



# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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November 1985

## Lower Elevation Breeding in the Sierra Foothills

by George L. San Miguel

(Continued from October issue)

### Calliope Hummingbird

Of all the Pacific Coast hummingbirds, the one most clearly associated with the high mountains is the Calliope Hummingbird. Nesting altitudes in the Sierra Nevada occasionally exceed 9,000 feet. However, an important part of the Calliope's time in the Sierra Nevada is spent in the foothills.

By the start of May, Calliopes are as abundant in Sequoia National Park's foothills as the common resident Anna's Hummingbird. At this time only a few of them are seen below 2,000 feet. Most males are busy establishing and defending territories in the foothill chaparral from 2,000 feet and higher in the Kaweah River drainage. Vigorous chasing and displaying flights can often be seen. One male was seen perched on the same chaparral shrub for at least four weeks in May. Females are also present, foraging in chaparral and oak woodlands.

I might have only speculated about this intense courtship behavior as a prelude to nesting higher in the mountains if I had not found an actual nest. In the middle of May, 1984, along the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River next to Potwisha Campground at just over 2,000 feet, I observed a hovering female Calliope Hummingbird picking tiny objects from the air just above the water surface. Perhaps these were tiny insects or parachuting seeds. The next day I saw her doing the same thing but this time I watched her fly into a nearby White Alder tree and perch. Upon closer inspection, I noticed she was building a nest. A week later she was sitting tight in the nest only moving her head. I believed she was incubating eggs so I did not disturb her just to count them. Unfortunately, the nest was located low to the ground next to the shore and the next weekend brought a large crowd of fishermen. The

nest was destroyed and the hummingbird had departed.

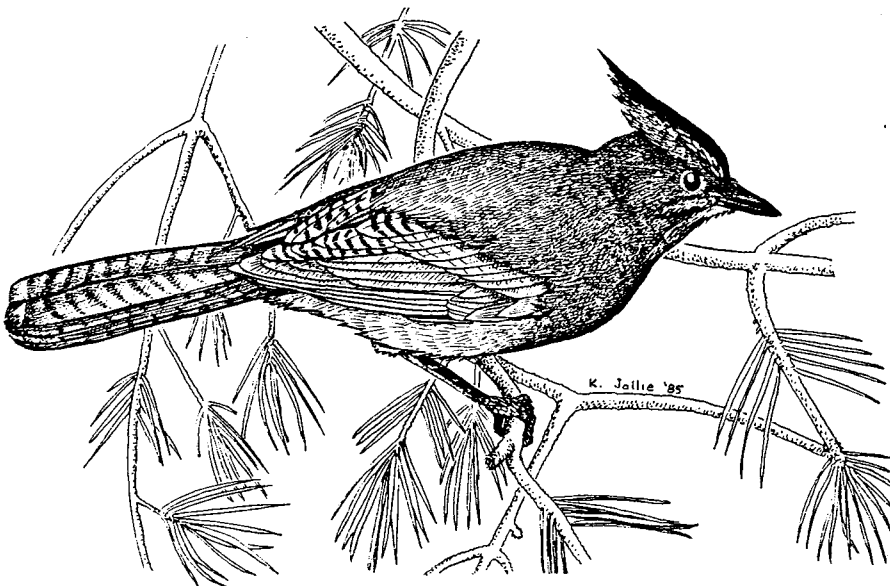
Finding one nest does not necessarily mean large numbers of Calliope Hummingbirds nest below 4,000 feet. However, together with the large amount of courtship and territorial behavior observed, and considering the natural difficulty of finding hummingbird nests points to the idea that at least some Calliope Hummingbirds do use the lower parts of the mountains to nest. The early abundance of Calliopes in the foothills is likely due to the seasonal abundance of insects and flowers at these elevations which won't be matched higher up until summer. Foothill nesting Calliope Hummingbirds are likely among the earliest female arrivals.

### Western Wood-Pewee

Sierra Nevada-wide, the Western Wood-Pewee is likely the most abundant flycatcher. Upper breeding altitudes frequently surpass 9,000 feet though they are probably most common between 5,000 and 8,000 feet in the Kaweah River drainage. The lower breeding limits of this species has commonly been associated, in the past, with Ponderosa Pines and Black Oaks. More recently, though, observations show the Western Wood-Pewee to be a consistent nesting bird of the foothills though not in numbers as great as higher up. My observations confirm this newer opinion about the use of the lower altitudes by this species.

Arriving in the latter part of April, these plain brown flycatchers initially appear somewhat inconspicuous. Into May, however, large numbers pass through calling, singing, and flycatching all over the foothills. In June, those that stay behind continue to sing from conspicuous perches while the rest of the population continues north or upslope. Western Wood-Pewees are often found near water though not always. In the summer foothills, Western Wood-Pewees are rarely seen far from water and the taller, more lush vegetation growing along rivers, perennial streams and densely wooded side canyons.

During June in the Kaweah River drainage, a pair was seen copulating in trees along the Moro Creek crossing of the Middle Fork Trail at about 3,300 feet. A pair with the male often singing occupied the area around Hospital Rock at about 2,700 feet. Down near Potwisha Campground, another pair foraged among



alders and sycamores along the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River at about 2,100 feet. The male was often observed singing and flycatching. By the end of July, the young woodpeewees would have been on their own and sightings in the foothills thus became scarce.

These and a handful of other observations in Sequoia's foothills support the idea that at lower altitudes, Western Wood-Pewees are tied to the moist, arboreal streamside woodlands which resemble their preferred habitats at higher altitudes. This may be for providing the proper nest building locations, perches for flycatching and singing, finding the right kind of aerial insects, or all of these.

### ***Violet-green Swallow***

Violet-green Swallows are by far the most common swallow in the Sierra Nevada and are also the one most likely to be seen about 4,000 feet. Therefore, the presence in these mountains has always been associated with middle elevations for nesting and higher elevations during the summer. Violet-green Swallows are frequently seen over 9,000 feet in the middle of summer. They typically breed below 7,000 feet though one nesting record occurred at an amazing 9,700 feet in the central Sierra Nevada.

For a long time, however, Violet-green Swallows were not considered part of the bird life of the foothills. Certainly their presence was considered common during spring migration through the foothills. More recent accounts of this species have correctly described it as not only a summer resident in the foothills, but also as a common breeding species as well. My observations have confirmed this new status, locally.

Found in large numbers in the foothills well before April, Violet-green Swallow numbers remain high at least through September. In the spring, many pairs can be seen flying low through Blue Oak woodlands. At this time the males can be seen oddly twitching their wings in flight and producing high scratchy twitters while repeatedly flying low around the same tree. This "territory" is usually dominated by a large Blue Oak with broken branches or old woodpecker holes. These swallows were seen lining their nest cavities with grasses. Though Blue Oaks are more commonly used, one pair used a woodpecker hole in an alder snag along a river. Many nests were located around the 2,000 foot level though abundant suitable habitat continues well below this altitude.

Hundreds of Violet-green Swallows roost on wires over the lower Kaweah River drainage. They spend mornings and evenings feeding over the foothills but also commute to distant mid-day foraging areas. Great numbers breeding in the foothills and their close tie to these areas through the whole summer requires us to redefine the status of the Violet-green Swallow to include them as a "fully-fledged" foothill species.

### ***Steller's Jay***

In the Sierra Nevada, Scrub Jays have always been associated with the lowland

oaks and chaparral and the Steller's Jay with the pines and firs of the mountains. There is no question that this is an accurate assessment. However, during or after severe winters especially, Steller's Jays have been recognized for their tendency to drift down slope, even to the floor of the Central Valley. Recent observations of Steller's Jays in the foothills during the spring and summer are only partly reflective of this down slope behavior. Some pockets of year-round residency will occur even after warm, dry winters such as 1984's.

Steller's Jay populations have increased due to the proliferation of picnic areas and campgrounds in the Sierra Nevada which supply extra food resources. A downward expansion of the Steller's Jay population to foothill campgrounds may have occurred to a certain extent. Yet, summer records in remote areas of the foothills indicate that campgrounds and picnic areas are not prerequisites for resident foothill populations.

In the Kaweah River drainage, Steller's Jays are seen in spring as low as Ash Mountain at 1,700 feet. They also occur in spring and summer around Potwisha Campground at 2,100 feet though they are not usually seen in the campground robbing picnic tables as do the local Scrub Jays. At Potwisha, more than three Steller's Jays stay in the densely wooded slopes above and east of the campground. Higher up the Middle Fork, Steller's Jays inhabit the Hospital Rock Picnic Area, at about 2,700 feet, and Buckeye Flat Campground at about 2,800 feet. Here they are bold and conspicuous as most jays are which become accustomed to humans and their food. Immature Steller's Jays were observed in Buckeye Flat Campground during the summer of 1984.

Steller's Jays were seen frequently in remote foothill areas all spring, even in chaparral down to 2,200 feet. How many of these birds remained in the foothills to breed is unknown. Probably only a few. During the summer, some Steller's Jays were seen in wild areas at least down to 2,100 feet. During the foothill summer, Steller's Jays are pretty

much restricted to densely wooded canyons and slopes with Canyon Live Oaks and other tall trees. They seem to avoid the foothill chaparral during the summer.

With the large population of Steller's Jays living in the coniferous forest areas above the foothill zone, surplus jays may have spilled over into the foothills in recent years. Steller's Jays have adapted to occupying the densely wooded canyon bottoms in the foothills, areas which Scrub Jays only sparingly inhabit. The addition of campgrounds and picnic areas in the lowlands has likely enhanced their status in the foothills. However, it is also compelling to believe that these outlying populations have always been in the foothills in small numbers but remained undetected by most observers who bypass the foothills during the hot summer.

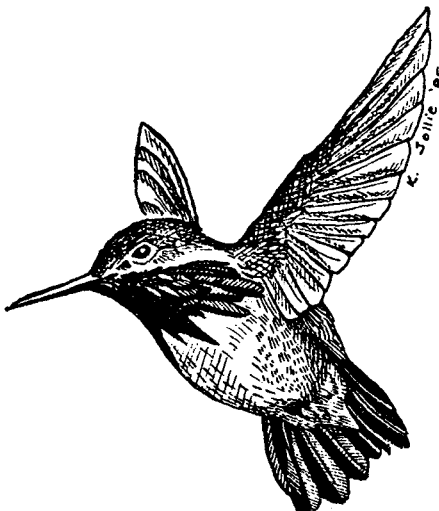
### ***Western Tanager***

Bright yellow, black and red Western Tanagers have always been associated with the deep greens of the pines and firs. Though recognized as a common spring migrant in the foothills, no past accounts have indicated that Western Tanagers inhabit the foothills throughout the entire summer as well. Therefore, recent observations reveal a new insight into the summer range of this, typically, middle elevation bird of the Sierra Nevada. Though no nesting records were established, the evidence is strong for including it into the list of breeding birds of the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Western Tanagers arrived in the lower Kaweah River drainage after the middle of April. Their numbers slowly grew and became a fairly common sight through May. Though their frequency of observation slowly dropped off in June, those observed at this time were often singing males, usually with females close by. Pairs of Western Tanagers and males singing in early summer and frequently calling throughout the summer, were observed at regularly visited locations in the foothills of Sequoia National Park during the hot summer of 1984. Tanagers were common enough in the summer that by listening for them in selected habitats, one could almost always hear them calling, especially in the morning.

Males were seldom seen without females close by, thus indicating that pair formation in the foothills was extensive. In all locations where singing males and/or pairs were observed in late spring and early summer, calling was heard through the summer. This loud calling was always done by males, sometimes from conspicuous perches. Once, two males were seen calling for several minutes while thirty feet apart along the Mineral King Road at about 2,250 feet. This volleying of calls back and forth appeared very much to be territory boundary maintenance. Since females were also seen here, the territories were likely used for nesting.

Potwisha Campground, at 2,100 feet, held two separate males which were regularly seen along the Marble Fork of the Kaweah



Calliope Hummingbird

Illustration by Karen Jollie

River. The males were distinguished by their clear plumage differences and one, the greener male, always occurred at least 100 yards down stream from the brighter yellow male. These kinds of observations were made elsewhere in the foothills but were not monitored as often.

In the foothills, Western Tanagers are found almost exclusively in densely wooded canyons of evergreen oaks or along river courses lined with sycamores and alders. They were sometimes seen flying over chaparral and open oak woodlands as well. However, observations indicate that the denser arboreal associations were the areas likely used as breeding territories.

A conservative lower limit to foothill breeding activity by Western Tanagers would be 2,000 feet. However, areas below 2,000 feet were not well monitored. Strong calling was heard in the middle of summer as low as Ash Mountain at about 1,600 feet, indicating that some may breed lower than 2,000 feet. Pairs with singing males were seen below 2,000 feet at the end of spring.

Western Tanagers then, like Steller's Jays, are not as strictly associated with pines and firs as once believed. Dense trees are likely to be more important than the type of trees. The great production of insects and berries in the foothills during the summer, supplies them with an adequate source of food. Despite the hot, dry climate, drinking water is readily available.

By the latter part of August, immature Western Tanagers were being seen in the foothill areas earlier frequented by adult pairs. Unfortunately, this late in the summer, these immatures could have conceivably come from elsewhere, so I could not possibly conclude these young of the year were produced locally.

By the start of September, it became apparent that many of the tanagers I was seeing were already southbound migrants. Even at this time of the year, Western Tanagers were not avoiding the hot, dry foothills. Since tanagers were observed in the "breeding" areas into the initial migration phase, even calling adult males, I was unable to determine when the local foothill populations began moving south or even dispersing.

Though the evidence for breeding in the foothills is still circumstantial, observations point to this as a strong likelihood. Even without positive knowledge of nesting, the large number seen or heard during the summer in the foothills, even down to 2,000 feet and much lower in the fall, a reevaluation of the Western Tanager's status in the Sierra Nevada is in order. These beautiful birds may now be added to the growing list of the Sierra Nevada's foothill avifauna.

### **Chipping Sparrow**

It seems amazing that this sparrow can manage to inhabit such a wide range of altitudes in the Sierra Nevada. Primarily a breeding species of middle elevation chaparral up to Lodgepole Pine forest, it is also startling

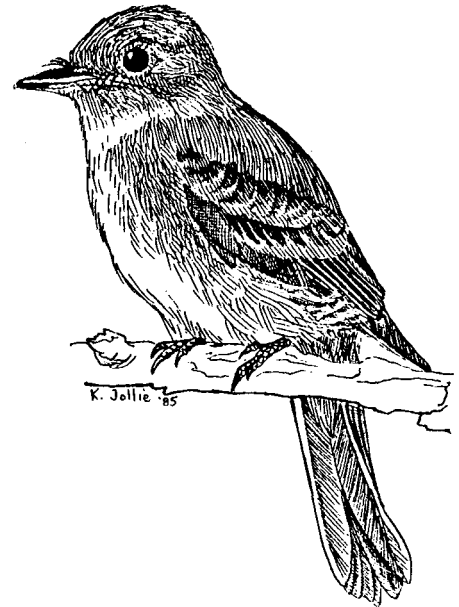
that Chipping Sparrows are not as abundant as one might think of a bird with such a wide variety of acceptable breeding habitats. Unlike the Dark-eyed Junco, another wide ranging Sierran sparrow, Chipping Sparrows are never found in great numbers. Chipping Sparrows can be seen within the Park all year, though from October through April they are principally found in the foothills. Late spring and summer records show that most Chipping Sparrows leave the foothills for higher elevations to breed. However, according to recent observations, they do inhabit, and are very likely breeding, at least as low as 3,500 feet. Other observations indicate that breeding, even double brooding, may occur as low as 1,500 feet.

The number of mid-summer observations in the foothills has been small probably due to the difficulty of hiking in this environment at this time of year. In mid-July of 1982 a Chipping Sparrow observation was recorded at Ash Mountain at about 1,700 feet. In late June of 1984, an adult Chipping Sparrow was seen at 3,500 feet vigorously scolding me as if it was trying to drive me away from its nesting territory. In early July of the same year, at least three adults were seen at Look-out Point at about 4,000 feet.

The difficulty with finding Chipping Sparrows in the foothills during the summer may also be due to an early nesting phase and thus their conspicuous singing season terminates early. During April and May, Chipping Sparrows were often heard singing in foothill oak woodlands and from tree perches in chaparral. Many such locations were identified. How many of these singing males remained in the foothills, attracted a mate and nested is unclear, but some did. At the start of May, a pair was seen gathering nesting material near the Ash Mountain corals, in Blue Oaks woodland, at about 1,650 feet. A singing male had been seen here often in April, probably the same male of the pair.

At the start of September, a small flock of Chipping Sparrows was seen foraging for several days on watered lawns at the Buckeye Housing Area at 1,500 feet. A total of nine were counted including one in adult plumage and the others in either immature or juvenile plumage. This difference in the young birds' plumages could mean that a local pair raised two broods over the summer. However, since the flock was seen late in summer, it would not be impossible for these Chipping Sparrows to have already migrated down from higher altitudes despite the hot September weather.

Conclusive proof of nesting activity in the foothills is still lacking for Chipping Sparrows although enough evidence now exists to show that they probably do. Chipping Sparrows do not occur in large numbers in the summer foothills. However, this is consistent with other elevations in the Park, but not to as an apparent extreme. The foothills are not ideal breeding habitat for Chipping Sparrows, but oak woodlands and chaparral



Western Wood-Pewee

Illustration by Karen Jollie

mixed with a few trees seem to provide adequate resources for some to at least spend the summer and likely nest. Watered lawns at the lowest observed altitudes may be a special requirement, especially for a summer's second brood.

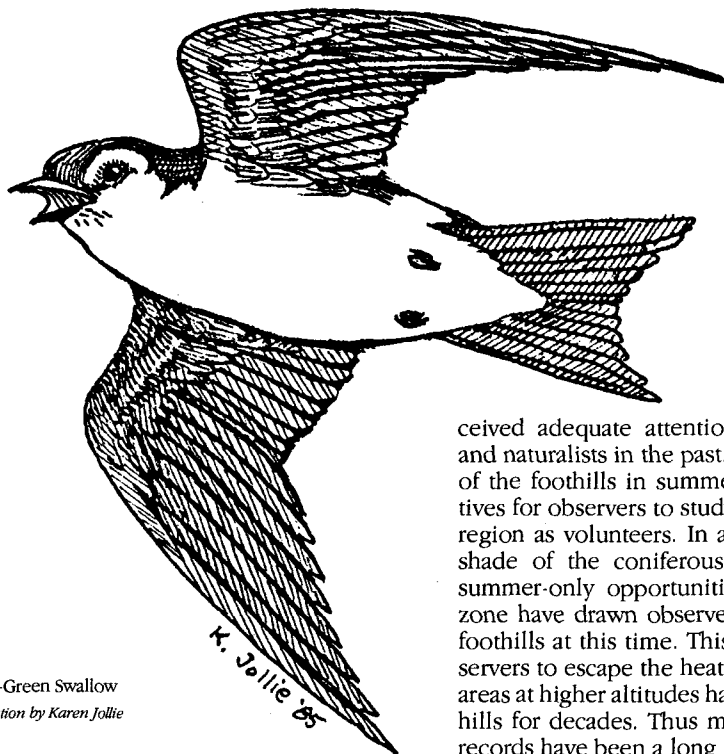
### **Conclusions**

The Sierra Nevada in Sequoia National Park vary almost 14,000 vertical feet. These mountains are divided into several environmental zones based on an altitudinal gradient. The lowest of these zones is the foothills, found below 4,000 feet. Birds can also be identified as breeding species in certain of these distinct zones. Most past accounts, though being generally accurate, miss the lower limits of some typically middle elevation species.

Here I discussed my observations of eleven species made mostly during 1983 and 1984 in the foothills of Sequoia National Park. Most of the past literature on the birds of the Sierra Nevada describe these as breeding species of the middle elevations. Several of them are already recognized as occurring in the Sierra Nevada foothills during fall, winter, spring, or in migration.

A few of the species discussed have only recently been recognized as breeding birds of the foothills. In these cases, observations have been able to confirm the idea that at least some part of these species' populations are breeding in Sequoia National Park's foothills.

Survey analysis has concluded that some species never before considered breeding birds of the Sierra Nevada foothills, have or very likely have been doing so recently in these foothills. Whether these birds have always been in the foothills but were missed by observers for decades or whether distribution changes have occurred recently, has been left open to speculation at this time.



Violet-Green Swallow  
Illustration by Karen Jollie

In many cases, my observations could not be considered hard proof of a species breeding in the foothills. However, I have provided enough strong evidence to favor this conclusion or at least initiate a reconsideration of the status of these species as summer residents of the lower elevations. In the cases of the two swift species I discussed, this could very well be the situation. Furthermore, determining the lower breeding limits for a species was very difficult. I could only discuss the lowest elevations where I saw nests or strong evidence of breeding activity. Certainly more study and evaluation must be done before final conclusions can be proposed. More surprises are likely to be in store.

Particularly during summer months, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada have not re-

ceived adequate attention by researchers and naturalists in the past. The intense heat of the foothills in summer reduces incentives for observers to study the birds of this region as volunteers. In addition, the cool shade of the coniferous forests and the summer-only opportunities of the alpine zone have drawn observers away from the foothills at this time. This tendency of observers to escape the heat and explore new areas at higher altitudes has cursed the foothills for decades. Thus my recent summer records have been a long time coming.

Hopefully, new books on the birds of the Sierra Nevada will be able to incorporate my findings. It should be interesting to see whether these new trends will be mentioned by book authors or whether the same old species range and status descriptions will be reused. I would hope that my observations will stimulate birders to spend some time in the foothills during future summers.

Whether or not these low elevation tendencies are restricted to the Kaweah River drainage can only be determined if more observers take some time searching other Sierra Nevada foothill areas for comparable results. Up and down the range, the character of the foothills does vary, but the foothills of Sequoia National Park are not all that unique to the range. However, it is well worth the effort to find out for sure.

## From The Editor

by Fred  
Heath



I will keep this editorial short for two reasons: 1) I don't have much space in this crowded 12 page issue; and 2) my mail suggests that I'm better off the less I write.

I now have received more mail on the *Birding Ecuador* article by Henry Childs than I've ever received for any whole issue, including my infamous April Fool's issue. More correctly the mail addressed my editorial comments on the *Birding Ecuador* article. With one exception, the mail was all in favor of this type of article.

Some letters went as far as to recommend that I shorten my editorials to provide more space for exotic bird names. Just keep sending in that material and I won't even have to write this column at all.

My address again is Fred Heath, P.O. Box 5036, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

## Research Awards

The Los Angeles Audubon Society will be giving annual Research Awards beginning in February 1986. Award recipients will be limited to students, amateurs and others with limited or no access to major granting agencies. The Awards shall be given for research relevant to the biology of birds. Applicants must reside in southern California (from San Luis Obispo, Kern and San Bernardino Counties south) or be currently enrolled in a southern California academic institution; there is no geographical restriction on the research area. One or more awards will be given. The total amount to be awarded will be approximately \$2,000.

The application deadline for the 1986 Research Award is 30 November 1985.

For applications, write

Sharon Milder, Education  
Committee Chairman, L.A.A.S.  
Los Angeles Audubon Research Awards  
134 Greenfield Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90049

### RESERVATION TRIPS: (Limited Participation) (continued from Calendar Page)

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 25** — Hal Baxter will lead this popular annual jaunt to the unique **Salton Sea Area** for a long day of unforgettable birding. The large quantities of ducks and geese are the highlight. Other birds to be looked for: Abert's Towhee, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Yellow-footed Gull, Mountain Plover, Sandhill Cranes and other waterbirds. Mr. Baxter is an outstanding birder and knows the area and its birds thoroughly. \$15/person.



### 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.

# Schedule of 1985 Christmas Bird Counts in Southern California

## Official Period: Wednesday 18 December thru Sunday 5 January 86

Count Area	Compiler	Address	Phone **	Associated Organization(s)
<b>Thursday, December 19</b>				
Salton Sea - south	Jon Dunn	4710 Dexter, Apt. 7, Santa Barbara 93110		
<b>Saturday, December 21</b>				
Big Bear Lake	Leo Best	402 So. Virginia, Azusa 91702	818-334-2528	
Bishop	Earl Gann	120 Pine Rd. H.C. Rt. 132, Big Pine 93513	619-938-2916	Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
Butterbrecht Spring	Keith Axelson	3262 Midvale Ave., Los Angeles 90034	213-474-6205	
Claremont	Dan Guthrie	Science Dept., Claremont College, Claremont 91711	714-621-4000	Pomona Valley Audubon Society
Lancaster	Fred Heath	6218 Cynthia St., Simi Valley 93063	805-583-0140	Los Angeles Audubon Society
Morro Bay	John McDonald	2264 Fresno St., Los Osos 93402	805-528-4855	Morro Coast Audubon Society
Redlands - Mill Creek	Douglas Williams	P.O. Box 21, Running Springs 92382	714-867-2391	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
San Diego	Jerry Oldenettel	4368 37th St., San Diego 92105	619-281-7039	S.D. Field Orn. & S.D. Aud. Soc.
Springville	Bob Barnes	P.O. Box 269, Porterville 93258	209-784-4477	Tulare Audubon Society
<b>Sunday, December 22</b>				
Bakersfield	William Goodloe	3104 Melrose Ave., Bakersfield 93308	805-399-6354	Bakersfield Audubon Society
Idyllwild	Norwood Hazard	2173 Colton Ave., Mentone 92359	714-794-2251	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
Orange County - northeastern	Gerald Tolman	12301 Gilbert St., Garden Grove 92641	714-539-8040	Sea and Sage Audubon Society
Rancho Santa Fe	Luis Santaella	P.O. Box 50, Rancho Santa Fe 92067	619-756-2082 h 619-753-5588 w	
*Salton Sea - north	Andy Sanders	472 Campus View Dr., Riverside 92507	714-684-0448	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
<b>Monday, December 23</b>				
Lake Henshaw	Claude Edwards	P.O. Box 232496, San Diego 92123	619-449-6017	S.D. Field Orn. & S.D. Aud. Soc.
Lone Pine	Mike Prather	P.O. Box 406, Long Pine 93545	619-876-5807	Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
<b>Saturday, December 28</b>				
*Carizzo Plains	Roger Zachary	1800 Traffic Way, Atascadero 93422	805-466-6222	North Cuesta Audubon Society
Granite-Woody	Mark Chichester	2501 Christmas Tree Ln., #101, Bakersfield 93308	805-832-1880	Bakersfield Audubon Society
*Lost Lake, Fresno	Garth Spidler	4105 E. Farrin Way, Fresno 93726	209-229-6367	
Morongo Valley	Stephen Myers	Star Route 1, Box 547, Whitewater 92282	619-325-0847	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
Oceanside - Vista - Carlsbad	Jerry Oldenettel	4368 37th St., San Diego 92105	619-281-7039	S.D. Field Orn. & Buena Vista Aud. Soc.
*San Fernando Valley	Arthur Langton, Jr.	7435 Lena Ave., Canoga Park 91307	818-887-0973	San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
Santa Ana River Valley	Lawrence LaPre	P.O. Box 505, Riverside 92517	714-369-3508	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
*Thousand Oaks	Elliott McClure	69 E. Loop, Camarillo 93010	805-482-0411	Conejo Audubon Society
<b>Sunday, December 29</b>				
China Lake	Pat & Donald Moore	1807 Drummond Ave., Ridgecrest 93555	619-446-6137	Maturango Museum of Indian Wells Valley & Kern Crest Audubon Society
Kaweah	Rob Hansen	P.O. Box 3840, Visalia 93278	209-627-4328 w	The Nature Conservancy, Tulare and Fresno Audubon Societies
Mammoth Lakes	Larry White	P.O. Box 8779, Mammoth Lakes 93546	619-934-4868 h 619-934-2505 w	Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
Palos Verdes Peninsula	David Bradley	1315 Park Ave., Long Beach 90804	213-498-0370	Palos Verdes Peninsula Audubon Society
	Ross Landry	12716 Muroc St., Norwalk 90650	213-863-9078	
*Santa Maria - Guadalupe	Margaret Brown	150 North Grey, Orcutt 93455	805-937-3915	Los Padres Audubon Society
Ventura	Virgil Ketner	169 Via Baja, Ventura 93003	805-642-3480	Ventura Audubon Society
<b>Monday, December 30</b>				
Pasadena - San Gabriel Valley	Michael Long	c/o Eaton Cyn. Nature Center 1750 North Altadena Dr., Pasadena 91107	818-794-1866 w	Pasadena Audubon Society
<b>Tuesday, December 31</b>				
Mono Lake	David Gaines	P.O. Box 119, Lee Vining 93541	619-647-6496	Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
<b>Saturday, January 4</b>				
Death Valley	Mike Prather	Box 406, Lone Pine 93545	619-876-5807	Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
Kern River Valley	Rick Hewett	P.O. Box 1662, Weldon 93283	619-378-2531	Kern Crest & Fresno Audubon Societies
*Santa Barbara	Paul Lehman	P.O. Box 1061, Goleta 93116		Santa Barbara Audubon Society
San Bernardino Valley	Don Hoechlin	10390 Brookway Pl., Riverside 92505	714-359-4186	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
<b>Sunday, January 5</b>				
Creighton Ranch Preserve	Rob Hansen	P.O. Box 3840, Visalia 93278	209-627-4328 w	The Nature Conservancy, Fresno and Tulare County Audubon Societies
Joshua Tree Nat'l. Monument	Brian Prescott	6737 Rycroft Dr., Riverside 92506	714-780-3146	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
Los Angeles	Robert Shanman	712 36th St., Manhattan Beach 90266	213-545-2867	Los Angeles Audubon Society
Orange County - coastal	Gerald Tolman	12301 Gilbert St., Garden Grove 92641	714-539-8040	Sea and Sage Audubon Society
<b>Weekday, Not Determined At This Time</b>				
San Jacinto Lake	Robert McKernan	40 Sherril Lane, Redlands 92373	714-793-7897	San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
Sespe Wildlife Area	Paul Lehman	P.O. Box 1061, Goleta 93116		Santa Barbara Audubon Society

\* Tentative but probable dates, usually because of Board confirmation requirement.

\*\* Evening home phone numbers unless otherwise noted.

Much appreciation to all the compilers for their cooperation in planning and setting CBC dates in September to meet our newsletter deadline. Special thanks to Bill Goodloe, Mark Chichester, Rob Hansen, Norwood Hazard and Mike Prather for their efforts in coordinating CBC dates in their areas.

# ANNUAL BANQUET

*Honoring LAAS Past Presidents*

*See what a few years as  
president of LAAS can do to  
a person!!*

*Tuesday, February 11, 1985*

*at the  
FISH SHANTY  
8500 Burton Way  
at La Cienega*

*Cocktails 5 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m.*

*Cost: \$20.00 per person*

**Speaker: Herb Clarke**

*Bird Photographer Extrodinaire*

*will present —*

**GALAPAGOS: CROSSROADS OF EVOLUTION**

**ADVANCE RESERVATIONS REQUIRED!**

**NO TICKETS SOLD AT DOOR**

*Send check with stamped self addressed envelope to  
LAAS no later than January 31st.*

*Specify Wing, Fin or Hoof  
(Chicken, Fish or Beef)*

the time and wish to belong ... of a 'select few' ... all too few according to those who, year after year, are selfless enough to accept a board post or committee chairmanship for 'just one more year' because no-one else is visibly available. How does one 'break in'? Just walk through the front door of Audubon House and say, 'I have a few hours to spare one day or so a week' ... and you're IN!

"What can you do? First of all, two or three willing workers (one day or part of a day each, mind you!) will make the job of running Audubon House a breeze for the House Committee, as well as allow us to expand the services we can offer members. If you appear a bit *extra* willing, you may wind up Executive Secretary, or House Chairman, or President! Most of the officers and committee chairmen have served in many offices over the years, and would be only too willing to step aside for an eager volunteer the following year.

"Almost every function of our Society would benefit from a little extra help. The Sales Department could operate to greater advantage to all if only one more person would join them. The Registrar's load in keeping track of our burgeoning membership would be greatly eased by just one extra assistant. The Librarian could use help, and it need not be on a regular basis. The Education Committee can absorb a number of volunteers, particularly those experienced in teaching children, as we are attempting to expand our efforts to carry the environmental message to the schools. At present, we have no Publicity Chairman, and would be delighted to have someone take over this function, particularly if experienced in media activities. Conservation Committee, Field Trip Committee, once-a-month Tanager folders ... you name it, they can use you!

"Also, there are several fields in which we could use some professional help ... an attorney, an insurance agent, an accountant ... not to perform their specialties directly for us, but rather to be available to advise the Board informally from time to time in these areas.

"And the reward? Only the acquaintance of a grand bunch of people, and the satisfaction of a valuable service performed. Speak to the Chairman of the committee which interests you, or to myself, or to any Board member. Or if you're only just curious for more information, come in and speak to any of the workers in Audubon House.

**"TRY IT! YOU MAY VERY WELL LIKE IT!"**

\*\*\*\*\*

Today, we still need a publicity chairperson and we need help in various aspects of Education and Conservation. Anyone willing to give us some time can contact any of the officers and directors whose names and phone numbers are available at Audubon House. However, I would personally be delighted to hear from anyone during the day at (213) 264-1422 or evenings and weekends at (213) 931-6692.

## The President's Corner

*by E.H. "Ken" Kendig Jr.*

**W**hile browsing through some old issues of the *Tanager*, I came across the following article from the May 1974 issue written by the then president, Gerald Maisel. With minor differences, it is fully applicable to the situation today.

### Message From the President

"Our Society continues to grow. We now have over 2600 memberships, many of which consist of two or more individual members, and therefore our actual membership is probably well over 3000. The interest of

these members, however, vary greatly in direction, intensity, and degree of participation, and there is room for all.

"As is so often the case in volunteer organizations such as ours, the preponderance of the work of establishing and implementing policy, and of performing the numerous day-to-day tasks required to provide the services and activities for our members is done by a small but highly motivated group of individuals. Most members are content to leave it at that, and to give us their moral support in addition to the financial support of their membership and, perhaps, an occasional donation for a particular cause such as the Condor Fund. For this, of course, we can all be grateful.

"But there is another segment, to whom this appeal is directed, who would like to take a more active part in the affairs of the Society, but who do not know quite how to start. Some may feel that there is an 'inner circle' of a 'select few' which must be 'broken in to'. And it is true! There is an 'inner circle' ... composed of all who have

# Conservation Conversation



by Sandy Wohlgemuth

**H**ow are the decisions made that affect the quality of our lives? Was it really General Motors (as the nasty rumor goes) that convinced the Los Angeles city fathers to eliminate the old electric Red Cars in favor of GM's diesel smog machines? Now, thirty-five years later, we must decide whether to throw billions into a subway system to relieve the freeways which relieves the smog and gridlock which (we hope) relieves the suffering citizen.

Do we blame or thank old Bill Mulholland (and the bad guys in "Chinatown", the movie) for bringing Owens Valley and (later) Mono basin water to the arid southland, thereby creating a megalopolis that won't stop growing till we all get claustrophobia? Too bad for the folks in the Owens Valley whose water and crops vanished over the last sixty years. Or the gulls and brine shrimp and eared grebes and the rest whose habitat is

So who makes the decisions? The mayors, the governors, the councilmen, the state legislators, the judges who decide cases when the underdogs go to court (if they can afford it). And many more elected and unelected arbiters of our fate. Anyone who has been to a zoning commission hearing quickly learns that there are two unequal sides to every argument. On the one hand are the nervous, apprehensive, angry neighbors who want to save their familiar neighborhood from what they feel is unwarranted change. A pleasant, wooded canyon may be scraped raw for a real estate monstrosity of jostling condominiums called "Royal Oaks" or "Running Springs" — after the oaks have been converted to firewood and the intermittent creek has been tied off. A suburban agricultural college is faced with the prospect of a row of high rises glaring down on the cattle and the alfalfa. A suave developer wants to build a shopping center a few doors from your home in a nice residential area so he wants his property rezoned "Commercial". The developer (always the developer) is the other side, the corporation man out for a profit who swears he is only trying to provide a service to the community or "improve" it. He is represented at the zoning hearing by a new, unendangered species: the Expediter. The expeditor has all the facts, the expertise and the eloquence to sell his boss to the hearing officers. He is aggressive yet ingratiating. And he eats unsophisticated citizens for breakfast. He is frequently on a first name basis with councilmen and zoning commissioners. When the chips are down he and his employer usually win.

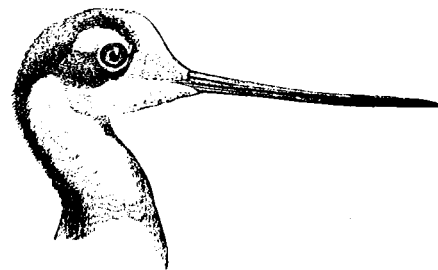
This shadowy world of "negotiation" exists on all levels of society, from the small town health inspector to the giant company that deals with the Pentagon in multi-billion-dollar contracts. Is there a quid pro quo? Are there payoffs? The man-in-the-street assumes there is some dirty work at the crossroads and accepts it reluctantly as a fact of life. Every so often, a bribery scandal sweeps through the media, rides the wind for a few weeks, and then flutters gently to the ground.

In a sentence that may live forever, Jesse Unruh once said, "Money is the mother's milk of politics." Campaign contributions to elected officials are legal and it is a rare legislator who refuses one. Common Cause, the League of Conservation Voters and other

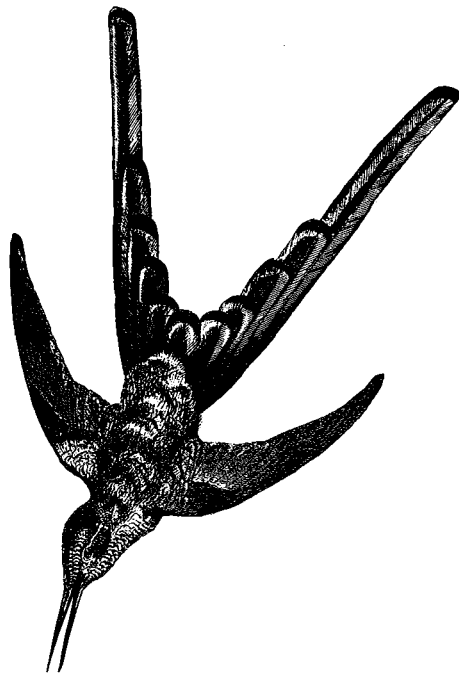
watchdog groups publicize these contributions as an educational service for an increasingly skeptical public. Only the hopelessly ingenuous will believe that a hefty donation from a special interest will not receive special consideration.

Whether we like it or not our lives are deeply affected by the pressure of unseen forces. Cost overruns and overcharges in military procurement add to the national deficit and keep interest high on housing and anything we borrow. The swallowing of open space by rampant development reduces our contact with the earth and sky. Toxic chemicals in the air and water threaten our health.

So what is the answer for the concerned citizen? In a word: Awareness. We have to care. Not only about our own neck but about the other fellow's. Over the years, Los Angeles Audubon has received dozens of urgent letters and telephone calls from anxious residents fighting to save a familiar canyon or a small park or a tiny remnant of wetland. They're hoping we can discover an endangered Belding's sparrow or a peregrine falcon in the parcel to stop the bulldozers. Their fears are real. We try to help with letters to agencies and testimony at hearings. We try to be good allies on the environmental front. But until their baliwick was threatened, our suppliant friends were quite unconcerned with our existence. (And after the battle is won or lost very few of our comrades-in-arms enlist in the wider struggle.)



Of course it is too much to expect the average person, involved in the details of his or her daily existence to mount a white steed and charge off to fight every enemy of the good life. That's what organizations are for. The Wilderness Society, The Union of Concerned Scientists, the Sierra Club, Audubon, Common Cause, the Environmental Defense Fund, The Committee For (Or Against) Proposition X. Whatever cause or group is working for what you believe in, deserves your support. If you can't lobby in Sacramento, your \$6 membership in Los Amigos de Bolsa Chica will help send someone there to speak for you — and the threatened wetland. If the annual slaughter of innocents appalls you, let Handgun Control oppose the powerful National Rifle Association. And so on, each to his own taste. An organization of quality is sensitive to developments that affect its area of interest. It has a staff that *anticipates* trouble and can act before the opposition has a head start. Some of us take a kind of twisted pride when we say, "I'm not a



still in grave jeopardy. Do we have here a cosmic survival of the fittest where the strong get stronger and the weak get clobbered? The Owens Valley farmers took up arms, shot DWP men and blew up the aqueducts. But, like the English Luddites who destroyed the machines that put them out of work in the early Industrial Revolution, they lost it all to progress.

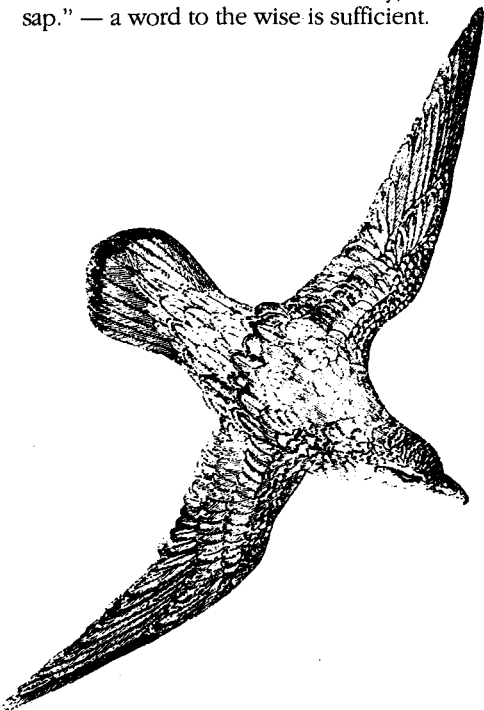


joiner." This may make us feel above the crowd and foster a self-image of independence. But if we want to see wrongs righted or good things achieved, how much can we do by ourselves?

There are special times when a public nerve is touched and the convulsion changes the world. This was accomplished in microcosm some years ago when influential parties proposed construction of a race track in the 2500-acre Sepulveda basin in Van Nuys. The mayor of Los Angeles was enthusiastic and the wheels of Public Relations began to spin wildly. With a small group of activists at its head, a groundswell of usually quiescent citizens arose, packed a high school auditorium and roared "NO!" to this invasion of open space. The mayor backed down quickly and the race track promoters crept back to Hollywood Park. The happy outpouring of environmental legislation in the 70s was the result of a powerful, undeniable consensus for a cleaner, more liveable America.

But these spectacles of an aroused populace are rare, and it is the less dramatic, day-to-day labors of dedicated people that must be encouraged and supported. The Nature Conservancy is trying to save the Carrizo Plains. People For The American Way are fighting the library censors and the radical right's attempt to force "creationism" (evolution isn't in the Bible) down the throats of biology students. Greenpeace is saving whales and opposing nuclear tests in the Pacific. To this non-violent action, a sovereign government's response is to sink the Greenpeace ship.

As Charlie Chan, or some other fictitious, ersatz-oriental know-it-all used to say, "Verb. sap." — a word to the wise is sufficient.



## Corrigendum:

The article in the October *Tanager* entitled "Mono Basin Field Trip" was written by David Gaines, not Wanda Conway.

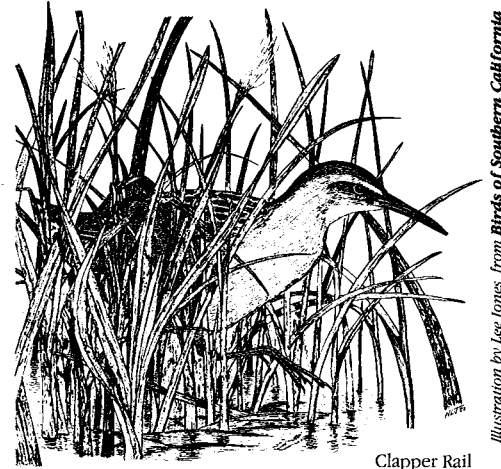
# Winter High Tides at Upper Newport Bay

by William C. Bakewell

**N**ovember, December, January, and February are the best months for searching for rails and other birds at Upper Newport Bay. American Bitterns, Clapper, Virginia, and Sora Rails are most often seen during these months; and the rare Black Rail is a possibility. These birds are by far most easily found at about the times of the highest high waters of this season. There are no tide gauges in Upper Newport Bay, but most local biologists seem to agree that the times and heights of higher high waters at Upper Newport Bay and Los Angeles Outer Harbor may be taken to be about the same. In the paragraphs below the times of favorable high waters during this season will be set forth.

The heights of the tide for the times given below are all at least 6.4 feet. On 11 and 12 December 1985 the heights of the higher high waters reach this season's maxima of 7.2 feet. Jean Brandt, in her earlier article on Upper Newport Bay (*Western Tanager*, October 1977), advises birders looking for rails to be on station a half hour before the time of highest water and to stay for at least one hour. For that reason the times given below all are for highest high waters that occur more than a half hour after sunrise.

In November 1985 the times of higher high waters are 0732 on Monday the 11th, 0805 on Tuesday the 12th, 0846 on Wednesday the 13th, 0927 on Thursday the 14th, and 1011 on Friday the 15th.



Clapper Rail

Illustration by Lee Jones, from *Birds of Southern California*

In December 1985 the times of higher high waters are 0745 on Wednesday the 11th, 0829 on Thursday the 12th, 0913 on Friday the 13th, and 1002 on Saturday the 14th. The two highest high waters during this entire season of good birding occur on the 11th and 12th, their heights being 7.2 feet.

In January 1986 the times of higher high waters are 0737 on Thursday the 9th, 0822 on Friday the 10th, 0908 on Saturday the 11th, and 0953 on Sunday the 12th.

In February 1986 the times of higher high waters are 0735 on Friday the 7th, 0820 on Saturday the 8th, and 0859 on Sunday the 9th.

All of these data were taken from the 1985 and 1986 editions of *Tide Tables West Coast of North and South America*. These books are published by the National Ocean Survey of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

*Good birding!*

## Travel Opportunity For Nature Lovers

### Help Save Mono Lake

**I**nterested in man and nature in far away places? Galapagos Islands/Ecuador/Peru and the headwaters of the Amazon are all on the itinerary for a Mono Lake Committee-sponsored trip June 18 to July 5, 1986. We shall spend eight days visiting the key islands of the Galapagos aboard the *Santa Cruz*, finest cruise ship in the islands. We'll explore Peru (Lima, Cuzco, and Machu Picchu) with an optional 3-day extension to Tambopata National Park, a pristine jungle area in the headwaters of the Amazon River. In Ecuador we'll see Quito, markets, folkloric dancing and more. Guides

knowledgeable about the flora and fauna and culture of these areas will accompany all parts of the trip.

At this writing, the exact fee for the entire excursion has not been finalized. The 8-10 day Galapagos trip will be about \$1800 and the 7-8 day Ecuador and Peru portion will be approximately \$800. Airfare is not included. A generous portion of the trip fee will be a tax-deductible donation to help save Mono Lake. The number of participants will be limited to 38 for the Galapagos segment. There will be fewer spaces available for the Peru/Machu Picchu and Amazon segments.

Betchart Expeditions, Inc., specialist in nature trips for non-profit groups, is working with us in planning this trip. For complete information, please send a self-addressed, stamped legal-size envelope to:

"ADVENTURE FOR MLC"

c/o M. Bennett  
2719 Marin Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94708.

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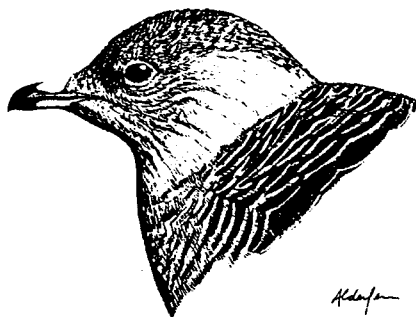


# Birds Of The Season

by Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett

Sitting down to take stock of the fall migration during the fourth week of September is something akin to writing a restaurant review after only a cocktail and the appetizer. The stage is set and the first judgments are in, but the real flurry of experiences is just around the corner. At this writing, the cocktail has been a powerful one with a Northern California twist: one part Little Stint, one part Curlew Sandpiper, one part Yellow Wagtail, with a jigger of Streaked Shearwater (making for the most Siberian cocktail since a shot of vodka). The appetizer, of the more local cuisine, must have been the Long-tailed Jaeger and Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Broth Lancaster. A number of other tidbits have added up to an auspicious beginning to the fall "vagrant season", but the main course, the real rush of unusual sightings, is just now coming up. Last year's icing on the cake, the Little Curlew, came rather early in the fall, and local birders eagerly anticipate an occurrence to rival that one sometime during the remainder of the fall season.

Assuming our readers are getting fed up with this half-baked analogy, we'll move on to the facts. As we have often noted in the past, perhaps the bulk of the migration of our standard western North American shorebird and passerine migrants has occurred by late in September. Boreal passerine migrants and assorted other species may peak somewhat later, especially those species that winter at relatively northern latitudes. For example, large numbers of such species as Yellow-rumped Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets winter to the south of us, these birds passing through primarily in October when their exact ranks are hopelessly muddled by the large numbers of individuals of the same species which remain to winter with us locally. We point out again that although the "Birds of the Season" column for the fall months reads like a roster of the lost, stressing the vagrants and the excitement they generate, there is, in addition, an equally fascinating parade of more common species which could benefit by closer scrutiny. Keep tabs, through the month of November, of the numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Cedar Waxwings, Hermit Thrushes, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and so on at your favorite birding spots. Do they continue to climb toward a winter peak in December and January? Or do they peak sometime during the month, suggesting that many of these individuals continue further south (or, at least, elsewhere) for the remainder of the winter.



Juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger  
Lancaster Sewage Pds.  
11 Sept 85

Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer

The **Little Stint** alluded to above was discovered by the careful, methodical work of Don Roberson on 14 September. It remained at its preferred mudflat, only during certain tidal stages, at Elkhorn Slough near Moss Landing, Monterey Co., until at least 21 September. This represents only the second record of this Palearctic sandpiper in California; the first bird was found at Bolinas, Marin Co., in September of 1983 but was thought to be an individual of the very similar, closely-related Rufous-necked Stint until photographs were thoroughly analyzed. In a classic case of "knowing the right time to be in the right place", Don found this year's stint on the anniversary date of the first record! The **Curlew Sandpiper** (like the stint, a juvenile) was found at the Salinas Sewer Ponds on 8 September, and remained until the 14th. Those looking for this bird on the 14th were also rewarded with the discovery of an adult **White-rumped Sandpiper**, which in turn remained for several days. The **Yellow Wagtail** was found by Art Edwards at Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes, on 12 September; in a fashion uncharacteristic of this species, it actually remained for a second day, and was seen by numerous observers. In recent years, California has been recording a September Yellow Wagtail nearly annually (six records since 1978).

The rarest pelagic bird of the period was the **Streaked Shearwater** seen and photographed by many on the Monterey Bay boat trip of 22 September. Other pelagic trips were short on birds; most disappointing was the grueling 3½ day trip out of Santa Barbara in mid-September — lots of high hopes vying with rough seas for a low yield (**Long-tailed Jaeger** was the consensus for bird

of the trip.) Trips out of San Diego and Los Angeles were also sub-par, although a **Long-tailed Jaeger** was found on the 22 September LAAS trip to San Clemente Island. Observers seem to agree that pelagic birding has been at a low ebb off southern California for some three or four years now, perhaps an effect of an abnormal cycle of water temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean over that period.

The **Olivaceous Cormorant** at the north end of the Salton Sea remained at least through the end of August; it was best seen at dawn and dusk. **White-faced Ibis** records included five at the Piute Ponds on the Edwards Air Force Base on 31 August (Brian Keelan, John Parmeter and Jim and Ellen Strauss). Birders should take note that the Piute Ponds are off limits without prior written permission from the Air Force Base. A male **Harlequin Duck** at the north end of Bolsa Chica reserve on 15 September (Bob Neuwerth) was undoubtedly the same male that was present the previous winter. Other wintering Harlequins have been known to remain through at least one subsequent summer.

**California Condors** were still being seen in VERY small numbers at the standard overlook along Cerro Noroeste Road ("The Sign") through early September, and it seems increasingly likely that this is one of the last times (for a while, at least) that wild birds of this species will be mentioned in this column. A rather early **Ferruginous Hawk** was seen in this area on 20 September (Richard Veit and Lars Johnson). A **Black Rail** was heard at Finney Lake near the southeast corner of the Salton Sea on 16 August (Brian Keelan and the Parmeters).

An excellent opportunity to study the two distinctive subspecies of the **Lesser Golden-Plover** was provided in mid-September on the Oxnard Plain in Ventura County. For example, on 21 September Paul Lehman *et al* studied five adult birds of the "Pacific" race *fulva* alongside a juvenile bird of the more widespread North American race *dominica*, on the sod farms just off Hueneme Road. The relatively long legs, slender build, and bright

Long-tailed Jaeger  
Lancaster Sewage Ponds

Photograph by Arnold Small



golden yellow tone of the former race could be appreciated with the side by side comparisons. Another Lesser Golden-Plover, thought to be an adult *fulva*, was at the Santa Clara River Estuary (McGrath) on 27 August (Ed Navojosky). The expected scattering of **Solitary Sandpipers** was encountered during the early fall, e.g. a juvenile at the pond along Cuddy Valley Road west of Lake of the Woods (Doug Willick, 15 August), one to two juveniles at Huntington Beach Central Park (Brian Daniels, 27 August to 11 September), two juveniles at the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Brian Daniels and Loren Hays, 1 September), and up to three juveniles at the ponds on the Pepperdine Campus in Malibu (Barbara Elliott, Hal Baxter, et al, 21-24 September). A **Red Knot** at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 16 September (Phil Sayre et al) was at an inland area of regular occurrence. Jon Dunn's shorebird seminar unearthed a juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 17 August; another juvenile "Semi" as at the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Doug Willick, 16-18 August), and yet another was at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 31 August (Brian Keelan et al). **Baird's Sandpipers** were reported in typical numbers, as shown by the following selection of reports: five along Cuddy Valley Road (Doug Willick, 15 August), five along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Doug Willick, 16-18 August), 30 at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds (Bruce Broadbooks and Bob Pann, 28 August), 41 there on 31 August (Brian Keelan), and 15 there on 16 September (Phil Sayre). Up to two **Pectoral Sandpipers** were on the Pepperdine Ponds in Malibu 30 August (Jean Brandt) to at least 24 September (Kimball Garrett). Twelve were counted on the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 14 September (Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer). Away from the Salton Sea, where regular in small to moderate numbers, **Stilt Sandpipers** were found at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds (six on 31 August, Brian Keelan) and along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (one

juvenile on 31 August, Doug Willick). The most unusual local shorebird was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** on the Lancaster Sewage Ponds 7 - 11 September (Bruce Broadbooks and Arnold Small); several additional Buff-breasts were recorded during September in northern California. San Diego birders reported that the Ruff had returned this fall to the east shore of San Diego Bay in Chula Vista.

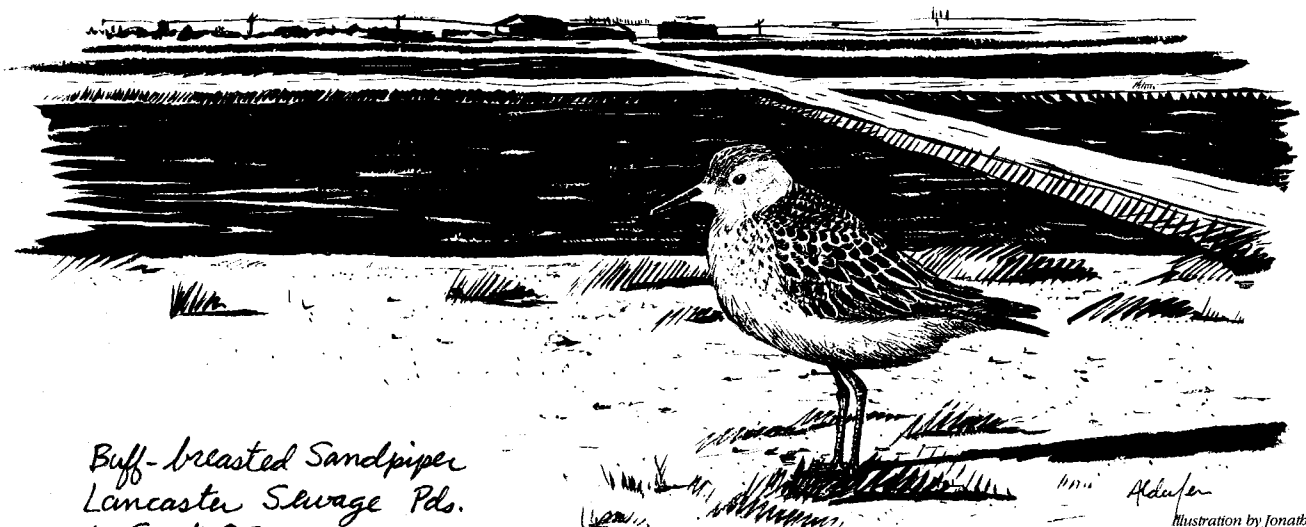
A juvenile **Long-tailed Jaeger** was closely studied and photographed on the Lancaster Sewage Ponds from 7 to 11 September (Bruce Broadbooks and Arnold Small); this species is exceptionally rare inland (though small numbers were found offshore during the same general period). A **Franklin's Gull** was at the north end of the Salton Sea on 16 August (Brian Keelan and John Parmeter). Small numbers of migrant **Black Terns** were reported along the coast in the latter half of August. Exciting was the news that **Black Skimmers** nested at Bolsa Chica this summer, the first nesting north of San Diego Bay. Ten nests fledged a minimum of six chicks in this pioneering effort. A **Pigeon Guillemot** along Ballona Creek on 10 August (Chuck Murdoch) was at an unusual locality.

**Common Ground-Doves** are now seen with regularity on the Oxnard Plain and especially around avocado and citrus orchards fringing the plain. For example, up to four were along the Laguna Road tamarisk line near Pt. Hueneme in September (Hal Baxter et al). A **Vaux's Swift** at the north end of the Salton Sea on 18 August (Brian Keelan and the Parmeters) came from a season when only the scarce Chimney Swift is normally expected. Flocks of southbound migrant Vaux's were frequently encountered after the tenth of September. An adult **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was present after about the 8th of September in a field near Lompoc in Santa Barbara Co. The most unusual land-bird of the season was perhaps the **Brown-crested Flycatcher** discovered by Jon Dunn in the willows at the north end of Harbor

Lake on 24 August, and remaining at least until 19 September. The bird, a juvenile (with the all rusty tail typical of juvenile *Myiarchus* flycatchers) was in heavy molt, with characteristic adult tail feathers beginning to come in by mid-September. Although small numbers of Brown-crests breed in desert riparian groves in southeastern California, the species is exceptionally rare along the coast (far rarer, for example, than Great Crested and even Dusky-capped Flycatchers). This establishes the first Los Angeles County record of this species.

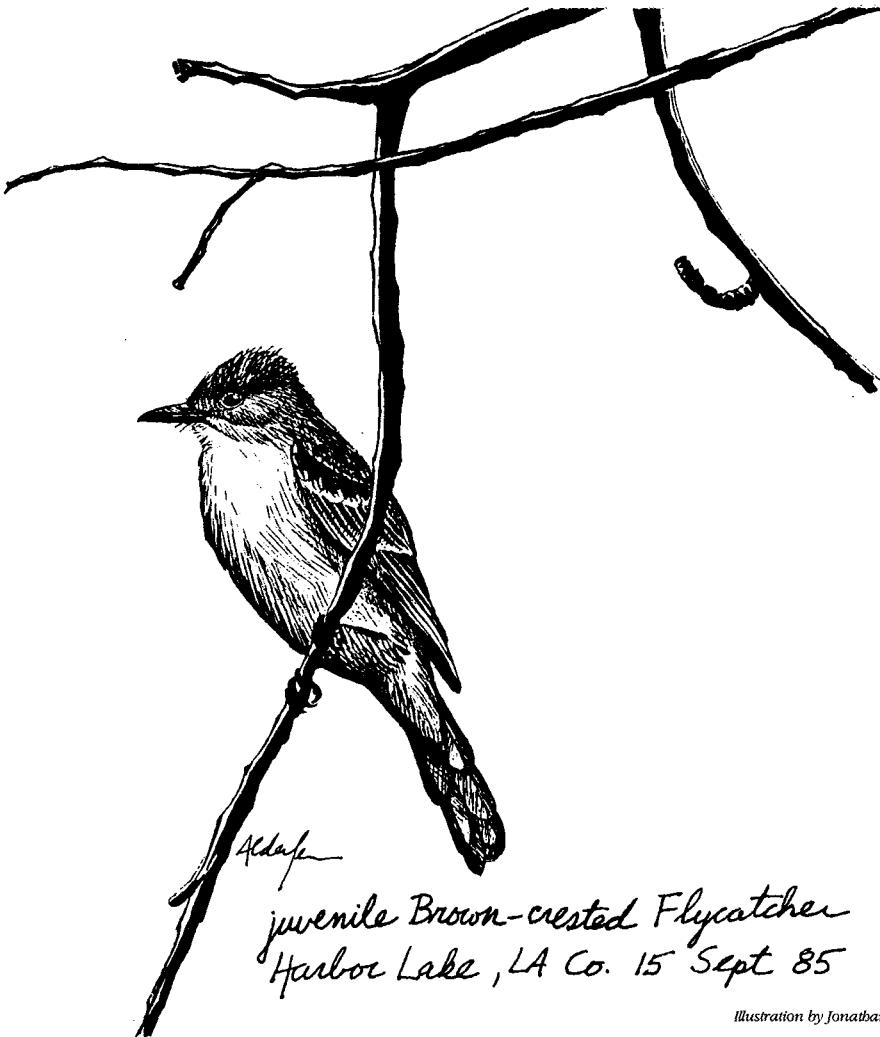
The earliest report of a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** came from Gerry Haigh in Topanga Canyon, on 11 September. As expected, numbers were just beginning to build up as of this writing. A migrant **Bell's Vireo** was at Huntington Beach Central Park after 7 September (Brian Daniels), and Jim Royer found an amazing three on the Oxnard Plain in September, including two on 21 September. An adult **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Carpinteria Creek 22-24 August (Louis Bevier).

Warblers once again provided much of the September birding focus, and we stress again that his column can only report a sampling of what has been found (**American Birds** carries a more complete report). The usual scattering of **Virginia's Warblers** west of the species normal range included one at the Yucca Valley Golf Course (Bruce Broadbooks et al, 24 August), one at Linda Mia Ranch east of Lancaster (Jon Dunn, 25 August), one along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Doug Willick, 1-6 September), and one along Arnold Road near Port Hueneme on 21 September (Jon Dunn et al). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was along Zuma Creek just below the Pacific Coast Highway bridge on 21 September (Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer). A male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** graced Huntington Beach Central Park on 19 September (Loren Hays). An early **Blackpoll Warbler** was at California City in Kern Co. on 6 September (Jerry Johnson); another was in Gayle Benton's La Canada yard on 20 Sep-



Buff-breasted Sandpiper  
Lancaster Sewage Pds.  
11 Sept 85

Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer



*Aldege*  
juvenile Brown-crested Flycatcher  
Harbor Lake, LA Co. 15 Sept 85

Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer

tember. A **Black-and-White Warbler** was at Harbor Lake after 25 August (Bruce Broadbooks), and another was in the Tapia Park willows on 12 September (Gayle Benton). A **Prothonotary Warbler** remained along Carpinteria Creek for some two weeks after 2 September (Larry Ballard), and an early **Worm-eating Warbler** was along San Jose Creek near Santa Barbara during the third week of August (Tom Wurster). There were several reports of **Northern Waterthrushes**, the closest to home being one at the Newport Environmental Nature Center (29 August, Doug Willick) and one in Big Sycamore Canyon (19 September, Ed Novojosky). An **Ovenbird** was at Harbor Lake on 25 August (Bruce Broadbooks). An **American Redstart** at Buckhorn Campground on 16 September (Southwest Bird Study Club) was at an unusually high altitude, although with the magnitude of warbler migration through these higher elevations, it should hardly be surprising that out of range warblers should show up occasionally.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were reported from the South Coast Botanic Garden (1 September, Mark Kincheloe) and from La Canada (Gayle Benton, 20 September). Two **Dickcissels** at the South Coast Botanic Gardens on 23 September (Arnold Small) constituted one of the few records of this species in Los Angeles County; its scarcity is probably due

in part to lack of rank weedy coastal habitat (many are recorded in coastal counties to the north and south of us). An immature **Black-throated Sparrow** was at an unusual locality along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (1 September, Doug Willick).

Late news from the Dairy Mart Road area below San Diego tells of a possible immature male **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**, well-studied and heard by Richard Webster; there is only one previous accepted record of this species from California.

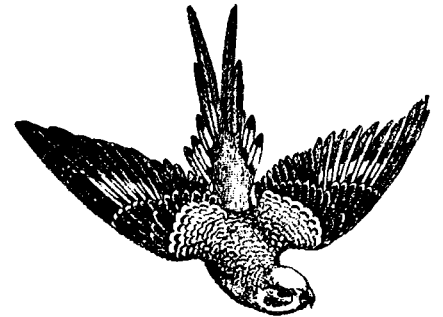
Although the whirlwind of fall migration is well past by November, the month nevertheless is among the most interesting, ornithologically, in southern California. Many birds are still on the move, waterfowl are arriving in droves, and vagrants, shorter in number than in September and October, are often long on quality. Once again, we remind observers to help out Christmas Count compilers by endeavoring to scout out areas within Christmas Count circles beginning as early as late November. Many of the interesting birds seen during that time will remain to winter.

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 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.



**EDITOR** Fred Heath

**DESIGN** etc. graphics inc.

**PRINTER** Artisan Press

**CONSERVATION EDITOR** Sandy Wohlgenuth

**ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT** Kimball Garrett

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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, NOVEMBER 2** — See shorebirds and ducks in fresh winter plumage with the **Amigos de Bolsa Chica** at **Bolsa Chica** at 9 a.m. On Pacific Coast Highway (#1) in Orange County between Golden West and Seal Beach Blvd.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3** — Meet **Gerry Haigh** at 8 a.m. for a morning walk in **Topanga State Park**. Look for resident chaparral birds and possibly late migrants. From Topanga Cyn. Blvd. make a sharp east turn uphill on Entrada Drive (7 miles south Fwy. 101 and approx. 1 mile north of Topanga Village); continue bearing left at each road fork to entrance. \$2 parking fee.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3** — Join the **Pomona Valley Audubon** at 8:30 a.m. for their first Sunday of the month beginners bird walk through the beautiful **Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens** in Claremont. From Foothill Blvd. go north on College Ave. (3 blocks E. of Indian Hill Blvd.) to 1500 N. & parking lot. (Note: Add this walk to your birdwalk resource list of 9/85. Correct phone number for Pomona Valley Aud. Soc. is 714-621-4000; move 714-825-4825 down to San Bernardino Valley Aud. Soc. — *Sorry about that!*)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9** — Join **Bob Shanman** for a morning walk at the unique **Ballona Wetlands**. This is peak season for viewing shorebirds, waterbirds and residents. 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: 213-545-2867 after 6 p.m.)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16** — Meet **Marge Parnias** at 8 a.m. at the **El Dorado Nature Center** in Long Beach to see a good variety of resident and wintering birds. Go south on Fwy. 605 to Willow St. offramp; go west about 1 mile to entrance on south side of Willow St.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17** — **David White** will lead his monthly trip at the **Whittier Narrows Regional Park**, in search of a good variety of residents in addition to returning waterbirds and raptors. 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, NOVEMBER 24** — Spend a day in the **Antelope Valley** with **Fred Heath** looking for wintering raptors and waterfowl and to work the fields for possible longspurs, Mountain Bluebirds and Mountain Plover. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Lamont-Odett Overlook on Hwy. 14 (of Lake Palmdale, about 40 min. north of intersecting Fwys. 5 & 14). Bring lunch and be prepared for cold weather. (Carpoolers are to meet across the street from Denny's at the Roxford exit [north end of S.F. Valley] off Fwy. 5 by 7:15 a.m.)

## FORTHCOMING OUTINGS:

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14** — Ballona — Bob Shanman

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15** — Whittier Narrows — David White

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18 - SUNDAY, JANUARY 5** — CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS (see list page 5)

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 19** — Lake Norco — Pat & Paul Nelson

**FEBRUARY** — Point Mugu Naval Station

## RESERVATION TRIPS

**FRIDAY EVENING/SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13-14** — **Gull and Tern Identification Seminar and Field Study with Arnold Small**. A slide show lecture will be held in the San Fernando Valley in preparation for a day of local field study. Numerous plumages of California Gulls and Terns will be carefully studied to determine age as well as species differences. The approach will be gradual and **beginners** are encouraged to attend, but there will be much information for **intermediate** and **experienced** field birders. Gulls and Terns are notoriously confusing and this is an excellent opportunity to advance your skills with these difficult birds. Dr. Small has extensive experience and knowledge in the birding world and is widely known for his marvelous collection of "full-frame" bird slides, many of which appear in the recent "Audubon Master Guide." He is a former LAAS President, a former President of the American Birding Assoc., has authored "The Birds of California" and co-authored "Birds of the West," is a Biology Professor at L.A. Harbor College and teaches three different UCLA extension classes on California Birds per year. \$26/person.



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The following three trips, which were first printed in the September issue are full and have waiting lists as of 9/24/85:

**WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 2 & 3** — Morro Bay — Kimball Garrett

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17** — Birds of Prey at Harper Dry Lake — Gene Cardiff

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7** — Santa Barbara — Jon Dunn

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, SALTON SEA** — See page 4 for details.

## EVENING MEETINGS Meet at 8:00 P.M. in Plummer Park

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12** — **Kent Smith**, Non-Game Wildlife Program coordinator for the Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game will give a slide illustrated program, **Wildlife Variety in California**.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10** — **Bob Dickson**, natural history cinematographer from BBC will speak on **Bird Behavior**, Illustrated by three short films.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 14** — **Fourth Annual Membership Slide Contest**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11** — **Annual Banquet**, See page 6 for details.

**CARPPOOLING:** IS encouraged to reduce gas consumption and air pollution whenever possible. While the IRS allows business to reimburse car expense at the rate of 20¢ per mile, a recent study shows that the average cost *per mile* to own and operate a new subcompact car was 34.6¢ and a standard car was 55.4¢. One suggestion has been for riders to at least share the 4-5¢ per mile gasoline expense.

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