



WESTERN TANAGER

The Los Angeles Chapter of
The National Audubon Society

Volume 56 Number 3 December 1989

SEASONS ON THE FARALLON ISLANDS

Of Winds, Rockfish and Seabirds: Life in the California Current

by Susan Claire Peaslee

It's December, and 25 miles west of the Golden Gate the Farallon Islands are washed by rains and draped in deep green Farallon weed. A perennial train of ocean swells rolls in from the west, and waves break over the shoals with a pulsing roar. Elephant seal bulls are posturing and trumpeting on the terraces of Southeast Farallon and West End (sister islands separated only by a narrow surge channel).

The elephant seal cows begin arriving in the colonies around Christmas, after males have already begun bidding for status to favor their breeding chances later this winter.

Winter on the Farallones. A number of Western Gulls stand about on their territories or gather in roosts on the marine terrace and slopes of Lighthouse Hill. They vocalize at length. Some days at dawn, several thousand

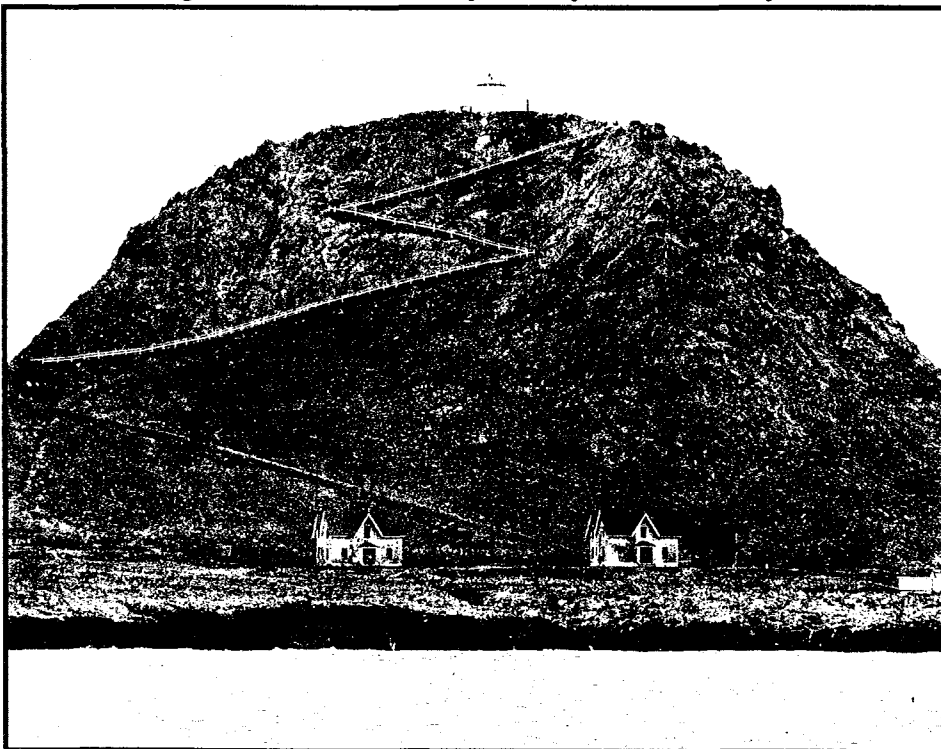
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Common Murres fly round and round the island checking out the rocky highlands, sites of their breeding colonies; perhaps they'll land to invest half a day occupying potential territories. Cassin's Auklets have barely begun their nighttime visits that soon will rock the island by dint of the birds' sheer numbers—a breeding population of perhaps 50,000 birds. Dirt flies as auklets dig out nest burrows, and the night air resonates with their rhythmic three-note calls.

Winter winds blow. Cold northwesterlies, that may prevail for weeks on end by spring, now vie for position in the atmosphere with storms from the west and southwest, loaded with rain. Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) biologists notice and discuss the weather at length. Not only does it rule the bi-weekly boat trips that keep the island supplied with groceries, mail, and fresh personnel; the weather regime also sets up the pattern of ocean productivity that will rule the seabirds' breeding success next spring. This correlation is one of the important ties between seabirds and their marine environment revealed in two decades of PRBO's Marine Research on Southeast Farallon Island. The Bird Observatory maintains a permanent station on the Farallones, a National Wildlife Refuge, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Lighthouse Hill (Photo Courtesy Point Reyes Bird Observatory)



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Farallon Islands

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Service (USFWS). Even in December, while preoccupied with the battles and births of elephant seals, we try to anticipate what variation on the seabird season this winter's weather will set in motion.

The Variable Marine Environment

These islands hold the largest concentrations of breeding seabirds and pinnipeds in the United States except Alaska. In spring, throngs of cormorants, auklets, murres, gulls, guillemots, and storm-petrels—eleven species in all and some quarter-million individuals—occupy every nest site niche in Southeast Farallon's 100-odd acres. To feed themselves and their growing chicks, they need abundant food resources from the ocean nearby. Productivity is so great in the marine food web here that the seabirds usually—but by no means always—fill their energy requirements easily.

One reason for the great biological fertility in the Gulf of the Farallones is the plume pulsing through the Golden Gate from the San Francisco Bay/Delta. It can carry sediments and nutrients from great Central Valley rivers up to 12 miles out to sea. The mixing between the ocean waters and this plume, different in temperature and salinity, promotes productivity. PRBO's long-term surveys across the Gulf of the Farallones show concentrated seabird feeding around the Bay/Delta plume, especially in winter.

In spring, upwelling is a critical factor, and the timing and strength of this seasonal phenomenon are highly variable. The California Current flowing north-to-south through the Gulf of the Farallones—enriched by plumes of cold, nutrient-rich water drawn up from the depths as well as by rich water advected south from northern regions—is one of the ocean's select regions. Known as Eastern Boundary Currents, such regions occupy only one-sixth of the oceans' area but produce about half their fishery harvests. Upwelling in the California Current is driven by spring



Western Gulls, chicks and adults
Courtesy PRBO

northwesterly gales...small consolation for sand-blasted beachgoers in April.

What happens in a good upwelling year? Infrared satellite photos of the ocean show great swirling forms of surface water colder than surrounding waters. Nutrients and oxygen are reaching the sunlit zone, fertilizing the ocean meadow. Standing at the Lighthouse on Southeast Farallon, we watch the ocean change from clear blue one day to cloudy green the next, a soup of suddenly blooming diatoms. Swarms of reddish euphausiid shrimp soon appear in the Gulf of the Farallones, and gulls and Cassin's Auklets stain the island pink with their poop. Short-bellied rockfish, sand dabs and other fish spawn; then juvenile short-bellied rockfish, especially important prey, become abundant during the chick-rearing phase of seabirds' breeding cycle. For Common Murres this factor

spells the difference between poor or average breeding success and good or great years. For Pigeon Guillemots and Pelagic Cormorants, it makes or breaks the year's breeding effort.

What causes perturbations in the ocean's productivity? Warm-water El Niño events that disrupt weather and ocean patterns worldwide can stifle upwelling. During the major El Niño of 1982 and 1983, most Farallon birds found little food and gave up their breeding efforts early—or never even tried. This common strategy among long-lived seabirds places a premium on the adults' survival to try again in subsequent years. El Niño, though, is only the most drastic of ways that natural ocean variability affects Farallon seabirds.

Other fluctuations in the ocean's bounty are also manifest in the seabird colonies, their measure recorded in PRBO's long-term biomonitoring research. In cold-water years, Cassin's Auklets begin breeding very early, in early March, in time to fledge chicks and lay a second time (a unique adaptation among alcids). In a crowded city of Common Murres below our blind, one member of each pair arrives from the sea with a fish every seven minutes: it's a feast year! In poor years, mid-way through the season Pigeon Guillemots switch from rockfish to less preferred prey, such as octopi; in these conditions they fledge fewer than 0.5 chicks per pair, on average. Hungry Brandt's Cormorant chicks, three to a nest, compete with each other for feedings: how many will survive to fledging?

Seabirds' Foraging Strategies

Top-level predators such as seabirds (and sensitive organisms such as birds in general) are excellent indicators of the well-being of this ecosystem. Responding to the environment with their varying degrees of breeding success, the murres, cormorants and others tell not only of natural variability but also humans' effects on the ocean. The Farallon seabird community, because of the different foraging strategies its members employ, gives us information about a complete cross-section of marine habitats.

"The Farallon seabird community... gives us information about a complete cross-section of marine habitats."

The Western Gull is a general opportunist that can scavenge in mainland garbage dumps, prey on murre's eggs and young, or even eat adult auklets and storm-petrels. Even this resilient species shows the highest reproductive success on the Farallones in years when ocean food is abundant and the gulls can surface-feed on small schooling fish or euphausiids. The Pelagic Cormorant, on the other hand, is limited to a very particular condition in the marine food web, the presence of small schooling fish within very close range of its nest colony. If upwelling is early, late, too weak or strong, then schooling fish can be too scarce or distant for Pelagics. They're the first of Farallon breeding birds to fail in a marginal food year.

Feeding grounds for island seabirds range from the ocean surface to very deep in the water column; they extend from the coast to far west of the continental shelf. Double-crested Cormorants breeding on West End fly all the way to the mainland to feed in estuaries such as Tomales Bay (and are relatively immune to the vagaries of life in the California Current). PRBO is monitoring this population as a basis for evaluating one that breeds on the Richmond/San Rafael bridge in San Francisco Bay and feeds in that urbanized estuary, as well. In contrast to Double-crested Cormorants, the Ashy and Leach's Storm-Petrels fly up to 80 kilometers west of their island nest sites to feed in pelagic waters. Southeast Farallon is home to the majority of Ashy Storm-Petrels' limited world population (roughly 70 percent of the species' 4,000-5,000 members breed here). Does the Ashy suffer (as other storm-petrels do) from ingesting plastics and petrochemical slicks at the ocean surface? Ashy Storm-Petrels certainly merit more scientific attention and, possibly, official protection.

This article, by the editor of PRBO'S Quarterly Journal, will continue in January with the story of the Observatory's conservation work.

PRBO Farallon Biologist Peter Pyle will present the featured program at LAAS's chapter meeting on 11 January 1990. ■

Raptor Workshop

by Nick Freeman

While it is true that we don't have the tremendous raptor migrations seen on the east coast, southern California does boast a number of raptor-rich wintering grounds. As many as 18 species of diurnal raptors (depending on definition) are regularly reported wintering in southern California. Winter specialties include Rough-legged, Ferruginous and Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Bald Eagles.

If you have questions, such as how to tell Sharp-shinned from Cooper's Hawks in the field, how to tell Rough-legged from Ferruginous Hawks by flight pattern from impossible distances, or how to tell dark-phase Buteos apart; if you enjoy the behavioral trivia that make each raptor fascinating, such as the East-West migration pattern of Ferruginous Hawks and the predatory aggressiveness of merlins; or if you would simply enjoy seeing a truly impressive slide collection demonstrating most of the age, sex, color morph

Continued on page 11

Herb Clarke Produces a Handy Guide for the New Southern California Birder

by Hank Brodtkin

A review of An Introduction to Southern California Birds by Herbert Clarke. 1989, Missoula Montana, Mountain Press Publishing Company. 186 pp. 252 color photographs. ISBN 0-87842-233-1. Paper. \$9.95

Herb Clarke, a past president of LAAS, has been photographing birds for some thirty years. Those of you who have seen one of his programs can testify to the clarity and sensitivity of his photographs.

For the Southern Californian wondering what this birding mania is all about and how to get started, *An Introduction to Southern California Birds* does exactly what the author meant it to do. The introduction lays out the parameters of the book, noting that it is not meant to be a comprehensive field guide, but illustrates those species most likely to be encountered in the many habitats of Southern California—here defined as the "eight southernmost counties of California: Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, Imperial, and the southern half of San Bernardino County."

Additional paragraphs give hints on attracting and identifying birds and some general information on introduced species, taxonomy, binoculars, etc. A short list of suggested reference books for those wishing to pursue this fascinating hobby further can be found on page 180.

The main body of the book consists of six chapters, five of which cover the habitats of Southern California: the western slopes and coastal valleys, the mountains, the desert, agricultural areas, grasslands and savannas, and the Pacific coast and wetlands. Each of these chapters starts out with a color photograph of a habitat and a list of the birds to be included in the chapter. The sixth chapter illustrates and discusses some of the vagrants that only occasionally visit this area as well as some of the specialty birds found only in very restricted areas.

The photographs are nicely laid out, three to a page on the right hand pages, with a paragraph for each species on the opposite page containing information on its natural history with occasional notes on vocalization and identification.

All in all, 215 species (most of the most-common of the approximately 500 species that have been seen in Southern California) are illustrated with Herb's beautiful photographs and discussed.

The book is small enough (5.5 by 8.5 inches) to fit easily into a glove compartment or backpack, and is the perfect stocking stuffer for the wildlife generalist as well as the about-to-be birder. *An Introduction to Southern California Birds* is available from the LAAS Bookstore—autographed by the author if you so desire. ■

BIRD QUEST '89

Brazil Overview

by James F. Clements, Ph.D.

Brazil was my fourth and final visit to South America this year. This continent-sized country boasts over 1,530 species of birds—roughly half the total for all of South America. With over 40 percent of the land mass of the South American continent, Brazil encompasses a vast array of habitats—steaming Amazon jungles, cerrado, rain forests, caatinga, capoeira, campos, savanna and the seasonally flooded pantanal.

My trip with Dr. Robert Ridgely, author of the new *Birds of South America*, encompassed the cerrado of Brazilia and Matto Grosso state, the rainforests of Iguazu Falls, and the mountains of Itatiaia National Park in coastal Rio de Janeiro state.

Brazil once had a continuous band of forest from the northeast to the extreme south near the Argentine border. The forest was flanked on the west by the caatinga and on the south by the Brazilian plateaus. These forests gave Brazil its name when Amerigo Vespucci took quantities of a wood called *brazza* back to Portugal in 1501.

The king of Portugal promptly gave Fernando de Noronha the exclusive right to exploit this valuable timber (locally known as *pau brasil*). In the intervening 470 years these forests have been reduced to a few relict patches. Despite these centuries of encroachment, Brazil cut and burned over 30,000 square miles of primary rainforest in the past two years alone! In 1987, a satellite over the southern Amazon basin picked up 6,803 fires, with smoke rising well into the upper atmosphere. The total burn rose from 78,000 square miles in 1987 to more than 95,000 square miles (an area the size of Oregon) this year! Despite all the attention focused on this desecration, President Jose Sarney refused to raise a hand.

Brazil is at a turning point, with a presidential election in November 1989. Along with its remaining forest and vast mineral, energy and agricultural

resources, Brazil has a national debt of over \$120 billion, and annual inflation over 1000 percent.

The debt is largely the price of huge projects like the Itaipu and Tucurui hydroelectric dams, iron mines and steel mills, oil exploration and refining, agricultural credit for soybeans and oranges, and for sugar cane to replace gasoline. The subsidized alcohol that fuels most new cars in Brazil is one of the most ill-conceived, poorly executed and financially devastating ecological disasters of the century and costs Brazil's taxpayers an estimated \$3 billion a year.

Brazil is destroying its forests to service the interest on its debt. In 15 or 20 years, when the Brazilian rainforest is gone, they will owe as much as they did before they began to cut and burn the forests. President Sarney added fuel to the fire (pun intended) by refusing to consider a debt-equity swap that has proven so successful to date in Costa Rica and Bolivia, because it would "compromise our national integrity." [*The success and wisdom of the Bolivia swap has been seriously questioned. See, Potter, George Ann, "Debt-for-Nature: Swaps or Traps?" Earth Island Journal, Fall 1989, 44-45. (Ed.)*]

Mario Henrique Simonsen, former minister of planning and a widely respected economist, described Brazil succinctly as "a country going the wrong way on the road to history!"

The Pantanal

Conservation of the pantanal has become a center of public attention. The pantanal's complex ecosystem includes one of the greatest and most varied collection of birds, fish, jaguars, wild dogs, deer, anteaters, otters, armadillos and capybaras. This immense plain which spreads over 90,000 square miles is a vast grassy savanna from August through November. As the rains increase in November, the rising rivers transform the region into the world's largest marsh.

Our journey took us to Pousada Caiman in the pantanal, an 8,000 hectare nature reserve, similar to Hato Pinero in the llanos of Venezuela, on a 50,000 hectare ranch. [A hectare is 2.471

acres. (Ed.)] The ranch is near the Bolivian border in Brazil's Matto Grosso do Sul. The ranch requires the nature reserve to be financially supportive so it is relatively expensive, especially by Brazilian standards.

Despite the allurements of storks, herons, seriemas and rheas (not to mention a roosting Bare-faced Curassow on the Pousada Caiman patio), the pantanal's main ornithological drawing card is the largest, most powerful and most spectacular of the world's 340 species of parrots—the Hyacinth Macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*). Pousada Caiman had a flock of 15 raucous Hyacinth Macaws in attendance throughout the day, and we were fortunate in witnessing a spectacular (if somewhat noisy) performance at two different nesting sites.

The population of Hyacinth Macaws has plummeted in recent years, and scientists estimate the world population at no more than 3,000 birds. In the past, habitat destruction, the international bird trade, and hunting for meat and feathers all contributed to the macaws' imperiled state. Until recently, habitat destruction, mainly by ranchers cutting down certain trees important to nesting, was the primary problem. World Wildlife Fund's Jorgen Thomson says, "It is now the systematic poaching of entire large Hyacinth populations from the wild that is almost single-handedly destroying the entire species."

Since existing conservation laws in Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay are basically unenforced, Pousada Caiman's active conservation efforts are providing a safe haven for a small population of one of the world's most beautiful and most endangered birds.

The Cerrado

After the pantanal we visited one of my favorite places in Brazil, the remote Das Emas (Rhea) National Park, a 100,000 hectare section of undisturbed cerrado in Brazil's Matto Grosso. While it seems like a tremendous area to traverse in a slow-moving jeep, from the air it is dwarfed by mechanized farms that stretch to the horizon. There is much more land under cultivation (mostly in

soybeans and sorghum) than I remember as recently as my 1986 UCLA study trip with Arnold Small.

Agricultural production has been expanded significantly in what used to be called the wasteland of Brazil, reaching 70 million tons of grains and oilseeds in 1987. In the last decade, Brazil has become the world's largest exporter of frozen orange juice and has moved into second place behind the United States in soybean exports.

While we did not record great numbers of species from Das Emas, what we did find was "choice." Our most unusual bird was a rare nocturnal Nightjar known from only a handful of specimens. Bob's flashlight picked up the eyeshine of a perched bird one evening as we made the park rounds well after dark. After carefully instructing me on how to handle the powerful beams, he was able to capture the mesmerized bird by hand from its perch on top of a termite mound.

"I have now handled more of these birds than there are specimens known to science," Dr. Ridgely remarked as the rare White-winged Nightjar (*Caprimulgus candicans*) disappeared into the gloom of the surrounding cerrado. The Das Emas National Park might constitute the entire present range of the bird.

Other little-known birds that we had spectacular looks at during our three days in Emas National Park were Black-masked Finch, White-striped Warbler, Coal-crested Finch, and the Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, plus the second Brazilian record for the Rufous-rumped Seedeater.

On one 37-kilometer stretch of cerrado, Bob and I counted an incredible 13 Aplomado Falcons. We watched one falcon land near a polygamous rhea burdened with no fewer than 18 chicks. At first it appeared that the falcon was going to make a pass at one of the chicks, but on closer inspection it turned out that the young ratite was considerably larger than the raptor!

Despite the rhea's size, the track star of the cerrado was a Red-legged Seriema that Bob clocked at a steady 40kph (25mph) pace for over four minutes! This long-legged carnivore is thought to be the closest living relative



of the extinct ten-foot tall "terror birds" that ravaged South America for some 30 million years.

Our most extraordinary find in Das Emas was a pair of Campo Dogs (*Speothos venaticus*) which we met face to face upon rounding a bend. Known as *Cachorro-do-matto-vinagre* in the local patois, this fox-like carnivore is on the verge of extinction; during his 15 years of travel in Brazil, Bob had never heard of anyone seeing this rare mammal.

Lowlands and Coastal Mountains

A quick two days at Iguazu Falls added some of the specialties of lowland south-east Brazil/northeast Argentina, including the rare Temminck's Seedeater, and a life bird for both Dr. Ridgely and me, the Russet-winged Spadebill, my 202nd tyrant flycatcher of the year! Rain and fog put a damper on our birding at Iguazu, and with great relief we headed for the final piece de resistance... Itatiaia National Park in Rio de Janeiro state.

This park is one of the birdiest spots in all Brazil, and at the Hotel do Ipe feeders it is possible to watch seven different hummingbirds and five tanagers while having lunch! Because of its vast size and varied habitats Brazil boasts by far the largest number of endemic birds of any South American country, and the coastal mountains of Itatiaia are particularly rich in these endemics.

Our most exciting bird at Itatiaia was yet another life bird for both Dr. Ridgely and me — the rare White-breasted Tapaculo. We had to cut a swath almost 100 yards deep into an

impenetrable bamboo thicket to reach the skulking mouse-sized bird, and only due to my brother's insistence on carrying a pair of pruning shears was I ready for this exigency.

We wound up our whirlwind BIRD QUEST '89 excursion to Brazil with 453 species, of which 240 were new year birds, bringing our total to date to 3,198 species, just about on schedule. Heavy rains curtailed our birding activity severely during four of the final five days of the trip, or we would have been considerably ahead of my estimate.

Next week it's off to Kenya, where a host of new and exciting birds await me as we go into the final rounds of BIRD QUEST '89. ■

Socially Responsible Investment

"Towards an Economy of Profit and Peace" will be the theme of a conference December 4 on socially responsible investing. The conference in Santa Monica will focus on profitable investment directions in economic conversion, the environment and affordable housing. Keynote speakers are Larry Agran, Mayor of Irvine, and Kathleen Brown, candidate for State Treasurer. The conference is sponsored by Southern California Socially Responsible Investment Professionals and the Social Investment Forum.

For more information, please call or write:

Lois Arkin
P.O. Box 27731
Los Angeles, CA 90027
(213) 738-1254

or

Robert Berend, Esq.
Registered Investment Advisor
(213) 651-2375

Cost: \$30 before November 28, or \$40 at the door (lunch included)
Date: Monday, December 4, 1989
Time: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Place: Bayview Plaza Holiday Inn
530 West Pico Boulevard
Santa Monica, CA 90405 ■

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.

As the madness of the Fall vagrant season gradually comes to an end, thoughts of the "responsible" birder turn to the challenge of the upcoming National Audubon Society Christmas Counts. On Pages 8 and 9 in this issue you will find a list of the counts in our area. Members of our local Society have a direct hand in organizing the Antelope Valley (Lancaster), Malibu and, of course, Los Angeles counts. Please sign up, whatever your expertise, and have fun while doing something worthwhile. It really pays to scout your area in advance, so try to get your assignment as soon as possible.

October was the height of the vagrant season and the "chasers" were again scouring the desert oases and the coast while frequently checking their telephone message machines to be sure that they were not missing anything.

Speaking of phone answering machines, both San Francisco and San Diego now have daily updates (using a different phone and machine) to their bird hotlines. If an exceptional bird is found or is no longer being found, the fact is put on the daily update. If nothing unusual occurs that day, the update remains unchanged. If anyone is willing to volunteer—this is a heavy responsibility—please contact Jean Brandt or me. That way, all interested birders, not just a privileged few, can have the latest information.

Now for the excitement of October. A **Pacific Loon** was found on the small pond at the Furnace Creek, Death Valley, on 18 October (Jon Dunn) and a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** was reported

seen eight miles east of Santa Catalina Island on 15 October (Steve Meladnoff). Pelagic species seem to have been quite scarce in the Catalina Channel the past few years.

The birder of the month has to be Shawneen Finnegan, who weeded out an eclipse-plumage male **Garganey** from a number of ducks on a pond near Santa Maria. A **Surf Scoter** on 18 October (Jon Dunn) and an even more unlikely **White-winged Scoter** on 17 October (Bruce Broadbooks) were both found on that pond in Furnace Creek.

The young **Andean Condors** used in The California Condor Recovery Program are beginning to show up some distance from their home area near Fillmore, with bird #1 being seen near Mt. Wilson on 3 October and bird #5 seen on 8 October near Running Springs in the San Bernardino. Lloyd Kiff, of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, says that these birds return each evening to their home area to be fed! Please report any sightings, with the number on the wing tags, to Jean Brandt who will see that Lloyd gets the message.

Three **Solitary Sandpipers** were seen on the Oxnard Plain on 8 October (Dan Cooper and Barry Lyon). An immature **Franklin's Gull** was at Malibu Lagoon on 21 October (Hal Spear), and an immature **Sabine's Gull** was reported seen at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on 3 October (Ned Harris). Reports every fall of this usually pelagic species have been coming from Lancaster, the reservoirs of the Owens Valley, and Mono Lake.

A **Common Ground Dove** was at Furnace Creek on 17 October (Lewis Bevier). A male **Ruddy Ground Dove** was at the same location on the same day (Jeff Kingery), and a female was also at Furnace Creek on 22 October (Jon Dunn). According to Jon, a ground-dove seen on the northern deserts is much more likely to be a Ruddy than a Common. A most unusual **Black-billed Cuckoo** was found in Huntington Beach on 4 October (Jim Pike).

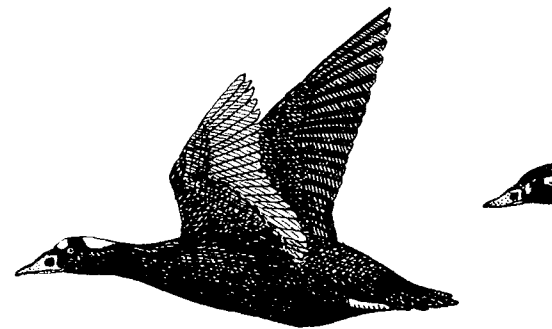
Thus far, this winter has not produced any great invasions of northern birds, with one exception. **Lewis' Woodpeckers** can be seen from Death Valley (at least 20 at Furnace Creek on

22 October, per Bruce Broadbooks) to at least Malibu Creek State Park. An out-of-range **Acorn Woodpecker** was at Galileo Park, Kern County, on 2 October (Bruce Daniels).

Both a **Least Flycatcher** and an **Eastern Phoebe** were at Oasis, southern Mono county, on 21 October (Richard Webster) and single **Brown Thrashers** were at Scotty's Castle, Death Valley (Richard Webster) and Panamint Springs, west of Death Valley (Jon Dunn), both on 21 October.

Both a **Philadelphia Vireo** and a **Red-eyed Vireo** were in the same line of tamarisks on the Oxnard Plain on 3 October (Mitch Heindel). Another Philadelphia was at Huntington Beach Central Park on 15 October (Doug Willick).

The following **Wood Warblers** were reported: a **Blue-winged** at Morongo Valley on 1 October (Mike Patton), an **Ovenbird** and a **Blackpoll** at California City on 1 October (Barry Lyon), a **Northern Waterthrush** at Morongo Valley on 2 October (Brian Daniels), a **Blackpoll** and a **Magnolia**



near Oxnard on 3 October (Mitch Heindel), a **Black-and-white** at Avril Park, San Pedro on 7 October (Paul Johnson), a **Palm** in Peck Park, San Pedro on 14 October (Steve Meladnoff), a **Black-burnian** at Deep Springs, Inyo County, on 21 October (Richard Webster), and a female **Black-throated Blue** near the mouth of Big Sycamore Canyon on 23 October (Hank Brodtkin).

An **American Tree Sparrow** was at Galileo Park on 22 October (Matt Heindel), two **Clay-colored Sparrows** were at Big Sycamore Canyon on 8 October (Daniel Cooper and Barry Lyon), and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was found at Furnace Creek on 17 October (Jon Dunn).

An adult **Le Conte's Sparrow** was seen at Furnace Creek on 17 October (Louis Bevier) and a juvenile was found in the same area on the next day (Jon Dunn).

Four races of **Dark-eyed Junco** (Oregon, Slate-colored, Gray-headed and Pink-sided) could be seen together at Galileo Park on 18 October (Bruce Broadbooks), and Bruce also reports

that half the juncos at Death Valley around that time were Slate-colored.

Two **Lapland Longspurs** were seen at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds on 8 October (Jean Brandt and Jerry Friedman) and two **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** were at Galileo on 17 October (Bruce Broadbooks).

The long-awaited *Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica* by Gary Stiles and Alexander Skutch, beautifully illustrated by Dana Gardner, is finally available. Check it out at the LAAS Bookstore.

Good Birding!

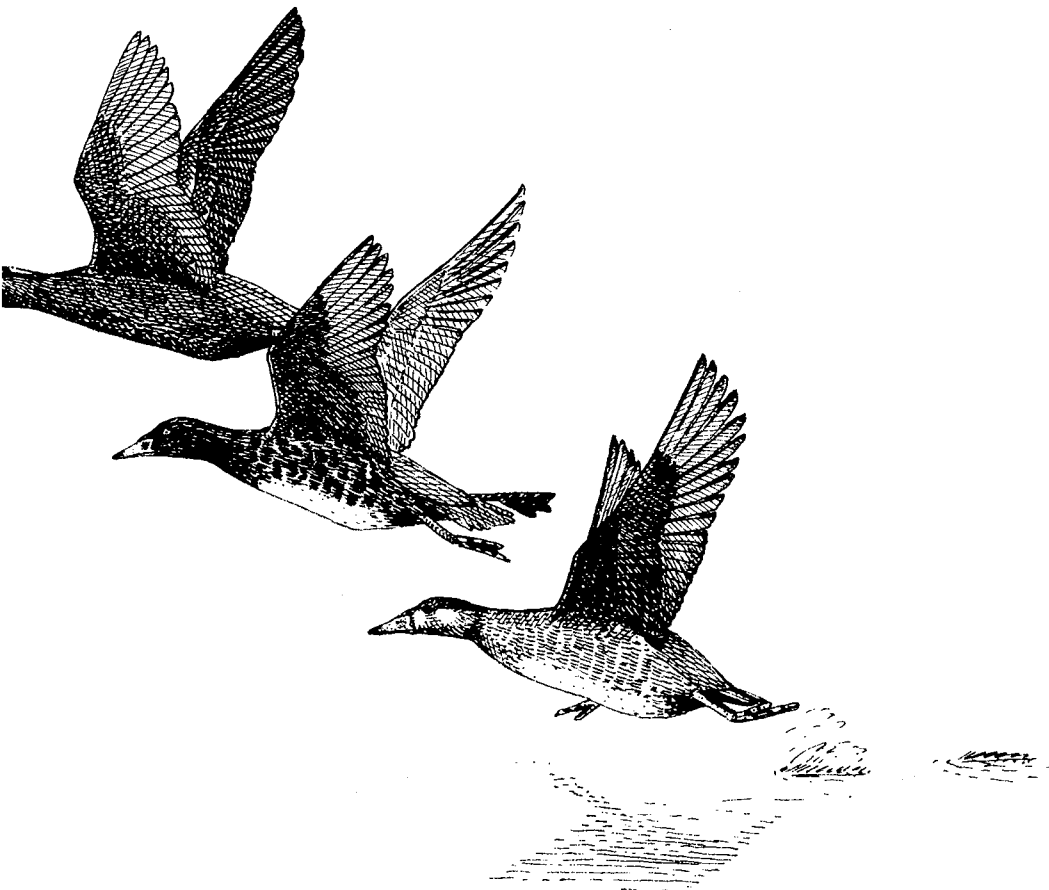
Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

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

or

Jean Brandt at (818) 788-5188 ■

Surf Scoters (Illustration by Jonathan Alderfer)



Bookstore News

by Charles Harper

December is the month to participate in the Christmas Bird Counts (for the results of your past efforts, see Terry Root's comprehensive analysis of Christmas Bird Count data, his *Atlas of Wintering North American Birds*), take a day off from birding to celebrate Christmas Day with your family, and plot strategies for your 1990 year lists.

The Audubon Bookstore carries well over 100 checklists, and the stock is always growing. Most Californians do their daily ticking on the *Field List of California Birds* (WFO 1987), which, for only 95 cents, provides a handy pocket record of up to ten trips or running lists. Keeping consecutive annual county lists or area lists, each in its appropriate *Field List*, makes for easy comparison of your accumulating data over the years. Recently arrived, and with a lot to learn about California's birds, I have been able to watch my year list grow, noting which birds I saw this year but missed last, and comparing first-sighting dates from year to year.

Other birders prefer using their county checklists, where published. We stock a number of California regional and county lists, including the brand new and authoritative *Field List of the Birds of Los Angeles County* prepared by Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. Published by LAAS this November, it is at present the only list available which reflects the 37th Supplement to the AOU Checklist of North American Birds and separates Canyon from California Towhee, California from Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Cordilleran from Pacific-slope Flycatcher.

The American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds itself (\$48.00 including all three supplements) is of course the checklist from which all other N.A. checklists

Continued on page 11

Schedule of 1989 Christmas Bird Counts in Southern California

December 16, Saturday		
Big Bear Lake (BB)	818 334-2528	Leo Best
Bishop (BI)	619 938-2916	Earl Gann
Claremont (CM)	714 621-4000	Daniel Guthrie
Lancaster (LN)	805 527-0968 (H)	Fred Heath
	805 984-3752 (W)	
Mono Lake (ML)	619 647-6525	Tina Hargis of USFS
Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley (PS)	818 794-1866	Michael Long
Redlands (Mill Creek) (RM)	714 867-2391	Douglas Williams
Santa Catalina Island	818 354-4112	Peter Tackney
San Diego (SD)	619 281-7039	Jerry R. Oldenettel
Springville (SP)	209 784-4477	Bob Barnes
San Fernando Valley (SV)	818 764-8548	Kris Ohlenkamp
December 17, Sunday		
China Lake (CH)	619 446-6137	Donald Moore
Malibu (MU)	213 396-4160 (H)	Roger Cobb
	213 452-9282 (W)	
	213 828-2936 (H)	Liga Auzins
	213 825-0187 (W)	
Orange County (northeastern) (ON)	714 539-8040	Gerald Tolman
Rancho Santa Fe (RS)	619 756-2082 (H)	Luis Santaella
	619 753-5588 (W)	
Santa Maria-Guadalupe (SG)	805 734-4008	Alex Abela
Salton Sea (north) (SH)	714 781-3699	Chet McCaugh
Thousand Oaks (TO)	805 482-0411	H. Elliott McClure
	805 987-3928	Jan Wasserman
December 19, Tuesday		
San Jacinto Lake (SL)	714 793-7897	Robert L McKernan
December 21, Thursday		
Lone Pine (LP)	619 876-5807	Michael Prather
December 23, Saturday		
Butterbrecht Springs (BS)	213 390-6378	Keith Axelson
Death Valley (DV)	619 876-5807	Michael Prather
Granite-Woody (GW)	805 831-5904 (W)	Rick Saval
	805 763-6403 (H)	
Idyllwild (ID)	714 794-2251	Norwood & Gjon Hazard
Kaweah	209 627-4328 (W)	Rob Hansen
La Purisima (LU)	805 734-4008	Alex Abela
Morongo Valley (MV)	619 949-3567	Stephen Meyers
Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad (OV)	619 281-7039	Jerry R. Oldenettel,
Palos Verdes Peninsula (PP)	213 863-9078 (H)	Ross Landry
	818 302-9159 (W)	
December 24, Sunday		
Anza Borrego Desert (AB)	619 767-4298	Art Morley
December 28, Thursday		
Lost Lake-Fresno (LL)	209 431-8567	William C. Mertz
December 30, Saturday		
Buena Vista Lake (BV)	805 763-4635	Allison Sheehey
Carrizo Plains (CP)	805 466-6222	Roger Zachary
Escondido (ES)	619 723-2448	Kenneth Weaver
Kern River Valley (KR)	619 446-6137	Donald Moore
Long Beach (LB)	818 354-4112	Peter Tackney
Los Angeles (LA) (tentative date)	213 328-4417	Mike Tiffany
Mammoth Lakes (MM)	619 934-3621	Margaret Gorski
Santa Barbara (SB)	805 967-2450	Paul Lehman
	805 962-9916	Pat Kelly
San Bernardino Valley (SO)	714 371-7001	Don Hoechlin

December 31, SundayCreighton Ranch Preserve/Corcoran
Lake Henshaw (LH)

209 627-4328 (W)

Rob Hansen
Claude G. Edwards
839 Jamacha Road
El Cajon 92019
Gerald Tolman
Larry LaPreOrange County (coastal) (OC)
Santa Ana River Valley (SA)714 539-8040
714 369-3508
714 684-7081(W)**January 1, Monday**Joshua Tree National Monument (JT)
Ventura (VE)
Unofficial Boat Trip out of San Diego714 780-3146
805 642-3480
619 464-7342Brian Prescott
Virgil Ketner
Marjorie Hastings**January 6, Saturday (unofficial)**

Cuyamaca

619 259-8649

Dave King

January 12, Friday (unofficial)

La Jolla

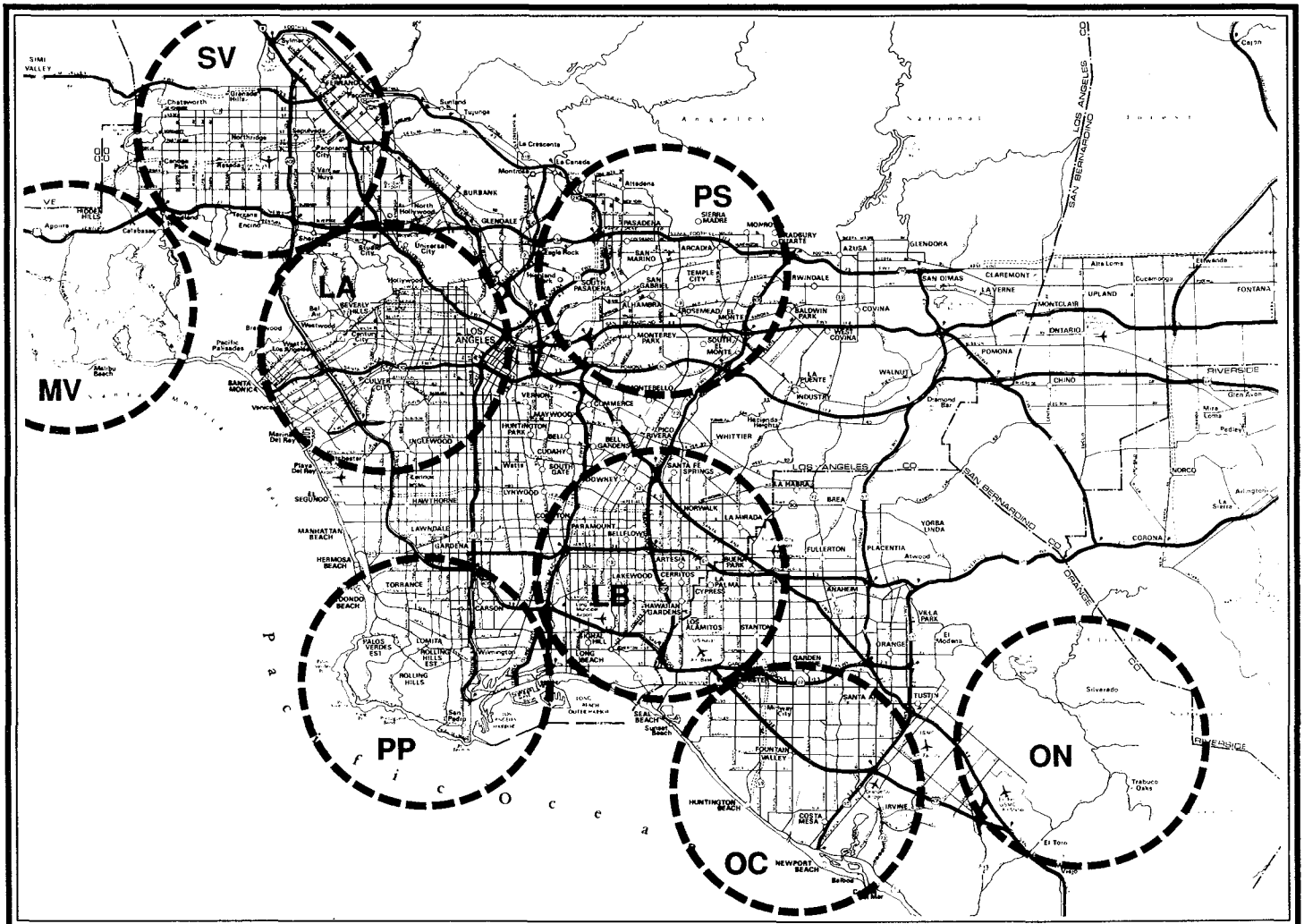
619 224-0374

Diana Herron (casual)

Dates Not FixedSalton Sea (south) (SS)
(probably Dec. 21, 27 or 28. Call after Dec. 19)
Sespe Wildlife Area (SW)
(date to be decided, count not certain)818 981-1841
805 967-2450

Jon Dunn

Paul Lehman



Ancient Forest International (AFI), in cooperation with CODEFF, Chile's only environmental watchdog, is trying to preserve the remnants of two awe-inspiring temperate rainforest ecosystems. Two species of magnificent trees, the alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*, a "southern sequoia") and araucaria (monkey puzzle tree, an ancient archetypal species of conifer), are the focus of AFI's multi-faceted campaign to establish the first non-governmental, temperate forest preserve in the southern hemisphere. These trees were eradicated long ago from most of their range and were considered practically extinct. Yet pristine stands have been discovered above the unexplored coastal fiords and valleys of the world's most precipitous continental divide. These forests are now the target of international pulp milling and banking interests.

Author Rick Klein served as Chile's first and only park ranger during Allende's presidency in the '70s.

What right did we have to intrude upon such solitude? How many, of the billions who have ever lived, were the first to enter a valley and walk among cathedral trees? How much of original ancient forest remains? Not a lot! Simply being in one of these rare, temperate rainforests is a special treat. Visiting the oldest cathedral grove in the southern hemisphere was an awesome privilege!

Most people, scientists included, do not know that there is an ancient, sequoia-like dryad beyond the Tropic of Capricorn. Only in the Pacific northwest above Cancer, they say, does such a tree exist. Yet, in terms of beauty, biomass, and age, the Chilean Valdivian forest is, with its northern counterpart, one of the two greatest growing ecosystems on earth.

We were the first to walk that forest's finer parts, the last great grove of cathedral alerce (pronounced ah-lair-say) cedar. This ancient conifer is an anomaly in a hemisphere dominated by broad-leaf tree species. The alerce is a relic from the inconceivable past, possibly the oldest form of life on earth. Totally exploited decades ago from their lowland habitat, the trees, unappreciated,

now cling to inaccessible reaches of the rain-drenched southern Andes, a mere 20 miles from bustling Puerto Montt, at the end of the Pan-American Highway and the "Gringo Trail" where South America starts getting skinny and cold.

Should we leave alone the unknown? Everyone dreams of being the first. The Valdivian Forest might be the last wondrous yet hospitable *terra incognita*. The call of the original biome is growing dim. Why did we come? We came for the adventure. We came to help the Chileans fight a multinational menace intent on defrocking their forested frontier. Japanese pulp interests

and our own Bank of America are presently snatching up vast tracts of virgin wilderness and clear-cutting it for chips. Our presence will show this self-determining nation that there is income involved in preserving the oldest groves on earth.

We came for the Spirit! Our act of homage to the alerce, a primeval sequoia-like tree, was a pilgrimage to help stitch together the two hemispheres; to see in both halves of our mother world the unifying spirit of the old ones. The California redwood is the standard for great trees. It is old. It is one of the largest life forms ever to have lived. On Pangaea, the ancestral southern continent, 350 million years ago earth's first trees, the cone bearers, grew from the ferns to the sky. We came to see a direct descendent of the dawn tree. Might this rare conifer, the alerce, remember that dawn?

We walked into the mountains to see for ourselves. We were 44 persons from six countries, amateurs and professionals: foresters, cooks, paramedics, musicians, horticulturalists, biologists, photographers, a cinematographer, sound technician and video crews.

There was not a leader in the bunch. Carlos, the quiet Chilean ranger, was a good candidate, but he returned the 20 miles to Puerto Montt with Ignacio, a Santiago university student, to tend to

their slashed fingers. We decided to sheathe our machetes and to push on through. The underbrush was temperate bamboo called "kila." Below 2,000 feet, it made the going grim. Once through the low valleys and up the overgrown, nearly vertical cliff to the Cordon Rauli ridge, we entered a fairyland. This ridge and the land beyond was a technicolor Oz to the kila's black-and-white Kansas.

While exploring the area over 100 years ago, Charles Darwin wrote: "Each ridge is an indescribable reward for those who would persevere through the dense forest." Volcanos rose around

us 270 degrees like royalty holding court in the Hall of Ages. The snow-covered queen, Osorno, national symbol

at 10,000 feet, towered over her nine luminescent sisters.

We walked for days in this classic landscape. At the end of an unnamed valley, we came to a jewel lake, a shimmering silver medallion hanging within an emerald field of ancient, gigantic alerce cedars. The forest was a cathedral within a greenhouse. José, who knew these mountains best, said that perhaps no human had ever been here; there was no game.

We spent a week wandering the valleys and their lakes, returning to our camp for sleep, food and music. We climbed trees and swam. Around us always, water streamed from the glacially marooned heights. Everywhere incandescent silver chargers soared down the mountain, nature's metronomes counting syncopated time.

We measured big trees, several about 14 feet in diameter and close to 4,000 years old. Alerce rival the California sequoia and the Bristlecone pine in size and age. Paul Alaback, a forest service ecologist from southern Alaska's Tongass rainforest, said the earth's oldest and largest trees live in the temperate, not the tropical, rainforest. These biomes, existing unviolated by natural catastrophe for tens of thousands of years, are our planet's oldest genetic communities, the last reservoir of ancestral DNA.

The Lost Forest of the Andes

by Rick Klein

Within the alerce forest, we were like children playing at the feet of demigods. We sat on their massive burls and nestled in the hammocks of humus that skirted their trunks. Above us their awesome columns formed a vaulted and chambered ceiling. A fragile carpet of moss and liverworts asked that each step be a careful one. There were no insects or snakes in these sylvan halls. Time and scale lost all proportion.

We North and South Americans formed Ancient Forest International, a non-profit charitable foundation. We wanted to draw attention, to help preserve our remaining temperate rain-forest wildernesses. Such revered and sacred biomes have given us the groves of the Druids, the inspirational sequoia of John Muir, the mystical forests of Old World lore. Within these vanishing apparitions of once-vast and ancient New World forest, we might come at last to know peace as it was at first!



AFI is leading its second (non-profit) expedition to the area in January-February 1990 as a means to gather wider support for its work. The expedition will be composed of scientists, naturalists, explorers, photographers, writers and other interested persons. (For more information on the Chilean forests and AFI's project, see Rick Klein, "The Alerce Odyssey," *Earth Island Journal*, Fall 1989, pp. 25-27.)

Anyone interested in participating in, or contributing to, this effort should contact AFI at P.O. Box 1850, Redway, CA 95560, (707) 923-3015. ■

Bookstore News

Continued from page 7

spring, being the authority on taxonomy and geographical distribution for the continent's avifauna, the official reference in any serious lister's library, and the final referee in any argument.

And then, wherever you are headed in the United States or overseas for your next birding adventure, we try to carry the checklist for you, from Vermont to Paraguay. All are reasonably priced and highly portable and an excellent way of keeping track of what you see... and it saves marking up that nice field guide. So, get ticking! ■

Raptor Workshop

Continued from page 3

and subspecific variations of the diurnal raptors that you will likely encounter in southern California, don't miss the lecture and slide presentation on January 19, to be given by Ned Harris—one of our foremost raptor photographers and a true enthusiast.

Furthermore, if you'd like to actually see these birds with Ned and to put some of your new-found appreciation and acumen to the test, you can also sign up for the bus-trip portion of the workshop scheduled from 7:00 a.m. to 4'ish the next day (Saturday, January 20). Ned will give the play-by-play as we tour nearby raptor grounds. See the Field Trip Calendar for more details. ■

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.

WESTERN TANAGER

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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.

National Headquarters, New York -
(212) 832-3200

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters,
Library and Bookstore are open

Tuesday - Saturday

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

(213) 876-0202 - office

(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 Brodtkin

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENING MEETING

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

Tuesday, December 12 - Dr. Michael Wallace, Director of The Captive Breeding and Release Program for the California Condor as well as the Curator of Birds at our own L.A. Zoo, will present a program on **The California Condor.** This is a topic of national interest. His talk will include details about the current use of Andean Condors as experimental surrogates (female Andean Condors were released in the Los Padres National Forest this year). The Captive Breeding Program is moving ahead successfully and Dr. Wallace will give us a behind-the-scenes look at how it works. Please join us and get reacquainted with the magnificent California Condor and the struggle to bring it back from extinction.

IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

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

Saturday, December 9 - Ballona Wetlands. Bob Shanman will conduct this monthly walk at our nearest wetlands. Wintering waterfowl and shorebirds will be well established. 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.

Saturday, December 9 - 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.

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.

Sunday, December 24 - 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.

Sunday, January 7 - Topanga State Park. See December 3 for details.

Saturday, January 13 - Ballona Wetlands. See December 9 for details.

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, Longspurs 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 Merlins. Lecture meets at 7:30 p.m. at Union Federal Savings at 8485 La Cienega near Wilshire. Free locked parking lot for duration of meeting. Field trip meets 7:00 a.m. at Federal Building parking lot in Westwood, 11000 Wilshire Blvd. Fee is \$12 for lecture and bus, \$6 for lecture only.

Saturday, January 20 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. See December 9 for details.

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. Aside from the huge flocks of Canada Geese, Snow Geese and other waterfowl wintering in the area, we should see lots of White Pelicans, numerous Sandhill Cranes and—we hope—Stilt Sandpipers and Common Goldeneyes. Call Audubon House to reserve. No fee. Stay tuned for details. ■

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