



WESTERN TANAGER

The Los Angeles Chapter of
The National Audubon Society

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STATUS OF THE CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER ON THE PALOS VERDES PENINSULA

by Kimball L. Garrett and Brian E. Daniels

Proposals to list the California Gnatcatcher (Poliophtila californica) as a federally Threatened or Endangered Species are gaining momentum, coincident with the continuing fragmentation of the species' coastal sage scrub habitat through rampant development. The Los Angeles County population of this species is now virtually limited to the Palos Verdes Peninsula (Atwood 1980) where coastal sage scrub habitat is being destroyed at a rapid rate. [Additionally, a very small population may still survive in the San Antonio Creek area near Claremont]. While McCaskie (1990) overstated the plight of this species on the peninsula, it is nevertheless in an undeniably precarious position.

In an attempt to obtain a more accurate assessment of the gnatcatcher's status on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, we conducted an informal survey on 28 July 1990. Participants were: Bruce Broadbooks, Brian E. Daniels, Kimball L. Garrett, Loren Hays, Bruce Henderson, David S. Janiger, Kathy Keane,

Diane Noda, Mike Patten, Alisa Schulman, and Doug Willick. The survey was conducted from 0730 until 1030 hr. under calm, broken low overcast conditions. All significant patches of coastal sage scrub on the peninsula were targeted; these lay on the south (seaward) face of the peninsula, from near the intersection of Palos Verdes Drive East and 25th Street to west of Pt. Vicente.

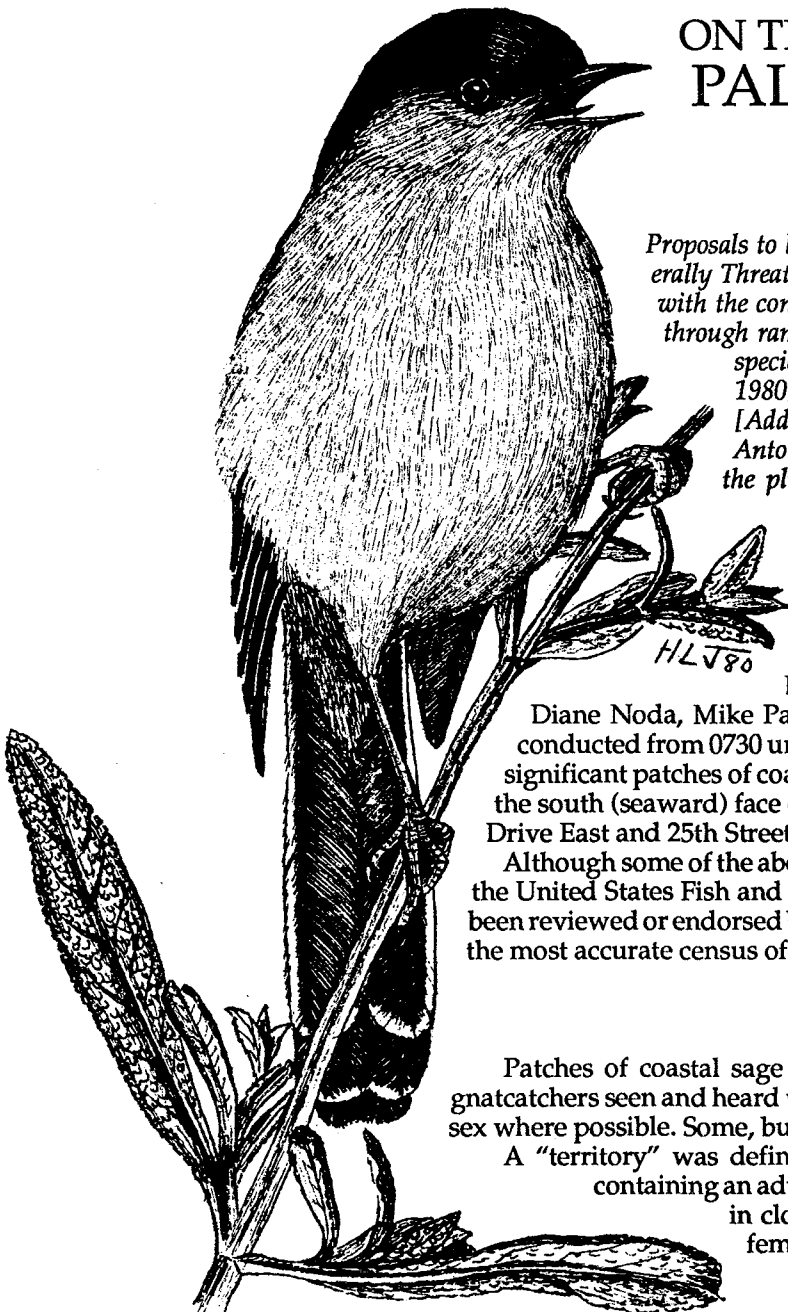
Although some of the above participants work for environmental consulting firms or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, this is not an "official" report and has not been reviewed or endorsed by any agency or company. However, we feel this represents the most accurate census of gnatcatchers on the Palos Verdes Peninsula in many years.

METHODS

Patches of coastal sage scrub were walked by the observers in four groups. All gnatcatchers seen and heard were tallied, and an attempt was made to determine age and sex where possible. Some, but not all, observers used tape recordings.

A "territory" was defined as an area where a pair of adults, or a family group containing an adult male, was encountered. Since adult pairs generally travel in close proximity, it is likely that the many sightings of single female-plumaged birds represented dispersing juveniles.

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RESULTS

We counted a total of forty-nine (49) individual California Gnatcatchers. Using the criteria above, an absolute minimum of eleven (11) territories was recorded.

The territory estimate was quite conservative, since the terrain was quite rugged in many areas, and birds were recorded by vocalization or distant sightings which precluded age/sex determination. It seems likely that more than eleven territories were present in the areas covered, perhaps as many as twenty or more.

Gnatcatchers were present in all areas surveyed. The accompanying map gives a general indication of the distribution of the birds.

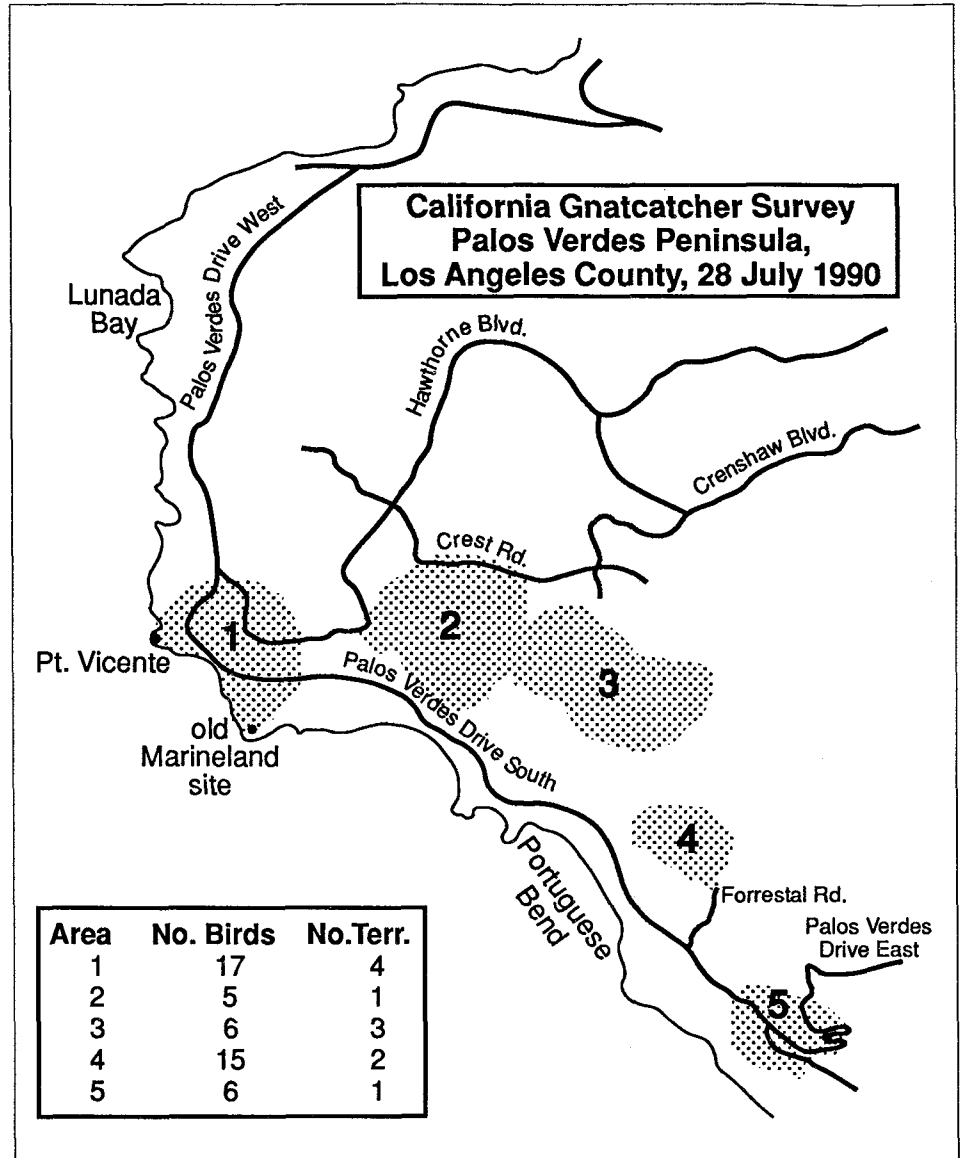
We estimate that only 50% of the suitable coastal sage scrub habitat was actually censused. As a rough approximation, it is probably valid to double our recorded numbers in order to extrapolate to the entire peninsula. More accurate, of course, would be a second census to cover those areas; plans are being made for an additional survey.

Incidental tally was made of Cactus Wrens and Rufous-crowned Sparrows, two additional species characteristic of coastal sage scrub on the peninsula. A total of thirty-three (33) Cactus Wrens was recorded, with about half of these in the easternmost patches of coastal sage scrub. Only six (6) Rufous-crowned Sparrows were found, but they were perhaps significantly undercounted because they are not very vocal at this season.

WHERE TO FIND THE GNATCATCHERS

The key to finding California Gnatcatchers on the Palos Verdes Peninsula is to learn to recognize the species' habitat and its vocalizations. Look for patches of beavertail cactus and cholla mixed in with California Sagebrush and other densely branched shrubs about a meter high. Then listen for the gnatcatcher's most distinctive call: a kitten-like, rising-and-falling "meeew." They also give short, fussy scold notes (much like the scold of a House Wren).

For identification criteria, see Dunn and Garrett (1987), which was a preview of one of the chapters in the forthcoming LAAS identification guide "Field Notes."



Try the following areas:

(a) Forrester Road Quarries: Take Forrester Road inland from Palos Verdes Drive South until it ends at a locked gate. Continue along the road on foot, cutting to the right into the quarry areas wherever there is a trail (one such trail is found just inside the locked gate). West of the playing fields there is more habitat along the edge of Klondike Canyon.

(b) Portuguese Bend: Gnatcatcher habitat remains inland from Palos Verdes Drive South in the Portuguese Bend area. Your main problem here will be parking (which is prohibited along Palos Verdes Drive South). Alternative access is from the end of Crenshaw Blvd.

(c) Pt. Vicente: Habitat remains between Hawthorne Blvd. and Palos Verdes Drive South/West from Pt.

Vicente east to the old Marineland site. The traditional site across Palos Verdes Drive from the Marineland entrance, however, has been bulldozed and no longer supports gnatcatchers.

(d) Palos Verdes Drive South at 25th Street: This is the easternmost gnatcatcher habitat on the peninsula. Park along 25th St. about 1/4 mile east of Palos Verdes Drive and walk toward the coast (just east of the condominium development).

Remember to record your observations; the species' status will require very close monitoring as petitioning for the Endangered Species List begins and recovery plans are developed. And, of course, avoid any harassment of breeding birds.

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Literature Cited:

Atwood, J. L. 1980. The United States distribution of the California Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. *Western Birds* 11: 65-78.

Dunn, J. L. and K. L. Garrett. 1987. The identification of North American gnatcatchers. *Birding* 19(1):17-29.

McCaskie, Guy. 1990. Southern Pacific Coast Region. *American Birds* 44(2):330.

Kimball L. Garrett (Section of Ornithology, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County) and Brian E. Daniels (Michael Brandman Associates, Irvine, California). 🐦

Birding Is Big Business, Says *American Birds*

Birders "constitute an important economic and political force" in the United States, according to an article in the Summer 1990 issue of *American Birds*, the birding journal of the National Audubon Society. The article, co-authored by ornithologists David Wiedner and Paul Kerlinger, is based on a survey of a thousand "active" birders — in this instance, participants in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count — and their spending habits. Among other things, it found the amount of traveling done by birders "staggering": by car alone, each birder travels more than 2,700 miles a year, just for birding. And the average birder spends a total of \$1,852 annually for birding travel, accommodations, and products ranging from binoculars to bird books. In all, the authors conclude, the participants in the Christmas Bird Count (43,000 in 1989) can be expected to spend a total of \$79.6 million a year. And with an estimated 61 million birders of varying levels of interest living in this country, the figure runs into the tens of billions of dollars!

For information about subscribing to *American Birds*, write to American Birds, 950 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022 🐦

From The Editor

Jean Brandt

This is a column I never dreamed I would be writing. Editor of the *Western Tanager*? Wow! To paraphrase Butterfly McQueen, "Lawdy, Miz Scarlett, I don't know nothing 'bout birthin' no Tanagers!" How can I ever hope to walk in the hallowed footsteps of Barry Clark, Lee Jones, Fred Heath and the many others who have made our newsletter singularly respected throughout the birding community? I plan to give it my best but I will need and will expect myriad help from just about every one of you. Here is my wish list:

Articles. We need an unending supply of appropriate articles, and not only "where I went and what I saw" articles. I hope to encourage people to submit research papers or updates on ongoing research. Controversial topics will be considered. As a matter of fact, anything anyone submits will be given the utmost consideration. It might get printed or it might get rejected — that is my job — but PLEASE, get out the pencil and yellow pad (or the IBM or Mac) and send in your articles!

Artwork. We need artists who can do simple but exact line drawings of birds. Or appropriate cartoons could be done to emphasize points made in conservation articles. Or sketches made on field trips. Or anything you'd like to submit.

Photos. "Record" shots of rare birds. Good photo quiz material shots. Habitat shots to accompany articles. We have an ongoing need for good photos for the *Tanager*. Let us know what you have.

And last, but not least, my wish is for all of you to volunteer to help LAAS in some capacity: lead a field trip, work in the Bookstore, take a position on the Board, ask what you can do to help. There are so very many things LAAS could accomplish if only there were volunteers to do the work!

We will continue to feature Birds of the Season, Conservation Conversation and Calendar in every issue and will add a monthly Pelagic column. We are considering accepting appropriate advertising or perhaps a member "want ad" column.

You will note that this is your October, 1990 *Tanager*. It is Vol. 57, No. 2. The numbers somehow got out of order and we have corrected this. We publish ten issues per year. We have two double issues, Jan/Feb and Jul/Aug. Since it takes approximately two weeks from the time an issue is mailed until it arrives in your mailbox, we plan to mail each issue by the 15th of the previous month. If you want to be sure you receive your *Tanager* on time, please consider sending \$5.00 yearly to cover the cost of first class postage.

The Board voted to publish the *Tanager* on recycled paper and to use the finest quality desktop publishing. It is a pleasure to work with Steve Hirsh, who not only is a professional publisher but is an enthusiastic member of LAAS.

Everyone knows me. I attend all of the evening meetings. I have a tape machine on my phone. I am receptive to comments, suggestions, criticisms, and (I hope) accolades. But please let me know what you want to see in the *Western Tanager*. Let me know what direction we should take. *Talk to me.* 🐦

A donation to The Nature Conservancy has been made by LAAS in memory of Wayne Lohr who passed away recently. Wayne was the husband of one of our most dedicated volunteers, Ruth Lohr.

Welcome, Edith

LAAS is happy to announce that we have filled the position of Office Manager and that Edith Vaché has joined our staff. Edith is busy learning about us, how we work and what we do. She handles all of the nitty-gritty work and is willing to do whatever is asked of her. Introduce yourself and let her know what makes us tick.

Conservation Conversation

by David White

For the benefit of Western Tanager readers who will wonder, Sandy Wohlgemuth is alive, well, and enjoying a respite from his essays. I had just returned from Argentina when Bob Van Meter asked me to relieve Sandy for awhile; feeling both relaxed and inspired by my trip, I agreed.

I went to Argentina with a bird list of 693 potential species. I saw fewer than 1/4 of those, but this was no collapse of Argentine avifauna. It had more to do with my wife, Maria-Lydia, going home for the first time in twelve years. She flew down two weeks before me to do the obligatory visits with relatives and friends so once I arrived we could focus on birding. But everyone she saw told others, and all wanted to meet the *norteamericano*. In three weeks, I spent only four full days (but many shorter periods) birding. With fewer birds than hoped for, I learned correspondingly more about Argentina. I came away with a renewed realization that it is human society and what we do (or don't do) which will determine the future fate not only of birds, but of that odd featherless biped, *Homo sapiens*.

* * *

The Aeropuerto Internacional de Ezeiza is bright, spacious and modern, yet fairly small; arriving passengers step out of Customs directly into a lobby where drivers, their taxis within sight at curbside, are offering to assist with baggage. I didn't need their services; an entourage was waiting for me. We left and headed toward Buenos Aires on Autopista 002, one of the few restricted access divided highways. We had gone only a few kilometers when my brother-in-law swerved right to miss rough pavement, then left to dodge a bus with no headlights lumbering onto the highway from an unlit access ramp. Just then a late model European car passed on the right at racetrack speed, miraculously wafting through the already-too-narrow-and-still-shrinking space between Hector's Peugeot and the bus. As the racer's taillights van-

ished ahead of us and the twinkling blue dash lights on the bus faded behind, Hector turned around, grinned, and said, "Welcome to the Third World!"

This was the first of many disparaging comments from Hector; he is proud of Argentine beef, but deeply concerned about the economy (in both cases, justifiably), and this gloom casts a long shadow. But his negativity was rarely couched in absolute terms; nearly always, the dark foreground was painted against a bright background of images from the "First World," images gleaned from Wrangler and Marlboro billboards, Hollywood movies, and cable TV. It wasn't just Hector; everywhere we went people complained or made excuses for most things Argentine, but endlessly asked about our wonderful life in Los Angeles. And it wasn't just good manners to visitors; emulation of the U.S. was everywhere (nearly all the music we heard was American rock-and-roll).

We found ourselves constantly pointing out that the U.S. is not without its problems; Maria-Lydia was in an odd position, trying to defend the country she chose to leave over twenty years ago. After we got back she found a note from Hector, thanking her for trying so hard "to convince us that we have a decent life."

Hector's worries about "a decent life" were not directed toward environmental issues, and I suspect he considers environmental sensitivity to be an unaffordable luxury; this is a familiar position in the U.S., as well. Even so, both here and there alike, we must learn that thinking too narrowly about the near-term economic and/or consumer amenity quality of life carries risks of creating or perpetuating long-term problems in environmental quality of life.

Pollsters are now talking about "the greening of America"; just within the past few years, they say, Americans have become more concerned with social (including environmental) issues than with economic or foreign policy issues. But at what cost, this aware-

ness? It was not enough to have local and regional proof of having poisoned the air, soil, and water with by-products of progress; we could still collectively convince ourselves that the problems were in someone else's backyard. Love Canal is in New York; Stringfellow is way out there in the Inland Empire; let West Covina worry about BKK.

It seems to have taken intimations of global ecological damage (destruction of the ozone layer, and the "greenhouse effect") to begin awakening most people to environmental concerns. Even now, uncertainty and indecision loom large; scientists argue about how real and/or serious the effects are, and politicians cannot decide what price their constituents would pay to begin correcting the problems. We are now willing to pay more for products that avoid environmental damage (if we can decipher the obfuscations of advertising rhetoric to decide which products those are); we may even be willing to see some jobs lost (though surely someone else's, not our own). But to what extent are we willing to change our lifestyles?

* * *

Many Argentines now think the War over the Malvinas (a.k.a. Falklands) was concocted by the then-military government to divert attention away from a deteriorating domestic economy; most seem to agree that whatever the motives, the result was an economic tailspin. A few skeptical Americans are now pondering the convenience of the Persian Gulf crisis, which has displaced the Savings & Loan debacle from U.S. headlines. In a recent cartoon, a pollster asks a hemming-and-hawing man what sacrifices he would be willing to make to support a war; when bluntly asked how many Arabs should die so he can wear a T-shirt inside his house this winter, the man shrugs and says "All of them."

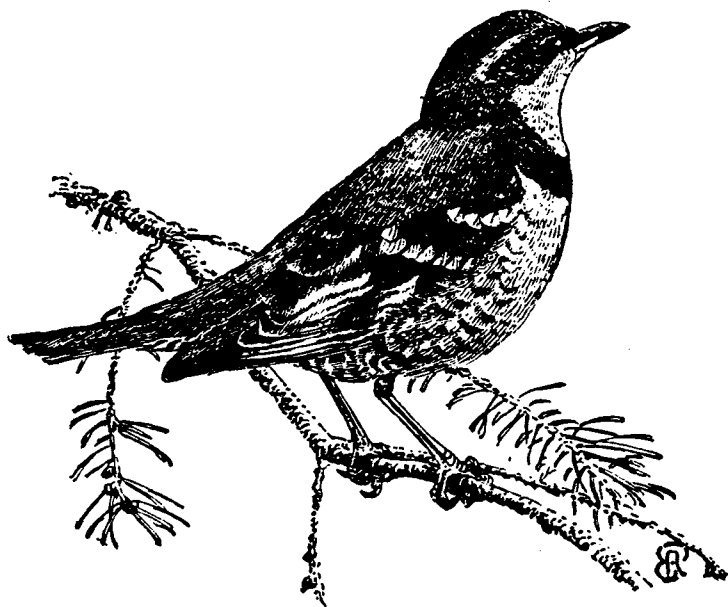
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Meetings in the "Old" Room

The good news is that we will again be using the Multi-Purpose Room in the new building at Plummer Park for our monthly evening meetings. This is the room close to the south parking lot.

The bad news is that we trade the band for the square dancers. However, the Multi-Purpose Room is air conditioned, cleaner, larger and more appropriate for slide viewing.

Plummer Park has really turned around and become a "family" park again. Come to our next general meeting and see for yourself! ➤



Oregon Lawmakers Would Level Last Ancient Forests

In the waning days of the 101st U.S. Congress, Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) and fellow Oregonian Rep. Les AuCoin (D-Ore.) introduced a pair of "nightmare bills" that would all but guarantee the wholesale destruction of the nation's last remaining ancient forests. The legislation, HR 5094 in the House and S 2762 in the Senate, requires continued commodity production — logging, mining, and grazing — in the national forests at current levels, regardless of the environmental consequences. Specifically, it would:

- ▲ limit the Secretary of Agriculture's power to lower logging quotas by more than one percent;
- ▲ require the Secretary to consider opening previously protected lands;
- ▲ insulate logging plans from court-ordered injunctions;
- ▲ limit judicial review of potentially illegal timber sales; and
- ▲ require the Secretary to sell the maximum amount of timber allowed in each forest plan.

You can help stop this legislation by writing your representative and senators today. Tell them to vigorously oppose HR 5094 and S 2762. These bills threaten the future of every national forest in this country. Also, ask your representative to co-sponsor HR 4492, the Ancient Forest Protection Act, supported by Audubon and other members of the environmental community, if he or she has not yet done so; and ask your senators to introduce a similar measure. ➤

Conservation

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Some people would argue that this is not an environmental issue. But I think it is. Beyond all questions of good guys and bad guys, aside from the nits of who did what to whom, or who called whom the worse name, or who may or may not be a madman desperately deserving comeuppance, is a hard bottom line: what will we do to our planet in the name of affluence?

The Sierra Club has announced that there may be a silver lining, good news for the environment, in the Persian Gulf crisis. The 1970s oil embargo stimulated development of Alternative and Renewable (A&R) energy sources; A&R funding has dwindled recently; a boost in oil prices might rekindle our interest in A&R technology. It's a nice theory, but I don't buy it.

Higher oil prices are at best a mixed blessing. But wars and rumors of wars are simply not good for the environment. If the crisis in the Gulf is prolonged, watch for more offshore drilling in California and the Gulf of Mexico, and the sacrifice of wildlife refuges in Alaska; if it escalates, look for renewed funding to the B2 Stealth Bomber. Expect neither tanks with sails, nor solar bombers. As you watch the evening news, ponder the wisdom of burning oil to save oil. And if spilling human blood on the ground doesn't worry you, think about the carbon dioxide a war would pump into our already overloaded global atmosphere. Back in the '60s, there was a favorite saying among the antiwar crowd: "Suppose they gave a war and nobody came?" I would like to offer a revised version for the '90s: "Suppose they made you write an Environmental Impact Statement before you could have a war?"

* * *

After listening to our "Third World"/"First World" banter, one of my nieces got a puzzled look and asked what the "Second World" is. We laughed in sudden realization that the scheme is outdated; the Second World, the Communist Bloc, is neither a block nor uniformly communist. Some observers, not without reason, expect the Post-Cold War Era to bring about a North vs. South realignment. But I have other hopes. I hope we can learn to stop dividing the world into "us" and "them;" I hope we can begin realizing that the real problems affect us all. Let there be diversity of languages, of cultures, of political entities; but let there also be an understanding that we humans share one planet, and that if we are to survive we must forge a decent life together with respect for our Only World. ➤

Vote For Our Ancient Forests, Please!

We shake our heads and cluck our tongues over the destruction of Latin American rainforests, yet many of us forget that here in California we are rushing to eliminate our own precious woodlands. Ninety-five percent of the towering redwoods are gone. Outside the state and national parks that preserve only comparatively small islands of trees, there are only 18,000 acres of virgin redwoods left in private hands. Of these, 15,000 acres are owned by the Maxxam Group, the junk-bond corporate raider. To pay off its huge debt, Maxxam is selling off its redwood assets as fast as the chainsaws can cut—150 trees a day.

To rescue these awesome giants and the wildlife they nurture, environmentalists have created the Forest and Wildlife Protection Initiative, Proposition 130, on the November ballot. Known as "Forests Forever," it would provide money to buy Maxxam's Headwaters Forest which is the largest unprotected redwood forest in the world. Prop 130 would ban clearcutting, the notorious practice of taking all the trees in a parcel. Clearcutting not only produces a malignant eyesore but exposes the land to heavy rains that erode the soil and poison the streams. Life forms in the northcoast forests is more than just the Spotted Owl. The owl is an indicator of the health of the ecosystem that is at risk. It is a thriving organism of redwoods, hemlock, alders, salmonberry, azalea, rich damp soil, banana slugs, transparent streams, tree voles, Marbled Murrelets, Goshawks, Varied Thrushes and Ruffed Grouse. When the redwoods go, everything goes.

Prop 130 will do more. It will tilt the balance toward sustainable yield where the amount of timber logged will not exceed the amount grown. It will add members of environmental groups and the general public to the

State Forestry Board which is now dominated by the timber industry. It will provide a fund to compensate logging workers displaced by forest acquisition and create a retraining program.

The powerful timber companies have put on the same November ballot Proposition 138 with the cynically clever title of "Global Warming and Clearcutting Reduction Wildlife Protection and Reforestation Act of 1990." Dubbed the "Big Stump" act by its detractors, it is a classic case of "Black-is-White" deception. It bans clearcutting; but if a few young trees are left in a parcel all the old trees may be cut. It exempts timber harvesting from CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act, and removes the ability of the public to sue the Department of Forestry for not enforcing CEQA. Prop 138 gives no significant protection to wildlife. It forbids state purchase of redwoods for ten years without the consent of the owner and removes the state's power of eminent domain for timber acquisition. (In ten years at the current rate of "harvest" there will be no redwoods left.) The industry is prepared to spend \$12 million to pass its initiative.

Proposition 128, the California Environmental Protection Initiative known as "Big Green," is an omnibus bill that will phase out

carcinogenic pesticides, eliminate ozone-depleting chemicals, and reduce CO₂ emissions by 40%. It will also provide for purchasing ancient forests and bans clearcutting.

If Big Stump (Prop 138) gets more votes than Forest Forever (Prop 130), then Forest Forever loses everything and the timber companies will get an unbeatable grip on our forests. If Big Stump gets more votes than Big Green (Prop 128), then the forestry part of Big Green is cancelled.

This is indeed a moment of truth. Twelve million dollars will fool a lot of people even in this era of increased environmental awareness. We are all urged to vote and ask our friends and acquaintances to vote. If you haven't voted recently, you have until October 9th to register. 🐾

In November, VOTE:

Yes on Prop 128

Yes on Prop 130

No on Prop 138

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Bookstore News

by Olga Clarke

Newly published by LAAS and now available from the Bookstore, an up-to-date, detailed guide to the best birding localities—*Where Birders Go In Southern California*. Selling at \$12.95, the Bookstore is offering a "prepublication" price of \$10.95 until November 15th! Author Henry Childs will be on hand at our Tuesday, November 13th general meeting for book signing. Come and have your personal copy autographed!

Also new are T-shirts (both long- and short-sleeved), sweatshirts, aprons and totebags all sporting the LAAS name and colorful Western Tanager. All quality items—all great gift ideas!

LAAS Bookstore Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for Tuesdays, Thursdays and/or Saturdays, to help maintain our well-known super service to our membership and customers throughout the world. No experience is necessary. We need people to prepare shipments, greet customers, and answer questions over the telephone.

Interested retirees or anyone looking for an exciting activity once or twice a week, working with nice people in a pleasant atmosphere, please give us a call. Ask for Olga or Edith in the Bookstore. Hours from 10 to 3, Tuesday through Saturday, (213) 876-0202, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood.

Here's a good opportunity to learn about the newest books, binoculars and telescopes, and expand your outlook on the fascinating world of nature. 🐾

A generous donation was made to LAAS in memory of Williams Parke, member, who passed away August 14, 1990. Special thanks to the Appeals and State Hearings Section of the Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County.

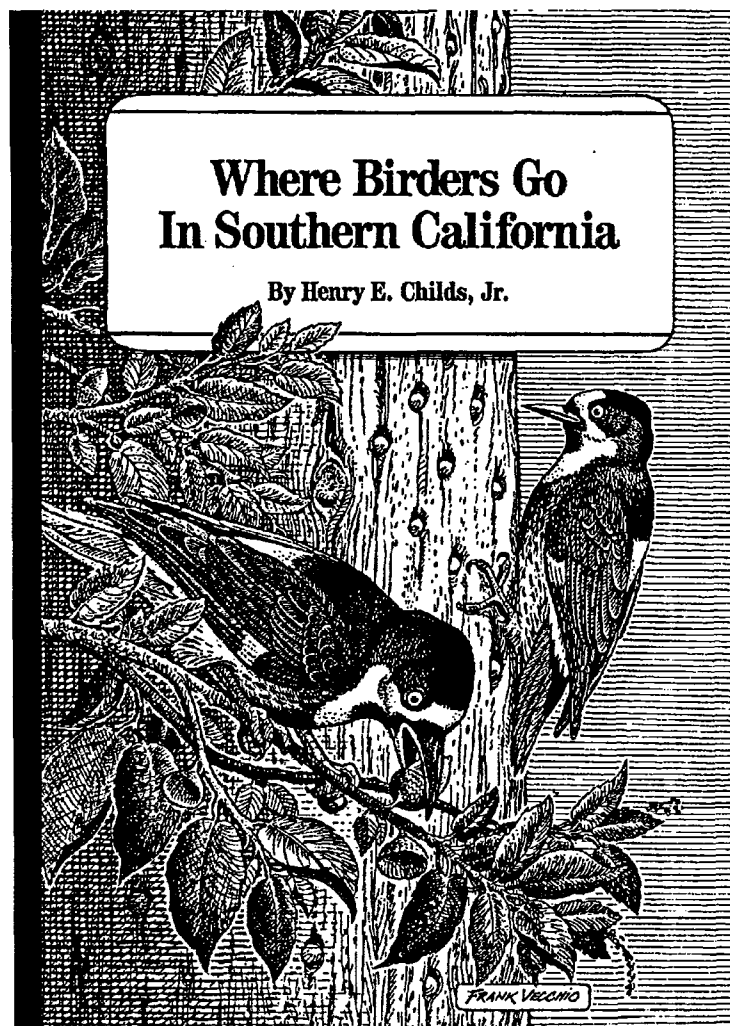
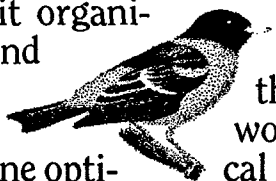
Anyone birding southern California will find this new guide invaluable for saving time and effort in locating desired birds and the best birding places. *Where Birders Go In Southern California* is the most complete and up-to-date source of the most productive birding localities for the southland. Specific directions to places with a "track record" of known species allow birders to maximize their birdfinding time and still provide plenty of opportunity to explore on their own.

Birders with all levels of experience can benefit from this locality guide which covers the counties of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura.

Written and compiled by Henry Childs, a birder for nearly 55 years and Emeritus Professor of Biology, *Where Birders Go In Southern California* provides much more than just a list of places to bird. Insights into the best times of day and year for specific localities and species, elevations and temperatures to be expected where

applicable, an understanding of migration trends, California bird lists, and sources for a wealth of additional information such as books about birding, museums, maps, southern California Audubon Society chapters, Rare Bird Alerts, birding tours, weather and tide information and more can be found in this single easy-to-use reference.

Where Birders Go In Southern California is published by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to conservation—especially the protection of birds and their habitats. This book is available from the Los Angeles Audubon Society Bookstore, which also offers worldwide bird field guides, checklists and reference material as well as fine optical equipment. The Bookstore is located at 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood, CA 90046, (213) 876-0202, open 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.



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12 southern California counties, 190 pages,
5 1/2" X 8 1/2", 14 maps, 8 illustrations,
current checklist of the birds of California,
comprehensive index

Resale inquiries invited.



Clapper Rail

Photo courtesy of Herbert Clarke

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 paragraphs below, the times of favorable high waters during this season will be set forth.

The heights of the tide for the times given below are all at least 6.2 feet. On 2 and 31 December 1990, the heights of the higher high waters reach this season's two maxima of 7.3 feet. Jean Brandt, in her earlier article on Upper Newport Bay (*Western Tanager*, October 1977), advises birders looking for rails to be on station a half hour before the time of higher high water and to stay for at least one hour. For that reason, the times given below are all for higher high waters that occur more than a half hour after sunrise.

In November 1990, the times of favorable higher high waters are 0715 on Thursday the 1st, 0749 on Friday the 2nd, 0826 on Saturday the 3rd, 0905 on Sunday the 4th, 0953 on Monday the 5th, and 1043 on Tuesday the 6th.

In December 1990, the times of favorable higher high waters are 0726 on Saturday the 1st, 0808 on Sunday the 2nd, 0855 on Monday the 3rd, 0943 on Tuesday the 4th, 1037 on Wednesday the 5th, and 0802 on Monday the 31st. The first of this good birding season's two highest high waters occurs on the 2nd, the second on the 31st, their heights being 7.3 feet.

In January 1991, the times of favorable higher high waters are 0850 on Tuesday the 1st, 0937 on Wednesday the 2nd, 1026 on Thursday the 3rd, 0758 on Tuesday the 29th, 0844 on Wednesday the 30th, and 0928 on Thursday the 31st.

In February 1991, the times of favorable higher high waters are 0707 on Tuesday the 26th and 0752 on Wednesday the 27th.

All of these data were taken from the 1990 and 1991 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! 🐦

Personal Commitment. . .

South Fork–Kern River

by Vladimir Hrycenko

The Kern River Preserve is a growing expanse of what up until recently has been cattle pasture and that is now and will continue being restored to its original riparian habitat state. It is located on the South Fork of the Kern River above Lake Isabella, about 35 miles east of Bakersfield and may be reached by taking Highway 178 not quite to the little town of Weldon. The Preserve contains close to 1,500 acres at this point with a recent acquisition which will house a research center.

The interest of maintaining and restoring this area is many-fold and can be summarized as follows: The valley of the South Fork is in a confluence of three major biological communities: desert, montane and grassland. The actual riparian section of this is one of the largest remaining growths of riparian woodland in the state. In addition to the high number of habitants of this community, many of which are obligate, its unique location makes it a home to tremendous diversity of other wildlife as might be expected from its proximity to the intersection of such disparate habitat zones. There are over 200 bird species, over 100 beetles and butterflies, and many different kinds of amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Included among these are the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, of which there were only about 20 nesting pairs left throughout the entire state this year, the also rare Willow Flycatcher which, happily, appears to be increasing, probably because of the restoration efforts thus far on the Preserve, and the Western Pond Turtle which was once widespread throughout the state but has now ceased to reproduce over most of its range because of agricultural restriction of its required nesting areas, just to name a few. The restoration will aid these and other species by providing depth, not just narrow strips along the river banks, of this type of habitat which they need for their survival. For instance, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo,

which is the most critically endangered species, requires roughly at least a square of between thirty and forty acres per nesting pair. The Western Pond Turtle must venture up to a half mile away from the river bank to build its nest which must then remain undisturbed for the duration of incubation of the eggs and then for the hatchlings to find their way back to the river.

The restoration consists of planting Fremont cottonwood, red willow, mule fat and some other plants typical of riparian habitat in this area. Once planted, a plot must have irrigation laid out on it until the trees are about three years old. In the meantime fences must be installed and repaired to keep out neighborhood livestock, major weeds must be removed which compete with the small trees for precious moisture, and plants that have failed to hold must be replanted. The Preserve has installed irrigating pumps and lines to some 700 acres as of this year. Much of this equipment has been donated. All of the effort to perform these tasks is, of course, also donated.

However, more volunteers at the Preserve would truly boost the rate at which this work could be done. During the past two months there were usually less than ten of us on any given work weekend. It is possible that this response may be increased significantly if members of other conservation-minded organizations become aware of these types of habitat-restoration projects and come to participate in them. I say this from personal experience for when I decided to get involved I could not find where to go for several months. I contacted the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club—both of which I am a member—at local and national levels to no avail before I stumbled on The Nature Conservancy's restoration projects.

Although this Preserve is operated by The Nature Conservancy, the objectives are not much different than if it were run by the Sierra Club or the Audubon Society. These are, basically, to arrest and reverse the steadily accelerating decline of the natural environment, and in my opinion we should become more collectively aware of where these efforts are needed.

The recognition of this fact finally drove me to seek out and volunteer on restoration projects. I've been an Audubon and Sierra Club member for many years and used to regularly go out on bird walks and other outings. With my work on the Preserve I still have the opportunity to engage in naturalist activity but in addition I feel I am directly contributing to the survival and enhancement of the little creatures I like to watch so much. In addition to this obvious motivation, the work on the Preserve has been just plain fun. The day would commence around 8:00 a.m. and continue until the afternoon or until the heat forced us to quit. Of course, anyone could quit whenever she or he felt like it, or for that matter not really work at all but wander about the Preserve to just enjoy it. One was always welcome there, in either case. In the heat of the afternoon we would go swimming in the beaver pond on the Preserve. Then, in the evening there was always a pot-luck dinner usually followed by a talk on some topic of wildlife biology. One evening Steve Layman from Berkeley

...work on the Preserve has been just plain fun.

talked about the avifauna of the Preserve and its prospects from the ongoing restoration work. Another time Dan Holland from LSU gave a very detailed presentation on the natural history of the Western Pond Turtle.

This year's activity has come to a close but the next year's is about to start. If you feel like you would like to contribute in this effort or another like it, please do not hesitate. Do it! Time, in many cases, is running out for our little friends and for the rest of us soon after them, too, if we don't start doing something about it now. 🐾

1990 Kern River Preserve Restoration Schedule

It's easy to be a volunteer: Pick the dates that fit your schedule, call the volunteer office at 1-(800) 733-1763 and let us know what days you will be coming. All workdays are scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m.

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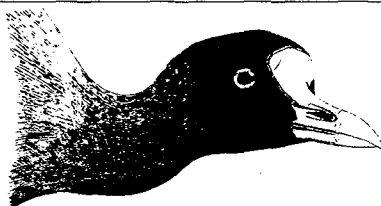
October 13, Saturday
November 3, Saturday
November 17, Saturday
December 1, Saturday
December 15, Saturday

1991 Schedule available.
Call for information.

Jon Dunn's "Peep" Show

by Nick Freeman

Once again, Jon Dunn's Shorebird Seminar left no turnstones unturned and got around to most other waders one could hope or dream to see in California. Jon began by covering feather topography, describing the function and useful ID patterns of various groups of feathers. With this foundation, Jon launched into a beautiful slide program covering nearly all of the expected waders plus the extremely rare Eur-



asian peeps that appear in small numbers only in Alaska, but are occasionally seen in the lower 48. Some of Jon's slides on other rarities will have to wait until another time; after two and a half hours, we were reminded that the room would be locked up at 10:00 p.m., so we wrapped it up, distributed information on the Sunday field trip and cleared out.

"That bird should be shot!" rung out the voice of an unnamed member of the Sunday Peeping Party. Let me put this frustrated but perhaps less than serious statement into context. The first stop on the field trip was at a pond along the upper San Joaquin River in Irvine. Shorebirds were typical migrating species and plumages coming and going in small flocks, offering fair to mediocre views. And then the "problem bird" appeared. After a couple of passes, it was apparent that this young Cooper's Hawk was not going to leave the subjects of our scrutiny alone and that we would have to move on to another spot.

Class reconvened at Bolsa Chica Wildlife Preserve, where wintering plumages were more in evidence. Here we were able to carefully observe Western and Least Sandpipers, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, yellowlegs and other waders. Also seen were skimmers, Red Knots, locally breeding tern species, and a distant Royal Tern. As noon approached, the official field trip came to an end — but not for those willing to undertake an arduous ordeal in search of some real "trophy waders."

Two prominent Orange County birds had given Jon a hot tip on some unusual birds seen the day before; they even tagged along to help out. As we reorganized along the L.A. River at Willow St., our birding technique shifted gears from the sedentary classroom style of the morning to a two-mile birding march scanning thousands of shorebirds for the occasional oddball. The Pectoral Sandpipers were easy to pick out; they were much larger than the peeps, their bills were fairly short, and the breast pattern was distinct. The richer color, longer wings and scaly upper parts of the Baird's Sandpipers were apparent, but hard to pick out in a crowd. A few people were also able to study the elusive Semipalmated Sandpiper, seen only briefly and quite difficult to distinguish from the flock of Westerns it was with. ➤

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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.

C A L E N D A R

Sunday, October 21 - Ballona Lagoon Marine Preserve. Leader Chris Stevenson. Walk along this migratory shorebird hot spot for a morning of birding. Easy walk and great up-close viewing. Note: Ballona Lagoon is not the same as Ballona Wetlands. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the bridge at Pacific Ave. and Lighthouse St. south of Washington St. in Venice. To get there from the 405 Fwy, take Culver Blvd. SW to Lincoln Blvd. (PCH), turn right on Lincoln, left on Washington Blvd. and veer left onto Washington Ave. Turn left on Pacific Ave. and continue about 3/4 mile to Lighthouse St. Search out parking in the adjacent residential areas. (LA, p.49, C-6).

Sunday, October 21 - Malibu Lagoon. Usually the fourth Sunday of each month, this walk will be on the third Sunday this month only. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the lagoon parking lot. The lot is on the ocean side of PCH, just west of the lagoon bridge, but you can turn right into town for street parking. The lagoon lot has a daily fee. This walk is under the leadership of a member of Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society. (LA, p.114, B-5).

Saturday, October 27 - Bird Photography Seminar. Local photo experts Herbert Clarke and Arnold Small will conduct this seminar reviewing the equipment, methods, ethics and aesthetic aspects of nature photography with special emphasis on birds, including slide illustrations on technique. Herb and Arnold co-authored and illustrated *Birds of the West*. Herb recently published *Introduction to Southern California Birds*, and Arnold has a work in progress. A basic understanding of photographic principles is suggested. The seminar will be in the Multi-Purpose Room (near the flag pole) at Plummer Park, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with a 1-hour lunch break (burger stand nearby). Light refreshments will be served. Fee \$20. (LA, p.34, A-4).

Saturday, November 3 - Newport Back Bay. Leader Mary Carmona. Notable high and low tides on this day. Should be a good opportunity for rails in the a.m. and shorebirds in the p.m. High tide birding at 10:00 a.m., eat a sack lunch, check Huntington Central Park or Bolsa Chica, then return to Newport around 3:30 p.m. for low tide birding. Meet at 10:00 a.m. along Back Bay Dr. just off Jamboree Rd. Take the 405 Fwy south to MacArthur Blvd. south, turn right on Jamboree Blvd., drive past San Joaquin Hills Rd. to Back Bay Dr. on your right. If you hit PCH you've gone too far. We will carpool in the back bay. (OC, p.31, F-5).

Sunday, November 4 - Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See October 7 trip for details.

Sunday, November 18 - Sepulveda Basin Nature Area. Leader Dustin Alcala anticipates seeing fair numbers of raptors, geese and smaller waterfowl, other wintering birds and resident riparian and grassland species. This is an easy walk, and a good chance to see a park that Audubon has been actively supporting. Meet at Woodley Park at 7:00 a.m. To get there, take Burbank Blvd. west, turn right onto Woodley Ave. and continue to the Woodley Park entrance on the right. Meet in the first parking area. (LA, p.15, B-6).

Sunday, November 18 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Leader David White. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See October 20 trip for details.

Saturday, December 8 - Carrizo Plain #1. This year the trip will be led by an experienced Nature Conservancy staff member with first-hand knowledge of the preserve. Mountain Plovers and Bluebirds, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, Northern Harriers and Prairie Falcons are seen on the plain regularly. We will check at dusk on Saturday for Sandhill Cranes. Trip is limited to 7 cars (per day), fee is a flat \$20 per car. Carpooling encouraged. Lots of dirt roads. See reservation details below. Map and info will be sent.

Sunday, December 9 - Carrizo Plain #2. See above for details. Meet Sunday, 8:00 a.m. ➤

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.

Beach Blues

Join actor and environmentalist Ted Danson in the season's first new Audubon Television Special, *Danger at the Beach*. Danson, founder of the American Oceans Campaign, explores America's coasts and the mounting pollution problems that beset them, and he talks with activists who are searching for ways to protect our waters before it is too late.

Danger at the Beach kicks off the fall line-up of Audubon Television Specials on TBS SuperStation. These programs will be shown in early October. Read your local TV news for dates and times. ➤

WESTERN TANAGER

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Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year, \$21 for seniors, and presently \$20 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

C A L E N D A R

EVENING MEETINGS

Meet at 8:00 p.m. in Plummer Park
ID Workshop preceeds the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 9 -

Dr. Hartmut Walter: *Ecology of Socorro Island*. Dr. Walter is Associate Professor, UCLA Geography Department. His program concentrates on the ecology and biogeography of endemic island species and possible re-introduction of the Socorro Dove on Socorro Island in the Revillagigedo Island chain, 400 miles west of Acapulco.

ID Workshop: Kimball Garrett

Tuesday, November 13 - Arnold Small will give a slide presentation entitled *Beyond the Roaring 40s*. He will discuss birds seen on his recent trip to Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia, Sub-Antartica and Antartica.

ID Workshop: Lee Jones

Book Signing: Hank Childs, *Where Birders Go In Southern California*

Sunday, October 14 - San Diego Area. Leader Nick Freeman. We plan to bird all of the local "hot spots" looking for late migrant and possible vagrant species. Take the San Diego Fwy (Interstate 5) about three miles past Route 52 to the Claremont Drive offramp and head west into the small lot adjacent to the Mission Bay Information Center. Meet here at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch. Scopes helpful.

Saturday, October 20 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join David White on this regular morning walk as he checks for returning winter birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. in South El Monte, off Fwy. 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Drive exits, west of Fwy. 605. (LA, p.47, D-5).

Continued on previous page

PELAGIC TRIPS

Sunday, October 21 - Santa Barbara Island and Osborne Banks, led by Kimball Garrett and Herb Clarke; 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Price \$32.

Saturday, November 17 - toward Santa Barbara Island, led by Herb and Olga Clarke; 6:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Price \$28.

See reservation details on previous page.

FIELD TRIPS

CALL THE TAPE!

Before setting out on any field trip, call the Audubon bird tape at (213) 874-1318 for special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

Notations in parentheses after trip listings refer to Thomas Bros. map page and grid coordinates (county, page number, grid coordinates).

Monday, October 1 - Malibu to McGrath. First Monday in October for nineteen years running! Ed Navojosky will be leading this annual trip from Malibu Lagoon to McGrath estuary. This is an excellent time of year to see resident, migrant and wintering bird species together (with decent vagrant possibilities). Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the shopping center adjacent to the Malibu Lagoon bridge. Take PCH north over the bridge, turn right and right again into the shopping center across from the lagoon, and meet in the northeast corner of the lot. Bring a lunch. (LA, p.114, B-5).

Saturday, October 6 - Santa Cruz Island. Leader Irwin Woldman. Upon reaching the island at 10:00 a.m., the guide will lead a 1/8 mile walk to the ranch house and eucalyptus stands. After lunch, there will be two-mile moderate hikes to the overlook or to the grasslands and ironwood canyons for those interested. On the island, the endemic subspecies of Scrub Jay should be seen, as well as island-hopping migrants. We also hope to document a "Farallon effect" of eastern migrant overshoots in our own backyard. Many birds may also be seen *en route*, but this is not a pelagic birding trip *per se*, as the boat will take us quickly and directly to the island. Reserve directly with Island Packers in Ventura (805) 642-1393. If you plan to go as a birder, please inform Audubon House also. LAAS has 20 spaces reserved until Sept. 21. Reserve later at own risk. Leave from Ventura Boat Landing at 8:00 a.m., return 6:00 p.m. Bring food, hot grills provided. Cost \$40.

Sunday, October 7 - Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh will be guiding participants through this beautiful and nearby area. The group will be observing migrant and resident birds in the sycamores, grasslands, scrub oak and chaparral. This is an ideal trip for a beginning birder or for someone new in the area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. heading SW from the Valley, take a very sharp turn east uphill on Entrada Dr. (7 miles south of Ventura Blvd., 1 mile north of Topanga Village.) Follow the signs to the state park, and meet in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$3 parking fee. (LA, p.109, D-4).

Friday, October 12 - Chatsworth Park South. Join leader Allan Keller for a morning of late migration birding. We will seek warblers, orioles, grosbeaks and others in this chaparral/oak woodland habitat. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., go west on Devonshire and continue into the parking lot by the Recreation Center. Meet at 8:00 a.m. (LA, p.6, B-3).

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