



# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 55 Number 8 June 1989

In 1988 I booked a tour of the south Texas coast months ahead of the March departure. I wanted to see the Whooping Cranes and some birds I had missed on my last visit 14 years ago.

There was talk of a new U.S. vagrant from Mexico, the Crane Hawk, right in the area I would be visiting. It would be great if it stayed, but I guessed the chances were slim.

Finally we arrived in Rockport. The next morning we boarded "The Skimmer," a unique flat-bottomed boat, to see whooping cranes. Captain Ted gave a non-stop commentary on the habitat and life history of the Whooping Cranes which winter on the off-shore islands. He monitors the cranes every day and obviously is deeply attached to them. He is also an excellent bird spotter.

There was a fine rain which soaked through everything and misted up eyeglasses, but after a short stay inside the cabin, I decided to go back on deck. Almost at once the rain stopped, and there they were -- family groups of **Whooping Cranes**, each in its territory, usually two mature birds with one immature.

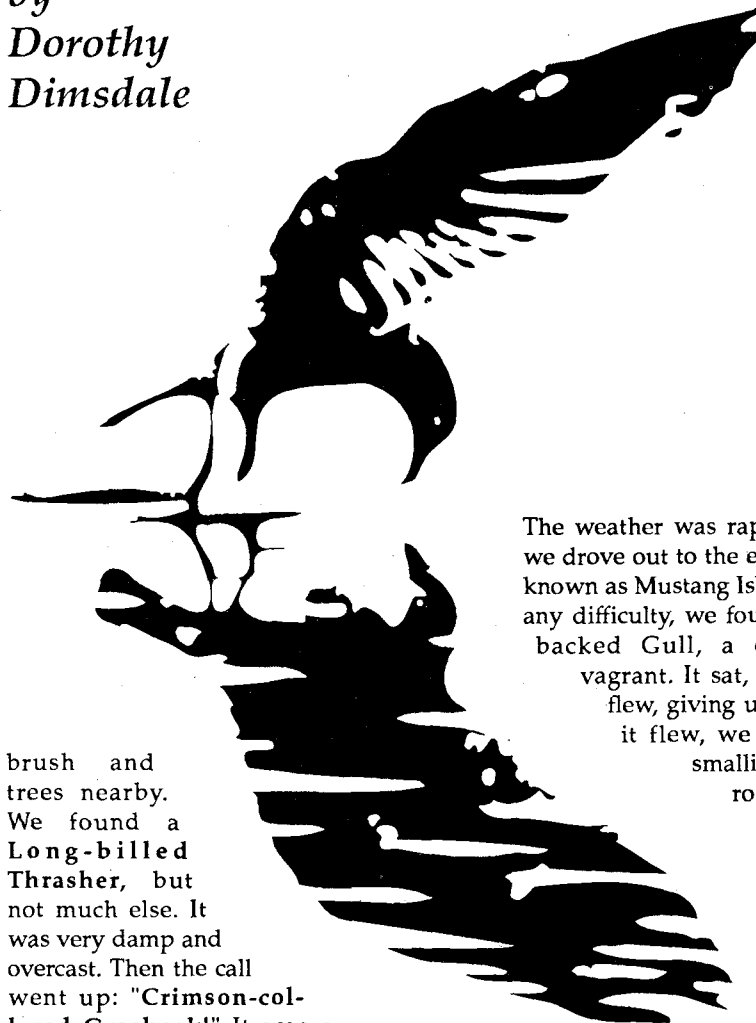
Captain Ted cut the engines and we floated very close to the 5-foot-tall Whooping Cranes. Their take-off was glorious, their lovely white wings with the black primaries outstretched, and long legs trailing behind.

On a nearby small island we could see Italian-pink-colored blobs - **Roseate Spoonbills!** As we got nearer we could see clearly that the pink was really vivid with a deeper red on the birds' shoulders. There must have been about 14 of them. Running about on the mud flats were **Piping Plovers**, a treat for those of us from the western United States.

The next day we drove to Aransas. At the entrance to the refuge, next to a small concession store, we stopped in hopes of finding a certain Mexican vagrant in the

## Vagrancy Sweeps South Texas

by  
*Dorothy  
Dimsdale*



brush and trees nearby. We found a **Long-billed Thrasher**, but not much else. It was very damp and overcast. Then the call went up: "**Crimson-colored Grosbeak!**" It was a female and didn't have a crimson collar, but was an overall deep rich green with a black head and breast -- a lovely bird. It came up on a branch for us all to see.

The weather was rapidly improving as we drove out to the end of Padre Island, known as Mustang Island. Here, without any difficulty, we found a **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, a casual European vagrant. It sat, then walked, then flew, giving us great looks. After it flew, we noticed nearby a

smallish gull with a very rosy breast. It was a **Franklin's Gull**, quite unusual in this neighborhood. I hadn't seen one with such a rosy breast before, though this manifestation is not uncommon.

The drive to King Ranch was less exciting. Our best bird for the day was a

**Couch's Kingbird -- Yawn?!**

Our leaders had more vagrants in mind for us, however. Early the next day we drove to Sabal Palm Grove to see the **Gray-crowned Yellowthroat**. This was the first time in 61 years that the bird had been seen in the U.S. It had been seen for the last 20 days, singing constantly, so we walked confidently to the prescribed spot and waited -- and waited -- and walked -- and waited. No bird. We left. That's the way it goes sometimes.

We cheered ourselves up by going to the Brownsville dump. Doesn't everyone? There, the small Mexican Crow joined the Chihuahuan Ravens foraging in the garbage. The experience made us hungry, so next we ate lunch at the birders' favorite "ontra" called Luby's. From there it was onward and upward to the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, where the **Crane Hawk** had been seen. "Fat chance," I thought.

We walked through the brush for ages, seeing very little, then a **Golden-crowned Warbler** appeared -- another Mexican vagrant! It hopped furtively about in a bush near us. We watched for 20 minutes, getting only brief glimpses until suddenly it emerged for one perfect view as it paused on a branch and was off again.

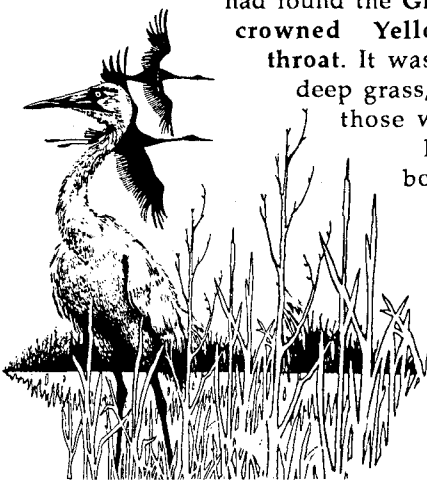
Spirits were high and we returned to the entrance prepared to leave, when we heard: "Crane Hawk! Crane Hawk!" The

call came from close by. "Ye Stars!" I thought, and raced to the spot, not a hundred feet away, where the hawk was perched. This is a lovely bird. Shiny black with long orange legs and a beady red eye. It flew right over our heads to perch across the road. We saw the narrow white stripe across the underside of the primaries and the white tail bars. It perched again, and this time we had it in the scope. Was I dreaming? So many unexpected goodies -- and more to come.

Breakfast the next morning was at 5:45 a.m. because a call to Sabal

Palms brought the news that Mike Farmer, the Sanctuary manager, had found the **Gray-crowned Yellowthroat**. It was in

deep grass, so those who had boots



wore them and we all sprayed ourselves with insect repellent.

We could hear the bird singing long before we saw it. It sat upon a bush, its yellow throat reverberating and its pale, lower mandible giving it a manicured, squeaky-clean appearance. Its vivid throat blending subtly to a buffy breast.

"An absolute crippler!" was how an Englishman in our group enthusiastically described the sighting. The bird sang as though it would burst with happiness.

It was still early and we moved on to Bentsen State Park where we watched a **Tropical Parula** as we ate lunch. What an annoying distraction!

At a feeder in a campground nearby we watched **Indigo Buntings**, **Golden-fronted Woodpeckers** glorious in the sunlight, **Green Jays**, and then another Mexican vagrant -- the **Blue Bunting**. A 5-inch-long bird, it is a deep, deep ocean blue with a royal blue forehead and rump. In the shade the male bird looks almost black.

That afternoon we also found a **Northern Beardless Tyrannulet**, which prompted one of our group to ask why it wasn't called just plain Cleanshaven Tyrannulet.

At Solenino we stopped at a feeder hoping for Brown Jays, but saw instead an **Audubon's Oriole** and an **Altamira Oriole**. A Clay-colored robin appeared on

## BIRD QUEST '89, Texas Update

by James F. Clements

My trip to Texas was planned to coincide with the annual return of millions of birds from the American tropics. Of 207 species recorded, the 81 new birds brought me to 1721 species for the year, almost exactly on my estimated target of 1700 birds at this point. It will be interesting to see what China holds for me in its inscrutable palm on the next leg of BIRD QUEST '89!

Most of the spring-migrant birds in Texas cross the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico from Central America. They usually begin at sunset for the 700-mile journey. Exhausted after battling headwinds, thousands of warblers, vireos, grosbeaks, tanagers, buntings and other songbirds literally "fall out" of the sky and invade the trees and lawns of the Texas coast.

On the day of my arrival in High Island the woods were alive with migrant warblers of 24 species... not to mention hundreds of dazzling Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks. I would estimate that in Boy Scout Woods alone there were several thousand thrushes of four species! I was thrilled to renew my acquaintance with many of the eastern warblers I had not seen for over a decade, including stunning views of the elusive Swainson's Warbler.

A highlight of the trip was seeing five of the seven species endemic to the United States. These include the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Carolina

Chickadee, Bachman's Sparrow and Fish Crow. With the endemic California Yellow-billed Magpie that I saw on New Year's Day to kick off BIRD QUEST '89, the only U.S. endemic bird I will not see this year is the Lesser Prairie Chicken.

As I watched an exhausted Scarlet Tanager, reflected in a woodland pool at sunset, it reminded me of one I had watched two weeks earlier in Ecuador. A Scarlet Tanager, bathed in the early morning sunlight of the cloud forest, with a backdrop of epiphytes and mosses, is a pretty tough bird to forget. This could be the same bird I watched in Ecuador. I had come here cruising at 500 miles an hour, 35,000 feet above the weather, in the comfort of a jet airliner. I marveled that this miraculous feathered wonder could complete the same trip with all the dangers inherent in a 5000-mile migration.

This incident also heightened my awareness of how important these "staging" areas are in the established migration routes of millions of migratory songbirds and shorebirds. The loss of even one critical "refueling" stop could mean the loss of a species... possibly the fate of Bachman's Warbler and the Eskimo Curlew!

One most encouraging sign was the large concentration of Brown Pelicans on the Texas coast, a bird that was conspicuous by its absence in recent years, and was the subject of intense study by the Museum of Natural History's ornithologist, the late Dr. Ralph Schreiber. In company with its larger congener, the American White Pelican, it put a good finishing touch on yet another successful leg of BIRD QUEST '89.

the ground, a rather dull-looking bird until you get it in the scope and see the subtlety of its beige, brown and cinnamon coloring.

The next morning, on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande, in a large bush, we saw birds we thought at first to be American Goldfinches. They were four **White-collared Seedeaters** out in the open for all to see! Usually, they scabble about in the scrub or long grassy areas. But here they were, not 15 feet away, in full view.

We moved on to Falcon Dam where we walked a half mile and into a clearing. Two **Hook-billed Kites** glided over, as if on cue. One perched then took off again.

On our last day we found the **Green Kingfisher**. We had previously seen the **Ringed Kingfisher**, large and colorful. And finally the **Brown Jays** were heard. A whole noisy flock flew into a nearby tree on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande.

We were all somewhat drained from the excitement of so many rare birds, not to mention the dozens of expected species. We drove to McAllen for a few hours rest and arranged to meet late that afternoon.

During this time our leaders set out to find us the **Red-crowned Parrots** and **Green Parakeets**. We drove in the direction of the birds' last sighting and in no time had seen both species -- noisy and charming, the Parakeets with their long tails, slim and elegant, as they settled into a roost tree, and the Red-crowned Parrots flying like ducks with their short squared tails and quick wing beats. The Red-crowns paused to eat loquats from someone's garden tree, holding the fruit in one claw and delicately taking leisurely bites.

For our finale we drove out at dusk to Bentsen State Park. The **Common Pauras** were easy to find. They were sitting in the middle of the road, their eyes like small white lights in the glare of the head lamps. They flew in a fluttery moth-like fashion. We saw one on the grass verge and our leader walked slowly towards it, keeping it all the while in his spotlight. When he was very close, he bent down, quickly and gently scooping up the bird in his hands. He brought it over for us to see. It was a female. We looked at the white wing patches and buffy undertail patches. A couple of quick photos were taken and the bird released. Surfeited, we left for our farewell dinner.

Our leaders, John Coons and Chris Benesh had worked for us, joked with us, and earned our respect and affection. Without them, most of our good sightings would never have happened.

## NAS Convention to Feature Southwest

**C**ome to National Audubon Society's Biennial Convention this fall to enjoy the Southwest's spectacular scenery, and renew your commitment to the environmental cause. The theme of the convention is "Our Southwest: Challenged by Growth." The gathering will be held in Tucson, Arizona September 12 to 16. The meeting offers field trips to some of the southwest's best birding spots, a taste of the region's fascinating history and culture, and an introduction to its environmental challenges.

In the last few decades, as Americans migrated in search of opportunity and warm weather, the southwest experienced unprecedented growth. Many of the convention sessions will focus on the escalating pressure for development and how it threatens the region's wildlife, water, air, and scenic beauty. This problem confronts communities in all parts of the country.

### Workshops

Noted conservationists and public officials will discuss such subjects as wildlife protection, western water resources, forest management, off-road vehicle use, and grazing on public lands.

There will also be sessions and workshops on a wide variety of local, national and global environmental problems, including Audubon's high-priority issues - acid rain, the Platte River, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest. Participants are invited to help get Audubon's new society-wide wetlands preservation campaign off the ground.

### Field Trips

As always, the convention offers lots of opportunities to explore the region. Among the field trips to choose from are a variety of birding outings as well as visits to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, a hummingbird banding station, and historic mining towns.

For two days during the convention, a shuttle bus will run between the convention site, the University of Tucson campus and its many museums, and the downtown Tucson shopping and historic area.

You can turn your visit to Arizona into a full-blown vacation by signing up for one of the tours preceding or following the convention. These include birding and sightseeing in the Grand Canyon, the birds and natural history of southeastern Arizona, a natural history tour of the Gulf of California, and a six-day birding tour of the Alamos area of Mexico. Also on the Pre- and post-convention agenda are one-day outings, including a hike up a rugged riparian canyon, a butterfly watch, a ghost-town tour, and a visit to the Kitt Peak Observatory and the Indian reservation in which it is located.

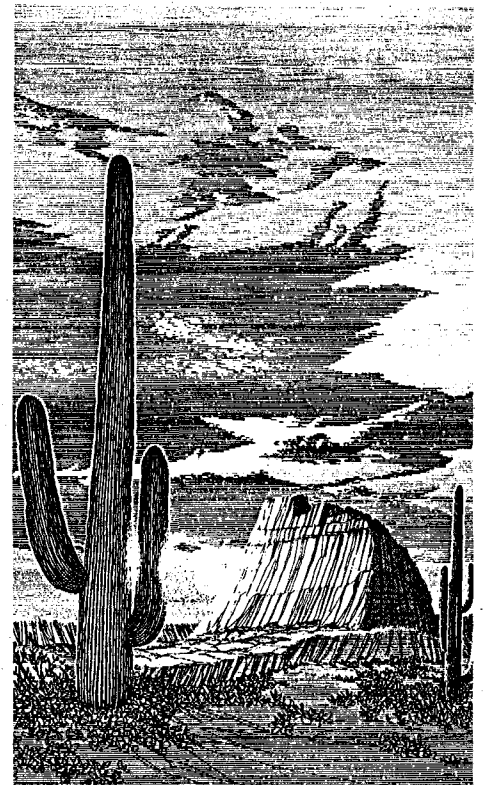
Audubon is also holding a special Ecology Camp the week before the convention, in the Chiricahua Mountains of southeastern Arizona.

### Free Information

The convention is being held in the Doubletree Hotel, near Randolph Park in Tucson. Accommodations are available at the Doubletree and Viscount Suite hotels at a special rate of \$50 per night. Registration is \$60 per person. Field trips are extra. Everyone is invited; sign up early to reserve your place. For a free convention brochure, write:

Audubon Convention Office,  
4150 Darley Ave., #5,  
Boulder  
Colorado 80303

or call (303) 499-3622.



## EPA Decision on Two Forks Dam

**S**aving the Platte River has been a National Audubon Society High-Priority Campaign for more than two years. The Platte, which flows from the Rockies, through Wyoming and Nebraska, to the Missouri River, is being studied for several dams. These water projects would be extremely damaging to wildlife habitat. NAS President Peter A. A. Berle called the proposed Two Forks dam an environmental and economic monstrosity. He now reports that the EPA, under its new administrator William Reilly, has moved to protect the Platte River from the Two Forks dam project.

The EPA action initiates an environmental review of the proposed Two Forks dam, which should then get a veto. Yet the Prairie Bend project in Nebraska and the Deer Creek project in Wyoming continue to loom ominously over the Platte's future. National Audubon, energized by the EPA decision, wants to energize to its grass-roots activists for a long-term battle over the Platte.

## Donations Sought

Bequests and memorial donations are very important to Los Angeles Audubon. Make a lasting contribution to the environment by your gift to the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

## Audubon Television, Video and Computers

**N**ational Audubon has produced excellent nature films that will be broadcast on PBS on successive summer Sundays at 8:00 P.M. Check your local programming this summer. Turner Broadcasting has been very supportive of Audubon's filmmaking, and many of these programs can also be seen on TBS.

- July 9....."Greed, Guns and Wildlife"
- July 16....."Grizzly and Man: Uneasy Truce"
- July 23....."Whales"
- July 30....."Crane River"
- August 6....."Woodstork, Barometer of the Everglades"
- August 13....."Messages from the Birds"
- August 20....."Sharks"
- August 27....."Sea Turtles"

All TV specials will eventually be released on home video. The latest three releases, in April, were "Galapagos: My Fragile World," "Ducks Under Siege" and "Woodstork: Barometer of the Everglades." The first home releases in January were "The Mysterious Black-footed Ferret,"

"Panthers & Cheetahs: On the Edge of Extinction" and "Condor." More information is available from Audubon at (202) 547-9009. Audubon videos for educational purposes, and an excellent teachers guide, are available from WETA/TV Educational Activities, P.O. Box 2626, Washington, D.C. 20013, (800) 445-1964.

The Audubon television empire expands with new productions from around the world. New films are coming out on ancient forests, wolves, climate change, beaches and coastal pollution, dolphins and the ocean ecosystem, wildfire, tropical forests, overgrazing of public lands and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. They will be released within two years.

Audubon Television Specials have a companion book *Life in the Balance*. A second book is being written by Roger DiSilvestro with photographs by Page Chichester. Each chapter will correspond to one Audubon TV Special, to provide deeper coverage of the topic. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. will publish it in early 1990.

Finally you have to know about the new MIVD (Multimedia Interactive Videodisc). The videodisc is based upon the Audubon Television Special on wetlands, "Ducks Under Siege." The program is called "The Mystery of the Disappearing Ducks." A Macintosh Hypercard computer program allows the student to influence the action in this Sherlock Holmes-type biological mystery. California high school students said that a mystery format would be most interesting. The MIVD prototype will soon be turned into a product suitable for school curricula.

## Environmental Federation

E. H. Kendig, Jr.

**L**ike other organizations, our Los Angeles Audubon Society needs new sources of funds to meet a constantly rising overhead. LAAS has therefore joined with about 20 other environmental organizations in the Environmental Federation of California. The Federation raises funds for the members.

The Environmental Federation concentrates on a single method of operation. It seeks employers who will allow contact with their employees at the workplace, to obtain donations paid through payroll

deductions. This method has been a great success for the United Way and other charitable groups.

The Environmental Federation started a few years ago in Northern California and has enlisted many public and private employers, including Apple Computer. The Federation recently expanded its efforts to Southern California, and the City of Los Angeles itself participates in the program.

At this time, the Federation needs entrees to private and public employers to expand its program. Every employer we bring into the program means income for Los Angeles Audubon. We therefore request that any member, who has a contact with the personnel department of any public or private employer in southern California, give the information to Mr. Charles Harper at Audubon House. We

will coordinate with the Environmental Federation to see if that entity can be recruited.

The organization that produces a new employer gets all first-year donations from those employees unless they specifically designate otherwise. After the first year, donations go into the general funds of the organization to be divided among the members.

The companies to be recruited do not have to be giant corporations but can be small groups of 20 or more. If you know someone influential in any business or public entity, please contact us and we can take it from there. The potential is enormous.

## Bookstore News

by Charles Harper

One of the newest items on the market is bird-listing software--computer programs to help you keep track of your sightings and bird lists. There are already several different programs available, and it is often difficult to choose among them without having experimented with their capabilities yourself.

The LAAS Bookstore has obtained copies of the most popular programs and has been testing them on the computer for user-friendliness, accessibility of data and versatility. We have selected three software packages to stock in the store which we think offer the most to the average birder. Now available are:

**PLOVER**, from Sandpiper Software, at \$59.95

**BIRDBASE**, from Santa Barbara Software, at \$39.95

**WORLD BIRDBASE**, from Santa Barbara Software, at \$89.95

Both *Plover* and *Birdbase* cover the A.B.A. area of the continental U.S. and Canada, while *World Birdbase* includes all the birds on Earth and is based on Jim Clements' *Birds of the World: A Checklist*.

*Plover* might be more generally useful to those who wish to manipulate data - creating seasonal lists, writing birding articles, etc. - while *Birdbase* seems more directed toward listing per se. *Birdbase* data are more readily convertible if one anticipates graduating to *World Birdbase*.

If you would like to explore these programs before purchase, please contact me and arrange for some computer time with in the bookstore's "open" hours.

## Volunteers Sought

Audubon House can direct you do-gooders to some good deeds. Would anyone be willing:

To take visiting birders around for a day?

To take care of young and injured birds?

To help fill mail orders in our world-famous book store?

Talk to Charles Harper at Audubon House for information. (213) 876-0202

## An Audubon Action Alert

### Arctic Refuge Needs Your Urgent Support

Incredibly stunning in its beauty, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is still largely untouched by development. It is, in fact, the largest undisturbed wilderness in the United States. Congress now is considering bills both for and against development. There is much to be done in the coming months to convince your congressmen of the need to save the refuge. We urgently need your help in the fight to protect the Arctic refuge from oil and gas development.

#### An International Ecological Treasure

The Arctic coastal plain is the prime calving ground for the Porcupine caribou herd. The region's spectacular scenery and rich wildlife have led people to call the coastal plain the "American Serengeti." Ducks, swans and loons nest on the plain and in the coastal lagoons; snowy owls, golden eagles, gyrfalcons and peregrine falcons nest inland. At least sixteen species of fish live in the streams and rivers of the plain. Wolves, foxes and polar bears also roam the area.

Oil companies believe there could be significant amounts of oil under the coastal plain. In response to intense political pressure, in November 1986 the Interior Department recommended that the plain be opened for leasing to the oil and gas industry. This recommendation was made despite the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's finding that oil development would result in a "major population decline" of the caribou herd - up to 72,000 animals lost. The agency also predicted that muskoxen and lesser snow geese populations would be cut in half and polar bear habitats would be critically disrupted.

Oil field development is a large-scale industrial activity. It requires huge quantities of gravel for roads, drill pads, airports and seaports; equally huge quantities of fresh water will have to be obtained from the rivers of the plain. Pollution will affect the fragile tundra far beyond the actual edges of the facilities. Such effects have already been demonstrated at the nearby Prudhoe Bay oil fields.

Drilling in the Arctic refuge would destroy its pristine character forever. That is why Audubon has consistently opposed any industrial activity on the coastal plain.

#### Do We Need the Oil?

The Interior Department admits that there is a only a one-in-five chance of finding oil, and a smaller chance still of finding quantities to make drilling profitable. The oil industry nevertheless says that the plain must be developed to avoid dependence on foreign oil imports. Audubon believes that these arguments ignore some important facts:

- 94 percent of all the potential oil-bearing land in Alaska and 90 percent of Alaska's arctic coast are already open to the oil industry. These lands should be explored first.
- Sensible energy alternatives exist that do not threaten to destroy the coastal plain. For example, a mere 1.7 mile-per-gallon improvement in fuel efficiency standards for cars would save more oil than drilling in the refuge could ever produce.

#### What You Can Do

Write to your senators and representative today. Give them facts about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

We have a worldwide oil glut. Now is the time to implement conservation measures that will make our nation secure for decades without sacrificing this priceless treasure.

Address your letters to:

The Honorable

U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

For more information, contact:

Brock Evans,  
National Audubon Society,  
801 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.,  
Washington, D.C. 20003.

# Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth  
(Reprinted from Dec. 1982 issue)



**Y**ears ago, in the misty recesses of time, before there were birders, we visited Yellowstone National Park. Exploring the bizarre and beautiful geothermal curiosities, we came upon the world-famous Morning-glory Pool. There, at the bottom of this graceful funnel of clear water and colorful earth, lay an obscene beer can. That did it. We became instant conservationists.

Some time later, on a vacation in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, when birds had become an exciting new passion, we stumbled upon an incredible latter-day Hiroshima: a clear-cut redwood forest. We wrote our first letter to the newspaper about this wanton destruction, and it was printed. We joined the ancient and honorable Save-The-Redwoods League that originally was formed to solicit money from wealthy donors to buy groves of trees in memory of loved ones. (Our twenty bucks hardly put us in that awesome company.) But the awakening environmental ethos stirred the old bones of the League into lobbying for watershed protection and the creation of a national park.

Eventually we joined almost every conservation group in the business: the Sierra Club when it roused the troops to prevent damming the Grand Canyon; the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) when it litigated the elimination of DDT; National Audubon as it became a powerful force to rescue us from our ecological dilemmas. (Of course we had become National members through L.A. Audubon when the birding virus struck.)

Conservationists. . . Who are we anyway? Are we a passel of hopeless Romantics standing in the path of the bulldozer of history? Are we trying to set back the clock to an imaginary Utopian era when man had not yet conquered the wilderness and there were no endangered species? Perhaps there is a grain of truth here. There is an inexpressible thrill in viewing a mountain crowned with snow, a stream purling over the rocks on its way to

the distant sea. The closer we are to genuine wildness, the more exhilaration we feel. The high-country backpacker walking through tundra belly-flowers can truly feel she has returned to an antique time where all the air is clean and pure, all streams uncontaminated, and the world is bright and new.

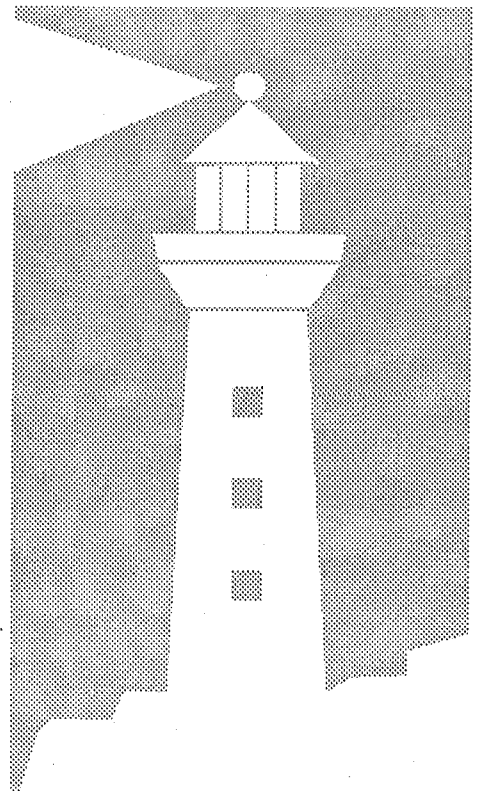
The descent to "civilization" can be a traumatic shock. We find ourselves immersed in the clatter of machinery, the grime and litter of city streets, the miasma of smoke and smog. . . The spirit rebels. We escape at every opportunity to the hidden canyon not yet scarred with motorbike tracks or the distant estuary abounding in waterbirds. We catch the flash of migrating warblers, the glint of sun on a brilliant butterfly, the jangled cries of gulls and terns, the smells of decomposing marsh detritus or the aromatic perfume of the chaparral. Lost in the willows of a fugitive creek we are temporarily in a miraculous green land.

Unfortunately the escape routes are becoming fewer. Like the wild creatures of the world, we are being forced into a smaller and smaller corral. One by one the canyons are being shaved clean for homes or used for trash-disposal dumps. The native vegetation disappears and with it the natural habitat. The estuaries are transformed into marinas. It is obvious, to everyone who treasures the natural world, that a counterforce is necessary if any of it will survive.

Time was when we could turn our heads and look the other way about ecological disasters. It was too bad that the Garrison Diversion project was going to inundate or damage eight or nine National Wildlife Refuges in (where was it?) North Dakota. North Dakota, for godsake! Or the Indian Point nuclear plant was sure to kill all the fish in the Hudson river. Like Candide, we were happy to cultivate our own garden. We still had our places to bird or swim or hike or enjoy the wild-flowers. That time is nearly past. Not only

is the corral becoming smaller, but so is the Hemisphere. It seems impossible to be an isolationist any more. The tropical rain forests - far, far away - are disappearing at an alarming rate, and with them the winter homes for "our" tanagers, orioles, vireos, warblers and other colorful migrants. How will that affect our birding in another decade? The Secretary of the Interior is determined to explore for oil on the entire continental shelf. How will the inevitable spills and leaks affect the offshore waters, the mudflats and estuaries of all our coasts? And can we ignore the "final solution" for all life on earth: nuclear war?

So we try to become part of the counterforce. We join, we write, we donate. The World Wildlife Fund is campaigning to save a portion of the tropical forests. The Nature Conservancy may rescue our Morongo park from inappropriate development. The Sierra Club is working vigorously for urban parks, especially the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. National Audubon, with its 450,000 members, is trying to save our Condor. Hard-core conservation is a tough job. It takes time, energy, persistence. It can be frustrating and rewarding; you lose some and (Hallelujah!) you win some. We can't all have the same involvement. Only a few of us can fly to Sacramento or Washington to lobby or testify. All of us can write a 13¢ postcard or get signatures on a petition or contribute five bucks to the Mono Lake Committee. Let's do it.





# New Strip Mining Methods Threaten the West

## California Desert and Historic Town at Risk

*Bill Dillinger, Sacramento Chapter Past President*

**T**he old ghost town of Bodie, a national historic landmark and State Historic Park in Mono County, is the focal point for opposition to a new type of strip mining that is spreading throughout the West.

These strip mines use the new "heap-leach" process, which can profitably recover minute amounts of gold - 0.069 ounces per ton, less gold than a '49er had stuck under his fingernail - but they do enormous damage to the landscape.

### The Mines

A mine near Elko, Nevada is digging a pit 500 feet deep and half a mile wide. At Bodie, the top 400 feet would be bulldozed off the mile-long ridge that forms the backdrop for the town. Effects on the fragile buildings of the old town itself could be disastrous.

There are 80 to 100 such mines operating, or in the planning stage, in Nevada. A University of Nevada conservationist predicts that the state will soon be "pock-marked like the surface of the moon." At least half a dozen are operating or in the permit stage in California, and a couple more are working on privately-owned land; others are in prospect.

### The Heap-Leach Process

Conservationists are particularly concerned over the loss of ducks, geese, and shorebirds, and mammals ranging from deer to field mice, in huge ponds of cyanide-laced water leached from "heaps" of ore the size of Cheop's pyramid.

The Nevada Fish and Game Department has tallied 5700 bird and animal deaths in mine ponds over the last 5 years, despite preventive efforts running from distress calls to noise-making cannons to robot boats and Heavy Metal

music. Nets over the smaller ponds seem to work fairly well; only neutralization of the cyanide, an expensive process, works for the big ones.

A mining operation in the BLM's East Mojave National Scenic Area - to be a new National Park under Senator Cranston's Desert Bill - has promised to build "guzzlers" to lure wild creatures away from the fatal ponds.

### Activists Awake!

So far environmentalists have been unable to do more than slow down the multi-million dollar international mining corporations, but they're hoping that Bodie can be a rallying point. The California State Park Rangers Association has formed a **Save Bodie!** committee and is spreading the word through Audubon and other organizations' newsletters.

Write your state and federal legislators and the governor urging a strong stand to protect Bodie and a hard look at the environmental consequences of this kind of mining throughout the West. The Mono County Board of Supervisors must review the official application for a mining permit at Bodie; they should know the concerns of recreationists who are the mainstay of the County's tourist-based economy. Write and request that they keep you informed.

For more information on the Bodie situation, write:

**Save Bodie!,**  
P. O. Box 28366,  
Sacramento,  
CA 95828

### 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).

EDITOR: Jesse Moorman  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Hank Brodtkin  
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Susan Chasen  
CONSERVATION ED.: Sandy Wohlgemuth  
ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:  
Kimball Garrett  
TYPE AND LAYOUT: Etcetera Graphics  
PRINTING: Beacon Litho  
Published ten times a year by the  
Los Angeles Audubon Society,  
7337 Santa Monica Blvd.,  
West Hollywood, CA 90046

PRESIDENT: Robert Van Meter  
1ST VICE PRESIDENT: Jean Brandt  
2ND VICE PRESIDENT: Charles Schoettlin  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY: Andrea Kaufman

Audubon membership (local and national) is \$35 per year, Senior Citizen \$21, and at present new members are being offered an introductory membership for \$30 for the first year, 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 must send checks for \$5 to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

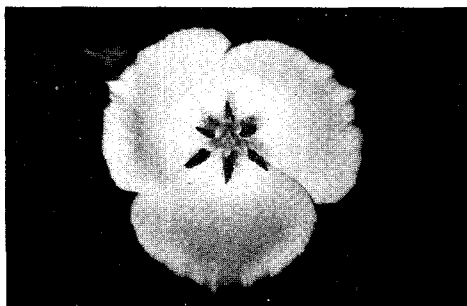
THE WESTERN TANAGER received the 1987 Special Conservation Award and 2nd place honors for Newsletter, Chapter with more than 900 members from the National Audubon Society.

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.

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, and Bookstore are located at:  
Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7337 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046.  
(213) 876-0202. Hours: 10-3 Tues. through Sat.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

June 1989



Mariposa Lily photo by Robert Gustafson

## EVENING MEETING

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

Tuesday, June 13 - Robert Gustafson will present **Rare Plants, Endangered Habitats: A Southern California Perspective**. Robert Gustafson, Botany Collections Manager at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, has a longstanding interest in rare and endangered plants in both southern California and Hawaii.



Pavement Plains photo by Robert Gustafson

Southern California with its mild climate and varied landscape has an extremely interesting, highly diverse and unique flora. Endangered habitats such as pavement plains, vernal pools, salt marshes and sand dunes are all home to endemic plants. Most of us are unaware of the unique plants that make up these communities. Areas as small as our own Ballona Marsh can harbor unique species (a cinquefoil, a member of the rose family, now presumed extinct!) Please join us, you'll come away with a greater appreciation and understanding of these endangered areas of southern California.

\* \* \*

## IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

Precedes the regular meeting, 7:30-8:00 p.m.

Everyone is invited to attend. This month's speaker and topic will be announced on the bird tape one week before the meeting  
Phone (213) 874-1318.

\* \* \*

## 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.

**Sunday, June 4 - 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, June 10 - Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island and Osborne Banks.** Leaders are Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer. R.V. Vantuna leaves Terminal Island Berth 26 at 6:00 A.M., returns at 6:00 P.M.; \$32. Reservations required; no refund on cancellations less than two weeks before sailing.

**Saturday, June 10 - Mono Basin Spring Breeding Bird Count,** led by the Mono Lake Committee. This weekend should be the greenest, songiest time to enjoy the high-country spring. Everyone is invited, regardless of birding experience. The count circle includes Lundy Canyon, Lee Vining Canyon and the County Park, although birders will be split into parties. Meet at 6:00 a.m. at Lee Vining Visitor's Center. Bring water and lunch. For information, call (619) 647-6620. Potluck dinner and compilation of birds follows.

**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.

**Saturday, June 17 - San Gabriel Mountains.** Leader David Koeppel will be looking for montane breeding species such as Mountain Quail, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Wood-Pewee, and Olive-sided Flycatcher (soon to be Boreal Pewee). Meet at the entrance to Charleton Flats Campground at 7:30 a.m. and bring lunch and insect repellent.

**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.

**Sunday, July 9 - Big Bear Lake and Vicinity.** Co-leaders Louis Tucker and Nick Freeman will meet other birders at Coldbrook Campground at 8:00 a.m. Proceed along Highway 38 about halfway along the Lake, and turn south on Tulip Road. The campground will be on the south side after the road curves. Target birds include Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope Hummingbird, Lincoln's and Brewer's Sparrows, Cassin's and Purple Finches and White-headed Woodpecker. It should be warm, and there may be bugs, so come prepared. We will plan to eat a picnic lunch along the way.

**Sunday, July 9 - Topanga State Park.** Leader Gerry Haigh. See June 4th trip for details. Note this is the second Sunday of the month rather than the (usual) first.

**Sat and Sun, July 15 and 16 - Mineral King Weekend with Rob Hansen.** On Saturday we will bird the foothill chaparral, Yellow Pine and

fir habitats around Three Rivers for Blue Grouse and many others. Sunday we will gain 3000 feet to an elevation of 10,000 ft. during our fairly strenuous walk through the fir forest and high alpine meadows of Mineral King. Rosy Finches and Calliope Hummingbirds may be seen at these elevations. More leisurely self-guided loops will also be available. Rob's knowledge of the flora, ecology and geology of this area should make this a notable natural history tour. In addition, communal lodging Saturday night

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 26974  
Los Angeles, CA

DATED MATERIAL  
Please Expedite

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
West Hollywood, CA 90046

will be provided at no extra charge, and Rob will provide a barbecue dinner at cost. Bring a sleeping bag, as some will sack out on the floor. Maximum 20 participants. \$30 fee includes Saturday night lodging; does not include BBQ dinner or vehicle entry fee. Sign up with SASE at Audubon House per policy.

**Sunday, July 16 - Mt. Pinos.** Jean Brandt will be leading this popular annual trip in search of mountain birds such as Calliope Hummingbird, Green-tailed Towhee and bluebirds. No California Condors, but stay tuned for future reintroductions. Take Highway 5 north to the Frazier Park Road offramp and turn left (west) onto the road. Turn left at the (only) traffic signal into Frazier Park and meet in the parking lot at 8:00 a.m. Bring a picnic lunch.

see page 7 for Reservations Policy and Procedure