



# WESTERN TANAGER

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## The California Condor: A Different Approach, Another Chance

by David White

The last time I saw a California Condor was Saturday, September 7, 1985, at 6:28 p.m.; it was IC-9, an immature male, cruising low over the Valle Vista campground in Los Padres National Forest. A few hours earlier in the day, "Igor" (as IC-9 was fondly known to Eric Johnson's valiant crew of Condor watchers) had been far to the north, in the Sierra Nevada, and he had swung by the Hudson Ranch before going to roost, apparently to see whether there were any carcasses available for Sunday brunch.

This year, I didn't go up to Los Padres. There is nothing that can compare with a Condor on the wing, but I cannot watch

them without thinking of their plight. The first time I saw a California Condor was in August 1980, and after seeing a flock of five birds together I wrote: "I am ... more terrified than gratified that I may have seen twenty-five percent of the world's population of this magnificent species in a single glance."

As readers of the *Western Tanager* well know, there have been many ups and downs for the species since the Condor Recovery Program was begun in 1979. But, after the early good news about double and even triple-clutching, the past two years have seemed particularly dismal. Half of the wild population had been lost over the winter of

1984-85, and there was no clear indication why. One contingent wanted to bring all of the birds into captivity; a compromise approach of leaving a few birds in the wild was strongly supported by the National Audubon Society, and this briefly prevailed, but 1986 again saw a push to bring in the remaining three birds. National Audubon managed to forestall the attempt, through legal action, but it seemed that few positive steps were being taken. The Department of the Interior was refusing to purchase the Hudson Ranch; insofar as I knew, we still didn't know what was causing the mortalities, and hence I saw little basis for optimism about future releases from the captive flock. Everything seemed confusing, and I had come to feel that either our efforts were being misdirected or that there was, quite simply, nothing that could be done. Either way, it seemed that we were watching the Condor slipping into extinction.

Now the temporary injunction that National Audubon won has been overturned, and by the time this article goes to press there may be no California Condors in the wild. None—not even a single "guide bird" left to show captive-born Condors how to behave and

*Photo Courtesy of The Los Angeles Zoo*





Photo by Eric Johnson

where to find food, if at some time in the future offspring of the captive flock are released. Some will see this as defeat — but this is not necessarily the case. The Condor Recovery Program has, in fact, not succeeded in keeping a viable population of Condors in the wild, but it has accumulated valuable information during its seven years, and this information may point the way toward another chance for the Condor. Another chance will, however, require another approach to the problem.

The new approach discussed here is taken from a report titled "The California Condor Program: a Proposal for the Next Essential Steps." It represents a consensus of discussions among Art Risser, Don Lindburg, Bill Toone, Mike Wallace, Cathy Cox, Warren Thomas, and Marcia Hobbs (San Diego and Los Angeles Zoos); Jerry Verner, Maeton Freel, and Teresa Nichols (U.S. Forest Service); Noel Snyder (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service); Lloyd Kiff (Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology); and Eric Johnson (California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo). The approach is, in my opinion, far from ideal. It is based on information which is, at first glance, exceptionally disturbing, because it forces us to seriously rethink our position on the matter of habitat and the feasibility of its adequate protection. Furthermore, it is disturbing because it suggest the possibility of a population which, although not confined to zoos, is more managed than wild. But despite this, the new approach seems to provide the only realistic hope that future generations of humans will be able to see Condors flying free.

Before presenting the new approach, a review of what has been learned about Condors during the past few years is in order. From perhaps 24 birds in 1982, the Condor population steadily decreased. The adult mortality rate was about 22% annually, while 5% or lower would be required to maintain a population; during the winter of 1984-85 nearly 50% of the birds were lost. (Fortunately, there are over 20 Condors presently in captivity.) Five years ago, the causes of Condor mortality were not well understood.

It is important that we recognize that historic mortality factors may no longer be critical; in the past, many Condors were shot and numbers were lost through collecting of eggs. But now, reliable data is available for recent causes of death. Shooting and collisions with human-built structures such as power lines may be partial factors, and pesticides are definitely responsible for some deaths, but *the overwhelming cause of death is lead poisoning*. Furthermore, we now know that the lead is coming from one major source: deer carcasses. Hunters do not always make clean kills; they wound deer, which wander off and die, and when Condors find them they ingest the bullets along with the venison.

What are the potential solutions? What if we were to feed the Condors so that they wouldn't have to scavenge on deer? Well — it's been tried. And it isn't that the Condor refuse the cattle carcasses that are put out for them; they respond quite well to being fed. However, it only works to a certain point. What "Igor" had done the day I last saw him exemplifies the problem: despite regular provision of carcasses at both Tejon and Hudson Ranches, Condors have continued to leave the feeding stations and

wander throughout the territory they know so well. There, they preferentially feed on hunter-killed deer. Thus the familiar idea of leaving "guide birds" in the wild becomes problematic, as the knowledge such birds possess will only lead them into danger. It is well established now that both California and Andean Condors which know their traditional territory will continue to forage throughout that area.

Habitat acquisition is another "solution" that has been proposed. It has long been understood that the traditional habitat of the Condor is too large for acquisition, but National Audubon has over the past few years put increasing emphasis on the purchase of Hudson Ranch. As the Department of the Interior stalled, the price tag went up from \$5 million to \$9 million, but that isn't the biggest problem with the idea. The biggest problem is that the Hudson Ranch is not sufficient habitat for sustaining the species. Several hundred million dollars still might not buy enough habitat for the species, which continues to range north to Sequoia and up the coast as well. Adequate funding clearly is not available, but no matter how much land is purchased, there is still the problem of hunter-killed deer. So long as Condors wander freely throughout their traditional territory — and they will, so long as they remember it — it won't matter how much of the territory is owned by the "good guys" if there is hunting going on in other places where Condors go to forage.

So suppose we get a law requiring universal adoption of steel bullets? That could solve the problem — except that there are major political obstacles, including opposition by hunters and animal-rights groups (steel bullets do not flatten on impact and hence reduce kills and increase cinnings) and opposition by the police (steel bullets will penetrate armor). Even if political opposition could be overcome and lead bullets were banned in California, they would continue to be available elsewhere in the country and hunters would no doubt continue to



Photo by Eric Johnson

use them in California even if they were illegal. If you are tempted to argue that most hunters would obey the law — keep reading.

Another favorite "solution" that we've all heard before is the idea of banning hunting throughout the Condor's range. Like steel bullets, this would also work — theoretically. But even with the political difficulty and the danger of a backlash from hunters (switching from legal shooting of deer to illegal shooting of Condors), there is an overriding consideration: the California Department of Fish and Game estimates that, at present, *80% of the deer shot in the State are taken illegally*. Thus even if there were no backlash whatsoever, and illegal hunting simply continued at present levels, there would still be too much lead shot for the Condor to survive.

Suppose an adequate "island" of habitat could be acquired in the San Joaquin Valley, at Hudson Ranch and other similar areas. If it were possible to sufficiently safeguard against hunting, a population might be secure so long as it consisted only of captive-born Condors with no "guide birds" (experienced in the wild, trained to traditional behavior patterns). Now we're moving in the right direction. But there are still a number of major problems. Perhaps foremost among these is the sheer complexity of land use in the San Joaquin Valley. Ranching, farming, petroleum development, and creeping urbanization are difficult forces to resist, and as noted before we can't buy it all. It would be very easy for Condors, whether captive-born or not, to wander from a protected ranch to an adjacent unprotected ranch where coyotes were being poisoned or hunters were shooting deer. In addition, there are serious biological problems with Hudson Ranch and other San Joaquin Valley areas. Golden Eagles and Ravens are abundant; the former compete for nesting sites while the latter prey on Condor eggs. Also, there have been no traditional nesting sites in the area, and there is no reason to expect that establishing such sites would be successful.

In short, leaving some Condors in the wild as "guides" for captive-bred birds to be released later, made sense so long as it was assumed that wild birds knew appropriate survival skills. But the human influence has irreparably modified the Condor's habitat, and what was formerly adaptive behavior has now become a lethal habit. The major cause of Condor mortality is lead poisoning from deer killed by hunters; these are present throughout traditional habitat. Condors trained to traditional behavior patterns leave provided food and go into traditional habitat, which is too vast to be acquired or adequately policed against hunting even if it were. Even if hunting and/or lead bullets were banned, illegal hunting would threaten the Condor. San Joaquin Valley habitat, while traditionally used for foraging, is subject to increasing development pressures; it has never been used for nesting and natural biological competition might prevent success. Thus leaving Condors in the wild, or releasing captive-hatched or captive-bred Condors



Photo by Eric Johnson

when they have wild-trained birds to emulate, is exposing them to extreme jeopardy. *Simply put, the Condor cannot survive in its traditional habitat with its traditional behavior patterns; with its traditional behavior patterns, it will not "settle down" and stay within a small portion of the former habitat.*

But there is still the other approach. For background, it is helpful to know that the European Griffon Vulture, a long-ranging bird with close ecological similarities to the California Condor, has been successfully released into the wild since 1981 with low mortality and near-immediate reproduction. There were no "guide birds" and despite encouragement the birds refused to wander far beyond the feeding area. An important conclusion that can be drawn from this is that long-range flights clearly appear to be learned rather than instinctual. Additional support for this comes from Peru, where Andean Condors have been found with restricted foraging territories where steady food supplies are available; other Andean Condors are wide-ranging, following traditional patterns of behavior like those of the California Condor, so it appears that there is even a certain degree of behavioral "plasticity" among wild populations of Condors.

In Southern California, excellent Condor habitat is available at the Sespe Condor Sanctuary and the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge, and at the Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary. Both areas are former nesting areas, within the heart of traditional Condor habitat; entry is already restricted, there is little real development pressure on the areas, and policing the area can be accomplished with relative ease. Natural food supplies are scarce, there is little deer hunting at present and closure would pose no problem. Also, there are relatively few Golden Eagles in the area (the importance of which was noted above).

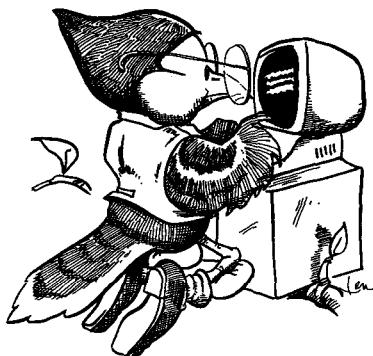
It has been argued that the Condor cannot survive in its traditional territory so long as traditional behavior patterns are preserved. One possibility for Condor survival is, of course, in zoos. If the species will not breed in captivity, it is indeed doomed already — but experience with similar species indicates that this will not be a problem.

The only feasible alternative — the new approach — seems to be the release of captive-bred birds only, into the Sespe and Sisquoc Sanctuaries. The birds would have to be fed, but feeding appears to be a necessity under any alternative save extinction. Birds previously trained to the wild would have to remain in zoos, to provide offspring for release and to avoid providing released birds with a model for the sort of behavior which now has the population at the brink. There is relatively little hunting in Sespe and Sisquoc, and there would be little habitat acquisition involved. Conflicting land use would not be a major problem. Andean Condors could be released into the sanctuaries on an interim basis, to test success in different target areas, while the captive population of California Condors is being augmented in size; female-only releases of Andean condors are proposed to prevent breeding.

The immediate needs for the new approach would be for:

(1) capture of all remaining wild California Condors (which by now will probably have been accomplished); (2) initiation of regulatory clearance for releasing Andean Condors; (3) acquisition of Andean Condors from zoos, for release; and (4) development of a research and management plan involving all concerned public and private agencies. It is probable that the release of California Condors back into the wild would be delayed until at least 1990 and perhaps not until 1995; it would be essential that the captive population be self-sustaining prior to any releases.

This, then, is the new approach and apparent last chance. Some will no doubt object that the Condor would no longer be a wild bird; it could be said that the proposal suggests an outdoor zoo. I must admit to being bothered by that, but I am far more bothered by the possibility that future generations of humans might otherwise be unable to see Condors except at indoor zoos. Because I see no other choices save these two, I have recommended to the LAAS Board of Directors that we lend quick support to the new approach. We are interested in hearing from LAAS members on this — so please let us know what your opinions are.



## Computers Are For The Birds

by Steve Hartman

### Part 3 — Frequency and Abundance

**W**hen we look at our alphabetical yardlists it is hard to discern a pattern. To find a pattern one has to view his data in *terms* of something, and the basic natural patterns have to do with the average, highest, and lowest. These rankings are completely "man-made" classifications, probably evolving from the early understanding of seasons and awareness of drought and flood. With that impetus, humans have always attempted to understand the "X's" on life's chart in terms of patterns, and we try to find cycles or trends with a predictive value. We naturally aspire to top our highest, but there is realm of curious excitement to be found in monitoring the average, which is what one is conveniently able to do by using a computer.

A semantic digression here is necessary. The terms *abundance* and *frequency* are used, too loosely, I might add, to describe the variations in the comings and goings of birds. I will use these terms (consistently, I hope) as follows: abundance is a counting function whereas frequency is a function of time; the number of birds one sees during a day is abundance whereas the number of times during a year a bird appears is frequency.

**Calculating Species Frequency** My last article in the *Tanager* described methods of depicting the total number of different species seen each month, or the *monthly abundance of species*. This issue will introduce the concept of species *frequency*, that is, how often is a particular species seen? Try to imagine the original spreadsheet (*Western Tanager*, Sept. 1986, Vo. 53, No. 1, page 3, fig. 2). The birds are listed on the left (in alphabetical order) and across the top the months are listed; "##" indicates if a species was seen during that month. To measure monthly abundance one adds up each column; to measure species frequency occurrence one must total each row.

One must create a new column on the spreadsheet, to the right of the name, to

NAME OF BIRD	NUMBER OF SPECIES SEEN DURING 54 MONTHS IN SHERMAN OAKS (October 1981 - March 1986)		
	Number of Months Seen	Average Months Per Year	
American Crow	54	100%	12.0
Mourning Dove	54	100%	12.0
Northern Mockingbird	54	100%	12.0
House Finch	52	96%	11.6
Bushtit	48	89%	10.7
Anna's Hummingbird	47	87%	10.4
Starling	47	87%	10.4
House Sparrow	46	85%	10.2
Scrub Jay	42	78%	9.3
Great Horned Owl	39	72%	8.7
White-crowned Sparrow	35	65%	7.8
American Kestrel	32	59%	7.1
Spotted Dove	32	59%	7.1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	31	57%	6.9
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	28	52%	6.2
House Wren	25	46%	5.6
Northern Flicker	25	46%	5.6
Brown Towhee	20	37%	4.4
Downy Woodpecker	19	35%	4.2
Gulls	19	35%	4.2
Cedar Waxwing	16	30%	3.6
Dark-eyed Junco	16	30%	3.6
Parrots	15	28%	3.3
Red-tailed Hawk	14	26%	3.1
Lesser Goldfinch	12	22%	2.7
Nuttall's Woodpecker	9	17%	2.0
Swallow	9	17%	2.0
Wilson's Warbler	9	17%	2.0
Pine Siskin	6	11%	1.3
Western Flycatcher	6	11%	1.3
Yellow Warbler	5	9%	1.1
American Robin	4	7%	0.9
Black-headed Grosbeak	4	7%	0.9
Western Tanager	4	7%	0.9
Band-tailed Pigeon	3	6%	0.7
Nashville Warbler	3	6%	0.7
Black-throated Gray Warbler	2	4%	0.4
Orange-crowned Warbler	2	4%	0.4
Phainopepla	2	4%	0.4
Red-breasted Sapsucker	2	4%	0.4
Townsend's Warbler	2	4%	0.4
Turkey Vulture	2	4%	0.4
Black Phoebe	1	2%	0.2
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	2%	0.2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	2%	0.2
Hermit Thrush	1	2%	0.2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	2%	0.2
Rock Dove	1	2%	0.2
Savannah Sparrow	1	2%	0.2
Swainson's Thrush	1	2%	0.2

Figure 1 — SORT creates a descending quantity list from the original yardlist.

make a space to enter the frequency data for each species. When all the entries have been made, use the SORT routine (explained in Part 1) to list the names by descending quantity (of total species seen). Figure 1 illustrates the original yardlist sorted in this manner. The *number of months seen* total is listed to the right of each species' name, alongside which two other calculations were made. The first is a percentage calculation: divide the total number of months each bird was observed by the time sample total of 54 months (October 1981 to March 1986). The American Crow was seen every month, 54/54 equals 1 or 100%; the Cedar Waxwing was seen 16 times, 16/54 equals 30%.

The second figure calculates the *average* number of months per year that a particular bird has been observed. For this calculation one must figure out the length — in years — of the sample (for baseball fans, this is similar to calculating a pitcher's earned run average); divide the number of months by 12 (54/12) to get 4.5 years. Thus, the species seen every month (54 times) have an average of 12.0 months per year (54/4.5); the species seen only 9 times (17% of the time) on the average appear at least once two months per year.

### Grouping Species with Similar Frequency

It is obvious that a simple ranking that would describe the birds at the top of the list as *common* and the birds at the bottom as *rare* would not be helpful. Certainly the White-crowned Sparrow, which can be seen everyday during the winter months, is a *common* bird during its season; yet it is only the 11th most common bird when averaging for the entire year. *Seasonal occurrence*, therefore, must be distinguished in order to clearly identify a species' status. The data collected in the yardlist example can help distinguish seasonal occurrence (and will be discussed in a future issue), but for the rest of this article I will limit the sample of birds to the more familiar ones. These can be identified on a spreadsheet as residents, winter visitors and migrants by creating another column and entering the appropriate code letter (e.g. R, W, & M). Then by sorting the list, first by type of seasonal occurrence, and then by percentage, the resulting list (with a few headlines added later for easier reading) looks like Figure 2.

I purposefully did *not* include many species that have very low rates or somehow did not fit easily into one of these three categories. These birds need a separate discussion. But this simplified list allows us an opportunity to try to rank the frequency of each species, and to do this I used five terms which might be described as follows:

**COMMON** indicates the species is easily observed (seen or heard).

**FAIRLY COMMON** indicates the species can usually be observed.

**UNCOMMON** indicates the species cannot always be observed.

**RARE** indicates the individuals are seldom found but are of regular annual occurrence.

**CASUAL** indicates the species has been observed only a few times and not on an annual basis.

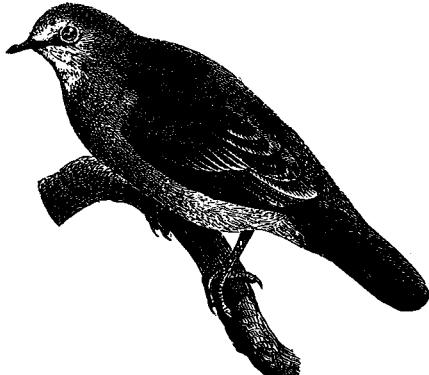
Although it is hard to decide where to cut-off between rankings (look at the difference between the Brown Towhee and the Downy Woodpecker), and sometimes the ranking isn't appropriate because the data is skewed (for some reason we rarely observed Spotted Doves for the first few years, but now they should be considered common), *in the*

AN ARBITRARY CATEGORICAL HIERARCHY  
Based on Average Monthly Frequency  
of Selected Bird Species

Name of Bird	Average Months Per Year	Status
<b>RESIDENTS</b>		
Northern Mockingbird	12.0	Common
American Crow	12.0	Common
Mourning Dove	12.0	Common
House Finch	11.6	Common
Bushtit	10.7	Fairly Common
Starling	10.4	Fairly Common
Anna's Hummingbird	10.4	Fairly Common
House Sparrow	10.2	Fairly Common
Scrub Jay	9.3	Fairly Common
Great Horned Owl	8.7	Fairly Common
Spotted Dove	7.1	Uncommon
American Kestrel	7.1	Uncommon
House Wren	5.6	Uncommon
Northern Flicker	5.6	Uncommon
Brown Towhee	4.4	Uncommon
Downy Woodpecker	4.2	Rare
Parrots	3.3	Rare
Red-tailed Hawk	3.1	Rare
Swallow	2.0	Rare
Nuttall's Woodpecker	2.0	Rare
Turkey Vulture	0.4	Casual
<b>WINTER VISITORS</b>		
White-crowned Sparrow	7.8	Common
Yellow-rumped Warbler	6.9	Fairly Common
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	6.2	Fairly Common
Dark-eyed Junco	3.6	Uncommon
Cedar Waxwing	3.6	Uncommon
Lesser Goldfinch	2.7	Uncommon
Pine Siskin	1.3	Rare
American Robin	0.9	Rare
<b>MIGRANTS</b>		
Wilson's Warbler	2.0	Fairly Common
Western Flycatcher	1.3	Uncommon
Yellow Warbler	1.1	Uncommon
Western Tanager	0.9	Uncommon
Nashville Warbler	0.7	Uncommon
Black-throated Gray Warbler	0.4	Rare
Townsend's Warbler	0.4	Rare
Swainson's Thrush	0.2	Rare

Figure 2 — Categorical Hierarchy Chart

long run the data accumulated clearly portrays a species' monthly frequency status. But the lack of daily observation and actual bird counts limits the value of this information. In fact, it requires a much more detailed data collection system to describe the abundance and frequency of a particular bird species on a daily basis. And once one has gathered the data, how does one rank levels of abundance? All that and more in issues to come.



## 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 marsh 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 during the times of the spring tides 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 6.2 feet. On 31 December 1986 the height of the higher high water reaches this season's maximum of 7.3 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 higher high water and to stay for at least one hour. For that reason the times given below are all for higher high waters that occur more than a half hour after sunrise.

In November 1986 the times of higher high water are 0749 on Saturday the 1st, 0821 on Sunday the 2nd, 0856 on Monday the 3rd, 0933 on Tuesday the 4th, 1019 on Wednesday the 5th, 0747 on Saturday the 15th, 0812 on Sunday the 16th, and 0718 on Sunday the 30th.

In December 1986 the times of higher high water are 0757 on Monday the 1st, 0839 on Tuesday the 2nd, 0924 on Wednesday the



Clapper Rail

3rd, 1013 on Thursday the 4th, 0744 on Tuesday the 30th, and 0830 on Wednesday the 31st. The highest high water during this entire season of good birding occurs on the 31st, its height being 7.3 feet.

In January 1987 the times of higher high water are 0921 on Thursday the 1st, 1010 on Friday the 2nd, 0742 on Wednesday the 28th, 0828 on Thursday the 29th, 0913 on Friday the 30th, and 1001 on Saturday the 31st.

In February 1987 the times of higher high water are 0736 on Thursday the 26th, 0822 on Friday the 27th, and 0907 on Saturday the 28th.

All of these data were gotten from the 1986 and 1987 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!*

## President's Corner

by E.H. "Ken" Kendig Jr.

We are a volunteer organization with over 3,000 members. At last count, I reached a total of less than 40 who do 90% of the work. We could use more help! We have chairpersons for our various committees but no committee members for backup or for future replacements. Most of the regular workers

are getting along in years. We need more young blood. Anyone interested in participating in the activities of the Society, please call me at 213/264-1422 during the day or 213/931-6692 in the evening or on weekends. I'm never too busy to hear from a volunteer. Anyone who wants to give time to the Society for any purpose, do not hesitate to call.

We could especially use someone with bookkeeping or accounting experience among other things. We have a place for nearly any kind of talent. Help advance the Audubon cause? We can't all be warriors like Greenpeace; we need some spear carriers, drummers, etc. Call Me! I can't call you if I don't know you are there.

# Book Review



## **Shorebirds, an Identification Guide to the Waders of the World**

**by Peter Hayman,  
John Marchant and  
Tony Prater**

*Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston. 412 pp.,  
88 color plates, 214 maps, numerous  
line drawings. 1986.*

**Review by Kimball L. Garrett**  
Section of Birds and Mammals  
Natural History Museum  
of Los Angeles County

This is a marvelous book — necessary, useful, thorough, attractive, accurate, reasonably affordable, state-of-the-art, and ... what more need I say? But the editor says I need say more, so I'll begin with a caution.

Properly reviewed, a field identification guide is discussed only after rigorous "testing" under the situations of its intended use. But it is the nature of the book review process that impressions of strengths and weaknesses must be given before there is time to field test the product. For example, Ralph Schreiber and I reviewed Peter Harrison's "Seabirds, an identification guide" [Wilson Bulletin 96:333-335, 1984], a congener of the work reviewed here, before having a chance to use it "at sea". While our impressions of that book remain quite favorable, it was only after a couple years of rigorous use that many flaws became apparent (relating to certain details of distribution, subspecies treatment, figure captions, art work, etc.). Similarly, the National Geographic Society's Field Guide to North American Birds has looked less "perfect" as time and daily use have taken their toll, though it remains a few quantum leaps ahead of its Golden cousin. In the case of "Shorebirds", my initial impressions are almost entirely positive, so I'll simply state at the outset that continued use in the field will ultimately reveal some flaws that I haven't noted — but I doubt that they'll be many or severe.

"Shorebirds" is indeed a direct descendant to Harrison's seabird identification guide. There was virtually unanimous agreement that a complete guide to the seabirds of the world was a desirable commodity; seabirds are so wide-ranging, and oceanic faunas are so poorly embraced by the scope of standard continent-based field guides that the treatment of all species under a single cover was deemed valid, if not downright urgent. In this age of proliferation of bird books (many of which simply rehash the same popular themes and formats), it is logical to ask first whether a new book fills a legitimate "empty niche". As with the Seabird guide, "Shorebirds" most certainly does. Like seabirds, shorebirds are wide-ranging, often highly migratory, and prone to long-distance vagrancy. They have been treated at various levels with varying success in the past. In North America, until the production of the National Geographic guide, popular field guide authors didn't even portray and discuss the appropriate plumages of many shorebirds (I refer, in part, to the omission of juvenal plumages from most guides). Even the NGS guide could not devote the space necessary to discuss and depict certain difficult problems. Paul Johnsgard's recent treatment of shorebirds ("Plovers, Sandpipers and Snipes of the World", University of Nebraska Press, 1981), is an excellent comparative treatment of shorebird biology, but it nevertheless ignores or mistreats most aspects of field identification, thus leaving a void for the present "Shorebird" identification guide to fill. Most "hard-core" birders throughout the world own a well-worn copy of "A Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders" (1981); intended to aid in in-hand and field identification, this excellent work was authored by John Marchant and Tony Prater of the present work, along with Sweden's Juhani Vuorinen. To this, Marchant and Prater have added a worldwide scope and the talents of the gifted artist Peter Hayman to produce one of the most important additions to the birder's library in years.

As in any bird book, "Shorebirds" has a front cover, a back cover, and lots of words and pictures and a Roger Tory Peterson foreword inbetween. The words and pictures are organized much as in the "Seabird" guide — introductory material, a set of color plates with liberal facing-page notations, and a detailed, taxonomically arranged text. A useful improvement in format over the "Seabird" guide is the inclusion of the species' range map with the facing page text in the color plate section (the text and plates are conspicuously cross-referenced). The introductory section includes a lengthy, illustrated discussion of shorebird topography, and three "must-read" sections treating the pitfalls of shorebird identification entitled "plumage sequence", "other factors affecting colours and patterns", and "size and shape". The cautions provided in these sections are fundamental ones which all active field observers should bear in mind, whether

viewing shorebirds, gulls or warblers. Following these sections is a series of notes on the shorebird families treated in the guide; these are the Jacanidae (jacanas, 8 spp.), Rostatulidae (painted-snipes, 2 spp.), Dromadidae (crab-plover, 1 sp.), Haematopodidae (oystercatchers, 11 spp.), Ibridorhynchidae (ibisbill, 1 sp.), Recurvirostridae (stilts and avocets, 7 spp.), Burhinidae (stone-curlews, 9 spp.), Glareolidae (coursers and pratincoles, 17 spp.), Charadriidae (lapwings and plovers, 65 spp.), Pluvianellidae (Magellanic plover, placed here in its own family), Scolopacidae (sandpipers and snipes, 88 spp.), and Thinocoridae (seed-snipes, 4 spp.). The introduction ends with a discussion of wader (shorebird) conservation and some hints on wader study. Peter Hayman also provides a helpful discussion on the scale of the plates.

The eighty-eight color plates treat an average of about 2.5 species per plate, and the number of identified figures per plate varies (roughly) from ten to thirty-five (there's even a bonus of an Andean Condor on plate 88!). Each plate is an artistic marvel. While I only feel qualified to comment on those species with which I am familiar in the field (primarily North American birds), the accuracy of shapes and the attention to intra-specific variation are unsurpassed in any guide. The artist's work compares favorably with that of the most gifted shorebird painter of our age, Lars Jonsson. In Jonsson's most familiar shorebird work, the plates for the *American Birds/British Birds* identification series on the small *Calidris* sandpipers, his figures were presented larger than Hayman's in "Shorebirds". Jonsson also wasn't burdened with so massive a production task (over 1600 figures in all!). Jonsson's softer style paints detail almost by default, while Hayman provides more detail with fine brush strokes. Both styles are effective and pleasing, but the reduction of Hayman's detailed figures to the page format of "Shorebirds" has caused some plates to appear slightly excessively dark. The only species I feel was poorly painted is the Baird's Sandpiper on Plate 81; the juvenile (figure 198g) is too dark-backed and, more importantly, lacks the strong golden-buff tones which are so evident in that plumage. The species groupings in the plates are sensible; additional plates of stints/peeps group juveniles of eight species together (plate 79) and alternate plumaged adults of the same eight species (plate 80). It is interesting to see color plates of the recently described Cox's Sandpiper (known only from two specimens and several sightings in Australia; breeding grounds unknown); one can't help but wonder, however, if this "species" isn't, in fact, some recurrent hybrid combination between two of the larger *Calidris* species.

The text is presented in standard phylogenetic sequence. Species accounts contain sections on identification, voice, habits, movements, description, age/sex, races, measurements, and references. The short introductory sentence or two heading each spe-

cies account should be read, as many of the "fascinating facts" in the guide reside here — did you know, for example, that the Pin-tail Snipe has 28 rectrices, or that the Violet-tipped Courser's violet primary tips may function in reducing feather abrasion? Or that the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's world population is between 2,000 and 2,800 pairs, so don't hold your breath next time you're at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds ( ... come to think of it, maybe you should hold your breath). All of the text sections contain a wealth of information, most of it directly relevant to identification. The section on

"Movements" details patterns of migrations and vagrancy; understandably, this section is rarely exhaustive, and local works should always be consulted for the specifics of status and distribution. Breeding distribution is detailed in the accurate-looking maps, but rarely elaborated upon elsewhere.

Appendices provide summaries of the identification characters of certain difficult pairs or groups (such as the golden-plovers, the snipes, and the dowitchers). A final appendix adds some "hot off the press" tidbits which couldn't be included in the main text; rest assured, for example, that we now

know that the Obi Woodcock does indeed have bare skin around and behind the eye (as in the Amami Woodcock). An extensive bibliography is provided, along with an index to both scientific and English names.

I've only just begun to mine the treasures found in this volume, and I have no doubt that I will be referring to it constantly as I struggle with this fascinating but often difficult group of birds. To the artist and authors we owe a debt of gratitude, best repaid by applying the information in "Shorebirds" to the continued study and documentation of the distribution and biology of these birds.

## Book Review

### Birding Northern California

by Jean Richmond

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. 142 pp., 36 maps. 1985.

Review by Stephen F. Bailey

Department of Ornithology & Mammalogy  
California Academy of Sciences

For over 15 years various birders have been talking about writing their birdfinding guide to Northern California. Tired of waiting, Jean Richmond has gotten the job done, and her book will be a major aid to visitors and natives alike.

The 72 areas covered include the vast majority of important birding sites, plus many lesser-known localities. As this book grew out of the author's birdfinding articles in her local Audubon journal (1976-85), its coverage is especially comprehensive and detailed in and near the East Bay (26 sites in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties alone). Although the number of site guides decreases away from the East Bay, the more distant accounts cover larger areas. For example, all of the Monterey County coast south to Carmel, and Yosemite to Mono Lake are in single accounts. Furthermore, many of the localities of secondary importance not included in this book are treated in *San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching*, *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*, *Birds of the Sacramento Area*, *Monterey Birds*, or *Birds of Sonoma County California*, so these books are all complementary rather than redundant. The localities covered in *Birding Northern California* will be more than adequate for nearly all visiting birders. Nevertheless, there are a few areas that should be added whenever Jean Richmond writes an expanded second edition (we always want more of a good thing!). Foremost is the need for more discussion of pelagic trips; Monterey boats are given 4 lines, and Cordell Bank and Farallon trips receive no mention at all. The best "missing" areas have only recently been worked extensively (for example Salinas Sewage Ponds and coastal Del

Norte County), so their absence is understandale. This book reaches into Southern California to cover Condor country, but the balance of south-central California falls between this book and *A Birder's Guide to Southern California*. Thus a vast region from Death Valley and the White Mountains, through the entire southern Sierra Nevada and southern San Joaquin Valley, to the Morro Bay area still cries for post-Pettingill treatment.

Very useful sketch maps accompany half of the sites. Indeed, the user may wish that every site had such a map, but the directions are reliable and can stand alone. "Where the birds are" indexes selected species and groups to their listings in the location guides. The bird lists for each site are necessarily condensed, but sometimes too much so. Selective, telegraphic lists require very care-

ful phrasing and punctuation to avoid ambiguity. Mainly we need clearer distinctions between those species that are common, uncommon, rare, and very rare. As the author herself recommends, proper use of *Birding Northern California* requires consulting the bar graphs and notes in *Birds of Northern California: An Annotated Field List* for the seasonal abundances of each species. Local works such as the outstanding *Monterey Birds* help fill this need. With the addition of *Birding Northern California* to this arsenal the birder is at last well-equipped for Northern California.

All books/tapes reviewed are available at the Los Angeles Audubon Book Store. See price list in this issue for details.

### BOOKSTORE NEWS

#### New Additions

BIRDS OF AFRICA, Vol. II, Urban/Fry/Keith .....	\$79.95
BIRDING GUIDE TO RENO, NE, Biewener .....	2.95
HUMMINGBIRDS OF THE STATE OF ESPIRITO SANTO, BRAZIL, Ruschi .....	**125.00

#### Out-Of-Print (All limited quantity, in stock)

BIRDS OF THE BALEARICS, Bannerman .....	20.00
BIRDS OF GIBRALTAR, Cortes .....	5.00
BIRDS OF GUATEMALA, Land .....	45.00
BIRDS OF THE WEST, Clarke/Small .....	40.00
GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI, Pettingill .....	25.00
GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI, Pettingill .....	25.00
GUIDE TO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES, Riley .....	25.00
FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF MEXICO & CENTRAL AMERICA, Davis .....	25.00
CURASSOWS & RELATED BIRDS, Delacour .....	150.00
EAGLES, HAWKS & FALCONS OF THE WORLD, Brown/Amadon .....	175.00
RAILS OF THE WORLD, Ripley .....	150.00
LES OISEAUX DU PROCHE ET DU MOYEN ORIENT, Etchecopar/Hue .....	70.00
OISEAUX DU NORD DE L'AFRIQUE, MER ROUGE, Etchecopar/Hue .....	70.00

#### Coming Attractions

BIRDS OF THE FIJI BUSH, Clunie .....	TBA
FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF HAWAII & THE TROPICAL PACIFIC, Pratt .....	TBA
THE TANAGER NATURAL HISTORY, DISTRIBUTION & IDENTIFICATION, Isler/Isler .....	49.95

\* Special order, allow 6-8 weeks   \*Limited quantity, in stock

### For a Limited Time Only the Following Titles Are Available at Greatly Reduced Prices.

	Regular Price	Sale Price
NEWMAN'S BIRDS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, Newman .....	25.00	17.50
ROBERT'S BIRDS OF SOUTH AFRICA, McLachlan & Liversidge .....	24.95	17.50
FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, Sinclair .....	19.95	14.00
BIRDS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA 1: KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, Newman .....	16.95	12.00
WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, Berruti & Sinclair .....	15.95	11.00
BIRDS OF THE HIGHVELD (Zimbabwe), Ginn .....	8.50	6.00
BIRDS OF THE LOWVELD (Zimbabwe), Ginn .....	8.50	6.00
LES OISEAUX DE CHINE Vol. 2, PASSEREAUX, Etchecopar & Hue .....	50.00	
BIRDS OF THE BALEARICS, Bannerman .....		20.00

# Schedule of 1986 Christmas Bird Counts in Southern California

## Official Period: Thursday 18 December thru Sunday 4 January 87

Count Area	Compiler	Address	Phone **	Associated Organization(s)
<b>Thursday, December 18</b>				
Salton Sea - South	Jon Dunn	4710 Dexter, Apt. 7, Santa Barbara 93110	714-793-7897	
San Jacinto Lake	Robert McKernan	40 Sherrill Lane, Redlands 92373		San Bernardino Valley Audubon
<b>Saturday, December 20</b>				
Big Bear Lake	Leo Best	402 So. Virginia, Azusa 91702	818-334-2528	Whittier Audubon
Claremont	Rick Clements	421 Furman Dr., Claremont 91711	714-626-9766	Pomona Valley Audubon
Lancaster	Dan Guthrie			
Lone Pine	Fred Heath	6218 Cynthia St., Simi Valley 93063	805-583-0140	Los Angeles Audubon
Morro Bay	Mike Prather	Box 406, Lone Pine 93545	619-876-5807	Eastern Sierra Audubon
Pasadena - San Gabriel Valley	John McDonald	2264 Fresno St., Los Osos 93402	805-528-4855	Morro Coast Audubon
Redlands - Mill Creek	Michael Long	Eaton Cyn. Nature Ctr.	818-794-1866w	Pasadena Audubon
San Diego	Douglas Williams	1750 N. Altadena Dr. Pasadena 91107		
Springville	Jerry Oldenettel	P.O. Box 21, Running Springs 92382	714-867-2391	San Bernardino Valley Audubon
	Bob Barnes	4368 37th St., San Diego 92105	619-281-7039	S.D. Field Orn. & S.D. Audubon
		P.O. Box 269, Porterville 93258	209-784-4477	Tulare County Audubon
<b>Sunday, December 21</b>				
Bakersfield	William Goodloe	3104 Melrose Ave., Bakersfield 93308	805-399-6354	Bakersfield Audubon
Bishop	Earl Gann	120 Pine Road, H.C. Rt. 132, Big Pine 93513	619-938-2916	Eastern Sierra Audubon
Malibu	Liga Auzins	c/o Santa Monica College Life Science Dept.	213-828-2936	
Orange County - Northeastern	Roger Cobb	1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica 90405	213-398-4672	Los Angeles Audubon
Rancho Santa Fe	Gerald Tolman	12301 Gilbert St., Garden Grove 92641	714-539-8040	Sea and Sage Audubon
Salton Sea - North	Luis Santaella	P.O. Box 50, Rancho Santa Fe 92067	619-756-2082	
	Andy Sanders	472 Campus View Dr., Riverside 92507	714-684-0448	San Bernardino Valley Audubon
<b>Saturday, December 27</b>				
Butterbredt Springs	Keith Axelson	3262 Midvale Avenue, Los Angeles 90034	213-474-6205	Santa Monica Audubon
Carrizo Plains	Rogery Zachary	1800 Traffic Way, Atascadero 93422	805-466-6222	North Cuesta Audubon
Lost Lake Fresno	Garth Spitzer	4105 E. Farrin Way, Fresno 93726	209-229-6367	Fresno Audubon
Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad	Jerry Oldenettel	4368 37th St., San Diego 92105	619-281-7039	S.D. Field Ornithologist & Buena Vista Audubon
*San Bernardino Valley	Don Hoechlin			San Bernardino Valley Audubon
San Fernando Valley	Arthur Langton, Jr.	7435 Lena Ave., Canoga Park 91307	818-887-0973	San Fernando Valley Audubon
<b>Sunday, December 28</b>				
Anza Borrego	Art Morley	P.O. Box 15346, San Diego 92115	619-583-8295	Anza Borrego Desert Naturalists
China Lake	Donald Moore	P.O. Box 984, Ridgecrest 93555	619-446-6137	Kerncrest Audubon
Kaweah	Rob Hansen	P.O. Box 3840, Visalia 93278	209-627-4328w	The Nature Conservancy
*Morongo-Whitewater	Stephen Myers			San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Palos Verdes Peninsula	Ross Landry	12716 Muroc St., Norwalk 90650	213-863-9078	Palos Verdes Peninsula Audubon
Santa Maria-Guadalupe	David Bradley	1315-A Park Ave., Long Beach 90804	213-498-0370	
	Jaimie Chavez	P.O. Box 1631, Santa Maria 93456	805-937-3915	Los Padres Audubon
Ventura	Jim Royer	1137 Chalmette, Ventura 93003	805-658-6094h	Ventura Audubon
805-648-5111w				
<b>Wednesday, December 31</b>				
Mono Lake	David Gaines	P.O. Box 119, Lee Vining 93541	619-647-6496	Eastern Sierra Audubon
(Will provide floor space both nights for those bringing sleeping bags and hot food for after the count; please notify in advance.)				
<b>Friday, January 2</b>				
Escondido (new)	Ken Weaver	1339 Taylor Place, Escondido 92027	619-747-2572	
<b>Saturday, January 3</b>				
Death Valley	Mike Prather	Box 406, Lone Pine 93545	619-876-5807	Eastern Sierra Audubon
El Dorado (new)	Peter Tackney	3042 Nipomo, Long Beach 90808	213-425-3948h	El Dorado Audubon & Nature Center
Kern River Valley	Rick Hewitt	P.O. Box 1662, Weldon 93283	818-359-4112w	
Lake Henshaw	Claude Edwards	P.O. Box 231496, San Diego 92123	619-378-2531	Kerncrest Audubon
Santa Ana River Valley	Lawrence LaPre	P.O. Box 5051, Riverside 92517	619-464-7342w	S.D. Field Orn & San Diego Audubon
Santa Barbara	Paul Lehman	P.O. Box 1061 Goleta 93116	619-270-4609h	San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Thousand Oaks	Joan Lentz		714-369-3508	Santa Barbara Audubon
	Elliott McClure	69 E. Loop, Camarillo 93010	805-967-2450	
			805-969-4397	Conejo Valley Audubon
			805-482-0411	
<b>Sunday, January 4</b>				
Creighton Ranch-Corcoran	Rob Hansen	P.O. Box 3840, Visalia 93278	209-627-4328w	The Nature Conservancy
Granite Woody	Mark Chichester	8000 Kroll Way, #72, Bakersfield 93311	805-832-1880	Bakersfield Audubon
Idyllwild	Norm Miller		714-737-2253	
Joshua Tree Nat'l. Monument	Norwood Hazard	2173 Colton Avenue, Mentone 92359	714-794-2251	San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Los Angeles	Brian Prescott	6737 Rycroft Dr., Riverside 92506	714-780-3146	San Bernardino Valley Audubon
Orange County - Coastal	Robert Shanman	712 36th St., Manhattan Beach 90266	213-545-2867	Los Angeles Audubon
Santa Rosa Plateau Preserve	Gerald Tolman	12301 Gilbert St., Garden Grove 92641	714-539-8040	Sea and Sage Audubon
	Tom Griggs	22115 Tenaja Rd., Murrieta 92362	714-676-5849	The Nature Conservancy
<b>Not Determined by Publication Date:</b>				
Grass Mountain	Tom Martin	1108 West Ave. H-4, Lancaster 93534	805-948-0596	
Mammoth Lakes	Margaret Gorski	P.O. Box 148, Mammoth Lakes 93546	619-934-2505w	Mammoth Lakes Ranger District
Sespe Wildlife Area	Paul Lehman	P.O. Box 1061, Goleta 93116	805-967-2450	Santa Barbara Audubon
(Fillmore-Lake Piru Area)	Joan Lentz		805-969-4397	

### New Trial Counts — Unofficial — After Count Period:

#### Saturday, January 10

La Jolla Diana Herron 4460 Del Mar Ave., San Diego 92107 619-224-0374

#### Sunday, January 18

Cuyamaca David King 836 Stevens Ave., Solana Beach 92075 619-259-8649

**Many thanks** to all the compilers for their cooperation in coordinating and setting CBC dates in September to meet our newsletter deadline. Special appreciation to Stan Walens (San Diego) and Norwood Hazard (San Bernardino) for their efforts in coordinating CBC dates in their areas.

Phone numbers given here are evening home numbers unless otherwise noted.

\* Tentative, but probable dates.

P.S. — There are 51 Bird Counts listed this period. For those not familiar with some of the counts listed, the following is a VERY ROUGH breakdown by area:

**GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA:** Claremont, El Dorado, Grass Mountain, Lancaster, Los Angeles, Malibu, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley, San Fernando Valley

**NORTH OF LA - COASTAL & INLAND:** Carrizo Plains, Morro Bay, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria-Guadalupe, Sespe Wildlife Area, (Fillmore/Lake Piru Area), Thousand Oaks, Ventura

**ORANGE COUNTY & SAN DIEGO AREAS:** Anza-Borrego, Cuyamaca, Escondido, La Jolla, Lake Henshaw, Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad, Orange County-Coastal, Orange County - Northeastern, Rancho Santa Fe, San Diego

**SAN BERNARDINO, RIVERSIDE & IMPERIAL COUNTIES:** Big Bear Lake, Idyllwild, Joshua Tree National Monument, Morongo-Whitewater, Redlands, Salton Sea - North, Salton Sea - South, San Bernardino Valley, San Jacinto Lake, Santa Ana River Valley, Santa Rosa Plateau Preserve

**LOWER SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AREA:** Bakersfield, Butterbrey Springs, China Lake, Creighton Ranch-Corcoran, Granite-Woody, Kaweah, Kern River Valley, Lost Lake Fresno, Springville

**EASTERN SIERRA AREA:** Bishop, Death Valley, Lone Pine, Mammoth Lakes, Mono Lake

Compiled by Wanda Conway

## From the Editor

Every month before I put my editorial to paper, I always wonder what I'll write about. Usually I can write to my heart's content about anything (or is it nothing) because I need to fill the vast empty spaces of the *Tanager*. However my pleas for material are starting to be answered and thus I no longer need to be so verbose. As a matter of fact, because my schedule has been very hectic lately I was honestly thinking of not doing an editorial this time around.

Unfortunately, I just found out that an error was made in the October *Tanager*. Herb Clarke spotted this mistake as soon as he received his copy, but thought it was another one of my zany tricks. He called to tell me my editorial had not fallen on deaf ears and he would be writing an article on a recent trip to Brazil. In passing he mentioned the latest screw-up. This wasn't one of my simple typos. By now you're probably saying, "Tell us already; what's the big deal?"

The problem concerns the two photographs on the Announcement page. These photos by Richard Ives were to help generate interest for his talk on *The Birds of Southern Asia*. One was a Hoopoe, the other an Eurasian Griffon. Unfortunately the captions had been flip-flopped. The month before Kimball Garrett had provided me with photos of a hawk and a hummingbird for which the exact species was a secret to be revealed at the next meeting. I jokingly wrote I wasn't sure which was which. On that same Announcement page was the first announcement for Richard Ives' talk. In that we had a typo misspelling Malaysia. He probably thinks I'm out to get him.

I don't usually make excuses for the errors in the *Tanager*, but this time I can truly say, "It's not my fault." I was out-of-town when the *Tanager* was laid-out and

only saw a xerox copy of the lay-out. The photos weren't actually shown because they are reduced at the printer to size before printing. Thus over "Hoopoe" and "Eurasian Griffon" were the words "photo A" and "photo B." Not until Herb called did I know which was photo A and which was photo B. With a 50% chance of being right, guess what editor has some mighty bad luck.

If you don't see an editorial in the next issue, it might be because this issue is perfect (fat chance!).

## ANNUAL BANQUET

Don't forget to leave Tuesday Evening, February 10, 1987 open for the *Los Angeles Audubon Annual Banquet*.

As usual the food and guest speaker will be terrific. Details next month.

## Research Awards

The Los Angeles Audubon Society will again be giving annual Research Awards beginning in February, 1987. Award recipients will be limited to students, amateurs and other 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 1987 Research Award is 30 November 1986.

For applications, write:

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

## Price Increase

As of December 1, 1986 subscriptions to the *Western Tanager* will increase to \$12 per year (bulk rate) or \$17 (first class, mailed in an envelope). Renew this month to beat the price increase.

### FUTURE FIELD TRIPS

#### Continued From Announcement Page

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15** — Join **David Bradley** and **Rusty Scalf** for a morning of rocky shoreline birding on the **Palos Verdes Peninsula**. Wandering Tattler, Whimbrel and both turnstones are all common here, along with other marine species. From the North take Palos Verdes Dr. west to Paseo Del Mar. Meet at **Lunada Bay** (at Via Bandini). From the East take Hawthorne Blvd. to Palos Verdes Dr. West, then left on Yarmouth and left on Paseo Del Mar. Fairly steep descent to shoreline. 8 a.m.

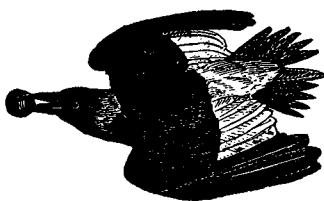
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15** — Meet **David White** at **Whittier Narrows Regional Park** for his monthly morning walk through a good diversity of habitats in search for a variety of residents, water fowl, and late migrants. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave., So El Monte, off Fwy. 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Dr. exits, west of Fwy. 605.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22 — Bolsa Chica Lagoon:** Meet **Tim Peddicord** and **Rusty Scalf** for a walk through what might be the best place in So. Cal. for close up looks at water birds of all types. Black Skimmers are now resident. Hardy souls will follow leaders to Newport Bay afterwards. Take the San Diego Fwy. to Seal Beach Blvd. west to Pacific Coast Highway. South on PCH to just past Warner. Parking lot and boardwalk are on the east side of the Highway. 8 a.m.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22 (Note new date)** — **Fred Heath** will lead a pre-Christmas Count foray to the **Antelope Valley**. Water fowl, raptors and open field birds will be abundant. Be prepared for any kind of weather. Meet at the Lamont-Odett Overlook (of Lake Palmdale) on Highway 14 at 8 a.m.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13 — Bob Shanman at Ballona Lagoon:** See November 8th trip for details.

# Birds Of The Season



by Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett

In our abbreviated discussion of late July and August birds (October *Western Tanager*), we promised that better days lay ahead, a statement we could make with some confidence since the month of September annually produces unusual bird sightings on an almost daily basis. The last ten days of September also provide us with our first influxes of our familiar winter birds: Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-crowned Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Water Pipits, etc. Suddenly there are flocks of birds to look through, and while it may be frustrating to sort through two hundred Yellow-rumps for a "good" warbler, there is something about an abundance of birds that gets the adrenaline going. It is clear that more birders were afield in southern California as the fall progressed into late September, as the following discussions may suggest.

Northern California once again stole the spotlight with the most unusual birds of the season. On 31 August Rich Stallcup observed a light morph **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** in Monterey Bay; it could not be refound subsequently. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are tropical and sub-tropical birds which regularly range as close to us as the warm waters off the coast of Mexico; in shape and flight they are similar to Buller's Shearwaters; to which they are closely related. The appearance of such warm-water species off our coast is an established phenomenon (species such as Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel and Red-tailed Tropicbird have been recorded), but such occurrences rarely seem to be closely correlated with physical factors such as water temperature.

California's first **Eurasian Dotterel** sequestered itself on Southeast Farallon Island during September 1974. Twelve years later, the second dotterel was more obliging, remaining on the pasturelands of Pt. Reyes, Marin Co., 6-9 September to be seen by dozens of observers. One of the rarest shorebirds recorded in North America, the dotterel certainly rivaled the Wedge-tailed Shearwater for the bird of the season prize.

The most unusual bird locally was Los Angeles County's second **Kentucky Warbler**, which frequented Chuck Murdoch's La Crescenta yard from 11 September to at least 22 September. The Murdochs' kind hospitality allowed a number of birders to see this normally secretive species. Even rarer, but slightly farther afield, was the **Lesser Black-backed Gull** found at the north end of the Salton Sea on 14 September by Roger Higson, and refound (after many unsuccessful

searches) on 28 September by Guy McCaskie. The only other bird of this species recorded in southern California was a winter bird at the south end of the Salton Sea.

The fall migration of loons through the inland parts of our region is not well understood, so it was with some interest that five **Common Loons** were observed on Lake Palmdale on 28 September (Cal Yorke *et al.*). A migrant **Least Bittern** was at a small pond near Turtle Rock Nature Center, Orange County, on 27 August (Doug Willick). **Little Blue Herons** were present at Bolsa Chica Reserve (an immature present since at least 18 August; John Schmitt) and San Diego Bay (one at the E Street Marsh in Chula Vista; Bob Neuwirth, 21 August). Sightings of migrant **White-faced Ibis** included one along Rio Hondo at Whittier Blvd. (Bob Neuwirth, 29 August). Sleuthing by Marge Pamias and Wanda Conway established that the odd duck found by Marge at Malibu Lagoon on 2 September was a young or eclipse male **Red-crested Pochard**; the bird, most certainly an escapee or released bird, was still present in late September. The three **California Condors** remaining in the wild were spending much of their time on the Tejon Ranch in September, but were seen on occasion at "The Sign" at Hudson Ranch. Capture attempts continue as of late September. Duayne van der Pluym encountered a flock of twenty **Black-shouldered Kites** at Ormond Beach, Port Hueneme, on 23 September. This suggests the formation of a communal winter roost in this area (such roosts are few and local in southern California). The first **Merlin** reported was one flying over the mouth of Zuma Creek on 27 September (Kimball Garrett).

At least four different **Solitary Sandpipers** were noted along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim between 15 August and 13 September (Doug Willick and Brian Daniels). Singles were also at the San Joaquin Marsh (1-3 September, Brian Daniels), Huntington Beach Central Park (1 September, Brian Daniels; 12 September, Loren Hays), Malibu Creek (Bob Pann, 6 September), the Los Angeles River at Willow Street (Kimball Garrett, 7 September), and at Lake Palmdale (Cal Yorke, 21 and 28 September). Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim: one on 5-10 September (Doug Willick) and one on 15 September (Hal Baxter). **Baird's Sandpipers** were widely reported in late August and September, as expected, with a high count of twenty at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 3 September (Jim Halferty and Hal Baxter).

The first **Pectoral Sandpiper** reported was in Anaheim on 6-7 September (Brian Daniels). A juvenile **Sanderling** was at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 28 September (Kimball Garrett, Art and Janet Cupples, *et al.*); this species is a rare but regular migrant at this inland locality. Four **Dunlin**, including one retaining some juvenal plumage, were at the Lancaster Sewage ponds the same day; Dunlins are among the latest of our shorebirds to arrive in fall. A **Stilt Sandpiper** was along the Los Angeles River at Willow Street, Long Beach, 30 August to 6 September (Bob Neuwirth); another was along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim on 13 September (Phil Sayre and Bert Mull). Among the few **Ruffs** reported was a juvenile along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim after 5 September (Doug Willick).

In addition to the Lesser Black-backed Gull mentioned earlier, one of the most noteworthy gulls of the season was a full-plumaged adult **Sabine's Gull** on the Lancaster Sewage Ponds found by Bruce Broadbooks on 21 September, and still present a week later. This is at least the third record of this normally pelagic gull for the Lancaster area. The concentration of **Elegant Terns** at Bolsa Chica was up to several hundred birds on 5 and 12 September (Hal Baxter). Small numbers of migrant **Black Terns** were seen coastally, including one along the Los Angeles River in Long Beach on 26 August (Bob Neuwirth). The latest count of **Black Skimmers** at Bolsa Chica was sixty (including twenty immatures) on 12 September (Hal Baxter). A **Spotted Owl** calling in Hal Baxter's Arcadia yard on 28 August and 4 September demonstrates that this species does wander out of its well-wooded canyons on occasion. Migrant **Lesser Nighthawks** were found coastally at the San Joaquin Marsh (3 September, Doug Willick) and in Torrance (12 September, Don Chartrand). Migrant **Vaux's Swifts** were streaming through the region during the last two-thirds of September, with concentrations of several thousand birds along the Los Angeles River from Burbank east through downtown Los Angeles.

A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was present intermittently in the Tijuana River Valley below San Diego from 17 August through mid-September. An **Eastern Kingbird** was seen briefly at Huntington Beach Central Park on 10 September (Jon Dunn). **Virginia's Warblers** were reported at Huntington Beach Central Park (=HBCP; 5 September, Hal Baxter) and in Exposition Park (18 September, Kimball Garrett). A **Magnolia Warbler** was at HBCP 9-10 September (Loren Hays). The rarest warbler of the season was a **Cerulean** seen briefly on Pt. Loma on 13 September (Richard Webster). **Blackpoll Warblers** were reported sparingly, including one in Jonathan Alderfer's Santa Monica birdbath on 27 September. One of the few **Prairie Warblers** to be found in Los Angeles County was in the extensive riparian zone bordering Lake Palmdale on 28 September (Kimball Garrett, Jonathan Alderfer, Cal Yorke and Tom Martin); this area is a private hunting

club, however, and is off limits without special written permission. **American Redstart** reports included one at HBCP (12 September, Gayle Benton) and one at the mouth of Zuma Creek (20 September, Kimball Garrett). A female **Summer Tanager** was in what is left of Long Beach Recreation Park on 9 September (Brian Daniels). Two **Brazilian Cardinals** along the Los Angeles River south of Del Amo Blvd. (Henry Spreadbury) were clearly escapees; this species has been seen widely through the region, but evidently has not established any viable populations. A molting adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Huntington Beach Central Park 18 August to 5 September (Doug Willick); a female was in the shrubs upslope from the sewage ponds on the Pepperdine Campus, Malibu, on 27 September (Kimball Garrett). **Brewer's Sparrows** are uncommon but regular migrants along our coast in September, but Brian Daniels was still surprised to find a singing bird in his Long Beach yard on 1 September. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Malibu Creek on 6 September (Bob Pann) was at a locality where the species is rarely reported.

Tidbits from farther away: A Mississippi Kite at Oasis, Mono Co., on 30 August (Guy McCaskie); a Black-billed Cuckoo seen briefly

at Mono Lake on 29 August; a Yellow Wagtail near Crescent City on 12 September (this species is now appearing almost annually in September); and a Yellow-throated Warbler and a probably Mourning Warbler at Montana de Oro State Park, San Luis Obispo Co., on 6-7 September. Highlights in Arizona included an Aztec Thrush in mid-August in Madera Canyon.

The excitement of the fall season continues through the month of November, as some of our late, northerly species begin to appear, and as rarities settle in for the winter. It will pay to be afield throughout the region. And keep in mind those Christmas Bird Counts which are, unbelievably, only a month and a half away!

Send any interesting bird observations to:

**Hal Baxter**

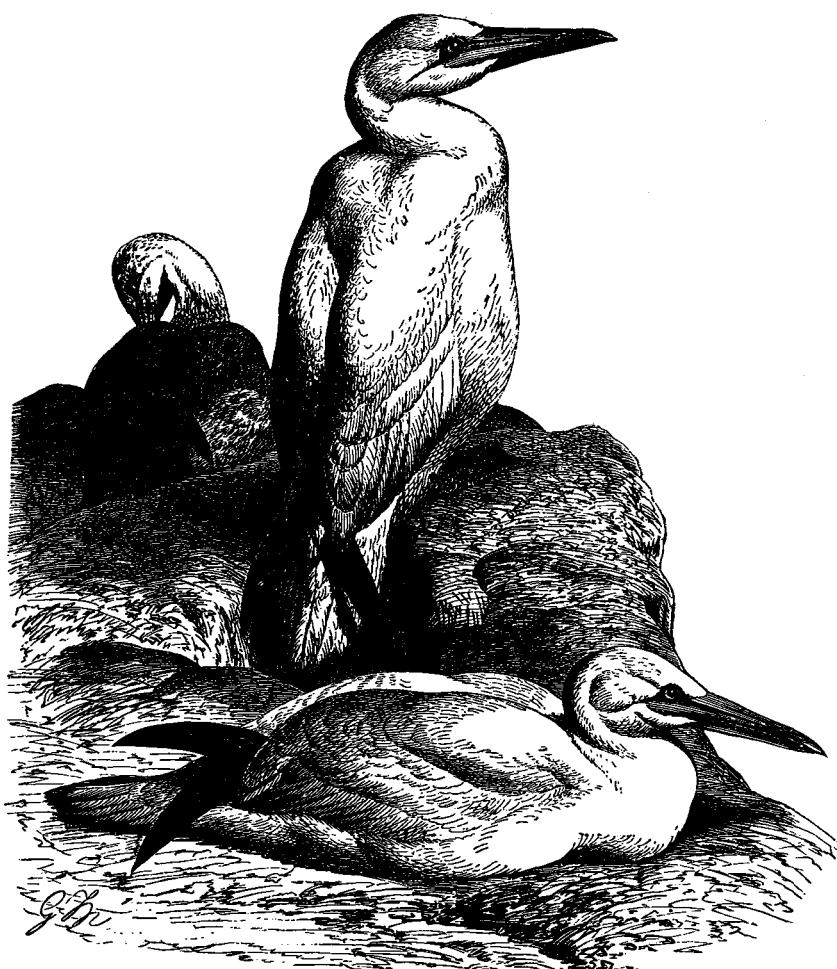
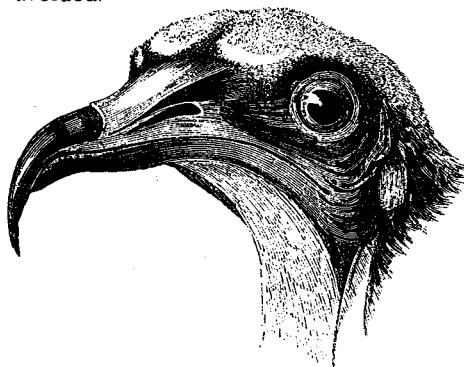
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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nov. '86

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

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



Costa's Hummingbird

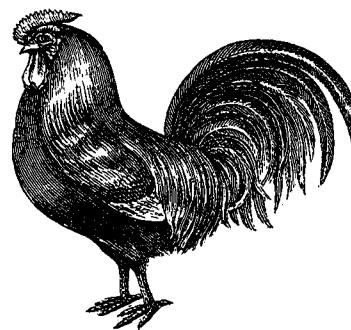
Photo by Don and Alberta Shoemaker



Partial Albino Anna's Hummingbird

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7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Photo by Don and Alberta Shoemaker



**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9** — **Hartmut Walter**, Professor of Biogeography at UCLA, will present a program on **Venturing Into Central Africa**. The remote rain forests and mountains of Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire are the home of Chimpanzees, Mountain Gorillas and Colobus Monkeys. These primates as well as a host of interesting birds will be the focus of this look at the natural history of Central Africa.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 13** — **Annual Members Photo Contest.** Bring your three best slides to be judged by the experts(??) Details in the next *Tanager*.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10** — **Annual Banquet.** The restaurant and speaker will be announced in the next *Tanager*; you can bet it will be a feast for the eyes as well as the stomach.

## WORKSHOPS

**Bird Identification Workshops** — Beginning in November, Los Angeles Audubon Society will begin offering a series of bird identification workshops. These workshops will be held one-half hour before the regular monthly program, from **7:30 to 8:00 p.m.** A variety of topics are planned and we intend to continue the workshops as long as members are interested. Because of time constraints each workshop will focus on a single species, a small group of species or some other aspect of birding. The workshops will be geared for the beginning to intermediate birder, but should be of interest to just about everyone. The programs will be led by some of our best local birders, many of whom are familiar as field trip leaders. If you were at the September program given by Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn, that will give you an idea of what we are aiming for. So come a little early to the regular monthly meeting and catch-up on some of the finer points of bird study.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11** — **Herb Clarke: The Plumages of the Western Gull.** From egg to adult Herb's beautiful slides will illustrate all the plumages of the Western Gull.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9** — **Fred Heath: Field Guides.** Fred, in his own inimitable style, will delve into some of the limitations of these books we all rely on.

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## FIELD TRIPS CALL THE TAPE!

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

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1** — Join **Guy Commeau** for a day of land and water birding with a hope for much variety. Meet near **Malibu Lagoon State Beach** behind the Hughes Market at 8 a.m. Enthusiasts may then follow Guy to **Tapia Park**.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1** — **Huntington Central Park**: Join **Brian Daniels** for a morning of birding in this lovely park which consistently attracts unusual birds. A great place for freshwater marsh birds. Take the San Diego Fwy. to Golden West Blvd. west to Slater. Park at the Slater Ave. Parking Lot. 8 a.m.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2** — In cooperation with the Santa Monica Mountain Task Force, meet leader **Gerry Haigh** for his monthly morning walk through **Topanga State Park** at 8 a.m. Spend the morning birding in lovely oak woodlands, meadows and chaparral. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. take a very sharp east turn uphill on Entrada Dr. (7 miles So. of Ventura Blvd., 1 mile No. of Topanga Village.) Keep bearing left on Entrada Dr. at various roadforks to parking lot at end. \$3 fee.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8** — Join **Bob Shanman** for a morning at the unique **Ballona Wetlands**. This is an excellent marshland site practically in our back yard. Take Marina 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: call (213) 545-2867 after 6 p.m.)

## FUTURE FIELD TRIPS See Page 9 For Details

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15** — Palos Verdes Peninsula

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15** — Whittier Narrows

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22** — Bolsa Chica Lagoon

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22** — Antelope Valley

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13** — Ballona Lagoon



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