



WESTERN TANAGER

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A Report From *The Frontier*

by Stephen F. Bailey

Recently I wrote (Bailey et al. 1989. *American Birds* 43:400-415): "The least-explored frontier of North American birding lies over the deep ocean waters beyond the Pacific continental shelf. Despite the great increase in pelagic birding in recent years, the more remote waters out to the 200-nautical-mile limit remain inaccessible to most birders. On those rare occasions when a birding boat ventures far offshore, the amount of time actually spent searching the deep-water zones is very limited, and weather frequently makes observation very difficult."

The most consistently sought birds far off the California coast are the gadfly petrels of the genus *Pterodroma*. During the past eleven years observers have begun documenting these elusive wanderers over our deep waters. Our paper that clarified the identification of the dark-colored species in the North Pacific and reviewed the records of these species also reported on an exciting expedition into this frontier (Bailey et al. 1989). On the 48-hour trip aboard *M/V Blitzen* 29-30 April 1989, we counted 98 Murphy's Petrels and 113 Cook's Petrels, not to mention 136 Horned Puffins and 2 Laysan Albatrosses! Our success has stimulated birders to charter several long-day boat trips to find these petrels. LAAS has booked trips aboard the *Salty Lady* out of Sausalito on both 27 & 28 April 1991.

cessful trip?

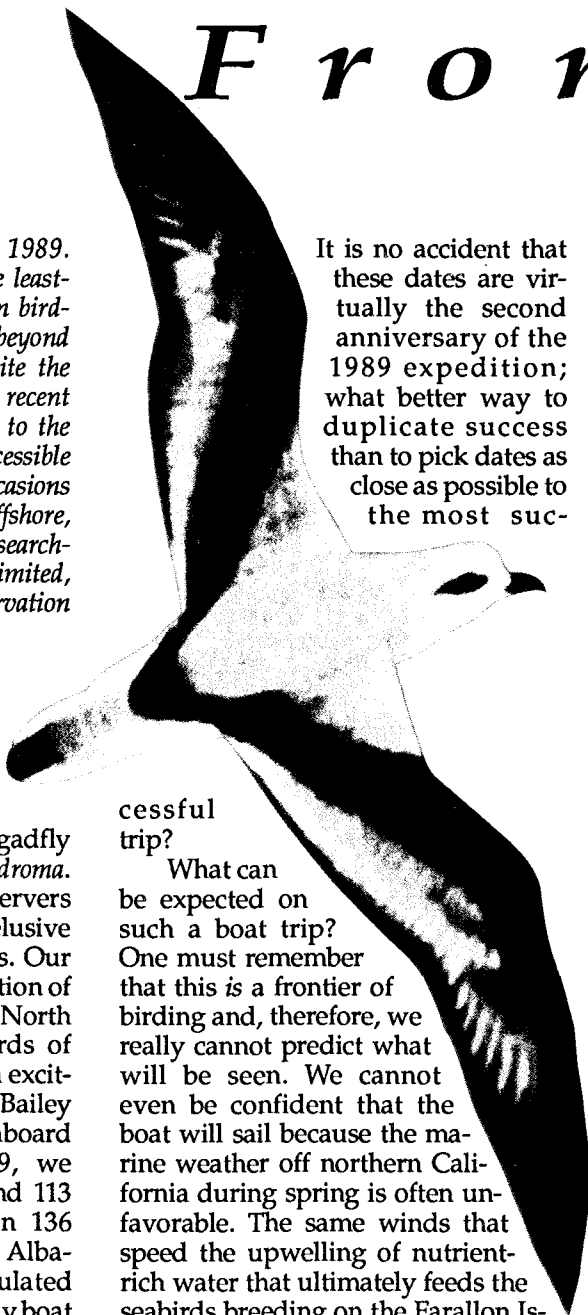
What can be expected on such a boat trip? One must remember that this is a frontier of birding and, therefore, we really cannot predict what will be seen. We cannot even be confident that the boat will sail because the marine weather off northern California during spring is often unfavorable. The same winds that speed the upwelling of nutrient-rich water that ultimately feeds the seabirds breeding on the Farallon Islands also can drive boats back to harbor. Bay Area birders chartered the *Salty Lady* for three consecutive days in

It is no accident that these dates are virtually the second anniversary of the 1989 expedition; what better way to duplicate success than to pick dates as close as possible to the most suc-

May 1990, but both the first and the last trips were turned back by foul weather. My more fortunate trip on 18 May found a window in the weather and reached the target: waters about 90 nautical miles outside the Golden Gate (about 75 n.mi. southwest of the nearest point of mainland, Point Reyes). These waters are more than two miles deep. On 18 May we saw three Murphy's Petrels and a very close Cook's Petrel (plus 15 Horned Puffins). These rewards, although modest in comparison to the April 1989 results, are enough to make almost any hardy birder plead for a space on the next boat.

On 30 September 1990, the *Salty Lady* again reached these same waters. As usual off northern California, the fall weather was more benign than the spring. However, we found no *Pterodroma* petrels of any species. Previous work over deep waters off our coast had found small numbers of petrels in fall, but we don't know whether they are regular or only within boat range in abnormal years. The same is true of spring and the other seasons. However, the greater numbers that have been seen in spring suggest that a regular migration of Cook's and Murphy's Petrels may peak about late April.

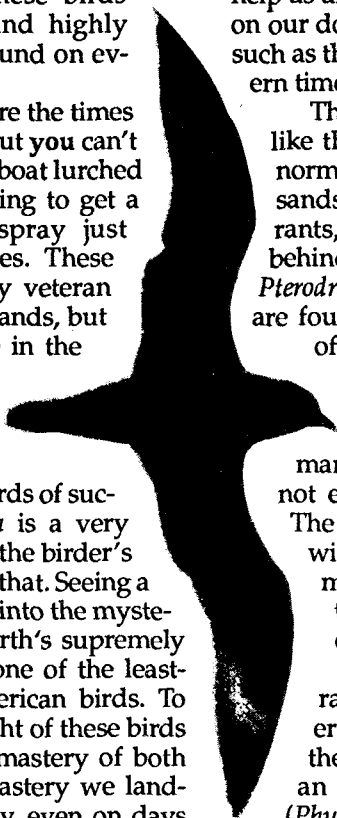
Part of the excitement of exploring such remote waters is not knowing what might be found. At any time a first record for North America might fly past the boat. The other side of the coin is the knowledge that one is likely



to get "skunked;" these birds would not be rare and highly sought if they were found on every trip!

More frustrating are the times when a petrel is seen but you can't see it well because the boat lurched just as you were starting to get a good look, or salt spray just swamped your glasses. These are hazards that every veteran pelagic birder understands, but they seem most acute in the case of *Pterodromas* because these birds seldom pass near the boat.

What are the rewards of success? Each *Pterodroma* is a very high quality "tick" on the birder's list, but it is more than that. Seeing a petrel gives a glimpse into the mysterious life of one of earth's supremely pelagic animals and one of the least-known of North American birds. To watch the sublime flight of these birds is to marvel at their mastery of both wind and ocean, a mastery we landlubbers may well envy, even on days when the boat can sail. Our fleeting experiences with these "wing runners"



help us understand that the ocean, even on our doorstep, is an alien wilderness such as the land seldom can be in modern times.

The deep ocean waters are not like the coastal waters searched by normal "pelagic" trips. The thousands of shearwaters, gulls, cormorants, murres and auklets are left far behind toward land on a successful *Pterodroma* trip. If any of these birds are found more than 40 or 50 miles offshore, they will almost certainly be few and scattered. I consider the paucity of birds to be a good sign; if there are many birds, it is because we have not escaped the coastal influence. The deep ocean waters normally will have few birds; it only remains to be seen whether any of the few are *Pterodroma* petrels or other open ocean rarities.

Sometimes trips with no rare birds can be rewarding nevertheless. The saving grace of the 30 September 1990 trip was an adult Giant Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and other deep water trips have shown us Baird's Beaked Whales (*Berardius*

bairdii) and Cuvier's Beaked Whales (*Ziphius cavirostris*).

So, what can be expected on the LAAS trips on 27 & 28 April? Who knows? — Remember, it is a frontier! We might not be able to leave the harbor, we might score a first North American record (hopefully documenting it on film), or we might find nothing. However, based on very few data, we have scheduled these trips to maximize our chances for Murphy's and Cook's Petrels. And regardless of our success on these trips, realize that we are exploring less than half way to the artificial 200 mile limit of "North American" waters! It will be many more trips before we understand the seasonal status and abundance of birds near 100 miles offshore, let alone the birds of the *second* 100 miles or those of the vast expanses of the Pacific Ocean just beyond. 🐦

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Stephen F. Bailey, Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy, California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA 94118. Photo by author.

1991 PELAGIC TRIPS

1991 LAAS PTERODROMA TRIP

SATURDAY, APRIL 27 AND SUNDAY, APRIL 28: 17-hour deep sea *Pterodroma* trip out of Sausalito — 25 SPACES

Time: 3:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Boat: *Salty Lady* with Captain Roger Thomas

Leader: Stephen F. Bailey

Dock: Caruso's Sportfishing, Sausalito — (415) 332-1025

Bunks: 15 given out on a first-come basis with your paid reservation

Food: Hot drinks and oven on boat. Bring your own cold drinks and food

Price: \$115 per day with fuel surcharge if necessary. NOTE: Price will be prorated if unable to complete destination

Birds seen last year: Murphy's and Cook's Petrels, Laysan Albatross and Horned Puffin

Expected birds: Same as for local LAAS pelagic trips but more chance for rarities

WARNING: This trip will encounter ROUGH SEAS

1991 LAAS "OUT OF AREA" PELAGIC TRIPS

SATURDAY, APRIL 13: Back side of Santa Rosa Island and out to sea if weather permits — it can be too rough

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Boat: *Jeffrey Arvid*

Leader: To be announced

Dock: Island Packers Ventura Marina

Food: Bring your own

Channel Island National Monument Dock

Price: \$60

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: Same as Saturday, April 13 (above)

1991 LAAS "LOCAL" PELAGIC TRIPS

1. **SUNDAY, MAY 5:** Toward Santa Barbara Island and Osborne Banks, led by Kimball Garrett and Lee Jones. 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Price: \$32
2. **SATURDAY, AUGUST 17:** Orange County Trip — Catalina to Lausen Sea Mount, led by Brian Daniels and Lee Jones. 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Price: \$36
3. **SUNDAY, AUGUST 18:** Coast and Santa Barbara Island, led by Kimball Garrett and Lee Jones. 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Price: \$32
4. **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12:** Santa Barbara Island and out to sea, led by Herb and Olga Clarke. 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Price: \$32
5. **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16:** Alcid trip toward Santa Barbara Island and Osborne Banks, led by Arnold Small and Herb Clarke. 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Price: \$32

NOTE: Marine mammal experts Dr. John Heyning and/or Linda Lewis will be on these trips when their schedules permit

Boat: Occidental College's *R.V. Vantuna*
Dock: USC Berth 262, Terminal Island, San Pedro — (213) 831-1441
Spaces: 38 + 2 leaders

EXPECTED BIRDS

WINTER (w) - SPRING (s) (Trips 1 and 5 above):

SHEARWATERS: Sooty, Pink-footed, Black-vented (w), Short-tailed, Northern Fulmar
JAEGERS: Pomarine, Parasitic
SHOREBIRDS: Red Phalarope, Wandering Tattler, Black Oystercatcher, Surfbird
TERNs & GULLs: Arctic Tern (s), Sabine's Gull (s), Black-legged Kittiwake
ALCIDS: Common Murre (s), Pigeon Guillemot (s), Xantus Murrelet, Cassin's Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet
RARITIES: South Polar Skua, Tufted or Horned Puffin (s), Black-footed Albatross, Buller's Shearwater (w)
MAMMALS: Pacific Pilot Whale, Gray Whale, Dall Porpoise, Risso's Dolphin, Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin, Common Dolphin

SUMMER (s) - FALL (f) (Trips 2, 3 and 4 above):

SHEARWATERS: Sooty, Pink-footed, Black-vented (f), Northern Fulmar
JAEGERS: Pomarine, Parasitic (f)
STORM-PETRELS: Black (f), Least (f), Leach's, Ashy (f)
SHOREBIRDS: Black Oystercatcher, Phalaropes, Surfbird (f), Wandering Tattler (f)
TERNs & GULLs: Royal (f), Arctic (f), Elegant Terns, Sabine's Gull (f)
ALCIDS: Pigeon Guillemot (s), Common Murre (f), Craveri's Murrelet (f), Xantus Murrelet (s), Cassin's Auklet
RARITIES: Flesh-footed Shearwater (f), Buller's Shearwater (f), Long-tailed Jaeger (f), Red-billed Tropicbird, South Polar Skua
MAMMALS: Elephant Seal, Harbor Seal, Finback Whale, Blue Whale, Orca, Risso's Dolphin, Common Dolphin

RESERVATION INFORMATION FOR ALL LAAS PELAGIC TRIPS

Please see RESERVATION AND FEE EVENTS information on page 11

Boarding: Half an hour before a scheduled departure. **NOTE:** Boat WILL NOT be held for late arrivals
Cancellations: 30 days before trip if inadequate response. No refund 2 weeks before sailing (you can sell your ticket to another party)
NOTES: Prices may be subject to surcharge if our cost increases
Destinations may be changed by leaders to optimize bird sightings

Finding Birds at Sea Over The Southern California Borderland

by Stuart L. Warter

To the beginning student of birds, experienced birders seem to have a sixth sense of where to find any particular species they might be looking for on land. While no one can completely discount the element of luck, there is of course nothing mysterious about a bird being found where (and when) it is supposed to be. Even the unexpected rarity seldom is found grossly misplaced ecologically, although it might be geographically "way out."

When it comes to finding birds on an apparently featureless ocean, however, many an ornithologist – amateur or professional – often finds himself out on the proverbial limb, more lost than the birds he seeks. Would that we could read the seascape as well as we can the landscape. The birds, it seems, have more than a leg up on us here.

Beneath its surface, the sea really is anything but featureless, especially off southern California. It is these submerged features that ultimately determine the distribution and local abundance of the birds on the surface. The problem, then, is how do we read those features, and what is their significance to the birds?

Not far from shore along most of the coastline north of Point Conception, the continental slope drops off sharply to the sea bottom. Beyond this edge of the continental shelf courses the southward flowing California Current, its cold waters scouring the ocean floor and bringing nutrient-rich upwellings to the surface over submerged canyons and along escarpments. Upon this natural fertilizer grow planktonic organisms which form the base of a rich food chain heavily exploited by seabirds. The bigger and more persistent the upwellings are, the greater the biomass produced and, ultimately, the more birds that can be supported.

South of Point Conception, the coastline cuts eastward, forming the so-called Southern California Bight. The continental slope, however, continues on to the south 50 to 160 miles from

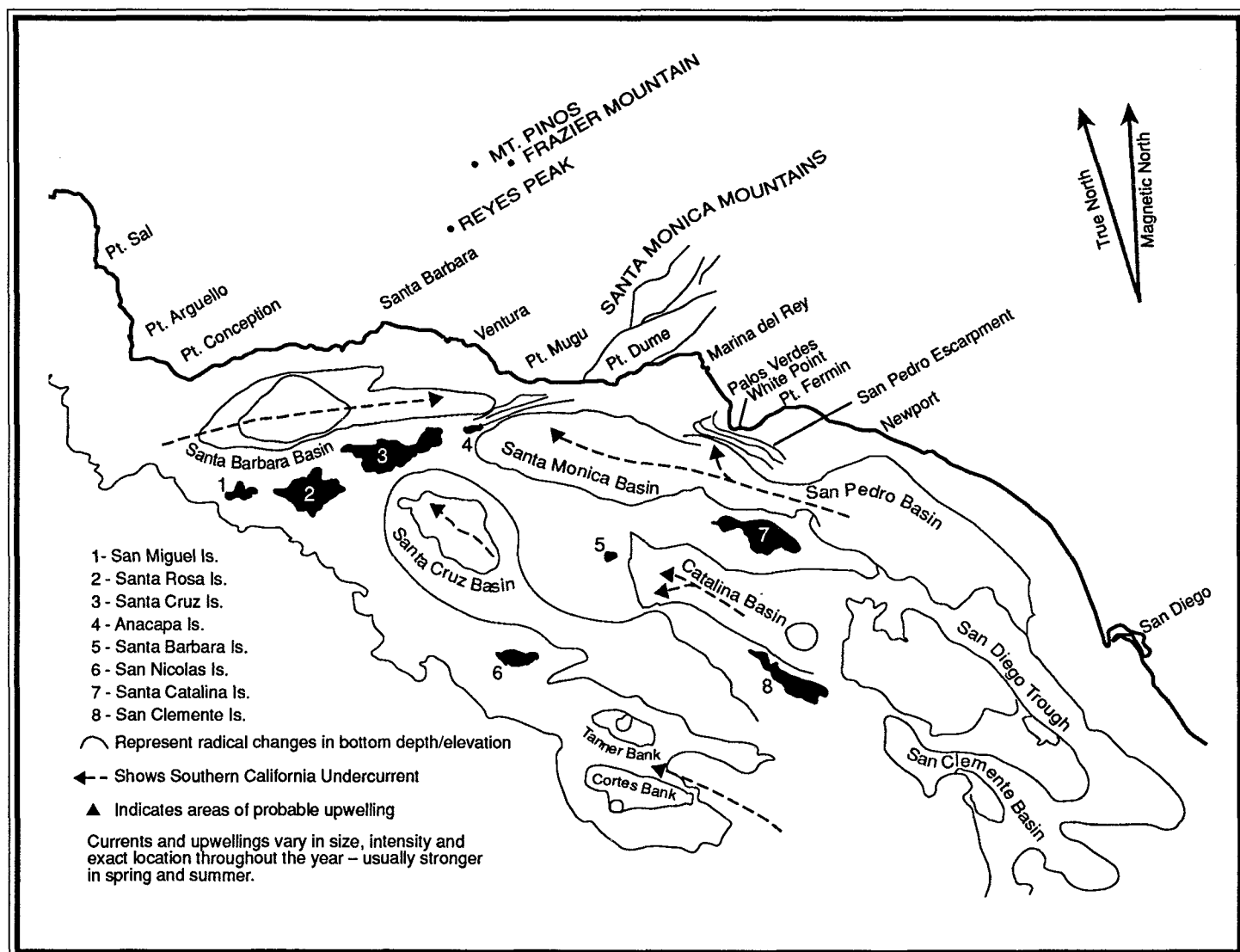
shore, and along with it goes the rich California Current (and many of its birds). The sea bottom between the edge of the shelf and the coast of southern California is not actually sea floor at all, but submerged continental crust – forming a geological province known as the Southern California Borderland. Through a most complicated interaction between the moving sea floor plate beneath and the overlying portion of continental plate to the west of the San Andreas Fault, the rock forming the surface of the submerged borderland has been compressed into a series of folded ridges and basins roughly paralleling the coastline. The emergent portions of these ridges form the southern Channel Islands: Santa Barbara, Santa Catalina, San Nicholas and San Clemente. Crossing the "T" at the top of these northwest-southeast trending features, and resulting from northward movement along the San Andreas, is an east-west ridge, parallel with the Santa Barbara coast and nearly continuous with the Santa Monica Mountains and other transverse ranges, and bearing the northern Channel Islands: Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel.

Flowing northwesterly along the bottoms of the trough-like basins, counter to the southward flowing California Current, are cold counter-currents. These become trapped in the northern ends of the basins, and upwellings result there as well as along the steeper escarpments along the sides of these basins and above the submerged canyons that reach nearly to shore at several places along the coast. Such an upwelling occurs at the end of the Catalina Basin where two ridges merge just east of Santa Barbara Island. Cold water from the California Current flows eastward through the Santa Barbara Basin (north of the northern islands), meeting northerly moving water from the Santa Monica Basin (where it ends near Anacapa Island), and a convergence results in a substantial upwelling there. Other easterly flowing

water converges with northerly moving currents west of Tanner Bank and on both sides of Cortes Bank, resulting in additional significant upwellings. A lesser convergence of two northerly flowing currents, one deflected to the east, occurs southeast of Santa Catalina Island.

Now these may be minor phenomena when compared to the major upwellings and convergences of water masses that occur elsewhere in the oceans, but in a local context they can be of great importance. Particularly in warm water periods – when surface temperatures rise and a thermal inversion forms, holding down organisms that would ordinarily reach the surface – are these upwelling phenomena significant. During such periods, when fish can be scarce and birds can be scarcer, even small concentrations of birds may be found to correspond to some minor blip on the fathometer which, in turn, relates to some bottom feature shown on a nautical chart. Pinnipeds, dolphins, and even whales may react to these same features.

A transect that is run across several troughs and ridges will intersect associated upwellings, and brief flurries of biological activity can be experienced, interspersed with long periods of nothingness. I run such a cruise for my Marine Ornithology class on their first trip of the fall semester, both to illustrate these phenomena and to try to pick up any tropical interlopers that might be brought north with the warm surface water that occurs at that time of the year. Thereafter I concentrate on (usually) more consistently productive routes. For instance, I have found that by zig-zagging along the rather steep escarpment that parallels the Palos Verdes Peninsula when shearwaters are present, I can stay with them for quite a while, since they stick closely to that escarpment – sometimes in a band no more than 100 or 200 yards wide – whereas running out to sea would intersect their path and leave them behind in a few minutes. Near the edge of



Map by Tom Frillman and Steve Hirsh

the latter escarpment, darker, blue upwelling water interfaces against lighter, green coastal water, forming a visible confluence of water masses along which birds regularly congregate. Here also the White Point sewer outfall provides an additional upwelling of a different sort, less productive since treatment levels were increased, but still attractive to phalaropes, Bonaparte's Gulls and other plankton feeders. A visit to the small canyon known as the San Pedro Sea Valley, south of Point Fermin, might find shearwaters roosting on the surface, gorged from their nocturnal or early morning feeding bouts. On one occasion we came upon a hundred or so Brandt's Cormorants there taking advantage of anchovies driven to the surface by a school of Bonito. It was an astonishing sight for us all to see phalarope after phalarope

disappear beneath the surface—only to pop up again like so many corks—as they were inadvertently grabbed by their toes and pulled under by the Bonito in their wild feeding frenzy.

Experienced offshore birders will recognize some of the more "reliable" spots in the above list of upwelling zones; nothing ever is infallible, but if conditions are right and if birds are around, a good nautical chart, a fathometer, a good eye for turbulence on the surface, a dose of good luck and, above all, a good captain who knows where the birds were yesterday (they do move around), should get you to the birds. If any rarities are around, they are likely to be where other birds are. This year's September 15th transect was a bang-up trip for the class: the bottom contours performed admirably, yielding 4 or 5 species of Storm-Petrels

(including many Leasts), 3 species of shearwaters, 2 of jaegers, 2 of phalaropes, 2 groups of Sabine's Gulls, and assorted other goodies to whet the appetites of beginning students, topped off with a Red-billed Tropicbird (twice — the same bird, going and coming) and a Brown Booby for good measure. Did these beginning students of seabirds appreciate their good fortune? It's hard to say, but the few who failed to show up certainly missed the boat in more ways than one! 🐦

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Stuart L. Warter, Department of Biology, California State University, Long Beach

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.

The cool breezes of November heralded in an exciting month for southern California birders. Winter "invaders," including some of the more expected species such as Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Varied Thrushes, were joined by at least two reports of Williamson's Sapsuckers. January should see more of the same, hopefully with the addition of a "Siberian" species or two. And then comes February and the first of the spring migrants — Allen's Hummingbird and the swallows — continuing the cycle for another year.

A Northern Fulmar was spotted from Balboa Pier on 29 November (Ed Stonick) and a Flesh-footed Shearwater was seen in the San Pedro Channel on the LAAS pelagic trip of 17 November. A Snow Goose was in Anaheim Bay on 3 November (Steve Mlodinow) and a Ross' Goose was at Holiday Lake in the Antelope Valley on 24 November (Phil Sayre, et al).

There have been an unusually large number of Eurasian Wigeon reports this fall with the most recent being one at Silver Lakes near Victorville on 30 November (Bea and Dick Smith). Since most if not all of these reports pertain to males, one wonders how many females are going unidentified. Where are these birds coming from?

Three White-winged Scoters were in Ballona Creek on 26 November (Raymond Skip), and our only Common Scoter report is of a bird at Balboa Pier on 29 November (ES). A Common Goldeneye was in Malibu on 25 November (Art and Jan Cupples).

Hooded Mergansers are everywhere this winter, but the high count of 20, including two adult males, at Pepperdine Ponds, Malibu, on 13 No-

vember (Sandy Wohlgemuth) has to be some kind of a record!

A late Pectoral Sandpiper was reported from Finney Lake, Imperial County, on 24 November (Irwin Woldman) and a Black-legged Kittiwake was at Balboa on 29 November (ES).

The increasingly common Common Ground-Dove was found at the Huntington Library on 23 November (Daniel Cooper), and a Ruddy Ground-Dove was discovered at Desert Center, Riverside County, on 23 November (A & JC).

Also at Desert Center on the same day was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (A & JC), and a Williamson's Sapsucker was reported from Mojave on 1 November (Jon Wilson), and the same or a different bird was seen there on 23 November (Priscilla Brodtkin). Another individual was at Malibu Lake on 24 November (Maurie Beck).

A Mountain Chickadee was at California City on 18 November (Hank Brodtkin), a Winter Wren was seen at Galileo Park on 4 November (Nick Freeman), and a more unusual Brown Thrasher was found at Huntington Beach on 8 November (Robert Liday). A White Wagtail, probably the same bird seen for the past couple of winters, was reported from Saticoy Ponds, Ventura County (Randy Moore).

Three "Plumbeous" Solitary Vireos, the form more likely to be seen in late fall or even winter, were reported, one from Mojave on 18 November (HB), one from California City (Matt Heindel) and the third from Huntington Library (DC), both on 23 November.

Our warbler reports for November include a Tennessee at Desert Center on the 23rd (A & JC), Chestnut-sideds at Alondra Park, Gardena on the 17th (Mitch Heindel) and at Malibu on the 17th (Ed Navojosky), and a Black-and-white at Rancho Simi Park on the 25th (Fred Heath).

A very late Blue Grosbeak was in Mojave on 18 November (HB). Dave Koeppel, searching for the Harris'

Sparrow found at the Wilmington Drain across the street from Harbor Park on 4 November (MiH), found a White-throated Sparrow on 11 November. Another Harris' Sparrow was seen at Desert Center on 23 November (IW), and a late or wintering Northern Oriole was at Banning Park in Wilmington on 3 November (DK).

Another year has slipped or rather rushed by. We have been blessed again with memories of desert oases, mountain peaks and tropical forests. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you whose phone calls, letters and expertise have made this column possible. And for your constant encouragement and love, thank you, Priscilla.

Happy New Year and Good Birding! 🐦

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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
David Koeppel (213) 454-2576

Thanks...

In response to our "Wish List" request for a paper shredder to be used at Audubon House, we are pleased to announce that one was donated by Art and Jean Pickus.

By using this remarkable device we not only recycle waste paper but have eliminated the need for styrofoam "peanuts." Our packaging is environmentally sound!

We truly appreciate this very generous donation.

Let's Not Get SEASICK

by Jean Brandt

Easy for me to say, right? Well, in most cases and with good common sense and precautions, mal-de-mer CAN be prevented.

Of course, there is always the sea — we can do nothing about the truly rough trips, and unless you happen to be one of the lucky ones who has a cast iron stomach, it is best to stay ashore and hope that the wind blows all of those pelagic birds inland.

Why am I writing this article? Who better? I speak from years of experience. It was MY head that Ruth Lohr gently lifted from the deck of a rolling ship in Monterey Bay to show me my life Black-footed Albatross. Up to that moment, I had been considering suicide. On a forgettable trip out of San Pedro on the *Vantuna*, it was I who "chummed" (you know what I mean) the Craveri's Murrelet that was alongside the boat. I could go on and on.

Many people have given me advice. Guy McCaskie told me about saltine crackers and staying midships. Norman Mellor introduced me to the "patch." Bill Principe told me to keep my eye on the horizon. I appreciate all of the help I can get, and I'd like to share some of it with my fellow sufferers.

PRECAUTIONS

1 - FOOD: What goes in must come out. When and where should be up to you — not the ocean. Therefore, you must think plain, simple, bland. And start thinking this way the evening before the pelagic trip. If you want to enjoy your boat trip, you must make some sacrifices.

DO NOT EAT GREASY FOOD... especially for breakfast. That means NO sausage, fried eggs and potatoes, buttered toast, corned beef hash. Do eat breadstuffs — pancakes are fine without butter, bagels are edible without cream cheese. The idea is to fill your stomach with inoffensive benign bulk. Forget peanut butter, knackwurst,

chips or chocolate.

While you are on the boat, eat saltine crackers constantly. Even if you feel lousy or worse, keep on stuffing in those saltines!

DO NOT substitute any other salty snack for the saltines. Fritos, Cheesits, popcorn, etc. are greasy. Saltines are the perfect food for pelagic trips.

For lunch, bring bland foods. Plain cheese, turkey or meat sandwiches without butter or mayonnaise are good. So are bananas. Bagels are easy to eat and fill the void.

2 - DRINK: DON'T. All liquids cause your stomach to slosh. This is to be avoided at all costs. No coffee or orange juice with breakfast. Don't drink on the boat. Just sip enough to be able to swallow the saltines. And believe it or not, GATORADE is great. I know it tastes terrible, but those electrolytes really help. Avoid coffee, sodas and all alcoholic beverages.

Remember, this is not a gourmet trip. You are here to see the birds. And you will enjoy them more from a vertical position.

3 - CIGARETTES: Don't smoke. Even if you don't get seasick, think of those who do and don't smoke. Or if you are addicted, ONLY smoke at the very back of the boat. (I remember almost "chumming" Hal Ferris and his cigarette before I "got" the murrelet.)

4 - LOCATION: Stay outside, midships, in the fresh air. Stay away from the diesel fumes. Stay on the main deck. DO NOT go inside — even to the "head" — if at all possible. If you regulate your intake, you should be OK. (This is another good reason to eat and drink sensibly the night before.)

Do not read. If all else fails, try to lie down, outside, midships. Cover your face from the sun. Sleep helps.

5 - GUESTS: It is not a good idea to bring a spouse, friend or date on a pelagic trip unless you are absolutely

positive that the person is completely aware of what a pelagic trip is. It is a trip on a boat on the ocean. That seems obvious, but your guest must be prepared to spend the day — the whole day — on a rolling, bouncing, tossing, smelly ship that is full of weird people who only think or talk about birds. Nothing is sadder than the poor soul who has joined the trip in good spirits, looking forward to a lovely day, perhaps even hoping for a romantic interlude, who gets seasick before the boat leaves the harbor or becomes terminally bored before the boat passes Point Fermin.

MEDICATION

Many remedies are available. Try them all (one at a time) until you find one that works for you. Here are some that I have tried. There may be others. If you use any seasick medications, do not drink any alcoholic beverages the night before, during or twelve hours after the boat trip.

1 - The "patch." TRANSDERM SCOP; prescription only. Active ingredient is Scopolamine — the truth drug. You put the patch behind your ear the night before the trip and leave it on while you are on the boat. (One patch — one ear.) Side effects can be a problem. Read the label. Dry mouth and disorientation are common. The patch can be cut in half and attached with adhesive tape. This cuts down on the dry mouth but may not be as effective. Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after you have handled a patch.

2 - DRAMAMINE, MAREZINE, BONINE, etc.; over-the-counter tablets. All are antiemetic, and some work better than others. Try each of them until you find one that works for you. A side effect can be drowsiness. Be sure to take your first tablet the night before the trip, the second upon arising and

every four to six hours thereafter until you disembark.

WITCHCRAFT

1 - WRIST BANDS. Wear one on each wrist while you are on the boat. The treatment is acupressure. The bands are tight with a button that fits against a designated pressure point approximately 3" above the wrist. There are no apparent side effects.

2 - GINSENG: A Chinese herb. I haven't tried this, but it works for some people.

ATTITUDE

Do not talk about how sick you feel, how sick you were on previous trips, how sick you expect to be. Do not listen to same from fellow travelers. For some reason, people who have experienced seasickness like to brag about it. This is false camaraderie and must be shunned. Be positive.

And remember, nothing is 100%

foolproof. There is always a chance that you will get seasick. That is why you must take every precaution possible. It might help to remember that no matter how sick you have been on the boat, the very second you step foot on dry land you will feel wonderful and ravenous.

As an expert on the subject, what do I do? Currently I use the wrist bands and back them up with Marezine. I eat saltines and bland foods, I sip Gatorade and I try to think good thoughts. I never, never talk about being sick, having been sick, or listen to the disgusting tales that fellow sufferers like to share.

If I take a trip that I think will be especially rough, I use the patch. I put it behind my left ear. For some reason, this works better for me. I have to have someone else drive, as I really get disoriented. I even take a large dose of Pepto Bismol the night before the trip for obvious reasons. I take every precaution possible knowing that I still may get sick. But what the hell, bottom line, the birds are worth it. 🐦

Gull Workshop February 8 and 9

What? You still find yourself calling Ring-billed Gulls Californias, and completely passing on more than a few of these avian opportunists? Or perhaps you're ready to bone up on the field ID characteristics of young Thayer's and Glaucous-winged Gulls. If so, good fortune smiles upon you for Arnold Small will be conducting a lecture and field trip on gulls and terns designed specifically to address "everything you always wanted to know about gulls (and some things you really don't want to know) and were afraid or too embarrassed to ask." A handout will also accompany the lecture.

For those who don't know Arnold, he has written and provided photos for a number of books on birding and bird identification, teaches a regular extension class on ornithology at UCLA and has been involved in LAAS for, well, a long time. The slide collection he has amassed is excellent.

Lecture and slide show on Friday evening will be devoted to learning about gull plumages and molts, aging, feather wear, extraordinary plumages, distribution and migration, and general status and distribution in California. There will be a handout, and numerous slides and pictures illustrating and clarifying problems with this difficult group will be shown.

The field trip on Saturday will go to Malibu Lagoon, Ventura Sewage Plant and McGrath State Beach. At this time of year, these areas hold just about all the expected California gulls in a variety of plumages. Here they are easy to see, compare and study. Other birds will not be ignored, but the focus will be on the gulls (and terns). In case of bad weather on Saturday, the rain date will be Sunday, February 10.

Cost is \$20 for both meetings, or \$8 for the lecture only. Space is limited, so reserve at Audubon House with SASE as soon as possible.

Bookstore News

The new bird listing software, **DataHawk**, is now for sale at Audubon House. The author is Russell Stone, an LAAS member.

DataHawk's data base contains all species on the AOU and/or ABA checklists. The data base also contains all state and province lists. You can add, split or lump species at any time.

Entering a sighting once updates all appropriate lists. DataHawk's lists include life lists, state lists, year lists, county lists, lists for specific locations in which you bird, lists of what you've seen in a state in a particular year (e.g. birds seen in California in 1980), all of your sightings of a specific bird, and more. You can even create life lists in chronological order or print hit lists of birds you have not seen in a state.

Sightings are entered on an on-screen checklist which displays the names of all species or can be limited to species in one or more states. You can move forward or backward a page at a time or jump directly to a species by typing all or part of its name. You can enter a one-line note for each sighting plus 17 lines of general notes for each trip as a whole.

DataHawk can generate lists for each location that you bird. For any two of these locations, you can keep a spreadsheet of sightings for each month of each year.

Herb and Olga Clarke are already keeping their lists on DataHawk. Arnold Small says, "Any birder owning or having access to a computer should take a long hard look at the DataHawk program... a unique feature of this program is that it contains a current listing of the state lists for every state, [and] all Canadian provinces..."

DataHawk sells for \$69.00. An IBM-compatible computer with a hard disk and 512K RAM is required. DataHawk can keep track of sightings for two birders — mutual sightings need only be entered once. 🐦

C A L E N D A R

Continued from back page

Sunday, January 20 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join **David White** on this regular morning walk to see the park's renowned wintering waterfowl. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. in South El Monte, off 60 Fwy between Santa Anita and Peck Dr. exits, W of 605 Fwy. (LA, p.47, D-5).

Saturday, January 26 - Point Mugu. Leader **Daniel Cooper** and new base biologist **Tom Keeney** should find plenty of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, scoters and other wintering birds to remark upon in this limited access area. Option to bird Ventura after lunch with Daniel. Take 101 Fwy W to Las Posas Rd., go S to PCH, take PCH N onto Wood Rd., head W then S on the frontage road to the lot at the main (#1) gate. Meet at 8:00 a.m. The limited attendance list must be submitted to the base, so sign up early. Must be 16 years old, scopes but no cameras, please. Include in your reservation request an SASE, citizenship status, phone number and a \$5 deposit to be refunded at the gate.

Sunday, January 27 - Malibu Lagoon. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the lagoon parking lot. The lot is on the ocean side of PCH, just W 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).

Sunday, January 27 - Tufted Duck Hunt. No sure thing, but **Bob Johnson** will follow up reports or try finding his own duck. Plenty of other birds, too! Meet at Denny's by the Roxford St. exit just E of I-5. Leaves at 8:00 a.m. Call tape first-definite, but very subject to change per scouting reports. (LA, p.2, B-3).

Sunday, February 3 - Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See January 6 write-up for details.

Friday and Saturday, February 8 and 9 - Gull Workshop. This slide presentation with handout, given by **Arnold Small**, will address many aspects of those seemingly

inseparable gulls. See further details on page 9. The lecture will be 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. on Friday evening at the Union Federal Savings ground floor meeting room at 8485 Wilshire Blvd. Limited parking available around the corner in the lot off of La Cienega. Lot will be locked during the lecture. The field trip will meet at Malibu Lagoon at 8:00 a.m. and end up at McGrath State Park at about 4:00 in the afternoon. \$8 lecture only or \$20 for the lecture and field trip. Limited attendance to either event is by SASE reservation only. (Lecture: LA, p.42, E-2), (Field trip: LA, p.114, B-5).

Saturday, February 9 - Prado Basin. Ecologist **Tom Keeney** will take our group through the extensive ponds and riparian woodlands behind Prado Dam. We should see a good selection of waterfowl, riparian passerines, raptors, shorebirds and other wintering birds. Sign-up by phone at Audubon House to learn 8:00 a.m. meeting location in Corona. 20 maximum. Bring mud-resistant footwear.

What's In A Bird Name?

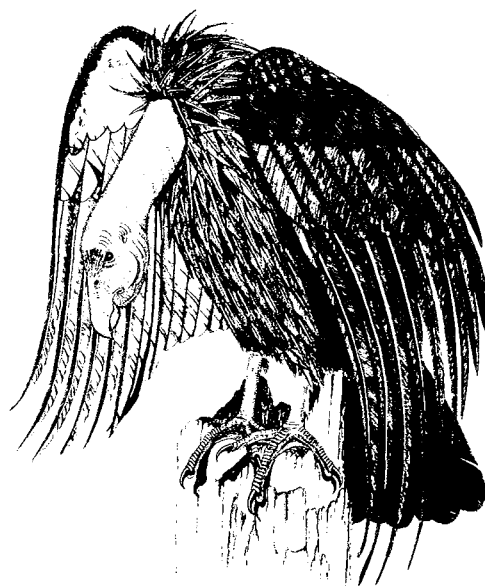
by Jim Halferty

One of the interesting facets of birding that we all learn early on is that whoever named some of the birds we see either was not paying attention or he/she was pulling our fibulas.

For example, the word "horn" really got fowled up in bird usage. Horned Owls do not have horns. Nor do Horned Grebes or Horned Larks. Rhinoceros Auklet do, so why not Horned Auklet? And the horns on a Horned Puffin — that is another avian hyperbole.

Further, Screech Owls do not screech, either in the East or the West. Bald Eagles are not bald, they only look that way to the myopic. But Condors are bald, so why not Bald Condor?

When we first heard about a Sharp-shinned Hawk we had a mental picture of a hawk with knives for shins, cutting through the air. Rough-legged Hawks and Rough-winged Swallows — rough? Compared to what? And Bristle-thighed Curlews... we expect to see a curlew with thighs that look like scrub brushes. But wait... 99 and 44/100 percent of birders are never going to see one, so we can scrub that.



"Bald" Condor?
Illustration by Lee Jones

How about some close calls? When we go birding for our first Orange-crowned Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet or Ring-necked Duck, we soon learn that looking for those distinguishing characteristics is an exercise in futility. The people who came up with those names probably shot the birds and then went over them feather by feather to search out those "diagnostic" features. And laughed all the way to the printers with their new "descriptive" labels.

Names do help make birding both interesting and fun. New in the game and walking with a group through a darkened, still woods, someone suddenly hollers, "There's a titmouse." The girl novice birders scream in terror. Then they are greatly relieved to learn it was not a mouse after all.

What's in a bird name? Not always what we expect. The reader might want to send the editor some bird names that come to mind as odd or intriguing. But please be careful of your language. For example, boobies mean different things to different people. ➤

Saturday, February 16 - Antelope Valley. Jean Brandt will lead five cars full of birders from Quail Lake along the length of the Valley. Winter car birding should still be good, with a selection of raptors, ducks and other birds. Bring warm clothes, picnic with hot beverage, scopes. No fee, but send SASE per policy to Audubon House for confirmation and meeting time and place. Please include info on comfortable, available seating in your car for carpooling, and willingness to be assigned as a passenger. Reservations accepted on a first-come-first-serve basis. (LA, p.D, quad.141).

Saturday, February 16 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Leader David White. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See January 20 write-up for details.

Saturday and Sunday, February 23 and 24 - Salton Sea. Marge Parnias will be your tour guide to this spectacular winter birding spot. Those wishing to see and hear 150 Sandhill Cranes and thousands of White-faced Ibis as they wheel and glide, gently descending on their roosting grounds, should meet up with Marge at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 23. Take Hwy 111 S to Brawley, head W thru town on Main St., then continue S on Hwy 86 to Cattle Call Dr., turning right and continuing to the fenced grassy area by the arena. Sunday morning, the group (and welcome latecomers) will reform at Carl's Jr. at Main and First Sts. in Brawley, leaving there at 7:00 a.m. A good trip for Canada, Snow and Ross' Geese, Burrowing Owl, Great-tailed Grackle, Stilt Sandpiper, Yellow-footed Gull and White Pelican. 118 species seen by the two groups in '90. Anticipate mud. Bring picnic, scopes, warm clothes.

Sunday, February 24 - Malibu Lagoon. Leader SMBAS member. Meet at 8:30 a.m. See January 27 write-up for details.

Saturday, March 2 - Chatsworth Reservoir. Leader Dustin Alcalá. Primarily an "old California" native grassland habitat with a small lake and oak riparian woodlands in the adjacent arroyos. Geese, raptors and other wintering and resident birds. Bring lunch and water. No restrooms. Finish up noonish. Take 405 Fwy N to Roscoe, head W to Fallbrook, take this right to the DWP entrance at the end. Meet here at the gate at 8:00 a.m. (LA, p.6, A-6).

Tuesday, March 19 - LA Arboretum. Barbara Cohen will lead a morning walk through varied habitat looking for quail, owls, herons, raptors and early migrants to usher in the first day of spring. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in front of the gatehouse in the parking lot on Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, just

S of 210 Fwy, on the W side of the street. No fee on third Tuesday only. (LA, p.28, C-4).

Saturday and Sunday, March 23 and 24 - Owens Valley Grouse Trip. Resident leader Earl Gann will show us around his favorite spots including Glacier Lodge and Diaz Lake. Sunday morning we will meet very early to watch the Sage Grouse displaying on the lek. Blue Grouse, Sage Thrashers, Pinion Jays, Osprey and winnowing Snipe are all expected. Rosy Finches and Long-eared Owls are hopefuls. Limited to 16. Reserve with a \$10 check (see policy). Include SASE for 7:30 a.m. Big Pine meeting location and lodging list.

Friday, April 5 - Flycatcher ID Workshop. Our speaker will be the well-known guide and author Jon Dunn. Emphasis of the slide lecture will be placed on identification of the problematic groups of flycatchers encountered in California including the big, brown Myiarchus group, the colorful kingbirds and the remarkably uniform *empidonax* complex. In just the past few years, the process of identifying "Empids" has been refined to where we have a fighting chance for some positive IDs. Jon will also have slides of specimens, and taped bird calls. Binoculars a must to see fine details on the screen. 7:30 p.m. at Union Federal Savings, 8485 Wilshire Blvd. See February 8 & 9 Gull Workshop write-up for directions. Fee \$7. Reserve at Audubon House with SASE. (LA, p.114, B-5). 🐦

RESERVATION AND FEE EVENTS (Limited Participation) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Reservations will be accepted ONLY if ALL the following information is supplied:

- (1) Trip desired
 - (2) Names of people in your party
 - (3) Phone numbers (a) usual and (b) evening before event, in case of emergency cancellation
 - (4) Separate check (no cash please) to LAAS for exact amount for each trip
 - (5) Self-addressed stamped envelope for confirmation and associated trip information
- Send to Reservations Chairman Millie Newton, LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.
- If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date (four weeks for pelagics) and you will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation after that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement.

Millie Newton is available at Audubon House on Tuesdays 10 - 3 to answer questions about field trips. If you desire to carpool to an event, she can also provide contacts for you. Our office staff is also available Tues. - Sat. for most reservation services.

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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 \$15 per year. The newsletter is sent by first class mail to subscribers and members who pay an additional \$7. 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 10:00 p.m.

(213) 454-2576 - David Koeppel

(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 precedes the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 8 - Esther and Robert Tyrrell. Our southern California-based hummingbird mavens will present a breathtaking look into the world of these miniature masters of flight. This evening's talk/slide show will highlight the hummers of the Caribbean, including the Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest bird, and the Streamertail or "Doctor Bird" of Jamaica. Take this opportunity to have Esther and Bob sign your copy (available at Audubon House) of their new, lavishly illustrated book, *Hummingbirds of the Caribbean*.

ID Workshop: Herb Clarke, Birds of Fall

Tuesday, February 12 - Annual Members' Slide Contest! A perennial favorite, this event brings out the art critic and art lover in all of us. Bring your friends... boo the judges... cheer your favorites. Photos must be of wild, unrestrained birds only. Submit up to five (5) 35mm slides per photographer, with a dot in the upper-right corner (for placement in slide tray) and your name on each slide. All participants must be present at the show to accept their honors and divulge their winning technique (or good fortune!). Bookstore gift certificates to all winners.

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

which can be observed in southern California, concentrating on the field identification of these raptors in their many plumages. Recommended text: *Hawks* by Clark and Wheeler. Likely on Sunday's field trip are: Ferruginous and Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon and Northern Harrier. Possible species include Rough-legged & Cooper's Hawks, Golden Eagle and Merlin. Lecture meets at 7:30 p.m. at Union Federal Savings at 8485 Wilshire Blvd. and La Cienega in LA (LA, p.42, E-2). Free, locked parking lot for duration of meeting. Some street parking if large crowd. Field trip meets at 7:00 a.m. in the San Fernando Valley. Exact location will be given at the lecture or by phone to paid participants. Cost: \$15 for lecture and/or bus, \$6 for lecture only. Reserve at Audubon House with SASE.

Continued on page 10

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PELAGIC TRIPS

See pages 2 and 3 in this issue for annual pelagic trip schedule and reservation information.

FIELD TRIPS

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).

Sunday, January 6 - Sepulveda Basin. Dustin Alcalá leads this morning tour of a nearby greenbelt. Easy birding in a "wild" area. Take the 405 Fwy to Burbank Blvd., head west to Woodley Ave., turn N (right) and proceed to the Woodley Park entrance on the right. Meet in the first lot at 8:00 a.m. (LA, p.16, B-6).

Sunday, January 6 - Topanga State Park. Gerry Haigh will lead participants through this nearby area composed of

sycamores, grasslands, scrub oak and chaparral. This is an ideal trip for a beginning birder or for someone new in the area. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. heading SW from the Valley, take a very sharp turn E (uphill) on Entrada Dr. (7 miles S of Ventura Blvd., 1 mile N of Topanga Village). Follow the signs to the state park, and meet in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch at 8:00 a.m. \$3 parking fee. (LA, p.109, D-4).

Saturday, January 12 - Gull Mini-Workshop. Field seminar on gulls given by our own Larry Allen. Includes a short discussion on gull ID and Larry's field-tested handout. Bring a picnic lunch, warm clothing, Nat'l. Geo. Field Guide and a scope if you have one. We will meet at the Malibu Lagoon parking lot kiosk at 8:00 a.m. Free parking on Cross Creek Road (first road W of lagoon bridge). Trip will finish at McGrath State Park in Oxnard. (LA, p.114, B-5).

Friday and Sunday, January 18 and 20 - Raptor Workshop. Ned Harris has further augmented his fine slide collection since last year's remarkable presentation. Friday slide show / Sunday Antelope Valley bus trip. The raptor ID workshop will cover the 22 species of diurnal birds of prey

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WESTERN TANAGER

Cumulative Index

1979 to 1990, Volumes 46 to 56

Prepared for the Los Angeles Audubon Society by Glenn Cunningham, December 1990

A

- ABA-1982-FLORIDA. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1982 p.4
Acid Rain. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. July 1983 p.6
ACTION PRIORITY GOALS SET FOR ENVIRONMENT BY NATIONAL AUDUBON. Aug. 1981 p.1
ADAPTIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF THE TURKEY VULTURE (CATHARTIS AURA), THE. William Lemon. Mar. 1988 p.5
ADVENTURE IN BRAZIL. Helen Matelson. May 1981 p.1
Air Quality Management. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Jan. 1989 p.3
Alaska
BIRDING THE INLAND PASSAGE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Oct. 1986 p.1
SPRING BIRDING IN THE MATANUSKA. Frederick Machetanz. Oct. 1986 p.3
Alderfer, Jonathan. AN ARRANGEMENT OF FEATHERS. July 1987 p.6
AMERICAN TRADER (TRAITOR) SPILLED. (Verse) Leslie Levy. May 1990 p.6
AN ALTERNATIVE EXPERIENCE: BIRDWATCHING AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM. Jan. 1983 p.9
ANDEAN CONDORS RELEASED. Mar. 1989 p.4
Anderson, Eugene N., Jr. THE CHAPARRAL. Part II of PLANT COMMUNITIES AND BIRD HABITATS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Nov. 1984 p.1
Anderson, Gene and Kelly, Dexter. BIRDING IN NEARER BAJA. Dec. 1980 p.1
ANNUAL MEMBERS PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS. Mar. 1987 p.1, Mar. 1988 p.1, Jan. 1990 p.1
ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Apr. 1984 p.1
ANTARCTICA ALERT. Jesse Moorman. Oct. 1989 p.4
Antelope Valley. THE MAKING OF A HOT SPOT: THE ANTELOPE VALLEY. Chuck Bernstein. July 1982 p.4
April Fool's Edition. KNOT THE WESTERN TANAGER. Apr. 1983 p.5
AN ARRANGEMENT OF FEATHERS. Jonathan Alderfer. July 1987 p.6
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. AUDUBON TOUGHENS STAND AGAINST DRILLING IN ARCTIC REFUGE. Oct. 1989 p.10
AUDUBON CAMP IN THE WEST. Joe Zell. Nov. 1982 p.5
AN AUDUBON HANDBOOK: WESTERN BIRDS. John Farrand. Review by Charles Hood. Jan. 1988 p.6
Audubon House. FIRE AT AUDUBON HOUSE. Jean Brandt. Jan. 1982 p.1
THE AUDUBON HOUSE LIBRARY. Glenn Cunningham. Nov. 1988 p.1
AUDUBON TELEVISION "SPECIAL." Peter A.A. Berle. Nov. 1989 p.8
AUDUBON TOUGHENS STAND AGAINST DRILLING IN ARCTIC REFUGE. Oct. 1989 p.10
AUGUST IN NEW GUINEA. Bob Van Meter. July 1982 p.1
Austin, Ian. VERSES. June 1987 p.5

Australia

- AUSTRALIA: FUN TO BIRD. INEXPENSIVE TOO. Richard and Beatrice Smith. Jun. 1987 p.1
BIRDING AT WORK, AUSTRALIA. Pamela Conely. Mar. 1982 p.1
BIRDING AUSTRALIA. Henry E. Childs, Jr.
Part I: Planning the trip. Feb. 1984 p.1
Part II: The Northeast Quadrant. Apr. 1984 p.4
Part III: East and South. Jun. 1984 p.3
Part IV: Tasmania and Western Australia. Jul. 1984 p.4
PAPUA-AUSTRALIA OVERVIEW, BIRDQUEST '89. James Clements. Nov. 1989 p.1
THE AVIAN MISFITS. Gerry Haigh, Lee Jones and Jan Tarble. Apr. 1980 p.1
Avian Tuberculosis. MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM PNEUMONITIS. Dorothy Dimsdale. June 1985 p.8
Awareness and the Environment. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Nov. 1985 p.7

B

- BACK TO BASE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Mar. 1990 p.8
Bailey, R.L. A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO BIRDING IN HAWAII. Mar. 1983 p.2
Baja California
BIRDING IN NEARER BAJA. Gene Anderson and Dexter Kelly. Dec. 1980 p.1
BIRDING THE MANGROVES OF BAJA. Raye Rhoads. Apr. 1984 p.9
BALD EAGLES REINTRODUCED ONTO CATALINA ISLAND. Sep. 1982 p.8; see also May 1980 p.7 and Dec. 1980 p.8
Ballona Lagoon. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Apr. 1987 p.8
BALLONA WETLANDS. Jesse Moorman. Mar. 1989 p.3
Bancroft, G. Thomas and Bowman, Reed. PIGEONS AND HAMMOCKS: A FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP. Oct. 1989 p.10
Bancroft, Dr. Thomas and Hoffman, Dr. Wayne. COWBIRDS INVADE SUNSHINE STATE. Apr. 1989 p.9
Barnes, Bob. SOUTH FORK KERN RIVER RIPARIAN AREA: CUCKOOS AND TANAGERS. May 1983 p.1
Baxter, Hal and Garrett, Kimball. BIRDS OF THE SEASON. Sep. 1983 - Sep. 1987
Berle, Peter A.A. AUDUBON TELEVISION "SPECIAL." Nov. 1989 p.8
Bernstein, Chuck
BIRDATHON, SHMIRDATHON: THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. Jun. 1990 p.1
DETAILS ON DETAILS: DESCRIBING A BIRD.
Part I Mar. 1984 p.1
Part II May 1984 p.3
THE HOLLYWOOD CONNECTION. June 1988 p.1
THE MAKING OF A HOT SPOT: THE ANTELOPE VALLEY. July 1982 p.4
SATURDAY MATINEE . . . ALL DAY! Excerpt from *The Joy of Birding*. July 1984 p.1
TECHNIQUES OF BIRDING WITH ARNOLD SMALL. A videotape cassette review. Dec. 1985 p.7

- BEYOND ACID RAIN: THE NITROGEN OVERLOAD. Walter, Hartmut. Special guest contributor to Conservation Conversation. Jan. 1987 p.8
- Biodiversity. PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY IS PROTECTING LIFE ON EARTH. Donella H. Meadows. Jun. 1990 p.8
- Bird Alert Tape. CALL 874-1318. Dorothy Dimsdale. Sep. 1981 p.4
- Bird Identification. FIELD TIPS: THE SINGLE FIELD MARK SYNDROME. Kimball Garrett. Jan. 1986 p.1
- Bird Names. DOVES 'N HAWKES. Dave Grindell. June 1983 p.4
- BIRDATHON, SHMIRDATHON: THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. Chuck Bernstein. Jun. 1990 p.1
- BIRDING ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Aug. 1990 p.1, Cont. Sep. 1990 p.3
- BIRDING AS A FOUR-LETTER WORD. Lee Jones. Nov. 1980 p.8
- BIRDING AT BUENA VISTA LAGOON. Alice Fries. Nov. 1980 p.4
- BIRDING AT WORK, AUSTRALIA. Pamela Conley. Mar. 1982 p.1
- BIRDING AUSTRALIA. Henry E. Childs, Jr. and Helen C. Childs
Part I Planning the Trip. Feb. 1984 p.1
Part II The Northeast Quadrant. Apr. 1984 p.4
Part III East and South. June 1984 p.3
Part IV Tasmania and Western Australia. July 1984 p.4
- BIRDING CHINO: LAKE SERRANOS REVISITED. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Oct. 1989 p.4
- BIRDING ECUADOR. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Sep. 1985 p.1
- BIRDING HUNTINGTON BEACH CENTRAL PARK. Ruth Lohr. Jan. 1981 p.5
- BIRDING IN NEARER BAJA. Gene Anderson and Dexter Kelly. Dec. 1980 p.1
- BIRDING IN SAN ANTONIO CANYON. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Sep. 1980 p.9
- BIRDING IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY. Helen Matelson and Nancy Crawford. June 1982 p.1
- BIRDING IN THE CUCAMONGA AREA. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Oct. 1980 p.9
- BIRDING IN THE LLANOS. Philip A. Silverstone. Nov. 1980 p.1
- BIRDING LANDS END. Alan Hopkins. Aug. 1981 p.8
- BIRDING LOCALITIES. Henry E. Childs, Jr.
Southwest San Bernardino County. Mar. 1980 p.3
Lytle Creek. June 1980 p.11.
- BIRDING LOCALITIES. Tapia County Park. Jean Brandt. Feb. 1980 p.10
- BIRDING SANTEE LAKES, SAN DIEGO COUNTY. Claude Edwards, Jr. Mar. 1982 p.9
- BIRDING SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS. Larry L. Norris. Jan. 1982 p.4
- BIRDING THE ASIAN SUBCONTINENT: INDIA AND SRI LANKA. Henry E. Childs, Jr. June 1986 p.1
- BIRDING THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS. Helen and Teri Matelson. Apr. 1983 p.1
- BIRDING THE INLAND PASSAGE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Oct. 1986 p.1
- BIRDING THE MANGROVES OF BAJA. Raye Rhoads. Apr. 1984 p.9
- BIRDING THE PALO ALTO BAYLAND AND FLOOD CONTROL BASIN REFUGE. Dan Murphy. Apr. 1982 p.1
- BIRDING THE PAMPAS, PATAGONIA AND THE LAND OF FIRE. Henry E. Childs, Jr.
Part I Pampas and Northern Patagonia. Apr. 1988 p.1
Part II Patagonia South and Tierra del Fuego. May 1988 p.1
- BIRDING THE SAN JACINTO AREA. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Sep. 1981 p.5
- BIRDING THE SANTA ANA RIVER IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Jan. 1981 p.9
- BIRDING THE SOCIETY ISLANDS. Ed Tarvyd. Mar. 1981 p.1
- BIRDQUEST '89. James Clements
China Overview. Jul. 1989 p.1
Update. Sep. 1989 p.1
Papua-Australia. Nov. 1989 p.1
Brazil Overview. Dec. 1989 p.4
Wind Up. Mar. 1990 p.10
Thailand. Sep. 1990 p.1
- BIRD'S NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM AND GEOMAGNETIC FIELD. Caltech Neurobiologist Study. Oct. 1980 p.7
- BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND - A LOCALITY GUIDE by Stuart Chambers. Review by Cliff Pollard. Jun. 1990 p.7
- BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: EXERPTS. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn
Surfbird. May 1980 p.9
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. June 1980 p.5
Common Poorwill. July 1980 p.5
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Hank Brodtkin. Sep. 1988 - May 1989; July 1989 - Sep. 1990
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FIRE AT AUDUBON HOUSE. Jan. 1982 p.1
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- Bushtit. A CLOSER LOOK. Kimball Garrett. Feb. 1980 p.6
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C

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- THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR? Harrison Truitt Starr
Part I Oct. 1982 p.1
Part II Nov. 1982 p.1
- CALIFORNIA CONDOR: A CAPTIVE HISTORY. Mike Cunningham. Oct. 1979 p.2
- THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR: A DIFFERENT APPROACH, ANOTHER CHANCE. David White. Nov. 1986 p.1
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 CALIFORNIA PELAGICS - RESOURCE LIST. Wanda Conway. June 1985 p.7
 CALL 874-1318. Dorothy Dimsdale. Sep. 1981 p.4
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 Carrizo Plain
 The Carrizo Plain. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. June 1987 p.4
 Carrizo Plain Trip. Bob Hansen. Mar. 1989 p.5
 December on the Carrizo Plain. Bob Hansen. Mar. 1990 p.1
 Cranes in the Carrizo. Joan Easton Lantz. Dec. 1984 p.6
 Winter Buteos of the Carrizo Plains. Jody L. Venema. Oct. 1987 p.6
 The Case Against the Reagan Environmental Record. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Sep. 1982 p.4
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 Part I Planning the Trip. Feb. 1984 p.1
 Part II The Northeast Quadrant. Apr. 1984 p.4
 Part III The East and South. June 1984 p.3
 Part IV Tasmania and Western Australia. July 1984 p.4
 Childs, Henry E., Jr.
 BIRDING CHINO: LAKE SERRANOS REVISITED. Oct. 1989 p.4
 BIRDING ECUADOR. Sep. 1985 p.1
 BIRDING IN SAN ANTONIO CANYON. Sep. 1980 p.9
 BIRDING IN THE CUCAMONGA AREA. Oct. 1980 p.9
 BIRDING LOCALITIES
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 Lytle Creek. June 1980 p.11
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 BIRDING THE SANTA ANA RIVER IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY. Jan. 1981 p.9
 BRAWLEY, BIRDING BELOW SEA LEVEL. Apr. 1990 p.1
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 THOSE SOCIABLE WOODPECKERS. Mar. 1981 p.5
 Chile
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 Part I: Jan. 1987 p.1
 Part II: Mar. 1987 p.3
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 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS SCHEDULE 1989. Dec. 1989 p.8
 CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS
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 MALIBU CANYON. Kimball Garrett. Feb. 1980 p.5
 Clark, Terry. THE DISCIPLINE OF BIRDING. May 1980 p.6
 Clarke, Herbert
 THE PANTANAL - BRAZIL'S AVIAN PARADISE. Dec. 1986 p.1
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 Clarke, Olga L.
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 Western Grebe. Nov. 1979 p.5
 White-crowned Sparrow. Dec. 1979 p.10
 Bushtit. Feb. 1980 p.6
 Bald Eagle. Mar. 1980 p.4
 House Sparrow. Apr. 1980 p.10
 Hairy Woodpecker. May 1980 p.10
 Mountain Chickadee. June 1980 p.6
 Variations in Southern California Birds. July 1980 p.4
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 Colombia. BIRDING IN THE LLANOS. Philip A. Silverstone. Nov. 1980 p.1
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 COMPUTERS ARE FOR THE BIRDS. Steven Hartman
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 Part II Graphic Examples. Oct. 1986 p.4
 Part III Frequency and Abundance. Nov. 1986 p.4
 Part IV Measuring Occurrences. Dec. 1986 p.3
 Condors
 ANDEAN CONDORS RELEASED. Mar. 1989 p.4
 THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR? Harrison Truitt Starr
 Part I: Oct. 1982 p.1
 Part II: Nov. 1982 p.1
 CALIFORNIA CONDOR: A CAPTIVE HISTORY. Mike Cunningham. Oct. 1979 p.2

- THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR: A DIFFERENT APPROACH, ANOTHER CHANCE. David White. Nov. 1986 p.1
- THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR ON THE BRINK. Harrison Truitt Starr. Jul. 1985 p.1
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Part II: Nov. 1984 p.4
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The Case Against the Reagan Environmental Record. Sep. 1982 p.4
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One World. Jan. 1983 p.6
Malibu Lagoon. Mar. 1983 p.6
Morongo Valley. Mar. 1983 p.6
Acid Rain. July 1983 p.6
National Audubon Society Convention. Nov. 1983 p.8
Conservation in Costa Rica. July 1984 p.7
Environmental Protection Agency. Sep. 1984 p.7
Garrison Diversion Unit. Oct. 1984 p.6
Malibu Revisited. Dec. 1984 p.4
Sepulveda Wildlife Preserve. Mar. 1985 p.8
Chemical Pollution. Apr. 1985 p.9 and May 1986 p.8
World Population Problems. May 1985 p.4
Environmental Alarmists. June 1985 p.9
Litter. Sep. 1985 p.8
William Penn Mott, Director of National Park Service. Oct. 1985 p.8
Awareness and the Environment. Nov. 1985 p.7
Water Conservation. Dec. 1985 p.8
Mono Lake. Jan. 1986 p.2
Endangered Species Act. Mar. 1986 p.6
Southern California Wetlands. Apr. 1986 p.9
Nuclear Age Risks. July 1986 p.8
Quality of Life. Oct. 1986 p.8
Las Virgenes Canyon. Dec. 1986 p.6
California Desert Protection Act. Mar. 1987 p.6
Ballona Lagoon. Apr. 1987 p.8
Environmental Concern. May 1987 p.8
The Carrizo Plain. June 1987 p.4
Development and the Environment. Dec. 1987 p.8
Nicaragua and the Environment. Jan. 1988 p.8
The Ozone Layer. Mar. 1988 p.8
Environmental Awareness. May 1988 p.5 and Nov. 1989 p.4
The Condor Rides Again! June 1988 p.4
Government and the Environment. Sep. 1988 p.6 and Apr. 1989 p.6
Greenhouse Effect. Dec. 1988 p.4
- Air Quality Management. Jan. 1989 p.3
- Dave Pearson's Report on Peru. Mar. 1989 p.6
- The Spotted Owl. May 1989 p.4
- Threats to the Environment. July 1989 p.4
- Chief Seattle Speaks. Sep. 1989 p.4
- Gorman Wind Farm. Oct. 1989 p.3
- William Ruckelshaus. Jan. 1990 p.4
- Song Bird Decline. Mar. 1990 p.4
- Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area. Apr. 1990 p.4
- The Population Explosion. May 1990 p.2
- Looking on the Bright Side. Jun. 1990
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MONO BASIN FIELD TRIP. Oct. 1985 p.4
RESOURCE LISTING OF BIRDWALKS IN THE GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA. Sep. 1985 p.7
SUMMER BIRDING DOLDRUMS? June 1985 p.6
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COSTA RICA - A BIRDER'S PARADISE. Olga L. Clarke. Sep. 1988 p.4
Costa Rica Conservation. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. July 1984 p.7
DECEMBER IN COSTA RICA. Bob Van Meter. Sep. 1981 p.1
COSTA RICA, JEWEL OF CENTRAL AMERICA. Olga L. Clarke. Oct. 1987 p.1
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- CRANES IN THE CARRIZO. Joan Easton Lantz. Dec. 1984 p.6
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- Crawford, Nancy and Matelson, Helen. BIRDING IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY. June 1982 p.1
- Crossbills. THOSE CURIOUS CROSSBILLS. Dave Grindell. Oct. 1985 p.5
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THE AUDUBON HOUSE LIBRARY. Nov. 1988 p.1
FRUSTRATION IN THE FOREST. (Verse) Sep. 1990 p.8
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Part I Sep. 1983 p.1
Part II Oct. 1983 p.5
Part III Jan. 1984 p.4
THE STORY OF PLUMMER HOUSE. Jan. 1982 p.1
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- Curlews. THE IDENTIFICATION OF CURLEWS, GENUS NUMENIUS. Kimball Garret and Jon Dunn. July 1983 p.1
- THE DANCE OF THE SAGE GROUSE. Joan Easton Lantz. Mar. 1986 p.4
- A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AMBLYRHYNCHUS CRISTATUS. Lee Jones. Nov. 1979 p.1
- D**
- DECEMBER IN COSTA RICA. Bob Van Meter. Sep. 1981 p.1
- DECEMBER ON THE CARRIZO PLAIN. Rob Hansen. Mar. 1990 p.1
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- DESTINATION HUDSON BAY. Dorothy Dimsdale. Sep. 1988 p.1
- DETAILS ON DETAILS: DESCRIBING A BIRD. Chuck Bernstein
Part I Mar. 1984 p.1
Part II May 1984 p.3
- Development and the Environment. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Dec. 1987 p.8
- Dillinger, Bill. NEW STRIP MINING METHODS THREATEN THE WEST. June 1989 p.7
- Dimsdale, Dorothy
ABA-1982-FLORIDA. Nov. 1982 p.4
BACK TO BASE. Mar. 1990 p.8
BIRDING ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE. Aug. 1990 p.1, Cont. Sep. 1990 p.3
CALL 874-1318. Sep. 1981 p.4
DESTINATION HUDSON BAY. Sep. 1988 p.1
GLORIOUS IDAHO GROUSE. Nov. 1989 p.10
GOOD BIRDER BEHAVIOR. Nov. 1980 p.9
THE JIZZ OF A VOLUNTEER. Oct. 1980 p.8
THE KERN RIVER - WET AND WONDERFUL. May 1983 p.6
MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM PNEUMONITIS. June 1985 p.8
OCTOBER AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA OFF MONTEREY. Dec. 1987 p.1
ODE TO AN APHELOCOMA COERULESCENS. Dec. 1981 p.3
ON COPING WITH NON-BIRDERS. Mar. 1981 p.8
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN. Oct. 1981 p.5
PERPETRATING THE PMA. July 1981 p.5
A RELIABLE SOURCE. Dec. 1980 p.8
SEEING NO. 606. May 1986 p.7
VAGRANCY SWEEPS SOUTH TEXAS. June 1989 p.1
WE'VE BEEN HAD. Apr. 1990 p.8
- THE DISCIPLINE OF BIRDING. Terry Clark. May 1980 p.6
- DOVES 'N HAWKES. Dave Grindell. June 1983 p.4
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- DROPPING LIKE FLIES. Jesse Moorman. Oct. 1989 p.5
- Dunn, Jon
FIELD NOTES
Manx Shearwater. Sep. 1979 p.6
Sandpipers. Oct. 1979 p.6
Western Sandpiper. Nov. 1979 p.6
Semipalmated Sandpiper. Dec. 1979 p.6
- Dunn, Jon and Garrett, Kimball. See also Garrett, Kimball and Dunn, Jon
- THE DESERT SPARROWS: BLACK-THROATED AND SAGE. Oct. 1982 p.4
- FIELD NOTES: HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jan. 1982 p.8
- FIELD NOTES: THE RED TAILED HAWK. Mar. 1982 p.1
- FIELD NOTES: TREE, BANK AND ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS. June 1982 p.8
- FIELD NOTES: YELLOW, ORANGE-CROWNED AND WILSON WARBLERS. Dec. 1981 p.1
- THE IDENTIFICATION OF CURVE-BILLED, BENDIRE'S AND GRAY THRASHERS. Dec. 1984 p.1
- THE IDENTIFICATION OF HORNED AND EARED GREBES. May 1985 p.1
- THE IDENTIFICATION OF WOOD-PEWEES. Dec. 1983 p.1
- THE IDENTIFICATION OF THRUSHES OF THE GENUS CATHARUS. See title entry.
- NUTTALL'S AND LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKERS. Dec. 1982 p.1

E

- Eagle, Bald. A CLOSER LOOK. Kimball Garrett. Mar. 1980 p.4
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- ECUADOR, BIRDING. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Sep. 1985 p.1
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- Endangered Species. FOUR MORE CALIFORNIA BIRDS NOW ENDANGERED. Oct. 1981 p.1
- Endangered Species Act. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Mar. 1986 p.6
- The Endangered Species Act. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Apr. 1982 p.4
- Environmental Alarmists. Sandy Wohlgemuth. June 1985 p.9
- Environmental Awareness. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. May 1988 p.5
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F

- Falcons
Falcons, Peregrine. OILED BIG SUR FALCON. Brian Watson. Apr. 1986 p.9
ON WATCHING PEREGRINES. Bob Shanman. Sep. 1984 p.5
REHABILITATING A PEALE'S PEREGRINE FALCON. Tim Gallagher. Nov. 1980 p.5
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THE RED TAILED HAWK. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Mar. 1982 p.1
TREE, BANK AND ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. June 1982 p.8
YELLOW, ORANGE-CROWNED AND WILSON WARBLERS. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Dec. 1981 p.1
- FIELD TIPS
THE BISHOP TEST. Kimball Garrett. July 1986 p.1
JUVENILE GULLS. Kimball Garrett. Oct. 1985 p.6
THE SINGLE FIELD MARK SYNDROME. Kimball Garrett. Jan. 1986 p.1
- Field Trips
Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Mar. 22-23. Stephen Gustafson
Morongo Valley Wildlife Preserve and Joshua Tree National Monument. May 2-3. Stewart W. James. Jan. 1986 p.4
Morro Bay. Nov. 2-3 1985. Kimball Garrett.
Sage Grouse Trip. Apr. 12-13. David Gaines
San Joaquin Valley Jan. 11-12 1986. Robert B. Hansen. Jan. 1987 p.4
- Field trips, local. SUMMER BIRDING DOLDRUM? Wanda Conway. June 1985 p.6
- FIRE AT AUDUBON HOUSE. Jean Brandt. Jan. 1982 p.1
- FIRST NORTH AMERICAN RECORD FOR THE BLUE BREASTED QUAIL. Henry E. Childs, Jr. May 1987 p.11
- FISH OF THE DESERT. Larry L. Norris. Jan. 1981 p.1
- FISHING FOR THE FUTURE. Carl Safina. May 1990 p.7
- Florida. COWBIRDS INVADE SUNSHINE STATE. Dr. Thomas Bancroft and Dr. Wayne Hoffman. Apr. 1989 p.9
- FOUR MORE CALIFORNIA BIRDS NOW ENDANGERED. Oct. 1981 p.1
- FOXES. Lee Jones. July 1980 p.1
- Freeman, Nick
NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT. July 1989 p.2
THRASHING AROUND IN THE OUTBACK. May 1990 p.6

Fries, Alice. BIRDING AT BUENA VISTA LAGOON. Nov. 1980 p.4
 FROM THE SIDELINES. Harold Swanton. Apr. 1982 p.1
 FRUSTRATION IN THE FOREST. (Verse) Glenn Cunningham. Sep. 1990 p.8

G

Gallagher, Tim. REHABILITATING A PEALE'S PEREGRINE FALCON. Nov. 1980 p.5
 Garrett, Kimball
 BIRDS OF THE SEASON. Oct. 1987 - May 1988
 CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS. Malibu Canyon. Feb. 1980 p.5
 A CLOSER LOOK. (See title entry)
 FIELD TIPS
 Juvenile Gulls. Oct. 1985 p.6
 The Single Field Mark Syndrome. Jan. 1986 p.1
 The Bishop Test. July 1986 p.1
 HYBRIDIZATION, THE LUMP AND SPLIT GAME RENEWED. Sep. 1979 p.1
 THE NEXT TEN BIRDS FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY. Jan. 1988 p.3
 A PRELIMINARY WATERBIRD CENSUS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY LAKES AND RESERVOIRS. Sep. 1987 p.1
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 Garrett, Kimball and Brandt, Jean. MALIBU CHRISTMAS COUNT. Nov. 1979 p.4
 Garrett, Kimball and Dunn, Jon. See also Dunn, Jon and Garrett, Kimball
 THE DESERT SPARROWS: BLACK-THROATED AND SAGE. Oct. 1982 p.4
 FIELD NOTES:
 HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jan. 1982 p.8
 THE RED TAILED HAWK. Mar. 1982 p.1
 TREE, BANK AND ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS. June 1982 p.8
 YELLOW, ORANGE-CROWNED AND WILSON WARBLERS. Dec. 1981 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON AND LESSER NIGHTHAWKS. Sep. 1982 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF CURLEWS, GENUS NUMENIUS. July 1983 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN TANAGERS OF THE GENUS PIRANGA. Nov. 1983 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF THRUSHES OF THE GENUS CATHARUS. See title entry.
 NUTTALL'S AND LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKERS. Dec. 1982 p.1
 Garrison Diversion Unit. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Oct. 1984 p.6
 GLORIOUS IDAHO GROUSE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1989 p.10
 Gnatcatcher, Black-tailed. Excerpt from *Birds of Southern California*. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. June 1980 p.5
 GOOD BIRDER BEHAVIOR. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1980 p.9
 A GOOD DAY AT THE SIGN. Eric V. Johnson
 Part I Oct. 1984 p.2
 Part II Nov. 1984 p.4
 Good News for Malibu Lagoon. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Nov. 1980 p.6
 Goriup, Paul D. THE HUBARA BUSTARD. Dec. 1981 p.1
 Gorman Wind Farm. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Oct. 1989 p.3
 GORMAN WIND FARM HEARING. July 1989 p.5
 Government and the Environment. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Sep. 1988 p.6; Apr. 1989 p.6

Grebes

Grebe, Western. A CLOSER LOOK. Kimball Garrett. Nov. 1979 p.5
 FIELD NOTES: HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Jan. 1982 p.8
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jon L. Dunn and Kimball L. Garrett. May 1985 p.1
 THE GREAT LATERALLUS ROUNDUP. Harold Swanton. Dec. 1984 p.8
 Green, Gina and Morgan, Jess. THE TROPICAL CONNECTION. Jan. 1983 p.2
 Greenhouse Effect. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Dec. 1988 p.4
 Grindell, Dave
 DOVES 'N HAWKES. June 1983 p.4
 THOSE CURIOUS CROSSBILLS. Oct. 1985 p.5
 WARBLERMOST, AND SUNDRY OTHER FACTS. July 1986 p.5
 Grouse
 THE DANCE OF THE SAGE GROUSE. Joan Easton Lentz. Mar. 1986 p.4
 GLORIOUS IDAHO GROUSE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1989 p.10
 NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT. Nick Freeman. Jul. 1989 p.2
 GUADALAJARA SURPRISE. Virginia Ulfeldt. July 1981 p.1
 GULL IDENTIFICATION: THE SEQUENCE OF PLUMAGE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Dec. 1985 p.1
 Gulls. FIELD TIPS: JUVENILE GULLS. Kimball Garrett. Oct. 1985 p.6

H

Haigh, Gerry
 THE AVIAN MISFITS. Apr. 1980 p.1
 IN SEARCH OF THE RED-CKOADED WOODPECKER. Mar. 1989 p.9
 Hansen, Bob. CARRIZO PLAIN TRIP. Mar. 1989 p.5
 Hansen, Rob. DECEMBER ON THE CARRIZO PLAIN. Mar. 1990 p.1
 Hanson, Janet Tashjian. WELCOME BACK!! THE THICK-BILLED PARROT RETURNS TO ARIZONA. July 1987 p.1
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY, WHITTIER NARROWS! Sandy Wohlge-muth. Oct. 1989 p.9
 Harper, Charles. Review of *THE COMPLETE BIRDER* by Jack Connor. Sep. 1988 p.9
 Hartman, Steven. COMPUTERS ARE FOR THE BIRDS. See title entry.
 Hawaii
 BIRDING THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS. Helen and Teri Matelson. Apr. 1983 p.1
 A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO BIRDING IN HAWAII. R.L. Bailey. Mar. 1983 p.2
 Hawks. FIELD NOTES: THE RED TAILED HAWK. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Mar. 1982 p.1
 Hayman, Peter and others. *SHOREBIRDS, AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE TO THE WADERS OF THE WORLD*. Review by Kimball Garrett. Nov. 1986 p.6
 THE HEALTH EFFECT OF MALATHION. Jesse Moorman. May 1990 p.1
 Heath, Fred
 A NEW CHRISTMAS COUNT - LANCASTER CA. Dec. 1980 p.5
 LOS ANGELES COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS. Nov. 1983 p.4
 A HIGH COUNTRY BIRDING BONANZA AT MINERAL KING. George San Miguel. May 1984 p.1
 Hoffman, Ralph. A SCHOOLMASTER'S HOBBY. Apr. 1981 p.1
 Hoffman, Dr. Wayne and Bancroft, Dr. Thomas. COWBIRDS INVADE SUNSHINE STATE. Apr. 1989 p.9
 THE HOLLYWOOD CONNECTION. Chuck Bernstein. June 1988 p.1
 HOLLYWOOD IS FOR THE BIRDS. Cathy Mish. June 1988 p.3
 Hood, Charles. Review of *AN AUDUBON HANDBOOK: WESTERN BIRDS*. John Farrand. Jan. 1988 p.6
 Hopkins, Alan. BIRDING LANDS END. Aug. 1981 p.8
 HOW FEW IS ENOUGH? THE CASE FOR CAPTIVE BREEDING. Lloyd Kiff. Oct. 1979 p.2

Fries, Alice. BIRDING AT BUENA VISTA LAGOON. Nov. 1980 p.4
 FROM THE SIDELINES. Harold Swanton. Apr. 1982 p.1
 FRUSTRATION IN THE FOREST. (Verse) Glenn Cunningham. Sep. 1990 p.8

G

Gallagher, Tim. REHABILITATING A PEALE'S PEREGRINE FALCON. Nov. 1980 p.5
 Garrett, Kimball
 BIRDS OF THE SEASON. Oct. 1987 - May 1988
 CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS. Malibu Canyon. Feb. 1980 p.5
 A CLOSER LOOK. (See title entry)
 FIELD TIPS
 Juvenile Gulls. Oct. 1985 p.6
 The Single Field Mark Syndrome. Jan. 1986 p.1
 The Bishop Test. July 1986 p.1
 HYBRIDIZATION, THE LUMP AND SPLIT GAME RENEWED. Sep. 1979 p.1
 THE NEXT TEN BIRDS FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY. Jan. 1988 p.3
 A PRELIMINARY WATERBIRD CENSUS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY LAKES AND RESERVOIRS. Sep. 1987 p.1
 RESEARCH IN REVIEW. See title reference
 Review of *THE KNOWN BIRDS OF NORTH AND MIDDLE AMERICA* by Allan R. Phillips. May 1987 p.6
 Review of *SHOREBIRDS, AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE TO THE WADERS OF THE WORLD*. Peter Hayman, John Marchant and Tony Prater. Nov. 1986 p.6
 TURNING A BIRD SIGHTING INTO A BIRD RECORD. Nov. 1987 p.9
 Garrett, Kimball and Brandt, Jean. MALIBU CHRISTMAS COUNT. Nov. 1979 p.4
 Garrett, Kimball and Dunn, Jon. See also Dunn, Jon and Garrett, Kimball
 THE DESERT SPARROWS: BLACK-THROATED AND SAGE. Oct. 1982 p.4
 FIELD NOTES:
 HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jan. 1982 p.8
 THE RED TAILED HAWK. Mar. 1982 p.1
 TREE, BANK AND ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS. June 1982 p.8
 YELLOW, ORANGE-CROWNED AND WILSON WARBLERS. Dec. 1981 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON AND LESSER NIGHTHAWKS. Sep. 1982 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF CURLEWS, GENUS NUMENIUS. July 1983 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN TANAGERS OF THE GENUS PIRANGA. Nov. 1983 p.1
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF THRUSHES OF THE GENUS CATHARUS. See title entry.
 NUTTALL'S AND LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKERS. Dec. 1982 p.1
 Garrison Diversion Unit. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Oct. 1984 p.6
 GLORIOUS IDAHO GROUSE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1989 p.10
 Gnatcatcher, Black-tailed. Excerpt from *Birds of Southern California*. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. June 1980 p.5
 GOOD BIRDER BEHAVIOR. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1980 p.9
 A GOOD DAY AT THE SIGN. Eric V. Johnson
 Part I Oct. 1984 p.2
 Part II Nov. 1984 p.4
 Good News for Malibu Lagoon. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Nov. 1980 p.6
 Goriup, Paul D. THE HUBARA BUSTARD. Dec. 1981 p.1
 Gorman Wind Farm. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Oct. 1989 p.3
 GORMAN WIND FARM HEARING. July 1989 p.5
 Government and the Environment. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Sep. 1988 p.6; Apr. 1989 p.6

Grebes

Grebe, Western. A CLOSER LOOK. Kimball Garrett. Nov. 1979 p.5
 FIELD NOTES: HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Jan. 1982 p.8
 THE IDENTIFICATION OF HORNED AND EARED GREBES. Jon L. Dunn and Kimball L. Garrett. May 1985 p.1
 THE GREAT LATERALLUS ROUNDUP. Harold Swanton. Dec. 1984 p.8
 Green, Gina and Morgan, Jess. THE TROPICAL CONNECTION. Jan. 1983 p.2
 Greenhouse Effect. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlge-muth. Dec. 1988 p.4
 Grindell, Dave
 DOVES 'N HAWKES. June 1983 p.4
 THOSE CURIOUS CROSSBILLS. Oct. 1985 p.5
 WARBLERMOST, AND SUNDRY OTHER FACTS. July 1986 p.5
 Grouse
 THE DANCE OF THE SAGE GROUSE. Joan Easton Lentz. Mar. 1986 p.4
 GLORIOUS IDAHO GROUSE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Nov. 1989 p.10
 NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT. Nick Freeman. Jul. 1989 p.2
 GUADALAJARA SURPRISE. Virginia Ulfeldt. July 1981 p.1
 GULL IDENTIFICATION: THE SEQUENCE OF PLUMAGE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Dec. 1985 p.1
 Gulls. FIELD TIPS: JUVENILE GULLS. Kimball Garrett. Oct. 1985 p.6

H

Haigh, Gerry
 THE AVIAN MISFITS. Apr. 1980 p.1
 IN SEARCH OF THE RED-CKOADED WOODPECKER. Mar. 1989 p.9
 Hansen, Bob. CARRIZO PLAIN TRIP. Mar. 1989 p.5
 Hansen, Rob. DECEMBER ON THE CARRIZO PLAIN. Mar. 1990 p.1
 Hanson, Janet Tashjian. WELCOME BACK!! THE THICK-BILLED PARROT RETURNS TO ARIZONA. July 1987 p.1
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY, WHITTIER NARROWS! Sandy Wohlge-muth. Oct. 1989 p.9
 Harper, Charles. Review of *THE COMPLETE BIRDER* by Jack Connor. Sep. 1988 p.9
 Hartman, Steven. COMPUTERS ARE FOR THE BIRDS. See title entry.
 Hawaii
 BIRDING THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS. Helen and Teri Matelson. Apr. 1983 p.1
 A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO BIRDING IN HAWAII. R.L. Bailey. Mar. 1983 p.2
 Hawks. FIELD NOTES: THE RED TAILED HAWK. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Mar. 1982 p.1
 Hayman, Peter and others. *SHOREBIRDS, AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE TO THE WADERS OF THE WORLD*. Review by Kimball Garrett. Nov. 1986 p.6
 THE HEALTH EFFECT OF MALATHION. Jesse Moorman. May 1990 p.1
 Heath, Fred
 A NEW CHRISTMAS COUNT - LANCASTER CA. Dec. 1980 p.5
 LOS ANGELES COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS. Nov. 1983 p.4
 A HIGH COUNTRY BIRDING BONANZA AT MINERAL KING. George San Miguel. May 1984 p.1
 Hoffman, Ralph. A SCHOOLMASTER'S HOBBY. Apr. 1981 p.1
 Hoffman, Dr. Wayne and Bancroft, Dr. Thomas. COWBIRDS INVADE SUNSHINE STATE. Apr. 1989 p.9
 THE HOLLYWOOD CONNECTION. Chuck Bernstein. June 1988 p.1
 HOLLYWOOD IS FOR THE BIRDS. Cathy Mish. June 1988 p.3
 Hood, Charles. Review of *AN AUDUBON HANDBOOK: WESTERN BIRDS*. John Farrand. Jan. 1988 p.6
 Hopkins, Alan. BIRDING LANDS END. Aug. 1981 p.8
 HOW FEW IS ENOUGH? THE CASE FOR CAPTIVE BREEDING. Lloyd Kiff. Oct. 1979 p.2

- Litter. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Sep. 1985 p.8
- LLANOS, BIRDING IN THE. Philip A. Silverstone. Nov. 1980 p.1
- Lohr, Ruth. BIRDING HUNTINGTON BEACH CENTRAL PARK. Jan. 1981 p.5
- Looking on the Bright Side. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Jun. 1990 p.8
- THE LOST FOREST OF THE ANDES. Rick Klein. Dec. 1989 p.10
- LOS ANGELES AUDUBON BOOKSTORE, THE. Olga L. Clarke. Jan. 1989 p.5
- LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY: THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS. Glenn Cunningham
Part I Sep. 1983 p.1
Part II Oct. 1983 p.5
Part III Jan. 1984 p.4
- LOS ANGELES COUNTY BIRDS, BREEDING SEASON OF. Lloyd Kiff and Douglas Irwin. Apr. 1987 p.4
- LOS ANGELES COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS. Fred Heath. Nov. 1983 p.4
- LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS. Mar. 1988 p.3
- Los Angeles. CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS. Lee Jones. Feb. 1980 p.5
- Los Angeles' Water Supply. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Jan. 1981 p.6
- LOWER ELEVATION BIRDING IN THE SIERRA FOOTHILLS. George L. San Miguel
Part I Oct. 1985 p.1
Part II Nov. 1985 p.1
- Lytle Creek. BIRDING LOCALITIES. Henry E. Childs, Jr. June 1980 p.11

M

- Machetanz, Frederick. SPRING BIRDING IN THE MATANUSKA. Oct. 1986 p.3
- Magpie, Yellow-billed. THE YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE OF CALIFORNIA. George Seymore. Nov. 1981 p.1
- THE MAKING OF A HOT SPOT: THE ANTELOPE VALLEY. Chuck Bernstein. July 1982 p.4
- Malathion. THE HEALTH EFFECT OF MALATHION. Jesse Moorman. May 1990 p.1
- Malibu Canyon. CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS. Kimball Garrett. Feb. 1980 p.5
- MALIBU CHRISTMAS COUNT
Kimball Garrett and Jean Brandt. Nov. 1979 p.4
1980. Kimball Garrett and Jean Brandt. Mar. 1981 p.11
- Malibu Lagoon
CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Mar. 1983 p.6
- Good News for Malibu Lagoon. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Nov. 1980 p.6
- Malibu Revisited. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Dec. 1984 p.4
- VICTORY AT MALIBU. Oct. 1982 p.7
- Manx Shearwater. FIELD NOTES. Jon Dunn. Sep. 1979 p.6
- MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SETS PRIORITIES. Dec. 1980 p.7
- Massey, Barbara W. PRO ESTERAS. Nov. 1988 p.3
- Matelson, Helen
ADVENTURE IN BRAZIL. May 1981 p.1
CHASING THE RARE VAGRANT. Oct. 1989 p.1
WINTER IN TEXAS... A WHOOPER OF A TRIP. May 1986 p.6
- Matelson, Helen and Crawford, Nancy. BIRDING IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY. June 1982 p.1
- Matelson, Helen and Matelson, Teri
THE BIG CLIMB. Apr. 1985 p.1
BIRDING THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS. Apr. 1983 p.1
YUCATAN, LAND OF THE MAYA. May 1987 p.1
- Matelson, Teri. A WEEK IN JAMAICA. Jan. 1985 p.1
- Meadows, Donella H. PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY IS PROTECTING LIFE ON EARTH. Jun. 1990 p.8
- MEMOIRS OF AN AMATEUR NATURALIST: ONE DAY IN NORTH/EAST MEXICO. Marcyn del Clements. Oct. 1986 p.6

Mexico

- BIRDQUEST '89 WIND-UP. James Clements. Mar. 1990 p.10
- MEMOIRS OF AN AMATEUR NATURALIST: ONE DAY IN NORTH/EAST MEXICO. Marcyn del Clements. Oct. 1986 p.6
- YUCATAN, LAND OF THE MAYA. Helen and Teri Matelson. May 1987 p.1
- Migrating Birds. WHOSE BIRDS ARE THEY? Roger F. Pasquien. Jan. 1983 p.5
- Migration, Raptor. NOT ALL, BUT A LOT OF WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE MIGRATION PATTERN OF WESTERN RAPTORS. Larry Steinberg, Ed. Jan. 1988 p.1
- Mineral King. A HIGH COUNTRY BIRDING BONANZA AT MINERAL KING. George San Miguel. May 1988 p.1
- Mish, Cathy. HOLLYWOOD IS FOR THE BIRDS. June 1988 p.3
- Mojave Desert. LANFAIR VALLEY TRIP. Brian W. Keelan. Sep. 1985 p.4
- THE MOJAVE DESERT. Part I of PLANT COMMUNITIES AND BIRD HABITATS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Larry Norris. Sep. 1984 p.1
- MONARCH WATCH. Jan. 1985 p.7
- MONO BASIN FIELD TRIP. Wanda Conway. Oct. 1985 p.4
- Mono Lake. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Sep. 1979 p.7 and Jan. 1986 p.2
- MONO LAKE ALERT. Dec. 1988 p.3
- Monterey. OCTOBER AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA OFF MONTEREY. Dorothy Dimsdale. Dec. 1987 p.1
- Moorman, Jesse
ANTARCTICA ALERT. Oct. 1989 p.4
BALLONA WETLANDS. Mar. 1989 p.3
DROPPING LIKE FLIES. Oct. 1989 p.5
THE HEALTH EFFECT OF MALATHION. Oct. 1989 p.5
REFLECTIONS. Sep. 1989 p.5
- Morgan, Jess and Green, Gina. THE TROPICAL CONNECTION. Jan. 1983 p.2
- Morongo Valley. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Mar. 1983 p.6
- Mott, William Penn, Director of National Park Service. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Oct. 1985 p.8
- Murphy, Dan. BIRDING THE PALO ALTO BAYLAND AND FLOOD CONTROL BASIN REFUGE. Apr. 1982 p.1
- MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM PNEUMONITIS. Dorothy Dimsdale. June 1985 p.8

N

- National Audubon. ACTION PRIORITY GOALS SET FOR ENVIRONMENT BY NATIONAL AUDUBON. Aug. 1981 p.1
- NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY. 1987 BIENNIAL CONVENTION. Bob Van Meter. Nov. 1987 p.6
- National Audubon Society Convention. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Nov. 1983 p.8
- THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY TRAVEL ETHIC FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL. Aug. 1990 p.6
- Natural History Museum. AN ALTERNATIVE EXPERIENCE: BIRDWATCHING AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM. Jan. 1983 p.9
- National Park Service Director. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Oct. 1985 p.8
- NEW BIRDING MAGAZINES: BIRDER'S WORLD, WILDLIFE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Jan. 1988 p.4
- A NEW CHRISTMAS COUNT - LANCASTER CA. Fred Heath. Dec. 1980 p.5
- New Guinea. AUGUST IN NEW GUINEA. Bob Van Meter. July 1982 p.1
- NEW STRIP MINING METHODS THREATEN THE WEST. Bill Dillinger. June 1989 p.7
- New Zealand
BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND - A LOCALITY GUIDE by Stuart Chambers. Review by Cliff Pollard. Jun. 1990 p.7
- KIWI COUNTRY IS GOOD BIRDING COUNTRY. Richard and Beatrice Smith. Jul. 1985 p.6
- NEW ZEALAND BIRDLIFE. Michael H. Cosgrove and Maxine D. Wolf. Jun. 1985 p.1

THE NEXT TEN BIRDS FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY. Kimball Garrett. Jan. 1988 p.3
 Nicaragua and the Environment. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Jan. 1988 p.8
 Nighthawks. THE IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON AND LESSER NIGHTHAWKS. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. Sep. 1982 p.1
 Nomenclature. OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW. Lee Jones. June 1982 p.9
 Norris, Larry L.
 BIRDING SEQUOIA AND KING'S CANYON NATIONAL PARKS. Jan. 1982 p.4
 FISH OF THE DESERT. Jan. 1981 p.1
 THE MOJAVE DESERT. Part I of PLANT COMMUNITIES AND BIRD HABITATS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Sep. 1984 p.1
 RESEARCH IN SEQUOIA AND KING'S CANYON NATIONAL PARKS. July 1982 p.1
 SOME THOUGHTS WHILE WAITING FOR A CONDOR. July 1985 p.3
 THE SOUTHERN SIERRA NEVADA. Part IV of PLANT COMMUNITIES AND BIRD HABITATS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Mar. 1985 p.1; continued Apr. 1985 p.4
 Norris, Larry and San Miguel, George. PHAINOPEPLA NESTING IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK. Mar. 1986 p.1
 NOT ALL, BUT A LOT OF WHAT WE ALL WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE MIGRATION PATTERN OF THE WESTERN RAPTORS. Larry Steinberg, Ed. Jan. 1988 p.1
 NOTES FROM A BIRD BANDER. Bob Stewart. Oct. 1980 p.5
 NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT. Nick Freeman. July 1989 p.2
 Nuclear Age Risks. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. July 1986 p.8
 NUTTALL'S AND LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKERS. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. Dec. 1982 p.1

O

OCTOBER AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA OFF MONTEREY. Dorothy Dimsdale. Dec. 1987 p.1
 ODE TO AN APHELOCOMA COERULESCENS. Dorothy Dimsdale. Dec. 1981 p.3
 OF WINDS, ROCKFISH AND SEABIRDS: LIFE IN THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT. Susan Claire Peaslee. Dec. 1989 p.1
 Ogden, John C. CONDOR FAILS TO SURVIVE. Sep. 1981 p.1
 OILED BIG SUR PEREGRINE FALCON. Brian Watson. Apr. 1986 p.9
 ON COPING WITH NON-BIRDERS. Dorothy Dimsdale. Mar. 1981 p.8
 ON WATCHING PEREGRINES. Bob Shanman. Sep. 1984 p.5
 One World. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Jan. 1983 p.6
 THE OPEN OCEAN. Part III of PLANT COMMUNITIES AND BIRD HABITATS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Paul Lehman. Jan. 1985 p.4
 O'PINIONS
 Johnson, Sam. Sep. 1990 p.7
 Lawrence, Conrad. Jun. 1990 p.5
 Leopold, Al. May 1990 p.5
 Suggins, Elwood. Jan. 1990 p.9
 Thompson, Ernest S. Apr. 1990 p.7
 U, Arthur. Aug. 1990 p.7
 Wilson, MacArthur. Mar. 1990 p.8
 THE OSPREYS OF TIRAN. Shalom Su-Aretz. June 1982 p.1
 THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN. Dorothy Dimsdale. Oct. 1981 p.5
 OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW. Lee Jones. June 1982 p.9
 Owens Valley. NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT. Nick Freeman. July 1989 p.2
 Owl, Spotted. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. May 1989 p.4
 The Ozone Layer. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Mar. 1988 p.8

P

PAIR RELATIONSHIPS IN BLACKBIRDS. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Dec. 1981 p.4
 Palo Alto Bayland. BIRDING THE PALO ALTO BAYLAND AND FLOOD CONTROL BASIN REFUGE. Dan Murphy. Apr. 1982 p.1
 Pampas. BIRDING THE PAMPAS, PATAGONIA AND THE LAND OF FIRE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Apr. 1988 p.1
 THE PANTANAL-BRAZIL'S AVIAN PARADISE. Herbert Clarke. Dec. 1986 p.1
 Papua-New Guinea. PAPUA-AUSTRALIA OVERVIEW, BIRDQUEST '89. James Clements. Nov. 1989 p.1
 THE PARADOXICAL SEA. Mary Lawrence Test. Apr. 1980 p.1
 Pasquien, Roger F. WHOSE BIRDS ARE THEY? Jan. 1983 p.5
 Patagonia. BIRDING THE PAMPAS, PATAGONIA AND THE LAND OF FIRE. Henry E. Childs, Jr.
 Northern Patagonia. Apr. 1988 p.1
 Southern Patagonia. May 1988 p.1
 Pearson, Dave. Report on Peru. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Mar. 1989 p.6
 Peaslee, Susan Claire. OF WINDS, ROCKFISH AND SEABIRDS: LIFE IN THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT. Dec. 1989 p.1
 Pelagic trips. CALIFORNIA PELAGICS - RESOURCE LIST. Wanda Conway. June 1985 p.7
 THE PERIPHERAL CANAL. Frank Welsh. July 1981 p.7
 THE PERIPHERAL CANAL - FACT & FANCY. Daniel Chapin. Apr. 1981 p.4
 The Peripheral Canal. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Jan. 1981 p.6
 PEREGRINES MAKE PROGRESS ALL OVER U.S. Jan. 1982 p.9
 PEREGRINES OF BONEY RIDGE. Oct. 1982 p.7
 THE PEREGRINES OF WESTWOOD. Lloyd Kiff. Oct. 1981 p.1
 Perlmutter, Gary. WORKING WITH CONDORS. July 1985 p.4
 PERPETRATING THE PMA. Dorothy Dimsdale. July 1981 p.5
 Peru
 BIRDQUEST '89 UPDATE. James F. Clements. Sep. 1989 p.2
 Dave Pearson's Report on Conservation Efforts.
 CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Mar. 1989 p.6
 RESEARCHERS VISIT PERU. Helen Snyder. Jan. 1981 p.4
 Pesticides. DROPPING LIKE FLIES. Jesse Moorman. Oct. 1989 p.5
 PHAINOPEPLA NESTING IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK. Larry Norris and George San Miguel. Mar. 1986 p.1
 PHAINOPEPLAS . . . THEY ARE UNIQUE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. June 1981 p.6
 Phillips, Allan R. THE KNOWN BIRDS OF NORTH AND MIDDLE AMERICA. Book review by Kimball Garrett. May 1987 p.6
 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS, ANNUAL MEMBERS. Mar. 1987 p.1; Mar. 1988 p.1; Jan. 1990 p.1
 PIGEONS AND HAMMOCKS: A FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP. Reed Bowman and G. Thomas Bancroft. Oct. 1989 p.10
 PLANT COMMUNITIES AND BIRD HABITATS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
 Part I The Mojave Desert. Larry Norris. Sep. 1984 p.1
 Part II The Chaparral. Eugene N. Anderson, Jr. Nov. 1984 p.1
 Part III The Open Ocean. Paul Lehman. Jan. 1985 p.4
 Part IV The Southern Sierra Nevada. Larry Norris. Mar. 1985, continued Apr. 1985 p.4
 Plovers, Snowy. SPECIAL CONCERN FOR THE SNOWY PLOVER. Nancy L. Spear. Sep. 1980 p.1
 Plummer House. THE STORY OF PLUMMER HOUSE. Glenn Cunningham. Jan. 1982 p.1
 Politics and the Environment. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Nov. 1985 p.7
 Pollard, Cliff. Review of BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND by Stuart Chambers. Jun. 1990 p.7
 Poorwill, Common. Excerpt from *Birds of Southern California*. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. July 1980 p.5
 The Population Explosion. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. May 1990 p.2
 Predators. A CHANGING POLICY ON PREDATORS IN SEQUOIA. George L. San Miguel. Nov. 1987 p.4

- A PRELIMINARY WATERBIRD CENSUS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY LAKES AND RESERVOIRS. Kimball Garrett. Sep. 1987 p.1
 PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY IS PROTECTING LIFE ON EARTH. Donella H. Meadows. Jun. 1990 p.8
 PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT. Robert Van Meter. Jun. 1990 p.4
 PRO ESTERAS. Barbara W. Massey. Nov. 1988 p.3
 Proposition 11. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Oct. 1982 p.6
 Pupfish. FISH OF THE DESERT. Larry L. Norris. Jan. 1981 p.1

Q

- Quail. FIRST NORTH AMERICAN RECORD FOR THE BLUE BREASTED QUAIL. Henry E. Childs, Jr. May 1987 p.11
 Quality of Life. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Oct. 1986 p.8

R

- RAY OF HOPE FOR THE SANTA ROSA PLATEAU. Dan Silver. Apr. 1990 p.3
 REAGAN WOULD DILUTE WATER PROJECT RULES. Dec. 1981 p.3
 Redwoods. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Apr. 1984 p.1
 REESTABLISHING THE SOCORRO DOVE: A CHALLENGE FOR THE CALIFORNIAS. Hartmut S. Walter. Apr. 1989 p.1
 REHABILITATING A PEALE'S PEREGRINE FALCON. Tim Gallagher. Nov. 1980 p.5
 A RELIABLE SOURCE. Dorothy Dimsdale. Dec. 1980 p.8
 RESEARCH IN REVIEW. Kimball Garrett
 Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. Sep. 1980 p.6
 California Islands Breeding Birds. Oct. 1980 p.4
 Christmas Bird Counts. Dec. 1980 p.4
 Breeding Bird Records. Mar. 1981 p.4
 RESEARCH IN SEQUOIA AND KING'S CANYON NATIONAL PARKS. Larry L. Norris. July 1982 p.1
 RESEARCHERS VISIT PERU. Helen Snyder. Jan. 1981 p.4
 A RESOLUTION ON THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR. David White. Apr. 1987 p.9
 RESOURCE LISTING OF BIRDWALKS IN THE GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA. Wanda Conway. Sep. 1985 p.7
 Response to Western Tanager Questionnaire. SURVEY SAYS... Mar. 1990 p.2
 Rhoads, Raye. BIRDING THE MANGROVES OF BAJA. Apr. 1984 p.9
 THE RIGHT TO WRITE. Morris K. Udall. Apr. 1984 p.3
 Rosove, Michael H. and Wolf, Maxine D. New Zealand Birdlife. June 1985 p.1
 Ross, Roland Case. CHAPARRAL IS FOREVER. Aug. 1981 p.4
 Ruckelshaus, William. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Jan. 1990 p.4

S

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 Salton Sea. THE PARADOXICAL SEA. Mary Lawrence Test. Apr. 1980 p.1
 The Salton Basin. WATER IN A DESERT VALLEY. Walton Wright. May 1980 p.1
 SAN ANTONIO CANYON, BIRDING IN. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Sep. 1980 p.9
 San Bernardino County, Southwest. BIRDING LOCALITIES. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Mar. 1980 p.3
 San Bernardino Mountains. BLUFF LAKE: A 'NEW' MONTANE BIRDING LOCALITY. Brian W. Keelan. May 1986 p.1
 SAN JACINTO AREA, BIRDING THE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Sep. 1981 p.5
 San Miguel, George L.
 A CHANGING POLICY ON PREDATORS IN SEQUOIA. Nov. 1987 p.4
 A HIGH COUNTRY BIRDING BONZANZA AT MINERAL KING. May 1984 p.1

- LOWER ELEVATION BIRDING IN THE SIERRA FOOTHILLS
 Part I Oct. 1985 p.1;
 Part II Nov. 1985 p.1

- THE THRUSHES OF COTTONWOOD SPRINGS. Apr. 1986 p.1
 San Miguel, George and Norris, Larry. PHAINOPEPLA NESTING IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK. Mar. 1986 p.1
 Sandpipers. FIELD NOTES. Jon Dunn
 Oct. 1979 p.6
 Nov. 1979 p.6
 Dec. 1978 p.6
 SANTA ANA RIVER IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY, BIRDING THE. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Jan. 1981 p.9
 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, BIRDING IN. Helen Matelson and Nancy Crawford. June 1982 p.1
 Santa Rosa Plateau. RAY OF HOPE FOR THE SANTA ROSA PLATEAU. Dan Silver. Apr. 1990 p.3
 SANTEE LAKES, SAN DIEGO COUNTY, BIRDING. Claude Edwards, Jr. Mar. 1982 p.9
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 A SCHOOLMASTER'S HOBBY. Ralph Hoffman. Apr. 1981 p.1
 RALPH SCHREIBER IN MEMORIAM. May 1988 p.7
 SEEING NO. 606. Dorothy Dimsdale. May 1986 p.7
 Sepulveda Basin. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Apr. 1981 p.6
 Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Apr. 1990 p.4
 Sepulveda Flood Control Basin. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Jan. 1982 p.7
 Sepulveda Wildlife Preserve. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Mar. 1985 p.8
 Sequoia
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 A CHANGING POLICY ON PREDATORS IN SEQUOIA. George L. San Miguel. Nov. 1987 p.4
 PHAINOPEPLA NESTING IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK. Larry Norris and George San Miguel. Mar. 1986 p.1
 RESEARCH IN SEQUOIA AND KING'S CANYON NATIONAL PARKS. Larry L. Norris. July 1982 p.1
 THE SEVEN LEVELS OF BIRDWATCHING. Hartmut Walter. July 1983 p.8
 Seymore, George. THE YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE OF CALIFORNIA. Nov. 1981 p.1
 Shanman, Bob. ON WATCHING PEREGRINES. Sep. 1984 p.5
 G. SHUMWAY SUFFEL. IN MEMORIAM. Sep. 1983 p.7
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 LOWER ELEVATION BIRDING IN THE SIERRA FOOTHILLS. George L. San Miguel
 Part I Oct. 1985 p.1
 Part II Nov. 1985 p.1
 THE SOUTHERN SIERRA NEVADA. Larry L. Norris. Mar. 1985 p.1; continued Apr. 1985 p.4
 Silver, Dan. RAY OF HOPE FOR THE SANTA ROSA PLATEAU. Apr. 1990 p.3
 Silverstone, Philip A. BIRDING IN THE LLANOS. Nov. 1980 p.1
 Smith, Richard and Beatrice. AUSTRALIA: FUN TO BIRD, INEXPENSIVE TOO. June 1987 p.1
 Snyder, Helen. RESEARCHERS VISIT PERU. Jan. 1981 p.4
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 SOME POEMS. Ruth Hutton. July 1987 p.4
 SOME THOUGHTS WHILE WAITING FOR A CONDOR. Larry L. Norris. July 1985 p.3
 Song Bird Decline. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgenuth. Mar. 1990 p.4
 SOUTH FORK KERN RIVER RIPARIAN AREA: CUCKOOS AND TANAGERS. Bob Barnes. May 1983 p.1
 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S COASTLAND WETLAND ENDANGERED HABITAT. Mary Lawrence Test. Dec. 1979 p.1

- Tropical Forests. THE TROPICAL CONNECTION. Gina Green and Jess Morgan. Jan. 1983 p.2
 TULE LAKE. Jan. 1990 p.7
 TURNING A BIRD SIGHTING INTO A BIRD RECORD. Kimball Garrett. Nov. 1987 p.9
 Turkey Vulture. THE ADAPTIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF THE TURKEY VULTURE (CATHARTIS AURA). William Lemon. Mar. 1988 p.5

U

- Udall, Morris K. THE RIGHT TO WRITE. Apr. 1984 p.3
 Ui, Arthur. O'PINIONS. Aug. 1990 p.7
 Ulfeldt, Virginia. GUADALAJARA SURPRISE. July 1981 p.1

V

- VAGRANCY SWEEPS SOUTH TEXAS. Dorothy Dimsdale. June 1989 p.1
 Van Meter, Bob
 AUGUST IN NEW GUINEA. July 1982 p.1
 DECEMBER IN COSTA RICA. Sep. 1981 p.1
 NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY 1987 BIENNIAL CONVENTION. Nov. 1987 p.6
 PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT. Jun. 1990 p.4
 Variations in Southern California Birds. A CLOSER LOOK. Kimball Garrett. July 1980 p.4
 Venema, Jody L. WINTER BUTEOS OF THE CARRIZO PLAINS. Oct. 1987 p.6
 Venezuela. BIRDQUEST '89 UPDATE. James F. Clements. Sep. 1989 p.1
 VERSES. Ian Austin. June 1987 p.5
 VICTORY AT MALIBU. Oct. 1982 p.7
 Vultures. THE ADAPTIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF THE TURKEY VULTURE (CATHARTUS AURA). William Lemon. Mar. 1988 p.5

W

- Walter, Hartmut
 BEYOND ACID RAIN: THE NITROGEN OVERLOAD. Special guest contributor to Conservation Conversation. Jan. 1987. p.8
 REESTABLISHING THE SOCORRO DOVE: A CHALLENGE FOR THE CALIFORNIAS. Apr. 1989 p.1
 THE SEVEN LEVELS OF BIRDWATCHING. July 1983 p.8
 WARBLERMOSTS, AND SUNDRY OTHER FACTS. Dave Grindell. July 1986 p.5
 Warblers. FIELD NOTES: YELLOW, ORANGE-CROWNED AND WILSON WARBLERS. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Dec. 1981 p.1
 Warblers. WARBLERMOSTS, AND SUNDRY OTHER FACTS. Dave Grindell. July 1986 p.5
 Water Conservation. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Dec. 1985 p.8
 WATER IN A DESERT VALLEY. Walton Wright. May 1980 p.1
 Water Pollution Control Act. TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. June 1982 p.6
 Waterbirds. A PRELIMINARY WATERBIRD CENSUS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY LAKES AND RESERVOIRS. Kimball Garrett. Sep. 1987 p.1
 Watson, Brian. OILED BIG SUR PEREGRINE FALCON. Apr. 1986 p.9
 A WEEK IN JAMAICA. Teri Matelson. Jan. 1985 p.1
 Welsh, Frank. THE PERIPHERAL CANAL. July 1981 p.7
 Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. RESEARCH IN REVIEW. Kimball Garrett. Sep. 1980 p.6
 WESTERN TANAGER'S TWO HIGH NATIONAL AUDUBON AWARDS - CONGRATULATIONS!! Jan. 1988 p.5
 Westwood. THE PEREGRINES OF WESTWOOD. Lloyd Kiff. Oct. 1981 p.1
 Wetlands. CONSERVATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Dec. 1979 p.5
 Wetlands, Southern California. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Apr. 1986 p.9

- WE'VE BEEN HAD. Dorothy Dimsdale. Apr. 1990 p.8
 Whimbrel. THE IDENTIFICATION OF CURLEWS, GENUS NUMENIUS. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. July 1983 p.1
 White, David
 THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR: A DIFFERENT APPROACH, ANOTHER CHANCE. Nov. 1986 p.1
 A RESOLUTION ON THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR. Apr. 1987 p.9
 WHITE STORKS OF MOROCCO. Mary Lawrence Test. June 1981 p.1
 Whittier Narrows. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, WHITTIER NARROWS!. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Oct. 1989 p.9
 WHOSE BIRDS ARE THEY? Roger F. Pasquien. Jan. 1983 p.5
 THE WILDERNESS SYSTEM IS UNDER ATTACK. May 1982 p.1
 Wilson. MacArthur. O'PINIONS. Mar. 1990 p.8
 Wind Farms
 Gorman Wind Farm. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. Oct. 1989 p.3
 GORMAN WIND FARM HEARING. July 1989 p.5
 WINTER BUTEOS OF THE CARRIZO PLAINS. Jody L. Venema. Oct. 1987 p.6
 WINTER IN TEXAS . . . A WHOOPER OF A TRIP. Helen Matelson. May 1986 p.6
 Wohlgemuth, Sandy
 ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST. Apr. 1984 p.1
 CONSERVATION. see title entry
 CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. see title entry
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY, WHITTIER NARROWS! Oct. 1989 p.9
 TOPICS OF CONSERVATION. see title entry
 Wolf, Maxine D. and Rosove, Michael H. NEW ZEALAND BIRDLIFE. June 1985 p.1
 Woodpeckers
 A CLOSER LOOK. Kimball Garrett. May 1980 p.10
 Red-cockaded. IN SEARCH OF THE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER. Gerry Haigh. Mar. 1989 p.9
 NUTTALL'S AND LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKERS. Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. Dec. 1982 p.1
 THOSE SOCIABLE WOODPECKERS. Henry E. Childs, Jr. Mar. 1981 p.5
 Wood-Pewees. THE IDENTIFICATION OF WOOD-PEWEES. Jon L. Dunn and Kimball L. Garrett. Dec. 1983 p.1
 WORKING AGAINST TIME: THE ATTEMPT TO SAVE THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR. Harrison Truitt Starr. Oct. 1983 p.1
 WORKING WITH CONDORS. Gary Perlmutter. July 1985 p.4
 World Population Problems. CONSERVATION CONVERSATION. Sandy Wohlgemuth. May 1985 p.4
 Wright, Walton. WATER IN A DESERT VALLEY. May 1980 p.1

Y

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 YUCATAN, LAND OF THE MAYA. Helen and Teri Matelson. May 1987 p.1

Z

- Zell, Joe. AUDUBON CAMP IN THE WEST. Nov. 1982 p.5