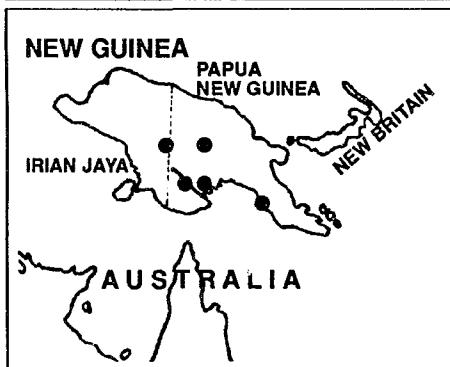
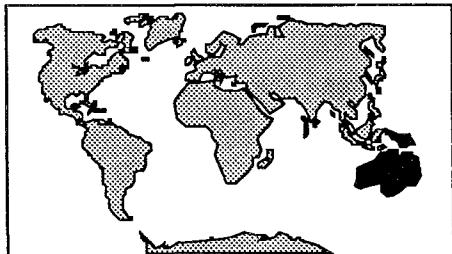




# WESTERN TANAGER

The Los Angeles Chapter of  
The National Audubon Society

Volume 56 Number 2 November 1989



## PAPUA-AUSTRALIA OVERVIEW

by James Clements, Ph.D.

*"Thunder rumbles across the heavens . . . the atmosphere is still and pensive. Suddenly there is a break in the gathering clouds and a shaft of late afternoon sun chances upon a huge and ancient tree, transforming what seemed moments before a mere shadow into a creature of unparalleled beauty. As if animated by the hands of the gods, a bird of paradise takes wing, its exquisite velvet-black plumage embellished with patches of iridescence and its elongated, ribbon-white feathers flare outward against the darkening sky."*

### BIRD QUEST '89

**T**his then is New Guinea, the home of a family of birds of paradise of such beauty and complexity that they defy simple description. When explorers first brought back the legless skins of these fabulous birds, recipients took them to be wanderers from a celestial paradise, an idea that persisted for over 200 years."

I listened enthralled as my friend and New Guinea expert David Bishop described the Ribbon-tailed Astrapia we had just watched fly into a nearby pandanus. The bird's body had totally disappeared, leaving only the three-foot-long white tail streamers dangling from the pandanus like that of an outrageous tissue-paper decorating party!

This was just one of 20 species of birds of paradise, 40 parrots, 32 pigeons and doves (including some incredibly beautiful Ptilinopus fruit doves), 15 kingfishers (including the magnificent, misnamed Common Paradise Kingfisher), and an unbelievable assortment of 57 honeyeaters that the Papuan-Australian segment of BIRD QUEST '89 recorded.

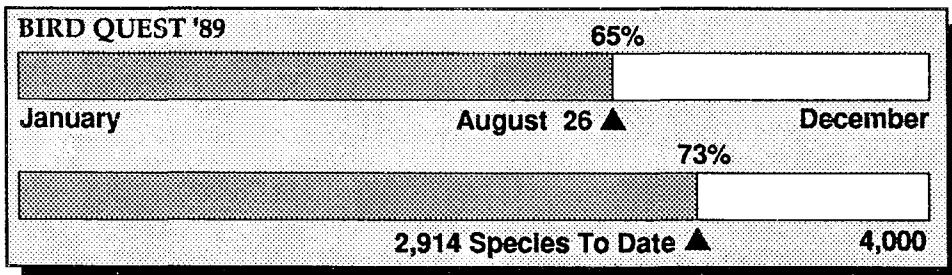
My most exciting ornithological experience was sighting the Papuan Whipbird (*Androphobus viridis*), a rare skulker known previously from only four specimens from Irian Jaya and the first record for Papua New Guinea. This was almost overshadowed by intimate views of a hunting New Guinea

Harpy Eagle, plus intimate views of Doria's Hawk, the rarest Papuan raptor, posing on an exposed branch above

*Continued on next page*

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## Winter High Tides At Upper Newport Bay

by William C. Bakewell

November, December, January and February are the best months for searching for rails and other birds at Upper Newport Bay. American Bitterns, Clapper, Virginia and Sora Rails are most often seen during these months; and the rare Black Rail is a possibility. These birds are by far most easily found at about the times of the highest high waters during the times of the spring tides of this season. There are no tide gauges in Upper Newport Bay, but most local biologists seem to agree that the times and heights of higher high waters at Upper Newport Bay and Los Angeles Outer Harbor may be taken to be about the same. In the charts at right, the times of favorable high waters during this season are set forth.

The heights of the tide for the times given are all at least 6.2 feet. On 13 November and 12 December, 1989 the heights of the higher high waters reach this season's two maxima of 7.2 feet. Jean Brandt, in her earlier article on Upper Newport Bay (*Western Tanager*, October 1977), advises birders looking for rails to be on station half an hour before the time of higher high water and to stay for at least one hour. For that reason, the times given are all for higher high waters that occur more than half an hour after sunrise.

The first two highest high waters during the entire season of good birding occur on November 13th and December 12th, both at heights of 7.2 feet.

November 1989	
07:32	Sunday the 12th
08:11	Monday the 13th
08:53	Tuesday the 14th
09:38	Wednesday the 15th
10:26	Thursday the 16th

December 1989	
07:57	Tuesday the 12th
08:43	Wednesday the 13th
09:25	Thursday the 14th
10:14	Friday the 15th
07:57	Wednesday the 27th
08:31	Thursday the 28th
09:06	Friday the 29th

January 1990	
07:54	Wednesday the 10th
08:36	Thursday the 11th
09:18	Friday the 12th
07:46	Thursday the 25th
08:21	Friday the 26th
08:59	Saturday the 27th

February 1990	
07:49	Thursday the 8th
08:31	Friday the 9th

All of these data are from the 1989 and 1990 editions of *Tide Tables West Coast of North and South America*. These books are published by the National Ocean Survey of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Good Birding!

ernment the creation of a 10,000 square mile national park extending from the Fly River lowlands over the central range to the upper Sepik basin.

Each day as I read articles in the Papua New Guinea press about chemical spills, landslides and pollution of the Fly from mine tailings, I was reminded of a warning note Jared sounded 15 years ago: "The Fly is also the region that will be affected by any downstream consequences of mining at Ok Tedi arising from transportation routes, infrastructure and pollution," the UCLA scientist wrote. How prophetic his warning turned out to be!

On Thursday, August 24, the headline of the largest New Guinea daily newspaper screamed out, "LANDSLIDE FORCES OK TEDI MINE TO CLOSE." With the Ok Tedi mine in western Papua New Guinea closed by the landslide and the Panguna mine in Bougainville closed due to armed insurrection by local landowners, Papua New Guinea is faced with an immediate loss of over 40% of its income.

Despite the fact that the Australian government is alarmed at the potential damages to the Great Barrier Reef from the chemical pollution of the Fly River system and the Arafura Sea, Papua New Guinea depends so heavily on the revenues from these two mines that immediate restoration of mining operations is the country's number one priority ... regardless of the ecological consequences.

As I watched a sylvan scene on the Bensbach River one evening, I was reminded again of Jared's dire message. Herds of indigenous wallabies romped about the soft, flooded meadows, leaving almost no sign of their presence. But the Java deer (*Cervus timorensis*), introduced by the Dutch into Irian Jaya in 1914, have increased to an estimated 600,000 animals, and their sharp hooves unmercifully tear up the unprotected turf.

This is the home of the Fly River Grassbird (*Magalurus albolimbatus*), a small warbler whose entire range comprises no more than a few hectares of specialized grass in this vast wilderness.

Watching the sun set on this idyllic spot, with a grassbird clinging to a small shoot and treating David and me to his evening vespers, I wondered if I was possibly watching the sun set on yet another unique product of this planet's millions of years of evolution.

## Overview

Continued from previous page

us with a monitor lizard grasped in its claws.

New Guinea is the second largest island in the world, and our VENT tour itinerary included the eucalypt forests of the Port Moresby region, the vast lowlands of the Fly River, the foothills adjacent to the Irian Jaya border and a week at the luxuriant and highly productive Ambua Lodge in the central highlands. Out of a total avifauna of 590 resident species, New Guinea boasts one of the highest percentages of endemic birds anywhere in the world, with an incredible 393 endemic species.

With virtually no overlapping avifauna, New Guinea, coupled with our two days in New Britain and a week in eastern Australia, raised the BIRD QUEST '89 total to a world-record-breaking 2,914 species.

Besides the 465 species, however, we were privileged to see some of the most pristine forests still extant on the face of the earth. Along with the Manu National Park in Peru and the Congo forests in Zaire, these three forests probably constitute the three largest tracts of undisturbed tropical areas left on the globe.

In 1976, Dr. Jared Diamond recommended to the Papua New Guinea gov-



Ruth Lohr ... Thank you!

## Too Good To Be True

For twenty years Ruth Lohr has been a member and volunteer of LAAS. Over the years, helping in the many endless small jobs—most of which are fun to do but need someone to do them—Ruth has always been reliable and thorough in every task she has tackled.

For many years she was a member of the Board of Directors, as Registrar, which requires meticulous bookkeeping and constant attention to new and changing memberships. In addition, she has managed to involve herself processing reservations for field trips and banquets and even occasionally writing and recording the weekly telephone bird tape.

This is not a farewell, but a very big THANK YOU and a BIG HUG. Ruth is still a volunteer, and we hope and expect that she will be with us for many more years. We are grateful to all our volunteers of which Ruth Lohr is one outstanding example.

## LAAS Needs a New Home

LAAS needs a permanent home for its activities, including meetings, the book-store, library and other functions. If you have any ideas, please contact Ken Kendig at (213) 931-6692 [home] or (213) 938-2200 [work].

## Audubon Leaders Meet In Arizona for Biennial Convention

Leaders of National Audubon Society chapters nationwide gathered at The Doubletree Hotel in Tucson, Arizona, from September 12-16 for the Society's biennial national convention of Audubon's Southwest Region.

Los Angeles Audubon President Bob Van Meter, Executive Secretary Millie Newton, Recording Secretary Melanie Ingalls, and *Western Tanager* Editor Jesse Moorman were among environmental activists who met with National Audubon President Peter A.A. Berle and other members of Audubon's staff of scientists, lobbyists, educators, and sanctuary managers.

The Audubon conference, with its theme of "Our Southwest Challenged by Growth," offered discussions on a broad range of important environmental issues, including water use, wetlands protection, public lands management and energy conservation. Field trips exploring Arizona's fantastic and wildlife-rich desert and forest areas were among the gathering's highlights.

The National Audubon Society is a 550,000-member organization dedicated to improving environmental quality-of-life. Audubon conducts a wide variety of programs aimed at achieving that goal, including environmental education, operation of a nationwide system of wildlife sanctuaries, scientific research, lobbying on both

federal and state levels and environmental policy analysis. The organization publishes the highly-acclaimed *Audubon* magazine and produces the award-winning National Audubon Society Specials seen on the Turner Broadcasting System and PBS stations nationwide.

## Dear Tanager,

For issues of mutual concern, write to *Western Tanager* at Audubon House.

### Dear Tanager,

The interesting article by Helen Matelson in the October *Tanager* says that my good friend Jon Dunn, "doubts that the Oriental greenfinch will be a countable bird for one's U.S. list, since its origin, whether wild or a released caged bird, is subject to question."

Many birders have long questioned the overly-conservative stance of the California Bird Records Committee ... in acceptance of rare bird sightings ... Their procedure, if there is any doubt, is "just say no."

I attempted to put forth the obverse position, that the burden of proof should be on the doubter, in *Bird Watcher's Digest* a few years ago (July/August 1987, pp. 78-79). From the general reaction to that article, I would conclude that the vast majority of birders agree.

Bird lists are personal. The reasonable conclusion, if no one can rationally prove it is a phony or did not get there on its own, is to list the rare bird!

Jim Halferty, Pasadena



Bob Van Meter, Millie Newton, National Audubon President Peter A.A. Berle, Melanie Ingalls and Jesse Moorman (left to right)

# Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Activists in every field have long deplored the reluctance of their listeners to become "involved." They say, "How can you be so complacent . . ." when the storm troops are smashing the shop windows or the abortion clinics are "murdering" babies or the last unspoiled wetland is falling to the bulldozer? You are asked to DO SOMETHING: vote, write a letter, call your congressman, contribute money, picket the embassy, join our organization. Most of the inactivists remain inactive.

Like the mule hit by a two-by-four to get its attention, many of us could use the drastic treatment. Environmentally, perhaps we're beginning to get the idea. Twenty years ago the environment seemed to be a kind of esoteric interest for a dedicated minority. Only a few thought much about it. They complained about the smog or read *Silent Spring* or recycled aluminum cans. Today the impact of environmental horrors is beginning to add up. We haven't time to recoil from the holes in the ozone layer before we're hit by the specter of global warming. Scarcely have we "adjusted" to acid rain and poisons in the drinking water when Alar pops up in the kids' applesauce or Exxon destroys fifty thousand seabirds. When we open the morning paper, we cringe.

Time was when we could keep the problems at arm's length. The smog might have stung our eyes but—dioxin? That was some weird chemical that plagued an unfortunate backwater town in Missouri or killed a mess of people in far-off Italy when the plant exploded. Today problems have moved to our own backyard. If we run away to the beach to escape the hottest weather of the century, we may have to endure gridlock on the freeway. When we finally get there the ocean may be so full of untreated sewage that we don't dare go in the water. And the uncluttered

horizon out to sea may sport a new oil-drilling platform.

Are we approaching a turning point in our attitude toward the mounting insults to the environment? Have we "had it up to here?" Possibly. The polls show an ever-increasing majority of Americans who place environmental matters high on the list of their concerns. Politicians are feeling the pressure. George Bush seems to be trying to make good on his campaign promise to be the environmental president. So far he's been talking a good fight. His clean air plan is a decent beginning and a welcome change from his predecessor's hostility to any regulation of pollution.

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*"The impact of environmental horrors is beginning to add up."*

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We've joined international conferences to eliminate chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that destroy the protective ozone layer. Bush has somewhat gingerly agreed to host a world meeting on the greenhouse effect.

Whatever the reasons, there is a general agreement that the environment is now "in" and no longer on the back burner. Newspapers, magazines and television have responded to the growing interest, producing excellent professional explorations of the issues. The *L.A. Times* for August 18, 1989 is a case in point. Over half the front page of this influential paper was given over to

environmental news. Some of the headlines read: "State Justices Uphold Local Air Regulation," "Governor Says He'll Support Recycling Law," "Regulators Rediscover the Auto." (Quote: "... state and federal officials are taking a renewed interest in tightening the environmental energy and safety regulations that directly affect cars Americans drive.") And smack in the middle of the page is a two-column color photo of loggers in Redding, California demonstrating against a government proposal to protect the spotted owl. Not too long ago, most of this stuff would have been on page 36. If people care, the media can't be far behind.

Europeans have not been spared the consequences of their own neglect. The beautiful blue Danube long ago was transformed into an open-air sewer. The legendary forests of Germany and the glacial lakes of Scandinavia are falling to the blight of acid rain. The rise of the Green parties all over the continent in the last ten years has been a striking phenomenon. Allied with anti-nuclear forces, the Greens have become a new factor in European politics with members elected to parliaments in France, Germany and Italy. They have had significant success in awakening the people to the importance of environmental considerations as well as pushing the majority parties into accepting some of their goals.

Do people in general grasp the seriousness of the crisis Planet Earth is already experiencing? Probably not. Even in the most enlightened circles there is an unwillingness to believe that the greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, CFCs, methane, etc.) will generate catastrophe. But as time passes, more scientists and world leaders are reluctantly recognizing that unless human activities change drastically, carbon dioxide will indeed do us in. The ap-

parently innocuous increase in the earth's temperature, if unchecked, will produce profound alterations in climate and weather, resulting in mass starvation and unprecedentedly violent storms. Melting icecaps will raise ocean levels to incredible heights, inundating the shores of whole continents and flooding out millions of inhabitants of low-lying nations.

Many of the earth's peoples have already been subjected to the "normal" aberrations of the modern world: hunger and starvation, endemic drought converting productive land to desert, over-grazed pasture, over-fished fisheries, inadequate medical care to combat malaria and other stubborn killers, man-made disasters like Chernobyl, Bhopal and the Exxon oil spill. And, lest we forget, the root of all misery: the population bomb. With real, hands-on suffering every day, how can the struggling majority be too concerned with the intangible threat of ozone depletion and greenhouse warming that might occur in fifty years?

Assuming that we mules have been jolted by the proverbial two-by-four, what can we do about it? Our evangelical activists have awakened our environmental conscience and we're rarin' to go. What do we do? Good question. Some have said it may simply be too late to do *anything*—we've already spent 200 years burning fossil fuels and the thermometer keeps rising. Others think if we make up our minds and work together, we can turn things around. It won't be easy. The biggest obstacle is ourselves. We're so damned set in our ways. Whether it's the comfort of a low-mileage luxury car or the religious opposition to birth control, we're slaves to outdated habits of mind.

There will have to be changes and sacrifices. We may have to live a little colder in winter (sweaters; thermostats at 5 rather than 75) warmer in summer (somehow there was life before air conditioning.) If gasoline is 4 or 5 bucks a gallon, we might find ourselves actually walking to the market, as most of the world does. Bicycles are good exercise; the record books say there are more bikes in the world than cars. We might even get a little healthier. Our love affair with thick green lawns that soak up scarce water by the acre-full may have to be shifted to plants that thrive in dry soils. Millions of trees will have to be planted. Solar power cries out for the kind of development it would

get if we were at war (which we are—the toughest war we've ever faced). In short, our high standard of living may have to be taken down a peg or two. Aye, there's the rub. That's the sore spot for the affluent society. Those who have achieved a level of comfort and convenience will fight like tigers to hold onto it. It will take an extraordinary conjunction of forces to dissolve the cement of this cohesive way of life.

We blame the Third World for destroying their tropical forests and so adding to the carbon burden in the atmosphere. The World Research Institute recently reported that our CO<sub>2</sub> production in 1988 exceeded the 1987 level substantially. The United States generated 24% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the entire world. We will have to take responsibility for this malefaction with the utmost gravity. As the most flagrant offender, it is only proper that we take the lead in atoning for our sins. If we and the rest of the 5 billion of us do not alter our course voluntarily, when the greenhouse effect is clearly evident to everyone, governments will be compelled to take drastic and oppressive action. By then it will probably be too late.

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*"Are we approaching a turning point in our attitude toward the mounting insults to the environment? Have we 'had it up to here?'"*

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Is *Homo sapiens*, faced with an unprecedented challenge to his very existence, capable of the wisdom and the motivation to extricate himself from this quicksand of his own making? Have we the guts to give up comforts and lifestyles that perpetuate the massive pollution of the only habitable planet we know of? The dinosaurs were masters of the world for 150 million years and they disappeared forever. Is our incredible brain and its vaunted technology equal to the task of staving off disaster? We don't know the answers. We do know that no nation can go it alone. Somehow we must put aside

parochial fears, free ourselves from self-defeating nationalism and work together to face the coming global catastrophe. We haven't the luxury of 150 million years.

### **Nota Bene:**

This sober essay was completed on September 17 with the author wondering if he was painting a canvas that was a little too dark, a little too somber. Later the same day he read a report of a meeting of the nation's foremost environmental scientists, convened in Washington by the Smithsonian Institution. The theme of the conference was, "The Global Environment. Are We Overreacting?" The *L.A. Times* article (September 7, part 1, page 4) by one of its excellent environmental writers said, "Not one scientist or government official . . . suggested that either the governments or the media had overreacted. In fact, the consensus was that the public at large seems almost unaware about the magnitude of the problems at hand." Thomas E. Lovejoy, tropical biologist: ". . . unless there is a major shift in the rate in which policy is developed or changed, it's likely that we are simply not going to make it . . . We are . . . at war with ourselves or our lifestyles and that is something we've never had to face with our species before. Are we overreacting? I think very clearly . . . we are certainly grossly under-reacting." George M. Woodwell, director of the Woods Hole Research Center, "You reduce the release of fossil fuel carbon into the atmosphere by restricting the use of fossil fuel. How much? Maybe all of it! You stop deforestation and you start reforestation." The *Times* writer, distilling the sense of the meeting, said, ". . . what is required is not simply 'adjustments' in life styles, but 'fundamental changes' in how societies function, particularly in how energy is produced and consumed."

\* \* \*

If this report scares the reader, he or she is not alone. Several scientists and senators chided the media for not properly informing the public. The president of National Public Radio said, "I really think the problem is an acute failure of leadership in a democracy."

# Birds Of The Season

by Hank Brodkin

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.

Now is the time to plan to participate in one or more of the upcoming National Audubon Society Christmas counts. Whatever your level of expertise, this is an opportunity to put your birding interest to some scientific use by joining over 40,000 participants in North, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands, in over 1,500 counts taking place next month. Sign up early for better choices of habitat.

The Antelope Valley count takes place on Saturday, 16 December. Call Fred Heath at (805) 527-0968 [home] or (805) 984-3752 [work]. To enroll in the Malibu count on Sunday, 17 December, call Liga Auzins at (213) 828-2936 [home] or (213) 825-0187 [work], or Roger Cobb at (213) 396-4160 [home] or (213) 452-9282 [work]. Mike Tiffany will see that you are assigned an area for the Los Angeles count in early January. More details in the December *Tanager*.

Wintering species are already beginning to appear with Lewis' Woodpeckers and Red-breasted Nuthatches showing up in the California City area of Kern County. While it is still too early to predict a trend, by the time this edition of the *Tanager* is published, we should know what kind of a winter to expect.

With the best of the vagrants still to come in October, September provided some fine birding. Galileo Park near California City in Kern County had three super-rarities. Jon Dunn turned up a Gray-cheeked Thrush here on 14 September and the even scarcer (only three or four California records) Yellow-bellied flycatcher, which was well seen and heard by a number of people on 27 and 28 September. And John Wilson found a Great-crested Flycatcher—possibly the first inland record for the state—on 23 September.

Four White Pelicans were on tiny

Grass Valley Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains on 13 September (Lewis Garrett). The Playa del Rey-Ballona Lagoon mystery heron, still around at the end of September, is getting to look more and more like a Little Blue, according to Kimball Garrett. Early were the three Wood Ducks found in Malibu Creek, upstream from the lagoon by Ken Younglieb on 16 September.

Among the migrating Ospreys were two in Santa Monica—one on 9 September (Dave Kopel) and one on 13 September (Hank Brodkin)—and one at Galileo Park on 26 September (Arnold Small). Merlins reported were one at Malibu Lagoon on 13 September (Hank Brodkin) and one at Playa del Rey on 23 September (Kimball Garrett).

Solitary Sandpipers included one at Revlon slough, Oxnard on 8 September (Sandy Wohlgemuth) and one at Galileo Park on 28 September (Hank Brodkin). An astounding estimate of 4,000 Sanderlings at McGrath by Irwin Woldman on 25 August underscores the importance of the Santa Clara River Estuary as a shorebird stopover point in coastal Southern California's dwindling inventory of wetlands. Three

Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported from Bolsa Chica on 26 August (Bert Mohl and Phil Sayre). The first Pectoral Sandpiper of the Fall was found by Arnold Small at Paiute ponds in the Antelope Valley on 6 September. Arnold also found the rare, closely related Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at McGrath on 24 September. Brian Daniels turned up two Stilt Sandpipers in the L.A. River bottom near Long Beach on 13 September and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Galileo Park on 23 September. There was an immature Ruff at the San Joaquin Marsh in Newport (Doug Willick).

An adult Parasitic Jaeger was seen on Redondo Beach by jogger Charlie Walker on 5 September and Jon Dunn found two species usually considered pelagics in California at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds—a dead Long-tailed Jaeger and a live Arctic Tern on 13 September. Three immature Black Skimmers were at McGrath State Park on 10 September (Joan Getz).

Four Chimney Swifts were seen flying over Whittier Narrows on 17 September (Steve Bonsel) and one of the increasingly rare Bell Vireos was at Big Sycamore Canyon on 14 September.



Red-Breasted Nuthatch

(Photos Courtesy of

(Barry Lyon).

Wood Warbler reports were as follows: Tennessee, 27 September, Westminster (Doug Willick); Virginia's, 23 September, Playa del Rey (Kimball Garrett) and 26 September, California City (Arnold Small); Lucy's, 23 September, Huntington Beach Central Park (Jim Pike); Blackpoll, 21 September, Harbor Lake (Steve Meladnoff); Black-and-White, 15 September, Pierce College (Roger Radd); American Redstart, 25 September, Banning Park, Wilmington (Jerry Johnson); Prothonotary, 27 September, Westminster (Doug Willick) and 23 September, Mojave (Brian Daniels); Magnolia, 2 September, Newport Beach (Jim Pike); Prairie, 4 September, Huntington Beach Central Park (Jim Pike); and Bay-breasted, 28 September, Galileo Park (Jon Dunn).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Playa del Rey on 30 August (Jon Alderfer), and a Dickissel and a Bobolink were at Galileo Park on 28 September (Jon Dunn). An immature Black-throated Sparrow was seen at Eaton Canyon on 1 September (John Fisher) and the Fall's first White-crowned Sparrow report was from Malibu Lake on 9 September (Susan Robin).

Some of you have noticed by now that your names have been misspelled. Most of the information above comes from Jean Brandt's and my telephone answering machines. For accuracy, those of you with ambiguous names, first or last, might want to spell them out. Most important, of course, is the name of the person who first found the bird.

There was a report last month of a Hammerkop from Los Angeles River and this month from Vogel Flat in the San Gabriel Mountains. Four of these peculiar African wading birds have escaped, so if you see a smallish, brown long-legged hammerheaded bird around water, you are not dreaming, nor have you gone to Birder's Heaven. And if you put it on your life list, don't tell anyone!

Good Birding!

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

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

or

Call Jean Brandt at (818) 788-5188



Herb Clarke

Lewis' Woodpecker

# Bookstore News

by Charles Harper

The holidays are almost upon us, and we invite you in to shop for your Christmas gift for that birder in the family.

For the world birder, Stiles and Skutch's fine new *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*—a truly outstanding work—is at last available (\$35, \$65). A nice adjunct would be the new *Birder's Guide to Costa Rica*, by Keith Taylor (\$17.50). Expected momentarily are Ridgely's *Guide to the Birds of Panama*, heavily revised to include Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, *A Field Guide to Birds of the USSR* in paperback, and *A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*, finally back in print.

Our stock of optics has been greatly enhanced by the addition of the extraordinary new Bausch & Lomb 10x42 Elites to our line of Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb products, to say nothing of the classic Zeiss 10x40 B/GAT Dialyts which are enjoying such good sales. The Zeiss 10x40s have rightfully acquired an impeccable reputation, but the Bausch & Lomb Elites will soon earn a place alongside them. Come in and try them out!

Is there a friend or family member whom you'd like to interest in the hobby of birding? The *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America* is great for that next-door neighbor who has just become interested enough to hang a hummingbird feeder (for that matter, we have hummer feeders here, too!), and Connor's *Complete Birder*, Davis & Baldridge's *Bird Year*, and Ehrlich's *Birder's Handbook* are all well-conceived basic reference works.

And we've got lots of stocking-stuffers too—William Spear's beautiful enamel pins, Audubon bird calls, binocular ministraps, children's coloring and sticker books—so plan to do some of your Christmas shopping at Audubon House and give to conservation at the same time you are giving to loved ones.

## Ornithology Open House and Reception

You, as a member of LAAS, are invited to an OPEN HOUSE and RECEPTION in the newly renovated Ornithology Research and Collections area in the Museum of Natural History.

Join us Saturday, November 11, 1989 between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to see what's new in the world of birds.

- Meet Ornithology staff members Kimball Garrett, Lloyd Kiff and Betty Ann Schreiber;
- Tour the new storage facilities for the huge bird collection;
- See the rain forest and condor mountain taking shape in the new Ralph W. Schreiber Hall of Birds, scheduled to open in the summer of 1990;
- See demonstrations of bird skinning, bird anatomy and specimen preparations;
- Learn about avian veterinary medicine with Frank Lavac, DVM, Bird Council President;

- Visit with artists who use the collections, including a demonstration by sculptress Caryl Castleberry;
- Join a workshop on the status and identification of parrots and other exotic species breeding in Los Angeles County;
- Hear the latest on James Clements' BIRD QUEST '89.

If you plan to attend, RSVP to:  
 Charley Schoettlin, Secretary  
 Bird Council, Section of  
 Ornithology  
 Natural History Museum of  
 Los Angeles County  
 900 Exposition Boulevard  
 Los Angeles, CA 90007  
 Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be  
 served. Make your check, \$15 per person,  
 payable to LACM Bird Council.  
 Call (213) 744-3366 for additional  
 details.

## AUDUBON TELEVISION "SPECIAL"

by Peter A. A. Berle,  
 President of National  
 Audubon Society

One of Audubon's most timely and important television specials aired on Turner Broadcasting during September and October. "Rage Over Trees," about the felling of the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest, was aired on schedule despite fierce economic pressure from the timber industry.

Stroh's Brewery, a regular sponsor of the series, cancelled its sponsorship of Audubon television. The company cited financial restructuring as an excuse and has since announced a deal to be acquired by Coors. However, the company received heavy pressure and boycott threats from timber interests immediately before announcing their decision.

Advertising time for the premier showing on September 24 had been sold out, but every advertiser pulled out during the week before broadcast. Most advertisers cited pressure from northwestern dealers, distributors or customers as the reason. The advertisers included Sears, Ford, Exxon, Citicorp, New York Life and *Omni* magazine.

While the program is pro-environmental, it is also fair. The film bends over backwards to present the points of view of all involved in the debate over the preservation of the Northwest's remaining ancient forest.

The game is called hardball, and the timber bullies are trying to stop the American public from learning what is happening to our trees on our public lands. Ted Turner is broadcasting the film despite the financial loss, and neither Audubon nor TBS is going to be intimidated. We hope the advertisers will think about the fact that there are many more members of the Audubon Society than timbermen and that, as a Society, we have no tolerance for censorship.

### LAAS Officers, Committee Chairs and Other Personnel

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



**A**s the two-engine plane cruised to land in Twin Falls, Idaho, I saw the Snake River below, cutting its way through steep gorges and winding away in the distance. On the horizon, the snow-covered Grand Tetons formed a dramatic backdrop. The air was incredibly fresh and clear, and my first impression of Idaho augured well.

I'd come to bird, to see the fabled Sharp-tailed and Sage Grouse do their pre-nuptial dance, along with many other species whose hormones told them it was spring.

There were sixteen of us in the group, including Charlotte Tucker from Louisiana, who had given me a superb demonstration of the Sharp-tailed Grouse dance.

With arms outstretched and body bent forward, Charlotte lowered her head and came running toward me, drumming a rapid beat with her feet. From what I had read about the dance, I had half expected her to leap four feet into the air, but this had to be left to my imagination. Nevertheless, it was an impressive display, and I could barely wait to see the birds perform. I hoped they would do as well as Charlotte.

It is from this dance that the Cree Indians of the area formed their own tribal dances (not by watching Charlotte, splendid though she was, but by watching the birds.)

In four days, we saw 122 species, a large number of which were breeding birds, but I will mention only one or two of the most spectacular.

The first evening we went owling and located two Western Screech Owls. It was dark and we heard them for quite some time calling back and forth and finally spotted them not eight feet away at eye level in a spruce tree. They were sitting side-by-side and preening each other's neck feathers. It was a beautiful sight and a good start to the trip.

Early the next morning we drove to the lek of the Sage Grouse. These same leks have been used by the grouse for probably hundreds of years. Every year the grouse return to the same place to perform their displays. There's something very special about being on these grounds where the Indians first saw them; one feels privileged.

The Sage Grouse is the size of a large chicken, and it is the males who put on the display. They spread their tails so that the pointed tail feathers

# Glorious Idaho Grouse

by Dorothy Dimsdale

form a showy white arc sprinkled with black spots. Then they fill the air sacs on their breast so that the front of the bird is greatly enlarged. The breast becomes a mass of white feathers with two yellow bare patches prominently displayed, looking somewhat like tennis balls. With a jerking movement by the bird, the yellow patches—which are actually air sacs—jump up and down, and as they drop down, loud popping noises are heard like very loud ping-pong balls as the air is expelled. The birds are guarding their territory and warning other males to stay away, while at the same time trying to attract females. There were about 30 birds all popping away, and it was amusing to see that the four females appeared to be oblivious to all this drama. Although these females were also on the lek, they seemed to ignore the surrounding males completely and pecked delicately and diligently for seed on the ground. Occasionally during the display, one male would get too close to another male's territory and the two would "face off," sometimes leaping perhaps three feet into the air. The intruder generally retreated.

***"With arms outstretched and body bent forward, Charlotte lowered her head and came running toward me . . . "***

We saw all this from the comfort of our van, pulled onto the lek before dawn and ignored by the birds. Having seen this marvelous display, I could hardly wait for the next morning and the Sharp-tailed Grouse.

As before, we drove to the lek pre-dawn and parked there quietly. I had the same feeling of being in a special place, a place of tradition, as I had with the Sage Grouse. As daylight appeared we saw the birds right close to the van and, sure enough, Charlotte had given a marvelous impersonation.

One bird started by puffing himself out and spreading his tail feathers to form a large white area and at the same time extending his wings. His neck showed quite lovely mauve-colored air sacs on each side. Lowering his head, he made a run, rapidly drumming his feet. His yellow eyebrows seemed to be raised and all the neck feathers were erect. Suddenly he turned and ran equally rapidly in the opposite direction to meet another male. Then (to quote E.S. Cameron from *Bent's Life Histories*), "to meet finally and stand drumming their quills in a trance with tightly closed eyes. After perhaps a minute, one bird peeps at the other and seeing him still enraptured resumes an upright, graceful carriage, anon stealing gently away. His companion is thus left foolishly posing at nothing, but presently he too awakes and departs from the area in a normal manner."

As with the Sage Grouse, the females assumed a pose of being unaware of the extraordinary "goings-on." We saw eleven males who seemed to be rushing back and forth at the same time and only one female. It was an incredible sight and I'd love to see it all again. We left, in full daylight, having waited until the last grouse had departed. To leave earlier would disturb the birds and could affect their returning to the lek, thus tragically terminating a hundreds-of-years ritual. Along the dirt road as we left, we watched a Sage Thrasher swooping and undulating around us and there, close by, was the female, the object of his nuptial flight.

Later that day, we were driving past some fields when we saw a Short-eared Owl sitting on a stump. We stopped to get a good look when another Short-eared Owl appeared in the sky. It came closer, then started to dive and at the same time brought its wings below its body and clapped them rap-

idly together maybe ten times in a couple of seconds. The sound was quite audible. It soared away again only to repeat the whole performance. The owl looked very like a ballerina doing entrechats. That afternoon we saw six Short-eared Owls and watched several more "clapping" dives. This spectacular display gave a very different picture than that I had previously, of a sober-looking bird sitting motionless on a stump in a marsh or gliding low over a grassy area in search of food.

The next two days we saw Sandhill Cranes dancing, Trumpeter Swans, Bald Eagles, breeding Common Loons, Common Mergansers and even a Great Gray Owl sitting on her nest. I'm waiting now for Charlotte's next bird dance. Who knows where it will take me?

#### RESERVATION TRIPS (Limited Participation) Policy and Procedures

Reservations for LAAS trips will be accepted ONLY if ALL the following information has been 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 changes
- (4) Separate check (no cash please) to LAAS for exact amount for each trip
- (5) SASE for confirmation and associated trip information.

Send to: Reservations, LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date and you will be so notified and your fee refunded. Your cancellation within that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement available.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

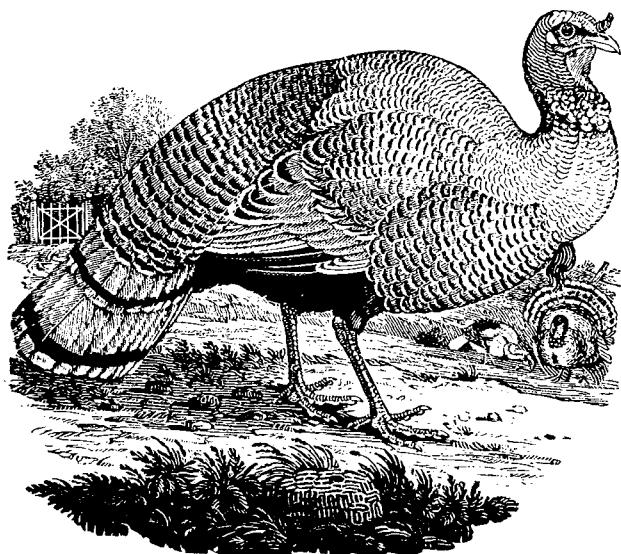
Continued from page 12

**Saturday, January 13 - Lakeview/Lake Perris Area.** Leader Monte Taylor will show us around this excellent winter birding area in search of Buteos, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, Long-spurs and myriad waterfowl. Take Fwy 60 east past Fwy 215, exit south on Gilman Springs Rd., and meet at the Bridge St. intersection at 8:30 a.m. at the side of the road. Bring lunch, scopes, warm clothing and durable footwear.

**Friday & Saturday, January 19 & 20 - Raptor Workshop.** Our instructor Ned Harris will be drawing on his extensive collection of raptor slides and raptor lore for this Friday slide show and Saturday bus trip. The raptor I.D. workshop will cover the 22 species of diurnal birds of prey which can be observed in southern California, concentrating on the field identification of these raptors in their various age, sex and color morph variations. The recommended text is *Hawks*, by W. Clark & B. Wheeler (Peterson Field Guide Series #35). The most likely species to be seen on Saturday's field trip are Red-tailed and Ferruginous Hawks, American Kestrels, Prairie Falcons and Northern Harriers. Possible additional species include Rough-legged and Cooper's Hawks, Golden Eagles and Merlin. The field trip destination will be determined by conditions and may not be definite before the slide show. Meeting places, times and registration fees will appear in the December *Western Tanager*.

**Saturday, January 27 - Point Mugu.** Leader Daniel Cooper and the base biologist should find plenty of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, scoters and other wintering birds to remark upon in this limited-access area. Exit PCH onto Wood Rd., head west, then south on the frontage road to the main (#1) gate lot. The attendance list must be submitted to the base beforehand, so sign up early! Must be minimum 16 years old, and no cameras please. Include in your reservation request an SASE, citizenship status, phone number and a \$5.00 deposit to be refunded at the gate.

**Sunday, February 4 - Salton Sea.** Marge Pamias will be leading this joint Los Angeles/Long Beach Audubon trip. No fee. Stay tuned for details.



Happy  
Thanksgiving

### WESTERN TANAGER

Published 10 times a year by  
Los Angeles Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard  
(Plummer Park)

West Hollywood, CA 90046

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Kimball Garrett

DESKTOP PUBLISHING: WP Plus

PRINTING: Marcotte Printing

Los Angeles Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society. Opinions expressed in articles or letters herein do not necessarily express the position of this publication or of LAAS.

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Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year, \$21 for seniors, and presently \$30 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon* magazine, a national publication.

Renewals of membership are computerized by National Audubon and should not normally be sent to LAAS. New memberships and renewal of lapsed memberships may be sent to Los Angeles Audubon House at the above address. Make checks payable to the order of National Audubon Society.

Non-members may subscribe to the *Western Tanager* for \$12 per year. The newsletter is sent by first class mail to subscribers and members who pay an additional \$5. Make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

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(213) 874-1318 - bird tape

(updated Thursdays)

To report bird sightings,  
before 9:00 p.m.

(818) 788-5188 - Jean Brandt

(213) 827-0407 - Hank Brodkin

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## EVENING MEETING

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

**Tuesday, November 14 - Annual Members' Slide Contest!** This ever-popular event will be held in November this year. Herb Clarke will be back to host the evening with a panel of expert (?) judges. You are invited to submit four (4) 35mm slides. Photographs must be of wild, unrestrained birds and you must be present to participate. In a separate and new category, the judges (and audience) will choose the funniest bird photograph. Limit is one entry in this category. Bring your friends . . . boo the judges . . . cheer your favorites. Bookstore gift certificates to all winners.

Thomas Harens will also be present to explain Earth Day 1990.

## IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

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

Due to the time required to set up for the slide contest, there will be no workshop this evening. Slide contest participants: please be present with your submissions by 7:45 p.m.

\* \* \*

## 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 cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

**Saturday, November 4 (DATE CHANGE) - Ballona Wetlands.** Please note that the November trip is the first Saturday, not the usual second. Bob Shanman or Ian Austin will conduct this monthly walk at our nearest wetlands. Wintering waterfowl and shorebirds should be firmly entrenched. Black Oystercatchers are usually seen. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Pacific Ave. footbridge. Take the Marina Fwy (90 West) to Culver Blvd., turn left to Pacific Ave., then right to the bridge at the end. Street parking is usually available.

**Sunday, November 5 - Topanga State Park.** Leader Gerry Haigh will guide participants through this beautiful nearby area. The group will look at wintering 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 south of Ventura Blvd. and 1 mile north of Topanga Village). Follow the signs to the state park. \$3 parking fee.

**Sunday, November 5 - Oxnard Plains.** Still unclear on the salient features distinguishing the almost-certainly-soon-to-be-split Pacific (*fulva*) and American (*dominica*) Golden-Plovers, or just having trouble finding these at-present subspecies of the Lesser Golden-Plover? Larry Allen will attempt to resolve your predicament with information, tips and spotting scopes. This may also be an excellent chance to look for and not find the Red-throated Pipit seen nearby last year.

Other promising areas will also be visited at Larry's whim to round out this morning of birding. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the historically plover-laden sod fields on Hueneme Rd. just east of Casper Rd. Take Hueneme Rd. west from PCH to Casper Rd. (past the Edison building on the right). You can also get there from Hwy 101 with a Ventura County map. Boots may be appropriate.

**Saturday, November 11 - Antelope Valley.** Fred Heath, organizer of the A.V. Christmas Count, will show us around Edwards Air Force Base and nearby areas. Wintering waterfowl and hawks should be establishing themselves. Bring a lunch and be prepared for possible bad weather—tennis shoes are out. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Lamont-Odett Vista Point located along Hwy 14 about 1 mile past the Pearblossom Hwy turnoff.

**Sunday, November 12 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park.** David White will lead a morning walk to check in on their resident birds and renowned waterfowl. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 N. Durfee Avenue in South El Monte, off Fwy 60 between the Santa Anita and Peck Dr. exits, west of Fwy 605.

**Sunday, November 12 - Pelagic Trip to Santa Barbara Island and out to sea.** Leaders Herb Clarke and Jonathan Alderfer. Leaving from L.A. Harbor at 6 a.m. Fee \$28. Reservations required. (213) 876-0202.

**Sunday, November 26 - 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 PCH, 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, December 2 - Prado Basin.** Basin ecologist Tom Keeney will take our group duck-club-hopping through the riparian woodlands behind Prado dam. We should see a good selection of waterfowl, riparian passerines, shorebirds and other wintering species. Sign up by phone at Audubon House to learn 8 a.m. meeting location in Corona. 20 participants maximum. Bring a lunch, warm clothing and mud-resistant footwear.

**Sunday, December 3 - Topanga State Park.** Leader Gerry Haigh. See Sunday, November 5 for details.

**Saturday, December 9; Sunday, December 10 - Carrizo Plains (two trips).** Leader Rob Hansen. Even with two dates available, these trips are expected to sell out, based on last year's response, the ensuing success of that trip, and Rob Hansen's impressive familiarity with the birds and the area. This is an excellent opportunity to see raptors, including dark- and light-phase Ferruginous Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, Prairie Falcons and others seen last year. Most would probably agree that the high point was the sight of hundreds of Sandhill Cranes gliding over the ridge to roost on Soda Lake. Bring lunch and scopes, and meet at

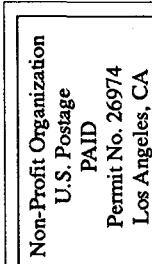
8:30 a.m. near Wheeler Ridge (map and info will be sent upon registration). In an effort to accommodate all comers while meeting expenses and limiting the carpool to a manageable 7 cars per day, the trip rate will be a flat \$40 per car. So call up some friends and make it a social event. Sign up at Audubon House with SASE per field trip policy.

**Saturday, December 9 - Ballona Wetlands.** Leader Bob Shanman or Ian Austin. See November 4 for details.

**Saturday, December 9 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park.** Leader David White. See November 12 for details.

**Sunday, December 24 - Malibu Lagoon.** Leader SMAS member. See November 26 for details.

*Continued on page 11*



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NOVEMBER, 1989

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