



WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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Computers Are For The Birds

Part 1 — Creating a Yardlist

by Steven Hartman

There isn't a birdwatcher I know who doesn't keep some kind of list. Whether it is simply an "X" in their field guide's checklist next to each bird seen, or as complex as maintaining a journal with species lists and accounts, listmaking is essential. And a computer is the perfect tool to maintain lists. So why aren't we all computerized?

For some, the manual recordkeeping process is a healthy form of therapy: one can turn those handwritten pages and fondly reminisce about previous adventures, or

contemplate future trips to get that one bird that was missed in an area. For others, a lifetime's worth of data is incorporated into voluminous lists, and it would take a huge investment in time to enter it all into a computer. Some people work at a computer terminal every day, and the prospect of sitting in front of a screen for pleasure is not acceptable, whereas others are plainly "computerphobic".

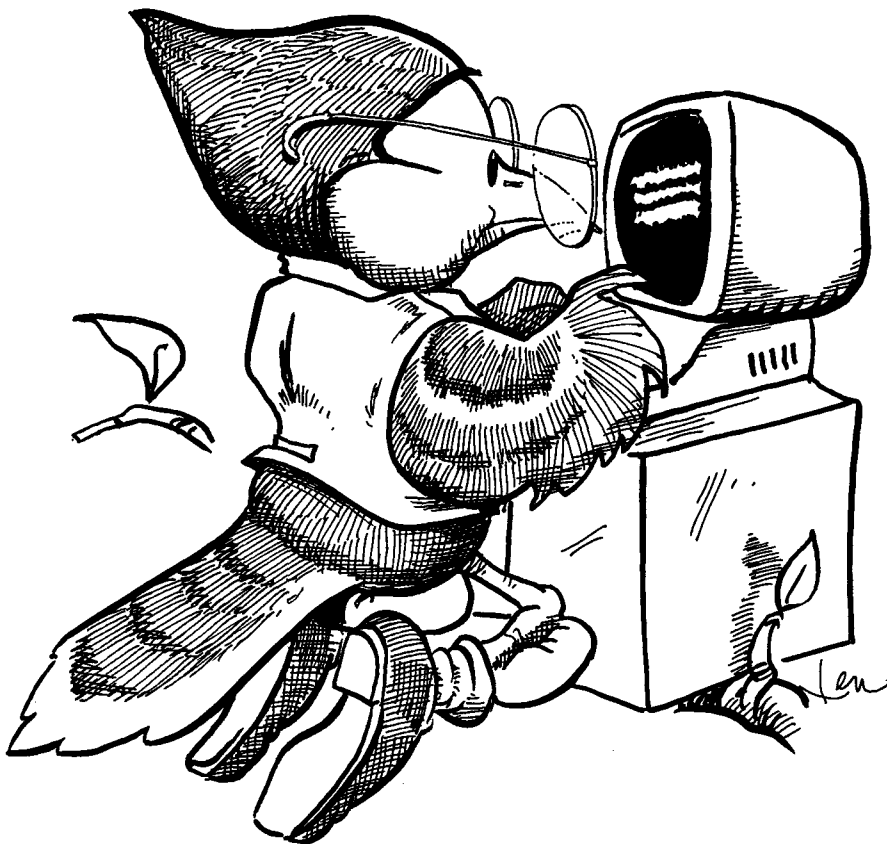
However, the main reason that we aren't all computerized is due to the murky understanding of what computers offer. In order

to shed light on this topic — in language understandable for both computer users and "computerphobics" alike — I will review recordkeeping concepts (which are the same for those keeping manual or computerized lists) and demonstrate how the use of a computer can save time, enhance accuracy, and provide more useful information. The persons whom I particularly address are those who are just starting out, those who have a computer but haven't taken that bold step to convert their manual data to an automated list, and those who may have attempted computerization.

For the reader who is unfamiliar with computers, a good introduction — written with the birdwatcher in mind — is *A Field Guide to Personal Computers for Bird Watchers and Other Naturalists*, by Edward M. Mair, published in 1985 by Prentice-Hall, Inc. The first half of this book provides a thorough introduction to the "world" of computers, using avian analogies (when appropriate) to discuss the evolution of personal computers, hardware, terminology, operating systems, and describes some of the personal computers that are available. The second half of the book offers examples and describes how the following software programs can be used by a birdwatcher: word processing, database management, electronic spreadsheets, graphics, and communications. There is also an ample bibliography and index.

Field Notes and Lists

The first step in collecting information about birds is to determine what data will be recorded. For an excellent discussion of this topic, see Kimball Garrett's article "Field Notes — for Fun and Profit" (*Western Tanager*, May 1979) where he states that "... one's notes should indicate the *date*, exact *locality* covered, *time* and *conditions* of observation, and a *complete list* of bird species found, including absolute or relative *abundance*." Rather than starting out describing a computerized system that will handle all of that information (since most of us do not take detailed notes), I will first describe the simplest kind of lists — showing as I go along the drawbacks of limited information — and in future issues work up to the kind of computerized lists that would satisfy scientific demands.



Any list with a space next to each item to "check it off" can be called a checklist, and there are two kinds that are commonly maintained: *lifelists* and *placelists*. Whereas a *lifelist* merely lists all the birds normally found in a general area, a *placelist* indicates each species' relative abundance during different seasons or months of the year. Placelists (commonly referred to as "checklists") are published by various organizations which maintain parks or preserves, or are compiled by experts and included in birder's guides to specific localities, often distinguishing between different habitats and elevations. In order to create a placelist, information has to be accumulated for a number of years. A good example of how to collect the data needed to create a placelist is to develop one's own *yardlist*, a task every birdwatching family should undertake.

Developing a Yardlist

Using a computer to maintain a yardlist is a good way to enter the realm of automation, and an electronic *spreadsheet* is the simplest way to start. There are many proven spreadsheet systems available for any kind of a computer and they all work in basically the same manner, that is rows and columns can be defined, data can be entered and sorted in this tabular format, and printouts can be made (I developed the yardlist for this example using LOTUS 1.2.3 on an IBM compatible personal computer).

The first step is to create a list of birds commonly seen and a legend of months separated by columns (see Figure 1). It is simpler to use familiar names, such as "Mockingbird" (rather than the scientifically correct *Northern Mockingbird*) and list the names alphabetically. Number each line and leave some extra space on the bottom. This first list needn't be created on a computer — graph paper will do fine. Post it in an easy to reach, well traveled location (ours is posted on the refrigerator in the kitchen) and throughout the year put an "X" in the column for the month that each bird is seen. If a new bird appears, write its name on a line in the space below and mark it for the month.

When this first page fills up — either all the months have been entered (our first list lasted from October 1981 thru September 1983) or more birds have accumulated that fit in the space below (our first list reached 40 species) — it is time to re-create the list, this time using a computerized spreadsheet program (see Figure 2). There are a number of reasons why one shouldn't just add another piece of paper to extend the list. First, lists get messy when posted on the refrigerator for two years. Second, the original graph paper allowed only 2 years of entries, but by using a computerized printout with "compressed" print (15 characters per inch) it enabled us to put 36 months on one 8½" x 11" piece of paper.

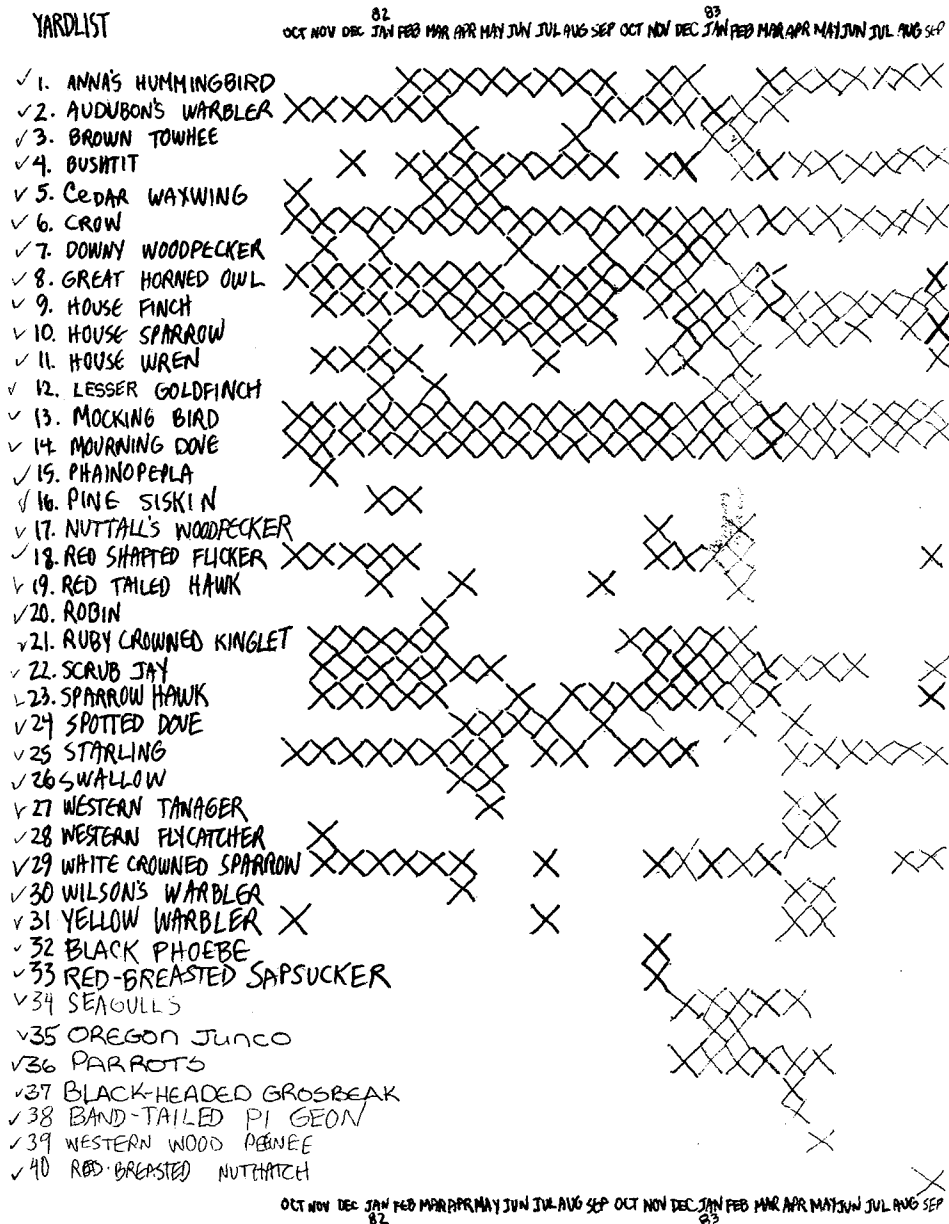


Figure 1. Actual reproduction (reduced in size — original was 8½" x 11") of our first yardlist. Note that the new birds were added starting at number 32. After a few years the faint blue lines of graph paper fade away.

Third (and most important), of our count of 40 species, 8 were added after the original alphabetical list was composed — so these species were out of order. By entering the names and indicating the months seen on an electronic spreadsheet, it is easy to re-alphabetize the list by letting the spreadsheet program sort the bird names. The easiest way to visualize how a spreadsheet "sorts" information is to think of each bird's information (name and monthly records) as a row or line of data; the bird's name is called the "primary key", that is, the data

upon which we will base our sort. If these lines of information were printed on a piece of paper, one could horizontally slit each bird's line of data and then rearrange these strips in alphabetical order; a computer does the same thing internally. Using the spreadsheet sort function is far quicker and more accurate than manually trying to list so many entries in alphabetical order and rewriting the correct months during which each bird was seen.

The beauty of yardlist with a monthly record (the example shown is for Sherman Oaks, in the flatlands near the L.A. River) is that one learns much more about the local birds than if one had just kept a list of species seen. Permanent residents (such as the Crow, Mockingbird, Mourning Dove, House Finch, Bushtit, Starling, Anna's Hummingbird, Great Horned Owl, House Sparrow, and Scrub Jay) can be distinguished from the regular seasonal visitors (White-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Oregon Junco); transitory regular migrants (Black-headed Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Warblers, Western Tanager, etc.) can be separated from the rare occurrences (Black Phoebe, Phainopepla, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pine Siskin, etc.); and one can track the sightings of generic groups which are hard to identify to species (for example gulls and swallows flying high overhead, and the various escaped parrots which boisterously announce their presence).

It becomes clear, however, that there is a great deal of information that is *not* provided. First, and most important, a list like this gives absolutely no indication of the *abundance* of the birds seen. Although the observers are probably aware of the *relative* abundance of each bird species (I've seen hundreds of starlings but never more than a pair of scrub jays, yet both are considered permanent residents), a list like this provides no *numerical* statistics indicating abundance. Second, in conjunction with the

The problem with an *alphabetical* list is that related birds will be scattered throughout the list, rather than together (as in a field-guide) for easier comparison (see Figure 2, note separation of the warblers). A quick way to solve this is to create another column and enter each bird's page number from a field-guide which lists the birds in systematic

[illegible]

order (for example, National Geographic Society's *The Field Guide to the Birds of North America*). Then, by assigning the *page number* as the primary key (remember that in the previous "sort" example an alphabetical list was created by assigning the bird's *name* as the primary key) running the sort function will rearrange the birds in systematic order. The only place where the exact sequence might be out of order is if two or more birds appear on the same page, but this method keeps your basic groups together.

By the time one has collected three or four year's worth of sightings, the sheer physical size of the list makes it difficult to look-up a particular bird's history. What

is needed is a condensation of annual sightings by month which clearly portrays seasonality, as shown in Figure 3. To create this list manually would be a tedious and perhaps unwieldy task, as a row of blanks and "X's" would have to be transcribed onto a series of rows and columns. Most spreadsheet programs, however, have a special function (called a MACRO) which allows one to "program" an often used series of commands which can then be called up by two simple keystrokes. Although it takes nearly a minute for the computer to create the report shown in Figure 3 for any particular bird, imagine how much time it saves over manual methods — and with 100% accuracy!

Indeed, the combination of speed and accuracy is what makes a computer such an attractive tool. Just as a 10-key calculator can speed up the process of adding up a long list of numbers, a computer can store years of bird records and then quickly search out specific data. But it cannot turn bad records into good data, and that is why the *way* data is stored is so important: in order to get the best use of a computer system one must clearly understand the nature of the data that is being recorded. Complete and accurate manual records can always be computerized; inconsistent or incomplete computer data is of little value.

Figure 3. Printout of special "Sightings by Month" report created by MACRO programming feature of LOTUS 1.2.3. spreadsheet.

SIGHTINGS BY MONTH FOR		OC	NO	DE	JA	FE	MA	AP	MA	JN	JL	AU	SE
Ruby-crowned Kinglet													
1981-1982		##	##	##	##	##	##						
1982-1983		##	##	##	##	##	##						
1983-1984		##	##	##	##	##	##						
1984-1985		##	##	##	##	##	##						
1985-1986		##	##	##	##	##	##	NA					

EDITORIAL

—by Fred Heath



Last issue, I was apologizing to Kimball Garrett for using his article as the lead article. This time I've got an apology for Sandy Wohlgemuth. He felt the two short notes were not worthy of being a *Conservation Conversation* column. For all the wonderful columns he's written for the *Tanager*, he deserves a byline even if he doesn't write a thing.

Speaking about not writing a thing, this issue is only eight pages because I've just about run short of material. Steven Hartman's series on *Computers Are For The Birds* should keep me from going to four pages for a few months, but after that who knows. Just as I was writing this a rather fat plain brown envelope turned up in my mail. I haven't opened it yet, but I think it is from Hank Childs. Please don't force me to open that envelope. Send your articles, drawings or small change to me — Fred Heath, P.O. Box 5036, Chatsworth, CA 91313.

RESERVATION TRIPS:
(Limited Participation)

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.

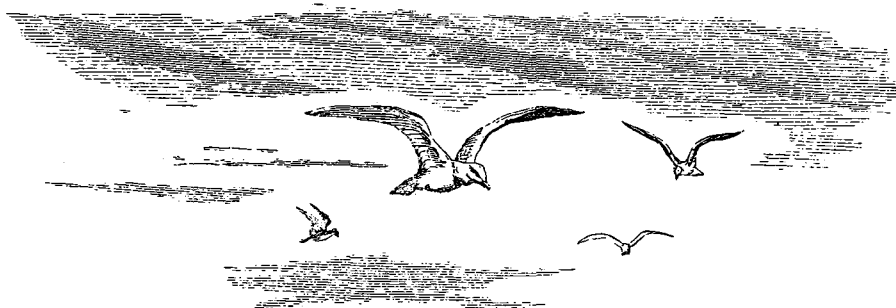
All refundable reservations contracted and then cancelled (except by LAAS) will be charged a \$5 handling fee.

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.

**FRIDAY EVENING & SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER
26, 28 — Pelagic Workshop with Arnold**

Small. Take advantage of this great opportunity to study, then actually view pelagic birds. A meeting in Studio City Friday evening will feature slides and discussion on the observation and identification of pelagic birds of California, followed by a full day pelagic trip to Santa Barbara Island Sunday. Dr. Small has extensive experience and knowledge in the birding world and is widely known for his marvelous collection of outstanding bird slides. Dr. Small has been President of both L.A. Audubon and the American Birding Association. He contributed many slides for the "Audubon Master Guide," authored "The Birds of California," co-authored "Birds of the West," and is a Biology Professor at L.A. College in addition to teaching three different UCLA extension classes on California birds each year. (Maximum 38 persons — boat limitations.) \$45/person. Lecture/Slide show only \$15/person.



Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth



Review

When the postman shoves "Audubon" magazine in the mailbox or plops it down at the front door, I wonder how many of us look at the pretty pictures, skim through a short article and then toss it onto the coffee table. If you're one of those, then you missed a great story in the July issue. Read "Finis Mitchell, Lord of the Winds" by James R. Udall. It's about a remarkable man who has spent most of his 85 years tramping the rugged wilderness of the Wind River Range in Wyoming. He was backpacking before the word was in our vocabulary, disdaining tents and hot meals and all the accoutrements of contemporary high country camping. He has a fierce love for these 13,000-foot mountains — the animals, the birds, the wind-blown trees, the magnificent vistas. He knows every snag and crevice, every canyon and glacier so well that the U.S. Geological Survey checks its maps of the area with him before publishing them.

Finis says he doesn't know much about acid rain but he can tell you plenty about the smog that has blown into his domain in the last 20 years. "Our air used to be crystal clear, but now it's getting more putrid every year . . . If we pollute the air we affect everything else: the rain, the soil, the vegetation, the animals." During the Great Depression, Finis lost his job with the railroad and he and his family tried to open a fishing camp. But only five of the 2000 lakes had any fish, so with fingerlings from a hatchery, they hauled them in five-gallon milk cans strapped on pack horses to these remote, barren lakes. In eight years they stocked 314 lakes with five kinds of trout — 2.5 million of them — and fish from those lakes reached 700 more. As author Udall says, "That these fish, which owe their existence to the good deeds of one man, are now threatened by acid rain, a pandemic pollutant for which all of us are responsible, is an excruciating allegory, a reflection of our times."

Deftly, Udall explores the problem of acid rain, relating the experiences of Germany, Scandinavia and our northeastern states. He paints a sober picture of the advent of the acid rain syndrome to the West: the power plants, the smelters, the auto exhaust, the oil and gas development. He talks of the Clean Air Act and the politics of pollution. And the irony of our objection to Mexico's new copper smelter because it has no emis-

sion controls, while we permit Phelps-Dodge to operate its Douglas, Arizona, plant without them.

But we always return to Finis, Finis the poet who never went past the 7th grade. A quote from his camping notes: "Evening alone in the mountains. No one to talk to. No one speaking out . . . Only the comfort of a murmuring breeze, the goodnight chirp of the snowbird . . . the glistening of the moon on a distant glacier, the faint music of waterfalls scurrying down. Where else can a man be so close to heaven and still have his feet on the ground?"

If you haven't done so, read this article. It's a marvelous blend of a unique personal history, an education in the phenomenon of acid rain, and a paean to the overwhelming beauty of an American wilderness. With pretty pictures.

* * * * *

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Time to regroup. The Letter-writing Network that was so successful for a couple of years fell by the wayside when the burden on the organizers became too heavy. By popular demand it is going to be revived. This is the telephone tree of Audubon people who are willing to write letters on environmental issues to senators, congressmen, governors, presidents, mayors, city council members and bureaucrats of all description. When a bill is going to the floor of Congress or a local issue demands urgent response, time is important. The next Tanager may be six weeks away. If a phone call can produce a clutch of letters from many parts of Los Angeles in a few days, the recipient must pay attention. Bob Barnes, the sage of the South Fork of the Kern river, tells about the aides to an official who told him that their boss was sure going to vote "correctly" on a bill. He had been swamped with letters. Bob asked how many; the answer: fifteen! Most voters don't write letters, so a simple, personal letter from a constituent carries a great deal of weight with public servants. Every lobbyist, everyone in politics — no matter how cynical — will confirm this fact.

There is new help available to reorganize the Network. If you would like to join, send a letter or postcard or call: Sandy Wohlgemuth, 19354 Calvert Street, Reseda 91335; 818-344-8531. Include your address, zip code and phone number (including area code). It will cost you nothing but a little time and a post-

age stamp every three or four weeks. If, in addition to writing your own letter, you can see your way clear to calling a small number of other volunteer letter-writers in your local area, please say so.

We are not alone. The great majority of people agree with us when we ask for a healthy place to live and the preservation of wild America. Your letters can help.

Is L.A. Ready for Another Million Trees?

Citizen Forester Training Prepares the Soil

October 4–November 9, 1986

The group that inspired the planting of one million trees in Los Angeles before the Olympics says the Urban Forest is still a dream. *TreePeople* is looking for committed community activists to participate in a five part "Citizen Forester Training" beginning October 4th.

The training, broken into theory and practice modules, will cover how, where and what to plant, and how to keep it all thriving in the future. Target areas for greening include Central, South Central, and East Los Angeles, but the training is open to all communities.

"Graduates" of the training will have the knowledge to do much more than lament eyesores in their neighborhood. They'll know how to get the people power, the political blessings, the media attention and the money to bring their dreams to reality.

There'll be a small fee to cover the cost of materials. For reservations and more information call Jane or Alex at 818-769-2663.

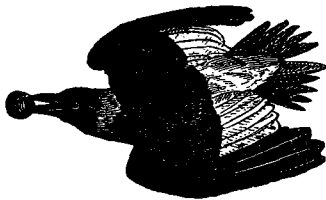


A Note From the L.A. County Museum of Natural History

Kimball Garrett, Ornithology Collection Manager at the L.A. County Natural History Museum, will present a free slide lecture on "**The Birds of Los Angeles County: A Natural and Unnatural History.**" The lecture will be given at the San Marino Woman's Club, 1800 Huntington Blvd., at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 23.

Birds of the Season

by Hal Baxter
and Kimball Garrett



The weeks of late June and early July are lean times for us to gather material for the Birds of the Season column. Local birders seem to migrate out of the region at this season, and the star summer attractions within California this year were in the northern part of the state (the **Sedge Wren** which stuck to its small patch of weeks and willows east of Yreka, Siskiyou County, until the end of June, and the **Murphy's/Solander's Petrels** which graced Kurt Campbell's Pacific Adventures boat trips beyond Cordell Bank). For those birders who remain in southern California in the mid-summer and birdwatch rather than aestivate, an altitudinal migration is evident — many of the following reports, therefore, are of montane birds.

By far the most unusual bird to appear locally during the period was the adult **Mongolian Plover** at the Santa Clara River estuary in Ventura. The bird was discovered on 12 July by Jim Royer, but was rumored to have been present earlier. It was seen by numerous observers for a few days after the 12th. The obvious question arises: was this the same individual that was present at the same locality 7-13 August 1982 and again 26 July to 2 August 1983? This year's bird appeared somewhat earlier and, therefore, retained almost complete alternate plumage (the broad cinnamon breast band, black auricular, and black-bordered white forehead were striking marks on this heavy-bodied long-legged plover). [In the Old World this species is known as the Lesser Sand-Plover, a curious name considering that, although it is "lesser" than the "Greater Sand-Plover", it is less "lesser" than other "sand-plovers" (a general term which covers a rather random assortment of our *Charadrius* plovers).] Experience would suggest that the same individual was involved in each of these three years; migrating shorebirds frequently pick the same stop-over points year after year. During the "missing years" of 1984 and 1985 the bird could simply have been overlooked, or might have stopped elsewhere.

Kurt Campbell's pelagic trips to the Cordell Bank and beyond (off Bodega Bay) on 1, 7 and 13 June amassed a total of twenty sightings of dark ***Pterodroma* petrels** (at least four of which were felt to be **Solander's** and one **Murphy's**). Other noteworthy birds on these trips included one small ***Pterodroma*** with white underparts (**Cook's Petrel** or a related species), a **Buller's Shearwater**, four **Long-tailed Jaegers**, and a **Horned Puffin**. The only local report

of pelagics received concerned the presence of several dozen **Black Storm-Petrels** around the fishing barge off Redondo Beach at night (Arthur Howe).

Even if late June and July birding around the southern California coast were restricted to nothing more than an occasional stare into the air, this can sometimes be rewarded by the sight of a **Magnificent Frigatebird** (affectionately known as Frignificent Mag-gotbirds by those of us who never see them, and abbreviated to Mag Frigs by those who see them all the time). Such sightings were made by Dave McLeod along the Pacific Palisades coast on 3 July, by Claudia Black and Chris Floyd over the Marina del Rey jetties on 13 July, and by Larry Norris at Santa Cruz Island on 22 June. The former two birds were thought to be immatures, while the last was an adult female. Additional frigatebirds are often reported at the Salton Sea. Two **Little Blue Herons** were found at the southwest corner of San Diego Bay on 13 July (Bob Neuwirth). A **White-faced Ibis** was along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim on 1 July (Doug Willick), and two (an adult and an immature) were over the Santa Clara River estuary on 12 July (Jim and Karen Havlena and Fern Tainter).

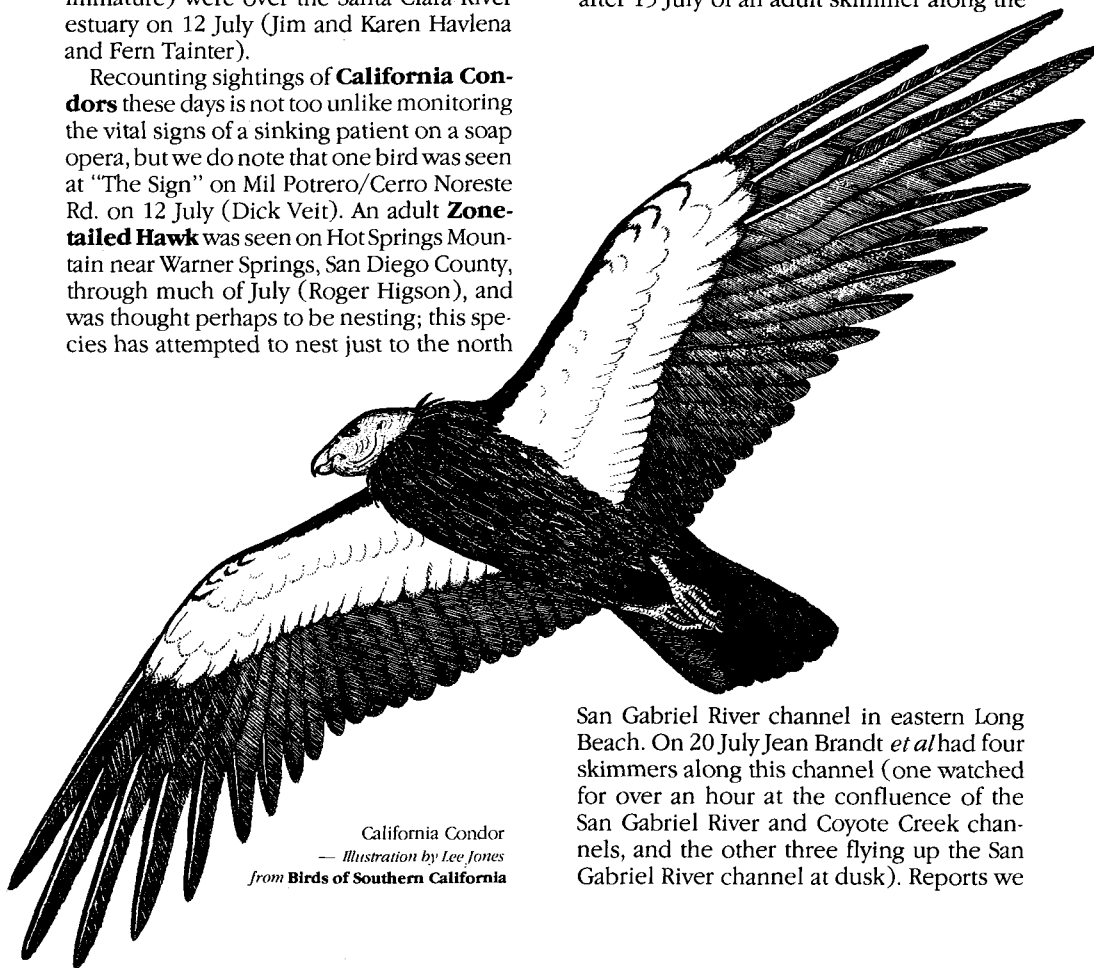
Recounting sightings of **California Condors** these days is not too unlike monitoring the vital signs of a sinking patient on a soap opera, but we do note that one bird was seen at "The Sign" on Mil Potrero/Cerro Noreste Rd. on 12 July (Dick Veit). An adult **Zone-tailed Hawk** was seen on Hot Springs Mountain near Warner Springs, San Diego County, through much of July (Roger Higson), and was thought perhaps to be nesting; this species has attempted to nest just to the north

in the Santa Rose Mountains, and occurs not uncommonly in the higher mountains of Baja California.

Incidentally, observers unfamiliar with Hot Springs Mountain may wish to read (or reread) Phil Unitt's excellent paper in *Western Birds* (Vol. 12:125-135, 1981) on this mountain range.

Apart from the Mongolian Plover mentioned above, the most noteworthy shorebird of the period was an adult **Stilt Sandpiper**, also at the Santa Clara River estuary, on 13 July (Brian Daniels). The **Glaucous Gull** found in late May at the north end of the Salton Sea was present at least through mid-July (Richard Webster).

Black Skimmers continue to expand their range and numbers along our coast; it is almost hard to believe now that this species was essentially unheard of in California prior to the late 1960s. In addition to the erratic colonies at the beleaguered Salton Sea and the healthy colony at the south end of San Diego Bay, skimmers are now nesting in good numbers at Bolsa Chica (25+ pairs); nesting is also suspected at Upper Newport Bay, and the species may ultimately nest at other large coastal estuaries which have protected islets for nesting. Despite the proximity of skimmers (at Bolsa Chica) to Los Angeles County, very few have ever been found within the limits of the county. Thus it was with great interest that we learned of Brian Daniels' sighting on several evenings after 15 July of an adult skimmer along the



California Condor
— Illustration by Lee Jones
from *Birds of Southern California*

San Gabriel River channel in eastern Long Beach. On 20 July Jean Brandt *et al* had four skimmers along this channel (one watched for over an hour at the confluence of the San Gabriel River and Coyote Creek channels, and the other three flying up the San Gabriel River channel at dusk). Reports we

Black Skimmer Illustration by Lee Jones
from *Birds of Southern California*

have received indirectly of a skimmer being seen on the south pond of El Dorado Nature Center would appear to pertain one of these same skimmers (that pond is only a few hundred yards from the confluence of these channels). It is possible that the San Gabriel River channel is within the normal foraging range of the Bolsa Chica population, and the area should thus be closely watched for more L.A. County skimmers.

Flammulated, Spotted and Northern Saw-whet Owls were all heard on Hot Springs Mountain, San Diego Co., in early July (Roger Higson). In addition to the Flammulated Owl at Buckhorn in the San Gabriels (after 15 June, Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer), one was calling near Bluff Lake, San Bernardino Mountains (Hank and Priscilla Brodtkin, 4 July), and a pair of adults and a young bird were at Church Dome, north of Lake Isabela (Fred Ziegler, 5 July). A Northern Saw-whet Owl heard at Grandview Campground in the White Mountains (Charles Hood, 3 June) is one of the few to be found in the White Mountains.

A male **Purple Martin** seen over the center of Arcadia on 1 July (David Bell) was undoubtedly from one of the remnant populations along the southern base of the San Gabriel Mountains. Two pairs of "**Plumbeous**" **Solitary Vireos** were along Upper Arrastre Creek, near Onyx Summit, San Bernardino Mountains, on 4 July (Hank and Priscilla Brodtkin). A male **Tennessee Warbler** made an unexpected stop in David White's Claremont yard on 6 July; the origin of these mid-summer "vagrant" parulines is unclear. The fate of the nesting pair of **Virginia's Warblers** along the Lighting Ridge Nature Trail west of Big Pines, San Gabriel Mountains, is uncertain, but the male was still singing there on 28 June (Doug Willick). **Summer Tanager** records west of the species' normal breeding range included males in Rustic Canyon on 29 June (Bernard Wilets) and Sycamore Park, Malibu, in late June (Jonathan Alderfer). This species is seen with surprising frequency in mid-summer on the coastal slope of southern California, but in-hand study is required to determine whether these records involve the race *cooperi* (which has nested as far west as Valerme and Castaic Junction) or vagrants of the eastern race *rubra* (of which several specimens have been collected in California). **Indigo Bunting** males were singing

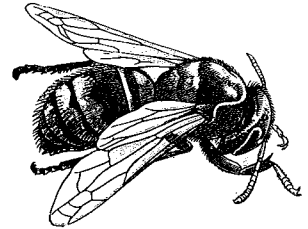
on the Glendora Mountain Road (Phil Sayre, 1 July), and along Mulholland Hwy. near Decker Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains (Lee Jones, late June). A couple of evererratic **Red Crossbills** were found at Iris Meadow, Mt. Pinos, on 20 July (Kimball Garrett).

September birding will mark a continuation of August shorebird watching as well as a passage from the doldrums of late summer land-birding in the lowlands. By now virtually all of our readers are aware of the kinds of habitats which concentrate migrants and therefore may harbor vagrants. We point out once more, however, that September is an excellent time to learn more about our normally occurring species (and it is ONLY through complete familiarity with these more common species that we can learn the identifying characters of vagrants). Many of the western species passing through in September have undergone their annual complete molt and are in fresh plumage. This fresh plumage imparts a brightness and color saturation that is often quite different from the appearance of these same feathers when spring rolls around. On the other hand, some species molt only upon reaching the wintering grounds, and may therefore possess a certain challenging "rattiness" to the plumage when they pass through our region in fall. Finally, juvenal plumages of many species are retained well into the fall, and present a further challenge to us. Without wishing to preach, we merely point out that a September without a single rare bird can still be a completely enjoyable and thoroughly educational experience when one pays close attention to the more normal species.

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.



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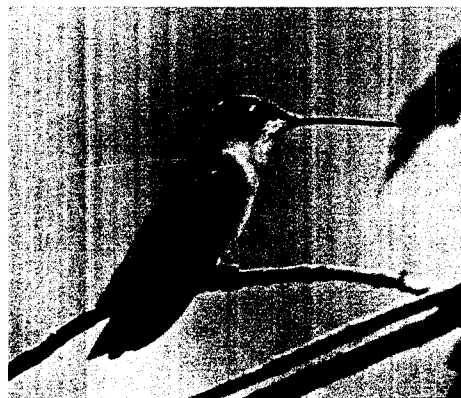
Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, Bookstore and Nature Museum are located at Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046. Telephone: (213) 876-0202. Hours: 10-3, Tuesday through Saturday.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sept. '86

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

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 — Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett — Bird Identification Workshop. Raptors and female hummingbirds are just some of the tricky bird identification problems that Jon and Kimball will discuss. Audience participation is encouraged as Jon and Kimball sort through problems that have probably perplexed most of us. As well as being well known for their field trips and seminars, Jon and Kimball coauthored *The Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution*, are currently writing a new book on bird identification, and are both members of the California Bird Records Committee. Kimball is



Two Mystery Birds — Photographed by Kimball Garrett. One is a raptor, the other a hummingbird. Just figuring out which is which has already confused the editor.



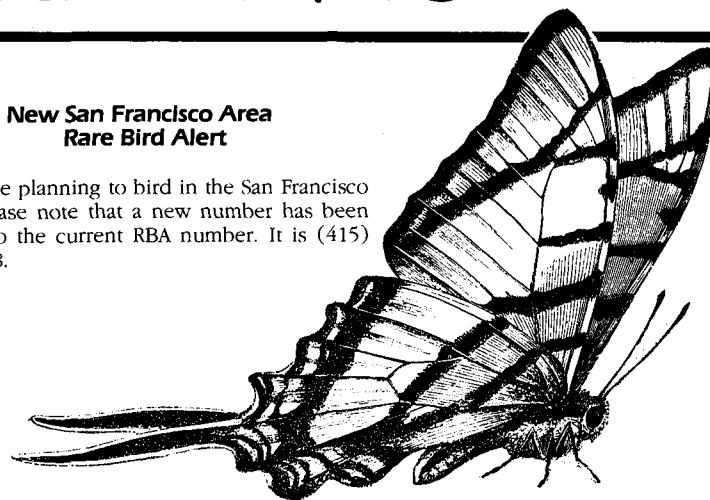
the Ornithology Collection Manager at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Jon was a chief consultant for the highly praised *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and currently leads tours for Wings Inc. Bring your questions and ideas, and in the meantime try your skills out on these two photos by Kimball.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14 — Richard Ives who has spent many months in Malaysia and will be leading tours in this area will present an illustrated talk on the **Birds of Malaysia**.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11 — Don and Alberta Shoemaker who have spent decades photographing and studying **Hummingbirds** will present an illustrated talk on the object of their studies.

New San Francisco Area Rare Bird Alert

If you are planning to bird in the San Francisco area please note that a new number has been added to the current RBA number. It is (415) 528-0288.



BOOKSTORE NEWS

Now showing in the bookstore:

BIRDS OF NEW GUINEA, Beehler, Pratt & Zimmerman	\$ 37.50	*\$ 65.00
A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF COLOMBIA, Hilty, Brown & Tudor	42.50	* 95.00
SHOREBIRDS: AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE, Hayman, Marchant & Prater ...		35.00
HUMMINGBIRDS OF THE STATE OF ESPIRITO SANTO (Brazil), Ruschi		** 100.00
Checklist of Birds of Sabah		1.25

Coming attractions:

THE Tanager: NATURAL HISTORY, DISTRIBUTION & IDENTIFICATION, Isler & Isler (242 species, 551 plumages, 263 maps)	49.95	* 70.00
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*Special order, allow 6-8 weeks. **Limited quantity, in stock.

FIELD TRIPS

CALL THE TAPE!

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

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 — Meet David White at Whittier Narrows Regional Park for his monthly morning walk through a good diversity of habitats in search for a variety of residents and fall migrants. 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.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 — Join Bob Shanman for a morning walk at the unique **Ballona Wetlands**. This is peak season for viewing migrating shore birds. Also see water birds 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, OCTOBER 11 — Bob Shanman, Ballona Wetlands. See September 20th trip for details.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19 — David White, Whittier Narrows. See September 20th trip for details.

RESERVATION TRIPS

See Page 4 for detailed information

SEPTEMBER 26, 28 — Pelagic Workshop — Arnold Small

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26 — Pelagic from San Pedro to Santa Barbara Island. \$24 — Kimball Garrett

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
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