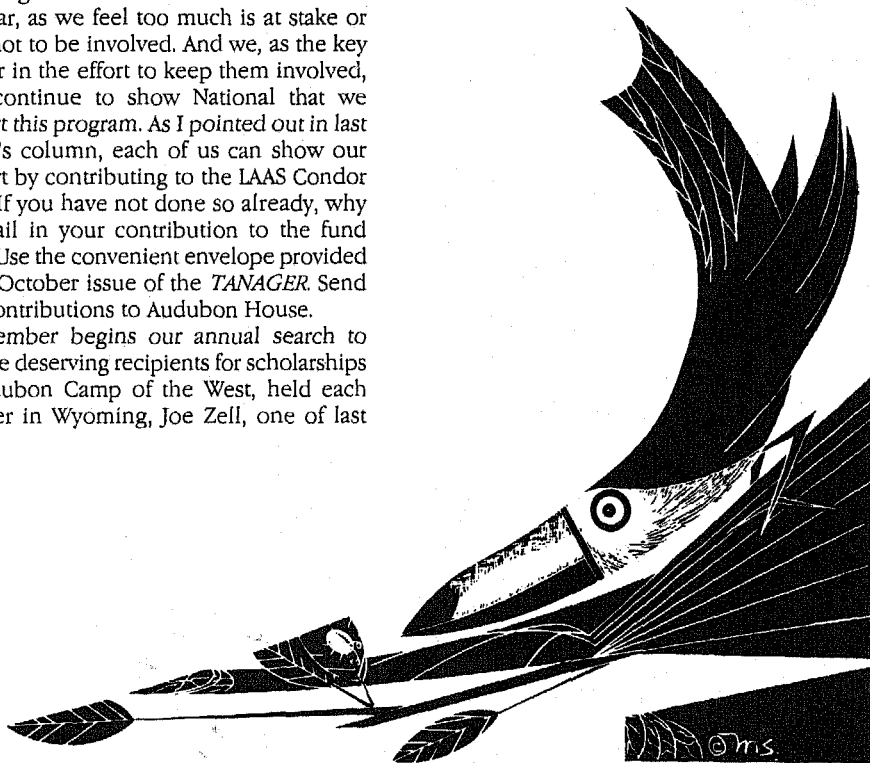


Illustration by Marie Sansone

# Birds of the Season

by Shum Suffel



**N**ovember is the start of winter for the birds. Migration is over, except for a few stragglers, and most birds have settled in for the season. It is interesting that many birds return to the same place winter after winter and may even set up loosely guarded territories, similar to those in the nesting season. This is not usually noticed among the commoner species, as individuals are not readily recognizable unless banded, but certain rarer birds, such as the Hepatic Tanager which returned to Rancho Park for seven consecutive winters in the late sixties or the Greater Pewee at Griffith Park for the last three winters, were among the dependable returnees.

The overnight L.A.A.S. trip from Oxnard to the waters off the northern Channel Islands on 29 August had birds in view continually, with hundreds of **Pink-footed** and **Sooty Shearwaters** plus three **Buller's (New Zealand) Shearwaters**, at least forty **Leach's Storm-Petrels**, and several **Black** and **Ashy Storm-Petrels**. Three **South Polar Skuas**, several **Pomarine** and **Parasitic Jaegers**, and at least one **Long-tailed Jaeger** were special treats. Four **Sabine's Gulls** and at least a dozen each of **Common** and **Arctic Terns** were seen, but the only alcids were **Cassin's Auklets**. The marine mammal list included Pacific White-sided and Common Dolphins plus close views of a Fin Whale. The Western Field Ornithologists' (W.F.O.) trips from San Diego to San Clemente Island on 10 and 12 September were similar, with the addition of three and four **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, two and six **Least Storm-Petrels**, several **Black-vented Shearwaters**, two **Common Murres**, and a single **Rhinoceros Auklet**; a disappointment was the lack of Craveri's Murrelets. The L.A.A.S. trip from San Pedro to San Clemente Island on 19 September was disappointing; most of the action was in the San Pedro Channel where there were scattered **Pink-footed**, **Sooty**, and **Black-vented Shearwater**, several **Pomarine** and three probable **Long-tailed Jaegers**, a single **Sabine's Gull**, and two **Common Murres**. The stand-out birds were a **South Polar Skua** in the channel (seen by only a few) and an adult **Red-billed Tropicbird** near San Clemente Island (which was well-viewed by everybody and saved the trip).

The **Olivaceous (Neotropic) Cormorant** continued to be seen mornings and evenings in the cormorant colony at the north end of the Salton Sea (N.E.S.S.), but still there

were no boobies or spoonbills. Two late **frigatebirds** were at Dana Point on 13 August (Loren Hays) and just off King Harbor on 6 September (Nancy Spear). Nancy also had a **Black Tern** (scarce along the coast) in the mixed tern flock there. **Least Bitterns** fledged two young at the Whittier Narrows New Lakes according to Natasha Antonovich who observed their nesting progress. From the same area comes a report that the **Wood Stork** which wandered around eastern L.A. County in 1981 was being seen again. A single **White-faced Ibis**, a rare transient through the deserts in fall, was in the Tecopa Marsh, Inyo Co., on 12 September (Rick Clements). Rick also had a **Red-shouldered Hawk** at Furnace Creek Ranch on 12 September, where they also are "rare transients". Six **Swainson's Hawks** were riding the thermals directly over the road on the east side of Mt. Pinos on 16 August (Bob Van Meter and Cliff Pollard). This was undoubtedly one of the few small migrating flocks which remain from the large flocks of former years.

Shorebirds again received maximum attention, as they have since early July. There were unprecedented numbers of **Solitary Sandpipers** below San Diego, with 25 reports and a maximum of 18 in one day (28 August, Elizabeth Copper *et al.*). Doug Willick spotted three Solitaires the same day in San Diego Creek, Irvine, and also on the 28th there were seven at Edwards Air Force Base marsh near Lancaster (Guy McCaskie *et al.*). A new shorebird for the Antelope Valley's growing list was a **Wandering Tattler** which remained at the Edwards AFB marsh 4-6 September (Jon Dunn *et al.*). **Pectoral Sandpipers** became more numerous as September progressed, e.g. one at McGrath on 21 August (Onik Arian), three at N.E.S.S. (where there are few records) on 19 September (Bill Grant and Dan Guthrie), eight along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim on 21 September (Doug Willick), and eight at the small ponds on the Pepperdine Malibu campus on 25 September (Kimball Garrett). At N.E.S.S. Bill and Dan also found hundreds of **Western Sandpipers** suffering and dying of botulism. They rescued thirty of these for later treatment and

release. Reports of **Baird's Sandpipers** came primarily from the Antelope Valley (with a maximum of 55 near Lancaster on 28 August); among those on the coast were three and five along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim on 13 and 20 August (Doug Willick) and two at McGrath on 17 August (Onik Arian). The top shorebird was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** on the sod farms at Pt. Mugu (Tom Wurster, 10 September). An earlier Buff-Breast was near Petaluma in northern California.

The summering **Mew Gull** at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds remained through August; this is our only desert record away from the Salton Sea. An early report of a **Black-legged Kittiwake** from McGrath on 7 September (Jean Brandt and Phil Sayre) undoubtedly involved a bird summering locally. Two **Parasitic Jaegers** and a **Red Phalarope** were also there. A **Sabine's Gull** along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Doug Willick, 15 September) was a very rare bird fifteen miles inland. Another Sabine's dropped by the Edwards AFB marsh briefly in early September. More than twenty **Gull-billed Terns** at N.E.S.S. (Brian Keelan, 28 August) was a high count there as they are usually seen at the south end.

**E**ach year there are scattered reports of **White-winged Doves** from the coast. This year most sightings were in the San Diego area: Pt. Loma on 26 and 28 August and below San Diego on 2 September (Richard Webster), and near Mission Bay on 12 September (Elizabeth Copper). Another was near Pt. Mugu on 4 September (Kimball Garrett). The young **Chimney Swift**, mentioned last month, survived to fly with its parents. **Black Swifts** were seen in Santa Anita Canyon as late as 17 September (Rick Gordon), and a migrant was feeding over the San Joaquin Marsh in Irvine (Shum Suffel, 28 August). Migrating flocks of **Vaux's Swifts** were widely seen during the inclement weather of September.

Traditionally, a few **Eastern Kingbirds** come through in early September: three at the Andre Clark refuge in Santa Barbara, with singles inland at Furnace Creek Ranch and Deep Springs. **Empidonax flycatchers** were moving through, with **Willows** and **Westerns** most often seen, a few **Hammond's** identified, and a single **Least** at Big Sycamore Canyon (Donna Dittman and Larry Sansone, 14 September). A card from Jerry Johnson tells of two **Red-eyed Vireos** at Oasis, Mono Co., on 7 September; closer to home, Phil Sayre found one in Tapia Park on 21 September. The summering **White-eyed Vireo** in Goleta stayed well into September.

Warblers, particularly vagrants, were of great interest, as they will be until early November. An adult male **American Redstart** was at the Turtle Rock Nature Center in Irvine on 24 August (Doug Willick). Later redstart reports



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

included nine below San Diego, five plus in Orange Co., two along the Topanga/Malibu coast, and several in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, and inland in the Inyo/Mono region. The only **Prothonotary Warbler** to date was found below San Diego on 14 September by Steve Ganley. Another rarity, a **Worm-eating Warbler**, was located in Goleta on 9 September by Paul Lehman. A **Virginia's Warbler** in the Newport Beach Environmental Nature Center was thought to be the same bird which has been there for the past two winters (Sylvia Ranney, 4 September). Three **Lucy's Warblers** were below San Diego between 22 August and 13 September (Guy McCaskie and Elizabeth Copper). An early "**Audubon's**" Warbler was in Gerry Haigh's Topanga yard on 3 September, but the "hordes" had'nt arrived as of late September. Two **Blackpolls** at Harbor Lake on 12 September were the first ones reported (John Ivanov). A **Blackburnian** came on board the W.F.O. boat to San Clemente Island on 10 September, and another was at Carpinteria Creek below Santa Barbara. Jeri Langham, down from Sacramento for the W.F.O. Convention, found a **Chestnut-sided** below San Diego on 12 September; another was on the Oxnard Plain (Paul Lehman). A single **Ovenbird** was at Furnace Creek Ranch on 12 September (Rich Clements). The only coastal **Northern Water-thrushes** were at Harbor Lake (John Ivanov, 22 September), at Tapia Park (Sandy Wohlgenuth, 23-26 September), and near Santa Barbara, but five were seen in the Inyo/Mono region on 4-5 September, two were at Deep Springs on the 7th (Jerry Johnson), and one was at Scotty's Castle on the 11th (Rick Clements). A **Red-faced Warbler** on Pt. Loma 11-12 September (Richard Webster) was only the second coastal sighting (both from Pt. Loma). Four reports of **Canada Warblers** in September were unprecedented: in Topanga Canyon on 3 September (Gerry Haigh); at Goleta on 9 September (Paul Lehman); at Big Sycamore Canyon on 11 September (Ed Navojosky); and east of Lancaster on 19 September (Kimball Garrett).

The range expansion of **Great-tailed Grackles** along our coast continued with one at Whittier Narrows and another at Refugio Beach, north of Santa Barbara. A **Scarlet Tanager** at Carpinteria Creek was of casual occurrence and one of the earliest fall records on the coast. The increasing reports of **Summer Tanagers** locally stimulates our interest in the subspecific status of these birds (see Garrett and Dunn, p. 330). The tanagers breeding at Morongo Valley were still there on 14 September (Rick Clements); they are of the western race *cooperi*. Formerly, the coastal sightings were thought to pertain mostly to vagrants of the eastern race *rubra*. But now, with little or no collecting being done, we do not know the origin of our increasing numbers of Summer Tanagers. In addition to the birds cited last month, the number of tanagers at the Arcadia arboretum

## From the Editor

by Fred Heath

I've now survived three issues of the *TANAGER* . . . bearly. I must take a few lines to thank my wife Michelle for putting up with me as each deadline arrives . . . phone calls at all hours for last minute changes, people dropping by at all hours to drop off material and me running here and there to get that last photo or proof-read the issue at the printer. I really shouldn't put the above in print, it will probably be used by her in divorce court.

Doing the *TANAGER* has not however been completely negative. In fact, it's been quite a learning experience. I find myself very concerned with the exact meanings of words and I've already allowed at least one error in usage to be printed. It was the word *fledgling* upon which I stumbled. *Fledged* means able to fly. To *fledge* a bird is to rear it until it can fly. The word comes from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning to fly. A *fledgling* is a young bird just fledged. Thus a bird in a nest which has not yet taken his first flight is a *nestling*, not a *fledgling*.

Another couple of words which I had a slight problem with were *juvenal* and *juvenile*. The former being an adjective and the latter being either an adjective or a noun. Since the author had used them correctly, I was clean. However, I did notice that both

has increased to two and possibly three (Barbara Cohen, 11 September).

Only two **Rose-breasted grosbeaks** were reported: a female at Furnace Creek Ranch (Rick Clements, 12 September) and an immature male at a willow clump in Costa Mesa (Steve Ganley, 7 September). First one immature, then, a few days later, two immature **Painted Buntings** on Pt. Loma drew crowds of birders (Rich Stallcup, 10 September). As most Painted Buntings are thought to be escapees, the immaturity of these two gave an air of legitimacy. A single **Indigo Bunting** (recently increasing in the west) was at McGrath (Onik Arian, 18 August), two were in Goleta (Paul Lehman), and a few more were in the Inyo/Mono region. A **Dickcissel**, a **Lark Bunting**, and a **Clay-colored Sparrow** in the Atascadero Creek Channel, Goleta, were the only ones reported to 20 September.

FANTASIES AND REALITIES Not all of the ultra-rarities reported have passed the review of experienced observers. The 18 September pelagic trip in Monterey Bay yielded reports of **Cape Petrel** and **Streaked Shearwater**. Examination of photographs showed the "Cape Petrel" to be a partially albino Sooty Shearwater, and it has been suggested that the "Streaked Shearwater" was an oddly-plumaged Buller's (New Zealand) Shearwater.

spellings were used as an adjective in the same article. So much for consistency.

While on the subject of words, it was brought to my attention that we sometimes are using difficult words especially to describe parts of birds. I myself have to dig deep to know where on a bird its *tertiaries*, *remiges*, *tibia* or *rectrices* might be found. Almost all books on bird identification will usually have most of these areas clearly diagrammed in the front of the book. If you intend to get halfway serious about bird identification you should really learn these words. Maybe, if there is enough interest we can put together an illustrated article on the subject. Some birders do get carried away. Take for instance the *mandible* which can be either part of the bird's beak *i.e.* upper and lower mandible. In other animals, especially mammals where the upper and lower jaw is so different, mandible only means lower jaw. The upper jaw is called the *maxilla*. Needless to say, every once in a while you'll get some show-off saying, "Look at that groovy maxilla on that ani." Don't let him snow you, he's probably misidentified a raven.

This month's *TANAGER* has a lot of information about books. Remember we have one of the best book stores in the world for bird and related books right at Audubon House. Books make excellent Christmas gifts. Come on down and browse. If you can't get there Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., try Saturday during the same hours.

Saving that weekend in Monterey was a legitimate, but uncooperative **Yellow Wagtail** which stopped briefly by Crespi Pond on Pt. Pinos (Jon Dunn and Bruce Boggs, 19 September). The presence of three **Spoonbill Sandpipers** in Oregon during August seems like "the stuff dreams are made of" (rumor has it they were Western Sandpipers with mud on their bill tips!), but a **Temminck's Stint** near Vancouver was apparently very real, and another Temminck's was reported from Abbot's Lagoon north of San Francisco in September.

An albino Steller's Jay, flecked with blue, in the San Gabriel Mountains must have been a lovely thing. Point Loma not only provided the Painted Buntings and Red-faced Warbler, but also a Pin-tailed Whydah, a Red-cheeked Waxbill, and several Oriental White-eyes. Locally, we not only have five or six species of parrots, but in the Pasadena area now a huge Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (a \$1000+ item). More and more we find ourselves birding in a huge open air aviary.





# CALENDAR

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4** — The National Audubon Society 77th. Annual Dinner. Audio-visual presentation on **Mono Lake** by **David Gaines**. Call National Audubon (213) 441-3466 for further information.

**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**.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13** — **Ballona Wetlands**. Join **Bob and Roberta Shanman** (545-2867, after 6) for a morning or 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 Frw.) to its end at Culver Blvd. Continue West on Culver, turn north onto Pacific Ave. and continue to bridge.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14** — Meet **Jerry Haigh** (455-1696) at 8 a.m. at the entrance to the **Trippet Ranch** to bird the Ranch and **Topanga Canyon**. Plan to see Chaparral birds and vagrants.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20** — **Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett** will lead a trip to **Antelope Valley**. Meet at 8 a.m. at Jane Reynolds Park, north side of Ave. J. in Lancaster. Approx. 1 mi. E. of Hwy. 14. Fall migrants. May be cool.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21** — **Whittier Narrows**. **David White** will lead a morning trip through this unique area alongside the San Gabriel River. Meet at the Nature Center at 8 a.m.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14** — Evening meeting. **Jon Dunn** will cover the identification, ageing and distribution of California's most intriguing group of birds . . . **The shorebirds**. This program will be illustrated in part by Larry Sansone's beautiful and informative slides.

## UPCOMING CHRISTMAS COUNTS

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18** Join **Fred Heath** for the **Lancaster Christmas Count**. Call Fred at 828-6524, after 5 p.m., for details.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19** — **Malibu Christmas Count**. Contact **Jean Brandt** (788-5188) or **Kimball Garrett** (455-2903) for details.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 1983** — **L.A. Christmas Count**. Call **Ian Austin** (452-3318) or **Bob Shanman** (545-2867) for details.

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).

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## 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. Leader is **Larry Norris**. 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:

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Los Angeles Audubon Society  
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