



# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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## Plant Communities and Bird Habitats in Southern California

### PART IV: THE SOUTHERN SIERRA NEVADA

by Larry L. Norris

#### Introduction

The Sierra Nevada of California is a 400 mile long fault-block mountain range that contains most of the alpine, subalpine, and coniferous forest habitats for birds in the state. Only the southern tip of the Sierra extends into what birders call Southern California. A look at the map in Garrett and Dunn (referenced in Part I of this series: Tanager-Sept. 1984) clearly shows a blank lobe protruding downward into Southern California. This blank represents the Southern Sierra Nevada and the San Joaquin Valley. Although not treated in Garrett and Dunn as part of Southern California the Southern Sierra has many avian ties with regions further south and, most of the fluctuations in bird populations that occur in Southern California are reflected in the Southern Sierra. Considering the increased interest of Southern California birders in birding this mountain area it was decided to include the Southern Sierra Nevada in this series.

The area generally described as the Southern Sierra includes all of the drainages of the Kings, Kaweah, Tule and Kern Rivers from the crest of the range down to about the 500 foot contour which roughly parallels the emergence of the foothills from the plains of the San Joaquin Valley. The south boundary is somewhat hazy in definition because of the extensive ecotone of Pinyon-Juniper Woodland leading down from the mountains and blending with the Joshua Tree Woodland of the Mojave Desert. Floristically the boundary appears to occur in the Caliente Creek drainage south of Breckenridge Mountain. The south boundary would include the Caliente Creek drainage and the northern drainages of the Piute and Scodie Mountains. The Tehachapi Mountains are not included nor are the southern slopes of the Piute and Scodie Mountains. The eastern slope of the Sierra in Inyo and Kern Counties above the 5000 foot contour can be considered to be in the Southern Sierra.



Photos by Larry Norris

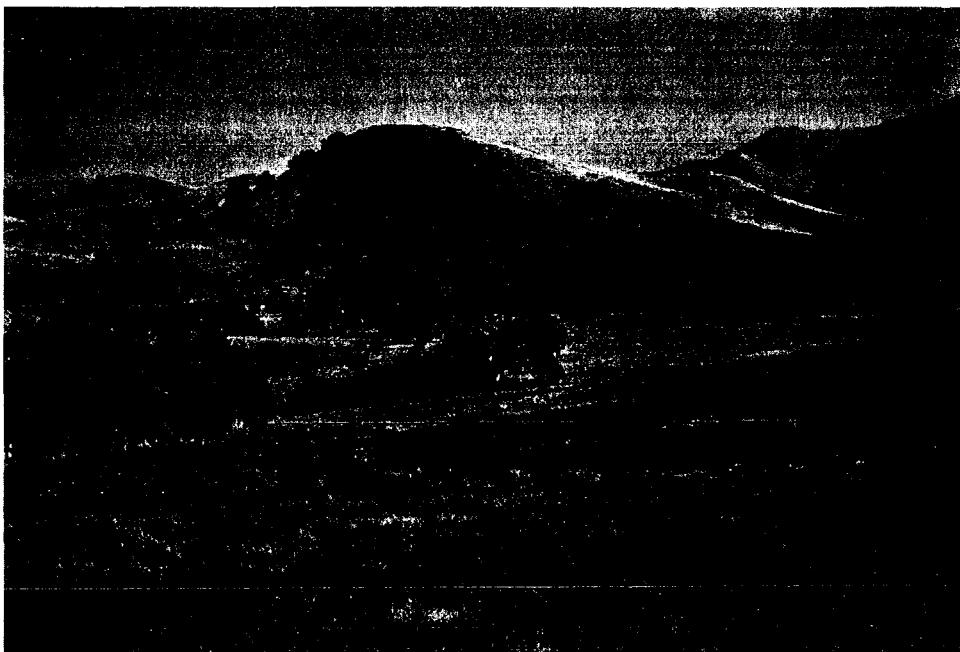
Spotted Owl perched by a Giant Sequoia, Grant Grove, Kings Canyon National Park. This species is resident in sequoia groves in the Mixed Coniferous Forest.

The elevational gradient in the Southern Sierra Nevada is the factor that most influences the distribution of bird species and the many plant communities in which their populations occur. Elevations in the region range from 500 feet near the floor of the San Joaquin Valley to 14,500 feet on the summit of Mount Whitney. Between these elevational extremes exist ten major plant communities and several recognizable variations or associations within them: the sum of which allows for a very interesting avifauna that interacts with elevation, habitat, and season in ways that intrigue ornithologists and ecologists.

These ten plant communities in the Southern Sierra from lowest to highest are: Oak-Savannah, Foothill Woodland, Mixed Coniferous Forest (several variations), Montane Chaparral, Red Fir Forest, Subalpine Forest (three variations), and Alpine (two variations).

The movement of birds through these ten plant communities occurs at different times of the year, at different elevations, and with varying intensities and numbers. By quickly summing up the movements of the major bird groups we can see how this occurs. Waterfowl in the Southern Sierra are almost nonexistent except on middle elevation and subalpine lakes in fall migration (August - October). In spring waterfowl migrate west and east of the high elevations because the lakes are still frozen over. Only three breeding species occur; Mallard, Wood Duck and Common Merganser. Shorebirds follow pretty much the same pattern, most observations occurring along the shores of subalpine and alpine lakes during fall migration (Red-necked Phalarope, Baird's Sandpiper, and

Oak-Savannah in Yokohl Valley, Tulare County. Valley Oaks inhabit the valley bottoms while Blue Oaks are found on the slopes.



Long-billed Curlew have been seen). California Gull, American Coot, and Eared Grebe also occur on these high lakes in summer and fall. Only two species of shorebird breed in the area, Spotted Sandpiper and Killdeer.

Raptors are split into two distinct groups of occurrence: residents that can usually be found in their preferred habitats like Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and Northern Goshawk, and those migrating species usually observed in the high country in autumn, Northern Harrier, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and, occasionally Rough-legged Hawk. Osprey seem to migrate through both spring and fall at low elevations. These three group examples only highlight the major avian yearly movements because they represent only a handful of observations and species when compared to the really noticeable spring migration.

In the Southern Sierra spring migration is the time of the passerines. As the new arrivals reach the foothills in late March and into April the woodlands come alive with bird song and activity. Due to the elevational gradient, birders in the Southern Sierra can enjoy spring well into July by following the birds upslope as the snows of winter melt. The nesting season is prolonged in the Southern Sierra as well, again due to the elevational gradient and the delayed summer at higher elevations. After the nesting season birding would slow down in the mountains except for the curious phenomenon of "upslope drift". Upslope drift occurs when young birds (and often adults) ascend the slopes after fledging. In autumn, birds characteristic of the low elevations are often seen in the subalpine or alpine zones, for instance Say's Phoebe above timberline in Mineral King,

Anna's Hummingbird in Subalpine Forest, Bushtits flitting among bushes the branches of which are still lightly covered by the first snow of late autumn, a Northern Mockingbird in Lodgepole Pine at 8000 feet, and one cool September day above 10,000 feet a Black-throated Gray Warbler learning to sing from a perch in a Lodgepole Pine.

Many bird species in the Southern Sierra are resident. They are either found in their particular habitat year around like Wrentit, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and California Thrasher in the chaparral, or they travel up and down slope with the season; Yellow-rumped Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, and Red-breasted Sapsucker among them. Several races of species that nest in the Southern Sierra are replaced by other races from the north in fall and winter. For example, the *oriantha* race of White-crowned Sparrow nesting in the willows of the Riparian plant community in the subalpine and alpine zones is replaced in fall and winter by the *gambeli* race of the same species, but this race winters in the Foothill Woodland and Oak-Savannah. The same is true for the races of Hermit Thrush. The Hermit Thrushes in the foothills of the Southern Sierra in winter are not of the same race that nests in the Giant Sequoia groves. These wintering races nest far north of the Southern Sierra.

### The Plant Communities

To begin a detailed look at each of the ten major plant communities of the Southern Sierra we will start with the lowest community at the edge of the San Joaquin Valley and work upslope to the alpine zone. Plant community indicator species will be mentioned and bird populations will be noted in reference to the season.

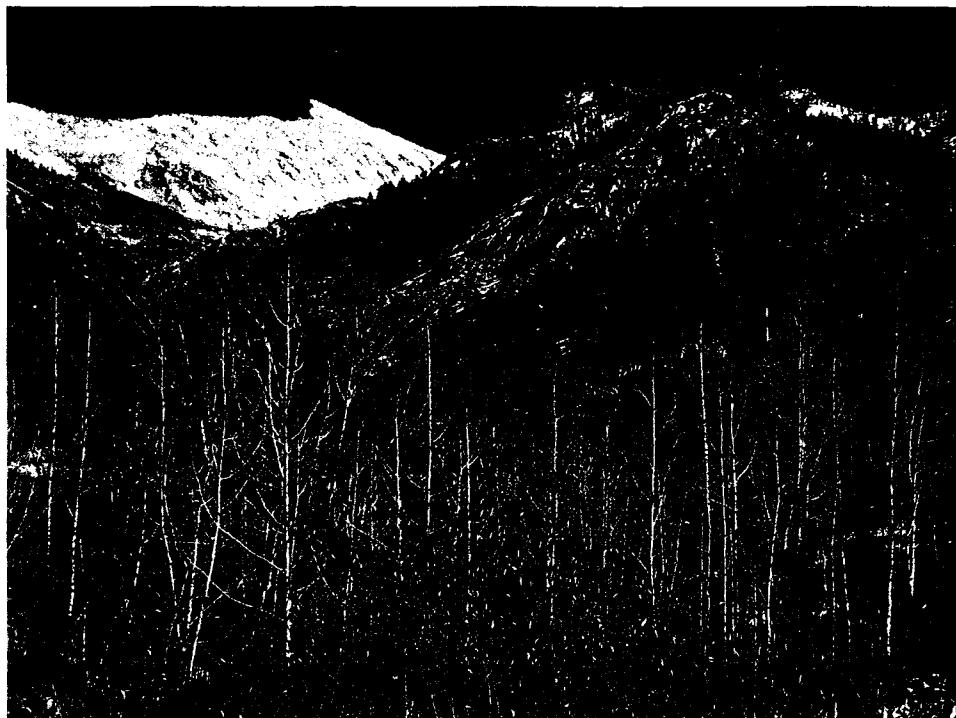
**Oak-Savannah:** This term is often used for a plant community that might really be considered an ecotone (area of transition) between the Valley Grassland plant community (not considered in this article) and the Foothill Woodland plant community of the major river canyons. Oak-Savannah usually occurs between 500 and 2000 feet in elevation. Characteristically the Oak-Savannah consists of large tracts of gently sloping grassland with scattered oaks of three species, Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*), Blue Oak (*Q. douglasii*), and Interior Live Oak (*Q. wislizenii*). Blue Oak often dominates in pure stands, especially in gentle, west and southern facing slopes. Valley Oak in the foothills is usually found on river flats that have a high water table. A mix of Blue Oak and Interior Live Oak occurs on east and north-facing slopes.

Summers are hot with temperatures commonly above 100°F. Summer birding is best down in the early morning starting just before dawn. Spring, fall, and winter are the best time to bird the Oak-Savannah for it is then that migrant or wintering species are

active as they search for food. Hole nesters abound many of which are resident species: Acorn Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Western Bluebird, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Violet-green Swallows also nest in the upper elevations of the Oak-Savannah and in the Foothill Woodland, a fact that is not often mentioned in the literature. Two resident predatory species, the Red-tailed Hawk and Great Horned Owl are found in the low elevation Oak-Savannah as well as in all the plant communities further upslope to the Subalpine Forest. Merlin has been observed in fall migrating south through the Oak-Savannah. In summer there is always a Turkey Vulture or two in sight, and the California Condors that use the Southern Sierra feed in the Oak-Savannah. Western Kingbird is common in the spring and summer. Lark Sparrow and Mourning Dove are resident, and so is Rufous-crowned Sparrow, preferring grassy hillsides with scattered trees, brush and boulders. Lewis' Woodpeckers sometimes cross the range from the east in autumn to spend the winter in the Oak-Savannah.

**Foothill Woodland:** Areas of moderately forested slopes between 2000 and 5500 feet are often lumped into the Foothill Woodland plant community. Actually many plant associations occur within this broad plant community and two other separate plant communities occur in these same elevations. To narrow all this variation down to an understandable level a good rule of thumb is to consider Foothill Woodland as that mesic (moist) woodland that predominates on north and east-facing slopes below 5500 feet, although it is not entirely restricted to them. The west and south-facing slopes are dry and, if soils are poor, usually covered with Chamise or Mixed Chaparral. The upper reaches of Oak-Savannah can be seen in summer and fall as yellow-brown patches of dried grass surrounded by the green of the Foothill Woodland.

Indicator species in the Foothill Woodland are: Interior Live Oak, California Bay-laurel (*Umbellularia californica*), Western Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), and Digger Pine (*Pinus sabiniana*). The Digger Pine is not found in the Kaweah River drainage and found only sparingly in the Kings and Tule River drainages. It is a common component of Foothill Woodland in the Kern River drainage. In the shaded canyons one can find the Interior Live Oak — California Bay-laurel Association. This is an evergreen association that provides cool, moist habitat for song birds. From 4000 to 5500 feet in elevation two other oaks occur in the Foothill Woodland marking its transition to the Mixed Coniferous Forest. These oaks are Canyon Live Oak (*Q. chrysolepis*) on the dry cliff-sides and California Black Oak (*Q. kelloggii*) growing on the slopes occupied by the lowest pines.



Riparian Woodland in the middle elevations in autumn. Mineral King, Sequoia National Park. Sawtooth Peak in background.

A list of resident species from the Foothill Woodland contains many common California birds — Great Horned Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Scrub Jay, Brown Towhee, Hutton's Vireo, Plain Titmouse, Bushtit and Band-tailed Pigeon. Migratory nesting species are plentiful — Ash-throated Flycatcher, Orange-crowned and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Black-headed Grosbeak and Northern Oriole to name a few.

During winter migratory species from the north invade the foothills eagerly exploiting every food source they can find. White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, an occasional Varied Thrush and, of course, American Robin are all examples. Winter also brings its share of high elevation nesters to the lowlands. These species are resident in the Southern Sierra, but cannot be considered resident only in the foothills since they nest elsewhere. Mountain Quail and Ruby-crowned Kinglet are examples as are Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, Yellow-rumped Warbler and an occasional Stellar's Jay or Mountain Chickadee.

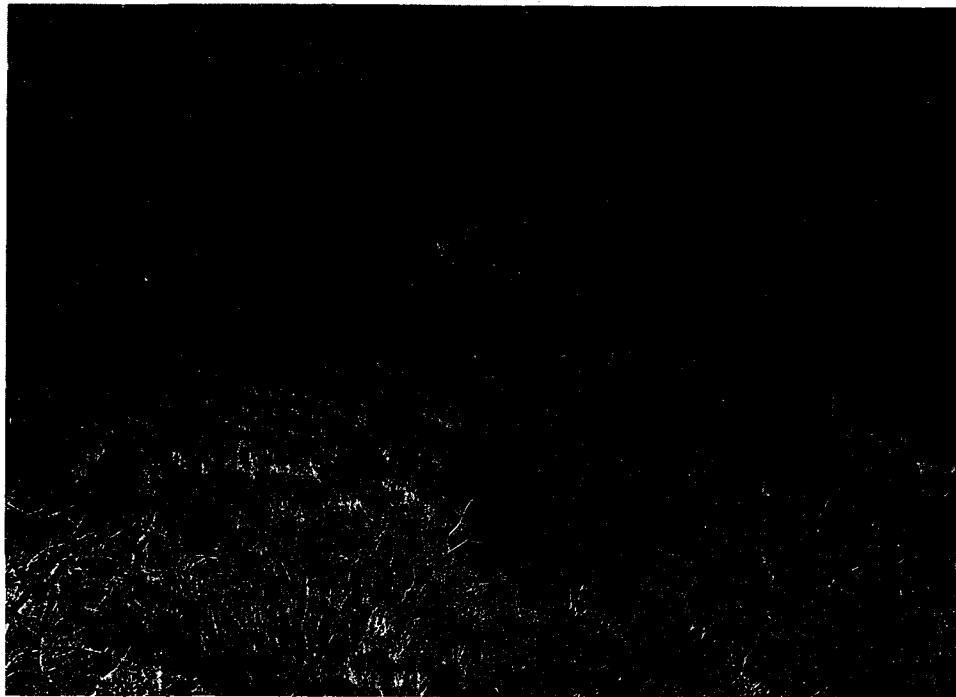
**Riparian Woodland:** In the Southern Sierra Riparian Woodland is a difficult plant community to describe botanically because it ranges from willow covered stream banks in the alpine zone all the way down, through many floristic changes, to the cottonwood and buttonbush lined sloughs of the river distributaries in the San Joaquin Valley. Riparian Woodland in a positional sense: it is woodland that lines the banks of permanent, and, to a lesser extent, intermittent waterways.

The dominant species at low elevations are: White Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), Fremont Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), Bigleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), and Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) with tangles of Wild Rose (*Rosa*), Blackberry (*Rubus*) and California Wild Grape (*Vitis californica*).

The middle elevations see a change in the riparian growth to smaller forms and species of similar genera. For instance White Alder is replaced by Mountain Alder (*Alnus tenuifolia*) and Fremont Cottonwood is replaced by Black Cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and Quaking Aspen (*P. tremuloides*). Creek Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) and California Hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta* var. *californica*) are in abundance.

Finally, in the high country, the Riparian Woodland plant community is reduced to a few crooked Quaking Aspen dominated by several species of willow (*Salix*). In fact willows are a major plant component throughout all elevations of the Riparian Woodland.

This habitat is most productive for birds in the spring and summer when food in the form of flowers, fruits, insects, and other animal prey abounds. Low elevation hole nesters include Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Plain Titmouse, Tree Swallow, and the elusive Wood Duck. Common Mergansers sometimes nest in abandoned woodpecker holes as well. Two species of special concern in California nest in the low elevation Riparian Woodland of the Southern Sierra: Yellow-breasted Chat and Yellow Warbler. Black Phoebe and Canyon Wren are



Pinyon-Juniper Woodland in Chimney Peak area, Kern Plateau, Tulare Co.

residents of low elevation riparian areas with canyon sides or cliffs.

Middle elevation riparian nesters are almost all small songbirds. Warbling Vireo and Swainson's Thrush are often seen in Black Cottonwoods, while Wilson's Warbler, Song and Lincoln Sparrows, and the uncommon Willow Flycatcher are almost always found in willows. Winter Wren and MacGillivray's Warbler skulk in the dense streamside tangles. Several of these species inhabit the riparian area for its "edge effect" with other plant communities, the difference being more food available and more easily exploited from a nearby perch or nesting territory.

High country riparian nesters are few. The mountain race of White-crowned Sparrow is abundant in the willows from the upper middle elevations up to the highest vegetation. Wilson's Warblers are occasionally seen. In the hummucky lakeside meadows Water Pipits forage for insects, their nests are hidden in or near the willows. Spotted Sandpipers nest near the shore.

Fall and winter are slow times in the Riparian Woodland except for the lowest elevations. Wintering species using the Foothill Woodland also forage in the Riparian Woodland. Bewick's Wren is common, as is Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Brown and Rufous-sided Towhees. In migration just about any of the common passerines can show up. The two resident species that are so characteristic of the riparian areas in the Southern Sierra from low elevation to subalpine streams are the Belted Kingfisher and American Dipper.

A sad situation to observe in the Riparian Woodland of the lower and middle elevations in the Sierra is the explosion of Brown-headed Cowbird populations around pack stations and corrals, and their parasitic behavior on song bird nesting attempts. It is a well known fact that the Brown-headed Cowbird has increased in the Sierra over the last thirty years. All of this increase is occurring in developed areas or areas where stock animals are used or kept.

Unfortunately most of these areas are near Riparian Woodland. Cowbird parasitism is common on nesting attempts by Warbling Vireo, Wilson's, Yellow, and Orange-crowned Warblers and other song bird species. In the middle elevations it has been noted that Brown-headed Cowbirds arrive about the time stock animals are brought up for the summer in early July. This timing happens to correspond with the major nesting period of the song birds in the nearby willows and cottonwoods. If the stocker were delayed for two weeks, giving song birds time to hatch their young before Cowbirds arrived the major adverse impact of this species would be greatly minimized. So far neither the Forest Service or National Park Service have seriously considered this possibility.

**Chaparral:** In the Southern Sierra extensive patches of Chamise Chaparral made up entirely of Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), a member of the Rose Family, occur on the hottest and driest west and south-facing slopes. Mixed Chaparral, another form of dense shrub cover, is also found on the

steep, hot slopes of the foothills between 1000 and 4000 feet. Dominant species are: Whiteleaf Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida*), Buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), Chaparral Whitethorn (*C. leucodermis*), Mountain Mohogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), Flower Ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*), Redberry (*Rhamnus crocea*), Whipple's Yucca (*Yucca whipplei*), and Bush Poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*) to name only a few. Montane Chaparral, a similar habitat at higher elevations will be discussed later in this article.

The seasons in the chaparral and in the three preceding plant communities are really just two; a prolonged hot, dry, summer-like season and a shorter, cooler (frost free) wetter winter-like season. Spring and fall fit in as short interludes between the two. For the birder's sake we divide observations into four seasons, but in the foothills of the Sierra it is not necessarily so.

Avian diversity in the Chaparral plant community is low, but numbers of individuals are really up, so the birder should expect to see many of the same species over and over again. This fact is reflected in the results of Audubon Christmas bird Counts that occur in Chaparral areas. Because of the density of this plant community many of the species are ground foragers skulking about being heard more often than being seen. Some of these ground-foraging residents are: California Thrasher, Brown and Rufous-sided Towhees, California Quail and Sage Sparrow. In winter Fox Sparrow and Mountain Quail join their ranks. Winter birders to the Chamise Chaparral are often surprised to hear the single, mellow note of the Mountain Quail, a bird they normally associate with the Mixed Coniferous Forest.

Some resident species are small and can quickly move through the dense brush, again more often heard than seen; Wrentit, Bewick's Wren, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Anna's Hummingbird is the only resident hummer. In spring Lazuli Bunting, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Black-chinned Hummingbird move in to nest while many other birds typical of the middle elevations are moving through. In winter American Robin and Hermit Thrush forage in the Chaparral.

**Pinyon-Juniper Woodland:** On the western slope of the Southern Sierra Pinyon-Juniper Woodland is limited to two areas of major occurrence: one is on the extensive, rolling topography of the southeastern portion of the Kern Plateau, and the other is in the northward flowing drainages of the Sodie and Piute Mountains. Further north two minor disjuncts occur: one is the rim of the South Fork of the Kings River Canyon in the Cedar Grove area of Kings Canyon National Park, and the other is along the Kern River Canyon in Sequoia National Park and southward into Sequoia National Forest. The Pinyon-Juniper Woodland on the Kern Plateau

is a beautiful, arid country having closer affinities with the desert ranges to the east than with the higher and wetter portions of the Sierra to the north. This plant community is also found extensively on the eastern slope of the Southern Sierra.

Visually dominant indicator species in this plant community are: Single-leaved Pinyon (*Pinus monophylla*), California Juniper (*Juniperus californica*), and Mountain Mohogany. In areas that have been burned by wildfire Great Basin Sagebrush (*Artemesia tridentata*) predominates, and in areas of volcanic soil on the Kern Plateau this species of sagebrush is replaced by Low Sagebrush (*A. arbuscula*). The Pinyon-Juniper Woodland has many small stringer meadows with sparse riparian habitat allowing birds to take advantage of the "edge effect", nesting in ecotones between the two habitats and foraging in both for food.

The Pinyon Jay is the bird most associated with this plant community, however, not all birding trips to this area will find them. Pinyon Jay flocks are often large, but can be comprised of only a few birds, too. Often they are heard before they are seen. It is truly a birding pleasure to see a hundred or two hundred of these birds flying slowly over the pinyons calling continuously.

The Pinyon-Juniper Woodland is busiest during spring when migrant species are moving through, and the nesting species are establishing territories. Beside those species likely to nest below the Mixed Coniferous Forest (Black-throated Gray Warbler, Scrub Jay, Rufous-sided Towhee and the like) some interesting hard-to-find birds are represented here. Recently a nest of the plumbeus race of the Solitary Vireo was found in a ravine on the Kern Plateau, a first for the west slope of the Sierra Nevada. This species has been suspected of breeding in the Pinyon-

Male White-headed Woodpecker, Crescent Meadow, Giant Forest, bringing food to nestlings.



Juniper Woodland of the Kern Plateau for at least a decade. Gray Flycatchers also nest in the area. Gray Vireo is suspected to nest here. Broad-tailed Hummingbird has been seen on the Kern Plateau during the nesting season, but no nests have been found. Brewer's Sparrow can be found nesting in the old burn scars that are covered with Great Basin Sagebrush.

A bird uncommon in the Southern Sierra, but seen regularly on the Kern Plateau is the Pygmy Nuthatch. This species is considered to prefer long-needed pines for habitat, but many observations in the Southern Sierra occur in Pinyon-Juniper Woodland. Most Pygmy Nuthatch observations in Kings Canyon are from the pinyons on the canyonsides and rim.

Wintering birds add more diversity to the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, but few birders are out to observe them. Townsend's Solitaires commonly come down from surrounding higher slopes to feed on juniper berries. Cedar Waxwings, Western Bluebirds and American Robins also eat these berries. During heavy winter storms in the high country Clark's Nutcracker, Evening Grosbeak and sometimes Red Crossbill are driven downslope to the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland.

**Mixed Coniferous Forest:** Finally we come to that plant community most commonly considered when the conversation turns to birding the mountains. In the Mixed Coniferous Forest of the Southern Sierra many opportunities exist for the birder because the habitat is well roaded and offers a variety of complex micro-habitats which harbor species that are often difficult to find. The Mixed Coniferous Forest is dominated, obviously, by a mixture of different kinds of conifers, a few of which have been discerned to occur along an elevational gradient. This plant community occurs between 5000 and 8000 feet on the west slope of the Southern Sierra. The lowest, driest reaches are dominated by Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Sugar Pine (*P. lambertiana*), White Fir (*Abies concolor*), Incense Cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) and California Black Oak. Further upslope, in certain places, groves of Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) are encountered. These groves usually have abundant White Fir, a few Sugar Pine, scattered Mountain Dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*), and the Jeffrey Pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) another member of the Yellow Pine group that replaces Ponderosa Pine at higher elevations. At the upper limits of these groves a few Red Fir (*abies magnifica*) may be found.

The understory of Mixed Coniferous Forest can be mostly clear of brush or it can be quite overgrown depending upon the fire history of the area. It usually consists of scattered shrubs like Mountain Whitethorn (*Ceanothus cordulatus*), Chinquapin Oak (*Chrysolepis sempervirens*), and two or three species of Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos spp.*). If it



Oblong holes chiseled in decayed White Firs are sign that Pileated Woodpeckers inhabit this area of Mixed Coniferous Forest.

were not for the overstory of conifers the area of dense brush would be called Montane Chaparral. In Small's "The Birds of California", referenced in Part I of this series, the Mixed Coniferous Forest is treated under the title Montane Forest. The author recommends readers peruse "The Mountains and Mountain Forests" section of Small's work before planning a trip to the Southern Sierra.

Resident species include a number of predatory birds that are usually found in Giant Forest Groves: Northern Goshawk, Spotted Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl and sometimes Northern Pygmy-Owl. Blue Grouse, White-headed, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Purple Finch and Red-breasted Nuthatch are also nesters in these groves and throughout the Mixed Coniferous Forest as well. Migratory nesters include Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Tanager, Solitary Vireo, several species of warblers and the difficult to find Flammulated Owl. It is curious to note that both records of this species in Sequoia National Park are from the Foothill Woodland in summer. In the willow fringe of the forest/meadow edge Warbling Vireo, Lincoln Sparrow and the uncommon Willow Flycatcher nest. Vaux's Swift also nests nearby and forages above these meadow openings in the Mixed Coniferous Forest.

In winter this plant community is quiet. Mountain Chickadees, Stellar's Jays and Golden-crowned Kinglets are heard in the snow hushed forest. Common Ravens and Clark's Nutcrackers (down from the high country) perch at the tops of tall pines on clear winter days. Nesting species that descend the slopes to winter in the low elevations of the Southern Sierra are: Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Fox Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-breasted Sapsucker and Mountain Quail.

## CONTEST WINNERS

The following are the winners of this year's Third Annual Slide Contest held during the January evening meeting.



*First Prize*

**Mike Tiffany**  
—Black Phoebe



*Second Prize*

**Tom Newman**  
—Eastern Meadowlark



*Third Prize*

**Harold Ericsson**  
—Cedar Waxwing

## EDITORIAL

—by Fred Heath



**G**uys, I know you faithful *Tanager* readers won't believe this, but I'm back as your editor. It's even more amazing that the LAAS Board has the courage to put me back as editor, especially since we are so near to the April issue. Of course, I am the most surprised of all. Somehow I was under the mistaken impression that my life had changed somewhat and I would now have more time. As you're no doubt aware from the late date you've received this issue, I'm no better about getting this issue out on a timely basis than my past issues.

Before I go any further, I'd like to thank Dexter Kelly for the job he's done as editor over the last year and a half. I am basically happy with the content and look of the last few issues and will probably not vary much from this format. One thing which I will try is a little experiment with paper and ink colors. If you see or read anything you like or don't like please let me know. As usual, I'm always open to any suggestions including replacing the editor.

I would like to take this opportunity to set one aspect of the recent *Tanager* straight: the numbering. Volume numbers change with each September's issue which is *Number 1*. The 1984-85 volume is *Volume 51*. Unfortunately the volume number got pushed to 52 by accident with the November issue and has been carried through the January-February issue. I've set it back to the correct *Volume 51* with this issue. In addition both the November and December issues were called *Number 3*. December should have been numbered 4 and the January-February issue was correctly numbered 5, although the volume number had not been correct.

I very much like the series *Plant Communities and Bird Habitats in Southern California* which was conceived of and started by Larry Norris. We're fortunate to have another segment of this series by Larry in this current issue. By the way, the segment

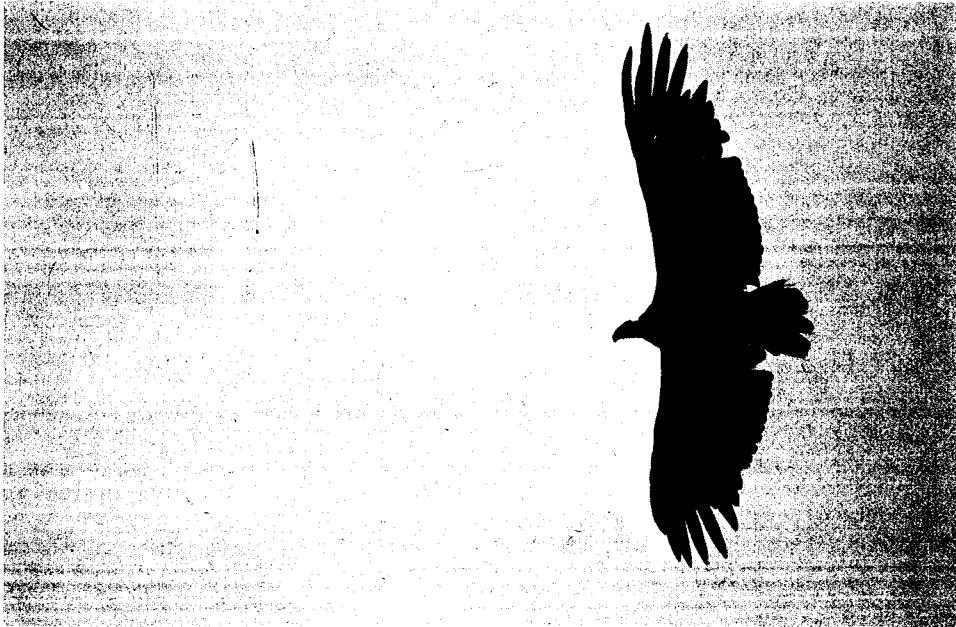
in the last issue by Paul Lehman was subtitled *Part II: The Open Ocean*. It was actually *Part III* of the series. Hopefully we will have a few more articles to round out this series. I have been promised a piece on the riparian habitat and would welcome others.

Another area in which I'd like to see articles is local breeding birds. The Southern California Breeding Bird Atlas Project is not getting off to a great start this year except in Orange County. We hope to have the full support of LAAS in the near future to kick off this project at least in LA County. Thus any articles which support this endeavor will be joyfully accepted.

Please address any articles, drawings, photos, praise or even criticism directly to me, Fred Heath, P.O. Box 5036, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

### BALLONA DATA NEEDED

The National Audubon is embarking on the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project. As part of this project, data on bird sightings in the area are urgently needed. Any sighting for which you have at least month and year information should be sent to Bob Shanman c/o LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046. Any quantitative information would also be appreciated.



### Bookstore Update

Since publication of the November 1984 catalogue, the bookstore has received in stock the following items:

BIRDS OF THE YOSEMITE SIERRA, Gaines (4 copies, only) .....	6.95
A BIRD-FINDING GUIDE TO CANADA, Finley, ed. .....	18.95
NEW COLOUR GUIDE TO HONG KONG BIRDS, 1983, Viney & Phillipps .....	13.95
A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN & EUROPE, 1983, Peterson .....	17.95
BIRDS OF PANAMA, VOL. 4, Wetmore .....	29.95
SEABIRDS OF EASTERN NO. PACIFIC & ARCTIC WATERS, Haley...	39.95
A DICHOTOMOUS KEY TO SHOREBIRDS OF NO. AMERICA, Mellon .....	2.95
THE JOY OF BIRDING, Bernstein .....	8.95
WINGS NO. AMERICAN FIELD LIST (new A.O.U. classifications)...	1.00
THE BIRD YEAR — A BOOK FOR BIRDERS, Dunn & Baldridge .....	5.95
HUMMINGBIRDS: THEIR LIFE & BEHAVIOR, Tyrrell & Tyrrell .....	35.00

We shall be happy to ship your copies if you are unable to visit us in person.

# Conservation Conversation



by Sandy Wohlgemuth

## Good News at Sepulveda

**P**romises, promises! A drawing, a blueprint, and "an artist's conception" are promises of things to come. If it's for something we dearly want, we may get excited and carried away with delicious anticipation. At the same time there may be a nagging feeling, born of past disappointments, that warns us not to get *too* excited. ("it's only on paper" . . . "many a slip" . . . "where's the money coming from?" . . .)

Tanager readers with long memories (Jan.-Feb. '82 issue) may recall our discussion of the plan for the Sepulveda Wildlife Reserve in the flood control basin in Van Nuys. Well, great things are really beginning to happen. The first substantial part of the General Development Plan has been under way for weeks: a freshwater marsh where none existed before. On the southern portion of the Reserve (between Burbank Blvd. and the Los Angeles River) a shallow seven-acre depression has been scooped out of the flatland and, when it is available, a foot of water will fill it. With the passage of time and the appearance of cattails, tules and other water-loving plants a thriving wetland habitat will be created. Just north of the marsh, a three-acre South Pond will be built. The Army Corps of Engineers, which has conceived the

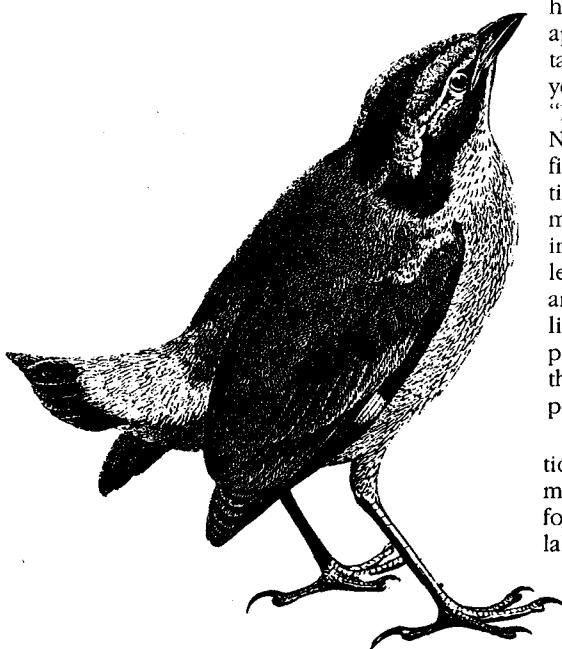
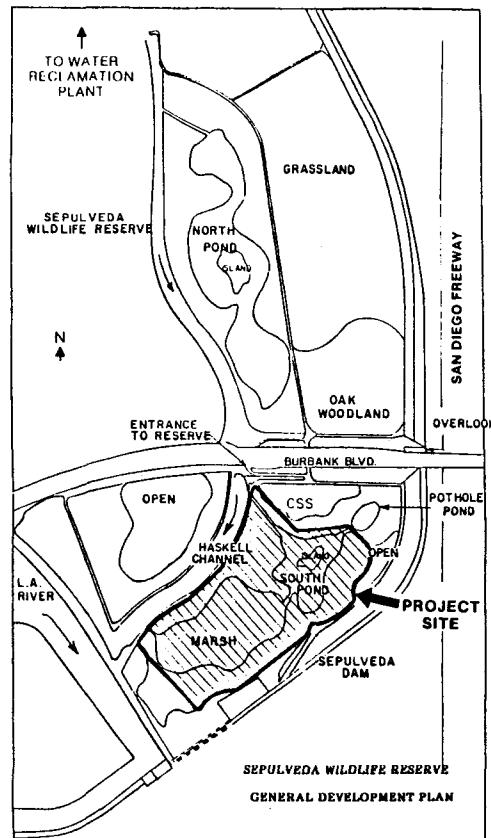
plan and is doing all the work, has already planted hundreds of shrubs and trees close to the marsh and pond. In years to come these will not only provide food and protection for birds and animals, they will make a rank weedy field into a green refuge. An island in the pond will provide a sanctuary for long-legged waders and puddle ducks that now appear occasionally in the channelized river and the few small golf course ponds. Yes, there are a handful of Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets and Snowies around. Furtive Black-crowned Night herons appear now and then. An American Bittern was flushed from Haskell Channel (see map) on New Year's day while heavy traffic whizzed close by on Burbank Blvd. Probably the same bird was seen two weeks later in the small "Pothole Pond" where it flew into the top of the brown cattails, bill pointing to the sky, as it performed its famous disappearing act. The marsh and the pond will attract migrating and wintering shorebirds that have rather slim pickings at present in the basin.

The potential for a Wildlife Bonanza is there in Sepulveda. The river — however trash-filled — is there. The Pacific Flyway passes overhead. Golf courses, ball fields, model airplanes notwithstanding, the basin is still some 2500 acres of more or less open space. If the Corps can successfully build habitats — wet or dry — the birds will appear. Many of us remember the few spectacular years of the mid-70s. After a very wet year, clay was dug out of the area labeled "North Pond" to reinforce the weakened Van Norman reservoir. Rain and irrigation run-off filled the excavation with water and in no time vegetation surrounded it, creating a marvelous wetland habitat. The birds poured in: stilts and avocets, Bobolinks, Palm Warblers and Sage Sparrows, peeps of all kinds and ducks in great variety. Birders flocked like blackbirds. The excellent goals and plans of the Corps, we hope, will re-create this ephemeral phenomenon and make it a permanent paradise for birds and birders.

As this is written, the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Commission has recommended that the city approve an application for a \$495,000 state grant to build an 11-acre lake in this very area (North Pond on the

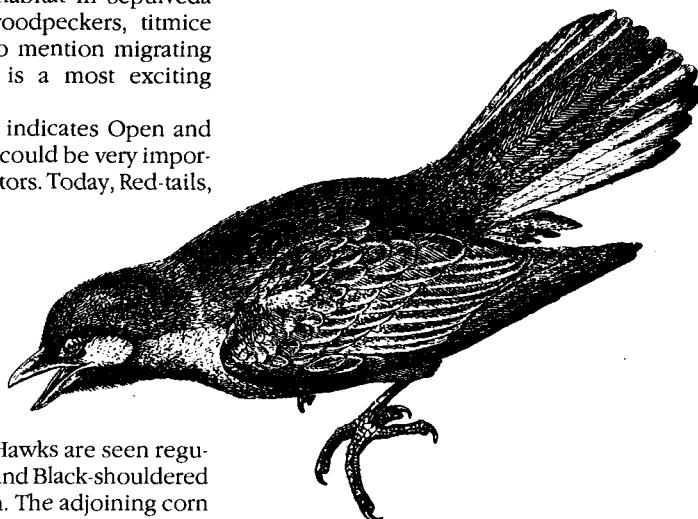
map.) The money would come from the \$85-million bond issue passed by the voters last June to acquire habitat for wildlife. The Corps is already drawing plans for this lake and the adjoining Grassland and will be the major factor in the operation and maintenance of the entire northern portion of the Wildlife Reserve. The state Wildlife Conservation Board will make the decision if the city applies for the grant and it is felt that it has a good chance of going through. We can't think of a better way to spend our money.

The Corps has been wonderfully innovative. On the south side of Burbank Blvd. (in the area labeled "CSS") it has experimented with a coastal sage scrub habitat. Planted only two or three years ago, it is quite impressive. Many species are thriving, including sumac, sagebrush, buckwheat and black, white and purple sage. On the north side of Burbank an oak woodland is already under construction. Earth fill from the marsh and the south pond is being trucked to the north to form a small hill that will add interest to the woodland. The woodland will extend for some distance to the Grassland on the north and will include the majestic Valley Oak, a tree that is becoming scarce in southern California. Unlike the more familiar Coast Live Oak, the Valley Oak is deciduous with "real oak" leaves, lobed like the classic eastern oaks. An understory of wild rose, gooseberry and currant will round out the woodland. The



emergence of a new habitat in Sepulveda that might support woodpeckers, titmice and nuthatches (not to mention migrating warblers and vireos) is a most exciting prospect.

A glance at the map indicates Open and Grassland areas. These could be very important in the future for raptors. Today, Red-tails,



Kestrels and Cooper's Hawks are seen regularly; Northern Harriers and Black-shouldered Kites are fairly common. The adjoining corn fields and those in other parts of the basin, when plowed, provide an excellent raptor habitat. Old times recall foraging Short-eared Owls. But agriculture is on the way out at Sepulveda and eventually the Wildlife Reserve may offer the only remaining hunting ground for these dramatic birds. The grassland will be planted in native bunch-grass, once widespread in the region, now very rare. This will provide fine cover for rabbits, mice, ground squirrels and snakes — top-drawer raptor fare. The grassland should be home for Horned Larks, pipits, Meadowlarks and perhaps an unusual sparrow or two. And let's not forget the remarkable influx of Mountain Bluebirds this past December. Mountain Bluebirds today, Mountain Plovers tomorrow?

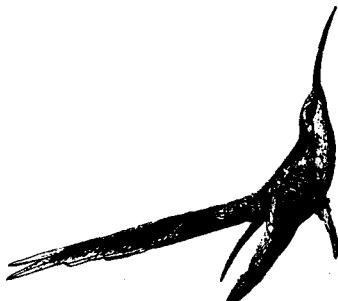
The corn fields also help support hundreds of wintering Canada Geese. These geese are a rare phenomenon for a big city. Over 2000 of them arrive in the valley in November, feeding at Sepulveda, Pierce College and Chatsworth reservoir. Most seem to spend the night in Encino reservoir. It is a spine-tingling experience to see them cross the valley after dawn in skeins of Vs of a hundred birds, their calls the very voice of wildness. Perhaps special plantings of food crops could be made in a Sepulveda enclave to keep these winter guests returning each year.

No mention has been made of the source of that essential ingredient: water. The new reclamation plant in the northeast corner of the basin will put out 40 million gallons a day at full capacity and will serve the parks, golf courses and lakes in the area. Haskell Channel will become a permanent stream with an improved riparian growth. Water will flow from the channel to South Pond, then to the marsh and finally back to the channel and the river. Continuous circulation is expected to prevent eutrophication (over-growth of algae that depletes oxygen in the water) and botulism, a deadly disease of aquatic birds.

### ***A Gentle Reminder***

Those old, used, but still adequate binoculars hiding away in your closet will be just the thing for a school kid when the Topanga-Las Virgenes Resource Conservation District (a state agency) begins its study program for 4600 fourth-through-sixth graders on wetlands and estuaries and the plants and animals there. This is a great way to develop an interest in the natural world and how to conserve it at a crucial age. You can help out with binoculars or even microscopes. Bring them to Audubon House or call Sandy or Marge Wohlgemuth at 818-344-8531. *Thank you.* Note that your optical donations are tax deductible.

If the generous person who brought the like new Bushnell microscope into Audubon House will call Sandy Wohlgemuth, a letter of appreciation will be sent to you.



Indeed, there is good news at Sepulveda. The old Master Plan map for the basin goes back to 1969 when the "Wildlife Refuge" designation seemed an afterthought, tucked away in the corner and forgotten. Today we know that those 16-year old promises were not empty. Thanks to the good will, the intelligent planning and the enthusiasm of the Corps of Engineers the blueprint is coming to life. If all goes well, the next few years should see the creation of a rich and fruitful living space for wildlife. In a time of rampant development, of environmental degradation and the accelerating extinction of species, this is the kind of effort that lifts the spirit and says there is hope.



### ***Renew Your Membership Through LAAS***

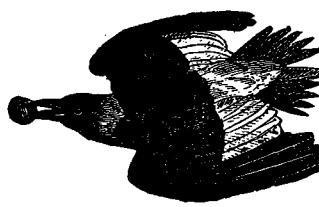
When you receive your annual renewal notice from National Audubon, we strongly urge that you complete the form and send it along with your dues check to Audubon House rather than directly to National Audubon. National has been having difficulties with the data processing firm handling membership. This has led to many errors in chapter records across the country, including ours. It has also resulted in some of our members missing issues of the *WESTERN TANAGER*. By sending your renewal directly to us, many of the problems should be avoided.

Before forwarding your renewal to National, we will photocopy your form and check, and make sure that our records are current. By renewing through L.A. Audubon you will be sure not to miss any issues of the *TANAGER*. We will also be able to confirm that National has placed you in the correct membership category.

We care about your membership, and are willing to make this extra effort to serve you better.

# Birds of the Season

by Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett



Nineteen-eighty-four bowed out in a flurry of Christmas Bird Counts which is the frantic standard we have now set for year's end. To many birders the final weeks of 1984 and the first ones of 1985 can be summed up in one four-letter word: GULL. Our figuring arrives at perhaps nineteen species of gulls recorded in the state of California over this period, with two individuals in particular standing out from the crowd. On his Salton Sea (South) Christmas Count, Jon Dunn turned up an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** near Red Hill Marina. The bird cooperated with most (but not all) birders who looked for it until just after the first of the year. This winter adult could be told from the nearby adult **Yellow-footed Gulls** by its smaller size, much slimmer bill, and the presence of dusky streaking on the head (typical of non-breeding Lesser Black-backed adults). The only previous California record for this species was of an adult near Monterey on 14 January 1978. Adding additional spice to the Red Hill gull population was a first-winter **Glaucoous Gull** (not present after the Christmas Count), as well as **Mew, Thayer's and Glaucoous-winged Gulls** (all scarce this far inland). This area is now a reliable place to find and study Yellow-footed Gulls in winter as well as in summer.

The OTHER gull of the period was an adult **Iceland Gull** at Bodega Bay in Sonoma County. The bird was discovered during the Christmas Count period but not widely seen until mid-January; as of this writing it had not been seen since 18 January. Birders who have immersed themselves in the complexities of the identification of the "large, pink-footed gull" will be aware that the identity of the bird as an Iceland Gull must remain tentative until a complete set of carefully documented characters can be analyzed by North American and European "experts". An additional complication involves the state of flux of the taxonomy of the "Iceland/Kumlien's/Thayer's Gull complex. Currently "Iceland Gull", as the species is now constituted, is unrecorded in California.

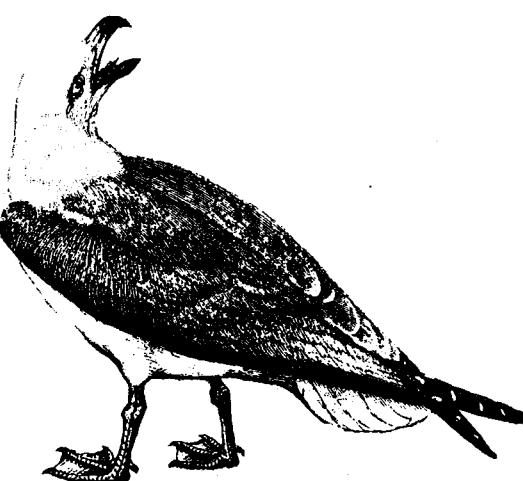
The roster of sightings below includes many records from the numerous Christmas Bird Counts conducted around southern California. Once again leading the field was Paul Lehman's well-organized Santa Barbara count, which recorded 210 species on 29 December.

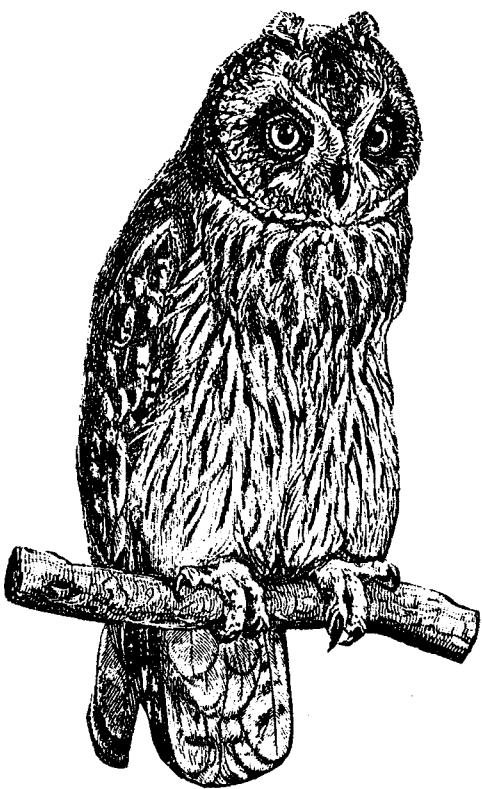
Three **Red-necked Grebes** at the Goleta Pier on 1 December (Arnold Small and class) were among the few reported locally. Twenty-five **Horned Grebes** on Lake Perris (Brian Keelan, 13 January) was an impressive inland number. An immature **Tundra Swan** was on a pond along Kimball Road in Chino on 8 December (Milt Blatt), while single **Snow** and **Ross' Geese** were at the Santa Fe Dam on 6 December (Zus Haagen-smit). **Eurasian Wigeon** reports included one through the period at the Brookside Golf Course near Pasadena and two on 13 January at the San Jacinto Sewer Ponds (Jim and Ellen Strauss et al). Up to 15 **Greater Scaup** were on Lake Perris on 13 January. The Lake Perris **Tufted Duck** from last winter has presumably returned, as a bird has been present there through January. Quite unusual was a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Irvine Park after 8 December (Jerry Tolman et al). **Oldsquaws** were in the Cerritos Channel, Long Beach, after early December (Dennis Minsky), and off the Balboa Pier on 17 December (Loren Hays). Immature male **Harlequin Ducks**, quite rare this far south, were along the Cerritos Channel 16 December to at least mid-January (Charlie Collins) and at the north end of the Bolsa Chica preserve after 28 December (Sylvia Ranney et al). Small numbers of **Black Scoters** were along the Malibu coast through December and a female was at Playa del Rey after 30 December. **Hooded Mergansers** were reported from scattered

localities, e.g. three females on a pond near Turtle Rock Nature Center after 28 November (Doug Willick), a pair on a pond in Tujunga Wash on 13 January (Warren Peterson), and a single bird at Fairmont Park, Riverside on 15 January.

This winter has seen a better than average flight of **Rough-legged Hawks** into southern California. Close to home one was near Calabasas on the Malibu Christmas Count (Jean Brandt, 16 December), and one has been present at the south end of the Bolsa Chica preserve since 28 December (Steve Ganley). Up to five (including a dark morph) were noted on the L.A.S. field trip to the Carrizo Plain on 1 December, along with six **Ferruginous Hawks** and six **Golden Eagles**. An adult **Bald Eagle** was noted over Davis Road, Lakeview, on 13 January (Ellen Strauss et al); the Big Bear Valley Bald Eagle population peaked at thirty birds in December, though numbers there diminished as the lakes remained frozen through January. **Peregrine Falcons** continued to be reported in and near Los Angeles: downtown, the Wilshire corridor, Bolsa Chica (Jerry Johnson, 13 January) and Pt. Mugu (Caroline Adams et al, 1 January). **Merlins** were widely reported. Up to 250 **Sandhill Cranes** were south of Brawley from Thanksgiving weekend (Bob Pann) through mid-January (Henry Childs). The L.A.S. trip to Carrizo Plain only recorded some 50 cranes, although larger numbers have been seen at that locality this winter. A few lucky observers (Ed Navojosky et al) spotted a **Black Rail** at Upper Newport Bay during the high tides of 7 January. **Mountain Plovers** were widely seen: Antelope Valley, south end of the Salton Sea, Lakeview, Oxnard Plain, Carrizo Plain, and Harper Dry Lake. The only unusual shorebird reported during the period was a **Ruff** through December and January at the end of Avenue F in Chula Vista. A very late **Parasitic Jaeger** was present into December at the north end of the Salton Sea.

In addition to the gulls mentioned at the beginning of the column, we should note the presence of **Franklin's Gulls** at the North end of the Salton Sea through November and at the Lake Forest Sewage Plant north of Mission Viejo 24 November to 16 December (Doug Willick). The status of **Black Skimmer** on the southern California coast has certainly undergone a dramatic change over the last decade. While the coastal resident population is still restricted to the south end of San Diego Bay, occurrences farther north along the coast are more and more frequent. Small numbers at Bolsa Chica through the fall built up to an amazing total of at least 24 birds on 8 January; a few were also present at Pt. Mugu and the Santa Clara River estuary. Alcids were in generally low numbers off the coast, although the Orange County Coastal count on 30 December did record both **Xantus'** and **Ancient Murres**.





**Short-eared Owls** are quite local in southern California, thus a total of 31 at Harper Dry Lake, northwest of Barstow, on 17 November was quite impressive (Pomona Valley Audubon). For the second consecutive winter, flocks of **Vaux's Swifts** were widely reported in the Los Angeles area. Up to 20 were around Legg Lake and Whittier Narrows on 8 December (John Parameter et al); up to 40 were over Echo Park Lake on 30 December and 3 January; and three were at Pt. Vincente, Palos Verdes, on 24 December (Glen Perrigo).

Continuing an "invasion" of sorts, **Lewis' Woodpeckers** were present in the lowlands at La Jolla Valley, Lake Sherwood, Malibu Canyon, Topanga State Park, Arroyo Seco, and in Orange County. **Williamson's Sapsuckers** were noted below their normal altitudinal range in Valyermo (Beatrice Smith, 1 December) and in Hillcrest Park, Fullerton (Doug Willick, 23 December into January).

The celebrated **Thick-billed Kingbirds** of Claremont and Irvine Ranch were still present into January, as was the Montecito **Greater Pewee** which was first discovered on 10 November (Jon Dunn). A second Greater Pewee was in Presidio Park, San Diego through the period. A male and female **Vermilion Flycatcher** were still present at Covington Park, Morongo Valley on 24 November (Bob Pann), and an immature male and female were at Prado Park near Corona on 8 December (Milt Blatt). A **Gray Flycatcher** was present through the winter at the L.A. Arboretum in Arcadia (Barbara Cohen), and another was north of Irvine Park in Orange

County on 9 December (Doug Willick). Both **Northern Rough-winged** and **Barn Swallows** were present at San Joaquin Marsh, Irvine, after late December (Doug Willick).

Quite far south on the coast was a **Winter Wren** on the U.C. Irvine campus after 25 December (Doug Willick). A **Bendire's Thrasher** remained at Lake Perris through the period (Bob McKernan et al). In December and January **Mountain Bluebirds** continued to be reported from a variety of coastal lowland localities where the species is usually rare (e.g. Sepulveda Basin in the San Fernando Valley). Isolated reports of single **Bohemian Waxwings** came from the Panamint Valley (Harold Ericksson, 5 December) and Arcadia (Barbara Cohen, 22 December).

The most unusual warblers of the early winter were a **Worm-eating Warbler** at Nojoqui Falls Park near Santa Barbara (Olga Clarke et al, 1 December) and a **Pine Warbler** in San Diego after mid-January. Single **Tennessee Warblers** were in Niland (Salton Sea South count, 18 December), at Long Beach Recreation Park (Wanda Conway, 22 December), and on the U.C. Irvine Campus (Doug Willick, 5 January). A **Lucy's Warbler** was at Dana Point on 15 December (Wayne Gochenaur) and a **Virginia's Warbler** was in Hope Ranch, Santa Barbara after 29 December (Kimball Garrett). The **Palm Warbler** at the mouth of Zuma Creek was still present on 19 January (Kimball Garrett). **American Redstarts** were at Malibu Lagoon after 2 December (Art and Janet Cupples) and at Peck Park (Don Sterba), with at least three additional birds in Orange County.

A female **Hepatic Tanager** has been present at the Turtle Rock Nature Center since 17 December (Doug Willick), while a male **Summer Tanager** has been at Long Beach Recreation Park through the period. Male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** visited yards in Hollywood (Jean Snodgrass, after 17 December) and La Canada (Virginia Alfeldt, 29 December). At least five **McCown's Longspurs** were in the fields off Davis Road near Lakeview after mid-December (Bob McKernan et al). An adult male **Scott's Oriole** was in the foothills north of Claremont on 11 December (Jean Brehany),

March birding will center around the search for early spring migrants, but observers should not forget that March is the peak of the nesting season for a great many of our resident species — a good time to get into "atlassing" form in anticipation of future Breeding Bird Atlas efforts!

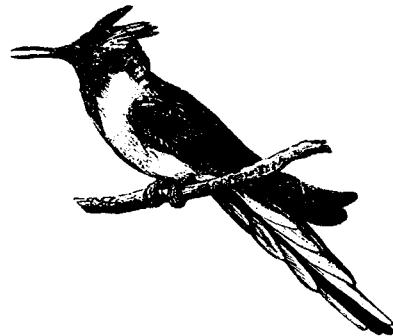
Send any interesting bird observations to:

**Hal Baxter**  
**1821 Highland Oaks Drive**  
**Arcadia, CA 91006**  
**Phone # (818) 355-6300**

## Grasshopper Sparrow Status in Southern California

Information on the past and present status of the Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) as a breeding species in Southern California (south of Monterey-Inyo counties) is needed, for a preliminary study on the current population status and possible decline of this species in recent years. Please include the following information:

1) exact location of breeding birds, 2) date of observation, 3) number of birds 4) evidence of breeding, 5) current status of site, if known, 6) habitat type, if known. All contributors will be gratefully acknowledged. Robert L. McKernan, Section of Ornithology, Los Angeles Natural History Museum, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007



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

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# 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.

## FIELD TRIPS

**SATURDAY, MARCH 9** — Join **Bob Shanman** (545-2867 after 6 p.m.) at **8 a.m.** for his monthly walk in the **Ballona Wetlands**. See a wide variety of shorebirds, some raptors, etc. Take Marina Fwy 90 west to Culver Blvd., turn left to Pacific Ave., then right to footbridge at end. \$3 parking

**SATURDAY, MARCH 16** — **David White** will lead a morning walk at the **Whittier Narrows Regional Park** looking for a wide variety of both land and water birds. Meet at **8 a.m.** at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave., So. El Monte, near crossing of freeways 60 and 605.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 17** — **Whale watch** while lunching on a bluff with the National Park Service at **Leo Carrillo State Beach**, Lifeguard Station 3 at **noon**. Naturalist **Paula Rooney** will meet there and take the group **tidepooling** from 1-2:30 pm. Bring a lunch; Be sure to wear rubber-soled shoes (sneakers fine), and at least a wind-breaker as the day may be cool. 14 miles west of Malibu on Hwy. 1. (\$3 parking fee)

**TUESDAY, MARCH 19** — **L.A. State & County Arboretum**. **Barbara Cohen** will lead a morning walk through varied habitat looking for quail, owls, herons, raptors and early migrants. Meet at **8 a.m.** in front of the gatehouse in the parking lot. Admission is free on this 3rd Tuesday of the month. On Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, Just south of Fwy. 210, on the west side of the street.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 23** — Join Birder **Bruce Henderson** and Biologist **Tom Keeney** on our first trip to the **East San Mateo Cyn.** See residents and migrants in four habitats (coastal sage, oak woodland, agricultural fields and fresh water ponds). Bring a picnic lunch and meet at **7:30 a.m.** in the San Bernardino County Museum (round building) parking lot, Redlands, just off Fwy. 10 at the California Avenue exit.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 30** — Meet **Marge Pamias** at the **El Dorado Nature Center** at **8 a.m.** for a morning walk through riparian and coastal oak looking for migrants and resident birds. Fee: \$2 per vehicle. Just west of Fwy. 605, south side of Spring St.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 31** — Join **Mark Kincheloe** at **8 a.m.** at the **South Coast Botanical Gardens**. Fee: \$1.50 per person. We'll look for Red-breasted and Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers, Red-breasted Nuthatches and early migrants. There's a possibility of our exclusive entrance to bird the **Rolling Hills Dump** in the afternoon. Bring a picnic lunch or quick food outlets nearby. 26300 Crenshaw, Palos Verdes.

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

**SATURDAY APRIL 6** — **Carol Smith** will lead us through the little used **Limekiln Creek Park** in search of the wide variety of residents and possible migrants. Bring lunch for possible afternoon water-birding in nearby area. Exit Simi Fwy. 118 at Tampa; go north short distance to Rinaldi and turn west to end of street. Meet at **9 a.m.**

## Future Trips

Sat. April 13 — Ballona Wetlands — Bob Shanman  
Sun. April 14 — Antelope Valley — Fred Heath  
Sat. April 20 — Whittier narrows — David White  
Sat. April 20 — Banning Cyn. & San Gorgonio Creek — Bruce Henderson & Tom Keeney  
Sun. April 21 — Malibu Creek State Park — Wayne & Judy Moore  
Sat. May 4 — O'Melveny Park — Harold Bond  
Sun. May 5 — Topanga State Park — Gerry Haigh

## RESERVATION TRIPS

**WEEKEND, APRIL 13-14** — Travel in comfort with leader **David Koepel** on a tour bus (reclining seats and restroom) to see the displaying **Sage Grouse** in the **Crowley Lake** area east of the Sierras. Will also look for Blue Grouse, Black-billed Magpie, Red Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak, Clark's Nutcracker; etc. \$75 fee includes one night lodging, double occupancy; \$15 additional for single room. Please note on your reservation whether you would still be interested in going by car should we either not get the minimum 30 participants or if road conditions would prevent bus access to the area. (A car trip would probably require 2 nights lodging and 800 miles of driving; fee \$25 ea.)

**SATURDAY, APRIL 27** — Spend a special spring migration day in the **Coachella Valley Area** with **Robert McKernan**. A unique opportunity to see large numbers of shorebirds in breeding plumage and a good variety of land migrants. \$10 per person; maximum 15.

**WEEKEND, MAY 18-19** — Visit the **Lanfair Valley Area** (near Needles), one of the most interesting and least explored areas in so. Cal. with **Brian Keelan**. This remote high desert will feature breeding Beldire's Thrasher; other possibilities are: Gray Vireo, Scott's and Hooded Orioles, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Poorwill, Gilded Flicker and other Arizona specialties. Plants, mammals and reptiles will also be emphasized. \$30 per person; maximum 15.

**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.

## PELAGIC TRIPS

**SUNDAY, MARCH 17:** *Alcid and Shearwater Trip, Santa Barbara Island and out to sea.* Depart 6 a.m., return 6 p.m. Leaders: **Bruce Broadbooks** and **Herb Clarke**. Price: \$24 per person.

**SATURDAY, MAY 11:** *Puffin and Shearwater Trip, Santa Barbara Island and out to sea.* Depart 6 a.m., return 6 p.m. Leaders: **Kimball Garrett** and **Richard Webster**. Price: \$24 per person.

*Expected Species on Spring Trips:* Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, Black Storm Petrels, Pomarine Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Arctic Tern, Xantus Murrelet, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Cassin's and Rhinocerous Auklets.

*Other Possibilities and Rarities seen on Previous Trips:* Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Flesh-footed, Black-vented and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Brown Booby, Red-necked Phalarope, South Polar Skua, Horned and Tufted Puffins.

## RESERVATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE:

Reservations will be accepted ONLY if ALL the following information is supplied: (1) Trip desired; (2) Names of people in your party; (3) Phone numbers-(a) usual and (b) evening before event, in case of emergency cancellation; (4) Separate check (no cash please) to LAAS for exact amount for each trip; (5) Self-addressed stamped envelope for confirmation and associated trip information. Send to: Reservations Chairman Ruth Lohr, LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two weeks prior to the scheduled date (4 weeks for pelagics) and you will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation during that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement.

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

## EVENING MEETINGS

**TUESDAY, MARCH 12 — 8 p.m. Plummer Park** — **Richard Webster** will present a slide illustrated talk on the **Birds of Eastern Australia**.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 9 — Esther Tyrrell** will give a slide illustrated talk on **Hummingbirds of North America**. Esther co-authored the book *Hummingbirds: Their Life and Behavior* with her husband Robert Tyrrell. This book will be available at the Audubon Book Store for sale and autographs by the authors.

**TUESDAY, MAY 14 —** Join **Larry Naylor** for a slide illustrated program on the **Chaco of South America**, the vast and unique birding area of Argentina and Paraguay.

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