



WESTERN TANAGER

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Joya!", articulated with an upraised thumb, signifies happiness and good luck in Brazil. On a recent natural history trip to this country in August, 1988, warm and hospitable Brazilians greeted us in this fashion. The largest tropical country in the world, Brazil has three times more tropical forest than any other nation, and is rich in primates, birds, flowering plants and freshwater fishes. Some of the fish journey up the rivers and feed on fruits of the jungle that fall into the water: their flavor when barbecued is delicious. That will be a joy to remember.

The saddest thing I remember is the pall of smoke that seemingly covers the entire country from the burning of the forests, jungle and cerrado, and the continued burning of grasses for cattle. Ranchers vainly believe this will enrich the grass, as the soil is characteristically nutrient-poor. This country, rich in resources but suffering severe economic woes and environmental degradation, still holds many wonders for birders and botanists.

I joined 19 participants on an expedition to the national parks of Brazil, organized by the World Wildlife Fund and led by naturalist Narca Moore-Craig, wildlife artist and birder, and Associate Editor of *Western Birds*. Narca is knowledgeable about all aspects of this country. Joining the safari in Brazil was Christoph Hrdina, a multi-talented, multi-lingual tour leader who shepherded us to out-of-the-way places and kept us safe, comfortable, well-fed and amused in an efficient and cheerful manner... which was not easy!

As a matter of fact, Rita Royal of Betchart Expeditions in Cupertino, California, the planner of this safari, invited us to "embark on this expedition with a spirit of adventure and anticipation. . . and adopt an attitude of humor, flexibility and patience." All took her advice, and had an exciting time, beginning with a flight on Varig from Miami to the port city of Belem in northern Brazil, on the Guama River, 86



by Helen Matelson

miles from the Atlantic Ocean. Rainfall greeted us here as we waited in the small airport to clear customs, the only rain that fell until the last day or two of the trip, in Rio. This is the dry season, which eases the threat of mosquitos and increases the effects of the smoke.

Brazil has seven distinct ecosystems, and we were to visit four of them, beginning in Amazonia. This is the largest block of tropical forest on Earth, about 2.3 million square miles, 60 per cent of which lies in Brazil. The Amazon River flows through its center, nearly 4000 miles long.

The World Wildlife fund has been active in Brazil since 1972, one of the first international conservation groups to recognize the biological significance here, supporting 125 projects in research and the es-

tablishment of protected areas. Tracey Meser, who is a young Associate Director in the funding of its projects, accompanied our group on this trip, her first chance to see how the field work is going.

Dr. William Overal, an entomologist living and working in Belem, is a WWF scientist and staff member at the Goeldi Museum in Belem. The museum is the major research institution in the Amazon, with an excellent natural history collection; it also assists in biological expeditions into the area. Overal explained that this, the first WWF project we were to see, was one of great importance: the remote Amazonian Kayapo Indians practice good forest management techniques, working the nutrient-poor soils with far superior methods to those of the farmers and ranchers of the

rest of Brazil. Here we experienced the fascination of our first native marketplace, the Ver-O-Peso, and went exploring in our first tropical forest, the Embrapa.

This safari involved long, dusty, bumpy bus- and truck-rides to the projects we visited. While not primarily a birding trip, we birded 3/4 of the time, and really looked forward to each destination. Our next was Amazonia National Park near Itaituba, a small gold-mining town reminiscent of what U.S. mining towns were like during the Gold Rush. All of this mining activity is not helping the park or the Amazon River, which it abuts: it causes pollution in the river and all that entails.

The Trans-Amazon Highway cuts through this huge park. With only two guides to protect this area, the attempt to maintain visitor cottages here is a constant battle: doors and toilet seats are ripped off. Christoph made us comfortable, however, with bunk beds and mattresses, and buckets of cool river water with which to shower. That took practice! The first bucketful applied to the body of each participant brought a modulated yowl, but you'd be surprised how good it feels after a muggy day of fantastic birding. Screaming pihas, puffbirds, nunbirds, and assorted parrots, macaws and parrakeets filled the trees along the highway and jungle paths; we did miss seeing the endangered Golden Parrakeets that are a specialty here, however.

The TABA Airlines plane was suddenly cancelled as we waited to leave Itaituba, stranding us in this tiny town. The magician Christoph found us overnight accommodations at some local hotels, where we had the second of our Brazilian barbecues at a very good local restaurant, and the next day we were on our way to Manaus.

This colonial port city was of great interest to us particularly, because three great rivers meet here to form the Amazon: the Rio Amazonas, the Rio Negro— that black river the city abuts— and the Rio Solimoes. We took a boat ride to see the confluence of these rivers, enjoying the river birds and a glimpse of pink Amazon River Dolphins. Transferring to a small boat, we were paddled up a narrow jungle tributary: Pygmy Kingfishers darted by, Yellow-hooded Blackbirds perched along the vegetated shoreline, a gorgeous Mantled Hawk gave us time for good studies, and some native Indians set up a little craft exhibit so that we could look at and buy their wares.

Another important project goes on outside of Manaus, involving the study of the severe impact of deforestation rapidly taking place in Amazonia. Simply: the

"Minimum Critical Size of Ecosystems" Project has teams working with local ranchers, isolating one-, ten- and 100-hectare patches of forest by cutting the surrounding trees, and then monitoring these isolated units: what size fragments can support the necessary flora and fauna and insure their survival?

Our visit to Brazilia, the 35-year-old capitol of the country, where Christoph and his family live and work, was short but impressive. The group was invited to a sumptuous dinner at Christoph's lovely home, on a lake facing Brazilia's skyline, which sparkled in the night. Here conservationists spoke to us about the work they and others are doing. A new national constitution is now in effect, with provisions for helping preserve forests and foster conservation concepts in the country. Landowners will be restricted in clearcutting all their forest land. The main difficulty will be in seeing that citizens abide by these new laws: strict enforcement will be the key.

Brazilians have been slow to appreciate what they believe is an out-of-the-way, sterile capitol city, liking better the coastal excitement and hectic mien of Rio de Janeiro. Brazilia is growing more acceptable now, as families are established there. We quite enjoyed the drier, crisper air, the very striking architecture and sculpture, and, with but little time to bird, the beautiful deep-blue Swallow-tailed Hummingbird and the Southern Lapwing.

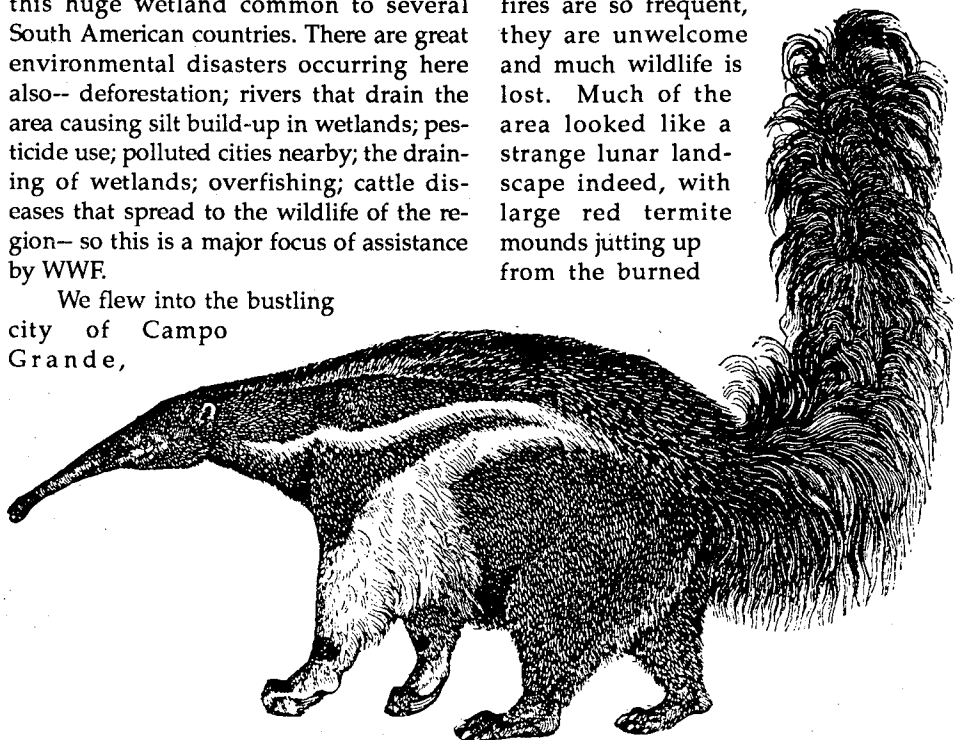
Our itinerary listed next the Pantanal. I have always been intrigued by tales of this huge wetland common to several South American countries. There are great environmental disasters occurring here also— deforestation; rivers that drain the area causing silt build-up in wetlands; pesticide use; polluted cities nearby; the draining of wetlands; overfishing; cattle diseases that spread to the wildlife of the region— so this is a major focus of assistance by WWF.

We flew into the bustling city of Campo Grande,

the capitol of Mato Grosso do Sul, and vanned 147 miles to Pousada Caiman, a wonderfully comfortable working ranch and lodge in the midst of the Pantanal. We spotted our first Hyacinth Macaws and Jabirus on the last portion of the ride along the dirt road leading into the ranch — that was Excitement! Our first look at a pastel-hued Capped Heron was not to be taken lightly either! Many caimans are found in the ponds here, so the lodge is aptly named.

Guyira Cuckoos, Whistling Herons, Red-legged Seriemas, Plumbeous, Bare-faced and Buff-necked Ibis, Picazuro Pigeons, White Wood-peckers — the birds found here made a lot of converts from within a group that did not consist primarily of birders. One participant asked if we were going to stop for every bird, which of course we did, and she almost missed seeing the Giant Anteater! WWF is conducting a comprehensive survey of several endangered mammals and birds of the Pantanal region and using the information in creating reserves to protect these key species.

Leaving the bulk of our luggage at the hotel, we took just a carry-all of gear (as we did for Amazonia) and flew in small groups in single-engine planes through the smoke-filled skies to Emas National Park and a new habitat, the Cerrado, grassland with trees. A farmer with land adjoining the park had lost control of a grass fire and burned many acres in Emas just before our visit. The grass and bushy vegetation grow back fairly quickly, but when fires are so frequent, they are unwelcome and much wildlife is lost. Much of the area looked like a strange lunar landscape indeed, with large red termite mounds jutting up from the burned



earth. More resources are needed to buy more land adjacent to this park in order to keep these frequent fires from encroaching. WWF is actively participating in the solution to this problem.

Interestingly, the city of Brazilia is located in part of the *cerrado* system, and before 1950 looked much like Emas National Park!

In the park we saw greater Rheas and the Giant Anteater slowly meandering about the plain. Their eyesight is poor but their sense of smell is good, so Christoph stood downwind of one of the rheas and the wonderful creature did not know he was nearby. In spite of the fire, the birding was great, accomplished by riding in open trucks and walking down dusty cerrado roads: Red-winged Tinamous, Lesser and Spotted Nothuras, Blue-and-Yellow, Golden-collared and Scarlet Macaws, Blue-crowned and Peach-fronted Parakeets, Gray Monjitas, Cock-tailed Tyrants, Coal-crested Finches, many seedeaters, and even a Short-eared Owl.

The excitement on this tour continued to build: the next stop was Iguacu Falls. There are many flights involved in this tour, and much waiting in airports, but anticipation made short shrift of all that. We stayed at the older but pleasant Hotel Das

Cotaratas on the Brazilian side of the falls. The beauty of the falls lived up to our expectations, and so did the birding. Curl-crested Jays and Toco Toucans perch outside your hotel window, and Eared Pygmy-tyrants, Red-ruffed Fruitcrows, Surucua Trogons and the gorgeous Blue-naped Chlorophonia are seen along the paths.

We rode in open trams to nearby forest trails for hiking, birding and a short boat ride. Two days here was really not enough, and our next and final stop, Itatiaia National Park between Sao Paulo and Rio, was also too short; I suggest longer visits to both places.

Itatiaia is a prime birding area, the only protected Atlantic Forest ecosystem left in Brazil. This forest once stretched from the eastern tip of South America to the Amazon rain forest in the northwest; now it is almost gone due to the growth of Rio and Sao Paulo and their suburbs, and no conservation consideration has been made. WWF has invested more resources here than in any other Brazilian ecosystem.

The Hotel do Ipo is comprised of wonderful individual bungalows reminiscent of Swiss architecture. Hummingbirds and fruiteaters outside the cantina provided us with many hours of joyful birding—

the Brazilian Ruby-frilled Coquettes are lovely, with a medley of gorgeous small tanagers feeding on the fruit. Mountain paths provide many birds per minute—Piping Guans hopping around a front yard late in the day, the striking Rufous Cliff Flycatcher, the Rufous Motmot; except for the very long, very steep hills we climbed in order to get anywhere away from the cabins, this was the place to bird!

On the way to Rio, we visited the Rio Primate Center, where efforts have been focussed on studying and preserving the Golden Lion Tamarin, the Black Lion Tamarin and other endangered primates. Here, captive-bred monkeys are introduced into the wild, and we applauded the efforts taking place.

It started to rain for our day and night in Rio de Janeiro. We could still see Sugarloaf and the Jesus figure on the mountain, we could still see Copacabana and Ipenema Beaches -- but bare of bikinis!-- and we could still shop at the famous Stein's for things uniquely Brazilian. Rio Airport was a hectic, traumatic experience, and we flew off late, on a crowded night-flight to Miami.

As Christoph would say, it was a "super-duper trip - JOYA!"

Audubon's Minority Education

Audubon's minority education program is now booming, reaching approximately 50,000 students in major urban neighborhoods in the U.S. Audubon Adventures now reaches 4,000 Native American children in eight states, including 2,600 Aleuts and Athabascan Indians in Alaska. National Audubon's new director of Urban Environmental Education, Dona Marie Thomas, will expand teacher-training for urban elementary teachers nationwide.

Ecological Computer Instruction

Available in your local software store is "Grizzly Bear," a great new educational software from National Audubon. Grizzly is a set of four interactive stories, in which the player tries to solve the problems that arise from human contact with grizzlies. The player assumes the role of a park ranger, a research biologist or a resource developer and seeks creative solutions to the conflicts between *Ursa horribilis* and *Homo sapiens*. The program contains

databases of relevant facts, ecological models and maps that explain how grizzly bears are affected by their environment. The package contains curriculum materials and is suitable for either home or classroom. There is a special edition for schools which contains a complete curriculum guide and expanded activities.

A program on whales will follow in the fall. Programs are available for Apple II and IBM computers.

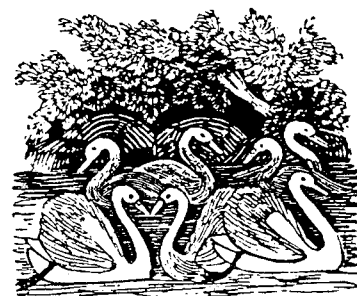
More information is available from Audubon's TV Department at (202) 547-9009 or from the publisher, Advanced Ideas, at (415) 526-9100.

Mono Basin 1989 Spring Breeding Bird Count

Saturday June 10, 1989 is the date of the Mono Basin Spring Breeding Bird Count. This weekend should be the greenest, songiest time to enjoy the high country spring. Everyone is invited to attend, regardless of their birding experience. The

count circle includes Lundy Canyon, Lee Vining Canyon and the County Park, although birders will be split into parties to ensure thorough coverage.

Meet at 6:00 A.M. in front of the Lee Vining Visitor Center. Bring binoculars, water and a lunch. For more information, call (619) 647-6620. The event will be followed by a potluck dinner and compilation of birds seen.



Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth



In 1988, biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service predicted the extinction of the Northern Spotted Owl in the foreseeable future, unless harvesting of old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest was curtailed. Many of the world's most prominent wildlife scientists had already reached this conclusion. Environmentalists in Washington State, Oregon and northern California petitioned the USFWS to list the owl as a threatened or endangered species throughout its range. When the petition was denied the coalition of over 25 conservation organizations (including National Audubon, The Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club) challenged the decision in federal court in Seattle. Judge Thomas S. Zilly said the decision not to list the owl was "arbitrary, capricious* and contrary to law" and that Fish & Wildlife had "failed to provide its own or other expert analysis supporting its conclusions." He gave the agency 90 days to justify its decision.

On February 22 this year, a startling item appeared in the Los Angeles Times. The General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, said that Fish & Wildlife management officials "substantially changed the body of scientific evidence", thus changing the report to "one that could more easily support denying the listing." This is a shocking accusation. Since USFWS has not answered GAO's charge at this writing we may have to wait for their testimony in Judge Zilly's court.

*In a lawsuit, environmentalists often have to prove that a bad administrative action is "arbitrary and capricious." In the 1930's, when the courts saw a burgeoning of regulations and bureaucracy, they decided that they had neither the expertise nor the resources to review all the questionable judgements of bureaucrats. The "arbitrary and capricious" standard is common today. It places a heavy burden on the plaintiff and insulates most of the decisions of administrative agencies from substantial review in the courts. —Editor

With 1100 acres of old growth forest falling to the chain saw every week, the future of the Spotted Owl grows more and more precarious. The U.S. Forest Service is well aware of the dilemma of the owl. The Service had designated it the indicator species for old-growth forest: as the owl goes, so go other plants and animal species dependent on mature forest. The timber companies and the Forest Service have both consistently downplayed the plight of the owl. Although the Service has set aside some old-growth areas to maintain the bird's habitat, these areas are too small to support a nesting pair. Even worse, the patchwork of parcels has fragmented the old-growth areas, isolating groups of birds so that the diversity of the gene pool is severely restricted. This is a classic scenario for an abrupt population crash and eventual extinction.

These old-growth forests are more than stands of ancient trees with a few owls sitting stolidly in the branches. They are vital ecosystems of virgin redwood, Douglas fir, Western Hemlock, Sitka Spruce, rhododendrons, lush undergrowth, clear-running streams, birds and animals. Many birds find optimum habitat for nesting and foraging in old-growth forests. Some, like the goshawk, Pileated Woodpecker and Marbled Murrelet are nearly as dependent on old-growth as the Spotted Owl. (For over 100 years one of the abiding mysteries of ornithology was the nesting place of the oceanic Marbled Murrelet; only 20 years ago the first nest was finally discovered high in the branches of a towering old-growth redwood!) The rare Pacific Fisher, the Red Tree Vole and two species of salamander also require this habitat. One must marvel at the delicate integration of a successful ecosystem and realize how it can be utterly destroyed by short-sighted exploitation. There is a diverse mixture here of trees and shrubs at all stages of development and a rich soil created over centuries by fallen leaves and other organic debris. Thousands of years are needed to develop the inter-relationships

of flora and fauna, of predator and prey. Clear-cutting obliterates the system and only centuries of undisturbed growth can restore it. The watershed disappears. Rain, no longer soaking into the spongy soil, runs off and pours down the slopes, eroding the ground. Clear streams are fouled, fish and amphibians die. After the old trees are cut and the ground is cleared, the timber companies plant seedlings of a single species— perfectly spaced like cornstalks— so that in 30 years we have a plantation of trees identical in size and height: a monotonous crop with little understory and less character. The Spotted Owl cannot survive in this regimented second growth.

The U.S. Forest Service reminds us as we enter and leave a national forest that it is a "Land of Many Uses". In logging country, recreational uses— hiking, camping, hunting, birding— have been overpowered by commercial timber cutting. Especially in the last eight years, with the Washington bureaucrats calling for more and more logging, there has been a marked acceleration of harvesting in the national forests. Since the domestic demand has decreased, most of the wood from this irrational cutting of the taxpayers' lumber has gone as unfinished logs to Asian markets.

Privately-owned lands still contain much old-growth forest. Pacific Lumber was a conservative, respectable company. For over a hundred years it engaged in a sustained-yield policy on its property that maintained steady employment, protected the environment, and satisfied its stockholders. Then it succumbed to that new dragon of laissez-faire economics - the hostile takeover. The new owner Maxxam, as do other proponents of the "legal" Wall Street flim-flam, used high yield junk bonds to borrow the cash to buy the company. Today's corporate pirate sells off its assets to pay off its loans. In this case, the assets were the valuable old-growth forests. Maxxam announced that it would drop Pacific Lumber's sustained-yield logging, and would clear-cut all the old-growth holdings, including the world's largest private hoard of virgin coastal redwoods. This rape of old-growth forests has been stymied temporarily by northcoast environmentalist, but the outcome is clouded.

What if the northern spotted owl was officially listed as an endangered species? There lies the very heart of the problem. Like every other listed species, the owl would get full legal protection. Forest management plans and timber cutting would not be allowed to threaten its survival. Critical habitat would be designated

and, as with the California condor, a Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Program would be developed by the USFWS. If this should occur, the timber industry and most of its workers are convinced it would be the end of the road for them. Much of old-growth forest would be off limits, but not necessarily all of it. Half the forest land in the Northwest has been cut over, is already in second-growth timber, and is privately owned. So there is still plenty of wood to cut. There has been serious unemployment in the region for many years and there will be more in the future, regardless of the decision on old-growth. New technology has eliminated jobs and there is stiff competition from logging in the southeastern states. In addition, the exportation of raw logs has cut into sawmill and finishing operation. On the other hand, recreation and tourism account for billions of dollars of income for the area - six billion a year in Washington and Oregon. Obliteration of old-growth forests will increase the loss of clean streams essential

for spawning salmon; fishing is a powerful lure for vacationers in the Pacific Northwest. The hideous blight of clear-cutting already erodes the scenic splendors of this beautiful region. Further depredation of Maxxam's marauders and others will serve to further dampen the tourists' ardor.

The U.S. Forest Service in the Northwest has a poor record of stewardship in our national forests. The pressure from above for more logs has made it a perhaps unwilling accomplice of the timber companies. We can only speculate on the forces that drove the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reverse the conclusion of its own field biologists on the dismal future of the northern spotted owl. The charge against Fish and Wildlife must be taken seriously. The General Accounting Office is a non-partisan agency with a impeccable reputation for honesty and impartiality. Congress should be encouraged to pursue this matter with all deliberate speed. At the very least, the head of the USFWS ought to be questioned by the ap-

propriate congressional committee. In November, Judge Zilly gave the Service 90 days to justify their decision not to list the owl. USFWS got an extension until May 1 (about the time this article will be in your hands). The agency's answer to the judge's powerful statement will be awaited with interest.

References:

Audubon Activist, Jan/Feb 1989 (National Audubon)

Wilderness Record, Dec. 1988
(Calif. wilderness Coalition)

Econews, Mar. 1989
(Northcoast Environmental Center)

Sierra, Jul/Aug 1987
(Sierra Club)

The Amicus Journal, Fall 1988, Winter 1989
(Natural Resources Defense Council)

Officers and Committee Chairs of L.A. Audubon

Los Angeles Audubon Society is an active and distinguished chapter. While your membership supports our activities, we need as many active participants as possible to maintain and improve services to our members and to our larger communities. In this issue we list the officers and committee chairs of Los Angeles Audubon. All of them will welcome your comments on, and participation in, chapter activity.

Officers

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Sandy Wohlgemuth	Conservation Editor

Birdathon '89

By now you should have received our information brochure on the 1989 Birdathon, the major fundraiser for our youth education program. You can help in four different ways:

1. Enter the Big Day Challenge Competition, form a team and make an exhaustive effort to see as many species of birds as you possibly can within one calendar day. The state record is over 200 species, but you can expect to see 100 - 130 with a little effort.

2. Join one of our specially scheduled field trips. So far we have scheduled trips with Kimball Garrett, co-author of *The Birds of California* on Sunday, April 30th, and with Chuck Bernstein, author of *The Joy of Birding* and columnist for *Birdwatchers Digest* and *Birding* magazine, on Saturday, May 20th.

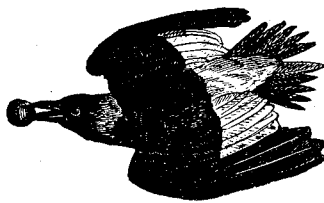
3. Register as a Backyard Birder and do a less demanding count in your own backyard.

4. Serve as a sponsor for any or all of the above by pledging a certain amount (\$25, \$50, \$1.00) for each species seen by the birder of your choice.

There will be fine prizes in all categories for most kinds of birds seen and largest amount of pledges raised, as well as official BIRDATHON '89 T-shirts for all birders, and sponsors pledging \$50 or more. For registration and information, call **Audubon House** at 213-876-0202.

Birds of the Season

by Hank Brodtkin



Records of rare and unusual bird sightings reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the American Birds regional editors or, if appropriate, by the California Bird Records Committee.

From about the second week in May through the first or even the second week in June most of the more interested birders will be scouting the desert oases and some favorite coastal locations for vagrants. Unlike fall birds, which seem to take a more leisurely attitude to migration, spring birds, their hormones flowing, seldom stay more than a day or two. Over the years vagrant traps seem to fluctuate in popularity. Changes in the habitat such as cutting the trees at Deep Springs College and draining the pond at Oasis Ranch have a negative effect while bringing in water and planting trees at Galileo Park have increased the concentration of migrants. Some locations are put off-limits. The golf course at Mojave changed hands and, ostensibly for insurance reasons, birders are no longer welcome. The latest closure is the dike area at the north end of the Salton Sea, which has been closed to all entry. Birders are however a resourceful lot and new "hot spots" are continually being discovered.

Mid-February through mid-March is one of the slowest times of the year, but early migrants are trickling through and we have some bird reports that strike us as interesting.

An **American Bittern** was seen on 11 March by Bob Shanman at the Ballona Wetlands. Not too many years ago this species could be seen regularly at the Wetlands in winter. Now it is unusual there. Also unusual was the **Least Bittern** on 9 March at Furnace Creek (Nan Moore). Two **Wood Storks**, rare on the coast, were seen at the Dairy Mart Ponds in Imperial Beach on 11 March by Elaine McPherson and Bob Neuwirth.

Four **White-fronted Geese** on 26 February at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds (Chuck Bernstein) and one on 12 March at San Joaquin Marsh (Brimmer Sherman) represent spring migrants. Also at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on 26 February

was a **Ross' Goose**, one of the few reported from the Antelope Valley.

A **White-winged Scoter**, scarce here this winter, was reported from Marina del Rey on 11 March (Bob Shanman). Five **Common Goldeneyes** were present on 19 February at Quail Lake (Barry Lyon) and a female **Red-breasted Merganser**, unusual inland, was reported from Lake Perris on 16 February by Hank Childs, who also saw two **Bald Eagles** at nearby Lake San Jacinto on the same day.

An early **Swainson's Hawk** was found in the San Gabriel Valley by John Schmidt on 1 March. A **Merlin** of the dark form *suckleyi* was reported from the San Gabriel Valley on 20 February (Barbara Cohen) and an adult **Peregrine Falcon** was at Lake Perris on 26 February (Hank Childs).

One of the few **Mountain Plover** reports this year comes from the south end of the Salton Sea on 19 February (Gail Benton). Two sandpipers casual in spring in our area, a **Baird's** at Paiute Ponds on 3 March (Kimball Garrett) and a **Pectoral** at Malibu Lagoon on 7 March were reported.

A near-adult **Franklin's Gull** was at Santa Fe Dam on 3 March (Milt Blatt) and eight **Elegant Terns**-- precursors of the breeding colony?-- were at Bolsa Chica on 12 March (Jeff Tufts).

An **Inca Dove** and a **Ruddy Ground-Dove** were still present on 15 March at Furnace Creek (Barbara Eliot), and Barbara also reports a **Tropical Kingbird** at Deveraux Slough, Goleta, on 21 February.

Pinyon Jays were actively nest-building in Garner Valley, Riverside County, on 16 February (Hank Childs). Bob Tease of Chicago ticked off his 700th North American bird in Ventura on 9 March, the still-lingering **White Wagtail**. And a tie for reporting the first **Hooded Orioles** this spring on 12 March goes to Claudia Heller (Duarte) and Richard Webster (Mt. Washington).

The **Common Poorwill**, a bird often heard but not often seen can be found easily, sitting on the dirt road and sometimes at the edge of the parking lot, at Big Sycamore Canyon, Pt. Mugu State Park, between February and October. The timing

is apparently critical, as we have only seen these birds, up to seven of them, sitting on the dirt road in the last half hour or so before total darkness.

Jon Alderfer, LAAS Program Chairman, whose drawings have graced these pages and who comes as close to being our Artist-in-Residence as possible, is currently having a showing of his superb gull and waterbird paintings at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History/Sea Center. The paintings will be on display until June 6. I've seen some of Jon's work and it's well worth the ride up.

Good birding!

Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

Hank Brodtkin
27-1/2 Mast Street
Marina del Rey, CA 90292
Phone: (213) 827-0407

OR

call Jean Brandt at (818) 788-5188

Linear Parks

by Jesse Moorman

Early this century there were 300,000 miles of rail roads in the United States, more right of way than in today's Interstate Highway system. These corridors were assembled, often given by the federal government, on a lavish scale and not all are economically viable now. Today there are about 140,000 miles, and the rights of way dwindle another 3,000 miles each year. Many are being abandoned and turned into ordinary real estate. Recently both citizens and government have begun to realize that this fabulous resource can never be duplicated and must be preserved for both economic and aesthetic reasons. There may again be a need for more railways, and the corridors are needed now as parks, greenbelts and trails of great value to the environment. The Rails to Trails Conservancy is a national organization that seeks to preserve rail corridors as a new nation-wide park system.

In 1983 Congress passed a Trails Act, establishing "rail banking" to prevent abandonment and complete loss of rights of way. Seeing a possible future need for

the railways, Congress intended to preserve the corridors as trails open to the public. Rail banking requires that some governmental agency request the trail and assume responsibility. First the local, state or federal agency must know of the abandonment. Second the agency must act quickly before the corridor is lost. Then the railroad must agree to the request. This process requires political support from citizens to win the commitment of government agencies. It then requires an action plan, so that the fleeting opportunity is not lost.

Rails to Trails supports grassroots activity by exchange of information and by political work. The Conservancy opened its office only three years ago. It now has 35,000 members nationally, 5,000 in California. It serves by making governments, railroads and citizens aware of the opportunity to create a new national park system which links communities and regions throughout the nation. It provides the facts and tools for action to preserve the corridors that exist in communities.

The loss of rail and other corridors has been dramatic in Los Angeles. A tragic example is the old red car trolley lines which disappeared only in the sixties; only in the last few years was the property wasted in myriad parcels of dense development. Another example was a corridor between Elysian Park and Griffith Park that was promised as a new piece of city park. Mayor Bradley praised the plan in the city's bicentennial celebration, and promised its completion. Somehow it was developed in the last two or three years as a mass of condos. Nobody knew what was

going on. The developer got his permit without ever hearing of the park corridor. More of these extremely precious open spaces are now in the balance, and public opinion is the only weight against economic and political expediencies.

Peter Harnik, Rails to Trails Conservancy's Director of Programs, was in L.A. at the beginning of April. The Conservancy has a wealth of information, and Peter exchanged ideas with some local activists. Anyone who would like to work on a very promising project that will bring great benefits, should join the effort to preserve the rail corridors we have not yet lost. There are many interesting issues involved here, and the benefits should be great. For more information you can contact:

Rails to Trails Conservancy,
1400 16th Street NW,
Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone
(202) 797-5400.

To get involved locally you may call Jill Swift at (818) 344-8714.

Valdez Oil Spill Brief

National Audubon Society has been busy since the Valdez oil spill on March 24. Alaskan volunteers have joined the cleanup of birds and mammals. You too can join, but be prepared to rough it. (Call 907-835-4512). Audubon members generally can be most helpful to the Alaskan environment by writing their representatives and President Bush to protest continuing plans to explore for oil in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge.

Field Trips--Continued from page 8

Sunday, June 4 - Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh. See April 2 trip for details.

Saturday, June 10 - Huntington Library Botanical Gardens. Leader is Daniel Cooper, who is out at the gardens on the second Saturday of each month. Take the 210 Fwy to Allen Street, turn south for about three miles, turn left on Orlando, right on Oxford and look for the entrance on the right. Tell the guard that you are attending the bird walk, and he will give you a pass. Meet in the lot at 8:00 a.m.

Sat. & Sun., June 24 & 25 (26th optional) -- Southern Sierras Weekend with Bob Barnes. This very popular, almost annual trip covers widely varying terrain from desert to riverine to montane habitats, and usually nets over 120 species with the Monday extension. Hopeful to likely birds include Wood Duck, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Willow and Grey Flycatchers, Evening Grosbeak and Red Crossbill. Limited participation. Fee \$22 plus \$10 for optional Monday extension. Reserve with SASE per field trip policy. A bird report of the trip will be provided to those attending.

Reservation Policy and Procedures:

Reservations for LAAS trips 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 Chair, LAAS, 7337 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90046.

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two weeks prior to the scheduled date (4 weeks for pelagics) and you will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation during that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement.

Membership Note

Membership in the National Audubon Society is computerized, so it is no longer advisable to renew through the Los Angeles Audubon Society. However, if your membership has lapsed, you will receive the next *Western Tanager* sooner if you renew through LAAS.

The national computer system sends multiple notices commencing four months before your membership lapses. Please excuse notices that may have crossed your check in the mail.

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

If you move out of the LAAS membership area, you are automatically changed to the chapter into whose area you moved. If you wish to remain in LAAS and receive the *Western Tanager* please indicate this to the National Audubon Society. You may also subscribe to the *Western Tanager* separately (see below).

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THE WESTERN TANAGER received the 1987 Special Conservation Award and 2nd place honors for Newsletter, Chapter with more than 900 members from the National 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.

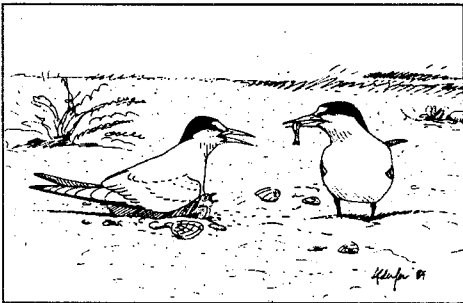
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

May, 1989



Least Terns *Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer*

EVENING MEETING

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

Tuesday, May 9 - Barbara Massey will present a program entitled *Breeding Biology and Status of the Endangered Least Tern*. A biological consultant, Barbara has been studying the Least Tern since 1970. This endangered species has had its ups and downs in recent years. Barbara's long-term research has been instrumental in safeguarding the continued survival of our local Least Tern breeding colonies. Please join us for this interesting presentation.

IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

Precedes the regular evening meetings
7:30-8:00 p.m.

This month **Kimball Garrett**, Ornithology Collections Manager at the LA County Museum of Natural History and birding guru, will present the workshop, on a topic to be announced on the Bird Alert tape (213-874-1318) the Thursday before the meeting.

FIELD TRIPS CALL THE TAPE!

Before setting out on 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.

Friday, April 28 - Huntington Beach Central Park. Park Ranger **David Winkler** will guide his covey through this migrant island in the suburban sea of Orange County. This well-birded area frequently hosts an unusual bird or two. Arrive early if you like, then meet David at 9 a.m. at the Park Bench Snack Bar on the east side of Golden West St. about 2.5 miles south of the fwy 405 intersection. There should be ample free parking here.

Saturday, April 29 - Antelope Valley Reptile Trip. L.A. Zoo Curator of Herpetology **Harvey Fischer** will be our guide to the reptiles of our nearest desert environs. Hopeful sightings include Side-blotched, Whiptail, Zebra-tailed and Spiny Lizards, with Horned and Collared Lizards, Desert Iguanas and others possible. We will meet at Placerita Nature Center, and depart promptly at 8 a.m. sharp to the Antelope Valley and points east towards Lake Los Angeles. Bring a lunch, plenty to drink, and good shoes. Tennis shoes are not advised for the sandy areas. Peterson's Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians by Stebbins may be helpful.

Sunday, May 7 - San Antonio Canyon. Leader **Dan Guthrie**. A good locale at a good time with a good leader. Migrating passerines in riparian habitat will be the emphasis. Take Fwy 10 east to Indian Hill Blvd., to Memorial Park parking lot between 8th and 10th Streets. Bring a lunch. Scopes probably not necessary.

Sunday, May 7 - Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh** will show us around this nearby scrub oak / chaparral habitat. Migrants should be migrating and local breeders should be singing. This is a good trip for beginning birders and those new to the area. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. in the Valley, take a very sharp turn east uphill on Entrada Dr. (7 miles so. of Ventura Blvd. or 1 mile no. of Topanga Village.) Follow the signs to the state park, and meet in the parking lot. \$3 parking fee.

Saturday, May 13 - California City Stray Warbler Chase with SF Valley Audubon. Meet at Central Park in California City at 7:30 for a walk. Bring water and lunch. Take Rt. 14 through Mojave and turn toward Bishop. About 8 miles out of Mojave follow signs to California City. The Park is on the left at the east end of town. This is two hours travel time from the Valley.

Saturday, May 13 - Santa Anita Canyon. Leader **Mary Carmona** will lead us on a 1.5 or 2 mile moderately strenuous walk through the chaparral and oak woodland habitats of the canyon looking for migrating passerines and chaparral birds.

Sunday, May 14 - California City and environs. **Daniel Cooper**, who leads for Pasadena Audubon, will be birding the golf course and either Galileo Park or Butterbredt Springs, whichever seems more promising. Take Hwy. 14 past Mojave to the right turn for California City. Turn left (north) at the sign for Central Park and follow the road around to the parking lot at the end. Meet here at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch, durable footwear and clothing for a hot day.

Saturday, May 20 - Placerita Canyon with San Fernando Valley Audubon. Meet at the Placerita Canyon Park main section at 7:30 for a walk through oak forest in search of migrating and resident birds. Bring lunch and water. After an early lunch we will adjourn to the Walker Ranch section. Take Rt. 14 to Placerita Canyon offramp. Turn right at the end of the ramp and go about 3 miles to the park. This is half an hour from the Valley.

Saturday, May 20 - Saturday, May 20 - Saturday, May 20 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. **David White** will lead a morning walk looking for a variety of birds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. in south El Monte, off Fwy 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Drive exits, west of Fwy 605.

Sat. & Sun., May 20 & 21 - Death Valley and Oasis, with **Steve Gustafson**. The water and thick vegetation of these areas in the otherwise barren desert near the Nevada border is a powerful migrant trap. Although it may be hot (100°F+) and spring migration will be on the decline, this trip has been scheduled to coincide

with the sparse but regular appearance of spring vagrants in California's eastern desert. Species such as Mississippi Kite, Greater Pewee, Gray Catbird, eastern vireos, Northern Parula and other eastern warblers cannot be counted upon, even to the degree of the slightly elusive locals like Le Conte's Thrasher, Rock Wren and Prairie Falcon, but we will be optimizing our chances for some memorable spring sightings in a bird-

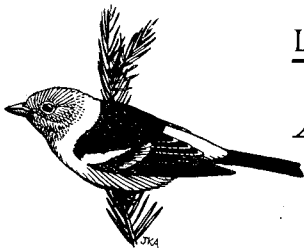
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ing area new to many of us. We will be planning to camp, although accommodations are available. Reserve with \$25.00 fee and SASE per field trip policy. Meet early Saturday in Death Valley.

Sunday, May 28 - Malibu Lagoon Walk. Fourth Sunday of each month. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the lagoon parking lot. The lot is on the ocean side of PCH, just west of the lagoon bridge, but you can turn right into town for street parking. The lot has a daily fee. This walk is under the leadership of a member of Santa Monica Audubon Society.

continued on page 7



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