WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society Volume 51 Number 1 September 1984

Plant Communities and Bird Habitats in Southern California

Part I: THE MOJAVE DESERT

by Larry L. Norris

Preface

The intent of this series of articles for the readers of the *Western Tanager* is to define the various plant communities of southern California as they relate to bird habitats and population fluctuations throughout the year. The editor believes this kind of information will be beneficial to beginning birders, and birders new to the area, as a basis from which to plan birding trips to the various biotic provinces of southern California. This series starts with the Mojave Desert and intends to include articles dealing with other geographical zones of southern California, and written by birders familiar with the areas. Two definitive texts have already been written by members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society that treat these subjects in some detail, and should be regarded as standard references for southern California birders. Arnold Small's *The Birds of California* provides an excellent overview of the various bird habitats of California, describing them in terms of major plant components. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn's *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* gives a detailed annual bar graph on each species' relative abundance in a given geographical area, with habitats ranked in order of importance to the species. Both of these works were based in part on Alden Miller's important paper on bird habitats: "An analysis of the distribution of the birds of California" (U.C. Publications in Zoology, Vol. 50 (6): 531-644, 1951. By using these texts, a birder can, in time, come to an accurate understanding of the seasonal distribution of bird species in major habitats throughout southern California.

Photo by the Author

Creosote Bush Scrub, along Excelsior Mine Road, Shadow Valley, San Bernardino County, Clark Mountain in distance, to the southeast.

Several schools of thought exist as to what really constitutes a plant community. However, it is generally agreed that the description of a plant community be based on the obvious, large species of the community. For instance, we commonly read of the Joshua Tree Woodland as a plant community. In most instances where these tree yuccas occur they are not the dominant species by numbers or by biomass, but are the most noticeable to the observer and provide highly visible habitat for wildlife. So the community takes shape in our minds as a Joshua Tree Woodland, even though the Joshua Trees may be a minor component of the area we perceive to be "woodland". Within the framework of this series we will work with the already well-defined plant communities of southern California, emphasizing their importance as bird habitats.

To a beginning birder, the seasonal movements of bird populations may appear random and confused. Definite patterns of movements exist, and, in order to best bird these habitats, one should keep in mind the season of the year that is likely to produce the desired birds. In southern California there exist six general movements of bird populations throughout the year. Examples of each of these movements can be seen in species from the Mojave Desert: 1) Spring arrivals—those breeding birds that winter outside the Mojave Desert and use Mojave habitats only in spring and summer. Examples are Lucy's Warblers nesting in the mesquite of desert oases, and Costa's Hummingbirds nesting in the Creosote Bush Scrub habitat. 2) Spring departures—those species that winter in the desert but breed far to the north. Water Pipits are an example. 3)

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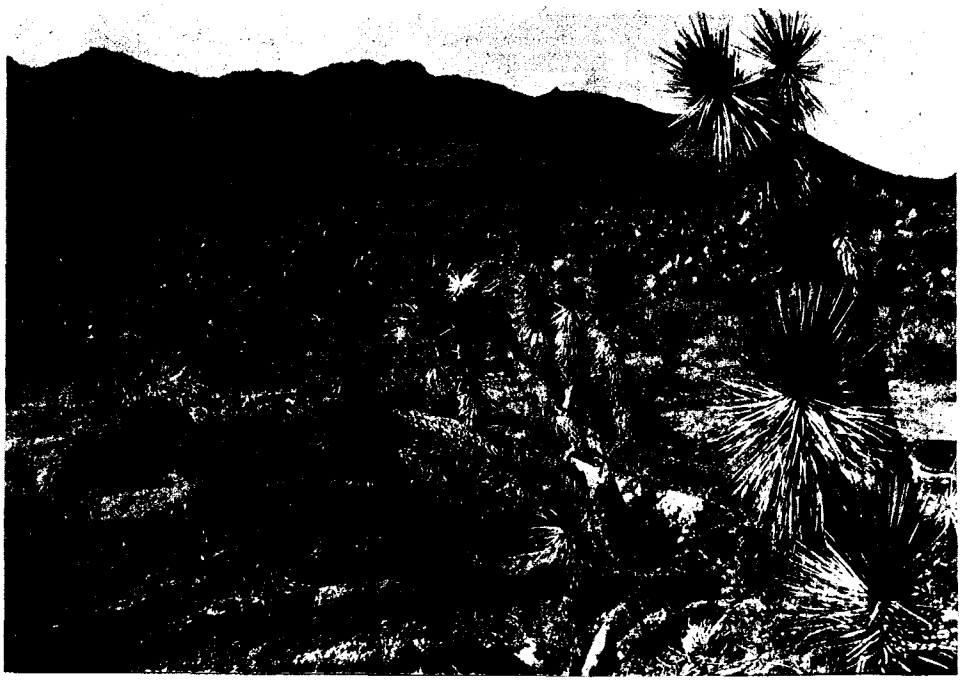

Photo by the Author

Joshua Tree Woodland — East side of Walker Pass, el. 4800-5000 ft. Kern County.

Fall departures—that general movement of breeding birds out of the desert to areas in the south. Turkey Vultures have mostly left the high desert by the end of October. 4) Winter arrivals—those bird populations that move into the Mojave Desert during the winter months. The large flocks of wintering Mountain Bluebirds in the Antelope Valley come to mind. 5) and 6) The major spring and fall migrations of bird species that do not use the desert in any way except for refueling stops on their long migrations to and from their breeding grounds. Almost all the shorebirds one sees at the oases are migrants, although an occasional Common Snipe may overwinter. All these movements of bird populations are reflected in the habitats at different times of the year, hence the effort to describe them. Three factors then, must be considered by the birder when planning a birding trip: the desired species of birds, their preferred habitats, and the time of year in which they frequent those habitats.

The Mojave Desert: In this article the area treated as Mojave Desert is the high desert north of the San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and Little San Bernardino Mountains. It is bounded on the west by the Tehachapi, Piute, and Scodie Mountains, and north of Walker Pass the Southern Sierra Nevada. In Small's *The Birds of California* the area north of the Garlock Fault, which has parallel north-south trending mountain ranges, is considered a portion of the Great Basin geographic province, and rightfully so, in a geologic definition. But, for an article of this scope, the flora and fauna of the region, which includes Death Valley, is similar enough to the true Mojave to be lumped in a single, broad treatment. It would be wise to read both The Mojave Desert and The Great Basin sections in Small's work (pp. 236-248).

Six plant communities comprise the vegetation of the Mojave Desert. Alkali Sink Scrub, Creosote Bush Scrub, Shadscale Scrub, Joshua Tree Woodland, Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and Oasis-Riparian Woodland are components of the vegetation of the Mojave Desert. Sagebrush Scrub and Bristlecone Pine Forest are plant communities that are typical of the Great Basin, but are included here to bring the total to eight plant communities of the high desert.

Alkali Sink Scrub: For birding, the bleakest plant community is the Alkali Sink Scrub. This community consists of salt-tolerant plants inhabitating the lowest portions of the valley floors rimming the salt pans and desert playas. Several species of Saltbush (*Atriplex*), Ink Weed (*Suaeda*), and Iodine Bush (*Allenrolfea*) are common indicators of this community. Anyone who has walked the dirt road from the golf course at Furnace Creek Ranch to the sewage ponds in late May knows how hot and dismal the Alkali Sink Scrub can be. Few birds inhabit this plant community. Sage Sparrows are occasionally seen running among the Ink Weed. House Finches are often observed perched on the fruiting branches of Saltbush. American Kestrel, Common Raven, and, rarely, a Prairie Falcon are seen perched on nearby Mesquite. Le Conte's Thrashers inhabit these low-lying areas of Saltbush. Considering the time constraints of birding trips, this plant community could go unbirded, since the few species one might see in it are easily seen in other communities as well.

Creosote Bush Scrub: The Creosote Bush Scrub plant community is the most common plant community occurring on the Mojave Desert, and is indeed, the one most commonly associated in our minds as typifying the Mojave. All the highways across the Mojave Desert pass through large tracts of gently sloping land covered by seemingly continuous creosote. In our efforts to bird the desert oases we drive through miles and miles of this habitat stopping only occasionally for a roadside Common Poorwill or a

Photo by the Author

Shadscale Scrub, Death Valley National Monument, Bullfrog Hills in distance.

larger than average, brownish shrike. Common plant species of this community are Burro Weed (*Ambrosia dumosa*), Brittle Bush (*Encelia*), and *Opuntia* cacti of both the beavertail and cholla types.

Loggerhead Shrikes are common in this open scrub habitat, as are Black-throated Sparrows. Costa's Hummingbirds build their fragile nests in the forked branches of the Creosote Bush. Small flocks of Horned Larks forage among the wide-spaced vegetation. While Greater Roadrunners hunt lizards along the sandy washes and about rock outcrops, Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, and an occasional Golden Eagle soar overhead searching for carrion or prey. In spring or summer one might find a concentration of Lesser Nighthawks flying back and forth low over the ground, once in a while gliding upwards to show their sharp-winged silhouettes in the evening sky.

Shadscale Scrub: Shadscale Scrub is another plant community dominated by salt-tolerant shrubs such as its namesake Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*). Other indicators are Cheese Bush (*Hymenoclea*), Hop Sage, (*Grayia*), Blackbush (*Coleogyne*), and Winter Fat (*Eurotia*). This plant community is generally found between 3000 and 6000 feet in elevation from the Owens Valley south through the Mojave Desert, covering large areas between the Creosote Bush Scrub and the Joshua Tree Woodland plant communities. The resident birds are mostly of the same species as those found lower in the Creosote Bush Scrub. From time to time one may find a Brewer's Sparrow or Sage Sparrow. Sage Thrashers also occur in this habitat.

Joshua Tree Woodland: As the elevation increases the Shadscale Scrub gradually gives way to one of the most biologically diverse plant communities in the Mojave Desert—the Joshua Tree Woodland. The Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) is the visual dominant in the plant community. Other large shrubs include Cotton-thorn (*Tetradymia*), California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), Mormon Tea (*Ephedra*), Cholla Cactus (*Opuntia*), and Mojave Yucca (*Yucca schidigera*). Small refers to the Joshua Tree Woodland as " ... ornithologically the most interesting and unique plant association of the Mojave Desert ...". These "woodlands" are found along most of the flanks of the desert ranges and provide nesting habitat for a number of bird species that forage through the area and down into the Shadscale and Creosote Brush Scrub. Species nesting in Joshua Trees are Scott's Orioles, Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, and American Kestrel and Ash-throated Flycatcher (in abandoned woodpecker holes). Many other species nest in the area, but not necessarily in the Joshua Trees: Western Kingbird, Mourning Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Cactus Wren, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Northern Mockingbird. Prior to the development of suburbia on the southern California landscape, the Mockingbird was noted as a dweller of the dry washes and desert slopes; now we rarely think of it as anything but a "backyard bird". Gambel's Quail can be found in this habitat.

Photo by the Author

Pinyon Juniper Woodland, East Side Clark Mountain (El. 7929 ft.), San Bernardino County.

Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: Above the Joshua Tree Woodland on the higher slopes of the desert ranges stands the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland. The dominant species are Single-leaved Pinyon (*Pinus monophylla*) and two species of Juniper, California Juniper (*Juniperus californica*) in most of the western parts of the Mojave, and Utah Juniper (*J. osteosperma*) in the north and east portions of the Mojave Desert. Mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*) and Antelope Brush (*Purshia*) are also common associates in the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland. Often several species of Sagebrush (*Artemisia*) can be found.

The Pinyon-Juniper Woodland is an area of transition from bird species that frequent the hotter desert valleys to those species that inhabit the cooler desert mountain slopes. The resident Pinyon Jay is commonly the first bird to come to mind when pondering what species may be seen on a bird trip to this plant community. One area in which Pinyon Jays are occasionally seen is Walker Pass on California Highway 178. Walker Pass is at the ecotone of an extensive Joshua Tree Woodland and the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland of the Scodie Mountains. The author has seen as many as 200 Pinyon Jays in a loose flock flying south over the pass from one pinyon-covered peak to another. The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher reaches the upper limits of its nesting habitats in the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, as does the Gray Vireo. On the steep rocky slopes one can hear the clear descending call of the Canyon Wren, and also the softer trill of the Rock Wren. These two wrens sometimes forage together on the same slopes and canyons of the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland. White-throated Swifts are often seen and/or heard soaring and cavorting above the Pinyons. Golden Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks glide silently overhead. In areas open more to sagebrush one can find Gray Flycatchers and Brewer's Sparrows singing from late spring well into summer.

Oasis-Riparian Woodland The bird habitat in the Mojave Desert of most interest to birders is the desert oasis. These scattered oases provide a critical habitat for resident and migratory species. These oases can be loosely considered part of the limited riparian woodland found along major stream courses in the Mojave. Probably the greatest concentrations of bird life in the high desert, not counting agricultural areas, occur in migration at the desert oases. The longest lists of migrant and vagrant species for desert areas are compiled from these oases. The space will not be taken here to discuss these interesting occurrences, but a perusal of the accidental/casual species on the Death Valley Bird Checklist or the migrant/vagrant species listed on the new Joshua Tree Checklist will demonstrate how attractive these green oases can be to migrating birds.

Most migrants in the high desert are observed while resting and feeding at an oasis. The lush growth of Mesquite (*Pro-*

sopsis), Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), Willow (*Salix*), and, occasionally a cattail (*Typhus*) marsh lure the birds in with a promise of food and rest. One morning not long ago the author was searching for migrants in the single cottonwood tree at Anvil Spring in Butte Valley, Death Valley National Monument. A male Costa's Hummingbird was perched on a nearby bush while twelve Savannah Sparrows, ten White-crowned Sparrows, and one Lark Sparrow scratched and poked around a half-bale of hay left by the burro removal wranglers. No bird was in the cottonwood. Suddenly an Orange-crowned Warbler flew into the cottonwood tree from the south. As I stood there looking south across all those miles of Creosote Bush and alkali sink I wondered where on the desert had that little warbler started last evening? I knew why it had flown so long into the morning; there was no suitable habitat in all those desert miles until this single cottonwood. I was again reminded of the importance these special oases have to hundreds if not thousands of migratory birds.

Resident birds of the desert oases are Crissal Thrasher, Verdin, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Phainopepla, and, in increasing numbers, Great-tailed Grackles. Wintering White-crowned and, much less commonly, Golden-crowned-Sparrows use the habitat offered by larger oases as do those rarities the White-throated, Tree, Harris', and Swamp Sparrows. Water Pipits use the largest oases in winter as well as the many agricultural fields present in the Mojave Desert.

Sagebrush Scrub: Sagebrush Scrub is a plant community more characteristic of the Great Basin than of the Mojave Desert, but is included here because of its affinities to the bird life of the Mojave. The major plant species is the Great Basin Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) a member of the sunflower family. Three other species of Sagebrush are also present in fewer numbers. Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus*) and Cotton-thorn are associated species in the Sagebrush Scrub. Sage Thrashers are commonest in this habitat as are Brewer's Sparrows and Gray Flycatchers. The large, introduced populations of Chukar range through the Sagebrush Scrub and Pinyon-Juniper Woodland. On the desert east slope of the Sierra Chukar have been found at over 11,000 feet in elevation in late summer and early autumn as they climbed above the heat of the Sagebrush Scrub. Green-tailed Towhee can be found in the extensive sagebrush on the east side of the Sierra. Sage Grouse are typical of this habitat, and have their leks in openings on slight rises in the sagebrush. Here the males perform their courtship displays to attract females to their area for the purpose of mating. Late March is a good time to plan to see these birds at their leks.

Bristlecone Pine Forest: The Bristlecone Pine Forest is, again, more characteriestic of the Great Basin, but is included here to complete the coverage of major plant communities considered in this article as occurring in the high desert of southern California. The Bristlecone Pine (*Pinus longaeva*) is the dominant species after which the plant community is named. Limber Pine (*P. flexilis*) also occurs in the community. In the White and Panamint Mountains of Inyo County the Bristlecone Pine grows only on dolomite outcrops near and on the crests of these ranges. The areas surrounding them are made up of granitic and metamorphic rocks overgrown with Sagebrush Scrub. The shift from Sagebrush Scrub to Bristlecone Pine Forest is rather abrupt because of this geologic difference. Birds utilizing this ecotone share habitats throughout the day's foraging. Clark's Nutcrackers are sometimes seen flying over vast tracts of Sagebrush Scrub getting from one patch of Bristlecones to another. It seems odd to see a species considered to be "alpine" in preference flying away over the sagebrush; but if that sagebrush is 10,000 or 11,000 feet in elevation the occurrence may not seem so odd after all. Mountain Bluebird, Common Raven, Townsend's Solitaire, Cassin's Finch, Mountain Chickadee, and White-breasted Nuthatch all nest in this cooler habitat high above the heat of the desert valleys below. In winter most species migrate down-slope from the Bristlecone Pine Forest to the relatively warmer Pinyon-Juniper Woodland or the desert oases.

Conclusion: Birding trips to the Mojave Desert designed for seeing the maximum number of species possible could be tailored to go from oasis to oasis with side trips to a nearby reservoir, mountain peak, or agricultural area. Those birders wanting to study resident species of certain habitats could make trips to various locations that have just those habitats and, in time, come to learn those areas very well. But either way the variety is surprising, the roads are good, and the weather in spring and fall delightful. Birders are usually repaid for their efforts by interesting birds and beautiful scenery. The Automobile Club of Southern California has three maps that pretty much cover the Mojave Desert: the San Bernardino County and Kern County maps plus the special map on the Death Valley area.

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Whether you have to RENEW your membership in the National Audubon Society, or JOIN for the first time, *Call Audubon House* to arrange to renew through L.A.A.S. This will ensure that you will keep getting the *Tanager* and be able to participate fully in Chapter activities. And it will help *us* keep better track of our membership. Thanks!

May and June at Whittier Narrows

The LAAS field trips on Sunday, May 13th and Saturday, June 23rd were not as productive as the April trip; totals of 51 and 37 species were seen, respectively (note: the April trip produced 58 species rather than 50, as indicated by the previous Tanager article).

Although May should have produced a fair number of migrants, the situation at Whittier Narrows reflected what seemed to be the general trend throughout the southern California area—relatively few migrants, and little of note. Wilson's and Yellow were the only warblers; a male Phainopepla was the "best" transient seen. At the same time, though, there were a few late wintering species—for example, 23 Cedar Waxwings were seen. June, expectably, had even fewer transients and no wintering birds, and in fact breeding species were the highlight of both the May and June trips. In May, Red-tailed Hawks had youngsters in a nest atop a high voltage electric transmission tower; by June they had fledged, but were still in the vicinity. There were American Coots with fuzzy red-headed babies at Lake Aguatecos in May; by June, that generation was nearly grown (large, gray, and ungainly—but looking much more like rails than the adults) and there were even younger coots (solid bright red fuzz-balls) at the 20-acre lake. Also in May, Black Phoebes were observed nesting under the eaves of a pump shed, apparently oblivious to the rumbling diesel engine which sends water coursing through the siphon ditch over to the New Lakes. In June, we saw Mallards and Ruddy Ducks with chicks, and there were also baby Pied-billed Grebes.

Both May and June produced a good number of permanent and summer residents, most of which presumably breed at Whittier Narrows despite the fact that we didn't observe their nests. There were Bullock's Orioles and Black-headed Grosbeaks; we neither saw nor heard a Yellow-breasted Chat in May, but both saw and heard one in June (in fact, there may have been two—but it took a lively chase just to get a glimpse of the bird as it dashed about through the willows on the south shore of the 20-acre lake). Also, as if to make up for their absence in April, there were Cardinals seen on both of these trips.

—David White

On Watching Peregrines

by Bob Shanman

Photo by Ian Austin

The day had finally come. It was warm and still in the canyon bottom where we were to begin our climb up the cliff to a vantage point where we could observe the wild Peregrines and the nestlings in the eyrie. The leaders cautioned us that the viewing might not be what we hoped because of the sun angle and the position of the birds. But to us it was worth the effort, any effort, to see these wild birds.

The climb was some 550 feet above the canyon floor, and after we arrived we quickly took a break for lunch and some drink. While we ate the adult male Peregrine flew lazily about, seeming to have no purpose but to ride the thermals off the canyon walls. The female was on the nest site with the young birds, who, from our vantage point some 500 to 600 feet away, appeared to be sleeping. Things continued in this vein for about 45 minutes. We began to get restless. Our schedules demanded that we not spend the entire afternoon at our perch.

Slowly, as the sun crept across the canyon walls and began to warm the nest, the young, white downy birds began to stir. Then suddenly, they began to yelp, begging for food. The female looked about anxiously for the male, who now had landed on a small ledge some 20 feet from the nest. The female called to him, and after about ten minutes, he flew off as if to seek some prey for the young.

But alas, it was not to be. After circling about for several minutes, he landed at the nest site, without food and much to the anger of his mate. After pecking about the nest site a bit, he moved down the narrow ledge upon which the eyrie was situated to what appeared to be an old nest site. Here he stayed, away from his angry mate, who continued to squawk at him to bring food for the young. We saw no birds in the area. Where would he get food for the hungry young?

Then suddenly he dropped off the ledge, swooped down, then back and up to an outcrop beyond the nest. There he landed on a dead bird, which our guides told us he had cached several days earlier. It was a fairly good-sized bird, which he plucked a bit and took some food for himself. Then he hopped onto it, and quickly took off, heading back towards the female. The bird was too large for him to get to the nest site, and he was losing altitude fast. As he passed his mate, he turned and flew away from the nest site. She took off in pursuit.

Several seconds passed and she caught up to him, only about 300 or 400 feet from the cliff. They were beak to tail, and when she touched him, he lifted a bit. He dropped the prey. Without a lost motion, she swooped it up, turned, headed back to the cliff nest site, and proceeded to feed the young. We had just witnessed a common but still spectacular food pass between two adult Peregrin falcons.

Where did all of this occur? The climb to our viewing site was in an elevator. Our perch was the legal library in the northwest corner of the North Arco Tower. The eyrie, was, and still is on the top of the Union Bank Building. The food pass occurred high over the swimming pool of the Bonaventure Hotel. The cliff walls and canyons are the skyscrapers of downtown Los Angeles!

We don't know who the male is, but the female is believed to be Mariah, released by the Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology in Westwood in 1982. Our guide was Jim Jennings from the Foundation. The program is part of the effort to reintroduce the Peregrines to Los Angeles.

L.A. Audubon is part of this effort, and on behalf of the chapter, we would like to offer our thanks to those individuals from ARCO, Union Bank, and Wells Fargo Bank who so generously made their facilities available to the birds, and the Peregrine team from the Foundation and the Peregrine Fund. We hope to see you in the wilds of downtown Los Angeles during next year's nesting season.

Welcome "A-Board"

With the start of a new year at Audubon, I would like to introduce the new Board of Directors to you, our members. New Board members this year are Bob Brault in the position of 2nd Vice President; Evelyn Weiskopf, Registrar; Doni Kendig, Treasurer; and Glenn Cunningham, Librarian.

Returning to the Board in the same positions as last year are Ken Kendig, 1st Vice President; Marge Wohlgemuth, Executive Secretary; Marilyn Cooper, Recording Secretary; and Jean Brandt, Executive Past President. Dexter Kelly will continue as TANAGER Editor, Wanda Conway with Field Trips, Sandy Wohlgemuth and David White as co-Conservation Chairs, Olga Clarke in the Bookstore, and Fred Heath as Publications Chair. Herb Clarke will continue as a Special Advisor to the Board.

Returning from last year, but in new positions, are Bob van Meter as Program Chairman and Andrea Kaufman as House Chair.

I would like to thank last year's board for an excellent job, and I am looking forward to working with the new Board this year. You are a great group of energetic people, and the chapter will benefit from your efforts.

Strangely absent this year will be Kimball Garrett, and I think many of you will be interested in knowing why. As many of you know, Kimball has been working with LAAS for a long time, contributing to the TANAGER, giving programs, writing books, etc., all to the detriment of completing his doctoral program. Kimball has decided that it is now or never, and has decided to return to school to complete his Ph.D. by this coming June. All of us wish you the best of luck in this effort, Kimball, and look forward to having you back next year.

Bob Shanman

LAAS Field Trip to Sequoia National Park

Seventeen participants spent Saturday and Sunday (7-8 July 1984) birding the roaded portions of Sequoia National Park. On Saturday the group gathered early at Ash Mountain, Park Headquarters (nesting Phainopeplas), and drove the long, winding 25 miles to Mineral King under the able leadership of Ranger-Naturalist George San Miguel. A short stop at Oak Grove in the foothills produced several Lawrence's Goldfinches, Lazuli Bunting, another Phainopepla, and a pair of Northern Pygmy-Owls which were observed for several minutes at close range. As the trip continued up the canyon leading to Mineral King, all three species of swifts (Black, Vaux's, and White-throated) were seen.

In Mineral King a Blue Grouse with young was observed about fifteen feet from the group. A Cassin's Finch was observed pecking in mud near a mineral spring presumably for salt or other minerals. Twice Evening Grosbeaks flew overhead. A Warbling Vireo nest was found with a Brown-headed Cowbird egg in it. San Miguel took the group by the corrals in Mineral King and explained the presence of cowbirds there, and the impact they are having on song bird populations in Mineral King. While George and the group were returning to the cars, one fellow was lucky enough to actually see a Steller's Jay pip its egg and start life on a beautiful summer day in Mineral King.

The following day the group met with Ranger-Naturalist Larry Norris for a trip into Giant Forest. Along the abandoned Colony Mill Road the group got good views of Solitary Vireo, Western Tanagers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and, to our delight, low foraging Golden-crowned Kinglets. Hermit Thrushes sang their enchanting songs in the distance, and the Winter Wrens along the shrubby ravine sang only a few, shortened songs most unlike their normal morning exuberance.

Around the Crescent Meadow area the group heard Pileated Woodpecker calling *and* drumming in the distance, but the bird was never located. Lincoln's Sparrows were common along the meadow edge as were Wilson's and MacGillivray's Warblers. At Huckleberry Meadow a Brown Creeper came in close—a life bird for some. We also had excellent looks at White-headed Woodpeckers on Giant Sequoias, a truly beautiful composition in Nature. Towards the end of the day four Vaux's Swifts were watched for several minutes flying back and forth over Log Meadow as they caught aerial insects for food.

At trip's end 85 species had been seen or heard during the two days. Although the days were warm and the mountain roads curvy, enthusiasm ran high, and it was an enjoyable trip.

—Larry L. Norris

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The tentative program includes philosophy and ethics; evaluation of picture quality; lens and film basics; use of equipment; lighting techniques, blinds, locations, good reference books and participant slide evaluation, and closing with an open question forum.

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Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

In July, Anne McGill Gorsuch Burford, former Ice Queen of the Environmental Protection Agency, was appointed chairman of an environmental advisory committee by President Reagan. The announcement of this event was made the day before a luncheon the President was to have had with four "moderate" environmental organizations: the National Wildlife Federation, the World Wildlife Fund—U.S., the Izaak Walton League and the Conservation Foundation. Jay Hair, executive vice-president of the NWF, had worked long and hard to arrange this meeting, "trying," he said, "to establish a positive and constructive dialogue with this Administration—to look forward and not backward on the tough environmental problems ..." On hearing of the Burford appointment he was outraged and said he would not attend the luncheon. After eight pleading phone calls from Reagan officials he changed his mind—but showed up late. Russell Train of World Wildlife said, "I told the President I thought he's made a terrible mistake. We all did." The most poignat comment came from the director of the Izaak Walton League: "We're Republicans. We voted for him, and he's given us the short end of the stick."

Mrs. Burford had no qualifications to head the EPA. She was a Colorado state legislator with close ties to James Watt and Joseph Coors, the ultra-conservative member of Reagan's "kitchen cabinet." She was forced to resign amid charges of mismanagement and political favoritism. Documents were shredded and executive privilege was invoked to thwart investigating committees of the Congress. A disturbing whiff of Watergate emanated from Washington. It is widely believed that Rita Lavelle, head of the Superfund for toxic waste cleanup took the rap for Burford when she was convicted of contempt of Congress. When Burford resigned the EPA was a shambles. Before Reagan it had been considered one of the most effective government agencies around. Its competent staff was reeling from political firings and obstruction of its professional mission. Many quit in disgust and despair.

Mr. Reagan blamed the press and environmentalists for Burford's resignation and seemed blind to the havoc she had created in the agency. He said she was "a far bigger person than those who have been sniping at her with unfounded charges ... I wonder how they manage to look at themselves in the mirror in the morning." Burford said, "I love that guy and I'd be proud to serve him anyplace." So now she has another chance. As chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere what are her scientific and ethical qualifications? The same as she had for the Environmental Protection Agency: friends in high places. Her response to the explosive opposition to her appointment was, "It's the same old story—politics." Presumably her politicization of the EPA makes her an expert on the subject.

The celebrated luncheon was the kick-off for a week-long demonstration of the President's concern for the environment in this election year. It was a superb demonstration of Ecospeak. Repeat over and over, "I am an environmentalist, I am an environmentalist." "We are making solid progress protecting and improving the quality of America's air, land and water resources." If you insist that black is white often enough someone is bound to believe it. You borrow the language of conservation and then turn it upside down. Mr. Reagan says Americans must be "thoughtful and effective stewards of our natural resources." The national parks are our "crown jewels." You speak of the quality of life and stewards beneath the statue of our first environmentalist president, Teddy Roosevelt—for the television cameras, hoping his glamour rubs off on you. But the claims are empty words. The fact is the EPA did nothing about waste dumps. Even under Bill Ruckelshaus, the Mr. Clean who replaced Burford at EPA, only six out of 7000 toxic dumps have been cleaned up. While lakes and forests die the Administration calls for more research on acid rain. Secretary of the Interior Watt tried his best to allow mining, oil-drilling and grazing in our "crown jewels." This is stewardship? The spectacle of Mr. Reagan, after 3½ years of a determined assault on the environment, presenting himself as an environmentalist would be a source of cynical merriment were not it so insulting to ordinary intelligence.

Watt and Burford were card-carrying anti-environmentalists when they got their posts. They did not change their allegiance when they went to work for you and me. They rolled up their sleeves and gleefully took the ax to the hard-won environmental gains of the 70s. They were doing a job for their boss—and for their boss's bosses. They were getting the government off our backs by weakening the regulations that protect our health and preserve our wild heritage. When they couldn't change the rules they ignored them, cutting staff and funds, while the polluters and developers plied their trade freely. We were being sold down the river for quick profits for business and industry and the hell with posterity.

The return of Anne Burford reminds us that in spite of his sudden media conversion to conservation there has been no change in Mr. Reagan's environmental philosophy. The ancient admonition still holds: watch what we do, not what we say.

* * * * *

On August 1st, after calling her new job a "nothing Burger" (Then why did she ask for it?), and following an overwhelming repudiation by both houses of Congress, Mrs. Burford resigned.

* * * * *

Congratulations!

Just ten years ago the New Lakes at Whittier Narrows were conceived. When the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department decided to make a fishing lake out of a very birdy pond at Legg Lake, Los Angeles Audubon went to court to prevent the action. After much legal sparring and many anxious moments (and an injunction issued by no less than Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas) a marvelous compromise was arranged out of court. The Army Corps of Engineers, which owns the area, agreed to build three lakes at the Nature Center in exchange for the fishing lake. Jerry Maisel, who was president of LA Audubon at the time, led the way with the solid backing of the membership which contributed generously to the legal defense fund. The delicate negotiations for us were mainly the work of Dixie Mohan who appeared out of nowhere like an environmental Clark Kent, produced her miracles and then as mysteriously vanished.

Today the trees and shrubs that replaced the former rhubarb crop have grown tall and green, and, with the lakes, have become one of the prime birding spots in southern California. The first bird to nest there was a Black-necked Stilt in July of 1975. One of the most recent nesters was the Least Bittern —a most scrumptious bird. The list for Whittier Narrows is now over 300 species. And with the brand-new stream that has been constructed, new species should pop up at any time. When the environmental outlook seems bleak, when acid rain and nuclear leaks and toxic dumps bring us down in the dumps, we think of Whittier Narrows and rejoice. Tomorrow is another day.

Sense or Nonsense?

by Dorothy Dimsdale

"My husband thinks you're crazy. Last week you told him that the iris of the female Blue-footed Booby is larger than that of the male. He's finding it harder to talk to you."

So spoke an old friend. Like many wives, my interest in birds has altered my priorities and though my sweet husband has adjusted from initial bewilderment to tolerance, and now acceptance of my passion; it's less easy for my longtime women friends, and worse for their husbands, who listen is dismay to our family discussions:

Husband: Would you enjoy a barbecue and cocktails at the beach on a private yacht?

Me: No thank you. At dawn I'd planned to be standing in mud with the mosquitos at the far side of the sewage ponds.

Husband: Are you joining us for the tour of ancient ruins and a glance at the bedchamber of the King of Macedonia?

Me: No thanks. I'll be lying in the reeds with the leeches hoping to see a rail or two.

The locations for prime birding are not always so unappealing. On one of those wonderful mornings when the air is full of spring migrants and the promise of a glorious day, sometimes I'll suggest a canyon country walk beside a stream. In addition to birds there'll be wild flowers to see and often a shy mammal scurrying into the underbrush. The response is something like: "Couldn't we meet at 11:30 a.m., after coffee? Meeting at 7 a.m. and wearing those funny boots of yours seems a little excessive to me, and what about snakes?"

It's getting more difficult as my interest in birding increases to find ways to have an enjoyable conversation, in fact it's becoming an impossibility.

Here's how it went the other day:

Friend: Yes, come for 7:30 p.m. Er ... would you mind leaving your binoculars at home? It makes the other women nervous when you keep going outside and peering through them at God knows what.

Me: O.K. Sorry about the binocs. Could I bring my scope then everyone could have a look?

Friend: Absolutely not. In fact I'vd decided to light a fire and close the drapes.

Me: I see. May I tell you a marvelous piece of information I learned the other day?

Friend: Not if it's about birds.

Me: It's actually something that someone said.

Friend: Oh, well, that's different.

Me: On a recent boat trip I overheard someone discussing the sound of Black Storm-Petrels with Ed Navojosky. (a birding friend)

Friend: I don't believe this.

Me: Ed was told that the birds had been heard about a mile off-shore from Redondo Beach whilst they were feeding, and that they made 'promiscuous kissing sounds'. Ed had the grace not to ask for details.

Friend: That's disgusting! Look. Would you rather not come to dinner?

Me: I suppose it might be better for both of us. Oh, I forgot. Did I tell you I finally found out what a tertial is?

Friend: Silence then ... Dialing tone.

Sad though such conversations have been, they are better than those that start:

Friend: This is Dorothy. She watches birds.

Replies various:

1. What for?
2. So do I. We have Bald Eagles coming to our feeder.
3. How adorable. You should come to my house, we have lots of them in cages.
4. Do you do anything else?

So it is in the field that I am truly content, or is there a hitch even there? Take the case of the 'Super birders'. I don't mean the folks in the Kimball Garrett, Jon Dunn, Guy McCaskie and Arnold Small class. I mean the stranger who joins the group and says right up front. "No, that's not a House Sparrow. Note the bracelets round the scapulars, faint necklace under the crissum and, most of all, the diagnostic gold ring through the auricular. Obviously it's an Apocryphal Hyppogryph!" From then on, as most of us know when a Superbirder joins the group, silence ensues. There's a great deal of calling "Over there" and "Top of this tree", but only when the super birder has said "Lovely Black and White"—or whatever the bird may be—does everyone start to name the bird. 'Black and White, see it?' "Over here a Black and White Warbler."

I am by nature a blabbermouth. For some reason I am unable to hold my tongue, and nervousness in the presence of an authority doesn't help. Two years ago, in Florida, at the top of my voice, I identified seven different species as Green-backed Herons—I wasn't proud of that. Now I've reached the stage that my misidentifications are almost worth it for the look of incredulity when I spot a bird and name it correctly. It's happened only about twice in the last five years, but on those occasions I walked tall.

It has occurred to me that perhaps all birders are nuts. Being fascinated by such things as the comparison of the widths of eyebrows, on birds which are overall only five inches long, may be departing from the everyday norm of most people. Of course it all boils down to the old question of "What is normal?"

I sat chatting with Benton Basham on a pelagic trip last fall. He was on his whirlwind cross-country endeavor to count more than 700 different species of birds in one year. I did not find this at all odd. In fact I thought it a splendid pursuit. We were enjoying a birdy conversation when this most delightful, bright, friendly man reached down and took from his pack a 16 oz. can of Dr. Pepper. Next he produced a bag of "Tom's" peanuts (sent especially from Tennessee). He poured the peanuts into the can of Dr. Pepper, gave the mixture a good shake and drank it down with obvious pleasure. Now I don't know—but maybe that was normal.

Birding the Mangroves of Baja

by Raye Rhoads

Photo by Raye Rhoads

Mangroves — San Ignacio Lagoon

A whale watching trip can be a great field experience for birders. Especially one of those extended cruises that run from Southern California to the calving lagoons of Baja California. Out at sea you'll spot Sooty or Manx Shearwaters skimming between the swells that Xantus' Murrelets scamper over, while overhead the familiar gulls and Pelicans may be joined by Laysan Albatross. If you stop at the offshore islands, you'll find shorebirds and passerines—many the same as you'll see on Southern California beaches and deserts—plus nesting Ospreys, and occasionally even a Manx Shearwater's nest burrow.

The exciting birding starts in earnest when you get to the lagoon. San Ignacio is probably the best, both for whale watching and birding. A sanctuary for the Pacific Gray Whale, it hadn't been subject to the commercialization pressures that are cluttering up Scammon's and Magdalena bays.

Sitting on the deck of the mother boat you might get to see a Parasitic Jaeger, or a Magnificent Frigatebird harrassing a gull for its catch. The beaches are shifting scenes of familiar shorebirds. Overhead, Western, Ring-billed and Heerman's Gulls are joined by Bonaparte's and Herring Gulls.

If you have the fortitude to get up at dawn, while the whales are doing their morning breaching exercises, you can get into a skiff and cruise through the mangrove swamp where the really exotic birds hang out.

Mangroves, inhabiting the tropical areas of both Atlantic and Pacific coasts, form dense thickets above vast tangles of roots visible above the water line. In the lagoons of Baja they thrive in the swift currents near the lagoon's mouth, forming a boundary between the water and the desert of Baja California's Pacific coast.

Sliding into the water channels of the mangroves at dawn can make you feel like someone on the African Queen. If you get an adventurous skiff driver you may find yourself down some side alley where thick mangrove boughs fringed with leathery leaves reach down to get into the boat with you. If a waterway closes down abruptly the boatman may get out and pull the skiff back to where he can turn it around and return to the main channel.

The larger channels often have broad, open grasslands right down to the waterline, with narrow mud beaches crowded with Marbled Godwits and Short-billed Dowitchers. Look closely among the brown feathers—you can also find Long-billed Curlews and Whimbrels. Willets and Lesser Yellowlegs regularly turn up on mudflats that punctuate the swamp.

Look carefully in the clumps of mangrove. You might see a Clapper Rail peering out from inside the tangled root rafts—or a Yellow-Crowned Night Heron sitting regally among the leaves.

The mangroves are best known for long-legged waders. Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets are inevitable, as are Green Herons and Snowy Egrets. But if you look far ahead, often on the tops of clumped mangroves, you will see a Reddish Egret or a Tricolored (Louisiana) Heron. Or a White Ibis. Juvenile White Ibis, still brown-feathered, can be found during whale watch season, too.

Look with special care if you see a Reddish Egret or a Tricolored Heron, or even a Snowy Egret. It might turn out to be a Little Blue Heron who also frequents the mangroves.

If your boatman is good, he'll spot the birds long before you do. If he's really good, he'll cut the skiff's outboard motor and glide up to where the bird is perched. If he's exceptional, he'll shut down the motor, get out, and push the skiff up behind a clump of mangroves where you can see a bird nearby without its noticing you.

Viewing the birds of the mangrove swamp requires nothing more powerful than a good pair of seven-power binoculars. Spotting scopes are not only unnecessary, they are incompatible with the space limitations of a skiff.

Photographing the birds is another problem. You'll need at least a 300 millimeter lens to make the subjects show up at all. If you use a standard telephoto lens—one of those heavy, tubular telescope-like instruments—300 mm may be all you can shoot hand held and still get relatively sharp pictures despite the motion of the skiff. Consider 300 or 500 mm only if you're using one of those new lightweight lenses.

As the sun gets properly up, your skiff driver may park you on a sandy beach where you can get out and explore on foot. This is the transition zone between desert and ocean, an area of tough grasses and shifting, wind rippled sand. Be alert for quicksand. It's there at the water's edge and it could catch you up.

As the skiff takes you back to the mother boat for breakfast, you might get to see a flock of Red-Breasted Mergansers or Surf Scoters guarding the entrance to the mangroves.

If you are lucky you might be able to get aboard a skiff the next morning too. The exotic waders will be old friends by then, so you can concentrate on looking deep into the "bush" for the phantom passerines. Orange-crowned Warblers, Northern Waterthrushes and Mangrove Warblers are said to frequent the mangroves, though the bird list never says which time of year.

After breakfast, when you get back into the skiff to go whale watching, you'll know, even if you don't get to touch a Pacific Gray Whale, if you've been through the mangroves at least once, your trip has been a success.

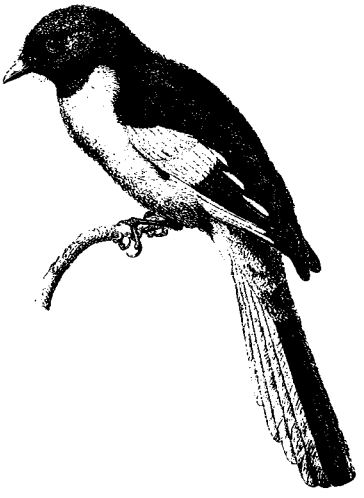
Birds of the Season

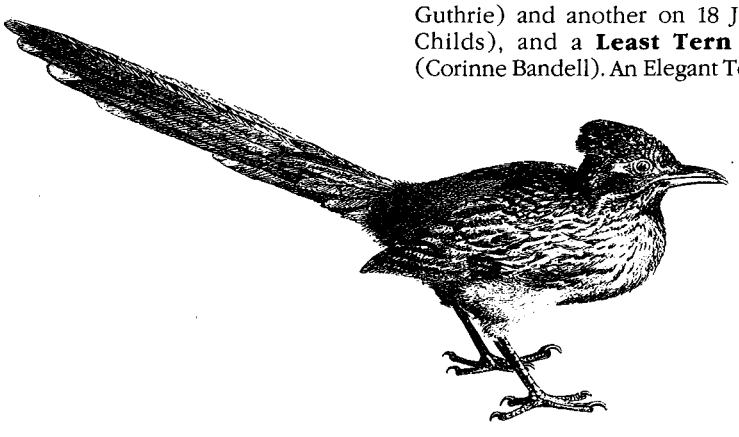
by Hal Baxter and Kimball Garrett

With virtually no measurable rain on the coastal slope of southern California since late December, the parched conditions of summer arrived early this year. Many observers commented on the dryness of their favorite birding sites, and most of these same observers attributed a relative scarcity of birds to these conditions. A prolonged period of moist (*i.e.* muggy) subtropical conditions in July did bring heavy rains to some of our mountain and desert areas, but these rains were undoubtedly too late, and perhaps *too* strong, to benefit local breeding birds.

One may be certain, however, that the autumn passage of migrants will be "business as usual", albeit with some adjustments by resting transients to local conditions. Even now, in late July, many birders are commenting on the abundance of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds around montane meadows, and shorebird migration is certainly beginning in earnest. September is that challenging month when young birds abound, beckoning active birders to remain (or become) familiar with juvenal plumages which often are not pictured in popular field guides. Happily, this will be the first autumn since a field guide (National Geographic's) containing illustrations of juvenile shorebirds appeared; it promises, then, to be an educational September for all bird identification enthusiasts. It is worth bearing in mind, also, that adult birds in fall may show unfamiliarly worn or fresh plumage (depending on the relationships of the molt and migration schedules). Again, September is an ideal month to study birds carefully in the field, both to brush up on plumages of common species and to search for a variety of vagrants. Repeatedly-checked estuaries, sloughs, sewage ponds and wet fields will almost certainly turn up scarce or unusual shorebirds at some point during the month. And favorite landbird spots, those promontories, oases or lushly-planted parks and gardens which concentrate and hold migrants, will likely turn up a variety of interesting species. Yes, September is a month to make the most of in the field.

Most of the mid-summer excitement came from the Salton Sea, where an inexplicable "invasion" of seabirds kept hardy observers braving the oppressive heat for a glimpse of an unusual inland sight. Most of us thought that Joe Dunn and Phil Unitt were crazy when they claimed a **Laysan Albatross** flying over the highway near Desert Hot Springs in May of 1976 (we believed them, but we still thought they were crazy ...). But a subsequent record for Yuma on 14 May 1981 suggested that some pattern might exist. On 21 May of this year Donna Dittman and Steve Cardiff had a Laysan flying over the north end of the Salton Sea, and subsequently two birds were seen simultaneously. Sightings continued from various points around the northern and western shores of the sea until 4 July. A **Sooty Shearwater** (second record for the Salton Sea) was also present around the north end of the sea in mid-June (Janet Cupples *et al*). And a **Leach's Storm-Petrel** was present at the north end after late June (Guy McCaskie), with two present there on 21 July (Robert McKernan). Add to these an **Ancient Murrelet** (first Salton Sea record) at the north end on 16 June (Curtis Marantz), and an unprecedented number of **Pomarine Jaegers**, and there was clearly something strange going on. Other north end of the Salton Sea reports included a **Horned Grebe** on 1 June (Henry Childs), a male **Common Merganser** on 1 June (Rick Clements), a **Mew Gull** on 1 June (Dan Guthrie) and another on 18 June (Henry Childs), and a **Least Tern** on 1 June (Corinne Bandell). An Elegant Tern reported at the north end of the Salton Sea in early June would require substantiation, as this species is unrecorded in the interior of southern California (but perhaps overdue at the Salton Sea).





An adult **Little Blue Heron** was at the Irvine Marsh on 8 July (Doug Willick and Brian Daniels). An impressive eight **Least Bitterns** were at the Whittier Narrows New Lakes on 27 June (Barbara Elliott *et al*). A **White-faced Ibis** was at Piute Ponds near Lancaster on 15 July (Jon Dunn); this has proven to be the most reliable site in Los Angeles County for this species. An adult **Wood Stork** flying over El Dorado Park, Long Beach, on 7 July (Brian Daniels) could possibly be the same individual that has been seen intermittently in the San Gabriel River basin for years. Three families of **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** were noted at Finney Lake on 5 July (Jim and Ellen Strauss).

The usual small numbers of over-summering shorebirds were reported, including a **Wandering Tattler** at Malibu on 18 June (Barbara Elliott). A **Common Snipe** along the Santa Clara River at Castaic Junction on 15 July (Kimball Garrett) was undoubtedly an early fall transient.

Common Ground-Doves may be regular visitors to the extreme southeastern part of Los Angeles County (and perhaps ever resident there). Brian Daniels and others have had several sightings in the Hawaiian Gardens/Lower San Gabriel River area this summer, with one as far west as Signal Hill. A **White-winged Dove** was at Eric Brooks' yard in Palos Verdes Estates on 20 June.

Owls proved to be diverse, though scarce, in our local mountains this summer. **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were found at Iris Meadow on Mt. Pinos (David Koeppel, 16 June) and at Charlton Flat in the San Gabriels (Brian Daniels, 3 July). **Spotted Owls** nested successfully in Evey Canyon in the

President's Corner

by Bob Shanman

It has been some time since I have had the opportunity to write this column, what with vacations, work, and becoming an expectant father. Since we have just begun a new year at LAAS, it seems appropriate to update you on what's going on in the chapter. To best do this, I'll answer the question most often asked of me as president: Just what does L.A. Audubon do? To best answer this question is to give a summary of this past year's activities, followed by some plans for the coming year.

This past year we held 11 general meetings, including the annual picnic. Subjects of the meetings ranged from birds to butterflies to a little history of "El Nino".

Fifty-nine field trips were run throughout southern California, including five pelagic trips. In addition, the chapter sponsored three Christmas Bird Counts: Antelope Valley, Malibu, and Los Angeles. A program of reservation-only field trips, requiring a small fee, but led by some of the top birders in California has been started, with early results indicating that it is going to be both popular and successful.

You, the members, contributed almost $3200 to the Condor Recovery Program. The Chapter added funds to bring the contribution to National Audubon for this program to $4500, a record. We also helped fund the students conducting the Condor Watch at "The Sign" near Mt. Pinos with an $1800 contribution.

Jon Dunn gave an extremely successful seminar on the new National Geographic *Field Guide to the Birds of North America.* This was attended by about 150 people.

Your contributions have been used to remodel and restore Audubon House.

Funding was obtained for the third year of Peregrine falcon releases in the Boney Ridge Wilderness Area of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

We have, for possibly the first time, had funds to help support scientific research on birds, specifically the Great gray owl.

We have continued to support other chapters in their fights to save endangered lands and species.

The Board has overwhelmingly supported the publication of Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn's WESTERN TANAGER bird identification articles in book form including the use of color plates.

All this has been accomplished with the assistance of you the members and the dedicated volunteers who work so hard to keep the society running on a day-to-day basis. If you have some time, and would like to spend it with a bunch of fun people, think about volunteering some time to work at Audubon House. The rewards far exceed the effort.

What's ahead for this year? The annual CONDOR FUND DRIVE starts in October. Bob van Meter has a tremendous list of MONTHLY PROGRAMS lined up. He is again planning the MEMBER'S SLIDE CONTEST for January. In late fall or early winter, our SECOND BOOK, described briefly above, will be published. Plans are not firm yet, but hopefully we will be able to SPONSOR A FOURTH PEREGRINE FALCON RELEASE. Internally, I have committed to having an OPERATIONS MANUAL prepared before I leave office in June. We will be sponsoring a SEMINAR ON BIRD AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY in October, with Herb Clarke and Arnold Small.

And last, and probably most important to the Chapter this year is that we will celebrate our 75th BIRTHDAY at the ANNUAL BANQUET in February. Details will appear in the next several issues of the TANAGER. We hope you will join us for this, and all the other exciting activities planned for this year.

San Gabriels (Rick Clements), though they appeared to be absent from Switzer Canyon. The diligent efforts of Brian Keelan and Jim and Ellen Strauss paid off with the discovery of the first nesting **Northern Saw-whet Owls** in the San Gabriel Mountains—three juveniles were monitored and photographed at 7000′ off the Angeles Crest Highway. Several **Whip-poor-wills** were heard at Angelus Oaks in the San Bernardino Mountains on 8 July (Phil Sayre and Bert Mull), but there were no reports from the San Gabriel Mountains this year. The Los Angeles area continues to be the most reliable place in California for **Chimney Swifts**. Several were seen in the Burbank Studio/Forest Lawn area on 24 June (Guy McCaskie *et al*), at least three were present in Exposition Park from 29 May to at least 20 July (Robert McKernan, Kimball Garrett), and two were frequently seen entering a building shaft in the mid-Wilshire district in July (John Ivanov).

A flock of 40 **Cedar Waxwings** in Whittier on 18 July was quite unusual. Flocks routinely linger to early June after good flight years, but this large flock was unprecedented in mid-summer. Mid-summer records of vagrant warblers may pertain to very late, lost spring migrants. Rich Stallcup had a exceedingly rare **Blue-winged Warbler** near Bridgeport on the east side of the Sierras in late June and, closer to home, Brian Daniels was surprised to discover a male **Bay-breasted Warbler** in the coniferous forest at Charlton Flat on 3 July. A young male **American Redstart** at Morongo Valley on 9 June (Don Sterba) was at a more expected date, as was the very rare **Golden-winged Warbler** at Carpinteria, Santa Barbara Co., on 1-2 June. A male **Bobolink** was at Playa del Rey on 1 June (Jacob Szabo). **Northern Cardinals** continue to hang on in small numbers along the Colorado River near Vidal, although much of their limited remaining habitat is flooded. Jim and Ellen Strauss waded to get their cardinal pair on 6 July. A male **Indigo Bunting** was at Monte Cristo Campground along the Angeles Forest Highway on 2 June (Beatrice and Richard Smith). A **Black-throated Sparrow** in Upland was at an unusual locality (Henry Childs, 16 June). The always unpredictable **Red Crossbill** was found on the trail between Mt. Pinos and Mt. Abel by Hank and Priscilla Brodkin on the Fourth of July (a flock of 50).

One note from further afield: Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittman discovered a nesting pair of **Least Flycatchers** in the Warner Mountains in the extreme northeastern corner of California, the first nesting record for the state.

Send any interesting bird observations to:
Hal Baxter
1821 Highland Oaks Drive
Arcadia, CA 91006
Phone # (818) 355-6300

CALENDAR

CALL THE TAPE!

Before setting out for any field trip, call the Audubon Bird Tape
(213) 874-1318
for special instructions or last-minute changes that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 — Ballona Wetlands. Bob Shanman (545-2867 after 6 p.m.) will lead this morning's walk in this critical area. We'll be looking particularly for shorebird migrants. Take Marina Fwy (90) west to Culver Blvd.; turn left to Pacific Ave., then right to bridge at end. Meet at 8 a.m. ($3 parking fee).

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 — Evening Meeting at 8 p.m. in Plummer Park. UCLA Naturalist **Bob Dickson**, who has produced nature shows for both British and Canadian television, will present two never-before-seen films on the **Wildlife of Thailand**, a rare and colorful look at the birds of Southeast Asia.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 — Malibu Lagoon/ Tapia Park. Meet **Bob Pann** at 8 a.m. inside the Lagoon entrance for this half day trip looking at shorebirds and migrants. Park along PCH north of Malibu Lagoon entrance. Beginners welcome, as always.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 — Whittier Narrows Reg. Park. Join **David White** for his monthly walk through a variety of habitats, looking for returning shorebirds, residents and possible migrants. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center 1000 Durfee Ave., El Monte, near crossing of freeways 60 and 605.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 — Santa Cruz Island Nature Conservancy Preserve. This natural history trip will be led by a Nature Conservancy naturalist familiar with birds. Departure from the Ventura Marina is at 8 a.m. with a 6 p.m. return. You should be in good physical condition—able to move from a skiff to a rocky shore and manage a fairly strenuous 1½ mile hike. Wear good hiking shoes and dress in layers as it is usually quite cold at sea. The island will be warmer and you may wish to swim during the 3½ to 4 hours ashore. In addition to bathing suit or shorts, bring suntan lotion and hat. Take your own food and water. There are no facilities on the island. Island Packers (805-642-1393) will handle reservations and finances. Maximum 35 participants; $28 for Nature Conservancy members, $33 for non-members. Go north on Fwy 101 beyond Oxnard taking the Victoria Ave. exit. Go left under the freeway approximately 1 mile to Olivas Park Dr. and go right; continue through intersection which becomes Spinnaker Dr. to 1867 (follow signs to Channel Island National Park Headquarters.)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 — Deadline for November Western Tanager. Send material to Editor, Dexter Kelly, c/o Audubon House.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 — Antelope Valley. Meet **Fred Heath** at 7:30 a.m. at the LaMont-Odett Overlook of Lake Palmdale (35 min. north of Fwy 5/14 junction), for a day of searching for desert specialties, land migrants and shorebirds. Carpoolers meet at the San Fernando Rd. exit (2nd exit on Fwy 14), where there is a large parking area, at 6:40 a.m., and be prepared to leave by 6:50. In any event, expect to carpool in A.V. Be prepared for probable HOT weather; bring lunch and lots of water.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 — San Diego. Reserve your space for a special day with resident expert **Richard Webster**. We'll start early looking for land birds in the morning and water birds in the afternoon. Maximum participants: 15; $10 per person.*

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1 — Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach. Ed Navojosky will lead his 13th famous annual jaunt up the coast. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking area behind the market, across the street from the Malibu Lagoon entrance. Bring picnic lunch for stop at Big Sycamore.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6 — Santa Barbara. Reserve a fun day with superb birder **Jon Dunn**. We'll start early to view migrants, shorebirds and perhaps even a rarity! Maximum participants: 20; $20 per person.*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20 — Photographic Seminar, Plummer Park. See notice in this issue.

WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 10-11 — Morro Bay. Reserve a special weekend with the marvelous **Kimball Garrett**. We'll view shorebirds and waterfowl, look for Peregrines and late fall and winter vagrants, and do some owling Saturday night. Depending on timing, we may make some birding stops in the San Luis Obispo area enroute home. Maximum participants: 20; $20 per person.*

Some Future Trips:

Sat., 10/13	Placerita Cyn. Park — Jean Brown
Sun., 10/14	Ballona Wetlands — Bob Shanman
Thurs., 10/18	Tapia/Malibu Lagoon — Sandy Wohlgemuth
Sat., 10/20	Santa Cruz Island — Leader TBA
Sun., 10/21	Whittier Narrows — David White
Wed., 11/28	Pt. Mugu — Leader TBA
Sat., 12/1	Carrizo Plains by bus — Leader TBA
Sun., 1/6	Lake Norconian — Pat & Paul Nelson

CARPOOLING: As conservationists, let's try to reduce gas consumption and air pollution whenever possible. In sharing costs, remember that a typical car journey costs 20¢ a mile.

Audubon Bird Reports*

Los Angeles	(213) 874-1318
San Bernardino	(714) 793-5599
Santa Barbara	(805) 964-8240
San Diego	(619) 435-6761

***RESERVATION POLICY:** Priority will be given to those including ALL the following criteria in their trip request. (1) Event desired; (2) Names of people in your party, (3) Phone numbers — (a) usual and (b) evening before event, in case of emergency cancellation, (4) Check to LAAS for exact amount for each event, unless fee not required, (5) Self-addressed stamped envelope for confirmation and associated event information. Send to: Reservations Chairman Ruth Lohr, LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

If there is insufficient response, the event will be cancelled two weeks prior to the scheduled date (4 weeks for pelagics) and you will be so notified and your fee returned. No refunds during these periods unless there is a paid replacement.

If you desire to carpool to an event, Ms. Lohr (usually in office on Tues.) can provide information for you to make contact and possible arrangements.

Shearwater Trips

September 4-6	San Miguel Island & Santa Lucia Escarpment	$125
September 7-10	San Miguel Island & Santa Lucia Escarpment	$125
September 12 (Wednesday)	Monterey Bay Shearwater/tba	$ 25
September 16 (Sunday)	Monterey Seavalley & Ascension Canyon Baldridge/Langham	$ 27
September 23 (Sunday)	Monterey Seavalley & Ascension Canyon Baldridge/Bailey	$ 27
September 26 (Wednesday)	Monterey Bay Shearwater/tba	$ 25
September 29 (Saturday)	Monterey Seavalley Chandik/tba	$ 27
September 29 (Saturday)	Twilight Storm-petrel Journey Baldridge/tba	$ 15
September 30 (Sunday)	Storm-petrel Study Tour Baldridge/tba	$ 27
October 6 (Saturday)	Monterey Bay Chandik/Bailey	$ 27
October 6 (Saturday)	Twilight Storm-petrel Journey Bailey/Baldridge	$ 15

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

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90046

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