



# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

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## Welcome Back!!

### The Thick-Billed Parrot Returns to Arizona

by Janet Tashjian Hanson  
Photographs by Dr. Noel Snyder

**O**n September, 1986, a unique and thrilling ornithological event occurred in the Chiricahua Mountains of southeast Arizona. For the first time in fifty years, the Thick-billed Parrot could once again be seen (and heard!) high in the trees, munching on pine cones, and flying free in the canyons. How often do we get to *upgrade* the possibility of seeing an endangered species?! With the current news full of extinctions and habitat destruction, how did this refreshing bit of good news come to pass....?

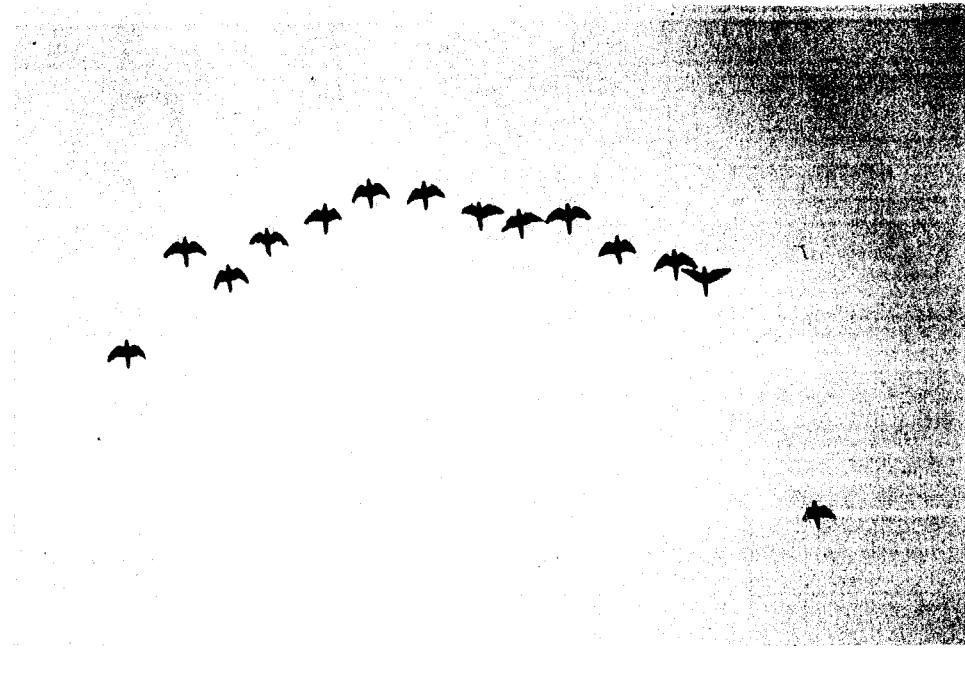
Only two of the 332 currently recognized species of parrots were ever endemic to the continental U.S. (two others are Puerto Rican, one extinct and the other still highly endangered). The last captive specimen of the Carolina Parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*) died in 1918, and the last credible wild sightings ceased in the 30's. It was a victim of agriculture and that early pesticide known as the shotgun. Such was also the case with the Thick-billed Parrot, whose range formerly covered southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, south into the Sierra Madres of Mexico. Around 1900, the mountains of Arizona were full of pioneering ranchers and miners, who managed to wipe out many species of food animals, including turkey, beaver, pronghorn, and bighorn sheep plus large predators such as the grizzly bear, jaguar, and gray wolf. A large, noisy, gregarious bird like the Thick-billed would have made an easy meal; reports from those days and from old-timers still alive today acknowledge these facts. By 1940, the parrot could only be found in the Sierra Madres.

In 1977, the Thick-billed was placed on the endangered species list, thus making illegal its importation as a pet or aviary bird. However, birds continued to appear in the U.S. via lucrative smuggling operations. In 1981 and 1982, researchers Lanning and Schifflet studied remnant populations of Thickbilleds in the Sierra Madres and documented their further decline, due to extensive lumbering in the pine forests. (Most parrots are hole nesters and "snag management" is probably a faroff ideal in view of Mexico's economic problems.)

Amazingly, in 1985 and 1986, a large number of Thickbilleds suddenly appeared in the U.S. cagebird trade, with estimates ranging from several hundred to over a thousand individuals. Agents of the Fish and Wildlife Service began to locate and confiscate birds held in California and Texas that were obviously recently smuggled. But this operation touched off a tug-of-war over Thick-billeds that is sure to continue for months and probably years to come: aviculturists who currently have Thick-billeds in their collection must somehow substantiate that their birds came in before 1977 and they must have a permit to keep endangered species. Combine this with the unique case of this parrot being a native species and the legal entanglements increase exponentially. All of the birds in captivity are not good release candidates and captive breeding is the best situation for them, but in whose zoo remains to be worked out.

It was Sam Jojola, of the Long Beach USFWS office, who suggested that recently smuggled birds become the nucleus of a free-living population in the species' old haunts of Arizona. This resulted in a meeting held in early July 1986, with the USFWS, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Department of Forestry in attendance, plus people like Dr. Noel Snyder, a field biologist, formerly with the California Condor Project and the Puerto Rican Amazon Project and Dr. Michael Wallace, whose landmark studies of reintroduced Andean Condors in Peru will have profound effects on future releases of California Condors. The consensus reached at this meeting and later public meetings was positive: the Chiricahua Mountains are now controlled by Coronado National Forest and are in better condition than ever: the mining (and hunting) days are over and very little lumbering now takes place on the steep slopes. An abundance of favorite foods are available year-round, including various pine cones and acorns comparable to those found in the Mexican range. Dead snags and old woodpecker holes are common for breeding. The only foreseeable problem was tradition: would those wild-caught birds become resident in the Chiricahuas or would they head south, back to Mexico?

In late August of 1986, the program was approved and set in motion, an amazingly



speedy decision considering all the agencies involved. Dr. Snyder, as Project Supervisor, wasted no time setting up camp with 39 Thick-billeds in large flight cages in the Cave Creek region of the Chiricahuas, at about 1700m altitude. The birds were offered the natural foods of the area: cones of the Chihuahua pine and Apache pine, Mexican pinon, and Douglas fir, berries of alligator juniper and acorns of Arizona white oak. They ate those readily, quickly weaning from standard cagebird fare. With the assistance of veterinarian James Koschmann, all the birds were surgically sexed and some were outfitted with radio-collars. Where possible, clipped wing feathers were impeded and flight restored but in several cases, the flight feathers had permanent damage or feather follicle cysts and were beyond repair. These birds will by necessity become captive breeders; the program has a standing offer to trade these for flighted birds, "a transaction that should also be of benefit to captive breeding programs by increasing the genetic diversity of captive flocks."

On September 20, 1986, with team members positioned on lookout points and with Helen Snyder high above with telemetry equipment in an airplane, the first cage door was opened for the initial group of 13 Thick-billeds. The first bird tentatively climbed onto the roof of the cage, then flew into a neighboring pine; the rest took about two hours to follow his lead and immediately began to feed on pine cones. Dr. Koschman reports: "Ultimately, the whole group soared and circled in tight formation, their emerald and crimson plumage iridescent in the western sun. Unscientific human cheers erupted from the nearby Ridge observation point."

Thus began days and weeks of tracking and recording the movements and activities of the flock. Flock movements were sudden and inexplicable; the parrots abandoned abundant food supplies for no apparent reason, flying from 6-13km to new foraging areas. They initially roosted in the release area but soon settled to sleeping in the crowns of conifers, high on northfacing ridges. Within a week, a single bird was missing and a second and third were gone by mid-October; these were probably birds in suboptimum flight condition who encountered local raptors, e.g. Cooper's Hawk, Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and Peregrine. By now they were no longer dependent on provided water, but had located potholes high on the rocky cliffs. These ten or eleven birds were feeding in a nearby canyon on October 19, the date of the second release, this time of 16 birds. This group made an almost immediate, spectacular spiraling flight upward to about 1000 feet before settling back to the cage area to feed. A bit later, the original ten showed up, and it was "a raucous, rowdy affair as peck orders were established" among the 26 parrots. They stayed together for about ten days and during that time, three more were lost, leaving a group numbering 23.

By now, it was November; the peak raptor migration period was over and Thick-billed losses dropped accordingly. The consolidated flock then split into two groups: a small flock of eight birds, two with radio collars, that stayed in the area and a second larger group of 15 birds, with six or seven radios among them. This big flock completely disappeared from the Chiracahuas and the team could not find them, even from the air with the telemetry

equipment. Exactly one week later, the smaller flock did the same thing, and for five days, there were no parrots to be found. Then the large group returned, now numbering 14 and staying around until December 3, when it suddenly left again, but this time, the team found them, 110km to the northwest, in the Graham Mountains. This group returned to the Chiricahuas around New Year's and has resided there since, losing only one more bird; it seems that mortality is definitely a factor of raptor activity and that the parrots otherwise survive the cold and snow quite well. In March 1987, two more radioed birds were added to the group, since the older radios signals were beginning to fade. The new radios have lifetimes of over a year. As I write this, Dr. Snyder assures me the birds are still resident in the Cave Creek drainage of the Chiricahuas.

The group of eight has disappeared completely, probably flying over the Mexican border 80km to the south, unfortunately, back into an environment filled with man-made stress. This summer, the team plans to begin work with a flock of captive-reared birds, donated mainly by the San Diego Zoo and the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust in the Channel Islands (ironically, the most successful captive breeding program for Thick-billeds is in England!). If all goes well, a release is planned for the summer, but as Dr. Snyder writes, "it will be awhile before they are all fully competent with pine cones and we will want to trust them in the wild." All parrots are highly social and their movement patterns are probably learned and not innate. The captive-reared birds will hopefully remain more sedentary in the Chiricahuas and not be subject to the large-scale, sudden movements of their wild-caught counterparts. The new flock will be released in an area away from the older flock, to reduce the possibility of contact between them.

Meanwhile, the Goshawks and the Peregrines have returned to nest in the mountains and the team is watching the original flock for signs of predation and breeding



activity. It is unlikely that the program will get any more government funding, making public donations all the more critical to the future of the release program. Remember this is our only remaining endemic parrot and your much-appreciated *tax deductible* donations can be sent to: Nongame Donations Fund/Thick-billed Parrot Project, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Attn: Terry Johnson, 2222 West Greenway Road, Phoenix Arizona 85023-4399.

This is a rare opportunity for us to support the reintroduction of an endangered species into its original but now safe habitat. It's extremely exciting, and will be even more so when the parrots begin breeding this summer. Future updates on the project's progress are forthcoming, if the interest is there (and I'm sure it is) and maybe I'll see some of you this summer in Cave Creek! Happy birding!

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Lanning, D. V. and J. T. Shiflett. 1983. *Nesting ecology of Thick-billed Parrots*. *Condor* 85: 66-73.

Snyder, N. F. R. 1987. *Personal communication*.

Snyder, N. F. R. and M. P. Wallace. 1986. *Reintroduction of the Thick-billed Parrot in Arizona*. In *Proceedings of the 1987 Delacour Symposium*, International Foundation for the Conservation of Birds, Hollywood, CA, 360-384.

## Research Awards

Sharon Milder, Ed. Chair

**C**ongratulations to the 1987 Los Angeles Audubon Society Research Awards recipients. They are, in alphabetical order:

#### Carolee Chaffrey

Project Title; "Cooperative Breeding in Western American Crows", *Corvus brachyrhynchos hesperis*

#### William S. Longland

Project Title; "Predation by Great Horned Owls and Predator Avoidance by Desert Rodents"

#### Robert L. Pitman

Project Title; "A Census of the Marine Birds of Clipperton Island"

We thank all who applied and welcome reapplication by those who did not receive an award this year.

The total amount awarded to the 3 recipients in 1987 was \$3,100. Because the need for funding of students in Ornithology is great, we hope that our membership will give to this fund so that we can continue giving to these research projects. Donations can be sent to:

LA Audubon Research Awards  
c/o LA Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90046

P.S. The October 1987 evening meeting will consist of presentations by 3 or 4 recipients of L.A.A.S. Research awards and should be most informative.

# Some Poems

By Ruth Hutton

## QUAIL

Behold the busy little Quail  
So plump, so sleek, so brown.  
He totes a small antenna  
Atop his little crown.

## SWAN

I like the Swan in water;  
On dry land not at all.  
On the lake he's nice and swimmy  
But walking he's too tall!

## FASHION

I'm watching birds of late and now  
I don't know what to think.  
'Cuz Golden Finches, some are green  
And Purple Finches..Pink.

## RED WINGED BLACKBIRD

The Blackbird is a flashy guy  
He sits on reed or boulder  
To show his suit of shiny black  
Red chevrons on each shoulder.

## PEACOCK

The Peacock, now there is a bird  
Its plumage is just glorious.  
Alas its majesty is lost  
By his strident squawk notorious.

## HUTTON'S VIREO \*

The write-up in the Bird Book  
It nearly broke our hearts.  
It says "The Hutton's Vireo  
Has dingy underparts."

\* Roger Tory Peterson

## OWL

"The Owl is very oddly made"  
The little urchin said.  
"because they hasn't any neck; they wings  
is on they head."

## COWBIRD

The Cowbird's neither cow nor bird  
In habit it's like we,  
She lays her eggs in others' nests  
Then flies off wild and free.

## PELAGIC TRIPS

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 15** — Join **Bruce Broadbook** and **Brian Daniels** for a trip towards **Osborne Banks**.

**Price:** \$24

**Time:** 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27** — Join **Herb Clarke** and **Brian Daniels** for a visit to **San Clemente Island (Tropicbird Search)**.

**Price:** \$28

**Time:** 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11** — Join **Arnold Small** and **Kimball Garrett** for a trip to **Santa Barbara Is.**

**Price:** \$24

**Time:** 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15** — Join **Herb Clarke** and **Brian Daniels** for a trip towards **Channel Is.**

**Price:** \$22

**Time:** 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## SUMMER AND FALL

### Expected Birds:

No. Fulmar(F)

Shearwaters: Sooty, Pink-footed, Black-vented(F)

Jaegers: Pomarine, Parasitic

Storm-Petrels: Black, Least(F)

Cormorants: Double-crested, Brandt's, Pelagic

Shore Birds: Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler(F), Surfbirds(F), Phalaropes

Terns and Gulls: Foster's, Common, Elegant, Royal(F), Arctic

Alcids: Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Cassin's Auklet, Craveries Murrelet, Xantus Murrelet

### Rarities: (Seen at least twice in 10 years)

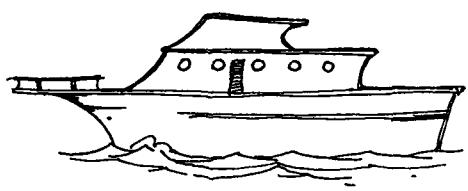
Flesh-footed and Buller's Shearwaters, So. Polar Skua, Long-tailed Jaeger(F), Ashy Storm-Petrel, Red-billed Tropic Bird

### Possible Sea Mammals:

Elephant Seal, Harbor Seal, Finback Whale, Menke Whale, Blue Whale, Orca, Risso's Dolphin, Pacific Common Dolphin

### Pelagic Trip — Off Morro Bay — Saturday, September 26

7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. A trip sponsored by the Morro Coast Audubon Society and led by **Jon Dunn** and **Brad Schram**. Possible species which have been seen on similar trips include Flesh-footed Shearwater, Skua, Long-tailed Jaeger, Craveri's Murrelet, Arctic Tern and Sabine's Gull. For reservations send a \$23.00 check payable to the Morro Coast Audubon Society and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Tom Edell, 46 8th Street, Cayucos, CA 93430, (805) 995-1691.

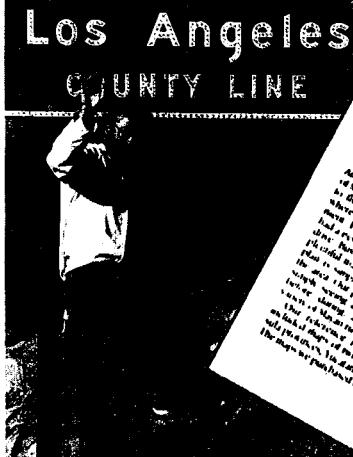


Not all people like birds as we do. This photo was part of an ad from a company which specializes in keeping birds off and out of industrial structures. They sell netting, sound and light devices, as well as feed that causes birds "to emit cries, frightening the rest into a hasty retreat." Sounds like some Mexican food I ate recently.

**Thanks,  
Fred...**

*for the memories*

Heathbird (*Editorius leavingus*) in flight



# An Arrangement of Feathers

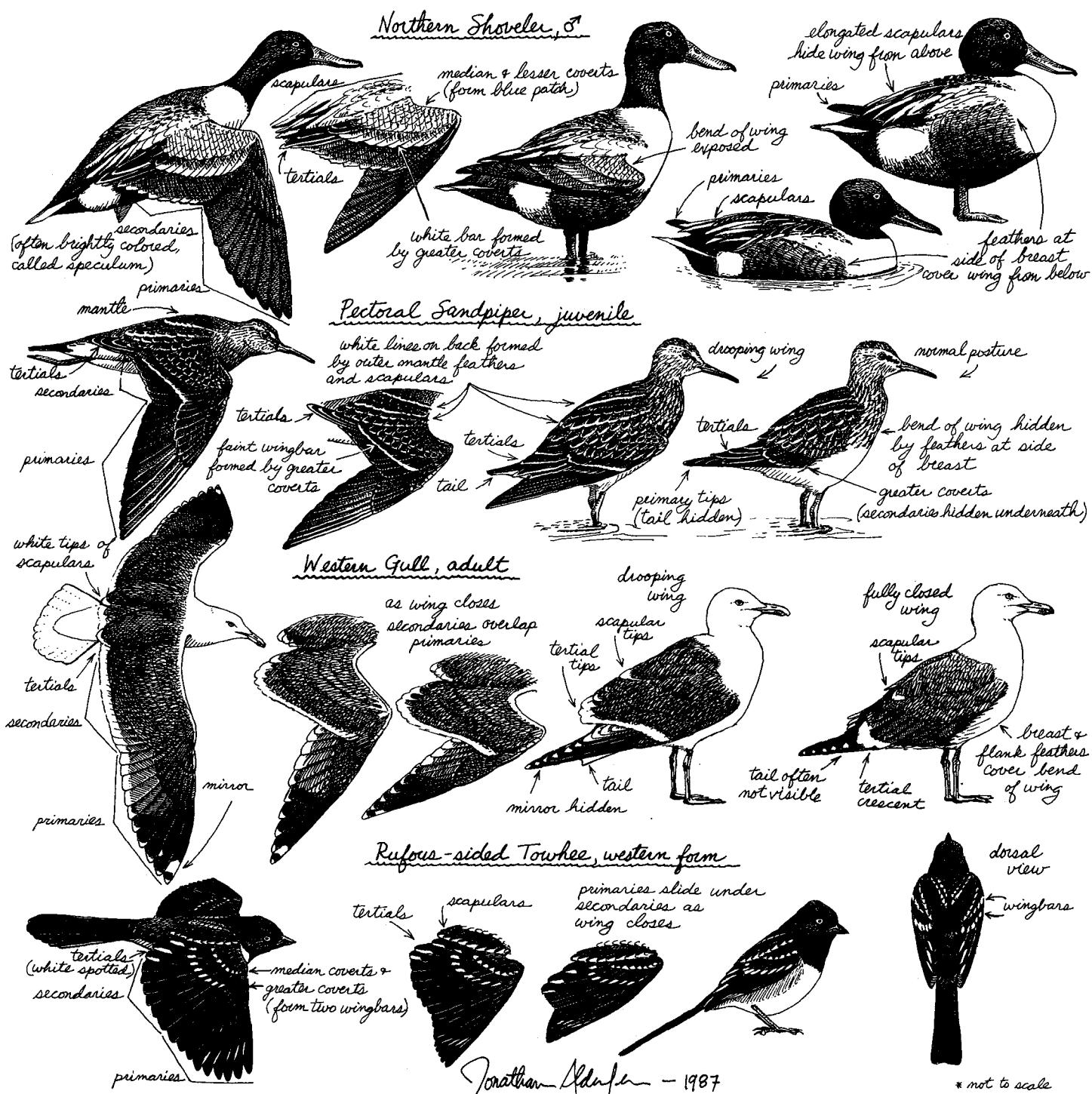
Article and Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer

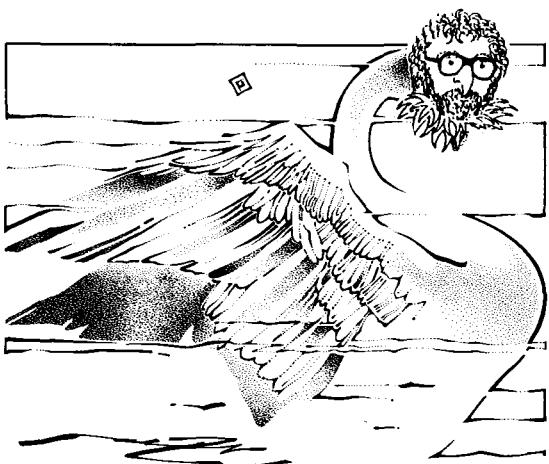
**T**here is a mystifying moment when a bird in flight becomes, well . . . a bird not in flight. In that split second when the wings are folded the feathers are radically rearranged. For most Passerines, the rearrangement is quite similar and the upper surfaces of the wings, though folded, remain visible. The other

orders of birds are a much more diverse group and the transition from open wing to closed wing can be very confusing — what went where and how did it get there? Elongated scapulars can obscure the closed wing from above or flank and breast feathers can swallow it up from below. Some ducks paddling around appear to

have no wings at all, the feathers from both above and below almost completely surround and hide the wing.

Below are specific examples of a duck, shorebird, gull and passerine. Each species has its own unique arrangement of feathers, but there are many similarities in closely related groups.





## Fred's Swan Song

**B**efore I launch into my farewell editorial, I wanted to recognize those few folks who have been keeping an eye out for breeding birds in L.A. County.

### Robert Munsey

*Red-shouldered Hawk* — nest in Tapia Park, April.  
*House Wren* — nest in a post in Tapia Park, April.

### Scott Harris

*Cliff Swallow* — nest building in Malibu Lagoon, April 8.  
*Barn Swallow* — nest building in Malibu Lagoon, April 8.  
*Brown Towhee* — adults with nesting material in Eaton Canyon Park, April 30.  
*Rufous-sided Towhee* — adults with nesting material in Eaton Canyon Park, April 30.

*Nuttall's Woodpecker* — adult feeding young in a cavity in Malibu Creek State Beach Park, May 12.

*House Wren* — adult feeding young in a cavity in Malibu Creek State Park, May 12.

*Killdeer* — adults with flightless young in Malibu Creek State Park, May 12.

*American Coot* — adult with young, Morris Reservoir, May 15.

*Common Raven* — food begging by fledged young, Morris Reservoir, May 15.

*Canyon Wren* — food begging by fledged young, Morris Reservoir, May 15.

### Bob Van Meter

*Anna's Hummingbird* — nest, L.A.  
*Spotted Dove* — nest, L.A.  
*Black-tailed Gnatcatcher* — nest, Palos Verde Peninsula

### Sharon Milder

*Hooded Oriole* — nest in her (Sharon's) Westwood Backyard.

### Marilyn L. Lewis

*American Crow* — three young in a nest on a building in downtown L.A.

In addition to these observers I noticed photos of nesting evidence in L.A. County in three issues of the L.A. Times.

*House Sparrow* — nesting in yellow signal light at the intersection of Plummer and Vanalden in Northridge, May 1 issue.

*Mallard* — female and six young crossing street in Long Beach, May 2 issue.

*Cliff Swallow* — nests and adults on College of the Canyons campus in Valencia, May 5 issue.

Please keep sending those breeding notes in. Larry Steinberg our new editor will be happy to continue printing them. Maybe someone will come forward and really start an honest to goodness Breeding Bird Atlas in Los Angeles County.

To get back to my goodbye . . .

I checked back to see how many issues of the *Tanager* I had edited. Counting this issue the number is 37, almost four years worth. This includes 25 issues during my current stint which started with the March 1985 issue and 12 issues which began in September 1982 and ended November 1983. The first time I gave it up, was because my ex-wife gave me a choice between birding and the *Tanager*. I didn't realize then I had a third option: divorce. By the time that option became clear, Dexter Kelly was firmly entrenched as editor. Fortunately Dexter's schedule became crowded after a dozen issues and I was able to reassume the editorship of the *Tanager*. My new wife, Carolyn, not only helps me with the *Tanager* but goes birding with me as well.

I've been lucky in other ways with the *Tanager*. I've had lots of help from a long list of people who have contributed articles, photos, drawings, suggestions, notes, poison pen letters, etc. It is those that made it easy for me to put out a first rate newsletter issue after issue. I thought of listing all those folks who have supported me in one way or another over the years, but the list would be long and I'd sure as heck would forget someone. Instead of that, I would just like to thank all of you and express the hope that I did justice to your contributions in the pages of the *Tanager*. The copious praise which I have received for the *Tanager* can be

justly shared by each and every one of you.

I also want to apologize to each and every one of you for the myriad of typos found in almost every article published. However, it has given me lots to write about in my monthly column . . . you didn't think I'd write a farewell column without some mention of typos, did you? Needless to say the June issue had its share. Unfortunately one of the worst concerns the new editor Larry Steinberg. When I gave his name and address I spelled his name *Steinburg*. He'll probably get even by misspelling my name in some way like *Heap* or *Heathen*. Before I finish my latest diatribe on typos I do want to remind you that Larry will be in desperate need of articles, photo, drawings, etc. Please support him as you did me. Send all material to:

Larry Steinberg  
 10336 Cheviot Drive  
 Los Angeles, CA 90064

Andrea Kaufman, feeling sorry for me in my constant battle with typos sent an article from a recent L.A. Times on wetlands to cheer me up. There one sentence read in part: ". . . include sandpipers, dowagers, mondo curlers, marble goblets . . .". I know they meant dowitchers, marbled godwits, and some species of curlew, although mondo (which means world in Portuguese) escapes me entirely. I've never managed to mangle three bird names in an entire *Birds of the Season* column and L.A. Times does it in one sentence. I guess I'll never be up to their standards.

For those of you that have been doing their articles on an IBM compatible personal computer we had a suggestion from Tony at Etcetera graphics that should help reduce errors in the future. The floppy disk with the article could be submitted to Etcetera graphics. They then should be able to go directly to their typesetting machines saving key punching time (and of course money) while not adding any errors.

Although this editorial is rather lengthy, I have carefully checked it over and it should contain not a single typo. Before I finish I did want to leave you all with one very important message:

Qxzt yweau iimno rypcde a bnpqst. And furthermore wkldgff to crqttrb or uqmtrrj gwx vanilla.

Goodbye,

# Bruised Planet

An international commitment to "sustainable development" is proposed by the World Commission on Environment and Development. It is advice that nations will ignore at great risk.

The principle of sustainability has been raised by the Worldwatch Institute in Washington in each of its annual State of the World reports since its survey of world resources was instituted in 1984. Perhaps this new endorsement from a prestigious commission, created by the United Nations, will facilitate acceptance of the principle and a more adequate commitment by world leaders to its implementation.

"To secure our common future we need a new international ethic that looks beyond narrow and shortsighted national ambitions," Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, chairman of the 21-member commission, commented. "It is the only way we can pursue our own self-interest on a small and closely knit planet," she added.

She is right. This global sensitivity to the environment is the only secure way to pursue national policy in an interdependent world. But most nations obviously are ignoring the advice as they plunder precious rain forests, waste diminishing petroleum reserves, threaten the Earth with toxics and radioactive waste, and engorge storage bins with unwanted, unneeded farm surpluses.

Brundtland said that the commission was offering governments and international organizations "a challenging agenda for change," and that it is. It is challenging above all because it would

force nations to reexamine programs now locked into national political schemes because they serve powerful domestic special interests like the developers of the Amazon Basin, the American and European Community subsidy-dependent farmers, the gas guzzling elements of the American and European auto industries, the military-industrial complexes that consume \$1 trillion a year when whole continents are starving for resources.

The report offers a particular challenge and opportunity to the United States, still the richest of all the large nations. Under President Reagan there has been a tendency to treat environmental matters as the preserve of addled idealists rather than the cement of survival. In international terms, Washington has been negligent on both of its frontiers, failing to halt the acid rain that is destroying Canadian forests or to purify the Colorado River's heavy salinity as it courses into Mexico. But there remains, despite official procrastination, a commitment among Americans to reform, a willingness to respond to leadership, an understanding that the economic well-being and security of the American people is inextricably connected with other nations, including the impoverished nations of the Third World. This report, and its personal presentation by Brundtland to Reagan, may facilitate an appropriate response before another opportunity is lost.

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## Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth



After the Second World War a feeling was expressed in many places around the world that mankind could not afford another orgy of blood, cruelty, and destruction. Even before the end of the war the United Nations was created under the banner: "One World." Idealistic college students in America sang, "Together we'll strive to build a new world" to music written by the Soviet composer Shostakovich. Picasso's

white dove of peace floated over the UN and was reproduced on postage stamps and Christmas cards. Naive hope was in the air.

The memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fades into the distance until we realize that this small planet contains over 50,000 nuclear warheads, all many times more powerful than the primitive bombs that devastated the Japanese. The euphoria of 1945 has vanished like a morning mist. The world is divided as never before; bullets

fly, people starve, hatreds intensify. When we thought (if we did) about One World forty years ago, we were thinking about politics, perhaps even a visionary World Government. Ecology was a word known only to academic specialists.

In the last four decades we have been assaulted by a barrage of environmental catastrophes that ignore political boundaries: acid rain, poisoned rivers, nuclear accidents, ozone depletion, desertification, international oil spills. As the Times editorial says, under President Reagan (and others) "there has been a tendency to treat environmental matters as the preserve of addled idealists rather than the cement of survival." Our cries in the wilderness have at last been heard and "prestigious commissions" are now sounding the warning. Will the rulers of the earth embrace "a new international ethic that looks beyond narrow and shortsighted national ambitions?"

Los Angeles Audobon does its bit on the local scene to preserve and protect what remains in this city of open space and wildlife habitat. We try to expand our horizons by participating in national and global conservation in the only way we can: contributing money. While we are members of many far-flung environmental organizations and so help them in a small way, each year we make substantial donations to those we feel are making the most impact:

The list this year follows.

- World Wildlife Fund - \$1000 for saving tropical rainforests in the western hemisphere.
- The California branch of the Nature Conservancy - \$1000.
- The National Resources Defense Council - \$1000.
- The Environmental Defense Fund - \$1000.

The last two above are formidable associations of scientists and lawyers who may be the most effective and innovative environmental organizations in the country.

● The Predatory Bird Research Group at UC Santa Cruz - \$1000. These are the people who released peregrines in the Santa Monica Mountains with money obtained by a grant to LA Audobon by the California Community Foundation. The Santa Cruz facility also works to propagate other endangered and threatened raptors.

● And last, but hardly least, the Mono Lake litigation fund - \$5000. LA Audobon is still one of the principals in the legal battle to preserve Mono Lake from the water diversions that may destroy this magnificent wildlife sanctuary.

Our over-all contributions this year are significantly less than in recent years as our available resources are considerably lower.

# The Wildlife and Environmental Art Show

## The Los Angeles Audubon Society's First Major Fund Raising Project

The Wildlife & Environmental Art Show to be held at the Wilshire Ebell Art Salon from September 12-18, 1987 is rapidly approaching. On September 12, 1987, the formal Awards Reception will be held in the Grand Hall, 4400 Wilshire Boulevard. The Art Show will be open daily from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Art Salon adjacent to the hall with entry at 741 S. Lucerne.

We are planning a memorable evening — a black tie event with music, entertainment and the presentation of awards. Currently, our focus is on acquiring an outstanding Emcee and confirming the entertainment. Watch your local newspapers for the announcement and details. There will be raffles and door prizes. Please call Audubon House (213) 876-0202 or (213) 931-6692 for inclusion on the invitation list.

On Sunday, September 13, 1987, the General Reception is scheduled from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. with hors d'oevres and a no host bar. All artists are invited to attend both receptions, so you will have an opportunity to meet them.

All artworks will be for sale and members will be needed to staff the show for its duration.

September sounds distant, summer has only just begun — but, printers require 4 to 6 weeks lead time, so we need commitments for raffle items and Merit Awards by early August to be certain the donors receive recognition of their contributions. This is the primary value we have to offer them in return for their generosity. We'd prefer to print the list of items on the raffle tickets. Also, we need to prepare promotional advertisements to submit to the various news agencies, arrange for printing of the Program for the 12th and all other publicity we can access. All items and the donors will be included in the Program, the major contributors will be mentioned in the advertising.

Our thanks to members Ruth Greenberg, Mr. & Mrs. Robert C. Packard, Mrs. G.S. Suffel and Polly and Macklin Fleming for contributing Merit Awards, plus a double thanks to Ruth for the matted and framed block print "Sea Urchins". It and a limited edition print donated by Birdwatchers' Digest will be raffled at the Awards Reception.

Our sincere appreciation to the following sponsors, contributors and supporters: Freida Factor Friedman, Studio Center,

Artists Teaching Workshop, San Jose, Prism Entertainment Corporation, Peter Falk, Alvin Markovitz, M.D., Mr. & Mrs. Anthony R. Hamilton, Mr. & Mrs. John F. Harrigan, Mr. & Mrs. Richard W. Daily, The Honorable Joel Rudof, Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Sears and Mr. & Mrs. Richard Rifenbark.

Over 700 artists nationwide have responded to our ads and been mailed a copy of the Prospectus. To encourage a maximum number of entries, we *need* additional Merit Awards, as we have determined the Wilshire Ebell Art Salon can accommodate 300 artworks, which will make a great show and a sales and exposure opportunity for a larger number of artists.

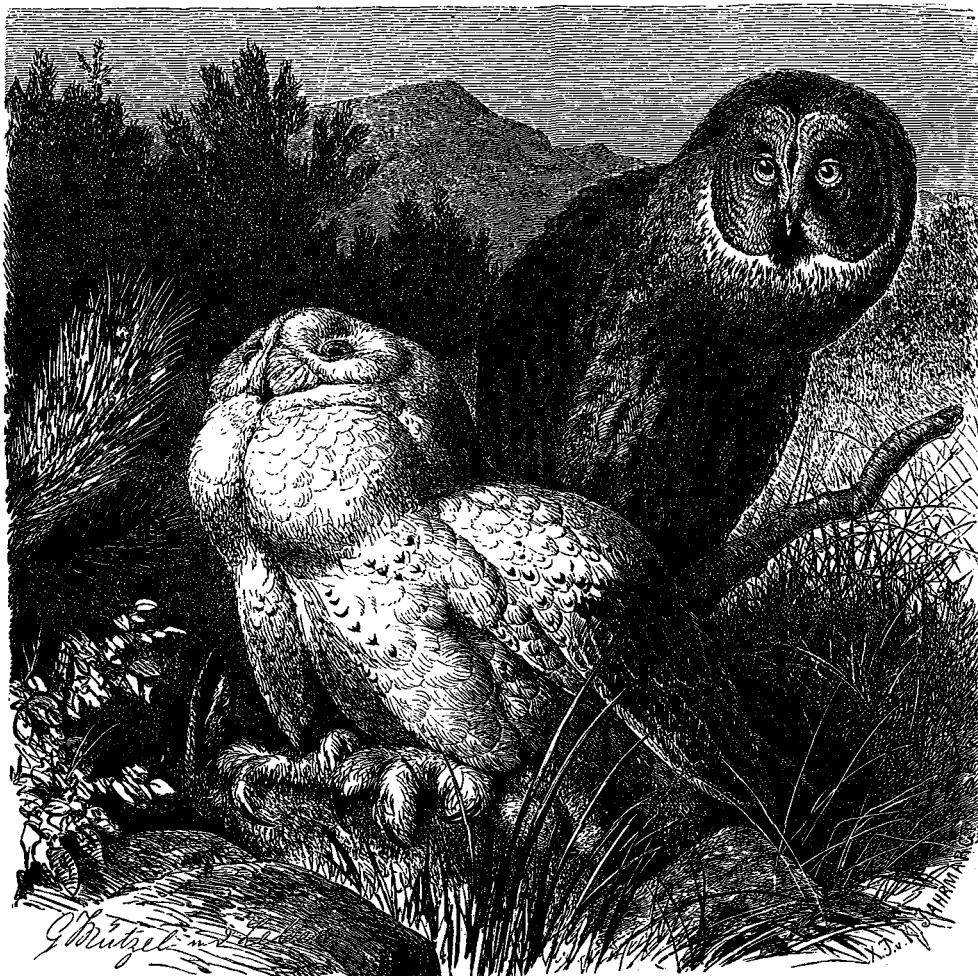
Advertising space is available in the Awards reception Program: full page \$300.00; one half page \$150.00; one quarter page \$75.00 and one eighth page \$50.00.

Our Honorary Committee is shaping up nicely, including Eddie Albert, Councilman Richard Alatorre, Peter Berle, Councilman Ernani Bernardi, Councilman Marvin Braude, Mr. & Mrs. Richard W. Daily, Martha Davis, Mr. & Mrs. John Earhart, County Supervisor Edmund D. Edelman, Councilwoman Joan Milke Flores, Frieda Factor Friedman, David Gaines, Kimball Garrett, Mrs. Ruth Greenberg, Mr. & Mrs. Anthony L. Hamilton, Mr. & Mrs. John F. Harrigan, Don Henley, Joel Higgins, Jack Lemmon, Dennis May, Prism Entertainment, Cliff Robertson, Judge Joel Rudof, Dr. & Mrs. Ralph Schreiber, Alan Sieroty, Mayor Pro Tem Etta Simpson, Jack Smith, Jeffrey Villagran, Councilman Joel Wachs, and Councilman Michael Woo. The Nature Company is an Underwriting Sponsor of the Awards Reception and an anonymous contribution of over \$1,000 in stock has been received to assist in defraying the expenses of mounting such an event.

For the receptions, we need floral displays, live music and items to be raffled. Anyone know where we can acquire a weekend somewhere special? or dinner for two? how about a T.V.? or a VCR? Do you know someone connected to an airline? or a jewelry store? Ask them. Any person or business donating an item to be raffled will be listed in the Program, the Catalog and their contribution will be recognized at the Awards Reception. Don't forget, all donations are tax deductible.

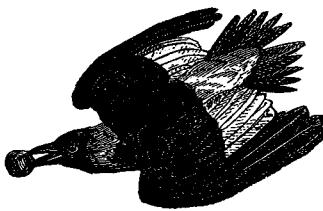
If you can assist with any of these things, please call Doni or Ken Kendig at (213) 931-6692.

Since this is the first major fund raising event we've attempted, it is imperative we do it exceptionally well. To do this we need the support of all our members . . . please help!



# Birds of the Season

By Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett



*Bird sightings reported in the "Birds of the Season" column have generally not yet been reviewed by the American Birds regional editors or by the California Bird Records Committee. All records of rarities should be considered tentative pending such review.*

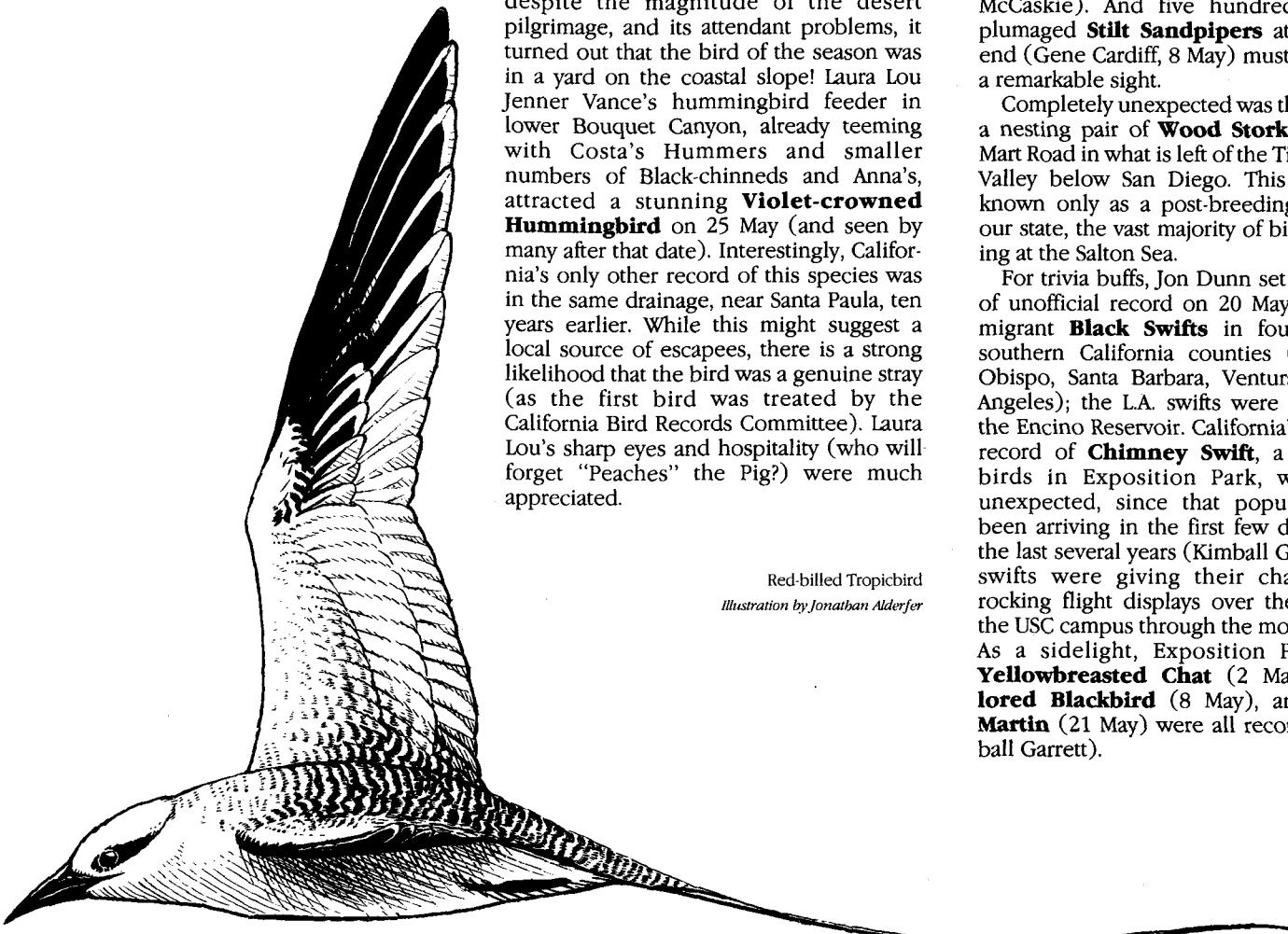
**M**ore birders than ever seem to have rushed off to the northern deserts over the latter half of May, and while a number of interesting birds were found, there has to have been a twinge of disappointment among the veterans. One oasis after another has suffered habitat destruction to some degree, and the birding throngs jeopardize access to "new" oases almost as quickly as they are discovered. The loss of many of the magnificent cottonwoods at Deep Springs College is sad

indeed to those who remember them full of warblers from root to crown. Productive, well-watered ranchyards in the Antelope Valley are essentially gone, a particularly unkind blow to home county birders. The result is that the Mohave Desert portion of Kern County, enthusiastically worked by a dedicated core of birders, is emerging as the prime region for rarer migrants in late spring. Many of the Kern County sites are "sensitive" -access, in other words, is not open to general birding; and at well-worked California City Central Park, it bears repeating that the apartment grounds adjacent to the park are off-limits to birders.

But the point is not to burden this column with admonitions and sad remembrances. Late spring birding was exciting and exhilarating, and will remain so in the coming years as long as we remain respectful of the fragility (politically and ecologically) of our productive birding sites. And despite the magnitude of the desert pilgrimage, and its attendant problems, it turned out that the bird of the season was in a yard on the coastal slope! Laura Lou Jenner Vance's hummingbird feeder in lower Bouquet Canyon, already teeming with Costa's Hummers and smaller numbers of Black-chinned and Anna's, attracted a stunning **Violet-crowned Hummingbird** on 25 May (and seen by many after that date). Interestingly, California's only other record of this species was in the same drainage, near Santa Paula, ten years earlier. While this might suggest a local source of escapees, there is a strong likelihood that the bird was a genuine stray (as the first bird was treated by the California Bird Records Committee). Laura Lou's sharp eyes and hospitality (who will forget "Peaches" the Pig?) were much appreciated.

Red-billed Tropicbird

Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer



The 10th May L.A.A.S. Pelagic trip out of San Pedro was highlighted by a very cooperative **Red-billed Tropicbird** which made several passes right over the *Van Tuna*, about four miles northeast of Osborne Bank. Perhaps the most unusual bird on the trip was a **Least Tern** halfway between Santa Barbara Island and Santa Catalina Island (Brian Daniels); this species is unrecorded from the Channel Islands and rarely seen well at sea. Among the twenty or so **Xantus' Murrelets** was a downy chick attended by two adults several miles off the tip of Catalina. In the "best views" category were certainly the exhausted Wilson's and Hermit Warblers which alighted on shoetops, binoculars and shoulders as they hitchhiked along. Finally, the seven species of marine mammals were highlighted by a pair of beaked whales (perhaps Cuvier's) about six miles northeast of Osborne Bank. "Pelagic" birding wasn't bad at the north end of the Salton Sea, where Bob McKernan saw an **Ancient Murrelet** and an adult **Long-tailed Jaeger** on 23 May. A lucky few who waded to the mouth of the Whitewater River saw the **Little Gull** there in early May (Guy McCaskie). A **Semipalmented Sandpiper** was at the north end on 2 May (Guy McCaskie). And five hundred alternate plumaged **Stilt Sandpipers** at the south end (Gene Cardiff, 8 May) must have been a remarkable sight.

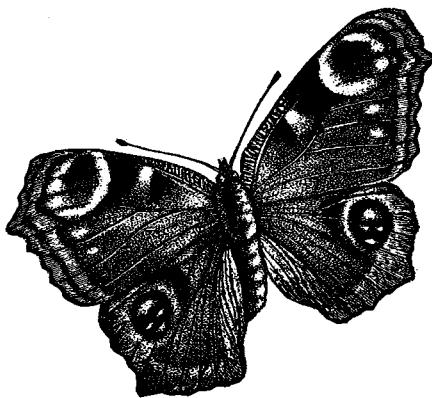
Completely unexpected was the report of a nesting pair of **Wood Storks** off Dairy Mart Road in what is left of the Tijuana River Valley below San Diego. This species is known only as a post-breeding visitor to our state, the vast majority of birds appearing at the Salton Sea.

For trivia buffs, Jon Dunn set some kind of unofficial record on 20 May by seeing migrant **Black Swifts** in four different southern California counties (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles); the L.A. swifts were flying over the Encino Reservoir. California's first April record of **Chimney Swift**, a couple of birds in Exposition Park, was hardly unexpected, since that population had been arriving in the first few days of May the last several years (Kimball Garrett); the swifts were giving their characteristic rocking flight displays over the park and the USC campus through the month of May. As a sidelight, Exposition Park's first **Yellowbreasted Chat** (2 May), **Tricolored Blackbird** (8 May), and **Purple Martin** (21 May) were all recorded (Kimball Garrett).

To the last Tanager's reports of migrant **Calliope Hummingbirds**, add two males in O'Melveny Park on 1 May (Wanda Conway). **Dusky Flycatchers**, always scarce as lowland spring migrants, were at Turtle Rock Nature Center on 20 April (Doug Willick) and in California City on 13 May (Hal Baxter and Wanda Conway). A few lowland **Gray Flycatchers** were noted, and several were on territory in the Rose Mine area of the San Bernardino Mountains on 10 May (Jim and Ellen Strauss, John Parmeter). Charmlee Park, in the Santa Monica Mountains, played host to a late **Red-breasted Nuthatch** on 7 May (Mickey Long).

Now for those warblers...The rarest find was the **Bluewinged Warbler** at Butterbrey Spring, north of Mojave, on 9 May (John Wilson). To complete the "Mother's Day Massacre" Paul Lehman turned up a **Prothonotary** and a **Wormeating** at Butterbrey on the 10th. None of these birds stuck around long, as seems maddeningly typical of spring warbler vagrants. A **Golden-winged Warbler** played hide and seek in the low cottonwoods at Oasis Ranch, Mono County, during the Memorial Day weekend. A **Northern Parula** was at Prado Basin on 4 May (Loren Hays). California City produced a **Prothonotary Warbler** on 13 May (Hal Baxter and Wanda Conway), a **Yellow-throated Warbler** there the next day (Bruce Broadbooks), and a female **Hooded Warbler** on 16 May (Jeri Langham). A male **Townsend's X Hermit Warbler** hybrid was in the oaks at Topanga State Park on 2 May (Kimball Garret), coinciding with a large push of both parental species through the region. An **Ovenbird** was in the 19th Street willows, Huntington Beach, on 9 May (Rick Hallowell). A second **Worm-eating Warbler** was at Morongo Valley on 30 April, and a **Painted Redstart** was there from 30 April to 10 May (Arnold Small, Bruce Broadbooks, Bob Pann). **Kentucky Warblers** used to be ultra-rarities in southern California, but each spring seems to bring a greater number. This year there were several on the northern deserts, one at Morongo (Doug Willick, 17 May), and one at a small Kern County oasis on 15 May, (John Wilson). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at Walker Ranch, Placerita Canyon, on 20 April (Guy Commeau), a likely breeding locality.

**Blue Grosbeak** sightings locally included several at the Sepulveda Basin (Irwin Woldman, 26 April), one in the La Jolla Valley (Bob Pann, 17 April), and at least three at Rancho Sierra Vista, Thousand Oaks (Kimball Garrett, 15 May). Thirty or more **Lazuli Buntings** migrating through Huntington Beach Central Park on 3 May (Brian Daniels) represented quite a movement. **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found near Ramer Lake (Gene Cardiff, 9 May) and at California City (John Wilson, 10-13 May). **Great-tailed Grackles** con-



tinue to be widely reported. They are very well established in California City; coastally, a male was at Newport Bay on 18 April (Mike McLaughlin).

Warblers and other passerine migrants have played such a dominant role in our birding psyche through May, that it is difficult to switch gears and offer the reminder that July and August are months for shorebirding. Adult shorebirds will be southbound in great numbers during this period. Will the Mongolian Plover return to the Santa Clara River estuary? Will something even better turn up? Only diligent searching will tell. July and August also represents condor-watching season, an endeavor that promises to be singularly unproductive this year. Does this mean nobody will bird the summit of Mt. Pinos, or "The Sign" again? Let's hope not, since those areas are certainly worthy of coverage. Check those montane meadows (many will be dry this year) for hummingbirds, and see if you can top this spring's Violet-crowned!

Send any interesting bird observations to:

**Hal Baxter**  
1821 Highland Oaks Dr.  
Arcadia, CA 91006

**Phone (818) 355-6300**

\* \* \* \*

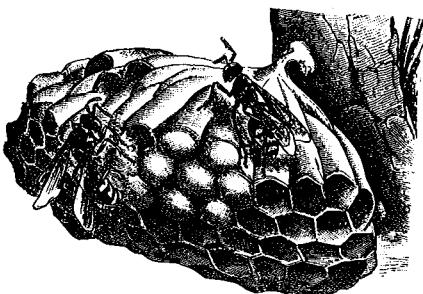
**The California Bird Records Committee** of the Western Field Ornithologists is seeking information on the status of non-native populations of the following species in California: Common Peafowl, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Ringed Turtle-dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Black-hooded Parakeet, Canary-winged Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot, Lilac-crowned Parrot, Yellow-headed Parrot, Red-Whiskered Bulbul, Oriental White-eye, and Northern Cardinal. Anyone with information on the history or escape, population size, distribution, nesting success, attempts to manage or eradicate these populations, or other factors which bear on the question of their establishment, or of the establishment of other introduced species not on the California State Check-List is urged to report to KIMBALL L. GARRETT, Section of Birds and Mammals, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007.

## Membership Note

The National Audubon Society is computerized through the Neodata Company in Boulder, Colorado, so it is no longer advisable to renew through the Los Angeles Audubon Society. The only advantage in renewing through the Los Angeles Audubon Society is if your membership has lapsed. At that time it would expedite receiving the next Western Tanager.

Neodata has a system of sending multiple notices commencing four months prior to your membership lapses. Frequently, there is an overlap from the time you mailed your dues and the next scheduled renewal reminder. Many people have received notices after they have remitted their dues because of this.

Subscribers who are members of another Audubon Chapter should not send their renewals to the Los Angeles Audubon Society.



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Audubon membership (local and national) is \$30 per year (individual), \$38 (family), \$18 (student), \$21 (senior citizen) or \$23 (senior citizen family) including AUDUBON Magazine and THE WESTERN TANAGER. To join, make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, and send them to Audubon House at the above address. Members wishing to receive the TANAGER by first class mail must send checks for \$5 to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Subscriptions to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are \$12 per year (Bulk Rate) or \$17 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

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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

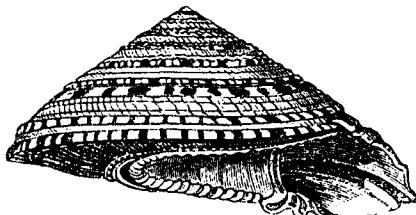
July/August 1987

## EVENING MEETINGS

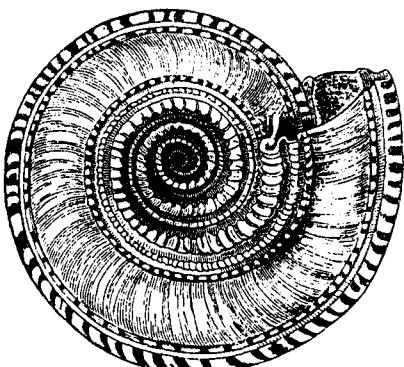
**Meet at 8:00 p.m. in Plummer Park**

**Tuesday, September 8 — Peter Robinson** the Senior Investigations Officer for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and author of *Bird Detectives* will give a unique talk. RSPB is like a cross between the Audubon Society and the FBI. Among other things they investigate trappers, hunters, egg collectors (especially for facony) which has become a big time international business. Please join us into a look into this shadowy world. It should be quite an adventure.

**Tuesday, October 13** — Three or four of the LAAS **Research Award** winners will give brief presentations on their research. Should be a different, informative and fun evening. Details in future *Tanagers*.



**Identification Workshop**, from **7:30 to 8:00 pm**, will precede the regular program, please check the tape (874-1318) for details.



## 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.

**SUNDAY, JULY 5** — 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, JULY 18** — Join **Jean Brandt** for a trip to **Mt. Pinos**. This beautiful mountain top is known to many as the traditional Condor lookout, and we shall earnestly hope it will yet be again. Meanwhile, Mt. Pinos offers some of the most accessible (subalpine? Hudsonian?) well anyhow 'mountain top' birding around. I love to watch and listen to the nesting Green-tailed Towhees, and Calliope Hummers are there as well. Take Hwy 5 to the summit of Tejon pass

and get off at the Frazier Park offramp. Turn left (East) and drive several miles up the lovely Cuddy Valley. Follow the signs to the parking lot at the summit trailhead. 8 a.m.

**SATURDAY, JULY 18** — 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 breeding birds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave., So. El Monte, off Frwy. 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Dr. exits, west of Frwy. 605.

**SATURDAY, JULY 25** — Join **Tom Keeney** for a birding hike up **San Gorgonio Canyon**. This day hike will take us up to 7000 ft. and through a variety of habitats including riparian woodland, mixed chaparral, mixed coniferous woodland and culminating in White Fir forest. This is a 'behind locked gates' situation and will be difficult to duplicate by yourself, so don't miss this opportunity! Meet at the San Bernardino County Museum at 8:30. Take the 10 Fry to California St. Offramp in Redlands. The museum is clearly visible from the Freeway. Bring lunch and hiking shoes.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 2 — Jerry Haigh** at **Topanga State Park**. See July 5 for details.

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## 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, 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 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, Audubon House can provide information for you to make contact and possible arrangements.

**WEEKEND, AUGUST 22-23** — join **Rob Hansen** for a trip to **Mineral King** in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The group will range from 7 to 10 thousand feet elevation and cover a variety of habitats from valley floor riparian woodland to alpine. Possibilities? Blue Grouse, Evening Grosbeak, Williamson's Sapsucker, Rosy Finch, Clark's Nutcracker, Golden Eagle and Mountain Bluebird. The spectacular High Sierran scenery alone should make the trip worthwhile. Rob Hansen is the Nature Conservatory naturalist for Creighton Ranch and Kaweah Oaks and is an excellent natural historian. \$25. If you are interested in this trip please contact Audubon House as soon as possible as there is very little time leeway.

See page 4  
for details on Pelagic Trips.