



# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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## Birding Australia

by Henry E. and  
Helen C. Childs Jr.

### Part I: Planning the Trip

Australia offers to "birdos" (the Aussie term for birders) some rather fantastic and exciting experiences for those who go after a good portion of the 700 species to be found in that country. However, to maximize the species seen and to get the "most bang for the buck", we offer the following observations and suggestions which are based on our experiences of 55 days birding in September and October of 1982.

First of all, we did the planning and itinerary on our own, using our local travel agency only to arrange plane and ground transportation. We considered a professional tour, but as this was a sabbatical leave for Henry, more time was available to see the country, meet the people and enjoy the birding than is generally available on the usual whirlwind tour.

We had more flexibility of locations, camping in national parks, freedom to contact local birders and to enjoy the people at our own pace as well as to be able to modify our plans as time and experience dictated.

**When To Go.** We were lucky that we could go in the fall, which, of course, is the austral spring. Our summer, their winter, brings cool and wet weather, especially in the Melbourne and Tasmanian areas. Christmas time is their summer, and Southern Australia gets very hot and bird activity is reduced. There are no transequatorial migrants from the Northern Hemisphere. And there are the Australian holidays. Shops close and reservations are hard to get as the Aussies go on their vacations. Our recommendation of the best time to visit the area south of the Tropic of Capricorn is the austral spring, from mid-September to mid-November. The trip should start as far north as possible and progress southward.



Little Blue Penguin — Phillip Island, Victoria

**How To Go.** Qantas had what was called a Circle 8 round trip tour. This allowed 8 stopovers enroute or in Australia at no extra charge, and included Hawaii, Fiji and New Zealand. The price was unbelievably low. Check with your travel agent for current rates. Leave in late August and you save considerable money. There is a once-a-week flight to Townsville, Queensland, from Los Angeles, a big time-saver in getting to Cairns and Northern Australia.

**Planning.** For a trip of any duration, a year should be allotted for advance study and planning. You will have to read a lot, obtain maps that are difficult to find in this country, and write to contacts overseas if you want to get some preliminary acquaintance with the avifauna.

You should obtain the following books:

1. *Destination Australia*. Australian Travel Bureau. Packed with travel and accommodation information.

2. *Frommer's Australia on \$20 a Day*. Impossible — but this book can save you that much in one day if you don't want to go the high-priced route.
3. *Pizzey's Fieldguide to Birds of Australia*. Newest and most convenient of the available guides. Size is awkward but the information is easy to find. Sclater's two volumes are almost as good but hard to use in the field.
4. *Nature Guide*. Tacoma Audubon Society. A list of people and organizations to contact. When writing, be sure to enclose an International Reply Coupon obtainable at your local Post Office. Don't expect it, but everyone we contacted went out of their way to be helpful with advice and hospitality.
5. Join or contact the *Bird Observers Club*, P.O. Box 185, Nunawading 3131, N.S.W. Australia. They have all the bird books for Australia and will ship (use airmail or be

*Continued next page*



*Black-fronted Plover*

- prepared to wait 2 months).
6. Obtain a copy of the Reader's Digest (!) *Complete Book of Australian Birds* just reprinted. It is the best book of its kind and has large colored photos of every species as well as a good, succinct life history. The \$32 price tag plus postage makes this a real bargain in large bird books today.

Your local travel agent will be helpful when you have a general outline of your trip. We were amazed we could stop in New Zealand at no extra cost. Local tourist bureaus were not too helpful for what we wanted. They are used to Americans going first class all the way, and had usually run out of whatever we needed. For road maps, stop at the first Shell Gas (Petrol) Station, and for \$.85 get a superlative up-to-date map of each state or big city.

#### **Places To Seriously Consider Birding.**

*Cairns, Queensland.* Tremendous shore-birding (waders) right off the center of town on the Esplanade. Atherton Tableland nearby.

#### *Darwin.*

a. *The sewer ponds.* Magnificent Pied Herons and Burdekin Ducks.

b. *Kakadu National Park.* The boat trip on the Yellow Waters Billabong was an experience of a lifetime. Located 200km by good road east of Darwin.

c. *Katherine.* The Park west of town had good birds and the gorge was spectacular as was the birding along the road from Darwin.

*Alice Springs.* Simpson's Gap to the west and the outstanding sewer ponds. Don't miss the Overlanders Steak House.

*Townsville.* The Commons. Only polace for the Black-breasted Bustard.

*O'Reilly's.* Located in Leamington National Park south of Brisbane. This is one of the

absolute "must" places for dedicated birders. Nowhere else can you have Crimson Rosells, Satin and Regent Bowerbirds land on your hand for food. Brush Turkeys, Wonga Pigeons and Superb Wrens are common. With a little working, Albert's Lyrebird can be seen. Camping facilities are nearby, or live it up by staying at the Guesthouse.

*Wyperfield/Hattah National Parks.* Located south of Mildura, in western New South Wales. Major Mitchell Cockatoo, Mallee Fowl and Yellow Rosellas plus many other species of the mallee are to be seen in practically non-peoples parks.

*Sherbrooke Forest.* Melbourne area. Beautiful place and easy for Superb Lyrebirds. Up high in the trees are Rose Robins.

*Phillip Island.* South of Melbourne. No birdo should miss the nightly parade of the Little Blue Penguins, an incredible sight.

*Adelaide.* Mt. Lofty Provides Adelaide Rosellas and Red-capped Robins at the Botanical Gardens.

**Land Travel.** There are three ways to go, all of which require renting a "hire" car. Hertz and Avis and many local firms are available. We rented a "campervan" fully furnished for about \$65 per day plus gas. This gives the maximum freedom to camp anywhere, in national parks, of which there are many, or to stay in a caravan park. The latter are all well equipped with showers and other amenities. The camper made it possible for us to do our own cooking, which we think saved us up to \$40 per day.

You may also rent a car and stay in motels. This option puts some of the out-of-the-way places out of reach.

The third option is the one we would take



*Magpie Lark*

if we could do it over again. Almost all campervan parks have what are called "on-site" vans. This is a trailer, usually with beds for four people, fully furnished for cooking, with refrigerator, and permanently in place. Bedding is not furnished, so you must bring sleeping bags or buy bedding. We found an army surplus store when we needed an extra blanket. Only during the holiday season are advance reservations mandatory. Locations of caravan parks can be obtained through free publications of state tourist bureaus or auto clubs.

**Roads.** Generally much better than we expected except in northeast Queensland. All other paved roads were good condition, wide "bitumen" roads with solid shoulders. Others were hard, well graded, all-weather gravel. Traffic is rare, so a quick stop for birds is not fatal.

**Climate.** Climate varies from warm and humid in the north, but not oppressively so in spring, to cool nights and hot days in the south. By early November it was hot in Melbourne and Sydney. We felt at home in this climate and the environment, generally, looked like many parts of California. Bring clothing for rain and cool nights.

**Gas Availability.** There was plenty of gas (petrol) at about U.S. prices, or a little higher, per liter, except during the strike. Naturally it costs more in the outback.

**Food Prices.** Meat is about half what we pay for beef and lamb. Other items may be a little more than we pay. It all averages out. Be sure to get some tenderizer as they don't fatten up their cattle.

**Survival Necessities.** Ice is not generally available at motels, bottle shops (liquor stores), or Campervan parks. Pick up a bag at the petrol station just before checking in for the night. You'll probably need a cheap Esky (styrofoam ice box) for perishables. One of our first purchases was two 12 oz. plastic glasses as a decent sized glass is not to be found otherwise, even in the public bars, which, by the way, now allow women.

**People.** Australians are amazing people, always friendly, always helpful. Our travels got us into places where they said they had never seen Americans before. When they heard where we had been, most would say "You've seen more of Australia than we have." When in doubt, ask.

**Worries.** Don't think that you are going to an undeveloped country. They have supermarkets, chemists (druggists) and shopping malls that rival our best and this includes what we would consider out-of-the-way places like Darwin and Alice Springs.

Don't worry about driving on the "wrong side" of the road. Traffic is generally light by our standards and practically non-existent outside of the big cities. Reflexes get modified in a day or two.

**Rest Areas.** There were many rest areas but few had toilet facilities. However, every town had a public toilet, well marked and well maintained, as did most large gas stations.

**Sydney.** Spend, if you must, one day in Sydney, but not on a weekend. Most shops close on the weekends except the hotels (bars) and fast food places. So play your weekend meals and other needs on Friday. Best deal is in the King's Cross area at the Manhattan Hotel — bed and full cooked breakfast was \$25 per couple. In the evening the night birds come out (the non-feathered kind) and provide an unbelievable sight for those who have led a sheltered life.

**Summary.** Australia offers, in addition to its 700 species of spectacular birds, no language difficulties (well, almost) and a low crime rate. This makes birding in out-of-the-way places not so scary. Reasonable caution is all that is necessary. In contrast, excess caution in Tahiti failed and there were no English-speaking police.

For us this was a trip of a lifetime, and we plan to go back. Part II will tell you about our experiences in the Cairns, Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Alice Springs and Townsville areas of North, Northeast and Central Australia.

## Condor Ranch Saved

A giant step forward was taken in the desperate struggle to save the California Condor when Congress approved \$5 million to buy the Hudson Ranch. This is the 14,000-acre cattle ranch in the San Joaquin Valley that has long been known as a prime foraging area for the Condor. Plans and negotiations were in the works for intensive residential development that would have taken a sizeable chunk out of the big bird's dwindling larder. The acquisition money could not have been more timely. It is particularly heartening and significant that Congress took this step despite Administration opposition.

Critics of the Condor Recovery Program have been saying that if we will only keep our hands off the Condor and protect the habitat everything will work out fine. Though there are still serious environmental hazards — pesticides, poisons, senseless shooting — perhaps the purchase will mollify some of the critics.

At any rate there is cause for rejoicing. As a footnote, it should be mentioned that a torrent of letters on the Hudson Ranch were written to Congress, not the least those from Los Angeles Audubon's Network. (Those wishing to join the letter-writing team, call 344-8531 or write to S. Wohlgenuth, 19354 Calvert Street, Reseda, CA 91335.)

## Backstage . . .

Many hours of work at Audubon House are contributed by the invisible volunteers, known only to their co-workers, who are here week-in week-out, often year-in year-out; it is time that their efforts, from which we all benefit, were recognized.

Evelyn Weiskopf is one of these hard working volunteers. About 5 years ago Evelyn answered our plea for help. Until the first of this year she was in charge of *Western Tanager* subscriptions (no mean job). Then she agreed to become assistant registrar.

Membership registration is a complicated business at best, but this year it has been at its worst. National Audubon switched their entire membership operation to a computer service in Colorado over a year ago and the dust is just beginning to settle; to add to the confusion, the Registrar was out of town for three unexpected months, and Evelyn had to take over. It was a real baptism by fire, and Evelyn performed nobly under the most trying circumstances. She has certainly earned our heartfelt thanks.



## Don't Forget to Reserve YOUR place at the LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY'S 1984 ANNUAL BANQUET

February 28, 1984

At ANDRÉ's, in Beverly Hills  
8635 Wilshire at La Cienega

Guest Speaker ARNOLD SMALL will take us  
"AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY MINUTES",  
with a spectacular array of slides showing wildlife  
on seven continents.

\$15.50 per person: Parking available at \$1.00 per car,  
payable at the restaurant. Plenty of street parking available.

# The Los Angeles Audubon Society: The First Thirty Years

by Glenn Cunningham

## Part III

**C**ontemporary History  
urrent history, both local and national, including events of world importance as well as as trivia, was often reflected in the actions, announcements and correspondence reported in the Society records.

On October 17, 1918, for example, the first indoor or program meeting of the L.A. Audubon (sic) Club to be held at the State Museum in Exposition Park on October 17 had to be omitted, the health authorities of Los Angeles City having placed a ban on all public gatherings - forbidding such meetings to be held "on account of Spanish influenza, a contagious disease which was raging throughout the city and country at the time." The ban, on indoor meetings only, continued through Nov. 1918.

In December of 1918, Mrs. Fargo, Chairman of the War Work Committee reported "one more star on the service flag," and announced that the treasury had on hand \$60.00 for the War Fund. And Mrs. Bicknell, after leading the salute to the flag "gave expression of thanks that all cannot help but feel now that the Armistice is signed and influenza on the decline."

One month later it was reported that still another star had been added to the service flag, and it was agreed that the coupon on the Liberty Bond should be cashed and added to the War Fund. Soon thereafter the Society bought a \$50 Victory Bond.

Following the nation-wide sentiment, the Society signed the petition being circulated to all clubs - "Appeal of the Women of France to Women of all Countries."

In November 1919 the Board went on record as favoring the League of Nations but was opposed to Hiram Johnson's amendment.

A widespread epidemic again interfered with Society activities in April, 1924, when due to an area quarantine against Hoof and Mouth Disease, the field day location was changed from Sanford Bridge to Playa Del Rey.

Hoping to spread interest in the world of nature, the Society, in April, 1924, purchased copies of *The Wild Flower Book*, *Western Birds* and *The Elfin Forest* "... to be given to the boys of the Merchant Marine."

The report of September, 1929 included a

description of "... a silvery bird of huge proportions and strange outline - that imposing bird of the world - flight fame - the Graf Zeppelin."

Of more local interest, in 1931, La Fiesta de Los Angeles, celebrating the 150th birthday of the city, was recognized when the members of the Board met in September with appropriate Spanish costumes and decorations.

And presaging important changes to come, at May, 1934 program meeting, Mr. Cox of the L.A. Board of Power and Light showed motion pictures of the construction of Boulder Dam.

### Interest in Trees

Early in the Society's activities interest in trees was manifest, not only interest in protection of all trees, but in tree planting on special occasions or as memorials to selected individuals.

On April 13, 1918, a live oak in the sunken garden at Exposition Park was dedicated to "Bird Life of the Country".

On Arbor Day in March, 1919, a Himalayan cedar "dedicated to the boys who served us in the Army" was planted by the Society in Griffith Park (Western Avenue entrance?). In June 1920, the Society received a Memorial Certificate of Registration indicating that the tree had been recorded by the American Forestry Association.

Other tree planting over the years included a Deodar cedar placed near the west entrance to Griffith Park in June, 1920, and dedicated to the sons and grandsons of members who were in service in World War I; and, in May, 1921, a live oak in the Park picnic ground as a Memorial Tree for life and charter members Mrs. de Normand. A properly inscribed bronze tablet was given the park keeper to be placed on the tree.

Other prominent Society members were honored on Arbor Day, 1926, when four flowering trees, — two ceanthus and two Fremontias — planted in the Bird Sanctuary in Vermont Canyon, were named for Mrs. F.T. Bricknell, Mrs. Robert Fargo, Mrs. Harriet Myers, Mrs. George Schneider. In April, 1927, a live oak was planted in the Sanctuary in honor of Mrs. C.H. Hall, Society Chairman of Birds and Wildlife.

In February, 1932, a magnolia tree was planted in Lincoln Park in memory of George Washington on the bicentennial of his birth.

Further interest in trees is suggested by the report that four trees had been entered in the Tree Hall of Fame on the American Forestry Association in Washington, D.C. in the name of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. These included the Cathedral Oak in Lincoln Park under which the Portola Expedition held Easter services; the Verdugo Oak under which papers were signed between Fremont and Pio Pico; the largest rubber

tree in California at 20th and Compton Street; and the largest known camphor tree in the yard of the Pomona Women's Club.

In October, 1930, the Society wrote the Los Angeles Council favoring the planting of shade trees on city streets. In October, 1934, the group favored the oak as the National Tree. At the December, 1938, meeting it was announced that a nursery on Commonwealth Avenue was to furnish labels for the trees of Plummer Park, but the minutes reveal no follow up.

It is not surprising that particular interest was shown in saving the California redwoods, and considerable effort was directed toward that goal.

Mrs. Josephine Clifford McCracken was made honorary member of the Society in April, 1918, since she was the first to start the movement of saving the redwoods, efforts which resulted in the establishment of government Forest Reserves and Parks. In September, 1921, members voted to join the American Forestry Association and Save the Redwoods League, approving the \$2.00 annual dues for the latter. In February of the following year the Corresponding Secretary was instructed to write the appropriate Congressmen and Senators requesting passage of House Bill 7452 as amended by Mr. Barber protecting the rights of the public against seizure of water in the Roosevelt-Sequoia National Park for commercial purposes.

Following the Federated Clubs of California's request for contributions to the Club's grove of redwoods, Los Angeles Audubon, in February, 1925, pledged \$100 for the Memorial Redwood Grove. On September 12, 1935, it was reported that the Redwood had been selected as the State Tree, another project that the Society had long favored. In February, 1939, the Society supported the purchase of Redwood Mountain Grove of Big Trees and the transfer of King's River Canyon to the National Park Service.

### Interest in Birds

Appropriately, the dominant interest of the Society continued to be birds — their observation, study, and protection, and the arousing of such interest in others. With this in mind, Mrs. G. Schneider, Official Speaker of the Society, was placed on the list of P.T.A. speakers in 1918, giving her a wide audience in which to spread the word. The city library was persuaded to buy bird books and to provide bird talks and exhibits. And in the same year Mr. Hall was appointed to see about keeping the bird baths in Exposition Park clean.

In 1921 subscriptions were made to the John Burroughs Memorial Fund and the Junior Audubon Society, and a Western Bird Guide was given to the McKinley Home for Boys. The experiment of the Boy Scouts in their Bird House Building Contest was sanc-

tioned in 1924.

Activities in 1930 included the approval of the erection of a monument to Audubon in Louisiana. The following year the Society sent \$10.00 to the fund to save the old home of Audubon from destruction. Plans entailed moving the house to park land on Riverside Drive by the Hudson River, but the project proved unfeasible and the donation was later returned.

In 1933 members volunteered to make a bird list for the Botanic Gardens at Huntington Library, a list which eventually included 124 species. On April 12, 1934, it was announced that Governor Rolf had declared April 13 State Bird Day.

### Protection of Wildlife

Consistent with the above interest was the Society's role in supporting the creation of bird and wildlife sanctuaries and wildlife preserves, both large and small. Many of these are well established today. Others were short-lived or failed to materialize altogether.

Leading off in these activities, at the May, 1919, Field Day, Audubon Glen was dedicated to the Society as a sanctuary, an accomplishment which inspired the members to close the meeting with the singing of *America*.

Early in 1920 the Society endeavored to have all City Parks declared bird sanctuaries. After inquiries, the Chairman of the Bird Sanctuary Committee was able to report in April that the Society was at liberty to dedicate any or all City Parks as sanctuaries whenever it chose to do so.

In May a petition was read and approved to save part of Yellowstone National Park for a bird sanctuary. On June 3, 1920, a bronze tablet was placed on a large live oak in east Griffith Park dedicating the area a "Bird Sanctuary," and in November, 1923, Mrs. Schneider was empowered to carry on work in the development of Vermont Canyon in similar fashion.

Two projects commanded the Society's attention in 1924. It was resolved that the State should re-establish Lower Klamath Lake (which had been recently drained) as breeding grounds for water fowl; and the Mayor of San Diego was urged to set aside Mission Bay as a Sanctuary.

Many similar resolutions, requests and petitions followed. In June, 1928, the Society passed a resolution that the Mandeville Canyon Botanic Gardens be made a Wild Bird Sanctuary, a move that was later adopted by unanimous vote of the Executive Board of the Gardens.

Among other activities:

October, 1928. Petitioned the Los Angeles District C.F.W.C. for creation of a State Park embracing the marshes of Playa del Rey.

December, 1928. Went on record as favoring establishment of Mt. Fraser as a Wild Bird Sanctuary.

September, 1930. Endorsed purchase of 320 acres of the Sepulveda Estate near San Pedro for a Royal Palm Park.

October, 1930. Announced the dedication of The Pines at Fraser Mountain Park as a Wild Life Sanctuary.

November, 1930. Attended a conference with Los Angeles Mayor Porter regarding the establishment of a Bird Sanctuary at Eagle Rock Park.

January, 1932. Upon hearing that Mandeville Canyon had been accepted by the County as a Botanical Garden, wrote expressing the hope that the Bird Sanctuary established there in 1928 would be maintained.

February, 1932. Wrote Congressmen to support Bill 12381 establishing Everglades National Park.

January, 1933. Petitioned U.C.L.A. Regents to set aside the campus as a bird sanctuary.

In 1934 reported that Hancock Park had been made a Bird Sanctuary.

May, 1935. Favored making Playa del Rey lagoon a bird preserve since real estate developers were threatening to drain it.

March, 1936. Supported the Harbor City Chamber of Commerce endeavor to have Bixby Slough declared a Bird Sanctuary.

December, 1937. The president reported on a meeting she had attended in regard to the conservation and preservation of Nigger Slough for a County Park and Bird Sanctuary.

December, 1937. Reported that Plummer Park had been made a Bird Sanctuary and considered installation of a bird bath and Audubon sign by the County.

January, 1938. Reported that the Chief Engineer of the Flood Control District had recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the sloughs be maintained as aquatic parks.

April, 1938. Reported on a letter sent by Leo Carillo to the California and Los Angeles Audubon Societies stating that his 2000 acre ranch had been made a State Game and Bird Refuge posted by the State and by himself, on which he had established watering places and feeding spaces.

May, 1938. Reported that the Society had played a part in helping to acquire Laguna Dominguez as a Bird Refuge, saving it from becoming a manufacturing district.

October, 1938. Reported on the progress toward making Bixby and Nigger Sloughs into a Bird Refuge, but had to add that developments were not encouraging.

December, 1938. Donated to the fund providing feed for the birds and animals in the recently burned over area of the Santa Monica Mountains.

February, 1939. Agreed that the Society should contribute \$5.00 this year and pledge \$5.00 a year for the next two, to a three year study of the California Condor by the National Association.

Good news was forthcoming in October, 1939, when it was announced that Buena Vista Lagoon had been made a Bird Sanctu-

ary, and that Woodland Park in Whittier was soon to be so dedicated. The latter materialized the following month. On November 6, 1939, the Whittier News reported that a wildlife refuge had been established in the San Gabriel River area between Whittier and El Monte adjoining Whittier's Woodland Park. The 26 acres owned by the Cate Ditch Company, plus several miles of river bottom, formed the nucleus of the refuge, to which Mr. Pelissier, of the Pellisier Dairy Company, added the 300 acres of his ranch. The Refuge was to be administered by the Los Angeles Audubon and affiliated societies.

But interest in wildlife conservation was not confined to the establishment of reserves. All legislation affecting the welfare of living things commanded the attention of the Society, as did cases of neglect or abuse, whether of entire species or single individuals.

Among the earlier instances of the latter, in April, 1919, members heard a complaint that "woodpeckers were being killed in certain parts of the city." They immediately voted that Miss Pratt, Deputy Game Warden, should investigate and take up the matter of defending the birds. On May 19 she reported that Mr. Cornell of the Fish and Game Commission stated that no permission had been given by him or the Telephone Company to kill woodpeckers.

There was seldom a dull period in this area as evidenced by the following actions of the Society.

February, 1921. Drafted a petition asking that no one under the age of 16 be granted a hunting license, and approved action asking that a one dollar tariff be placed on all birds imported into the country.

1924. Resolved to work for State law making it illegal to pick or destroy wild flowers within 25 feet of highways.

April, 1924. Protested, and requested measures against the International Crow Shooting Contest to be sponsored for the following three months by DuPont.

November, 1925. Protested to Fish and Game over the removal of the Cormorant and the White Pelican from the protected list.

September, 1927. Discussed the "war on birds" in the Lindsay area where two cents was being paid for each bird and one cent for each egg.

March, 1930. Approved the Bald Eagle Protection Act.

April, 1931. Sent the following telegram to President Hoover: "Heartily approve your protection for wild geese and migratory birds."

October, 1931. The Society was assured that the current vogue of colored chicken feathers on women's hats meant no danger of a return to the use of egret feathers.

Reported a protest against so many cats being dumped in Sierra Madre Canyon.

November, 1931. Reported that a grosbeak, a Mountain Bluebird, and a redbird were for sale in a pet shop.

December, 1931. Upon hearing that permission was being sought to shoot seagulls on Los Angeles reservoirs, wrote Police Chief Steckel asking that he give careful thought and consideration before acting. The answer stated that he had given permission for such shooting for 90 days but that the safety of citizens would be taken care of. (!)

May, 1932. Passed a resolution protesting the poisoning of animals with thaleum (thalium?).

March, 1933. Passed a resolution requesting the State Legislature to extend the boundary of the Fish and Game District No. 19 A to a line between Pt. Dume on the north and Rocky Point on the south.

April, 1933. Reported that "feather trim is much favored in fashion this season," and that two caged cardinals had been on display at the Bel Air Flower Show, and further, that collectors, authorized by Fish and Game, were thinning out desert birds, especially the Vermillion Flycatcher.

April 1936. Discussed advocating the belting of cats.

September, 1936. Sent a telegram to President Roosevelt imploring the closing of the duck season for the year because of the effect of the drought on the crop of young ducks. In December heard the report that the duck hunting season had been cut by 15 days, and furthermore that in spite of protests by hunters the Federal Government was standing behind the law prohibiting "baiting."

Perhaps the ultimate in horror stories was revealed in March, 1938, when it was reported that Mr. Bruder had cooperated with the Society in apprehending a woman who had been feeding live birds to her cat on the advice of her veterinarian.

Ending the decade on a happier note, in May, 1939, a letter from the Isaac Walton League announced that they would drop all proceedings to have White Pelicans exterminated on Lake Elsinore.

### Preservation of the Environment

Concern about the environment is nothing new. Many of the items that attracted the Society's attention in early years are reminiscent of today's headlines, as the following attest.

May, 1920. Began a campaign to prevent the construction of irrigation reservoirs in Yellowstone National Park.

In February, 1922, members wrote Congress requesting the passage of House Bill 7452 protecting public rights against the seizure of water in the Roosevelt-Sequoia National Park for commercial purposes.

In May, 1927, there was the first mention of the threat of poison spray in the orchards affecting bird life.

October, 1930. Sent a letter disapproving the widening of Sturdevant Trail (Santa Anita Canyon) to an auto road.

January, 1932. Protested to the City Planning Commission over granting permission to drill for oil in the Los Angeles River.

October, 1932. Urged members to vote No on Proposition 11 permitting oil drilling along the coast.

April, 1933. Wrote the City Council disapproving the plan to put a street (Wilshire Boulevard) through Westlake Park. (MacArthur Park.)

Illustrating the unhappy affect of environmental change on wildlife, in April, 1933, it was reported that the clearing of willows and underbrush in Griffith Park, and the diminished water supply, had reduced the park bird list from 137 to 111, a loss of 26.

### Miscellaneous Activities

Finally we note a few miscellaneous items that fit in none of the topics discussed above, but that suggest the interests and thoughts and actions of Society members in past year.

In January, 1922, the Board voted the "the March Field Day in each year hereafter be known as Founder's Day, and that our April meeting this year be recognized as John Burroughs Memorial Day."

December, 1922. Adopted the Mariposa Lily as the Society Flower.

December, 1922. Moved that Mrs. Bicknell complete the Los Angeles Society history and plan to have it published. (What happened?)

June, 1924. Attended the house warming at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Stephen McGroarty (soon thereafter destroyed by fire.)

October, 1924. Agreed to open each meeting with the singing of *America the Beautiful*.

May, 1926. Announced that the living symbols of Society emblems were: Bird - Western Tanager; Flower - Mariposa Lily; Tree - living (sic) oak.

December, 1926. Thanked Mrs. Leonard Hall for her efforts in selecting the Society's seal.

November, 1927. Announced that the following were complimentary members of the Society: the Los Angeles Library, the Hollywood Branch of the Library, Roland Ross, Alfred Cookman, Dr. L.H. Miller, Mary Mann Miller, Augusta Possens and Martha McCann of the Botanic Gardens.

September, 1929. Passed a motion that "we do not subscribe to The Auk, but that we sanction and join the National Park Association."

October, 1932. Reduced the annual dues from \$1.50 to \$1.00.

April, 1933. Voted to select a butterfly emblem for the Society, and in May adopted the Swallow-tail Butterfly.

May, 1933. Wrote John McGroarty congratulating him on being chosen Poet Laureate of California.

December, 1934. Received a new book, Roger Tory Peterson's guide, enabling quick identification of birds, and agreed to purchase a copy.

March, 1934. Mrs. Veatch was asked to write the history of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, and in May the Post Record (?) requested such a history in story form. (Again what happened?)

May, 1934. Gave the bird nest collection to the University of Southern California and later received a letter of thanks from President Von Kleinsmit who reported it had been placed in the Science Building.

On June 3, 1935, the group met at the home of one of the members to celebrate the 25th birthday of the Society.

A letter to Joan Crawford, dated August 19, 1936, congratulated her on turning her Brentwood Heights home into a bird sanctuary with water and bird houses provided. She responded on August 29 thanking the Society for the letter and congratulating it in its work.


In February, 1938, Mrs. Duff presented the President with a gavel made from wood from a tree on Abraham Lincoln's farm.

With relief we note that on April 14, 1938, "the President reported that Mrs. Fargo had found her binoculars which had been missing."

As early as 1919 the Society had placed a bird fountain in Exposition Park, but in 1926 received a letter from the Department of Parks reporting the "end" of the fountain, a victim of vandalism and disintegration.

But in December, 1938, a new cement bird bath was acquired through the generosity of Mrs. John E. Bishop of the Ambassador Hotel, a gift in the name of her canary, Micky. With considerable fanfare it was dedicated at Plummer Park on January 27, 1939, and accepted by Mrs. Florence Lewis Scott, Director of Plummer Park, Mr. O.M. Schultz, President of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, Mrs. Harriet William Myers, President of the California Audubon Society, and Captain E.R. Plummer.

Micky had achieved some fame as a result of being the only bird with membership in the Audubon Society, the only one with his own bank account, as well as one that had founded a Canary Club, appeared on radio, and that regularly received fan mail.

On May, 1939, it was voted "that we have a listing in the Los Angeles Telephone Directory," and thus did the Society announce to the world that it had reached maturity at the end of the first thirty years. 



## From the Editor

by Dexter Kelly

When I first took over as editor of the *Tanager*, my greatest fear was of being left high and dry at deadline time, with nothing to print. Fortunately, my fear has turned out to be groundless. Many of you have either submitted articles, or have promised to write some, or have done both. Since there seems to be plenty of writing talent and energy in our members and other readers, I feel emboldened to take the next step; to suggest and urge writers to produce articles on specific subjects. There are three areas in particular that I would like to see covered in the *Tanager*.

**Birding Locations and Travel** Good travel articles have always been a staple of birding magazines. But some of the ones we have published in the past have been criticized for being lengthy and self-indulgent. A good travel article should combine good descriptive writing with practical information. Keep the focus not on yourself but on the place you visited: use your own experience only to highlight your description of the place and/or how to find the birds. Don't list every bird you saw: we don't have the space and format for lengthy listing, and it makes for sticky reading. Your article should help the reader find the birds when he follows in your footsteps, while giving him or her a pleasant, if vicarious, birding experience in the meantime.

The locations treated can be anywhere, but I would especially like to publish a series of articles on West Mexico (Durango Highway, San Blas, Alamos, Northern Sonora, Mazatlan weekend, etc.). It's an area rich in numerous and colorful tropical birds, relatively close to home, and cheap enough to visit repeatedly. Yet it is ignored by too many Southern California birders, whose listing stops dead at the Mexican border. Peter Alden's excellent book on the region is fifteen years old and out of date in many respects, and we haven't published anything on West Mexico in over six years.

Also, how about some stories about places we might visit on a weekend or a business

trip. For example: if you have to travel to Washington or Cleveland for a couple of days, where can you go very quickly to pick up a lifer?

**Ornithological Subjects other than Identification and Distribution** Like behavior, taxonomy, biogeography, evolution, etc. Some find such subjects arcane and boring. I find them fascinating, even though I can't understand many of the new discoveries and theories being batted around these days. Our membership includes some world experts, people on the cutting edge of science, and who also have the ability to explain scientific arcana to intelligent, curious ignoramuses like the rest of us. Some of you literate savants I have already contacted and begged from; others will soon hear from me.

**Basic Bird Habitats** Someone has suggested that the *Tanager* should reach out to the beginning birder and/or the new birder in town, with a series of articles describing basic Southern California habitats like chaparral, wetlands, oak woodland, desert oases, etc. Many of us supposedly more experienced birders may assume that we know these habitats well enough, whereas we may be ignorant of many of their most significant features. It follows that these "elementary" articles should be written by experts. You know who you are, even if I don't. I urge you to step forward and volunteer.

Well, those are three of *my* preferred subjects. What would *you* like to see in print? I hope you all have filled out the questionnaire in the last issue, or will do so shortly, and made your interests known—whether or not they include the *Tanager*. Of course, not all material submitted need fall into your or my favorite categories. Informative and entertaining writing on any subject will be welcomed. Be assured and forewarned that the high professional standards of editorial quality established by Barry Clark nine years ago will be maintained. Important articles are already in the works, on such subjects as taking field notes, results of this year's Christmas count, ramifications of the A.O.U. Checklist, etc. With your continued help and support, I am sure the *Western Tanager* will enjoy its tenth year as the best chapter newsletter in the NAS.

## Book Review

by Lee Jones

### Field Guide to the Birds of North America

National Geographic Society  
(eds.). 1983. Kingsport, Tennessee.  
464pp. \$13.95

Traditionally, a reviewer will pick a book apart piece by piece, convince the reader that he, the reviewer, could have produced a better product, then end his review with, "Despite its many flaws I highly recommend it. No one should be without a copy." In a break with tradition, I will reverse the procedure by stating at the outset that, despite its flaws, I highly recommend this new field guide. No serious student *should* be without a copy. This book is without question the best bird guide published to date. It is so superior to its predecessors that comparisons would be pointless. *But*, it is not without flaws.

One should ask the following questions before evaluating any bird book: 1) What were the author's or publisher's intended objectives? 2) To what extent are they met? 3) If they have not been met, why? It has been my understanding that the National Geographic Society was out to produce the "ultimate" field guide. They hired the best artists and consultants available (Jon Dunn and Eirik Blom were the chief consultants). Within reason, cost was to be no object. Have they produced the "ultimate" field guide? No. National Geographic did come close to producing a truly magnificent field guide. Yet it could have been so much better with so little additional effort. Why did they fall short? Incompetence? Budget constraints? Too many "cooks"? Time limitations? Nearly all of the book's shortcomings are the result of the latter — deadlines, unforeseen last-minute problems, an inflexible (understandably) publication deadline. Let's take a closer look.

The organization, layout and quality of the book are, for the most part, fine. There are more species, more recognizable subspecies, more exotic species and more plumages illustrated than in any other comparable guide ever published. There are over 800 species of birds illustrated. Most recognizable subspecies, age classes and color phases are also represented. See, for instance, the six representative subspecies of Fox Sparrow on p. 407, or the three recognizable forms of Hermit Thrush on p. 327. Most of the species are arranged in phylogenetic order which, to my mind, is essential. The only serious departures are the birds of prey and "chickens" (grouse, pheasants, quail) which have been placed at the juncture of water birds and land birds, and the cranes which follow the other long-necked waders rather than the rails. While I would have preferred to see



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them in phylogenetic order as well, I do not find this arrangement objectionable. The editors have adopted the recent AOU taxonomy throughout, which I find laudable. Though a few die-hards may grumble, in a few years even they will have grown accustomed to this modern taxonomic arrangement. Those launching their birdwatching careers with this book will not soon be burdened with further taxonomic changes while they are still mastering their basic skills; whereas those starting with Robbins' and Peterson's field guides will have the confusing task of eventually learning two sets of names and listing sequences.

As for layout, I have always liked the idea of placing the text, illustrations and range maps together on facing pages despite some inherent problems. The fact that the amount of text for each species must be limited in such a format may actually be a plus. This prevents the author from becoming bogged down in too much detail — detail which is not necessary in a field guide, and which can be confusing or overwhelming to a novice.

If I have one gripe with the layout, it is with the poor use of space. The maps could be 30% larger without any reorganization of the text. They could be close to 100% larger with some minor changes in layout. The maps are very detailed, much more so than in previous guides such as Robbins' *Birds of North America* or Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*. The inclusion of state and provincial boundaries is especially helpful. Because of the fine detail that has gone into the making of these maps, it is essential that they be as large as possible. Much of the painstaking effort involved (cf. Double-crested Cormorant) is lost on a map that is a mere 1" by 7/8". The maps could have easily been enlarged to 1 1/4" by 1" (30% more area) without sacrificing more than a slim bit of each margin and some space between the map and text. They could have been made still larger if the editors had been willing to extend any remaining text below each map out to the left margin. My meager training in graphic design tells me that such an arrangement would be even more pleasing to the eye—as well as more practical. The present format, and the editors' rigid adherence to a set layout, have apparently resulted in the exclusion of a map for American Black Oystercatcher (p. 102). If a map had been included, it would have extended slightly above the first line of type for the species. This would have required only a very slight (and worthwhile!) departure from the present format.

Another example of poor space utilization lies, not with the editors, but with several of the artists. Again, in consideration of the meticulous attention to detail and accuracy emphasized in this book, large image size becomes paramount. John Pitcher's shorebirds are, for the most part, very well

illustrated. But they are too small—much smaller than they need be. So are John O'Neill's birds. And Thomas Schultz's birds. And the birds on some plates by other artists. Lest you be tempted to say the birds *have* to be small in order to get so many on a page, turn to p. 121 or p. 135. Count the number of birds illustrated. Now count the number of birds in Pitcher's plates (his are the ones with the tiny birds). Better utilization of space would have resulted in more visually attractive plates in addition to birds that are at least half again larger. In fact, birds large enough to overlap each other a little without obscuring any pertinent field marks add a certain three-dimensionality. Donald Malick has used this technique very effectively in many of his plates.

The consequence of unnecessarily small images is nowhere more apparent than on p. 99. In reduction from plate to printed page, the Yellow Rails have lost their white crossbars. This, in turn, has resulted in two confusing statements in the text that seemingly contradict the illustrations. Under Sora (p. 98): "upperparts are streaked, not barred, with white [as in Yellow Rail]." Under Yellow Rail: "A small rail, deep tawny-yellow above with wide dark stripes marked by white crossbars." Since no such white crossbars are readily visible, one must turn to another source, such as Robbins' *Birds of North America*, to understand the significance of these statements.

This brings us to the question of quality. Before I dive headlong into a lengthy discourse on *lack* of quality, let me once again emphasize that the overall quality of the book is high. But the quality varies from superior to decidedly inferior. Examples of poor quality range from poor grammar, confusing statements and a few factual errors, to highly stylized, inaccurate artwork and disturbing inconsistencies within the range maps, plates and text. Many of these problems are pointed out in the appendix to the review. Others are discussed below.

The first thing most birdwatchers turn to when inspecting a new field guide is the plates, so let's examine them first. The National Geographic Society employed no fewer than thirteen artists to illustrate this book! (But note: The plates are not signed; you'll have to turn to the last page in the book to find out which artist is responsible for which plate.) In other field guides the commission of numerous artists has resulted in artwork spanning a broad spectrum of quality (cf. *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* by de Schauensee). Such is also the case here. But, interestingly, the variation in quality is not due so much to different artistic abilities as it is to *intra*-artist variation. Puzzling? Not really. Few artists can produce superior work under the pressures of an inflexible deadline. And if the typical artist operates as I do, he or she probably reasons "I have one year to paint fifteen plates." Later,

"I have four months yet, to finish the last ten plates." Still later, "I have only one month in which to do seven plates!" In such a case the artist may end up painting three or four plates in little more than a week. I'm not saying that this was the case with any of these artists, but it should not be ruled out, human nature being what it is.

If the first two plates you look at are the loons on pages 19 and 21, you're in for a pleasant surprise. By comparison, the loons will make most of the other plates look even better than they may otherwise appear. Jon Janosik, who painted the loons, grebes, Pelecaniformes and some of the shorebirds, is however, capable of superb work. His plovers on p. 109, for example, are excellent. In fact, it is difficult for me to believe that the same artist who painted the rather stylized, off-color phalaropes on p. 121 also produced the life-like, finely detailed and accurately portrayed plovers on p. 109. I wonder which of the two plates he painted first!

The same unevenness in style and quality holds true for most of the other artists as well. One of my favorite plates is the grouse plate on p. 211 illustrated by Kent Pendleton. But Pendleton painted two inferior hawk plates. Either he is much better with gallinaceous birds or he painted the hawks under pressure. Even Malick, who may have more truly outstanding plates in the book than any other artist, is responsible for the badly misshapen juvenile Mississippi Kite on p. 187 and the misleading illustrations of two Zone-tailed Hawks and a Turkey Vulture in full flapping flight on p. 199 (see appendix for more on this).

John O'Neill is one of my favorite artists. But his plates in this volume are a disappointment. None of his work here, except perhaps, his "Parts of a Bird" illustration on pp. 10-11, is outstanding, and he is easily the worst offender when it comes to *image size*, my obvious pet peeve. If one needs to be impressed with the diminutive aspects of chickadees, O'Neill has certainly succeeded! Fortunately, chickadees do not suffer as greatly from a small image as do shorebirds. While most of his plates are at least adequate, his swallows (pp. 297 and 299) are an embarrassment. They are among the poorest plates in the book, at least artistically. Their colors are accurate, however, and the field marks are all correctly portrayed. Perhaps, this is all one should ask from a field guide. Perhaps.

Doug Pratt, another exceptionally talented artist, has contributed more plates than any other artist. Most of his plates are superb. Others are adequate, and a few such as the Empidonax flycatcher plates, are considerably less than adequate. Unlike O'Neill's swallow plates, however, artistically speaking, the Empidonax are artistically fine. But they suffer from inaccurately portrayed field marks and body proportions (more on this in the appendix). Nevertheless, considering the



task, Pratt has done an admirable job. And the Empidonax are certainly not the easiest group to capture on canvas! Some of his plates, such as the kingbirds on p. 277, the jays on p. 301, and the crows on p. 307, are not up to par with his others. I cannot help but wonder if these were painted last.

Cynthia House did the waterfowl plates. Aside from the fact that it is refreshing to see waterfowl painted by a female artist (aren't waterfowl and birds of prey the exclusive domain of men?), her work may be the most even in the book. If I have a criticism, it is once again, with image size. Not her basic waterfowl illustrations—these are fine—but her flying ducks on pp. 92-95. Many of these are much too small and lacking in necessary detail. The smews, for instance, on p. 95 (bottom, right) are only one-third the size of the Northern Pintails on p. 92 (top, left). They should be closer to two-thirds the size of the pintails, or nearly twice the size illustrated. And look at all that white space surrounding them (and the other ducks) that she could have utilized!

At the risk of dragging on and on about the artists, I will mention Thomas Schultz, if only to add a few positive comments. While his gulls and terns may not be stunning artistically, they are more than adequate—and accurate. This extremely complex group is perhaps the most challenging of all birds to illustrate properly. Slightly longer body, slenderer bill, more marbled pattern, rounder profile—these are expressions frequently used in describing differences between gulls. With gulls in particular, it is important to accurately illustrate these subtle differences in body proportions and plumage patterns. Schultz has succeeded. If only his birds were larger . . . !

One brief comment about Marc Steadman's cuckoos. I understand that he was hired in the eleventh hour to paint a couple of plates that were "due yesterday". 'Nough said.

After checking out the plates, the next thing people look at is the range maps. Aside from the fact that they are generally very accurate, up-to-date, and easy to interpret (and too small!), there is little else to be said that I haven't covered in the appendix. There is, however, one annoying problem that should be discussed. Birds at or slightly beyond the limits of their normal ranges have not been treated similarly. This is always a difficult problem to tackle, but whatever policy is adopted should be followed throughout. There appears to be no policy here, however. A number of species are shown wintering in areas where they are rather rare (Nashville, Yellow, Hermit and Wilson's warblers are all shown wintering in coastal southern California). Others, however are not shown wintering in areas where they occur regularly (Black-and-white Warbler in the Southeast, for example).

The authors have indicated seabird breed-

ing colonies with small dots. But they have only done this for some species. For a few species (Black Storm-Petrel, Brandt's Cormorant, Cassin's and Least auklets), they have shown some, but not all, breeding colonies. And for at least two species (Black-vented Shearwater, Rhinoceros Auklet), breeding colonies have been created where they do not exist.

The last thing people look at is the text. Therefore, I have saved the text for last. Once again, I will emphasize that the text is adequate in most respects. This guide contains more useful information than any of its predecessors. But it has not been as tightly edited as it should have been. Remarkably enough, I have not found any typographical errors in the text (one hummingbird illustration, however, is mislabeled); thus, editing for typos has been thorough. As with the maps, the text does, however, suffer from several annoying inconsistencies. Most annoying is the casual use of "casual". The words "casual" and "rare" are frequently used interchangeably in the text to describe a species' relative abundance, without regard to the definitions given in the introduction. On p. 13 the editors state, "Birders call *casual* the species that turn up irregularly in small numbers in areas outside their normal range." It is implied that "rare" birds are those which are least expected—the equivalent of "accidental". With this in mind, let's turn to the text. According to their definitions a Tennessee Warbler is casual in migration on the West Coast and a Blue-winged Teal and Garganey both being casual? It is not at all unusual to find 30 or 40 Blue-winged Teal in a day on the West Coast in appropriate habitat during migration. But there are probably no more than a dozen records of Garganey for all of North America outside Alaska.

If Spotted Redshank is a "rare spring and fall visitor to the Aleutians and Pribilofs" and "casual on both coasts during migration and winter", it is then more likely to be seen on both coasts than in the Aleutians and Pribilofs. Right? Wrong. Confused? You'll be more confused as you encounter countless similar examples in the text.

Another problem that crops up occasionally is the omission of pertinent information and the inclusion of irrelevant or unnecessary information, either of which can mislead the uninformed reader. Take, for example, Red-throated Pipit. It is said to be a "regular migrant along the Pacific Coast". Outside of Southern California where a half dozen or so are seen each fall, it is quite rare along the Pacific coast. It is still on the list of rarities reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee.

Similarly, the statement under Sandwich Tern, "very rare spring visitor to Southern California", is misleading [there are three records from San Diego, all of which may

pertain to a single individual]. Since the authors have (wisely) resisted mentioning such accidental occurrences for other species the inclusion of such a statement for Sandwich Tern may lead the reader to believe that Sandwich Terns are more likely in California than, say, a dozen species of wood warblers including Black-and-white and Palm, for which no mention is made of California or the West Coast.

Lack of pertinent information on White-rumped Sandpiper migratory routes will surely leave the novice wondering where he might find this species without travelling to the high Arctic tundra. There is a similar problem with a few other species.

One final peevish point about grammar. Perhaps I'm just fussy, but a decade of English teachers has made its mark on my sensibilities. I cannot bring myself to ignore such phrases as "bill is heavier than Greater Yellowlegs" (p. 114), "tail is broader than Parasitic Jaeger" (p. 142), or "tail is similar to female Black-chinned Hummingbird" (p. 258). There are many many similar examples which I will leave for you to find.

I hadn't intended to wax so disparaging (if one may wax other than lyrical). But is it not virtually axiomatic that it is easier to criticize than to praise? What more can be said about the finer aspect of a book than "fantastic", "outstanding", and other such superlatives. These wear thin after awhile. It requires much more space to point out the flaws, no matter how few nor how trivial many of them may be.

I will conclude with two pleasing plusses and one minor minus. I was pleased to find rugged, water-resistant pages and a binding that can withstand even the most rigorous treatment in the field. *But* (there is always a but), the print has an annoying habit of smearing—perhaps an unavoidable consequence of water-resistant (and ink-resistant?) pages.

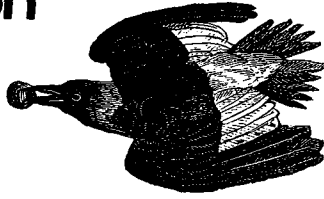
You won't find this book in your local bookstore. But you may order a copy (along with a large format, beautifully photographed coffee-table companion and a record album) from the National Geographic Society for \$35.95. Or you may purchase the field guide separately (no frills) from the Los Angeles Audubon Society Bookstore for just \$15.95

## Desert Ecology Weekend

The Tucson Audubon Society will hold its 14th annual Institute of Desert Ecology at Catalina State Park just north of Tucson, April 27-30. The program features three full days of field studies of Sonoran Desert plants, wildlife and geology. For further information contact the Desert Ecology Institute, Tucson Audubon Society, 30-A N. Tucson Blvd., Tucson AZ 85716, Phone (602) 745-2721.

# Birds of the Season

by Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett



As you read this, the busiest part of the winter season — the Christmas Count period — will be history. The whereabouts of unusual wintering species will be known, and the magnitude of winter “invasions” by irruptive species will have been duly recorded. And, somewhat surprisingly to those with a traditional view of the seasons, “spring” migration will be just beginning. Some of our earliest migrants, such as Allen’s and Rufous Hummingbirds, various swallows, Turkey Vulture, Greater White-fronted Geese and Cinnamon Teal, should be in evidence well before February is over. As always, birders should be on the lookout for these and other migrants in order to document local arrival dates and major migratory movements.

Each winter we are amazed, and perhaps even a bit heartened, by the repeated return of individual birds to specific wintering sites. Many banding studies have shown that individual birds are capable of returning to the same garden, woodland, beach or pond winter after winter. Since most of us are not banders, this winter “philopatry”, or “site specificity” is most noticeable among the very rare species. Thus, we can be quite confident that “the” **Greater Pewee** has returned this winter to the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round area for the fifth straight year, rather than invoking the coincidence of up to five different individuals having found this patch of trees during different winters. Let’s run through some of the other possible or probable “returnees” from this winter. On Point Reyes, the **Eurasian Skylark** has returned for its sixth winter, although it quickly disappeared from its favorite field and has remained elusive. For an excellent account of this record, see the paper by Joe Morlan in *Western Birds*, Vol. 14, pp. 113-126, 1983. Closer to home, several Santa Barbara area birds have returned. The **Grace’s Warblers** in Montecito and near “Santa Claus” are back for their fifth winters, and the male **Hepatic Tanager** has returned for a second winter near the Santa Barbara Natural History Museum. In Orange County the **Thick-billed Kingbird** is back for its second winter on the Irvine Ranch near Lemon Heights. Lake Perris in Riverside County has a **Tufted Duck** again this winter, perhaps one of the two present last winter. And once again there is a pair of **Eurasian Wigeon** on the Brookside Golf Course in Pasadena. What goes unnoticed, of course, is

the fact that many of the White-crowned Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos in your yard are probably the same birds that were there last year as well — the same could be said for a great many species.

As we write this, just before the Christmas Counts, it is difficult to summarize the extent of the irruptions of certain montane and boreal species. It is clear, however, that this winter has seen higher-than-average numbers of the following species in the lowlands: **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, **Mountain Chickadee**, **Cedar Waxwing**, **Pine Siskin**, **Purple Finch**, and **Golden-crowned Kinglet**. Another irruptive species, the **Varied Thrush**, was present in small numbers (e.g. Huntington Beach Central Park, Zuma Canyon, and near the top of Kanan Road above Malibu). By contrast, not even a minor irruption of pine seed specialists (Clark’s Nutcrackers, Pinyon Jays, Red Crossbills) has been noted.

The following paragraphs detail not only winter birds of note, but many late fall vagrants. Arthur Howe submitted a convincing description of an immature **Brown Booby** around a fishing boat three miles northwest of Santa Barbara Island on 29 October. The bird was seen a few days later by the captain of the same fishing boat. **Least Bitterns** continue to be seen at Harbor Lake, with an immature observed there on 1 November by Jim Halferty *et al.* Over one hundred **White-faced Ibis** were seen on the Pt. Mugu Navy base on 14 November (Southwest Bird Study Club), and one was in a field across from Prado Park near Corona on 8 November (Dave Richardson). In addition to the **Eurasian Wigeons** noted above, four were on the San Jacinto Sewage Ponds near Lakeview, Riverside County; several also spent last winter at this locality, among the thousands of American Wigeon. Also at these ponds was a curious hybrid duck, perhaps American Wigeon X Pintail, which bore a resemblance to a large Baikal Teal. Female **Wood Ducks** were seen at Huntington Beach Central Park (Doug Willick, 27 October) and the Whittier Narrows New Lakes (Natasha Antonovich, 29 October). A male Wood Duck was on Grass Valley Lake near Lake Arrowhead on 24 November (Kimball Garrett), and up to 15 birds, males and females, were near the Fire Station at Lake Sherwood on 28 November (SW Bird Study Club). A female **Harlequin Duck** in Sandyland Slough near Carpinteria after 25 November (John Ogden, Kimball

Garrett *et al.*) provided the only recent Santa Barbara County record.

A flock of 34 **Swainson’s Hawks** south of Bakersfield on 22 October (Matt Heindel) was encouraging, and at the tail end of their southbound migration. A **Bald Eagle** (probably a second-year bird) was found feeding on dead and dying catfish at Harbor Lake on 2 November (Rob Hofberg). **Peregrine Falcons** were seen in several coastal localities; many of these birds may have originated from the releases of recent years in Westwood and the western Santa Monica Mountains. An immature put up some 7000 gulls, terns and shorebirds at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve on 18 October (Loren Hays); another sighting there in July suggests that this large and productive estuary might be an important feeding area for this species. An adult Peregrine, perhaps one of the pair that has frequented downtown Los Angeles, was circling over the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park on 5 December, munching on a white pigeon (Kimball Garrett). **Merlins** were noted at Lennox Park in Inglewood (Don Sterba, 19 October), in Altadena (Lois Fulmor, 29 October) and in Arcadia (Barbara Cohen, 1 November). A **Lesser Golden-Plover** (of the race *fulva*) was at Upper Newport Bay on 29 October (Arnold Small). Three **Mountain Plovers** (quite scarce and local near the coast) were on the sod farms of the Oxnard Plain on 16 October (Loren Hays). An exceptionally late **Rednecked Phalarope** was in Goleta on 26 November (Paul Lehman). **Red Phalaropes** were found in large numbers along the coast in late November after a series of storms. Perhaps because of the storms, several were on Puddingstone Reservoir and even on the streets of adjacent San Dimas around 23 November (Dan Guthrie). A **Franklin’s Gull** was seen along the Santa Ana River near the Hamilton bridge from late October through at least mid-November (Wayne and Virginia Gochenour). An immature **Sabine’s Gull** at King Harbor, Redondo Beach, after 4 December provided our latest Southern California record (Ross Landry).

An **Inca Dove** which was found at a Gardena feeder on 20 November (Craig Weiford) is best treated as an escapee, although this species is a potential straggler to the coastal slope. **Vaux’s Swifts** have normally passed south through our area by the middle of October. Exceptional, therefore, was a concentration of some 1000 birds over Exposition Park and the USC campus on 2 November (Kimball Garrett); up to 50 of these birds were still present in early December and appear to be wintering. Three late transient Vaux’s were flying past Pt. Dume, Malibu, on 19 November. A male **Broad-billed Hummingbird** was found at a patch of tree tobacco near Mt. St. Mary’s College in Brentwood on 5 November (Abigail King); it remained to at least 17 November. The expected sapsucker in the Lowlands around Los Angeles is the Red-



breasted. Scarcer "**Red-naped**" **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were found in La Crescenta (Chuck Murdock, 28 October) and at the arboretum in Arcadia (Barbara Cohen, 23 November - 2 December). A bird combining the characteristics of Red-breasted and Red-naped was at the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round on 27 November (Kimball Garrett). A **Tropical Kingbird** was at the Turtle Rock Nature Center in Orange County on 4 November (Doug Willick).

Small numbers of Solitary Vireos, usually of the race *cassinii*, are noted annually in the lowlands. "**Plumbeous**" **Solitary Vireos** were at Huntington Beach Central Park in October and November (Doug Willick) and east of Lancaster on 6 November (Kimball Garrett). A **Philadelphia Vireo** was at California City Park northeast of Mojave, Kern Co., on 22 October (Matt Heindel); this park has proven very productive for vagrants since it was "discovered" recently by the Bakers-

field birders. Warbler sightings in late October and early November included the usual small numbers of Tennessees, Northern Waterthrushes, American Redstarts, and Palms. The most amazing warbler of the season was a **Kentucky Warbler** which frequented the very small courtyard of Dale Delaney's apartment building in Del Mar, San Diego Co., from 14 to 16 November. The bird was considerably more visible as it perched on stairways or under the few decorative plants than it would have been in its preferred forest understory habitat! A female **Hooded Warbler** obliged scores of birders near the southwest shore of Lake Sherwood after being discovered by Guy and Louise Commeau and the SW Bird Study Club on 28 November. A **Blackburnian Warbler** at the Pt. Loma Cemetery on 31 October was one of the few reported this fall (Priscilla Brodtkin). An immature **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Huntington Beach Central Park from 16 to 23 November (Gail Benton). The **Worm-eating Warbler** first found on 15 October along Rainsford Place in Zuma Canyon was still present on 4 December and apparently wintering. An **Ovenbird** was found along Carpinteria Creek on 6 November (Art and Janet Cupples, Bruce Broadbooks). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was in Temescal Canyon, Pacific Palisades, on 31 October (Rob Hofberg), and two were there on 9 November (Jacob Szabo). Two others were along Carpinteria Creek on 6 November (Cupples), and one was along Bonsall Drive in Zuma Canyon on 4 December (Priscilla Brodtkin).



Send any interesting bird observations to:  
**Hal Baxter**  
 1821 Highland Oaks Drive  
 Arcadia, CA 91006  
 Phone # (213) 355-6300

At least three **Summer Tanagers** were at Huntington Beach Central Park after late October (Brian Daniels, Doug Willick). Others were in Long Beach Recreation Park on 25 November (Jerry Friedman), in Topanga on 25 November (Kimball Garrett), and at Lake Sherwood on 3 December (Kimball Garrett *et al*).

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at the Whitewater Canyon Trout Farm on 12 November (Steve Myers, *fide* David Hatch). Late *Passerina* buntings in southern California tend to be Indigo rather than Lazuli; this was evidenced by the presence of an **Indigo Bunting** at Huntington Beach Central Park 2 - 7 November (Barbara Elliott) and one at Santiago Oaks Nature Center, Orange Co., on 9 November (Sylvia Ranney).

A **Sharp-tailed Sparrow** at Morro Bay after November appears to be wintering; this species has rarely been recorded in Southern California in recent years. A **Black-throated Sparrow** in Big Sycamore Canyon on 2 November (Barbara Elliott) was a rare straggler to the coast. **White-throated Sparrows** were noted in several localities, and **Harris' Sparrows** were at Huntington Beach Central Park (Craig Weiford and Don Sterba, 19 November) and at Coal Oil Point, Goleta. An apparent hybrid **White-crowned X Golden-crowned Sparrow** (immature) was in Rocky Oaks Park off Kanan Road, Malibu, on 4 December (Kimball Garrett). The fields off Bridge Street near Lakeview in the San Jacinto Valley had at least two **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** and one **Lapland Longspur** in late November and early December.

Of note in the northern desert oases in November were the following birds: **Ross' Goose** at Saratoga Springs (Brian Keelan and the Strausses, 11 November); **Eastern Phoebe** at Furnace Creek Ranch (4 November); **Rufous-backed Robin** in the date grove at Furnace Creek Ranch (4 November); **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Deep Springs on 4 November; and **Rusty Blackbird** at Furnace Creek Ranch on 11 November.

Noteworthy birds from Northern California, in addition to the skylark mentioned at the beginning of the article, included a **Le Conte's Sparrow** at Neary's Lagoon in Santa Cruz on 29 November and a **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** in mid-November at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory near Bolinas (the northernmost record for California).

As early spring approaches, the active observer will seek out the first arriving spring migrants. But while it is relatively easy to record arrival dates of migrants, it is far more difficult to get a handle on *departure* dates. Almost daily coverage and efficient note-keeping are important requirements for this task. Keep tabs through February and March on the diminution of numbers of our common wintering species, and attempt to pin down the day of departure of individual birds. A great deal remains to be learned about this subject.



# CALENDAR

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 28** — **Hal Baxter** will lead this annual trip to the **Salton Sea**. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the **Wister turn off on Hwy. 111**, 36 mi. south of Mecca. Call **Hal** for further info. at **355-6300**.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4** — **Ron Dowe**, base biologist, and **Lee Jones**, will lead a trip to **Pt. Mugu**. \* Trip is limited to 25 people. Phone Audubon House for details, reservations, and directions.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4** — Meet **Marge Parnias** at the El Dorado Nature Center at 8:00 a.m. for this half-day trip. Depending on how the birding is, trip may go to Recreation Park in Long Beach.

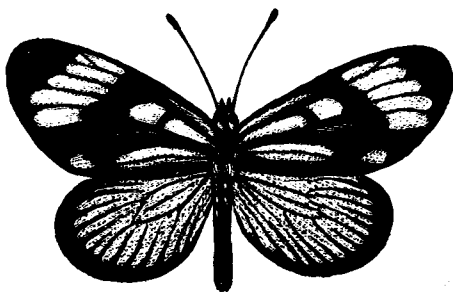
**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11** — **Ballona Wetlands** with **Bob and Roberta Shanman**.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12** — **Whittier Narrows** with **David White**. (See Jan. 15 for details.)

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14** — **Evening Meeting**. Our annual general meeting of L.A.A.S. membership, to discuss the present and future of the Society, and the results of the questionnaire in the last *Tanager*. The drawing for the prize will be held: all who handed in their questionnaire are in the running. See you there!

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27** — Join **Guy and Louise Commeau** for a trip to **Malibu Lagoon and Tapia Park**. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** behind the store in the shopping center at Malibu Lagoon for this half-day trip.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28** — **ANNUAL BANQUET**. See details elsewhere in this issue.



## 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.

If you would like to lead a field trip call **Wanda Conway**, our new **Field Trip Coordinator**, at **(213) 340-0365**. Ian Austin has retired after many months of hard work! Thanks, Ian, for a job well done!

### Audubon Bird Reports:

<i>Los Angeles</i>	<i>(213) 874-1318</i>
<i>Santa Barbara</i>	<i>(805) 964-8240</i>

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

## WESTERN TANAGER

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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.

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**Address Change** — Many members who move complain about missing an issue or two of the *Tanager*. To avoid this, subscribers should notify LAAS directly of their change of address. If you send your address change only to National Audubon, it will take several weeks for LAAS to be informed.

## Pelagic Trips

The first two **pelagic trips for 1984**, sponsored by **LAAS**, will be held on:

**Sunday, MARCH 25** — **Alcid trip. Santa Barbara Islands and out to sea**. Depart 6:00 AM, return 6:00 PM. Price is \$22 or 2 for \$40. Leaders will be announced. Birds to be expected include Fulmar, the three common shearwaters, the two common jaegers, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Cassin's and Rhino Auklets, and Black-legged Kittiwakes. Rarities seen may be Black-footed Albatross, Short-tailed Shearwater, or Puffins.

**Sunday, AUGUST 12** — **Shearwater and storm petrel trip. Santa Barbara Islands and out to sea**. Depart 6:00 AM, return 6:00 PM. Price is \$22 or 2 for \$40.

All trips will be on the *Vantuna*, leaving from Terminal Island, San Pedro. All prices are tentative and subject to fuel cost increases. Reserve spaces early. To take part in these pelagic trips, send your reservations with the names and telephone numbers of all members of your party along with a self addressed, stamped envelope to:

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

## Shearwater Trips

Please look for Debra Love Shearwater trips in the March issue of the *Tanager*. If you would like information prior to that, please write or call Debra at:

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

**\*NOTE:** If you have to cancel your reservation on either of the Point Mugu Trips, please notify Audubon House, so that you can be replaced by someone on the waiting list. Unless a certain minimum of birders show up, the base command will cancel the trip.

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