



WESTERN TANAGER

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BIRDQUEST '89— China Overview

by James F. Clements

This is part of a continuing series of articles contributed by James Clements as he circles the globe in search of as many bird species as possible in order to raise pledge money for the new Hall of Birds at the L.A. County Museum of Natural History. This article details his visit to the Asian Giant, completed just prior to the recent unrest.

The May visit to China was another successful chapter in the BIRDQUEST '89 world odyssey. Out of a total of 253 species seen, 159 were new birds for the year, bringing the 1989 count to date to 1880 species.

The birding was centered in southwest China's Sichuan Province, which contains the rich "Red Basin" agricultural lands comparable to California's San Joaquin Valley.

West of Sichuan's capital city of Chengdu, the mountains rise precipitously, with Minya Tonka at 7,590 meters (24,895 feet) dominating the landscape. Such rare mammals as the Giant Panda, Chinese Takin and Snub-nosed Monkey find their only habitat in these conifer-clad mountains. These mountains are also home to some of the most beautiful and endangered of the world's birds, the pheasants and partridges that make this area an ornithologist's delight.

My three week odyssey to this area was led by Ben King, the leading expert on Asian birds and author of *A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA*, and produced 20 of mainland China's 47 endemic birds.

Avian specialties we recorded in these rhododendron-bamboo forests included five species of parrotbills, seven pheasants, five partridges, 17 babblers, and 30 thrushes. Our best family showing was a record 12 titmice, which included every one of

mainland China's
endemic members
of this family.

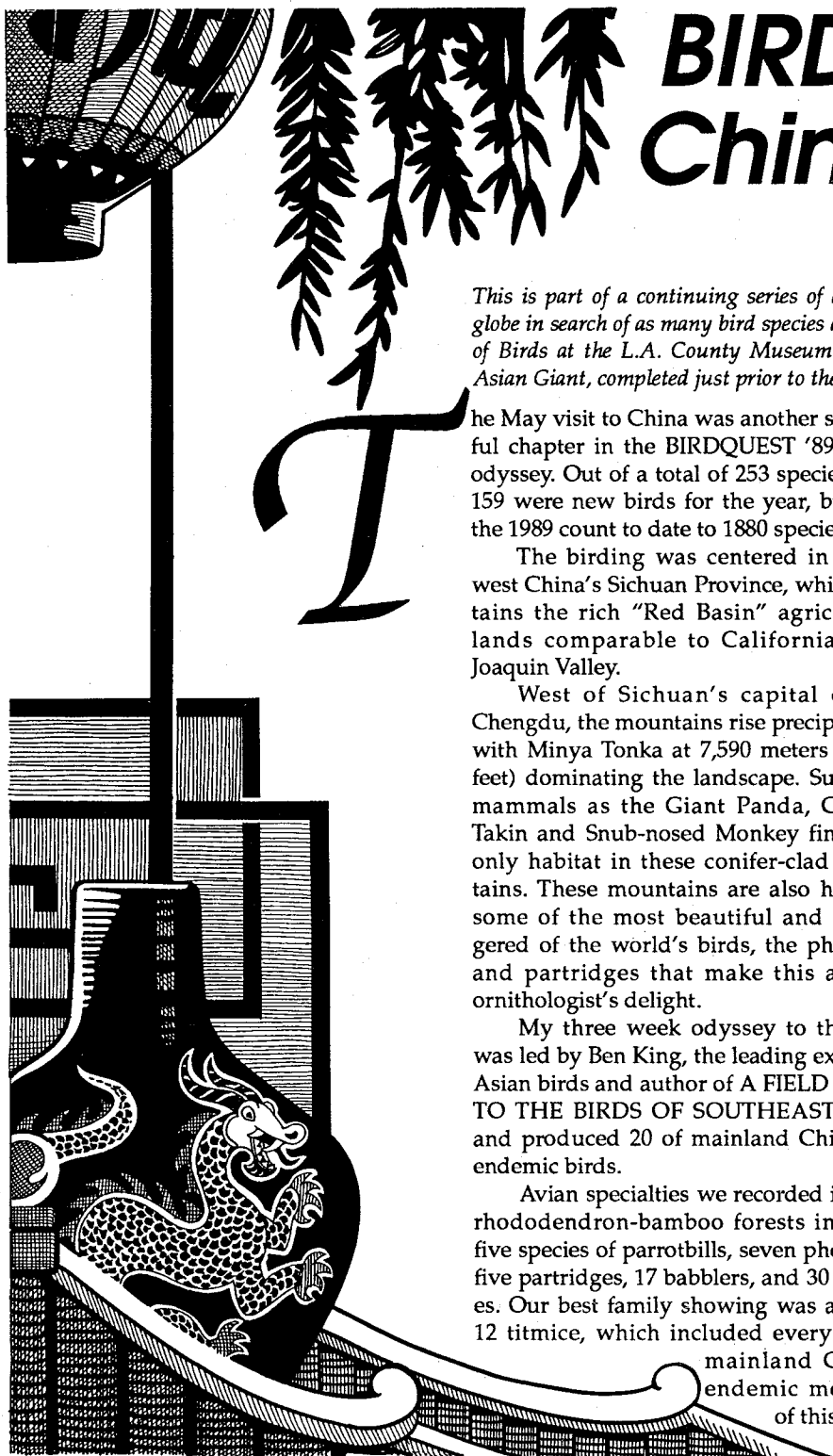
Moving up onto the Tibetan plateau, we had wonderful opportunities to study the Black-necked Crane, one of the rarest and certainly the most endangered of the world's 15 crane species.

Unfortunately, much of the cranes' habitat is under severe encroachment caused primarily by a tremendous increase in domestic animals in recent years. Ben King estimates that since 1961 there has been a 1,000 percent increase in people, yaks, sheep, goats, horses and other domestic animals on the plateau. I counted over 3,000 animals from a single vantage point during one evening's observation of the rare cranes.

This fragile tundra is ill-equipped to support this indiscriminate number of grazing animals, and much of the plateau is now heavily overgrazed. The high altitude "grasslands," that only 20 years ago boasted knee-high grasses, are now close-cropped to within less than an inch of the ground.

While it may seem idyllic to see Black-necked Cranes feeding calmly among yaks, sheep, goats and domestic cattle, the danger from disease could easily wipe out this population of already endangered cranes. Too much contact between wild and domestic birds poses a potential threat, particularly as the local Tibetans increase their flocks of domestic geese and ducks.

But the most visible problem we encountered was not with the avian population, but the mammalian one. Of the 13 Giant Panda reserves in China, we visited



the two largest - 200,000 hectare Wolong and 90,000 hectare Jiuzhaigou. If these are representative of the 13 reserves, my estimate is that the Giant Panda will be extinct in the wild within 20 years.

These two reserves alone account for almost half the total 630,000 hectares allotted to pandas . . . now restricted to various isolated mountain tops in Sichuan. The World Wildlife Fund, which adopted the Giant Panda as its logo in 1961, has spent over \$4 million on panda conservation efforts, and the Chinese government has reportedly spent an additional \$25 million.

Yet the population of pandas keeps dropping. According to George Schaller, the acknowledged world expert on the panda, "They are being poached out of existence." This statement was in response to the information that 150 pandas were poached from Sichuan reserves last year!

This came on top of the 1973 and 1985 flowering of the bamboo that caused an estimated 165 pandas to starve to death. That is a healthy percentage of the estimated world population of under 1,000 animals . . . especially one that has shown a notoriously low reproduction rate and an over-specialized diet.

In Wolong, we saw evidence everywhere of locals running their livestock through prime panda habitat. And in Jiuzhaigou, a supposed showplace of Chinese tourism, I counted 300 goats browsing through a bamboo thicket one evening, while the steady hum of a saw paid noisy tribute to the relentless cutting of trees in the reserve.

All the money in the world spent on studies of DNA, gene pools, flowering bamboo cycles, and radio telemetry tracking is meaningless unless the Chinese govern-

ment maintains the absolute integrity of these reserves. Without it, we will watch the Giant Panda wind up in the same boat as the California Condor . . . a zoo curiosity!

* * *

My three-day trip to Mexico was a spur-of-the-moment decision, based primarily on the increasing overlap I am experiencing in different parts of the world.

I chose Mazatlan for three reasons. First, it is only a two-hour flight from Los Angeles. Second, it is cheap. Round trip airfare from Los Angeles was \$230, and my meals and room at the Villa Blanca Motel near the Sinaloa-Durango border cost me \$74 for three days. Last, but certainly not least, Rancho Liebre Barranca is one of the high points of Mexican birding. The mile hike from the Durango Road wanders

(continued top of page 3)

Nothing to Grouse About

by Nick Freeman,
LAAS Field Trip Chairman

On April 8th, while temperatures in L.A. soared above 100°, the mountains near the Owens Valley were comfortable for short sleeves - certainly not the chilly experience of most early birders in the area.

Our first stop below Tinemaha Reservoir was riparian, sage and scrub set amidst pastures. Dividing our attention between what perched in the trees and what lay on the ground, our local leader Earl Gann pointed out Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Nuttall's Woodpeckers, one or two Swainson's Hawks, Belted Kingfishers, and American Kestrels sharing a kill. A fairly early Western Kingbird was also seen.

Our second stop, Glacier Lodge, produced Red-breasted Sapsuckers and a sedate but somewhat obscured Blue Grouse accented by the red combs over its eyes. After everyone got a good look at this bird from various angles, we roller-coastered down and up the other side of the valley to a spring near Westgard Pass, where the birding was rather sparse. A Costa's Hummingbird and a few Yellow-rumped Warblers were the only well-seen birds to speak of. Farther up, along the Bristlecone Pine Preserve Road, Black-throated and Vesper Sparrows were seen by many, and a few saw a notably quiet and solitary Pinyon Jay. Birds were sparse here too, but nobody seemed to mind that

we saw no more than Steller's Jays during our scenic and sunny lunch stop among the Pinyon Pines of the White Mountains.

We next found ourselves back south of Big Pine, overlooking Tinemaha Reservoir. A pair of Ospreys on a nesting platform stole the show, while some birders tried diligently to identify shorebirds and waterbirds at a mile or better from our promontory.

To finish off our day, we headed north to Bishop onto the road to Rovana, where we saw the hoped-for Wilson's Snipe cockily chirping out "neep, neep, neep" from atop an old post in a pasture. We also saw deer, House Wrens, and a determined but unsuccessful Prairie Falcon stooping on a presumed snipe. Farther along, we happened upon a Great Horned Owl nest with a downy owlet within and a perturbed parent nearby.

Sunday sunrise caught up with us out on the Lake Crowley Sage Grouse lek. Sacramento Audubon Society and about 100 Sage Grouse were in place when we arrived at 6:00 am, but there was plenty of room to marvel at these normally secretive birds as they pompously paraded in front of the seemingly disinterested females and awaited their verdict. A female Yellow-headed Blackbird looked somewhat out of place in the middle of the open sage as she hopped up on a bent aerial that seemed to remind her of a reed. As she searched and called from her vantage point, a male popped up from the nearby sage and they flew off toward the lake together. We soon followed suit, espying mostly ducks and a few White Pelicans from the lake edge.

Continuing to the South Tufa Reserve at Mono Lake, many of us observed a nearby Sage Thrasher courting a female. This is

certainly one of the better spots around to see this bird. Also seen were Savannah Sparrows, Violet-green Swallows, Eared Grebes, California Gulls and a pair of Ospreys nesting on a distant tufa tower. Seen circling in the distance were a Red-tailed Hawk, a Golden Eagle and a fairly dark Swainson's Hawk. Emily Strauss, one of the Mono Lake biologists, furnished us with an impromptu talk on the ecology of the lake. She described the warm top isotherm that usually restricts the nutrient-rich cool water to the depths of the lake. This year, she said, was the first since 1983 that the lake water had mixed completely, allowing nutrients into the active top waters. The biologists are hoping that this will convert into a bumper crop food supply in the lake this summer, enriching the widespread ecosystem around the lake.

From here we headed farther east to the nearby pine outcropping where we had seen the distant Golden Eagle circling. We found not the eagle, but many Mountain Chickadees and Pinyon Jays, including an active Pinyon Jay nest nestled in a low branch. By now the group had thinned out considerably, and Earl parted our company after having shown us many fine birds in some beautiful spots.

Those remaining with the group meandered up the Tioga Pass road in search of American Dippers and a dreamy lunch spot. Both were found without too much trouble. Also seen were more Red-breasted Sapsuckers, a Brown Creeper, and the eastern Sierra race of the Steller's Jay which, unlike the birds shown in the field guides, shows an ochre wash to the chin and throat. A nearby waterfall was well worth a quick visit before packing it up for the late afternoon haul back to L.A.

through some of the most pristine oak-conifer forests left in Mexico. this western edge of the Sierra Madre Occidental is the meeting place of two great avifaunas . . . the west coast neotropical birds and the Sierra Madre nearctic birds.

The nearctic birds live on these pine and oak ridges, while the neotropical species occupy the stream valley and sides of the steep barrancas.

Flourishing between these two extremes in the isolated, humid canyons is one of the most amazing aggregations of Mexican flora. Arboreal orchids abound, and in addition to epiphyte-laden oaks, the barranca boasts the northernmost specimens of the Sacred Fir, plus fragrant magnolias, tillandsia and other broadleaf trees.

President's Annual Report

by Bob Van Meter

This has been a year of promise and challenge for the Board and the members of L.A. Audubon. And I am proud and pleased that every initiative, suggestion, and effort has been met with energy and zeal.

Locally, we work with the League of Conservation Voters; the Coalition to Save the Sepulveda Basin, and, through Audubon Adventures, we bring the message of conservation to 100 Southern California classrooms (ages 7-14). We back the creation of the Santa Clarita Regional Park. We have contributed to the Ralph Schreiber Bird Hall at the Natural History Museum, the Environmental Defense Fund; the Theodore Payne Foundation; the Save the Redwoods League; the Desert Protective Council; the Mono Lake Lawsuit; Amigos de Bolsa Chica; Friends of the Santa Margarita River; the Santa Cruz Peregrine Release; the Point Reyes Bird Observatory; the Western Foundation for Raptor Conservation; the National Resources Defense Council; and the Wilderness Society.

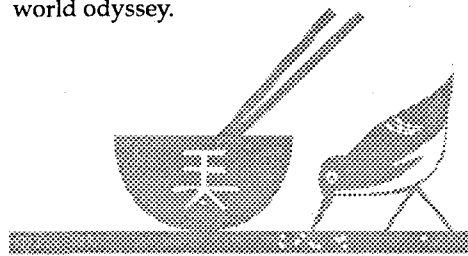
Internationally, we have favored the operations of the World Wildlife Fund; the Socorro Dove Restoration; Rainforest Conservation (through the Nature Conservancy); Greenpeace; pro Esteros (the creation of a Marine Estuary preserve in Baja California; and ICOB, the International Council for the Protection of Birds. Our officers have represented us at national, regional, and state organizational functions and before state, county, and city public agencies.

Some of the rarest birds in Mexico are restricted to this unusual ecological niche. I had stunning views of the large Tufted Jay, as well as the elusive Eared Trogon. I say elusive since, in my seven trips to Rancho Liebre, I have seen the bird only once before . . . and that was a lone silent female!

This time however, I was able to record an excellent series of vocalizations for the Cornell University Library of Natural Sounds. In fact, at one point on the tape I have simultaneous recordings of Eared, Mountain and Elegant Trogons, Tufted Jays, and a Brown-backed Solitaire! To top things off, I had nine trogons in view at one time - two Eared, three Elegant and four Mountain - not to mention five

Tufted Jays!

The trip was successful in every way. I added 54 species, bringing the BIRDQUEST '89 total to 1957 species. What's really interesting is that 15 of the birds seen were pure Mexican endemics. Another 12 species reach Central America, but do not get into Venezuela or Peru, my next two destinations on BIRDQUEST '89 world odyssey.



Our bookstore bulges with new books, video, and tape offerings. Our Grants are funding the research of three ornithology students. In last year's Birdathon we placed third nationally, first in the western region, and best in the state. For this we received twelve prizes which were awarded by lottery to attendees at our most successful Annual Banquet. Now we have a publicity chair and we have received recognition in the press. We have also been lauded in a personal letter from the Mayor of West Hollywood. And our Field Trips, both pelagic and land-based, have been expanded in scope and are fielded by the best available leaders. Ditto for the marvelous presentations we have enjoyed as Bird I.D. workshops and features topics at monthly meetings. Our current team of editors has brought the Newsletter to new excellence; it has been entered in this year's National Newsletter Contest. Our Membership rolls are now astutely maintained through the dedication of the registrar; and the Social Chairpersons (who've never read a calorie counter!) provide the hearty tidbits and drink after each meeting. The library is now so stocked that there is no space left. We have established a Species Locator File in the office for visitors and others wishing to know the exact So. Calif. location of a given species. Our ornithology consultant has an updated Checklist of the Birds of L.A. County in progress. Peter Berle, the National Audubon President, was our guest at lunch in the Audubon House last November.

So I invite every member to dedicate himself to additional support for our Chapter, attend more meetings, volunteer for more tasks. Many innovations are projected for the year beginning this September. We will provide field trips for

the June 1990 combined convention of the A.O.U. and the Cooper Society to be held at UCLA. We will formulate a major membership recruitment drive. Plans are in the wind for a photo workshop. Another Garrett-Dunn book will be published. And a chance to merge with a Peruvian bird group as sister chapter is being considered. I know there are many other ideas, as yet unuttered, waiting to be expressed-let any officer know your thoughts.

To end, let me offer sincere thanks to our office staff and volunteers; to our two vice presidents and our two active past presidents; and to the treasurer and the executive and recording secretaries, all of whom have bolstered me with enthusiasm and cheerful cooperation.

Bookstore News

by Chas. Harper



Among the more interesting books published in the last year is Terry Root's *Atlas of Wintering North American Birds, An Analysis of Christmas Bird Count Data*, (University of Chicago Press, 1988). It is one of the first major works arising directly from that wealth of data accumulated since 1900.

The book sets the data out in species accounts in phylogenetic order. Each species' winter status and distribution within the continental United States is briefly described and is illustrated by two maps. The maps, mere outlines of the lower 48, show a contour and a three-dimensional pattern of distribution and abundance.

Conservation Conversation



by Sandy Wohlgemuth

In time of war, nations mobilize all their energies and resources to win, to defeat the enemy. Most people are swept up in a flood of patriotism or they go along because it is too hard or embarrassing or dangerous to oppose the flood. The enemy is real, he's there—just across the border or the ocean. The leadership, through the media, makes sure that the ordinary citizen is aware of the harsh face of the enemy and the justice of our cause. There are dramatic events that stir our emotions: Pearl Harbor, the sinking of the Lusitania, the Bataan Death March. We make sacrifices. We accept rationing. We recycle everything. We pull in our belts. Our way of life is severely altered for the common goal—victory.

The adversaries today are far less visible. We confront the ozone layer depletion, the daunting smog that blankets our cities, the population bomb that destroys our elbow-room and the quality of life. Except for a Chernobyl or a Bhopal or an Exxon Valdez, these are quiet, subtle adversaries. Though we may be aware of them, they rarely penetrate deeply into our consciousness or directly affect us. We're pretty sure there are carcinogens in the food we eat, but if we feel fine next week or next year, we don't worry too much. It's hard to accept a physical threat that might materialize in ten or twenty years. We breathe the pervasive smog nearly every day, but we feel no bullet holes, we see no blood.

Yet we are told that the increased ultraviolet rays that will bathe the earth if the ozone layer is destroyed may do more than increase human skin cancer. Billions of tiny plants grow in the upper levels of the ocean, receiving the beneficent energy of the sun. They are the foundation of the classic food chain that culminates in fish, whales, bald eagles and us. Lethal ultraviolet rays could obliterate this plankton and the entire fabric of life in the waters of the earth.

Bulldozing the forests of the world is annihilating the oxygen producers that make life possible on this unique planet.

The burning of wood, coal and oil is warming the earth and, if unchecked, may change the climate and the very shape of the continents. The science fiction scenario of melting icecaps and drowning cities may seem a trifle far-fetched, but the prospect of eternal drought in the world's grain belts is terrifying. With the prediction of a population of six billion souls early in the next century, the loss of millions of tons of food spells unimaginable starvation. We're speaking of the possible death of a staggering number of people. The impact of this calamity would exceed the devastation of the Black Death in medieval Europe. We can't grasp the possibility of this happening to us, if not tomorrow, then in fifty years. Yet our wise men tell us it is not a wild nightmare, that it could occur.

How are we going to save the world and ourselves? Somehow we must be made to recognize that this may be the most serious predicament the human race has ever faced. Deadly epidemics like bubonic plague or AIDS run their course or science eventually finds a cure. But man-made insults to the entire planet present problems of a vastly greater order of magnitude. We must be educated to the point where our energies can be mobilized as they are in wartime in a single-minded drive to change. The challenge is enormous. Nothing in our history has prepared us for this moment. We have grown up in our own towns, states, nations within a fairly uniform culture and language, surrounded by countries whose people are different from us. There are fears and suspicions: ancient wars to brood upon. We are all armed to protect ourselves, to "contain" the potential enemy. Nationalism is an implacable force: witness the turmoil in Soviet Georgia, Armenia and the Baltic states when the chains of oppression are loosened. The League of Nations after World War I was a failure and the United Nations today is hardly a harbinger of World Government. Will the people and their leaders have the wisdom to put aside their differences and work together to sub-

due the environmental monster we have created?

Mostafa K Tolba, executive director of the United Nations Environment Program, said last March, "There is not a single nation or individual on earth whose well-being is not finally dependent on its biological resources: its seas and rivers, grassland, forests, soil and air. Unless all nations mount a massive and sustained effort into safeguarding their shared living resources, we could face a catastrophe on a scale rivalled only by nuclear war." Two years ago there was an international conference held in Montreal on eliminating chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that destroy the ozone layer. There will be another meeting soon because the first one is considered inadequate: the scientific findings since then have shown that the problem is much more serious than originally thought. Greenhouse warming will be addressed by a similar convention this year, with the Bush administration, after some reluctance, volunteering to take the lead. These are encouraging beginnings and we should be grateful that a start has been made.

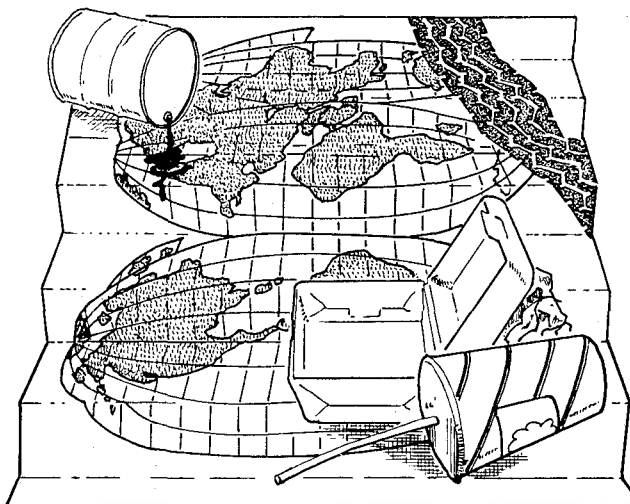
It is appropriate for the United States to take the lead and it is proper for us to make the most sacrifices. With only 5% of the world's population, we consume 25% of the world's resources. If we are really serious about our survival, we will have to change, we will have to make those sacrifices. Raising the level of fuel economy in cars must be accelerated; an increase of one mile per gallon saves 420,000 barrels of oil a day. Auto exhaust is a major part of the gases that produce the greenhouse effect. The current trend back to the infamous gas-guzzlers must be halted. Our government has never been enthusiastic about the development of alternate energy systems. The kind of effort that produced the atomic bomb is required to produce practical, non-polluting solar power.

Will we be willing to forgo the luxury of air conditioning in new cars and homes until chemicals to replace CFCs are developed in a few years? To raise the standard of living of its 1.1 billion citizens, China is building 12 plants to make CFCs so that it can manufacture refrigerators. How do the advanced nations convince the Chinese to wait for CFC substitutes? Third World nations look at us and say we want to deny them the benefits of the modern world that we have enjoyed for decades. The rising expectations of their people will be frustrated by this denial and could lead to violent social upheaval. An Indian scientist said, "Are you prepared to lower your standard of living? You won't drive

less miles in your car, but you tell the Third World not to cut trees." There is talk of subsidies to the Third World from the advanced nations that would provide alternative jobs for the farmers who are slashing and burning the rain forests. Compensation might be paid to other countries for cutting back on their use of CFCs or waiting for the substitutes.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) has put forth a 20-year plan to conquer our miserable smog. It calls for conversion of autos to new fuels, pollution controls for factories, power plants and oil refineries. It eliminated loopholes for polluters. Leaders of industry have attacked the plan with great vigor saying it is unreasonable. It will cost them hundreds of millions of dollars, they say, the controls are too stringent, and it won't work. James Lents, head of AQMD, commenting on the cost says, "looking at the cost per pound of emissions that you clean up, it's not unreasonable. The oil companies represent a large part of the emissions, and we believe they should be part of the cleanup." Individuals will be affected when the cost of controls is passed on to them as higher prices. Carpooling—hardly a popular institution here—will be empha-

sized with more diamond lanes on the freeways. A smoking car or truck will be stopped and fined. With the AQMD plan, southern California will become a laboratory model—and a mere taste, at that—of what the people of the world will face if



they respond to the menace of ozone depletion and greenhouse warming.

The thought of the adjustments that individuals will have to make and the changes necessary for industry projects an alarming picture. We are all prisoners of our familiar ways. Changing lifestyles is hard work. In America we're not accus-

tomed to much interference with our private lives, at least in peacetime. To save water, have you ever tried asking your hose-wielding neighbor to use a broom to clean his sidewalk? Will we gladly curtail our auto mileage, our barbecues, our gas-powered lawn mowers, our winter heating systems? Will we understand that we have to sacrifice some of our high standard of living?

In the western world and in the industrial far east, the profit system is the normal mode of operation. Will the private sector be able to adapt to the environmental clouds that hang over our heads? Will jobs be lost? Will our giants of industry relinquish their independence of government? Will government take the lead and show us the way to combat the unprecedented danger? Will the nations of the world agree that short-term gain must give way to long-term solutions?

We are left with disturbing questions. If we accept the diagnosis of our scientist we must see that we are in for a time that will try men's souls. Our lives and perhaps the fate of the earth are at stake. We must find a way to put aside our differences and work together for our own survival.

Gorman Wind Farm Hearing is set for August 16

The Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR") on a proposed 458-turbine Gorman wind farm has been released for public review, and the hearing on Zond's application for a conditional use permit has been scheduled before the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission on August 16, 1989, in Santa Clarita.

Environmentalists say that the DEIR understates the impact the project could have on the California Condor and other birds. For example, the DEIR states that "recorded condor flight corridors appear to skirt the proposed project area," although we know for a fact that the Condor flew over the project site on its way to foraging areas in the Tehachapis and in the lower Sierras.

In the Altamont Pass area in Northern California, at least 108 raptors, including 36 Golden Eagles, were killed after colliding with wind turbines. This study was not

even mentioned in the DEIR although the facts were presented a year ago at a wind energy conference which was attended by Zond.

Several branches of the Pacific Flyway join in the vicinity of the wind farm site; large numbers of Golden Eagles and several Bald Eagles have spent the winter in the Gorman area in recent years.

Les Reid, former National Director of the Sierra Club, criticized the DEIR for ignoring the issue of wind farm abandonment. "The abandoned wind farms in Tehachapi, San Geronio and Altamont demonstrate that the claimed benefits of wind farms are often illusory," said Reid. "Travelers passing through wind farm areas are confronted with rusting and lifeless wind machines, and the governmental agencies which granted the permits for the projects have had difficulty forcing the wind developers to remove this blight on the landscape," Reid stated. "Since Los Angeles County does not have a wind farm ordinance to address the abandonment issue there is even more reason for the County to deny Zond's application for a conditional use permit," Reid added.

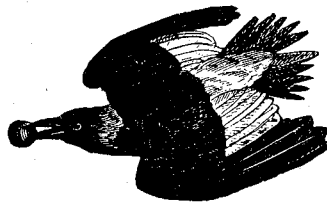
Mary Carlson, Chairperson of the Save the Mountain Committee, which opposes the Gorman wind farm project, said "the draft report does not recognize the visual pollution the project would create in one of the State's most beautiful wildflower areas. The report also contains misleading statements about the energy benefits of the project; it does not adequately discuss erosion issues; and it fails to answer the question of whether the project would lead to other wind farms in the Gorman area."

Concerned citizens should attend the public hearing on August 16 at 9:30 a.m. in the City of Santa Clarita Council Chambers, 23920 Valencia Blvd., Santa Clarita. You may submit a letter on the project, and any comments you may have on the Draft Environmental Impact Report, to the Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission before the August 16 hearing, at Hall of Records, Room 1346, 320 W. Temple St., Los Angeles 90012, Attn: Nick Hasselkus.

For more info, contact the Save the Mountain Committee, P.O. Box 105, Gorman, CA 93243, (805) 248-6386.

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.

No sooner, it seems, have the last of our spring migrants passed through when, with just the briefest of pauses, the fall migration begins. Those of us who will be privileged to visit the flower-strewn higher slopes of the Transverse Ranges or the High Sierra will see *Selasphorus* hummingbirds timing their return journey to Mexico to take advantage of these alpine gardens even as the nesting Fox Sparrows and Green-tailed Towhees set the clear summer air ringing with their territorial songs. Also the first of the shorebirds, probably males—except for the role-reversed phalaropes—who have no nesting duties will begin to show up.

By August fall migration will be well underway, with many birds wending their way south through the mountains. The more hardy birder will again be haunting the shores of the Salton Sea where the regular migrants are joined by visitors from Mexico, some of which may be quite unexpected, and real masochists will bird Furnace Creek, Death Valley.

Early spring seemed atypical this year. There were some good movements of migrants around the end of March through the beginning of April. Then things seemed to slow down until the middle of May when birds passed through in good numbers again.

As this is being written—May 20—just a few of the more common “vagrants” have shown up. But as always in our bird-blessed part of the world some interesting observations were reported.

An immature **Frigatebird**, presumably a **Magnificent**, was reported from Newport Bay at the very unusual date of 20 April by Beth Flint.

Howard King saw a **Brown Booby** in Pyramid Cove, San Clemente Island on 13 May. Our last report of a **Hooded**

Merganser is 15 April at Malibu Creek State Park (Russell Stone).

A flock of 20 **Swainson's Hawks** was reported from the lower Colorado River on 9 April by Steve Meladonoff. At one time in California this species used to be seen passing through in flocks of a hundred or more.

The most exciting report we received was of a **Yellow Rail** at Upper Newport Bay on 10 April seen by Hank Childs. Unfortunately this bird could not be refound.

About 15 **Franklin's Gulls** were present at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds from at least 25 through 30 April (Barry Lyon, Russell Ruffing), and 3 **Sabine's Gulls** were found at the same location on 21 April by Gail Benson and Barbara Elliot.

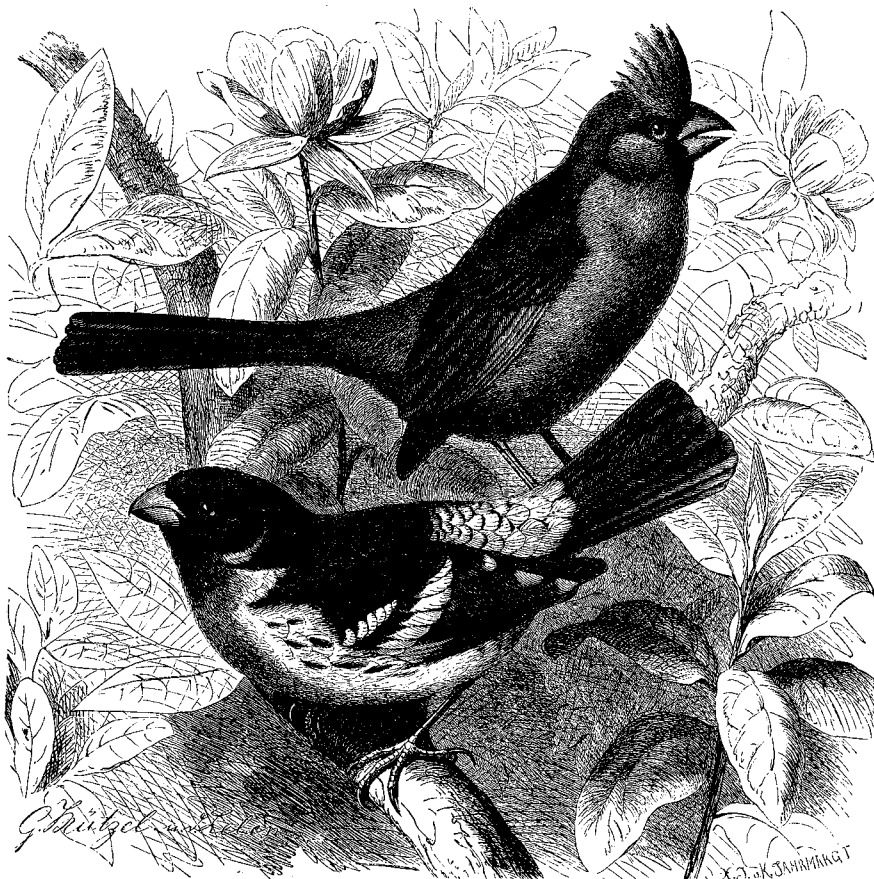
Our first **Olive-sided Flycatcher** report was one at Placerita State Park on 17 April seen by Irving Woldman.

A male **Purple Martin** was seen at Fairmont Park, Riverside on 22 April by Bob Neuwirth and a flock of six was seen trying to fight the head winds above the village of Snow Creek on the desert side of San Geronio Pass (Hank Brodtkin).

A **Verdin** was found by Jean Brandt at a new location for this species in the Antelope Valley west of Longview between S and T Streets on 19 April. The last report of a **Varied Thrush** was on 4 April at Placerita and the first report of the Bob's Gap **Gray Vireos** was two pairs seen by Hank Childs on 13 April. A **Red-eyed Vireo** was also reported here on 14 May by Russ Stone.

A male **Palm Warbler**, very unusual in spring, was photographed by Herb Clarke at Corn Springs, Riverside County, on 8 April. An **American Redstart**—a first-spring male—was found at Morongo Valley on 6 May by Russell Ruffing and a **Northern Waterthrush** was seen in Yucca Valley on 13 May by Priscilla Brodtkin.

Some early reports by Steve Meladonoff at the Santa Rosa Plateau near Temecula are most interesting. On 11 March he had a **Lazuli Bunting**, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** and a **Bobolink**. We were fortunate this April to spend the afternoon on the Plateau. We heard at least five singing Grasshopper Sparrows, mostly around the vernal pools. The rich green grasslands were dotted with flowers—



Cardinal (above) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak

including Chocolate Lilies. The Nature Conservancy is to be commended for preserving this unique example of our disappearing Southern California habitats.

Indigo Bunting reports include one at Galileo Park, California City, on 6 May by Ernie Ables and Chuck Bernstein and a male/female pair at Yucca Valley on 13 May by Rod Higbie.

Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were seen at Morongo Valley on 17 May by Gail Benson and Barbara Elliot, who also had another **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Sierra Vista Ranch on 11 March.

Finally, an early 14 March date for **Black-chinned Sparrow** was reported by David Richardson in the Santa Susannah Mountains north of the San Fernando Valley.

FLASH!!! We just got a call (May 20) informing us that a **Spotted Redshank** has been found probably by Elizabeth Cooper at Camp Pendleton.

It has recently come to my attention that both San Bernardino and Orange Counties are doing Breeding Bird Atlases. These studies, based on the idea carried out in Great Britain, divide a county, state, or even a country into squares of equal size. Observers are assigned one or more squares and for a specified number of years, usually five, search for birds and list them with symbols according to the probability of their breeding based on these observations. The results are published in a book with overlays for the breeding species. The basic format once in place can be used for wintering birds, plants, geology, insects, etc. until a complete natural history of an area can be represented. In the past Kimball Garrett and Hartmut Walter have tried to get people interested in a state or county project. Now that we have our sister counties making the effort—according to Loren Hayes, Orange County is in its fifth and final year—perhaps someone reading this might consider getting the first **LOS ANGELES COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS** started. Contact me.

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

NOTICE FOR BIRDERS

Butterbredt Springs is on private property, part of the Onyx Ranch, and it represents a critical water supply for the ranch's livestock. Recently, someone using the property closed a gate that had been left open by ranch staff, the cattle could not reach the springs, and several head died. The Ranch is accusing Los Angeles birders of closing this gate. So, PLEASE, once again, RESPECT ALL PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PROPERTY, and leave it EXACTLY as you found it!

ANNOUNCEMENTS continued from last page

Saturday, Sept 23 - Pelagic Trip at Morro Bay, about 4 hours drive from L.A. Brad Schram and Tom Edell lead the Morro Coast Audubon Society's annual fall pelagic trip. Boat leaves from Bob's Sport Fishing, 845 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, at 7:00 a.m. sharp, and cruises the outer waters of Estero Bay until return at 3:00 p.m. Possible sightings include 6 species of shearwater, 5 species of storm petrel, 3 species of jaeger, skua, gulls, terns and alcids; killer, blue and humpback whales. \$25 with 36 spaces available. Bring warm clothes & lunch; no ice chests allowed on the boat. Call or write for info or reservations: Tom Edell, 46 Eighth St., Cayucos, CA 93430. Ph. 805 995-1691. Make checks payable to Morro Coast Audubon Society. No refund on cancellation if your place is not filled.

Sunday, September 24 - Pelagic Trip to San Clemente Island with leaders Herb Clarke and Jonathan Alderfer. Fee: \$35. Reservations per policy.

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 or emendation;
- (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, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90046.

If a trip is not filling up, it will be cancelled two weeks before the scheduled date; you will be so notified and your fee will be refunded. If you cancel a reservation within two weeks of the trip, you will get a refund only if someone takes your place.

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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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, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046.
(213) 876-0202. Hours: 10-3 Tues. through Sat.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

July-August 1989

EVENING MEETING

Meet at 8:00 p.m. in Plummer Park
The next regular meeting will be on Sept. 12.

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, July 9 - Big Bear Lake and Vicinity. Co-leaders Louis Tucker and Nick Freeman will meet other birders at Aspen Glen Picnic Area at 8:00 a.m. Proceed along Hwy. 38 about halfway along the Lake, and turn south on Tulip Road. The picnic ground will be on the south side after the road curves. Target birds include Williamson's Sapsucker, 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 will continue his monthly walks in this beautiful nearby area. (NOTE: this is the second Sunday of the month rather than the usual first). The group will look at migrants and resident species in the sycamores, grassland, scrub oak and chaparral. This is an ideal trip for a beginning birder or for someone new to the area. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. heading south, take a very sharp turn east (left) uphill onto Entrada Drive (7 miles s. of Ventura Blvd. and 1 mile n. of Topanga Village). Follow the signs to the state park. \$3 parking fee.

Sat and Sun, July 15 and 16 - Mineral King Weekend with Rob Hansen. On Saturday we will bird foothill and lower montane habitats in search of Blue Grouse and many others. Sunday we will explore the higher forests and alpine meadows of Mineral King, where Rosy Finches and Calliope Hummingbirds may be seen. Communal lodging Saturday night will be provided, as well as a barbecue at cost prepared by Rob himself. Some will need sleeping bags (bring one). Maximum 20 participants. \$30 fee does not include BBQ dinner or vehicle entry fee at park. Sign up with SASE at Audubon House per policy.

Sunday, July 23 - 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 for now. Take Hwy. 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.

Sunday, July 23 - Malibu Lagoon. Fourth Sunday of each month. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the lagoon parking lot (daily fee) on the ocean side of the Pacific Coast Highway, just north of the lagoon bridge. You can also turn into town for street parking. Parking along the highway is not recommended, as there have been several automobile break-ins in recent months. This walk is under the leadership of a member of the Santa Monica Audubon Society.

Saturday, July 29 (tentative) - Point Mugu. Leaders Daniel Cooper and base biologist Matt Clope will share the duties of guiding and remarking upon the birds encountered in this limited-access area. Elegant and other terns, early peeps and other shorebirds should be seen. Exit PCH onto Wood Road, head west then south on the frontage road to the main (#1) gate lot. Meet here at 8 a.m. The attendance list must be submitted to the base, so sign up early. Must be 16 years old, and no cameras please. Include an SASE, citizenship status, and a \$5 reservation deposit to be refunded at the gate. Verify date with Audubon House (213) 876-0202, as it is still tentative with the base at publication date.

Sunday, August 6 - Topanga State Park. Meet leader Gerry Haigh at 8 a.m. See July 9th trip for details.

Sunday, August 6 - Salton Sea. Leaders Marge Pamiás and Nick Freeman will be touring this renowned hot spot of late summer birding, looking for post-breeding dispersal specialties such as Yellow-footed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Laughing Gull, boobies and frigatebirds (slim but historic chances on the latter two), as well as local residents like Abert's Towhee, Lesser Nighthawk and Gila Woodpecker. Because of the notorious heat (100°F) we will get an early start at 6 a.m. near Brawley. Call Audubon House at (213) 876-0202 to sign up and for details. 30 participants maximum. Bring a lunch, water for you and your car, sunscreen and a spotting scope if you have one.

Saturday, August 12 - Ballona Wetlands. Bob Shanman or Ian Austin will resume their monthly walks at our nearest wetlands to celebrate shorebird migration's being in full swing. Black Oystercatcher is usually seen. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Pacific Avenue Bridge. Take the Marina Freeway (90 West) to Culver Blvd. and turn left; at Pacific Avenue turn right to the footbridge at the end. Street parking is usually available.

Sunday, August 13 - Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Is. and Osborn Banks with leaders Arnold Small and Herb Clarke. Fee: \$32. Reservations per policy.

Saturday, August 19 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. David White will lead a morning walk at Whittier Narrows to check on the resident birds and the migrants passing through. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave, in south El Monte, off Fwy. 60 between the Santa Anita and Peck Drive exits, west of Fwy. 605.

Sunday, August 20 - Santa Clara River Estuary. Fred Heath will show us around one of the few major estuarine systems left in southern California. Also known as McGrath State Beach. Shorebirds and Elegant Terns should be prevalent. The group will bird from 7:30 a.m. until noonish. Bring a scope if you have one. From Highway 101 North, take Victoria Ave. exit left (west), then turn right onto Olivas Park Drive. Continue straight as it crosses Harbor Blvd. and becomes Spinnaker Drive. Park in the lot on the right side of the street across from where the fence on the left turns into the State Beach, and meet at the end of the fence.

Sunday, August 27 - Malibu Lagoon. Meet in lagoon parking lot at 8:30 a.m. For details see July 23 trip.

Friday & Saturday, September 1 & 2 - Shorebird Seminar. Don't miss this in-depth discourse by Jon Dunn, senior consultant to the *National Geographic Field Guide to N.A. Birds* and co-author of the locally definitive *Birds of Southern California*. Detailed treatment will be given to topics including migration patterns, species identification, molts and plumages--making considerable use of Jon's fine slide collection. The next morning there will be a field trip to a fairly nearby locality (possibly

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McGrath). Details will be announced at the Friday evening lecture and will depend on scouting reports. Sign up with SASE as per policy. Fee: \$19 for lecture and field trip, \$8 for lecture only. Limited enrollment.

Saturday, Sept 23 - Big Sycamore Canyon. Come see what migration is all about with leader Roger Cobb and assistant leader Melody Glover. Roger teaches bird courses at Santa Monica City College, and will be gearing this walk for beginners. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the dirt parking triangle on the inland side of the PCH. Big Sycamore Canyon is located between Zuma Beach and Pt. Mugu on PCH. Bring a knapsack lunch and liquids.

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