WESTERN TANAGER

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The California Condor on the Brink

by Harrison Truitt Starr

Anyone writing about the California Condor for the last forty years has been faced with one outstanding fact — the tragic and seemingly inevitable decline of this unique species. Indeed, the most pessimistic authors wrote that extinction was a certainty, but surprisingly from 1981 to 1984 the number of Condors in California increased dramatically.

This remarkable turnaround was made possible by The Condor Recovery Program, begun in 1979 as a joint effort of The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Audubon, The California Department of Fish and Game, The U.S. Forest Service and The Bureau of Land Management. The field work was carried out from The Condor Research Center, now in Ventura, by a team of field biologists from Fish and Wildlife, Audubon and California Fish and Game, aided by many volunteers and supporting organizations.

Their hands-on approach, modeled on a previously successful Fish and Wildlife program with the Andean Condor, a close cousin to our bird, had the immediate priority of building a captive flock whose purpose would be the augment the wild one, thereby preventing its precipitous decline. They also wanted to take the first really accurate census, increase habitat protection and, very important, determine as soon as possible the causes of the unnatural mortality rate plaguing the species.

Unfortunately, the death of a Condor chick in the spring of 1980, due to mishandling by an inexperienced field assistant, brought the fledgling program to a state of near paralysis. It also revived previously existing divisions within the conservation community between those favoring this hands-on approach and those holding that strong habitat protection and environmental reform, particularly in agriculture, were the keys to the birds' survival. To the latter, hands-on was simply a sterile excuse to put the birds in a zoo.

The battle between these two factions was fought out mainly before The California Fish and Game Commission, the agency presently deferred to as the deciding body on the Recovery Program because the bird exists only in California. This divisiveness considerably slowed down any vigorous hands-on approach. At the time, considering the massive number of unknowns about the bird and its habitat, caution seemed to make good sense. But, the Law of Unintended Consequences, which says that for every intentional act of man there will be unforeseeable and unintentional consequences, hovers over all our endeavours, and, down the line, this slowdown would have its fair share of unintended consequences.

By the summer of 1983 there was considerable change. The Research Center's successes in egg collection and the hatchings accomplished by the San Diego Zoo, chick handling and the productive radioing of two birds, encouraged the Commission to adopt a more permissive approach. In the 1984 permit they allowed even more chicks and eggs to be taken. They were further encouraged in this by the important discovery that, contrary to previous "expertise" which held that Condors only breed every two years, the birds not only

can but do breed annually, and they can also double and triple clutch to replace lost eggs. By the fall of 1984 this had made it possible for the biologists to build, in a both the San Diego and Los Angeles Zoos, a captive flock of 16 birds, all juveniles except for the adult male, Topa Topa, who had been found in the wild some years earlier. Unable to survive he had been brought to the Los Angeles Zoo. This was 16 birds short of the proposed ideal, a genetically diversified 32 flock, but as the breeding pairs in the wild capable of producing eggs had increased in 1984 from 4 to 5, their goal seemed attainable in the very near future.

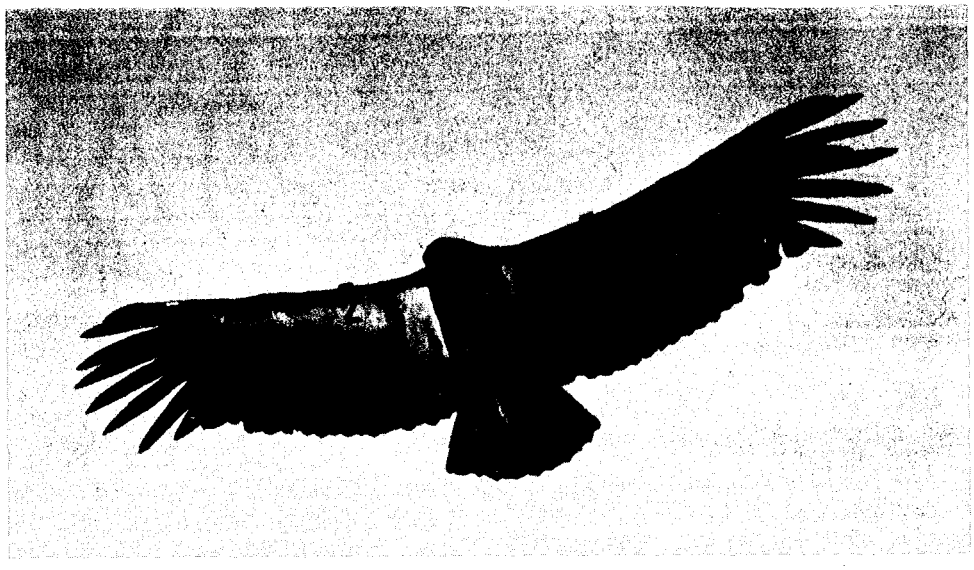
Still, success didn't totally silence the critics because while the captive flock was growing, the wild flock was continuing to decline. Its number, a positive 23 birds in the most accurate to date 1982 census, was down to 18 in late 1983, and, by the fall of 1984, there were only 15 birds left, an 8 bird loss in a little over two and a half years. Worse, the only deaths which could be specifically accounted for were: one female yearling dead in November 1983 from a cyanide coyote trap in Kern County (the fact that she was radioed made it possible to find her), and a radioed subadult male dead in March 1984 from ingestion of lead bullet fragment. The other six birds had vanished into the environmental abyss, and no one knew why.

The same environmental hazards were still being considered: agricultural poisoning, shooting (either deliberate by those who wished the condor extinct or done randomly by ignorant hunters), lead poisoning from shot carcasses, death traps such as power lines, oil sumps, and other encroachment and habitat degradation by man. But, the birds' foraging range is so vast: all the way from as far north as Monterey down through the Carrizo Plains and around the great "U" of the Santa Ynez, San Rafael and Tehachapi mountain chain north to the Southern Sierras, that any attempt to solve the problem would take more time.

Time, however, seemed finally to be on the side of the Research Center's staff. Their 1985 plan envisioned the attainment of that much hoped for goal, the release of at least 3 captive birds into the wild flock.

If successful, this would be the crossing point where the declining wild flock would be supplemented by captive birds, and the needs of both could be interbalanced with greater leeway. Then, there could be more time to attack the habitat problem. Then too, perhaps all the controversy and travail would be in the past, and the recovery of The California Condor would be well on its way even earlier than expected.

The most accurate condor census is taken in the late summer and early fall when all the birds congregate on the large Kern County ranches north of Mt. Pinos. The 1984 count showed 15 birds. At the end of fall and in early winter, the birds disperse throughout their foraging range, and it isn't until late winter, when the breeding pairs return to their more concentrated nesting range, that another preliminary count can be taken. If there are losses, this is when they show up.



Marked Condor

By February 1985 the research team was desperate. Only the Santa Barbara pair had returned intact. They waited and waited, hoping against hope, but by the late spring it was agonizingly apparent, 5 birds were missing, among them 4 mates of the 5 breeding pairs. One of the missing birds was radioed and they scoured the range hoping to get a signal, if only to find out how he'd died, but — nothing. Then, another bird of a forming pair disappeared. Six birds gone, and no one knew where or why. Like a symbol of the team's forlorn hopes one of the females of a broken pair remained on her nesting site, rising expectantly to meet condors returning from other parts of the range. She would fly with them for awhile, then return to wait for her still missing mate. Finally, the male of the forming pair was found over in the Southern Sierras, so debilitated that he soon died. The autopsy showed lead, copper and zinc poisoning, the latter two somewhat puzzling, unless one deduces that the copper came from a bullet clad with that metal and the zinc from a galvanized metal, both ingested and excreted. As for the other 5 birds, including the radioed one, nothing is known. There are now only 9 wild birds left.

The irony of unintended consequences weighed heavily on everyone. Slowing the program down in 1982, in an effort intended to protect the bird from un-tested, hands-on experiments, had prevented by one crucial year the discovery of the condors' amazing reproductive potential, which, very likely, would have made it possible to move one year faster in egg collection. This would have built up a more variable gene pool and, possibly, speeded up re-entry to the wild of captive birds, all of which would have made this winter's unexpectedly high death toll more bearable.

One thing everyone agreed on was the need to gather opinions from leading geneticists in the field. The majority agreed: in order to insure the gene pool, the proper course of action was to bring all of the wild birds into the zoos, although with so many birds of different strains now missing, even this was considered marginal. Geneticists, however, aren't field biologists, nor are they necessarily conservationists, and their recommendation only emphasized the divergency of views coming forth. Some thought it almost sacriligious to suggest taking any, let alone all of the birds from the wild. If this were done, habitat protection would become impossible. Others completely agreed with the geneticists, sure that this was the Condors' only hope. Any further mortality in the wild would be risking the birds' extinction: it would be madness. The middle ground spoke of compromise: three wild birds taken in to build up immediate breeding in the zoo, and three captive females introduced into the wild in order to test hacking and provide a chance for an additional breeding pair there. Other reasons for this position were that the wild adults have a higher reproductive value and, as the captive released females would be radioed, field studies would be enhanced. It was also thought that it would be extremely difficult to maintain the existing habitat, let alone make any further acquisitions, without a wild flock. Already, inquiries have been made about opening protected lands. The fall back position would be, in the case of further significant loss and no better knowledge of the causes, to bring all the birds into captivity.

On April 26th, The Fish and Game Commission issued a draft statement saying that, due to the lack of solid mortality information, they leaned very strongly towards bringing all the

birds into captivity. They also suggested the possible release of radioed, female Andean Condors into the habitat to investigate mortality. As Andeans breed like chickens in captivity, they were considered expendable and their presence would help maintain the habitat.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the major agency in the program in terms of funding, countered on May 13th with a proposal preceded by an interdepartmental memo saying; "There is no consensus on the best course of action for recovery and management of The California Condor. Instead, there is a wide divergence of opinion represented by highly qualified individuals and groups on both ends of the spectrum." The proposal then suggested that 3 wild birds be taken in and 3 radioed female captives be released. California Fish and Game was faced with some very difficult choices at their meeting in Sacramento on June 6th.

Taking no public testimony, due to the considerable oral and written input already received, they rejected the Fish and Wildlife proposal, calling the release of any birds into the wild irresponsible until specific causes of mortality could be ascertained. They again indicated that they leaned toward capturing all the birds and wanted Fish and Wildlife to rethink their position and return with another proposal immediately.

There is a spirit of compromise in the air: take 6 wild birds into captivity, leaving the Santa Barbara pair (both radioed) and an immature, radioed male, called IC-9, in the wild. The Santa Barbara pair seldom go to the Southern Sierra, which is considered dangerous for the birds, so their exposure to mortality is lessened. IC-9 would be at hazard. This satisfies those who think that there must be Condors in the wild both to maintain the habitat and to hack wild birds back to. It would leave others very dissatisfied.

In the meantime life, where it counted most, went on. The still intact Santa Barbara pair, behaving like the good breeders they are, had produced three eggs during the spring. The first was taken and hatched at the San Diego Zoo, the second proved infertile, the third egg hatched at the zoo on June 9th and the chick was named Malibu.

This brings the total number of California Condors in the world, both wild and captive, to 27. That's four more than there were in early 1982, but the genetic reserve has been severly depleted, the habitat will not support the birds, and to take the newly born Malibu as a traditional sign of hope and regeneration would be foolish indeed. The California Condor is on the brink of extinction in spite of, or because of, all our efforts, and what is done this summer will tell the tale.

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Some Thoughts While Waiting For A Condor

by Larry L. Norris

It is nearly 3 PM, I have been perched on this canyonside for most of the afternoon waiting for a California Condor to fly over the ridge or soar in the distance with Mount Abel as a blue-gray backdrop. No luck yet, but I am patient. So are the people standing at their cars parked by "The Sign". They were here when I came, but I do not know for how long. Both vehicles have California license plates so I am not overly anxious for them; they can probably watch again another summer day. If the license plates read Maine or South Carolina I would be anxious for their condor. Who knows? This may be their last chance to see a condor. I wish there were more condors so people's chances of seeing this part of their heritage would be greater.

The afternoon wears on. From the Live Oaks below me Scrub Jay occasionally calls. It is hot while I write this. California Quail are chattering in the tall grass on the slopes below, a covey of twenty or so I would guess. Gazing eastward across the rugged, brushy slopes of Santiago Creek Canyon I am amused by the thought "What if there were only 20 California Quail left in the world?". We would have a devil of a time trying to see them. I can imagine the insert in *Birding* with a little map and all text saying "Quail last seen in the 200,000 acres of Pinyon-Juniper Woodland on the northside of the Mount Pinos-Mount Abel area; park at "The Sign" and wait." I am truly glad that condors soar.

I do not park at "The Sign"; too crowded, too noisy. It is quiet today, though, with only two cars. One man has a huge scope that looks like an orange cannon barrel. For the last two hours it has been standing in the hot sun, uncovered, pointing away to the smog of the San Joaquin Valley, above which rise some bossy cumulus clouds over the Sierra Nevada. Condors still range into the Sierra as far north as Sequoia National Park. Their recent successful nesting in a managed redwood grove should give us some thoughts concerning the condors' preference for nesting sites and roosts in forested land. How might we benefit the condor here? Perhaps close monitoring of this nesting will yield facts about condor use of a redwood grove and nearby forage habitat that will aid the recovery effort. Was this grove selected as best nest site, or because it was better situated for foraging the area, or both? We will never know if we do not take the opportunity to study this occurrence.

No, I do not park at "The Sign". The next turnout to the east is best. The light is to your back in the afternoon, perfect for condor spotting. Also the fragrance of the California Junipers on the slope below is wafted up on the afternoon breeze giving me a pleasant memory of Condor Country. The two cars left at 3:30 PM. One fellow had seen a pair of condors at noon today. One bird had come over "The Sign" from the south, and joined another above the grassy hills to the north. Both birds slowly spiraled, gaining altitude, and moved northward until they disappeared in the distance. I am glad he saw his condor; it was a life bird for him, and his seventh or eighth Saturday of waiting.

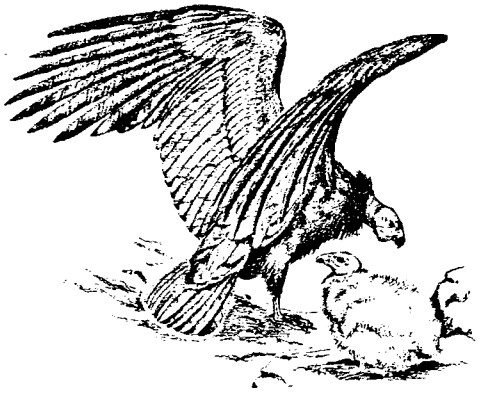
Photo by Eric Johnson

"The Sign"

To fill in my perception of what I am looking for out here on this canyonside, and *why* I am spending time doing so I have brought along a copy of Sanford Wilbur's *The California Condor, 1966-76: A Look At Its Past and Future.* It is well-researched and provides an amazing amount of data for such a short publication. I wanted to read a few paragraphs about condor distribution, then look up and scan the sky; return to the book for a reading on the reasons for condor decline, then look up for another scan, and so on until I saw a condor or it was time to leave. The book is interesting. It contains sections on condor distributional changes through time, population size and decline, food requirements and supply, disturbance, and factors affecting productivity. This reading provided me a better understanding of the condor I waited for.

In the last section entitled Preservation, Wilbur anticipated the split we see today between the "hands-on" management philosophy and the "hands-off" just-preserve-the-land advocates. As a professional in the field I am of the former group, although I was not always of that opinion. But even if I were still for "hands-off" these two paragraphs from Wilbur's text would convince me otherwise. They read:

"...the California Condor is most pleasing symbolically and esthetically as a free-flying, self-perpetuating species, but each passing year brings more questions about its ability to survive wihtout intensive management. Since



the passing of the wild big-game herds and their replacement with livestock in the mid-1800's, the condor has been dependent on the activities of man, and "naturalness" has been relative. Nevertheless, the wildness that is left in the species is desirable and should be preserved. If the species can be saved, we should also be able to preserve the aura and tradition of condor and condor habitat. It is not necessary to sacrifice "wildness" for "management".

The California Condor is on the brink of extinction right now, and may disappear no matter what we do. If the species is to be saved, it must receive our most innovative attention as quickly as possible."

This was published in 1978, we and the condor are six years down the line and real gains have been made in our understanding of the condor. Wilbur's basic tenet is still true. Those two condors today did not come over the ridge from the south and slowly spiral northward out of chance. They were headed directly for the large herd of cattle near the water tank on the grassy hills north of "The Sign". The condors know where the food supply is, and chances are it was not the carcass of a wild animal they were looking for, but that of a calf. Times have changed for the condor, and times have changed for us, too. With better equipment and research methods our understanding should grow to provide an answer for the dilemma the condor faces.

It is now past 5 PM. Still no condor for me today, but I know that they are out there. Perhaps, in the near future, for time is short, captive breeding and better land management will turn the situation around and the "recovery" will occur. Then those open, grassy areas on the low ridges east of "The Sign" will have groups of feeding condors as similar open areas must have had in the past. It is not an impossible thing; if the scientific community, the preservationists, and the educated public give it their best — now.

Working With Condors

by Gary Perlmutter

Gary Perlmutter, a high school student, has been given some modest financial support by LAAS to be able to help out The Condor Recovery Program during the summers. This is his report.

—Editor

The Condor Recovery Program was little publicized until the first eggs were hatched from their nests and hatched in captivity in the spring of 1983. This made world history in conservation; marking the turning point in the plight of the California condor, *Gymnogyps californianus.* I was involved with the saving of this species then, as well as now.

For over two and half years I have been working on the Condor Program both at the Condor Research Center here in Ventura and at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Although I may have received money in the form of grants from the Los Angeles Audubon Society, I have gained something more valuable: the experience of some of the tasks involved in a research biological career, the chance to learn something of the habits and distribution of a little known and gravely endangered species, and satisfaction that I am doing something to save an important bit of the natural environment from further human destruction.

I began my work at the Condor Reseach Center in July, 1982 by performing simple but needed jobs. The bulk of my work consisted of photocopying field notes of the present biologists as well as early pioneers in the field such as Carl Koford and Fred Sibley. For about six months I also filled sighting report cards from over-the-phone messages of condor sightings. This is to protect condor habitat from development by keeping a record of the locations where condors have been seen.

The summer of 1984 was spent observing the behavior of the captive chicks at the Condorminium in the San Diego Wild Animal Park. The observations consisted of noting in code every behavior a chick made during an hour. This method is called "intensive sampling" and is one of the most important ways to understand the habits of this rare creature. The intensive samplings of these chicks, when compared to that of wild ones, have shown that they don't seem to be suffering any ill effects of their artificial environment.

Upon my return to Ventura I was able to use this technique on a wild condor — the chicks living in the recently discovered Sequoia tree nest. There, from a blind, I witnessed a feeding by the male parent — a spectecular sight! This was a chance of a lifetime, for soon after my intensive samplings the chick was taken into captivity so that its parents may reproduce again the next year, thus raising the total population more than it would without human intervention.

For the next two months I volunteered for the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service photographing wild condors in southern Kern County soaring over ranch land that serves as prime

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Photo by Noel Snyder

Photo Courtesy of San Diego Zoo

First Flight for a Fledgling

foraging habitat. The purpose of photographing is to iden ify individual birds by the moult patterns of their primaries.

After that I returned to office work; continuing to photocopying field notes. Then I helped to file the Condor Research slide collection and enter photo data into the computer. These slides are used for press releases, books, and slide presentations.

Only 300 years ago condors soared the skies from Baja California to Canada. *Gymnogyps californianus* was once a part of a complete eco-system, including vast herds of wapiti and pronghorn grazing the plains of Southern California. Back then you might have seen about fifty birds feeding on a pronghorn carcass left by a cougar or grizzly bear. If you had looked close enough, you might have noticed a pecking order in this seeming mass of confusion: immatures being forced to wait their turn after their elders or adults and immatures alike being harrassed by the smaller golden eagles, putting the condors in their proper place. Up above you might have seen a flock of fifteen or more circling over another possible kill five miles away.

But today this scene can only be imagined. White man has come to live and dominate the land at the expense of its native inhabitants. The condor has barely survived where the grizzly has not. The present range of *G. californianus* is a small area in California, covering parts of Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Kern, San Luis Obispo, and Tulare counties. There is also a rumor that a separate flock may exist in Baja California, but this is very unlikely.

With the vast herds of native ungulates gone condors primarily feed on livestock carcasses, continuing their niche as nature's garbagemen. Calving season provides the highest bounty of food, with still-borns, placentas, abortions, and carcasses of older calves. Condors are most likely to be seen during the summer months, rising in pockets of warm air called thermals. Soaring in groups, pairs, or even alone, they scavenge miles of ranch land and forest, traveling a hundred miles or more a day at speeds up to 60 mph.

The total population numbers about 30 birds, half of which are in captivity. The captive flock is hoped to breed in a few years, adding more to the already growing population. Condors that will be released will represent the most distantly related sets of parents to prevent inbreeding, thus keeping the gene pool diverse.

Condor chicks fledge at six months — a long time for birds. At the Condorminium fledglings exercise their wings and hop vigorously day to day. They become increasingly adventurous and eager to take wing. And finally first flight — a few feet and clumsy, but a captive chick succeeds in flying onto a sawhorse to get a higher perspective of her world. She is then unsure about getting back down. The chick flaps her wings for awhile. Then she jumps, flapping hard; lands. Not very graceful, but that will come with time and practice.

One warm August morning, 1984, two residents of the Condorminium, Piru and Ojai, were given their first carcass. Ojai immediately ran away from this strange new object in her pen. Piru watched curiously from atop her sawhorse. She flew down to investigate the dead antelope, walking around it and occasionally mouthing a hoof. Meanwhile, from the adjoining light cage, Sisquoc and Tecuya peered with interest into the pen. After awhile of looking over this new form of food, Piru walked to the fence to be among the two older birds. Not before long my hour of intensive sampling was over and with Ojai still in her corner, I left for the day. Next morning I saw that the two condors had found the carcass harmless and edible, for most of it was eaten.

The Condor Recovery Program, with its present success, is an example of what we humans can do to stop ourselves from destroying a species and help it restore its numbers to a level safe again from extinction. And I am glad to be a part of it, for the experience has given me an early start in my pursuit of a career in research biology. None of it would have been possible without the support from the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

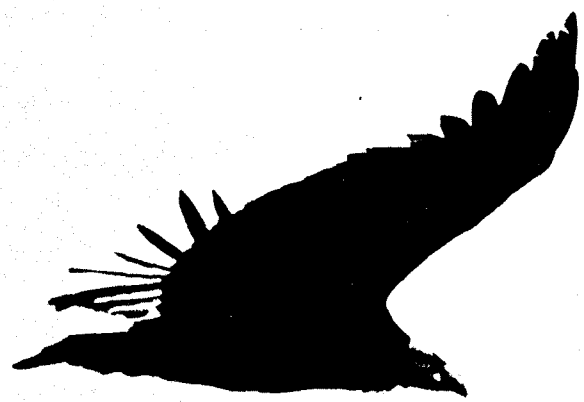


Photo by Jesse Grantham

Kiwi Country is Good Bird Country

By Richard & Beatrice Smith

It has been said by some that birding in New Zealand is second rate, since most of the birds are introduced species from England. But we found this not to be the case and are supported in our findings by the authors of *The New Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* — Falla, Sibson and Turbott. (See page 13.) In only 11 days in December of 1983, we found Kiwi country definitely good bird country!

It is good bird country even though you don't see the Kiwi in the wild! We didn't see him, but we did identify 64 other species, only 8 of which were British introductions. Included in this number are interesting pelagics such as Wandering Albatross, Fairy Prion, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Fluttering Shearwater and Westland Black Petrel — all seen on a ferry trip, Wellington-Picton-Wellington in Cook Strait. On this same trip — and elsewhere along the east coast of the North Island — the Australian Gannet was common.

Inland, 3 species of Cormorants were easily seen — the Common, Pied-Shag and Little-Shag — as well as White-faced Heron, New Zealand Shoveler and Pukekio.

The North Island shorelines at Miranda, Tauranga and Wenderholm were alive with birds, including possibly the largest concentration of wintering Bar-tailed Godwits anywhere in the world! We saw Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher, Double-banded Dotterel, New Zealand Dotterel, Mongolian Dotterel and a Red Knot or two. Present also were an abundance of Common Stilts and a few of the indigenous and uncommon Wrybill.

Gulls and terns were only fairly represented. They included Red-billed, Black-billed and Southern Black-backed Gulls and nesting White-fronted Terns, as well as a wandering Caspian.

Parrots (as well as Penguins, which we did not visit) are represented in Kiwi country too. At Long Bay Park, north of Auckland, we saw the Eastern Rosella and on Kapiti Island, off western New Zealand, we saw both the Kaka and Red-crowned Parakeet.

Actually, Kapiti Island — which can only be visited by pre-arranged permit — deserves some very special attention. A Kiwi is theoretically possible there. (The Brown Kiwi has been introduced, but is, of course, nocturnal.) But the flightless Weka is a certainty! We saw one devour a juvenile New Zealand Robin. On a short day trip there, we also saw the Bellbird, Whitehead, Silver-eye and, most fascinating of all, a male Saddleback, calling on territory! The Saddleback is a noisy , endemic, New Zealand wattle-bird.

And on Kapiti and elsewhere we saw the hyperactive Fantail, the beautiful New Zealand Pigeon and the vocal, well-dressed Tui, as well as the confiding and inquisitive New Zealand Robin.

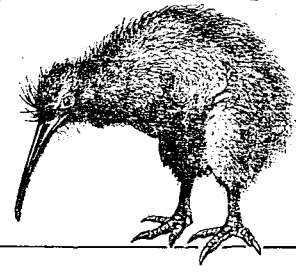
On several occasions, we heard birds we did not see, such as the Tomtit and Gray Warbler. At night the charming little owl, Morepork, announced his presence, almost in the center of Auckland.

And, as we have suggested earlier, we saw our fair share of British imports, such as Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow, Starling, Blackbird and Song Thrush.

One of the easiest birds to see was certainly the White-backed Magpie. One of the most difficult to see was the Long-tailed Cuckoo. (Mt. Otanewaimuky, near Tauranga) The bird we wanted to see most was the Laughing Kookaburra and we saw one and studied it a length at Wenderholm Park.

Our Christmas Day bird was not uncommon, but it was one which has eluded us in Thailand, Japan and Hong Kong — the Blue or Eastern Reef Heron, which we saw at Mt. Maunganui.

Our New Zealand trip was made by rented car, Cooks Strait ferry, Air New Zealand and the celebrated Silver Fern train. Locally, a few New Zealand birders helped us, but since it was a Holiday Season, we had to proceed largely on our own. Everywhere people were most friendly and New Zealand is worth a visit for a multitide of reasons. Take with you the guide mentioned earlier and Harper and Kinsky's *Southern Albatrosses and Petrels*... Kiwi country is, indeed, fascinating bird country.



From The Editor

by Fred Heath

If you've been paying attention you have probably noticed that there are quite a few articles on the California Condor in this issue. Normally the October issue of the *Tanager* is devoted to this rare creature. Unfortunately, as is apparent from Harrison Starr's article there have been a number of recent events which will hasten the decision making process with regard to the Condor Recovery Plan. By October this could be very old news indeed. Harrison's article became the trigger for me to do something unusual (for a change) and put together a July-August condor issue. I had Larry Norris' and Gary Perlmutter's articles so that part was easy. Too late however, it dawned on me that I needed some graphics either in the form of photos or drawings of condors. Luckily, Dexter Kelly, the previous *Tanager* editor, had left me a box of material when we changed horses a few months back. In this wonderful box, I found a number of excellent condor photos. The problem is that I have no idea who took some of these pictures. So if you see your photo and you haven't gotten the proper credit please let me know and I'll give you a plug in a future *Tanager*.

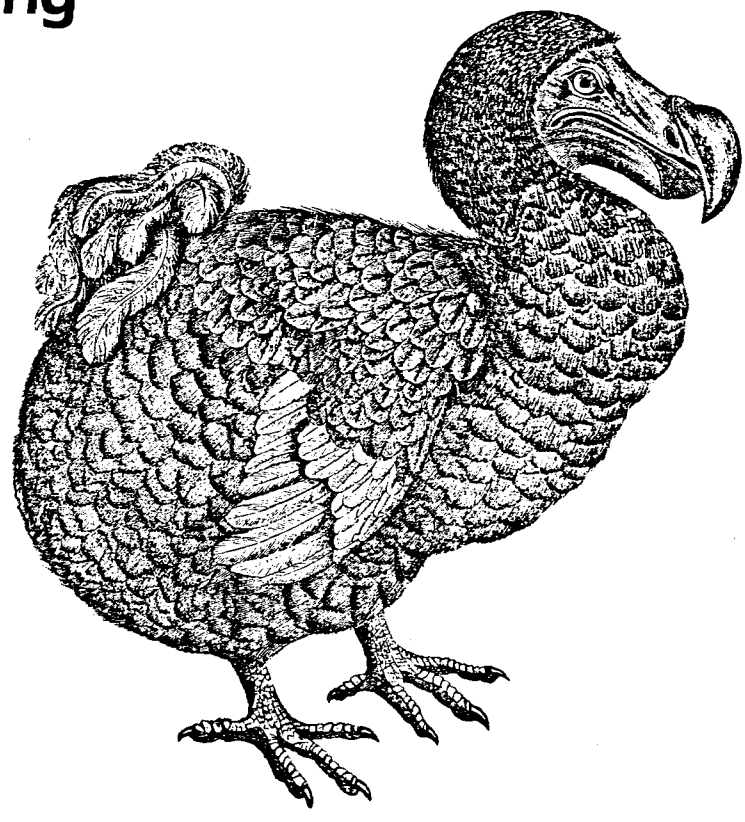
Aside from condor articles, I've received a whole slew of short articles which I will be using over the next few issues. The short piece on Kiwi Country is such an article. I couldn't resist publishing it on the heels of the longer article on New Zealand which appeared in June's *Tanager*. Thank you one and all for your response to my plea for more material. I still have a shortage of longer pieces which might make good lead articles. My preference still runs to material of a more local nature (say the Southwest U.S.), but beggars can't be choosers. In addition, I'm still looking for drawings of birds or other animals as well as plants to use as fillers to help give the *Tanager* a somewhat open look. My address again is Fred Heath, P.O. Box 5036 Chatsworth, CA 91311.

I did get one offer of help that was received with mixed emotions. Attached to a note volunteering to proofread the *Tanager* was a copy of the June issue with some 30 odd mistakes circled. I appreciate the thought, but seeing all those errors depressed me no end. One of the reasons I can't use proofreading help is a matter of timing. By the time I get all the necessary material together and down to the typesetter (etc. graphics), I'm usually running late. By the time I get the first galley, the printer (Artisan Press) should have been putting the issue to press. Each month I press Carolyn Maryman into service to help proofread the latest issue, but this is usually done at 10 o'clock the night before it's due back at etc. graphics. I've been trying to leave myself more time, but unfortunately I think it's the nature of the beast. Besides without all these typographical errors I'd now have nothing to write about in this column.

My would-be proofreader even had the nerve to point up what he thought was an error in *my* column. He had the word *humerous* circled. I thought *everyone* knew that *humerous* referred to humor which tickled your funny bone.

Turning A Bird Sighting Into A Bird Record

by Kimball Garrett



Your bird sightings from field excursions remain just that, sightings, until a simple procedure of documentation and communication is initiated. Such a procedure turns a sighting into a record, available to the ornithological community. We outline here the steps one should take once a sighting is made.

First, record and document the sighting in your field notes, using whatever system you are most comfortable with. Obviously, the more unusual the sighting, the more detailed the documentation should be. Garrett and Dunn's "Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution" should provide an indication of how unusual your sighting is. Apparent population trends, arrival and departure dates, migration waves, and interesting behaviors constitute examples of other "sightings" which should be recorded and documented in your notes.

Second, communicate your sightings to others. The speed with which this should be done is, again, obviously proportional to the rarity of the observation. Some birds call for an immediate dash for the nearest pay phone; most demand less urgency. Some procedures follow:

For exceptional rarities (generally, those species on the California Bird Records Committee Review list, published on occasion in *Western Birds*):

(1) Make your dash to the phone, alerting other birders. When in doubt as to whom to contact, call Audubon House.

(2) Make sure your description is complete and accurate; write the description before consulting a field guide; take photos whenever possible.

(3) In the following order, communicate information on the sighting to: Audubon House for the L.A.A.S. bird tape (or to other groups sponsoring tapes); Hal Baxter for the "Birds of the Season" column; Guy McCaskie or your local county coordinator for *American Birds* (see listing in this article); Secretary of the California Bird Records Committee (for review list species; address in this article).

For sightings which do not pertain to exceptional rarities (this would include virtually anything you feel is of interest), a perusal of the "Birds of the Season" column should give you an idea of what is appropriate to send to Hal Baxter for that column. When in doubt, send it in. This likewise applies to *American Birds*. For that journal's regional reports, send a complete list of interesting sightings, along with documentation, to the regional editor or the county sub-editors listed below.

Deadlines for *American Birds* regional reports are generally about a week after the close of each season. The seasons are:

Spring:	1 March to 31 May
Summer:	1 June to 31 July
Fall:	1 August to 30 November
Winter:	1 December to 28(9) February

Observations should be sent to the Regional Editor (S. Pacific Coast Region):

Guy McCaskie
954 Grove Street
Imperial Beach, CA 92032

Or, preferably, to the sub-editor for each county:

San Luis Obispo Co.:
Tom Edell
46 8th St.
Cayucos, CA 93430

Santa Barbara and Ventura Co.:
Paul Lehman
P.O. Box 1061
Goleta, CA 93017

Los Angeles Co.:
Kimball Garrett
Natural History Museum of
Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Orange Co.:
Doug Willick
838 W. South Street
Anaheim, CA 92805

Kern Co.:
Mark Chichester
8000 Kroll Way #27
Bakersfield, CA 93311

San Bernardino Co.:
Gene Cardiff
2736 Court St.
Rialto, CA 92376

Riverside Co.:
Robert McKernan
40 Sherril Lane
Redlands, CA 92373

San Diego Co.:
Elizabeth Copper
P.O. Box 595
Coronado, CA 92118
(or directly to Guy McCaskie)

When in doubt, send observations directly to the Regional Editor.

Descriptions of rarities on the California Bird Records Committee review list should be sent to:

Benjamin D. Parmeter
Secretary, CBRC
2500 Emerson St.
Napa, CA 94558

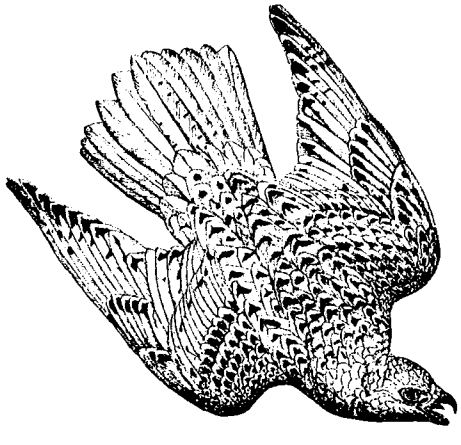
Annual reports of the California Bird Records Committee, detailing accepted and rejected records, are published in the journal *Western Birds*.

Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Many of us, at one time or another, have been out in the field birding and had our contentment shattered by the blast of firearm. Within city limits this is illegal. In open country, shooting game animals or non-game species at any time is also illegal. To the generally unaggressive birder who witnesses this activity it can be frustrating and even frightening. Not only is this "sportsman" disturbing the peace but he is upsetting your peace of mind. If you're big enough and bold enough you can take the weapon from him and break it over your knee. Returning from your Walter Mitty fantasy, you might tell him that what he's doing is wrong and you'll call the authorities, or you might simply get the hell out of there.

But wait, help may be on the way! The California Fish and Game Department has dreamed up a new idea called Cal-TIP. (Turn In Poachers.) If you see someone shooting a deer out of season or taking a potshot at a kestrel, you can call a toll-free number and, with luck, the miscreant may be caught. Of course you may not be near a telephone but you could possibly get a license-plate number and a description of the gunman. If the scofflaw is caught with the goods or a smoking gun you might even get a reward. Money, that is. The Reseda amateur taxidermist who shot ducks, egrets and other birds in the Sepulveda basin was turned in by an outraged witness and the man is being prosecuted. The witness got a reward. Fish and Game realizes that the person reporting may be concerned about reprisals — especially with gun-happy violators — so a code number is given to the caller and the bad guy has no way of knowing who turned him in.



Now this may sound a little far out for us. The average birder rarely sees an illegal kill. But the Cal-TIP idea might be a way of discourageing neophyte hunters from invading "our" turf and killing "our" birds. The day after I read about the new plan I came across a group of 17 or 18-year old hooky-players firing pellet guns at birds in a city park. When I told them they were violating the law they simply shrugged and went on with the fun. I copied down their license number as they drove away and when I got home called the 800 number out of curiosity. Though I told them the kids had not killed anything to my knowledge and that they had left the scene, they took it quite seriously. "It's illegal. You can't shoot any weapon in a public place. A pellet won't kill you, but someone could have lost an eye." I discovered I was talking to Sacramento. An hour later, a local game warden called me, verified my meagre information, and said something would be done. Maybe nothing will happen in this case. But if the boys find out (a letter or a phone call from the warden) that the authorities know what they've been up to, it may dampen their enthusiasm a little. And next time they might be caught.

From our standpoint, we have nothing to lose — not even the price of a phone call. We may gain at least the illusion of doing *something* to overcome our feeling of helplessness in the presence of macho ignorance.

The number is: 1-800-952-5400. Write it on the back of your driver's license or on the flyleaf of your field guide. Think of the starlings you'll save.

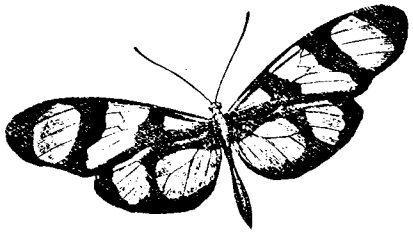
It's Later Than You Think

Lest we Californians think that acid rain is a dreadful thing, but thank goodness we aren't living in New England, take another look. The World Resources Institute, after an 18-month study of pollution and geological data in the Western states, warns that there is a very real threat to western wilderness and watersheds. Particularly vulnerable are the Colorado Rockies, the Washington Cascades and the Sierra Nevada. These mountains have thin soils, steep slopes and granite bedrock — conditions which provide little buffering against acids. The concentration of industry in the West is considerably less than in the Midwest, but here — especially in California — there are more autos and nitrogen oxides predominate in the snow, rain and fog.

The authors of the study say that the West is about where the Northeastern states were ten or twenty years ago before acid rain damage became noticeable. And they added, "That's why we're raising the red flag." A word to the wise.

A Bottle Bill in '85!

Remember Proposition 11? That was the Bottle Deposit Initiative that went down to bitter defeat in 1982. Two months before the election, public opinion polls showed that 67% of the people were in favor of this anti-litter measure. In the closing days of the campaign $5.6 million poured into California for newspaper and TV ads that scared the voters into voting against the proposition. Dire things were predicted: loss of jobs, inconvenience, cockroaches in the markets, increased prices. A top beer company featured interviews on televison with a handful of Oregon citizens who swore up and down that the bottle bill there was a dismal failure. All of these simple "men-in-the-street" later turned out to be employees of the company. Nowhere did we learn from the effective propaganda that several states (nine today) have bottle bills with an overwhelming number of happy consumers. Nor were we told that in 1979, an attempt in Maine to repeal their bottle bill was voted down 7 to 1.

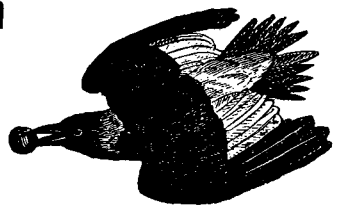


Which brings us to 1985. Not an initiative this time, but an Assembly bill is in the works in Sacramento. AB 2020 has already passed the Natural Resources Committee and will reach the floor of the Assembly in late summer. There are two organizations pushing hard for passage this year: California Against Waste (CAW) and California Public Interest Research Group (CalPIRG). Among others who are endorsing this concerted drive are the American Association of University Women, the Agoura Chamber of Commerce, Common Cause, the Hollywood Congregational Church, Los Angeles Audubon and several other Audubon societies.

We are asking you, the intelligent, aesthetic, realistic, articulate reader to do one simple thing right now. Write to your Assemblyman/woman and tell him/her you want him/her (ugh!) to support AB 2020 - vigorously. Current polls show that 80% of Californians still support a bottle bill. If you aren't sure who your Assemblyperson is, call your local library or CalPIRG at 213-473-8491. Let's be as clean as Oregon!

Birds Of The Season

by Hal Baxter and Kimball Garrett



These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records". This disclaimer appears at the beginning of the "Recent Reports" column of the excellent journal *British Birds,* a column analogous in many ways to our monthly "Birds of the Season" effort. How does a sighting metamorphose from an "unchecked report" to an "authenticated record"? This depends, of course, on our standards for acceptance, but in our region the usual procedure involves a submission of a detailed description to Guy McCaskie, the Southern Pacific Coast Region editor for *American Birds.* For birds on the California Bird Records Committee review list, descriptions are also forwarded (or sent directly by the observer) to that body's secretary, Benjamin D. (Parmeter. This method of review will theoretically screen out nearly all "unacceptable" reports and ensure the publication of acceptable records in nationally-circulated journals (*American Birds* and *Western Birds*).

Why do we mention all this, when we should be using the opening of this column to rejoice in the exciting finds of the late spring vagrant season? Precisely because the wealth of fascinating reports which have come to our attention leaves us fearful that our column has come to be perceived as the appropriate final resting place for such sightings, when in fact we provide only a way station (rumor mill?) on the way to more permanent scientific record. Maybe this is an appropriate time to reflect on the function of the Birds of the Season column, which was so ably and readably nurtured by Shum Suffel over the years. What the column emphatically is NOT is anything close to a complete run-down of bird sightings over the period covered. Likewise, it is not a "certification" of unusual sightings. Nor, by its lack of rigorous review, is it a "scientific record" in any true sense. The column hardly carries "news", at least in comparison to the Bird Tape, although it achieves a more current content than the *American Birds* regional reports or the *Western Birds* California Bird Records Committee reports.

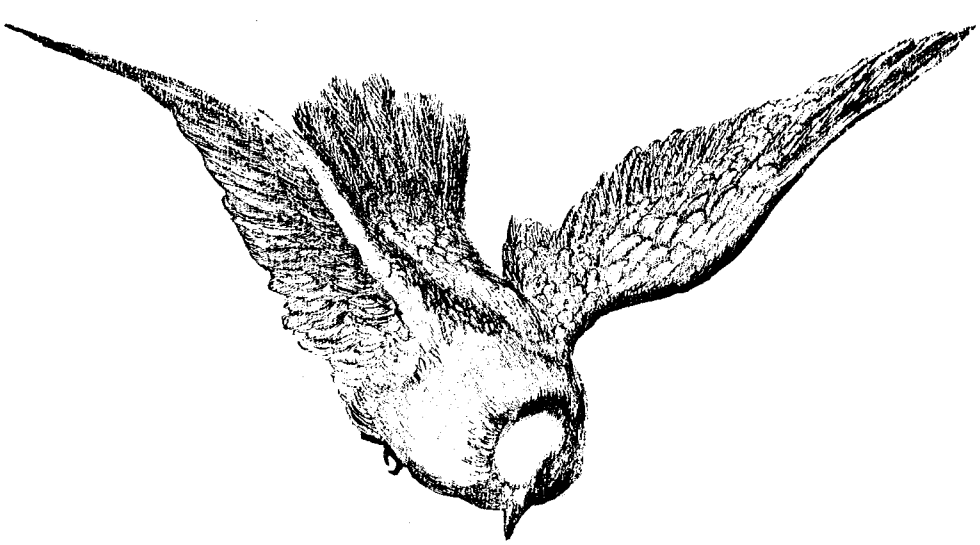
What Birds of the Season tries to do is highlight seasonal trends in southern California's bird life, primarily through listing reports (both of vagrants and of regularly-occurring species) which serve to illustrate such trends. We would be remiss not to mention outstanding rarities, but we cannot pretend to be exhaustive. Thoroughness is the job of the *American Birds* regional reports, a job which can only be accomplished with full cooperation from ALL oberservers. Our aim is to report on the activities of our birds and our birders by discussing recent field trips, newly "discovered" birding areas, heroic birding efforts, species irruptions, population trends, unusual behavior (of birds and of birders), and so forth. The examples we provide can only be selected from the reports which reach us; inaccuracies (for which we apologize) are usually the result of our receiving reports second-or third-hand.

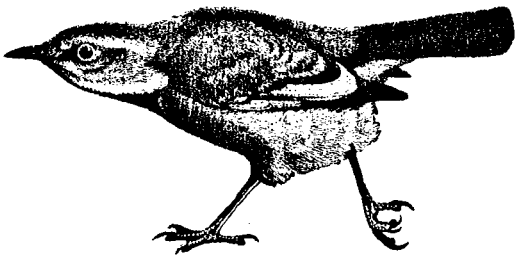
Elsewhere in this issue we provide a primer for getting your observations into print. These procedures will be "old hat" to some of you, and completely new to others; and for a large number of you they will serve as a reminder and a gentle nudge. Now that we've set a record for the most Birds of the Season column-inches without the mention of a bird sighting, let's get to the important stuff...

The late May "Memorial Day" coverage of our northern deserts is an enthusiastic annual celebration of the tendency of migrant birds to wander off "normal" course. Given population sizes in the millions for most of our migrant passerine species, one can appreciate the minor "migrational error rate" (say 0.1%) can result in a lot of "lost" birds. ("migrational error" here refers to a complex set of biological phenomena, and should not be considered synonymous with "getting lost"). The fact that some of these wanderers are found by birders (we have no idea what percentage) is testimony in large part to the concentrating effects of desert "oasis" situations, as well as to the ever-increasing sophistication of birders.

The traditional late spring coverage of the oases of Inyo and Mono Counties continues, but a corps of active birders from the Bakersfield area (Mark Chichester, Matt Heindel, John Wilson and others) has put California City on the map as a must during vagrant season. The well planted, well watered Central Park of this community northeast of Mojave gained some notoriety last spring (Eastern Phoebe, Prairie Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, etc.), and furthered its reputation this year with a singing male **Cerulean Warbler** on 17 May and a **Kentucky Warbler** on 19 May. Neither could be refound, though birders looking for the Cerulean on 18 May were treated to singing male **Black-and-White Warbler** and an increasing colony of **Great-tailed Grackles,** along with excellent views of singing **Red Crossbills** (these nomads have temporarily found the planted pines of California City much to their liking).

The highlight of the Memorial Day period in the Death Valley region was an **Upland Sandpiper** at Furnace Creek Ranch (Jeri Langham et al, 17 May); absolutely uncharacteristic of the species in California was this individual's obliging stayover to the following day, when it was seen by numerous observers. Another Upland Sandpiper had been noted in mid-May in Las Vegas, Nevada (fide Richard Webster). Mesquite Spring in Death Valley had an **Eastern Kingbird** and an **Eastern Phoebe** (the latter exceptionally rare in California in spring). Oasis Ranch, in extreme southeast Mono Co., harbored the greatest number of vagrants over Memorial Day. A partial list would include **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bay-breasted Warbler, Dickcissel** and (the previous weekend) **Yellow-throated Vireo.**





Brian Keelan's intensive scouting of the eastern Mohave Desert in preparation for this Memorial Day L.A.A.S. field trip yielded many interesting birds. While his climb up Clark Mountain on 19 May uncovered none of the the Sierra Madrean forms which have been encountered in past years (Grace's Warbler, Painted Redstart, etc.), he did have a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak,** 15 **Broad-tailed Hummingbirds,** 3 **Gray Vireos** and 15 **Red Crossbills.** Fort Piute, another well-known vagrant trap, had a **Kentucky Warbler** (22 May), a wandering **Acorn Woodpecker,** three **Brown-crested Flycatchers,** two **Summer Tanagers** and a **Bell's Vireo** (thought to be of the race *arizonae*). Along the Colorado River Brian confirmed the presence of **Northern Cardinals** again this year near the Riverside/San Bernardino County line. While Brian's Memorial Day field trip didn't turn up quite the variety of birds noted on the scouting trip, it nevertheless received rave reviews due largely to his encyclopedic knowledge of a whole range of natural history topics of the region.

In the coastal part of the region, Huntington Beach Central Park proved to be productive, with a **White-eyed Vireo** found on 21 May (Brian Daniels) being joined, incredibly, by a **Yellow-throated Vireo** on 25-26 May (Loren Hays). **Tennessee Warblers** were at Morongo Valley 4-5 May (Kimball Garrett; also W.F.O. Field Trip), at Shipley Nature Center in Orange Co. 5 May (Doug Willick), and on Pt. Loma (2, *fide* Richard Webster). A female **Northern Parula** was at Turtle Rock Nature Center in Orange Co. on 8 May (Doug Willick). An adult male **Blackburnian Warbler** was at Pt. Loma on 4 June. **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Placerita Canyon (Tom Howell and UCIA class, 27 April) Turtle Rock Nature Center (Doug Willick, 1 May), the north end of Harbor Lake (Don Sterba, 25 May), and Malibu Creek above the lagoon (Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer, 25 May). Los Angeles County's first **Kentucky Warbler** survived a cat attack in Claremont on May 9 and was photographed and released by Dan Guthrie the following day. A vagrant **Painted Redstart** was at Mohave Narrows on 21 April (Harold Bond), and another Painted Redstart was in suitable breeding habitat in the lower portion of the Charlton Flat Picnic Area, San Gabriel Mountains, 18-19 May (Art Blauvelt, Kimball Garrett).

Pelagic trips in May have often been productive in past years, and although nothing out of the ordinary was noted on the 11 May L.A.A.S. trip from San Pedro to and beyond Santa Barbara Island, a good representation of eastern Pacific pelagics made the day a success.

Sightings included **Pink-footed Shearwater** (260), **Sooty Shearwater** (310), **Black-vented Shearwater** (2), **Ashy Storm-Petrel** (1), **Black Storm-Petrel** (231), **Red-necked Phalarope** (100), **Pomarine Jaeger** (14), **Sabine's Gull** (3), **Xantus' Murrelet** (54), and **Cassin's Auklet** (8), not to mention Dall Porpoise, Risso's Dolphin, Bottlenose Dolphin and Common Dolphin (bird counts courtesy of Richard Webster). The late May W.F.O. pelagic out of San Diego was highlighted by a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** (unfortunately missed by most observers aboard).

Two outstanding pelagic birds during May deserve special mention. A possible **Red-footed Boody** was observed and sketched at Morro Rock on 27 May (John Schmitt); if accepted this would represent a first record for southern California. And yet another confused **Laysan Albatross** wandered overland from the Gulf of California this spring, an individual observed by Barbara Carlson around the wind turbine fields off Hwy. 111 north of Palm Springs on 6 May. This ill-fated bird eventually struck a wire, being killed instantly.

We will attempt to cover the rest of the interesting observations of the period in roughly phylogenetic sequence. A **Common Loon** and a **Red-breasted Merganser** on the pond at the Yucca Valley Golf Course on 12 May were in an area where both species are scarce migrants (Brian Daniels and Doug Willick). Doug had a **Little Blue Heron** at the Baker Sewage Ponds on 27 May. Yet another **White-faced Ibis** was observed at Piute Ponds near Lancaster, this time by Tom Martin of Lancaster (11-12 May). The male **Harlequin Duck** was still at Bolsa Chica at the end of May, and Hank Brodkin found a female **Oldsquaw** at the mouth of the Ballona Creek channel on 4 June. The most unusual ducks of the season were two **Black-bellied Whistling - Ducks** found near the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge headquarters at the end of May by Richard Webster; this species is casual in California, and it should be noted that its congener, the Fulvous Whistling-Duck, is continually declining in the state.

Astounding was a second sighting of a **Common Black-Hawk** (see June *Tanager*). This time Abigail King, Joan Mills and company observed one at Barker Dam in Joshua Tree National Monument on 23 April, not too great a distance from the original Thousand Palms sighting on 13 April. The bird was rumored to have been present at Barker Dam again on 26 April, but no additional sightings were reported. Also quite extraordinary was an exceptionally late **Rough-legged Hawk** in the alfalfa fields north of California City on 25 May (Hank Brodkin). The only **Swainson's Hawk** reported was one at Mohave Narrows on 21 April (Harold Bond).

A *dominica* **Lesser Golden-Plover** was at Piute Pond on 12 May (Tom Martin), one of the few records for the Antelope Valley area. The only **Solitary Sandpiper** report we received was on one at Mohave Narrows on 21 April (Harold Bond). Rumors of California's second **Spotted Redshank** trickled down to southern California long after the fact (the bird had been present near Crescent City in mid-May). Twenty migrant **Red Knots** were at Bolsa Chica on 2 May (Brian Daniels). A **Franklin's Gull** was at Mohave Narrows on 28 April (Elton Morel). Two different **Laughing Gulls** were reported from Malibu Lagoon: a year-old bird seen 1-2 May by Don Galli and full-plumaged adult photographed by Jonathan Alderfer on 28 May. Guy McCaskie established the Salton Sea's second record of **Elegant Tern** by finding one at the north end on 1 June. This species is otherwise unrecorded inland in California. **Least Terns** had returned to Bolsa Chica by 16 April (Dave Richardson).

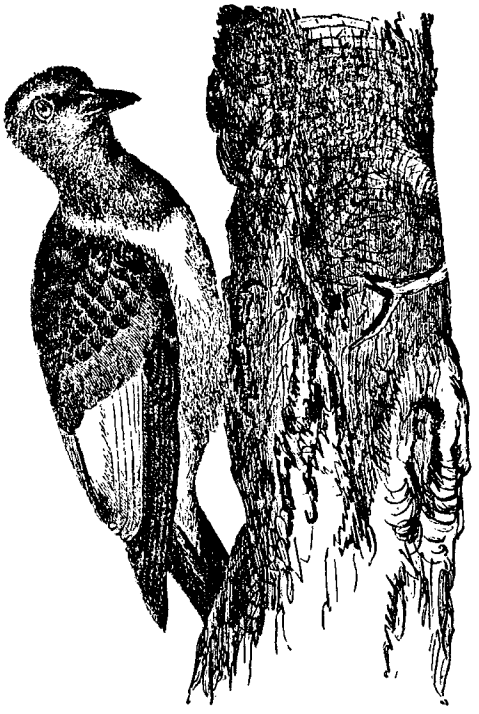
A **Common Ground-Dove** in an Inglewood yard (Shirley Berri, 21 April) added to a sprinkling of recent records for the Los Angeles Basin. **Chimney Swifts** returned to Big Pine in the Owens Valley by late May (they have been recorded there in past years). The Exposition Park Chimney Swifts returned this year on 6 May, with at least 6 birds present thereafter (Kimball Garrett).

Two **Calliope Hummingbirds** were on territory at Arrastre Creek as early as 24 April (Brian Keelan). The latest report of a **Lewis' Woodpecker** was of one in Bonner Canyon, Orange Co., on 6 May (Doug Willick); eight were seen in Joshua Tree National Monument on 24 April (Caroline Adams *et al).* A count of 13 **Williamson's Sapsuckers** along the road into Bluff Lake from the south shore of Big Bear (Brian Keelan, 24 April) showed how numerous this much sought-after species can be in this habitat. A migrant **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Huntington Beach Central Park on 25 April (Brian Daniels); a scattering of **Gray Flycatchers** were reported, including one at Pt. Fermin on 27 April (Don Sterba). A **Vermilion Flycatcher** was at Mohave Narrows on 28 April (Elton Morel).

Richard and Beatrice Smith found two **Le Conte's Thrashers** in Joshua Tree National Monument between the headquarters and Hidden Valley Campground (17 May); this species is thinly scattered through this area. A **Bell's Vireo** was on territory at Whittier Narrows (near the southwest corner of the largest lake) after 20 April (David White). **Great-tailed Grackles** were reported again adjacent to the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Doug Willick, 14 May), and one was at Mohave Narrows on 28 April (Elton Morel). Away from the standard desert localities, **Summer Tanagers** were found at Valyermo (at the Pallett Creek/Big Rock Creek confluence), a site where the species may be regular but for which nesting remains to be confirmed; a pair was also found along the Santa Clara River just east of I-5 (Magic Mountain area) by Kevin Spencer (25 May); a single bird was also found in May at the Turtle Rock Nature Center in Orange.

Northern Cardinals in Pacific Palisades (Bob and Norma Kummel, 8 April) and the Sepulveda Basin (Matt Dinsmore, 23 May) were certainly escapees, while a handful of sigtings along the Colorado River near the San Bernardino/Riverside County line belonged to California's truly wild population. An **Indigo Bunting** stopped by Barbara Cohen's Arcadia yard on 4-5 May. A migrant **Green-tailed Towhee** was in Huntington Beach Central Park on 28 April (Brian Daniels). Small numbers of **Evening Grosbeaks** were in the Bluff Lake area of the San Bernardino Mountains on 24 April (Brian Keelan). **Red Crossbills** were still widely seen through the month of May, primarily in montane forests, but also locally around planted conifers in the lowlands: Yucca Valley, Lancaster, California City, El Dorado Park, Santa Ana, Point Loma, etc. Nesting of this nomadic species in these unusual localities is quite possible.

Well to our east, the **Flame-colored Tanager** mentioned last month from Cave Creek Canyon in Arizona continued to be seen through May, keeping company with a female Western Tanager. By the time you read this there is no guessing what other wonders might have been turned up in this fascinating border area.



During this month of August the attention of active birders will be focused largely on shorebirds. Large numbers of juveniles of most species will augment the passage of adults (which peaks for many species in July and early August). Perhaps more than any other time of the year, this is the time to birdwatch with a camera. Juvenile shorebirds are often quite approachable, and frequent open, well-lighted situations. A portfolio of peep shots will prove to be an invaluable reference for future shorebird watching, and the documentation of rarity is always made easier with a camera (in addition to, not instead of the standard pencil and note-pad!).

Montane meadows will also be productive for birds during the late summer period. Three factors combine to make this true: populations have swelled from the summer's nesting efforts, many lowland species have undergone an upslope late summer movement to exploit the productiveness of montane habitats, and the southbound migration of more northerly species often takes place primarily through the mountains. This is an excellent time to study the juvenile plumages of our common passerines; this task is made easier by the tendency of juveniles to associate with adults of the same species before they have migrated from their nesting grounds.

And of course, finally, there is the traditional rite of condor watching in a August — not without its poignant urgency this year.

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

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 may 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.

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Subscription to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are $8 per year (Bulk Rate) or $13 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

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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 occured by the Thursday before the trip.

FIELD TRIPS

SUNDAY, JULY 21 — David White will lead a morning walk at the **Whittier Narrows Regional Park** looking for a good variety of summer residents, including Herons, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Towhees, Warblers, Vireos, Raptors and returning waterbirds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave., So El Monte, off Fwy 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Dr. exits, west of Fwy 605.

SUNDAY, JULY 21 — Search for **Western Screech Owl** in the Pacific Palisades with **Paul Fox.** Meet at 5 p.m. for some casual chaparral birding then attempt to see the owls that have nested in the area for 3 years. Trip dependant on their being relocated; check the tape. Take Palisades Dr. from Sunset Blvd., north 2 miles to just after Highlands Development. Park near well marked Santa Ynez Park. Wear quiet clothing and bring powerful flashlight.

SUNDAY, JULY 28 — Join **Jean Brandt's** annual 3 mile hike to the top of **Mt. Pinos.** Look for Calliope Hummingbird, White-Headed Woodpecker, Fox Sparrow and other mountain birds. Condor should be seen though they are more easily seen at the sign on Mil Portrero Rd.* Be prepared for heat (sun lotion, visor) and chill (layered clothing). Bring water and picnic lunch in knapsack. Take Hwy. 5 north through Gorman, exiting at Frazier Park and continuing on this highway, bearing left at Mil Portrero junction to the Iris Meadows parking lot at end of paved road. Meet at 8 a.m. To carpool, meet across from Denny's at the Roxford exit off Hwy. 5 at the north edge of the San Fernando Valley. Be prepared to make arrangements and leave this point by 6:30 a.m.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10 — Join **Bob** and/or **Roberta Shanman** for their initial walk of the season at the **Ballona Wetlands.** View residents, raptors, and returning shorebirds. Take Marina Fwy. 90 west to Culver Blvd., turn left to Pacific Ave., then right to footbridge at end. Meet at 8 a.m. $3 parking. (More info: Shanmans (213) 545-2867 after 6 p.m.)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24 — David White at **Whittier Narrows.** See Sun. July 21.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25 — Shirley Rubin will lead a beginners' birdwalk and introduction to the **UCLA Botanical Gardens,** in cooperation with the Natural Sciences Section of the Sierra Club. Learn your urban, backyard birds, and hopefully a few others. This is an easy stroll of 2 hours or so — more or less, depending on activity. Meet 8 a.m. at SE entrance to the Garden, NW corner of LeConte and Hilgard, in Westwood.

* Refer to last months' "Summer Birding" article for Condor info. and other birding possibilities.

FORTHCOMING TRIPS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 — Ballona Wetlands — Bob and Roberta Shanman

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 — Whittier Narrows — David White

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7 — Malibu to McGrath — Ed Navojosky

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12 — Ballona Wetlands — Bob and Roberta Shanman

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18 — Chatsworth Park South — Allan Keller

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19 — Whittier Narrows — David White

RESERVATION TRIPS

FRIDAY EVENING/SATURDAY, AUGUST 16-17 Shorebird Seminar and Field Study with **Jon Dunn.** A slide show lecture will be held in the San Fernando Valley in preparation for a day of field study, location dependent on water levels for maximum number of shorebirds. Plumage will be carefully studied to differentiate juveniles from adults and various differences in peeps and other shorebirds. The approach will be gradual and beginners are encouraged. Lots of time will be spent looking for individual birds. Expect to be quizzed. Do wear shorts and expect to get wet and muddy. The experience is meant to be fun as well as instructive. Dunn has particular expertise with shorebirds, is a professional bird tour leader, was the major consultant of the National Geographic's "Birds of North America," and co-author of both "Birds of So. Calif., Status and Distribution," and the forthcoming "Field Identification of Difficult Species." $25/person. Max. 20.

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.

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 retumed. 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 or Art Levine (usually in office on Tuesday) can provide information for you to make contact and possible arrangements.

PELAGIC TRIPS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10th: *Shearwater and Jaeger Trip,* ***Santa Barbara Island*** *and out to sea.* Depart 6 a.m., return 6 p.m. Leaders: **Bruce Broadbooks** and **Kimball Garrett.** Price: $24 per person.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22: *Red-billed Tropicbird Trip,* ***San Clemente Island.*** Depart 6:00 a.m., return 6 p.m. Leaders: **Richard Webster** and **Louis Bevier.** Price: $24 per person.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5: *Tropicbird and Storm-Petrel Trip, out to sea towards Santa Barbara Island.* Depart 6:00 a.m., return 6 p.m. Leaders: **Herb Clarke, Larry Norris.** Price: $24 per person.

Expected Species on Summer-Fall Trips: Pink-footed, Sooty and Black-vented Shearwaters, Black, Ashy and Least Storm-Petrels, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, Sabine's Gull, Arctic Tern, Xantus' Murrelet (Aug.), Craveri's Murrelet, Cassin's Auklet.

All trips are on the *Vantuna,* leaving from the USC Docks at Fish Harbor, Seaside Ave. on Terminal Island, across the Vincent Thomas Bridge from San Pedro. There are 38 spaces, plus 2 for leaders. Remember: If possible, you should get your reservations in at least 4 weeks before trip date. (See Reservation Policy on Calendar Page).

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

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