WESTERN TANAGER

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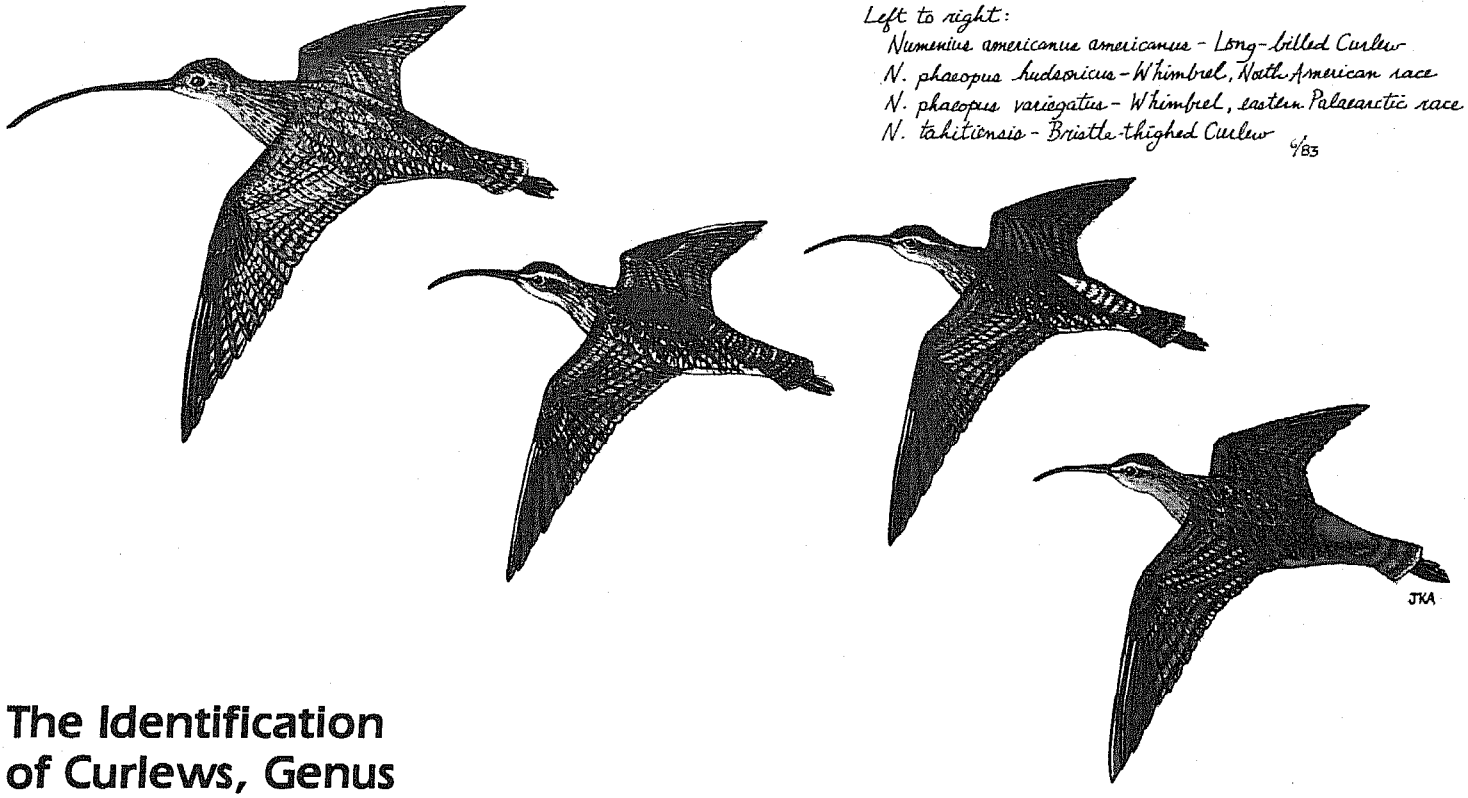


Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer

The Identification of Curlews, Genus Numenius

By Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn

The curlews, large to very large sandpipers with decurved beaks, are represented in California by two species: the Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) and the Whimbrel (*N. phaeopus*). Curlews are birds of open habitats, nesting on tundras or prairies and wintering in open fields, on large estuaries, and along seacoasts (the exact habitat varies with the species). In this article we discuss the field identification of Long-billed Curlews and Whimbrels. On the surface this would seem to be an easy differentiation, but a failure of observers to understand the distribution of the two species has led to problems. We will also briefly discuss the geographical variation in these species with an emphasis on the Whimbrel, in which distinctly marked Eurasian races have been recorded in North America. Finally, we will briefly treat the Bristle-thighed Curlew (*N. tahitiensis*), a potential straggler to California.

Long-Billed Curlew

This species, the largest and longest-billed of the world's curlews, breeds in inland prairie regions and migrates to coasts and interior areas. Its breeding range in California extends south to the Honey Lake area of Lassen County and, at least rarely, as far as the Big Pine area in the Owens Valley. Flocks winter in agricultural fields and grassland habitats over much of inland California, away from the coldest regions. This winter range includes the San Joaquin Valley, portions of the Mojave Desert, and the Imperial Valley. It cannot be overemphasized that this is the ONLY species of curlew to winter in the interior. Long-billeds also winter locally along the coast, primarily on the larger estuaries. Some sections of the coast are not occupied in winter; it is interesting to note, for example, that this species is unrecorded on the Malibu Christmas Count (which includes Malibu Lagoon) whereas it winters commonly up the coast at Mugu Lagoon and down the coast in the major estuaries of Orange County. Transients may be noted anywhere along the coast.

The overall cinnamon-buff coloration (strikingly similar to that of a Marbled Godwit) is quite different from the darker gray-brown plumage of the Whimbrel. Additionally, Long-billed Curlews show rather bright pinkish-cinnamon wing linings in flight. The overall flight appearance is paler than that of a Whimbrel. The crown is finely streaked with dusky-blackish; it lacks the bold, dark stripes of the Whimbrel's crown. Beware, however, the suggestion of crown striping which can exist when the fine crown streaks of Long-billeds are either particularly heavy or disarranged.

The bill of the Long-billed Curlew can vary

Continued top next page

from absurdly long and decurved to shorter and Whimbrel-shaped. This variation is based on three things. First, juveniles in fall are strikingly shorter-billed than adults. Second, females average considerably longer-billed than males (by an average of about 20%). Finally, the two recognized subspecies, though weakly differentiated, differ on average in bill length. The more northerly *N. a. parvus* is smaller and somewhat shorter-billed than the more southerly *N. a. americanus*. While California's breeding population appears to belong to *parvus*, both subspecies mix in winter flocks. From the above, it follows that a juvenile male *parvus* will appear much shorter-billed than, say, an adult female *americanus*. This disparity (often somewhat bimodal) in bill size within winter flocks of Long-billeds has sometimes resulted in erroneous reports of interior wintering Whimbrels. See the accompanying figure for an illustration of bill size variation, based on actual specimens in the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

The common call of the Long-billed Curlew is a rich, whistled "cur-lee", sometimes quite strident and drawn out. This differs from the more staccato notes uttered by the Whimbrel.

Whimbrel

The major features separating this species from the Long-billed Curlew are its overall grayer, darker coloration, the prominent dusky crown stripes, and the shorter and somewhat more evenly decurved bill. Whimbrels completely lack the pinkish-cinnamon wing linings of the Long-billed Curlews, and there is virtually no hint of buffy coloration in the body plumage. This lack of cinnamon is especially obvious in flight (when Long-billeds show much color); Whimbrels appear darker in flight than Long-billeds.

The most commonly heard call is a rapid series of piping, whistled notes, "pip-pip-pip-pip . . . "; this call is quite different from the loud, rising "cur-lee" call of the Long-billed.

Whimbrels are common migrants and winter visitants along the southern California coast. They may be found on beaches, rocky shorelines, estuaries, and a variety of other coastal habitats; they are certainly less tied to large estuaries than the Long-billed Curlew. From March through May large flocks of Whimbrels are routinely noted migrating through portions of the interior. They are especially abundant at the Salton Sea (where flocks may number up to ten thousand), but flocks up to several thousand have also been noted regularly in the Antelope Valley. In the San Joaquin Valley, flocks are also frequently noted in the spring, though somewhat locally. Interestingly, the Whimbrel is rather rare in spring in the Colorado River Valley (in contrast to its abundance at the Salton Sea). There are only scattered spring records from elsewhere in the interior. Small flocks are also noted inland on the coastal slope in spring, even on open lawns in urban areas. The fall and winter status of the Whimbrel in the interior is markedly different from the spring status. The species is numerous in fall in the interior only at the Salton Sea, where numbers are nevertheless much lower than in spring (fall maxima are in the hundreds). There are only a handful of fall records (mid-July through mid-August, exceptionally to early September) for the desert areas away from the Salton Sea. This species is unrecorded in winter anywhere in the interior; at this season it is strictly confined to the coast, and is somewhat local there.

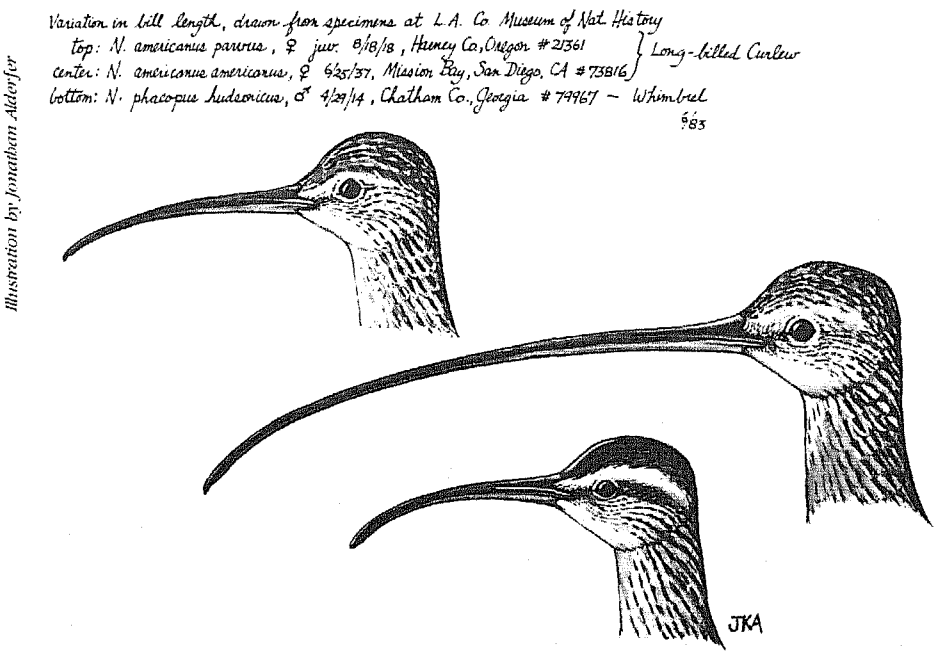


Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer

Geographical Variation in the Whimbrel

Our North American Whimbrels (formerly called "Hudsonian Curlews") are of the subspecies *N. phaeopus hudsonicus*. They are characterized by an entirely dark, gray-brown lower back and rump. Eurasian races, on the other hand, show a variable amount of white on the rump. The eastern Palaearctic *variegatus* occurs regularly in western Alaska, and there is a sight record from the Arcata Bottoms, Humboldt County, California, 29 October to 1 November 1981, that probably pertains to this race (or possibly the following race). Nominate *phaeopus* breeds in the western Palaearctic and is noted rarely on the east coast in migration. *Variegatus* has a barred whitish rump and upper tail converts, and may even show some clear white on the upper rump. The nominate race is characterized by extensive clear white on the rump. There appears to be much variation in the amount of barring on the rump and upper tail coverts in these races, but any example should be easily differentiated from our *hudsonicus* Whimbrels.

Bristle-Thighed Curlew

This relative of the Whimbrel is endemic to western Alaska, where very few nesting localities are known; the species migrates to the islands of the tropical Pacific for the winter. The total world population is undoubtedly not high. Because the species has been recorded from British Columbia, and because there are recent reports from Oregon, we feel that it is a candidate for potential occurrence in California and discuss it briefly here.

Bristle-thighed Curlews derive their name from a handful of shiny, stiffened hairlike feathers which occur on the flanks near where the legs join the body. This trait is visible only in the hand. The most obvious field characters are the general tawny-buff tone to the plumage, and, especially, the clear tawny orange rump (reminiscent of a Cliff Swallow pattern). The mantle and coverts are spotted and barred with a rich tawny, and there is an orangish wash on the lower flanks. The breast and flank markings are finer and sparser than in the Whimbrel. The tail has relatively wide tawny-orange bars and rather fewer and narrower dusky bars (the dusky bars and light gray-buff bars of the Whimbrel's tail are about equal in width). Field notes by Dunn in western Alaska suggest that Bristle-thigheds may appear slightly larger and stockier than Whimbrels, and may have a slightly shorter bill, straighter on the basal two-thirds and more sharply decurved at the tip. Juveniles show rows of blackish feathers with buffy margins down the back, unlike the more uniformly dark pattern of juvenile Whimbrels.

The call of the Bristle-thighed Curlew is a clear, "ter-whi-wheet", like a human whistle in quality. Another note is a more plaintive whistle, recalling a Black-bellied Plover's note. Both calls are utterly different from calls of the Whimbrel, and are excellent field characters.

Christmas in July

By Dorothy Dimsdale

Audubon magazine is only one of the many publications available to bird lovers. Its offshoot, 'American Birds', is of special interest to the serious birder. Each year the July edition records the species and participants in the previous annual U.S. Christmas bird count. This data fills over 400 pages of small type, covering each section of every state or province.

I've found that the individual reports of the regional editors make fascinating reading—that's a note for all you participants who look simply to see if they've included and spelled your name correctly!

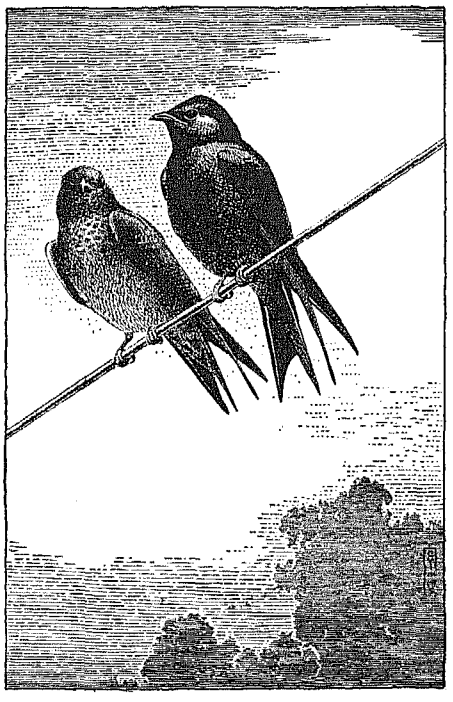
Some of the reports are fun. In Ontario in 1979 a Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus,* known to use a large diseased maple tree, was found on count day, hammering away at a heap of logs. The tree had been cut down and the logs were all that remained. In the same year T.V.'s 'Sesame Street' called National Audubon to be sure that Big Bird, *Avis magna*(?), was included in the count.

Some of it is exciting, like the first recording (on a Christmas count) of an Elf Owl, *Micrathene whitneyi,* at Alice, Texas in 1981.

Some of it is encouraging. In Virginia in 1979, one of the participants was 92 years old.

Some of it is sad, as the report from Edwin McKnight in 1980, that after 47 consecutive years the Accokeek, Md. count has been discontinued as the participants grew too old to venture out.

Then I came to the California report. 344 species counted in 1981. Terrific! However our regional editor, Guy McCaskie has not been truly happy, at least since 1979. In that year many of the count lists sent to him, not only were miscalculated but also untidy. I can well sympathize with his frustration over the former. Neatness is something else—from my own point of view, that is. Whatever glorious qualities may be attributed to me, neatness is not one of them.



One splendid isolated moment in my life contradicts this. I was standing in line at the Blue Chip stamp redemption center. When my turn came, I presented my wad of books to be counted. The lady riffled the pages, then looked up and said, 'I must compliment you on the neatness of your books. Not many people stick the stamps in with such care.' As I left the store clutching my new electric can opener, my heart *sang!* Of course, I would be the first to admit that sticking in Blue Chip stamps is a far cry from writing down the Christmas bird count, but it is a start.

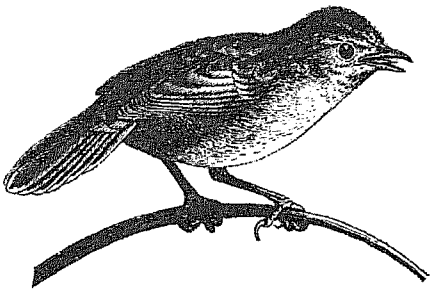
Obviously Guy McCaskie's remarks were taken to heart. In the 1981 edition of American Birds, reporting on 1980's count, Guy reported that he was 'encouraged by the increased quality of the documentation accompanying the counts' and expressed the hope that the trend would continue. With bated breath (almost) I awaited the report on 1981. There was no mention of neatness, but in a final paragraph he chastised those compilers who incorrectly totalled either the species or the number of individuals, or both. Could it be that the compilers were so absorbed with making their reports neat and readable that the actual totalling went by the board? What will be the outcome in the 1983 edition? It's too late now to issue a warning, but I hope all you compilers have 'got it together' and sent Guy an 'A' paper.

In fact, I agree with Guy McCaskie's position. If these counts are to be taken seriously and kept for reference, the least the compiler can do, is to present a legible and correctly tallied count. As for me, Blue Chip stamps have long been unavailable, but I keep three copies of my bird 'life list', and would you believe each has a different total?

The Malibu Christmas Count

By Kimball Garrett

Eighty-three observers in some thirty parties were deployed on Sunday, 19 December for the annual Malibu Christmas Bird Count. While this meant coverage was up slightly from the past two years, the species total for the day, 160, was about four below average. This lower total seems attributable to the virtual absence of many montane and boreal species in the lowlands this winter: misses in this category included Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Chickadee, and, nearly, Cedar Waxwing (we squeaked by with two!). Also down this year was the diversity of waterfowl, with such species as Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler and Redhead missed; the paucity of ducks was especially evident in Malibu Lagoon, perhaps a temporary result of the lagoon restoration process (which will undoubtedly increase waterfowl populations a year or two hence).



Notable species or high counts included: Black-vented Shearwater (150 counted off Pt. Dume); Black Scoter (one picked out of a Surf Scoter flock off the Moonshadows Restaurant by Fred Heath, Tom Frillman, and Mary Thompson); Hooded Merganser (absent from Malibu Lagoon for the first time in years, but salvaged by Sandy Wohlgemuth at a treatment pond off Las Virgenes Rd.) Osprey (the first ever for Malibu CBC, spotted by the Cupples near Malibu Lake); Cassin's Auklet (a speck off Pt. Dume claimed by co-compiler Kimball Garrett); Western Screech-Owl (Gerry Haigh's call to KG at 5:00 a.m. told of a calling screech-owl . . . quite current, as it was audible over the phone!); Common Poorwill (another first for the count, heard and glimpsed in lower Tuna Canyon by Cathy and Bill Jacobs); Allen's Hummingbird (Lee Jones' total of 15 in the residential area upstream from Malibu Lagoon indicates that this species continues to colonize this area); Tree Swallow (seven flew over Jon Dunn at Malibu Lagoon; Black-and-white Warbler (the Brodkins located the wintering male along Bonsall Dr.—its third straight winter here); Tennessee Warbler (Kimball Garrett, Sherman Suter, and Terri Weyrauch found one, along with two Nashvilles, on Pt. Dume); and Gray-headed Junco (now considered a subspecies of the common "Dark-eyed" Junco—Brian Keelan dug one up in Liberty Canyon anyway).

There were two showstoppers: a Painted Redstart at Malibu Lake (found four days before the count by Jean Brandt and seen by several on count day) and a Hammond's Flycatcher at Tapia Park. The Hammond's was found just before our traditional mid-day gathering and obliged the great majority of the participants on the count!

The 30,660 individual birds counted was somewhat below average, and many observers commented on the low numbers of many resident and wintering species. Though some 15% of the count circle burned last October, it seems unlikely that the fires alone explained the drop in bird numbers.

Compilers Jean Brandt and Kimball Garrett extend heartiest thanks to those who participated—and look forward to your participation on the next count (Sunday, 18 December 1983).

The Lancaster Christmas Count

By Fred Heath

For the first time in the four years of existence of the Lancaster Count we failed to hit a high for the number of species. We had 105 species which was well below the high set in 1982 of 115 species. The count did have a high count of observers at 31, which was a full ten over the year before. I must say that I blew it. I had not expected as many people to show up that beautiful, windless (though below freezing at dawn) Saturday, 18 December, and thus had not split the people into enough different parties. I think that half of the people on the count worked the marsh on Edwards Air Force Base. While this is a very productive area some of these folks could have probably added a few species, if they'd been placed elsewhere.

This notwithstanding, we still had an excellent count with quite a few new species for the count. One of the beauties of a new count is the fact that it is still fairly easy to find new species. We found seven new species and one race: a couple of **Cattle Egrets** walking through an agricultural field, two **Ross' Geese** with a flock of 51 Snow Geese, a female **Hooded Merganser** at Edwards, a very dark **Harlen's Hawk** (a rare race of the Red-tailed Hawk), three **Tree Swallows** over the marsh of Edwards were late (the mild weather found a number of this species here and there in the Region), a **Brown Creeper** in a ranch yard was quite unusual, a **Lark Bunting** was unusual but they seem to be turning up regularly in late fall in the Antelope Valley and finally a **Harris' Sparrow** for which there haven't been any reports in L.A. County for a number of years.

New High Counts were recorded for a number of species: Pied-bellied Grebe 17 (12 previous high), Great Blue Heron 31 (4), Great Egret 7 (2), American Bittern 8 (6), Canada Goose 18 (15), Snow Goose 51 (47), Gadwall 148 (31), Pintail 406 (204), N. Shoveler 7636 (4885), Redhead 13 (4), Ring-necked Duck 14 (10), Canvas-back 35 (16), Red-shouldered Hawk 5 (2), Red-tailed Hawk 82 (80), Golden Eagle 2 (1), N. Harrier 40 (38), Prairie Falcon 7 (5), Common Snipe 3 (2), Common Flicker 35 (34), Black Phoebe 18 (16), Say's Phoebe 30 (23), Raven 1647 (1197) (and last year's high was the highest for any Christmas Count ever), House Wren 3 (2), Marsh Wren 102 (65), Starling 2830 (2485) (there is a program to stop this, I hear), Song Sparrow 65 (21), Lark Sparrow 110 (48), Tricolored Blackbird 15, 941 (5000), Brewer's Blackbird 5645 (3023), House Finch 1543 (991), House Sparrow 868 (860). The fact that so many new highs are set is not surprising, especially since there were so many observers. Note the highs in water birds and remember all the folks at the Edwards marsh.

The low counts were as follows: Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 (2 previous low) (better or worse identification skills?), Ferruginous Hawk 4 (7), American Kestral 36 (38), California Quail 23 (76), Virginia Rail 3 (5), Dunlin 1 (14), Long-billed Dowitcher 1 (14), Horned Lark 7859 (17, 845) (can you believe our low is almost eight thousand birds and Malibu can't get one?), Loggerhead Shrike 31 (34), (is it significant that Shrike and Kestral which feed on similar prey are both down this year?), Brown-headed Cowbird 1300 (1500). Only two birds that have been seen on the three previous counts but were not seen this time: American Avocet and Rock Wren. Only one Rock Wren had been noted in all three years. The Avocet was represented by one individual in two years and jumped to the amazing total of two birds in one year. Thus to miss either of these species is not especially surprising. Disappointing yes, surprising no.

The Lancaster Christmas Count will be held this year on Saturday, December 17th. I'm hoping for at least as big a turnout as last year and a promise there will be many more parties with territories that can be adequately covered. See you then.

Jean Brandt, our past LAAS President, received the following letter from James E. Halferty of Pasadena and thought she might share it with the readers of the TANAGER

Dear Jean:

Since you are my mentor and avian confidant, I am writing about ABA credibility vis-a-vis introduced birds.

To wit (also the call of the ex-Weid's Flycatcher), the non-position of the Red-crowned Parrot and the Red-whiskered Bulbul in California, specifically in the Arcadia Arboretum. And in the case of the R-C Parrot, the Halferty's front yard, beginning this year.

I am certainly carrying no flag for these birds, or for any introduced birds, for that matter. I would not argue for or against keeping them on the ABA list, other than to recognize that, once they have become well established, they definitely are wild birds — tweet, lay eggs and all the rest on their own.

But, it seems a bit incredible that while I have obnoxious, squawking R-C Parrots in my yard, all too-well established, I have to go to South Texas to try to see one to list officially, albeit (V).

Even more fuzzy is the R-W Bulbul, which was (is) well established in the Arboretum and may or may not now be extirpated depending on how successful the extirpators are. But to list one I have to go to Florida, where they are also (I).

Neither one of these birds are any less (I) than say, the Spot-breasted Oriole or the Budgerigar in Florida.

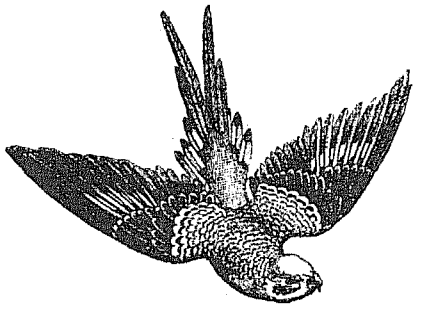
What one concludes is that the people in Florida have sold their (I) birds to the ABA, and the people in California have not. Our purists, in fact, lobby against such nonsense and can give you 10,000 words on why, for example, the R-C Parrot and the R-W Bulbul do not qualify for (I). Their logic, at least to a lay person, seems very subjective and warped out of shape, but such is the burden of bias.

Again, I really do not care whether ABA lists (I) birds or not. I only say, in the interest of fairness and credibility, they should list *all* established introduced birds or none. And the rules for what constitutes "established" should not be such that otherwise competent birders will try to convince you that R-C Parrots are not well established in Arcadia and East Pasadena.

Jean, (I) birds should be all in or all out. I hope LAAS will lend its support in this direction. Meanwhile, if you know anyone who wants to be properly introduced to a R-C Parrot, please let me know.

Kind regards,

Jim



Updating Birds of North America

The American Ornithologists Union (A.O.U.) has just announced a major revision to its *Check-List of North American Birds.* This changes many common names and makes extensive taxonomical rearrangements. Hal Spear sent a copy of a proposed article for the *TANAGER* which lists on a page by page basis each change which would have to be made to the field guide used by most of us: *Birds of North America* by Robbins *et al.* This article was so long it would have run over 8 pages in the *TANAGER* and it was decided not to print it. Hal, however has printed copies of this article and is willing to send you a copy for a mere $1 (to offset printing and postage costs).

If you are interested, send your buck to Hal Spear, 218 The Strand, Hermosa Beach, California 90254.

Field Trip to Lime-Kiln Creek Park

The morning of April 4 dawned bright and sunny for the 17 enthusiastic birders who joined me to check out the birds of Lime-Kiln Creek Park at the top of Tampa and Rinaldi in Northridge. After many days of rain and excessive Santa Ana winds, this day was perfectly clear. The rolling hills above the park were the brightest green, and we anticipated seeing many birds. We weren't disappointed!

In addition to typical species, we saw Northern Oriole, Black-headed Grosbeak, Costa's Hummingbird, Lincoln, Lark and Chipping Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hutton's and Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped and Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Kingbird, Lesser, American and Lawrence's Goldfinch. The total for the day—52 species.

Although the Roadrunner was running on some "unseen" road, and the Golden Eagle choose not to come soaring over the hills, we were happy to have seen so many beautiful birds.

And, besides, the challenge of birding this area remains. I have recorded 101 species (since 1977), and now that more eyes are looking, I'm sure "new" birds will be discovered.

Caryol Smith

From the Editor

by Fred Heath

This column could easily be a want ad. It would read: "Wanted, Editor for Western Tanager. Long hours, high pressure from seemingly endless deadlines, and no pay." If this looks like the perfect job for you please let us know at Audubon House as soon as possible. You see, after one long, long year as editor of the *TANAGER* I'm retiring. No, I haven't been forced out because of the April Fools issue (that trick didn't work . . . the Board kept me in spite of it). I just couldn't handle the job of editor, along with my full time job (for real money) which has me traveling all over the world, and more importantly my other full time job as a husband and father. (Costs real money. That's why I need the first full time job.) With these two full time jobs it has always been difficult enough to find time to get out birding on weekends. This is also one of the reasons I decided to limit myself pretty much to birding L.A. County instead of running all over the state as I did before I got married. As editor of the *TANAGER,* finding birding time became even more difficult and so I've decided to hang up my pen.

Although it is a tough job requiring more time than I care to give, it has been a very rewarding experience for me personally. I've received many supporting letters which alone made it all worthwhile. In addition I've never had a problem getting material for the *TANAGER,* be it articles, notes, drawings or photos, for which I am grateful. I can't thank everyone individually, but I must point out a few without whose help I could not have done the *TANAGER.* Sandy Wohlgemuth and Shum Suffel for their monthly columns Conservation Conversation and Birds of the Season, respectively. For Peggy Pantel for doing the Calendar page which means harrassing the Field Trip and Program Chairman to line up field trips and programs far in advance. John Dunn and Kimball Garrett for their series of articles on identification. Keith Lee for the design of the *TANAGER* which give it the excellent "look" that it has. John Parque at our printer Artisan Press, who gets the *TANAGER* out on time each month even after I miss each deadline. And finally and most importantly, Kimball Garrett who aside from co-authoring the I.D. articles, types Shum's column each month, provides invaluable advice and has more than once gotten the *TANAGER* to press for me when I was off traveling somewhere or other (you can tell those issues . . . the ones without the typos).

These good people will continue to support whoever the next editor will be. And just remember you can't do a worse job than I did (just look at my last editorial where about five lines have been repeated have been repeated have been repeated).

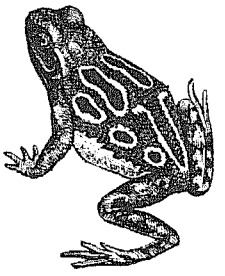
I also will be more than happy to help the new editor as much as he or she needs. I might even write an article or two for the new editor to turn down.

What am I going to do? First I'm going to spend some time with my son, Dean and daughter, Holly. Next I'm going to get reacquainted with my wife, Michelle. Then I'm going to look for a few birds or maybe just sit on a log somewhere and do nothing.

Photograph by Howard Honig

. . . spend some time with my son Dean, look for a few birds or just sit on a log somewhere . . .

Conservation Conversation



by Sandy Wohlgemuth

It has crept silently upon the world like an intergalactic plague launched by an insidious science-fiction enemy. Unknown and unsuspected twenty or thirty years ago, acid rain is slowly rolling across America and Europe leaving death and destruction in its wake.

In 1948, a pall of smog descended upon Donora, an industrial town in Pennsylvania. The result: twenty deaths and many crippling respiratory ailments. Four years later, London was devastated by fog and smog that lasted for days and killed 4000 people! In response to these catastrophes, industrial cities all over the world built tall smokestacks that sent the pollution high into the clouds and far away, effectively reducing the contamination.

It wasn't until the 60s that Norway and Sweden realized that their clean environments were suffering from acid rain blown east from Germany and Britain. Within the next few years Canada and the United States discovered that they, too, had become victims of acid rain. The giant smokestacks, unfortunately, only helped with local fallout; the pollutants that blew away did not conveniently vanish into the wild blue yonder, never to be met with again. These gases and tiny particles were caught up in the prevailing winds and blown hundreds and even thousands of miles from their point of origin before falling gently on the earth beneath.

The predominant chemical in the emissions from factories, smelters, oil refineries and power plants is sulfur dioxide. In the atmosphere sulfur dioxide combines with water molecules to form sulfuric acid and falls to earth as rain or snow. In big cities such as Los Angeles with millions of cars and trucks, the nitrogen oxides from engine exhaust rises, mixes with water vapor, and in the presence of sunlight forms nitric acid. Viola—acid smog.

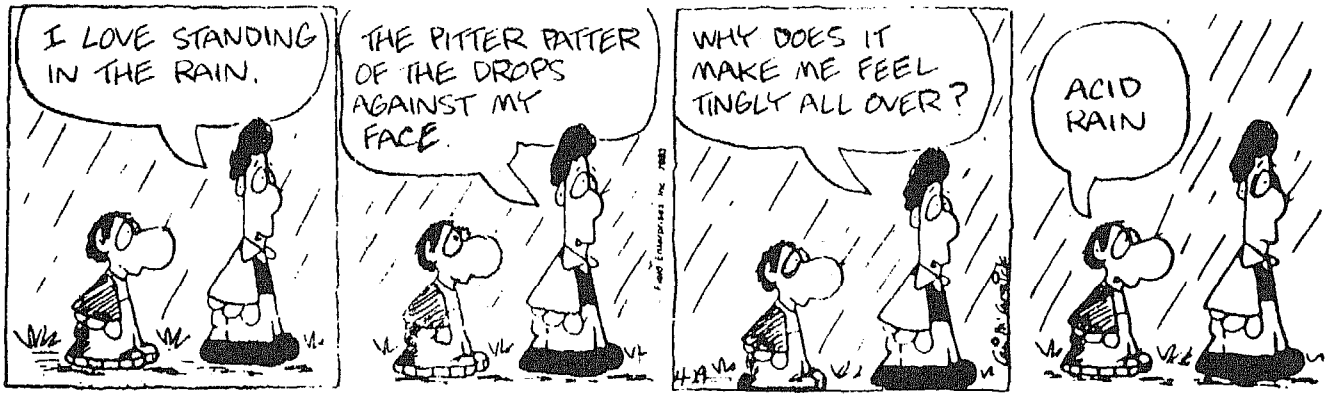
In the northeastern United States and Canada (as in Scandinavia) the glacial lakes and rivers are the prime targets for acid rain. Limestone, if it occurs in the soil around or at the bottom of a lake can neutralize acids because it is alkaline. Where the earth layer is thin and covers hard granite or basalt there is no substantial buffer for the acid. In either case, the yearly addition of more and more acid brings on the slow death of the lake ecosystem. First clams and snails, then crayfish, aquatic insects and amphibians, then the fish. The eggs of all these living things go first and so we are left with only adults. On the surface, nothing seems to have changed; fisherman are still catching fish, small children, frogs, But changes do occur. With fish, the acid attacks the calcium in their bones and they become deformed. Acid leaches out aluminum from the soil which clogs the gills, so the fish suffocate. When the amphibians and the fish decline, the food chain is disrupted and mammals and aquatic birds begin to starve. When the plants go, the only life remaining is a thick mat of algae, moss and fungus that covers the bottom of the lake like Astroturf. It is a diabolical irony that when a lake dies the water becomes crystal clear and looks even more attractive than before. One scientist tells of watching a lone fisherman on a picture-postcard lake enjoying his solitude. The scientist shakes his head and says to himself, "The poor guy doesn't know it, but he's not fishing. All he's doing is drowning worms."

Even in lakes and rivers that are apparently not in jeopardy there is the danger of acid shock. This happens when a heavy snow cover, loaded with sulfuric acid, begins to melt in the spring. The runoff carries a sudden lethal dose of acid for a short time—perhaps a hundred times stronger than usual—and kills off the spring eggs and larvae of frogs, salamanders and fish. Atlantic salmon had spawned in Nova Scotian rivers for eons. Generations of fishermen had enjoyed a healthy, renewable protein resource. When anglers reported a noticeable fall-off in their catches in the 50s, studies were made and all the target rivers were highly acidic. In the 60s the catch had declined by half and a decade later there was none.

But that's not all. Acid rain affects trees and the soil. As we know from our own experience in southern California, the yellow pines in the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountains have been slowly dying because of smog. Local production of spinach and other leafy vegetables is a hazardous financial undertaking. So, in the valuable coniferous forests of New England and eastern Canada, timber yields have fallen as acid removes nutrients from roots and foliage. Forestry is Canada's largest industry and in eastern Canada alone is worth over $4 billion dollars a year.

What about people and acid rain? Though there is some difference of opinion in the medical fraternity, the preliminary investigations are not promising. Heavy metals such as mercury, lead, zinc and copper have been found in alarming concentrations in remote lakes far from possible industrial sources. How did they get there? The puzzle was solved when it was discovered that the metallic particles in the smoke can hitch a ride with acid molecules in their long passage from smokestacks to the downwind lakes. The metals and acid react to produce more toxic forms of the metals which may be ingested by fish. People eating contaminated fish are threatened with serious diseases such as mercury poisoning. It has been shown that toxic metals can trickle down into underground

Arnold **By Kevin McCormick**



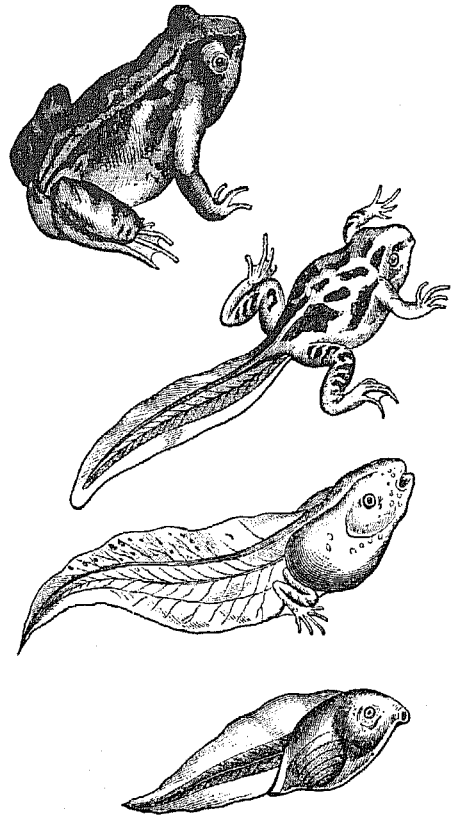
Reprinted from the LA Times

aquifers and enter the water supply. And acids in metal pipes leach out soluble metal salts that are undesirable, to say the least. In smog-infested cities all over the world, the greatest concern is aggravation of respiratory problems. A little known fact about air pollution is that sulfur and nitrogen oxides may travel the air currents in the dry state before they have had time to change into sulfuric and nitric acids. They fall to earth and become acidic when they mix with mist or fog or rain or surface water. As dry particles they may be inhaled into the lungs and cause chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Last but not least on our doleful list is the effect of acid rain on some of the architectural treasures of the world. The Taj Mahal, the Parthenon, The Roman Colosseum have been scarred and pitted by acid washings. Some buildings have received more environmental abuse in the last fifty years than they have in the previous two thousand. Limestone and marble are forms of calcium carbonate. The slow, persistent bath of acid converts the hard marble into soft gypsum which is similar to plaster of Paris used in making casts for broken limbs. Close to home, both the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial are targets for acid rain.

Hundreds of lakes in Canada and the Adirondacks have already expired. Economically, the bills are enormous. Millions of dollars worth of lumber is being ruined. Jobs are being lost. Vacation resorts are closing down, bringing the tourist industry down with them. More than monetary loss is the threatened demise of millions of acres of magnificent habitat: green mountains of hardwoods and conifers, healthy lakes and streams alive with fish and waterfowl, resounding with the electrifying cry of a loon.

The solution of the problem of acid rain is difficult and expensive. In Sweden, New York state and Ontario lime has been added to affected lakes to buffer and neutralize the acid. This is not only very costly but it must be repeated periodically. With lakes that are remote and hard to reach the job would be impossible. The only genuine solution is to stop the pollution at the source. As long as we are burning fossil fuels there are going to be sulfur and nitrogen oxides. With a hard-nosed rational program emissions can be reduced significantly. Scrubbers can be installed to wash the sulfur out of the escaping gases; precipitators to extract the solid particles. Coal-burning plants can use low-sulfur fuel to wash the sulfur out of the coal before it is burned. Better catalytic after-burners can be developed to cut down more nitrogen oxides from auto exhaust than is currently handled. It *can* be done. Smog has been almost endemic to large Japanese cities. Not long ago we saw news photos of people there wearing surgical masks during their routine urban activities. A determined effort was launched to reduce emissions, and in five years sulfur dioxide was cut back by 50%. The number of chemical scrubbers in Japan was increased from 100 in 1970 to over one thousand in 1975. Emission limits have been revised downward almost every year.



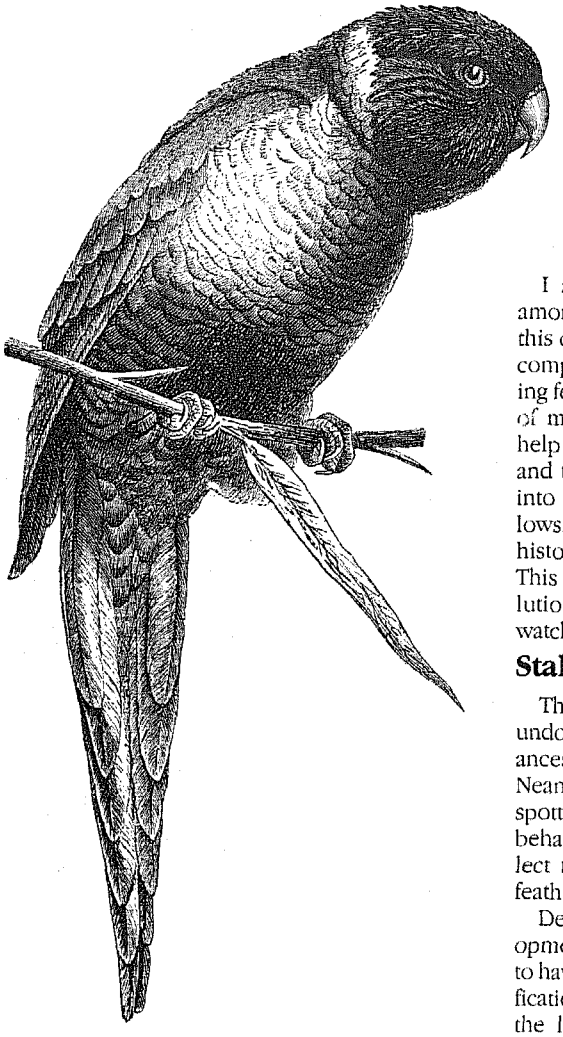
After several years of discussion and research, Canada and the United States issued a statement in 1979 on acid rain in North America. They acknowledged the extensive and irreversible damage that had already been done and agreed to abide by vigorous enforcement of air quality standards, mutual consultation on energy problems and cooperative research activities. A Joint US-Canada Work Group of scientists was set up to gather information and make recommendations for action. Canadians are not happy with the progress of this body. John Roberts, Minister of the Environment, says that "US scientists have not accepted that the impacts of acid rain, which are clearly evident in the hundreds of lakes and rivers studied, apply generally to the thousands of aquatic ecosystems which are now identified as sensitive to acid rain fallout." The Reagan Administration is viewed as stalling the proceedings of the Joint Group as well as showing reluctance to engage in diplomatic negotiations of the problem. Over half the tonnage of acid rain from the United States crosses the border into Canada and to Mr. Roberts this is "a clear and present danger to the environment." A new study by the Environmental Law Institute concludes that only the United States, among major industrial nations in Europe and North America has ignored new research on acid rain damages and adopted policies in recent years which may worsen the problem.

Many people were shocked to learn that the Justice Department applied the Foreign Agents Registration Act against three documentary films produced by the prestigious National Film Board of Canada. One film concerns the medical and environmental effects of nuclear warfare; it won an Academy Award. The other two films were on acid rain. Smearing accurate scientific information as "propaganda" and forcing the distributor to report the names of organizations and institutions renting the film is blatantly intimidating and unworthy of a free democracy. It would seem to indicate that the Administration is unwilling to face the catastrophe of acid rain and is trying to hide the truth from the American people. Environmental groups are suing to strike down the labeling action and they are joined by the State of New York which is a victim of acid rain and wants to use the films to educate the public.

Acid rain might be viewed as a symbol of human shortsightedness. We do not have to search for our imaginary sci-fi antagonist casting lethal acidic pestilence upon us from outer space. In the immortal words of Pogo Possum, "We have met the enemy and he is us!"

More Peregrines Released

Once again, through the generosity and understanding of the California Community Foundation, the Ora L. Leeper fund has granted $7500 to Los Angeles Audubon to sponsor the release of three young peregrine falcons in the Santa Monica mountains. The captively-bred birds will be placed in the hack box in the Boney Ridge Wilderness Area that was the scene of the last year's successful project. According to Brian Walton, of the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, releasing falcons from the same area several years in a row increases the odds that some of them will return to the site when they are mature and will breed there. This spring, two pairs of young birds have taken up residence on tall buildings in downtown Los Angeles. It is believed some of them may be Boney Ridge birds and some Westwood birds released from the building housing the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. These birds may already have established pair bonds, though if they are local birds they are probably not ready to reproduce. Nest boxes have been provided in the event they are mature birds. The Western Foundation plans to release three more peregrines this year. If all the birds from Westwood and Boney survive this year there will have been fourteen peregrine hacked into the wild from the Los Angeles area in three years! An exciting prospect. In a few years they may appear on everyone's county list!



The Seven Levels of Birdwatching

By Dr. Hartmut Walter

While attending a recent meeting of some of Los Angeles' most intrepid birders I was struck by the great advance in their technical skills and curiosity level compared to just ten years ago. I suddenly felt as if I had been misplaced, improperly educated, or—worse—left behind as an incompetent and crippled runt of the modern birding world.

In order to regain my composure I began a quick mental scan of the world of birdwatching. Where were my coordinates? Was I going to become a relict or was I still anchored in the mainstream? The more I thought about it, the more I discerned a phased development in both the phylogeny of birdwatching and the ontogeny of the individual birdwatcher. I determined my own status (somewhere in the middle), and vowed to move up another evolutionary level with my New Year's resolution.

I am quite certain that there are many among the nine million certified birders in this country who feel ill at ease when in the company of some hot-shot, know-it-all birding fellow. I will therefore write up the results of my mental scanning exercise. This may help those poor souls to find their bearing and to classify their friends and competitors into their proper "birding level". What follows, is not intended in any way to be a history of ornithology or of natural history. This sketch is strictly concerned with the evolution of the trade, art, science, and fun of watching birds.

Stalking and Trapping

The first level of human birdwatching was undoubtedly developed by our early hominid ancestors, be they of the afarensis, erectus, or Neanderthal type. They needed birds, so they spotted them, observed their ecology and behavior, then stalked specific birds to collect them, their young, their eggs, or their feathers.

Depending on the level of cultural development those gatherers and hunters appear to have exhibited variable skills of bird identification. On some Pacific islands, for instance, the local inhabitants are extremely knowledgeable about all bird species, including the smallest songbirds. On the other hand, many desert dwellers and fishermen whom I have met in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East—essentially gatherers living from and within the local ecosystems—were surprisingly ignorant of bird identification: they recognized only bird groups like gulls, shearwaters, larks, swallows, etc. They usually did not recognize juvenile, non-breeding and other plumage stages as part of a species' total phenotype. Level one therefore appears to contain a wide range of expertise in bird identification and biology. We may presume that people knew most about those birds that were important for the human economy, culture, and religion.

When we look at our contemporary society we find that some among us are still at the first level. Others, please pardon my arrogance, have regressed to an even lower state of bird consciousness. They are those who don't hear or see any birds wherever they may be. You hear them at the cocktail party or during the coffee break: "Are there birds in L.A.? Did you really study one bird for twelve years?" They are also incredulous when you tell them about the popularity of the birding hobby or the distinguished world of ornithology. We might classify such people as a zero contingent.

Admiring, Enjoying, Curious

Level two began with great men like Aristotle, Frederick II of Hohenstauffen, and Albertus Magnus. They observed, studied, and wrote about birds because of their high curiosity about natural phenomena like migration, sexual dimorphism in size (reversed in most raptors), and the changing composition of the fauna in different countries. Frederick II in particular was an excellent level two birdwatcher. His interest and mastery of falconry made him observe the habits of some raptors in great detail; he also studied the raptor's quarry, however, relying on field observation rather than on the customary classic literature source.

Level two continued well into the middle ages and beyond. Some distinguished authors like Gilbert White (1720-1793) belongs to this category. They observed birds mostly for pleasure, and became veritable bird scholars out of curiosity and love for their feathered friends. There are many friends of birds around today who like and enjoy birds, often know a great deal about them, but do not catch the "listing" fever or the quantitative ambition.

Collecting and Describing

The third level is linked to the explosion of natural history cabinets in Europe. Wealthy private individuals as well as princes, queens, and emperors competed in a case of collectomania to heap millions of stuffed animals into their chambers of natural curiosities. The shotgun played an important part in this endeavor. From far places soon came the unfamiliar, the wildly exotic plants and animals. To display the treasures, to organize the collections, curators were employed. Their task was to classify and to describe. Thus taxonomy and systematics began to bloom. Species, forms, races, and types of birds were looked at, described and named. There was very little birdwatching in the field during this stage because bird skins abounded in the new museums where you could study a bird's morphology in detail. Still, some of the best taxonomists also knew much about birdlore, seasonal avifaunal variation, and about the taste of each species on the dinner table or in the soup kitchen. Among these were Buffon, Brehm, Naumann, Linnaeus, and in North America famous ornithologists like Wilson, Nuttall, Audubon, and Dawson.

The third phase is an important one because it focused on the morphology of birds at close hand. Taxonomists noted even minute variations and differences in bill length, feather shape and feather color. They marveled at the incredible diversity in the bird world and devoted their careers to sorting out order from disorder. This work is still going on today, a much-needed, but often little appreciated task. Any birdwatcher of the sixth level

can attest to the need for accurate and complete plumage characters on many difficult species. Thus, we need more taxonomists!

Among the ancient high civilizations we know that the Egyptians described, knew, and depicted in excellent color frescoes most of their common resident and wintering avian species. This achievement (over 4,000 years ago) can be compared to the museum work of our greatest naturalists.

Walking, Watching, and Listing

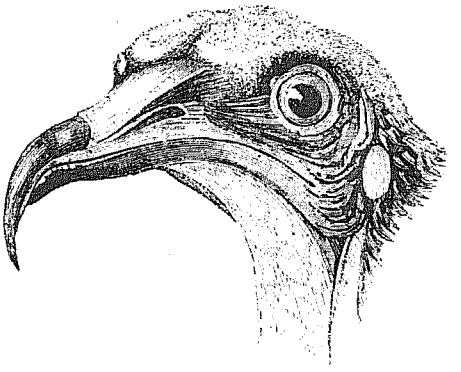
The fourth level is intimately connected with the development of modern optics, the growth of the bird preservation movement and amateur ornithology. Good field glasses make it easy to identify most birds from a distance if you know their characters. The latter has become easier to attain with the proliferation of pocket-sized field guides and handbooks to common and rare bird species.

The great ornithological societies were founded after 1860. Many pages of the early journals were devoted to field ornithology, and listing of bird species encountered on field trips and expeditions in familiar and in remote, unexplored regions. Eventually, avifaunas were written up for most countries on earth. Typically, they consist of a qualitative listing of bird species over a temporal and spatial gradient; in most cases, the contribution of amateur ornithologists has been essential and substantial in these works.

It is at this fourth level that the birdwatcher becomes a recognized part of the society. He or she is dedicated, meticulous, belongs to several ornithological and conservation societies, owns a small library of bird books, and spends as much time as possible birdwatching in the outdoors. His/her interests vary from the extreme lister who has lists of "life" birds for the backyard, county, state, country, continent, and world to the weekend birder who enjoys a fine walk in the woods or a drive to a bird reserve as a recreational activity. Others birders attempt to track down the breeding of species in their county, or specialize on a group (waders, warblers, ducks) or just one species; they will acquire much in-depth knowledge about their subjects over time. All birdwatchers are lost without their binoculars. High-powered scopes, cameras with large telephoto lenses, and notebooks are often indispensible as well. On a worldwide basis, most birdwatchers fall into the fourth level.

Counting and Mapping

Quantification is the key to the fifth level. Annual breeding surveys, the development of lists of rare and endangered species require the development of census techniques. How many birds of a species occur over a certain area can only be estimated in most cases. How to come up with the most reliable estimate is a question of studious preparation, proper execution, and of the application of



statistical methods. This level is currently more in vogue in Europe than in the United States. Great Britain and France have published a breeding bird atlas each, and other countries are gathering and compiling bird data for similar efforts. This requires the assistance of literally thousands of volunteers who will monitor the avifauna of the national grid. The end results will be used to assess the importance of certain vegetation formations for bird communities, to develop local and regional bird diversity indices, and to assist in the planning process for the long-term management of the biolandscape.

In the U.S. we are just beginning to seriously tackle the issue of bird atlas works for each state. The main problem is the enormous size of most states. Most birdwatchers live in urban areas that are often hundreds of miles away from the census quadrants. This problem can be overcome, however, as more and more fourth level birdwatchers become motivated by the long-term benefits of fifth level birding. Participation in the traditional Christmas Bird Count and other quantitative exercises serve as an excellent preparation.

Feather Knowledge

The sixth level has just begun. It consists of birdwatchers who have graduated from the lower levels (except level five) and are eager for a new challenge: identifying correctly the age, sex, subspecies or variant, hybrid status, and seasonal plumage status of every bird encountered. This is of particular value in bird groups with many similar and difficult species like dowitchers, sandpipers, warblers, and flycatchers.

We may also call the sixth level the feather level, as it literally requires the knowledge of all plumage stages in a bird. You must be able to tell whether a feather on the wing, head or tail is freshly molted or not. In order to do sixth level birding you must get extremely close to your bird or use a powerful scope; if you think you have a rare find, you should document your bird with a crisp photographic portrait (every feather should be identifiable on the screen).

This level is the outdoor version of the third or museum level: the latter holds the bird in his/her hands while the former accomplishes the same pattern recognition by optical means with the live subject in the wild.

I know of only a handful of sixth level birders. They have to be thoroughly familiar with all species at all seasons; they know of the differences in call and morphology of any western, northern or eastern subspecies; they know all about the individual variation or deviation from the mean shape, length, or color shade. The sixth level birder is the new standard in birdwatching because of his/her knowledge of ornithogeography (including seasonal migration of all populations), bird ecology, behavior, and taxonomy in addition to superb identification skills.

High Tech Birding?

And now, what about the seventh level? Are there any birdwatchers who have gone beyond the six levels of birding? What else is there that one might do as an interested human observer vis-à-vis the free-living world of birds?

I don't know of any seventh level person yet, but have a hunch that birdwatching will continue to advance with the optical/electronic technology. This probably means the use of computers, sophisticated data bases, instant photography and video-recording. There are more birds out there then we can observe at present; there are so many things we still don't know about our resident and seasonal bird communities that a seventh level may concentrate on the merging of fifth and sixth level birding.

Beyond the Seventh: Immersion

In conclusion, I have outlined six historical levels of birdwatching and speculated on the seventh one. Among a group of birdwatchers, practically all levels may be present at the same time. Level three is rare, however, because we rarely shoot birds nowadays. Actually, museums are filled to the rim with bird specimens; most curators would be very happy if more birdwatchers would take an interest in the bird collection. If you are a fourth level birder, you might wish to become a museum regular in order to develop your sixth level. You can also join the growing number of fifth level birders in their ambitious effort to quantify and compile a bird atlas of your state.

I sincerely hope, that this little treatise on the evolution of birding has erased any self-doubt about your birding status. And don't forget, birding must remain satisfying, enjoyable, and stimulating regardless of your expertise, commitment, and technological sophistication. While you are cherishing your best birding memories, I have my fun thinking about yet another level: when a birder becomes totally immersed in birding, will he/she not be transformed into a bird? I wonder, what level such a feat would represent?

UCLA Dept. of Geography

Birds of the Season

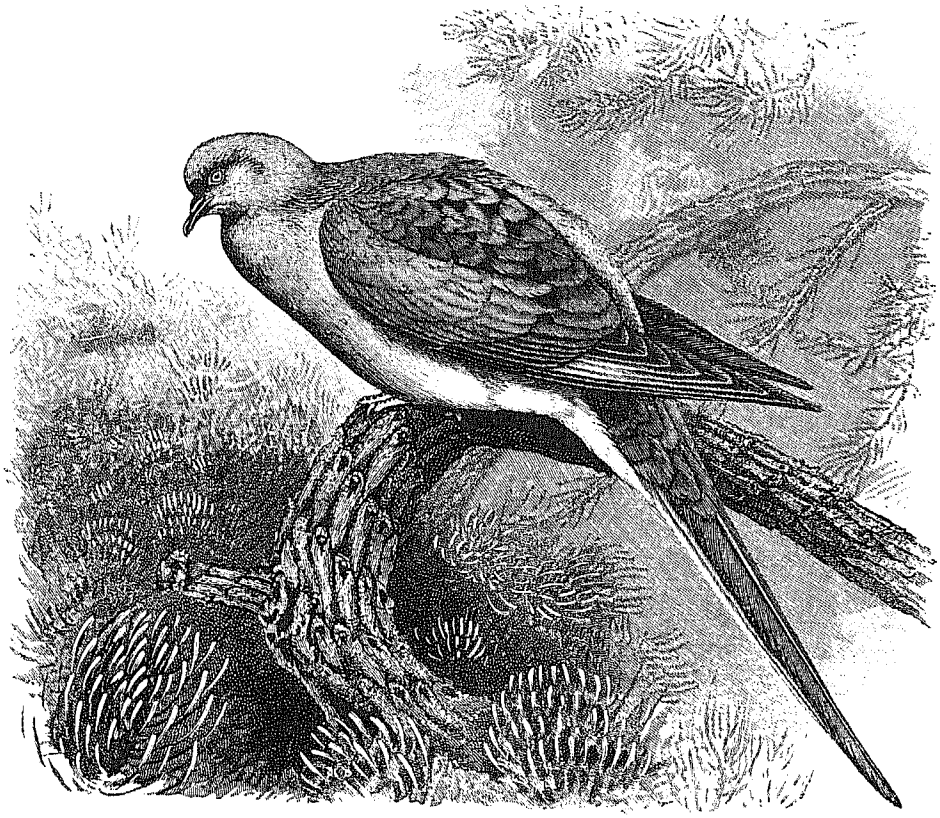
by Shum Suffel

Birding in May came in like a lion, and went out like a lion, but was a pussycat in between. The bird of the year, a **Spotted Redshank** in breeding plumage, was found at the north end of the Salton sea (NESS) on 30 April by Dale Delaney, and identified by Arnold Small an hour later. During the next week it was searched for by dozens of eager birders, but was often missed because of its wide ranging lifestyle. This old world, all black, Yellowlegs-like shorebird was a first record for California, although there are records from Nevada and Oregon. Its departure at sunset on 7 May was dramatic. As described by Ed Navojosky: a large flock of Whimbrels came over calling loudly; the resting shorebirds began to call and move about excitedly; then, as one, they rose and flew off to the north leaving their favored shallows almost deserted. While looking for the Redshanks, there was much to fill a birder's time—a **Lesser Golden-Plover** in stunning breeding plumage was widely admired, while **Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, dowitchers, Sanderlings** (a few), and **Wilson's Phalaropes** all in breeding plumage were a real treat. Guy McCaskie even separated out two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** from the hundreds of more familiar peeps. In addition to shorebirds there were: 500 **White Pelicans,** four **"Black" Brant,** a **Thayer's Gull,** two **Gull-billed Terns,** dozens of **Black Terns,** and, inland, **Lesser Nighthawks** and a pair of **Black-tailed Gnatcatchers**—an avian extravaganza.

After that week of excitement, May provided the predictable decline in the passerine migration with a few notable exceptions. The Bodega Bay pelagic trip on 21 May enjoyed calm seas but heavy fog, and found some forty **Black-footed Albatross** and four **Fork-tailed Storm Petrels,** one of which came close to the boat for a feather by feather inspection, plus the usual north coast alcids, but no hoped for *Pterodroma* petrels were sighted. Hal and Nancy Spear witnessed the spectacular migration of **Sooty Shearwaters** on 19 May. From shore they estimated 5 to 7,000 Sootys in Santa Monica Bay. One **Least Bittern** at the Whittier Narrows New Lakes (Natasha Antonovich, on 8 May) gives hope that they will nest there again as they did last summer. **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** (a declining species here) were at Rainer Lake, Imperial Valley and at the Kern Refuge, north of Bakersfield (fide Mark Chichester). **Gadwalls, Redheads** and **Cinnamon Teal** nested successfully in the Antelope Valley with adults followed by ducklings at both the Lancaster Sewer Ponds and the Edward's A.F. marsh. A male **Wood Duck** stopped at the Arcadia Arboretum lake for one day only (Virginia Escher, 21 April). The Yucca Valley Golf Course pond hosted a female **Red-breasted Merganser** (an uncommon spring migrant on the desert) and a male **Redhead** on 26 April, and a female **Common Goldeneye** (a scarce transient there) on 8 May. In San Luis Opispo Co. a pair of **Harlequin Ducks** were above Morro Bay on 22 April, and a female **King Eider** was at Pismo Beach on 17 & 18 April (Phil Swan). Could it be one of our winterers migrating north?

A **Golden Eagle** on 5 May, and an **Osprey** on 17 April were flying over the Arcadia Arboretum according to Barbara Cohen who covers the area almost daily. Both were many miles from the nearest nesting areas. **Ospreys** nested again on their tower in Lake Isabella, Kern Co. despite the powerboats roaring below them (Robert Barnes), another was on its traditional perch at West Pond near Imperial Dam on the Colorado River on 16 May, and a fourth was at SESS on 17 April (Hank Childs). Regrettably, there are no reports of nesting **Swainson's Hawks** in the Antelope Valley this year, but a few were seen in the San Joaquin Valley, the Owen's Valley and at Oasis Ranch, Mono Co. **Mountain Quail** seldom invade the desert domain of the Gambel's Quail, but one was heard just below the Morongo Preserve on 12 May (Abigail King and Joan Mills). A **Black Turnstone** at Salton City on 17 April was only the tenth record at the Sea (Hank Childs). The only spring report of a **Solitary Sandpiper** was one along the Santa Ana River near Anaheim (Doug Willick), and the only reported **Stilt Sandpiper** was at NESS on 12 May (Dan Guthrie *et al*). Hank Childs had not found them in the usual places at SESS on 17 April. The second **Ruff** this spring was a male at McGrath Lake, west of the estuary, on 14 May. This is noteworthy as there are only two (previous) spring records (Garrett and Dunn, 1981).

A **Laughing Gull** at King Harbor was seen only on the morning of 10 May (Nancy Spear). At the Lancaster Sewer Ponds there was one **Franklin's Gull** on 7 May (Brian Daniels), and three there a week later (Hank Childs *et al*). The earliest reported **Gull-billed Terns** were two at Red Hill, SESS on 16 April (Hank Childs). A **White-winged Dove** at the Morongo Reverve on 12 May was a little north of its breeding range. The Earp trailer Park across the river from Parker, Arizona remains the best place to see **Inca Doves** in the state. The only recent coastal report of a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was an apparent migrant in a canyon above La Crescenta on 29 May (Vir-



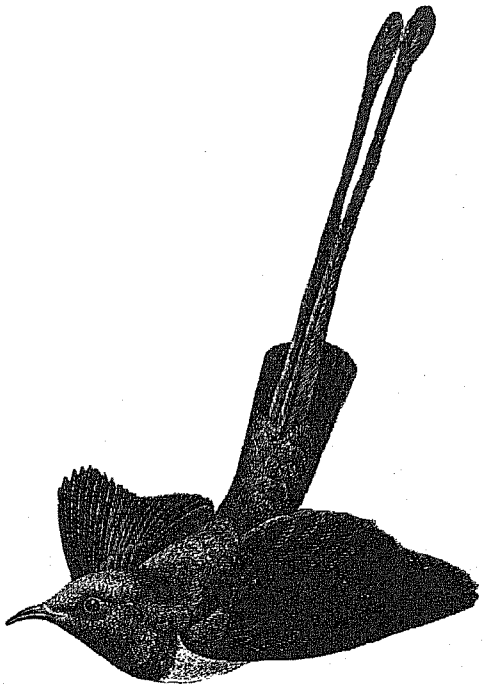
ginia Ulfeldt). **Vaux's Swifts** were widely reported in late April and early May, usually in small numbers, but hundreds were milling overhead at Placerita Canyon on 28 April, and at NESS on 7 May (Tom Wurster *et al).* Two to three hundred roosted in a chimney in Santa Monica on 28 April. The only reported **Calliope Hummingbird** in the lowlands was in Deep Canyon Park, Granada Hills on 22 April (Becky Belkin).

One of the few **Lewis' Woodpeckers** this winter was quite late on 7 May at Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts. (John Ivanov). A male **White-headed Woodpecker** (casual in the lowlands) was in Farnsworth Park, Altadena on 21 April (Lois Fulmer). While looking for the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher which attempted to nest on the Needles Golf Course last year, Jim and Ellen Strauss photographed an **Eastern Kingbird** on 29 May. Previously, quoting from Garrett and Dunn, 1981 "It is unrecorded on the California side of the Colorado River." According to Russ and Marion Wilson, who census the Morongo Reserve daily each spring, a very early **Brown-crested (Wied's) Flycatcher** was there on 15 April and by early May there were at least three Brown-cresteds there. The earliest report of a **Willow Flycatcher** was one near Saugus on 27 April (Jean Brandt). **Purple Martins** (severely reduced in our area) were found in numbers elsewhere: ten or more at Nojuqui Falls State Park, Santa Barbara Co. including several nesting in an aluminum martin house (John Hamilton, 12 May); and about forty pairs in two areas of San Luis Obispo, Co.; and a few on Mt. Palomar. Any observations of the **Rufous-backed Robin** in Newport Beach later than mid-April are solicited. The presence of the coastal race of the **Black-tailed Gnatcatcher** near Marineland is well known, but they are also on the hillside above the north end of Forestall Road, Palos Verdes according to bob Van Meter. Bob also found **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** and **Costa's Hummingbirds** there.

Both **Bell's** and **Solitary Vireos** were singing in the Morongo Reserve in early May, but in different habitats. The Bell's nest there but the Solitaries were presumably migrants. At least three **Gray Vireos** (the first found in L.A. Co. in recent years) were singing and probably nesting at Bob's Gap, six miles southeast of Pearblossom. Two different **Tennessee Warblers** were found at Morongo on 1 and 3 May (the Wilsons). Probably a migrant was a **Virginia's Warbler** at Ft. Piute on 23 April (Brian Keelan). **Lucy's Warblers** were reported as nesting from the Imperial Valley and Colorado River to Death Valley, but were unaccountably absent from Morongo Valley between 13 April and 1 May (the Wilsons). Possibly early arrivals did not stay because the mesquite had not leafed out yet. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was an Alta Loma on 17 May (Hank Childs), and an **American Redstart** was with a host of western migrants at Whitewater Village, Riverside Co. on 1 May (Jerry Johnson). The rarest warbler south of Inyo/Mono was a male **Red-faced Warbler** at Morongo on 12 May (Dan Guthrie). The inevitable spread of **Great-tailed Grackles** into L.A. Co. continues with one at the Saugus Sewer Plant (Jean Brant, 27 April), and both a male and a female at Holiday Lake in the west end of the Antelope Valley (Art and Jan Cupples, 22 May). The west side of the Colorado River is the best, but far from sure, place for **Bronzed Cowbirds** in California. Two were found at Parker Dam City on 24 April (Brian Keelan). There were at least six **Summer Tanagers** in the Morongo Reserve by late April (the Wilsons), and others were in Mojave Narrows Park, south of Victorville (Ed Navojosky). Not satisfied with the Morongo tanagers, the Wilsons, on their return to Huntington Beach found a male Summer Tanager in the Central Park there on 21 May. Most interesting to L.A. Co. birders was a female **Pyrrhuloxia** near a ranch pond in the Antelope Valley for a week or more after 7 May (John Dunn et al). A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in Wardlow Park, Long Beach stayed for one day only (Brian Daniels, 13 May). A **Green-tailed Towhee** (rare transient in spring) was a yard bird for Lois Fulmor of Altadena on 21 and 22 April. **Lark Buntings** were seen on the desert of eastern San Diego Co. where they are considered erratic transients, and winter visitants. Five, including two males, were in central Anza-Borrego Park on 18 April (Barbara Massey), and a single female was in the northeast part of this vast park the next day (Charlie Collins). A **Mountain White-crowned Sparrow** of the *oriantha* race, which nests sparingly in the San Bernardino Mts., was in the eastern Antelope Valley on 11 May (Ed Navojosky). A rare vagrant to the coast was a **Black-throated Sparrow** in the U.C.L.A. Botanic Garden on 3 April (Mike Weinstein).

May did indeed go out like a lion with the Memorial Day trek to the Inyo/Mono region drawing over sixty dedicated birders, who braved the 90 to 120 degree heat to find a list of vagrants which will be hard to equal in the rest of 1983. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Lucy's Warblers, Waterthrushes, Redstarts,** etc. were considered not worth itemizing. Unfortunately, many had left, because of the heat, before the **Mississippi Kite** was found at Furnace Creek Ranch (F.C.R.) on 28 May. This is the tenth record for the state, six of which were at F.C.R. and all of these were in late May or early June. **Yellow-billed Cuckoos,** now a rarity in California were found near the campsite in Cottonwood Creek and at F.C.R. Two **Chimney Swifts** flew over Jon

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



Dunn's group while they were gassing up in Big Pine. The **Brown-crested Flycatcher** at F.C.R. on 30 May was the second record there, which is remarkable as it was over 400 miles north of their known nesting areas.

Vagrant warblers received maximum attention. A partial listing follows: **Northern Parula** at Scotty's Castle, and earlier at Deep Springs; **Chestnut-sided, Magnolia,** and **Cape May** at Deep Springs; a **Black-throated Green** and a **Blackpoll** at Oasis on 22 May; a **Worm-eating** (fourth spring record in state and second for Inyo Co.) at F.C.R. on 30 May; **Ovenbirds** at Oasis and nearby Dyer, Nevada; a singing male **Mourning Warbler** very cooperative and much admired at Oasis; **Hooded Warblers** at Deep Springs and F.C.R.; and an unconfirmed **Canana Warbler** at Deep Springs. Also seen were: four **Bobolinks** at F.C.R.; a **Common Grackle** (about a dozen state records) at F.C.R. on 23 May and at the Stovepipe Wells sewer ponds a week later; a female **Scarlet Tanager** at Deep Springs on 30 May; and two late **Harris' Sparrows** at Oasis on 22 May. Thanks are due sevral participants who furnished information on the Big Week, and my apologies if the above summary is scrambled.

Two predictions for late summer, based on the continued presence of "El Niño," the warm water current in the Pacific, which gave Australia and the Pacific islands a drought, and the southern U.S. unprecedented rains. It also caused many island nesting birds to desert their eggs and young, due to lack of food, as warm water is not as food rich as cold water. #1—There will be an invasion of the Salton Sea, possibly even the coast, by Boobies and Frigatebirds from the Gulf of California. #2—Soutern pelagic birds will come north in search of food, to our offshore waters. these are probably only "hopes" not valid "predictions."

CALENDAR

SUNDAY, JULY 31 — Annual Picnic. Will be held at **Charleton Flats** this year. There will be a morning birdwalk at **8:00 a.m.** led by Fred Heath. Take Hwy 2 N. out of La Canada, pass Mt. Wilson. After big swing to the left, look for signs to Charleton Flats. If you need further information, please call Audubon House at 876-0202.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, AUGUST 6 & 7 — Annual Condor Watch and Tequila Bust. Lloyd Kiff, invites Audubon members to join the fun this weekend at Mr. Pinos. Take Hwy. 5 N. through Gorman, exit on Frazier Park turn off, stay on that Hwy. until it ends in the big round parking lot at Iris Meadows. Walk up dirt road leading to top of Mt. Pinos (3 mi.) and watch for Condors. Camping available. If **entering at night,** please **be kind to astronomers** and **dim lights upon entering parking lot** as **lights spoil** their **photographs** and hours of work. Thank you.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13 — Fred Heath will lead a trip to **Antelope Valley.** Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the Lamont Odett Overlook on HWY 14, just south of Palmdale. Plan to see local specialties and migrants. Bring water and lunch and be prepared for high temperatures.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13 — 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. Please confirm this trip on the tape.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20 — Jean Brandt will lead a **Condor watch at Mt. Pinos.** Meet at **9:00 a.m.** in the large round parking lot at **Iris Meadows.** Take Hwy. 5 N. through Gorman, exit on Frazier Park turn off, stay on that Hwy. until it ends. You will then be in the parking lot at Iris Meadows. Meet at the foot of the dirt road which leads up to the top of Mt. Pinos. If **entering at night,** please **be kind to astronomers** and **dim lights upon entering parking lot** as **lights spoil** their **photographs** and hours of work. Thank you.

NOTE: There are **no evening meetings** scheduled for **July and August.**

Address Change — Many members who move, complain about missing an issue or two of the *TANAGER.* To avoid this, subscribers should notify Los Angeles Audubon Society directly. It takes several weeks for National Audubon to notify LAAS if you only pass your change of address to them.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 — 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.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 — 8:00 p.m. - Evening Meeting. This is our **Annual Homecoming meeting.** Speaker to be announced in the September Tanager. Don't miss this great event!

Audubon Bird Reports:

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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.

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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, AUGUST 7 — 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Kimball Garrett and Louis Bevier will lead this trip aboard the "Vantuna" from San Pedro to **Santa Barbara Island** and out to sea. Cost is $20 and there are 44 spaces available.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 18 — 5:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Arnold Small and Olga Clarke will lead this trip from San Pedro to **San Clemente Island.** Cost is $24 and 44 spaces are available. Birds to be looked for are Red-billed Tropic bird, Long-tailed Jaeger (rare), Pomarine Jaeger, Blk.-vented Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater (rare), Pink-footed Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Least, Leach's, Ashy and Black Storm-Petrels, Sabines Gull and many more.

If you are interested in these LAAS Pelagic Trips, please note: Car pool if possible, as parking is limited. Bring lunch and popcorn, etc. for chum. **Send your reservations** with the names and telephone numbers of all members of your party along with a **stamped, self-addressed envelope to:**

Reservations c/o Ruth Lohr
Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angles, CA 90046

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 upcoming scheduled trips from Monterey Bay:

July 30	Monterey Seavalley/ Leader to be announced	$35
August 13	Monterey Seavalley/ Leader to be announced	$35
August 20	Cordell Banks and Beyond/ Leader to be announced	$36
August 27	Monterey Bay/ Leader to be announced	$25
Sept. 10-12	Tanner & Cortez Banks Baldridge/Chandik/ McCaskie/Webster	$67
Sept. 18	Monterey Bay Leader to be announced	$25
Sept. 24	Monterey Bay Leader to be announced	$25

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

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7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
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