



WESTERN TANAGER

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Good Things Survive

by Dorothy Dimsdale

Once upon a time, seventy two years ago, on November 18, 1919, a group of bird lovers got together. They wanted to study as well as watch the birds of California and, in particular, those in the Los Angeles area. They called themselves "The Bird Lovers' Club of the Southwest Museum," because the museum was where they were to hold their meetings. Dr. John Adams Comstock, who was the Curator of the Southwest Museum at that time, helped the Club get started.

In those days there were, of course, no bird magazines in the western U.S. for the beginner, and precious few identification books. Roger Tory Peterson would not produce his classic *Field Guide to the Birds* until 1934, and that didn't cover the birds specifically of the western states.

Newsletters and communications from other birders were on a purely personal level. Very often undocumented and unscientific findings were the only clues as to what was going on in the birding world. There were, fortunately, one or two current, regularly published magazines. *The Auk* first ap-

peared in 1876, and *Bird Lore* in 1889, becoming *Audubon Magazine* in 1941. These magazines published up-to-date information on bird subjects of all kinds—they still do. However, at that time they were concerned mainly with the birds of the eastern United States. It wasn't until 1941 that Peterson produced his *Field Guide to Western Birds*, so the Southwest Bird Club had the study field practically to themselves,

teacher. To quote from notes made in later years: "At the study meetings members gave their reports with books, charts, diagrams and bird skins to assist and amplify. Miss Miller was a conscientious guide and an exacting leader on the field trips. Woe betide anyone who made a social visit of a field trip, who wore bright colors, or—greatest sin of all—pointed a finger at a bird." Alma Mason, who followed as president for a further sixteen years, was also held in great esteem. She "gave a serious, almost scholarly approach to study, saw to it that every member participated, and brought out the beauty and poetry of birds and all forms of nature. Her devotion was outstanding."

In order to qualify for membership, the Club's constitution stated that one had to be "in good moral standing," as well as having an active interest in ornithology, and birding in general. In the early years, first names were never used. The minutes of the day are full of the activities of Miss, Mrs. and Mr. The first recorded study group meeting on January 5, 1920 was a lesson on sparrows: Lark, Golden-



with the help of some dedicated local birders.

They held bird walks once a week, and study meetings once a month. These were conducted for the first fourteen years by the president Mary Mann Miller who was an excellent

crowned, Gambel (now lumped with White-crowned), Chipping, Western Vesper and Song — followed at the next meetings by lectures on all of the birds likely to be seen on their field trips.

They saw such birds as Blue-fronted Jay, Red-bellied Hawk, Russet-backed Thrush, Golden Pileolated (sic) Warbler, Lutescent Warbler, and Calaveras Warbler. If you came across these birds today you would recognize them by the names Steller's Jay, Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Thrush and Wilson's, Orange-crowned and Nashville Warblers. Fortunately — to paraphrase — a bird by any other name sings just as sweet!

Inclement weather had a serious affect on attendance. Rain caused meetings at the museum to be canceled, and hot days reduced the numbers on birding trips. One should remember that flash flooding was not as controlled as it is today, and air-conditioning was non-existent. Even as late as February 22, 1965 there is a rather charming report of a trip to Chantry Flats where it was foggy and cold, and only 17 birds were seen (not species). The six birders held their meeting "in Mrs. Boyce-Smith's car, with President Starling presiding."

The enthusiasm and pleasure in their bird walks come through in the minutes, as in a report of a meeting at Tapia Park in the 1950s when, with a list of the local birds, was the added comment, "It was a really happy day!"

As the group grew in numbers they held special study groups for beginners and, later, classes for those more experienced but not yet fully qualified as reliable birders.

When the Southwest Museum became the Museum of Anthropology in 1926/27 it could no longer accommodate the Bird Club for its lectures. After meeting at several unsatisfactory, temporary places, they were offered the use of a room by the Los Angeles Audubon Society. The headquarters were, as of 1937, in Plummer Park at the old Plummer House. This continued until the house was burned by vandals and made uninhabitable in November 1981. LAAS was able to move into its present offices in Long Hall, still in Plummer Park, but could not provide space for the Southwest Club meetings.

Since then, the Club has had to

meet either during their field trips or at one of the member's homes. However, as the study groups no longer take place on a regular basis, this is not difficult. With the availability of excellent lectures for birders at many Audubon Societies, and comprehensive reports in innumerable birding magazines, the accent is now on field trips.

On reading the minutes over the years, one is intrigued by the emergence of the personalities of the recording secretaries. In the early years the reports were very formal, then later, in the '50s, Evelyn McDowell, followed by Ruby Curry really set down most descriptive and charming reports.

I believe the Club would best be served if I simply cull some of the most interesting and/or entertaining of the entries and let the readers judge for themselves. There are times when I feel I have to make a comment, but trust this will not detract from the overall impression.

August 22, 1920 - Mineral Park. 18 varieties observed by the one member present. Extremely warm day. — Jessica A. Potter, Secy.

November 1, 1920 - The Cooper Ornithological Society was invited to hold their January meeting at the Southwest Museum.

February 28, 1921 - Met near Church of the Angels and walked through the hills to Eagle Rock Park. (No longer possible today as the area is completely developed.) Saw 28 species. Of special interest was the beautiful song of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

April 25, 1921 - Nigger Slough and San Pedro. (The name of this location really made me sit up. I made inquiries and discovered that it was an area no longer in existence, except for one end of the slough, which is known today as Harbor Lake — still an area for very good birding — and a much more attractive name.)

May 16, 1921 - Eagle Rock Park. Saw Roadrunner and nest.

September 5, 1921 - Voted that the President of LAAS be made an honorary member. (This gesture was accepted by LAAS.)

December 5, 1921 - Announcement that a new manual of California birds was in preparation by Ralph Hoffman.

April 10, 1922 - The Southwest Club, LAAS and Pasadena Audubon

joined for an Arbor Day program.

May 1, 1922 - Enthusiastic reports of observations of migrating birds were given and the question was brought up as to which birds were to be classed as "bad birds" when talking to children. After general discussion it seemed to be the opinion of the Club that no birds could properly be called "bad birds" as all did some good to counteract the damage done to farmers and fruit raisers. — Jessica A. Potter Secy.

November 13, 1922 - The senior group met for field study at Griffith Park, Western Avenue (Fern Dell). 29 birds were listed. The important find of the day was a White-throated Sparrow feeding in the dry weeds, seen by Miss Miller. Observations of the Varied Thrush and the singing of the San Diego Wren (Bewick's) were also of interest.

I should insert a comment here that the group engaged actively in government procedures all through the years, writing letters to State and Federal officials. On March 5, 1923 a letter of protest was sent to Governor Richardson regarding the cutting down of the appropriation for the State Forestry Department. On November 2, 1925 they protested the California Fish and Game Commission taking away "Protection from Cormorants and Pelicans." A sad note on January 16, 1928 that, despite protests, the demolition of Eagle Rock Park as a public resort and bird haven was underway, and two years later, on September 22, 1930 the Edison Company was destroying trees in Eagle Rock Park while the Park Board struggled to have it made into a bird refuge. On a brighter note, early in the 1940s, the Club contributed two acres of land at \$33 an acre to the Northern California Coast Range Preserve in Mendocino County. This amount was out of proportion to the small size of the Club.

Many times during the minutes of the first several years, one finds lectures devoted to the "economic value to agriculturists" of swallows, blackbirds, orioles, meadowlarks, etc. It seems that it was important to justify the existence of some species on the premise that they were "good" for the farmer. — Back to the notes:

June 9, 1924 - At Dr. Munk's Grove, near Compton, a California Cuckoo was seen. (Yellow-billed, of course, a rarity even then.) — Jessica A. Potter, Secy.

June 16, 1924 - The Southwest

chose as their emblems the Alder Tree, Columbine Flower, and Dotted Canyon Wren.

November 29, 1926 - Echo Park was the meeting place for the General Group, nine members and one visitor being present. Several gorgeous Townsend's Warblers and two Snow Geese were among the thrills of the day, and 29 species listed. — Clara Weedmark, Secy.

May 20, 1930 - At Whittier River Bottoms they were "fortunate enough to see a Cardinal." — Marchie L. Jupperlatz, Secy.

October 27, 1930 - At Verdugo Woodlands, 44 species were seen. Among them, between 12 and 15 Blue-fronted (Steller's) Jays were scolding in the trees. Their presence in the Valley was an unusual occurrence. — Alma W. Mason, Secy.

October 4, 1932 - The meeting was held at the Echo Park Library. The first hour was devoted to checklist work led by Miss Faddis. The pronunciation of the name "Vaux" was discussed (as in Vaux's Swift) — whether we should use the anglicized form or the French. A motion was made, seconded and carried, that we use the French pronunciation of this name.

It was reported that Mrs. Swinney's aviator son had been hurt in a plane accident, but not seriously. A motion was made, seconded and carried, that we send to Mrs. Swinney an expression of gratitude that her son was not seriously injured. Mrs. Lusch was requested to take this message by word of mouth.

The second vice-president, Mrs. Mason, then took charge, leading the study of woodpeckers. She stated that it seemed best to make out the charts, as much as possible, from personal observation rather than by consulting books. There was discussion as to whether the woodpecker eats acorns, or whether the California (Acorn) Woodpecker stores the acorns and

waits for the grubs to hatch. They were said to eat the acorns themselves. It was stated that the Lewis' Woodpecker is seen on the ground and therefore many of these fall victims to poison put out for rodents. After a most interesting lesson, adjournment was taken to the lunch tables on the



Birders picnicking at Playa del Rey, 1923

island. — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

October 25, 1932 - A delightful day at Pacific Palisades where 44 species were reported by the 14 members present. It was reported that Mrs. Swinney's younger son was ill of tin poisoning, and a motion was made, seconded and carried that the secretary be instructed to send her a note of sympathy. (I guess they meant lead rather than tin. Lead was used to seal tin cans in those days.)

November 1, 1932 - Two books, *The Practical Value of Birds* by Julius Henderson and *Useful Birds and their Protection*, published by Massachusetts Audubon, were recommended reading. (Again illustrating that birds were not to be tolerated simply for themselves, but only in relationship to their value to the human race.)

November 15, 1932 - Pictures illustrating *The Birds of Massachusetts* by Louis Agassiz Fuertes were available for \$1.75.

January 3, 1933 - The President presented a letter from the Green Cross Society requesting a renewal of our membership in that organization. A motion was made, seconded and carried that action on this matter be postponed until the next monthly meeting of the Club and that, in the meantime, the secretary should find out just what the Green Cross is doing.

— Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

February 7, 1933 - The Secretary reported that she had visited the headquarters of the Green Cross as instructed and found that organization engaged chiefly in educational work in fire prevention and control, as well as encouraging gardening and the planting of trees in cities and towns. A motion was made, seconded and carried that we consider more thoroughly the work of the Green Cross before deciding whether to join the organization. (We never hear about the Green Cross Society again.)

Mrs. Hall stated that a number of American (Common) Mergansers were to be seen in Westlake (MacArthur) Park early in the morning, about 60 in the flock, and that some were there late in the afternoon. — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

The Christmas census of 1932 showed 88 species and 6,230 individuals which indicated more species and less individuals than the previous year.

March 7, 1933 - Miss Faddis reported that an attempt is being made to commercialize Frazier Mountain Park, putting in "hot dog" stands and so forth. Mrs. Harriet Williams Myers is a member of the Chamber of Commerce Committee and is opposed to such commercialization. (The area today has human encroachment on a grand scale and no California Condors.) At lunch we had a very pleasant surprise given the Club by Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Shanks of a delightful dessert of a loaf of Bishop's bread and the recipe was presented to all who wished for it. — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

April 24, 1933 - Threatening skies deterred some from making the trip to Sierra Madre this day, but those who went were amply repaid in spite of very unfavorable weather — almost a rain some of the time. In the open wash were hummingbirds in bewildering numbers, especially in a blos-

soming orange orchard. Chipping Sparrows and Lazuli Buntings were seen here also. Among the live oaks and sycamores of the canyon were a number of uncommon warblers — Townsend's, MacGillivray's, Hermit, Calaveras (*Nashville*), Black-throated Gray — as well as the ones we usually see. While in the upper part of the canyon we observed, high in the air, a flock of some 300 White Pelicans maneuvering. — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

September 16, 1940 - Mr. Berry reported a Screech Owl wailing like a half-starved cat. Mr. Berry is conducting Sunday morning bird walks under the auspices of LAAS. Miss Faddis reported a bird she had never seen before, a Lead-colored Bushtit, on the desert rim of the Laguna Mountains. (*This bird was lumped many years ago with your old friend, the Common Bushtit.*) — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

November 25, 1940 - Mr. Harwell, now representing National Audubon in California, gave us a few interesting items from his attendance at the National Audubon Convention in New York City in October. The conservation men had called on the feather trade men to explain their action in putting feathers on the market for millinery purposes. The feather dealers stated that the conservationists had robbed them of their business, and that the feathers on the market now were those that had been stored away since before the laws prohibiting them were passed — 27 years ago!

Being asked for a poem, Mr. Harwell repeated one of his own beginning, "I know that I have never heard a song so lovely as a bird" and whistled the tune to which the words were set. His whistled imitations of bird songs are remarkably accurate and beautiful — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

December 9, 1940 - A rather chilly, foggy day at Temescal Canyon Pacific Palisades. Mr. Kent and his party had heard a rail laugh again this morning. — Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

January 27, 1941 - Mr. Keely announced that the January *Auk*, the only magazine that claims to be infallible, reports a Calliope Hummingbird on the nest being fed by the male bird, although the male hummingbird is supposed to forsake his wife before nesting duties begin. — Evelyn McDowell, Secy. (*Do I detect a sour note here?*)

It's very hard to leave out many of the records as they are so fascinating, but space dictates that I move on, so we resume:

November 6, 1951 - Rose Burch brought a hummingbird nest from Texas to show us. It had been built on top of another nest which had a dead bird in it. — Ruby Curry, Secy.

June 3, 1952 - Dr. Kline spoke on "The Necks of Birds" and the Secretary (Ruby Curry) felt it important to mention in her notes that "the Canada Goose is the only bird which uses its esophagus as a storage apparatus."

February 8, 1955 - The topic of Mr. Koehler's talk was "Wood in Crime Detection," illustrated by slides. (*Arthur Koehler was an active member of the Club.*) While he was chief of the Division of Silvicultural Relations in the Forest Products Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Agriculture at Madison, Wisconsin, he was called upon to assist in identifying the kidnapper of the Lindbergh baby by means of the ladder used in the kidnapping. The request for this service was made by the Superintendent of the State Police of New Jersey where the crime was committed.

Mr. Koehler explained, in interesting detail, the technique he used in pinning the evidence to the culprit. This was done through tracking down the origin of the ladder which was found on the Lindbergh estate and was used by the kidnapper.

The ladder was home-made, and its rungs showed no signs of wear, indicating that it undoubtedly was made for this particular job. It showed inferior workmanship, as if made by an amateur. Microscopic examinations and accurate measurements were made of every piece of wood in the ladder. Through wide inquiry among lumber mills in various parts of the country, Mr. Koehler learned where each piece originated — and not only the kind of wood, but the exact mill where each of the new rails had been finished. The kind of plane that smoothed the boards. The speed of the revolutions made by the cutter. The particular tools employed. The kind of chisel used in cutting out the recesses for the rungs of the ladder, and even the age of the chisel.

He found that one of the rails used in making the ladder had been cut from a wider board, and while police

were searching the premises of Hauptmann, the suspected kidnapper, for ransom money, they found in the attic floor a board from which a narrow piece had been stripped. Comparing the annual growth rings shown in the rail — their width, number and curvature — with those on this board, it was found that they were precisely the same, and the old nail holes matched.

In examining the ladder, it was observed that the edges of some parts were planed with a dull hand plane, and that two different kinds and sizes of lumber in the ladder had been planed with the same plane. Later, a similar old plane was found on a shelf in the Hauptmann garage.

To the average layman, it seems incredible that such minute details could be uncovered, and that so much accurate information leading to the detection of the perpetrator of a crime could be deduced from them.

— Evelyn McDowell, Secy.

Sherlock Holmes would have been proud of Koehler! As a footnote to this account, there is a record in the minutes thirty years ago in 1961 when President Bess Hoffman was given a gavel of Texas ebony made by Arthur Koehler. She has it still.

Ruby Curry, an extremely active member for many years began in 1940 to introduce the members to the Latin/Greek names of birds and their literal translations, enabling the group to study their meanings. Later Bess Hoffman took over this task, and was also President. A poem about birds became the terminating item of the meetings, and a different one was read each time, sometimes composed by the member who read or recited it. The meetings were very often fun.

March 16, 1959 - Alice Lewis read an interesting article on attempts to introduce the Skylark to this country and Canada. Then she read Shelley's poem "To the Skylark." — Lucy Starling, Secy.

March 23, 1959 - Monrovia Canyon. Two members and one guest turned up, and 13 individual birds were seen. After lunch the bird list was read, and Miss Helen Wadsworth recited the following poem to the Dove. "Oh, cooing little Turtle Dove. You move my heart to dreams of love —". She got no further than "dreams" and the meeting was dismissed. (Perhaps

just as well.) — Lucy Starling, Secy.

March 30, 1959 - Those who were fortunate enough to attend the Asilomar Conference made reports, and all had been deeply interested in Roger Tory Peterson's lecture on the Flamingo.

April 20, 1959 - President Hoffman spoke of the hospitality enjoyed at LAAS Headquarters and suggested that a book be donated to their library, *The New College Dictionary*.

May 18, 1959 - Birded Irvine Park, then Modjeska Canyon. 59 species. "It was hard to tear ourselves away, but we finally started back to the city where we had the most exciting experience of the day — a sight of a pair of Blue Grosbeaks flying among the willows along a stream bottom near the road. A close second in interest here was the Western Tanager which has a wider range and had appeared earlier

Charlton Flat with 19 present. 22 species were noted, not to mention the squirrels whose table manners left something to be desired. Several members tried to give the calls of the different species of nuthatch, and we hope no nuthatch got into the wrong nest that night. — Lucy Starling, Secy.

November 21, 1960 - Colorado Lagoon. Winifred Koehler gave an ani-

the water until Min Gerhardt (the then President) and Gertrude Woods came to his rescue and saved him in the nick of time. — Bess Hoffman, Secy.

Looking back over these records it seems fair to state that the Club members belonged to a very different America from that we live in today — less hectic and, in some areas, much gentler and kinder. We may not be



in the day. All in all it was a red letter day and the letters spelled BIRD."

— Lucy Starling, Secy.

February 22, 1960 - The Club met at Will Roger's State Park. The day was fair and mild, and 25 members and friends were out. 35 species were noted. The greatest number of individuals were seen on the close-cropped lawn in front of the ranch house, where great numbers of juncos, Lark Sparrows, and Killdeer were feeding. The excitement of the day was heightened by a minor casualty when a boy with a slingshot missed a bird and Olive Alvey received a blow in the temple. The fact that the ammunition was only a piece of hard candy made the bruise no less painful. A park policeman was summoned but the rascals had disappeared. Thus the perils of bird watching. — Lucy Starling, Secy.

October 24, 1960 - The Club met at



The Club — then and now

mated account of a recent trip to Death Valley. Arthur Koehler gave the scientific names of the Eared, Horned, and Pied-billed Grebe, and our President gave an imitation of the call of the nuthatch that would have fooled his own mother.

April 21, 1969 - Since Monrovia Canyon was barred to us because of storm damage, a substitute was in order, and the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum was chosen. Seven members attended and the day was fine. We went at once to the small pond where the Black Swans and their 4 cygnets, and a pair of Canada Geese and their half-grown goslings, held forth in the water. Here we witnessed a near tragedy since the swans would not tolerate anyone else in their territory, and drove out the goose family — all except one gosling which couldn't climb the bank in time. It was set upon, pecked unmercifully, and held under

very much wiser in the 1990s, but we do know a great deal more about what is needed to conserve our natural world. However, it is obvious that the Southwest Bird Club members were, and are, very serious about their study and field trips. Most of them from earlier days became excellent and reliable birders, and today's group seems just as eager to keep the record. I'm a member, and though not able to attend on a regular basis, I have found that being a participant is leisurely, fun and informative. The proportion of men and women is much more balanced than in the "old days" and, of course, first names are mandatory.

So far I haven't been asked about my moral standing, and I don't think the matter has been eliminated from the constitution, but I won't tell if you won't. 

Thanks are due to Glen Cunningham, Charles Harper, Min Gerhart, and Southwest Co-President Fred Sammons for additional information. Early bird names were updated by reference to Birds of the Pacific States, by Ralph Hoffman.

Conservation Conversation

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

When a Supreme Court Justice is appointed, the President is never absolutely sure how his choice will turn out. John Kennedy, generally seen politically as a progressive (if not a liberal with a capital "L") appointed football hero Byron "Whizzer" White to the court. White's long term on the bench has found him voting consistently with the conservative members. President Eisenhower chose Earl Warren for Chief Justice of the Court and later said it was the biggest mistake he ever made. Warren became a flaming liberal, ushering in an era that brought equal rights to minorities and an interpretation of the law that had right-wingers frothing at the mouth.

Though without the security of a life appointment, is California's new Republican governor also a sleeper? As Senator Wilson, he made a few gestures toward protection of the environment — his opposition of offshore drilling, for example — but he was hardly perceived as an environmental ball of fire. On April 22, Wilson proclaimed an astonishing program that has left the environmental community gasping with open-mouthed amazement.

George Bush promised to be the Environmental President in his campaign for office and spoke in glittering generalities about how all the ecological problems we faced would be overcome. Now, more than half-way through his term, he has announced an energy policy of increased oil production, a revitalized nuclear energy industry, exploitation of the Arctic Na-

tional Wildlife Refuge and much more that would send the country back to an environmental Stone Age.

Pete Wilson's agenda grapples with specific proposals that conservationists have been passionately longing for. The broad spectrum of Wilson's 14 points is remarkable. His focus is on the quality of life and habitat for wildlife. The Coastal Commission is to be beefed up so that it has the money and manpower to properly confront the unrelenting drive to develop what remains of California's

than are planted. The majority of the big timber companies refused to go along with the compromise. They must wonder what kind of a Republican they supported in November. Wilson is also demanding that the State Board of Forestry, a long-time close friend of the industry, change its approach and become a genuine custodian of the forest.

The Governor seems to have borrowed the philosophy of the Nature Conservancy: if habitat is to be saved, buy it! He asks for \$125 million to buy

and develop parkland throughout the state. He wants to purchase land that harbors endangered species and seeks to preserve coastal lagoons, inland wetlands and rare riparian habitat. With considerable sophistication his proposal calls for an experimental program to preserve land where species

are not yet endangered but of special concern. Though the plan would permit development in similar areas, he asks for it to be compatible and environmentally sensitive. That's a tall order and would require expert guidance.

There's more:

* Wilson proposes \$138 million for three state agencies: the Coastal Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Tahoe Conservancy. All three are in the land acquisition business and have been on short rations for some time.

* He wants a California Environmental Protection Agency to take on duties of other government departments. This would be an encouraging



The author at the Sepulveda Wildlife Area

unspoiled coastline. His predecessor, George Deukmejian, seemed to pursue a vendetta against the Coastal Commission, cutting its budget periodically when he was unable to abolish it. Wilson faces the ancient forest question boldly, calling for acquisition of the 3,000-acre Headwaters forest near Eureka. This was the heart of Proposition 130 ("Forests Forever") that was endorsed by all the leading environmental organizations in November 1990 but which lost along with most of the other bond issues. He also supports the compromise worked out between the Sierra Club and Sierra Pacific (the largest California logging company) that would reduce clearcutting to a tolerable level, and endorsed harvesting no more trees

change in the case of the Food and Agriculture Department that monitors pesticide use as it snuggles up with the growers.

* He is seriously promoting the use of alternative fuels to replace gasoline in automobiles.

* Money for forests would not be limited to coast redwoods and Douglas firs but would help preserve oaks and pines in less glamorous areas of the state. In fact, \$48 million of a bond issue would go to buy land in the Santa Monica mountains. The most exciting possibility is the purchase of 8,000 acres that would create the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park, a splendid wilderness just north of the San Fernando Valley, which the California Parks and Recreation Department has already declared prime parkland.

* Wilson asks the Resource Agency to work up a plan for further preservation of wetlands, especially the creation of seasonal marshes from inundated farmland to provide waterfowl habitat.

Well! Quite a rich menu. The sober fact is that it will happen only if the state legislature supports it and the voters approve the \$628 million bond measure in June 1992. Bonds for the environment did very well until last year when the electorate was stunned by the overwhelming number of bond propositions on the ballot. Many voters threw up their hands and voted "NO" on all of them. Perhaps that can be avoided next year and, despite the recession and the budget crisis, this epoch-making measure can be passed.

Environmentalists are vigorously applauding Pete Wilson and some are probably wondering, "Where's the catch?" These certainly aren't fancy campaign promises — he won the election. He can't be looking ahead to re-election in 1994, only four months into his term of office. Perhaps there is no catch. Though he might not have shown it as a U.S. Senator, he does feel strongly about the Santa Monica mountains. On Earth Day he said:

"Our natural treasures — the majestic Sierra, the austere canyons of the Santa Monica mountains, the ancient forests of the north coast — have shaped the California character.

"If we lose them, we lose not only part of our heritage and our history but part of ourselves."

We hope John Muir is listening. 

An Exchange: Debt-For-Nature

by State Controller Gray Davis

In May of 1989 an historic event took place in Tehama County, California. Dye Creek Wildlife Preserve was opened — the first nature sanctuary in the United States acquired through a debt-for-nature swap.

The debt-for-nature swap gave the people of California 37,000 acres of gently rolling hills, rare blue oaks, Peregrine Falcons, and Bald Eagles. It was a landmark event not only for what it preserves for future generations, but for the promise it holds for protecting our environment by uniting government, business and non-profit organizations in a common environmental goal.

California is blessed with a wealth of natural resources. But many of those resources are in danger of being lost forever as development encroaches. Will we manage to save the living diversity of unspoiled California for future generations, or will we leave them a legacy of development that was blind to the riches of our natural heritage?

We must look to new, fresh approaches to preserve and protect these important resources. The key is to develop creative solutions of meeting important societal goals and to protect assets with our increasingly limited resources.

The Dye Creek swap was proposed by the State Controller's office in settlement of a state lawsuit against the Bank of America. With the help of the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the American Farmland Trust, and the Defenders of Wildlife, my office conducted a lengthy search for environmentally precious preserves in California owned by the Bank. The Bank agreed to turn over to the state more than 40,000 acres of precious wildlife preserves worth approximately \$17.2 million.

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The Dye Creek property, the largest piece of these ecologically sensitive lands, includes redwood forests, archaeological sites, riparian habitats on the Russian and Sacramento Rivers, steelhead and salmon spawning grounds, oak woodlands, and grasslands. These lands and the endangered wildlife within them have been preserved and protected for generations of Californians to enjoy. The Nature Conservancy manages Dye Creek, and the land is cared for in a way that protects sensitive species which enables Californians to enjoy and learn about them.

...creative problem solving with the goal of preserving public resources

As a member of the State Lands Commission, I helped structure a settlement of a lawsuit with Unocal which resulted in the state receiving five environmentally sensitive parcels of land valued at more than \$20 million in addition to \$39.2 million in cash. The Ballona Wetlands settlement, described in your March newsletter, is yet another example of how the public and environment benefitted from creative problem solving with the goal of preserving public resources.

If we are to secure the environmental blessings of this planet for future generations, we must fashion innovative techniques to halt the destruction of crucial resources and the extinction of priceless species, not only in California, but across this country and around the world. 

Birds Of The Season

by Kimball Garrett

Although spring migration seems to have just ended, July and August mark the beginning of fall migration. Flowering mountain meadows sustain hordes of Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds and by August flocks of warblers drift south along the ridges. Along the coast, a few wandering Magnificent Frigatebirds and visiting herons from Mexico are likely to show up. For those willing to brave the furnace of the Salton Sink, these birds, boobies, and species thought of as pelagics — jaegers, storm-petrels, shearwaters, and even an albatross — are possibilities.

Speaking of pelagics, boat trips out of Sausalito on the weekends of 3 May and 11 May were extremely successful. Word came of up to 171 Murphy's Petrels, along with a scattering of Cook's, a few Horned Puffins and Black-footed and Laysan Albatross. These trips go out to the 100 mile line if the seas are not too rough. Information on these and other more local pelagic trips are announced in the *Tanager* and on the Audubon bird tape — (213) 874-1318.

Unusual weather patterns produced some noteworthy fallouts of birds. On 27 April, Harold Swanton's bottlebrush tree in Northridge hosted some 50 Nashville Warblers, several other warbler species and a few Black-headed Grosbeaks, all at the same time — and a bottlebrush is not a very large tree!

Although at this writing (16 May), the vagrant season has barely begun, the past few weeks were not without their interesting reports.

A Laysan Albatross had a fatal encounter with a utility line at the south end of the Salton Sea (*vide*: Bob McKernan). Brants are unusual inland, so one at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on 22 April (Leo Best) was noteworthy. A Swainson's Hawk was seen in Palmdale on 11 May (Dave Koeppel).

Solitary Sandpiper reports include one in the Antelope Valley on

20 April (DK) and one at California City on 1 May (Dave Richardson). A Baird's Sandpiper, most unusual in spring, was reported from Bolsa Chica on 10 May (Brian Ferrar).



Laysan Albatross by Herb Clarke

Two Long-tailed Jaegers — the jaeger species least likely to be seen inshore — were reported from the Seal Beach Pier on 4 May (Jeff Boyd, Steve Mlodinow). Franklin Gulls were reported from the Antelope Valley on 20 April (DK), from Quail Lake on 5 May (Mai Johnson), and from Malibu Lagoon on 9 May (Jon Alderfer).

A Ruddy Ground-Dove was at the Wister Unit of the Salton Sea on 20 April (Vernon Howe). The first Olive-sided Flycatcher report of the spring comes from Dominguez Hills on 20 April (Mitch Heindel), and an Eastern Kingbird showed up at Butterbreyt Springs in eastern Kern County on 1 May (DR).

A singing Sage Thrasher was seen near Butterbreyt Springs on 5 May (Matt Heindel), and a Bendire's Thrasher has been on territory in upper Butterbreyt Canyon since at least 28 April (Hank and Priscilla Brodkin).

A singing Northern Parula was reported from Wilson Park in Torrance on 14 May (Ron Meline) and a Palm Warbler was at Mojave Narrows near Victorville on 27 April (Joe Brooks). Black-and-white Warbler reports include single birds in the Antelope Valley on 20 April (DK), in Rolling Hills on 20 April (MiH), in Placerita Canyon on 30 April (Doug Maticio), and at Butterbreyt Springs on 11 May (Jon Wilson).

A female American Redstart was at Mojave on 9 May (JW) and an at-least-second-year male was there on 13 May (H&PB). A Northern Waterthrush was at Huntington Beach Central Park on 4 May (JB & SM) and another was at California City on 11 May (SM). A male Hooded Warbler was found in Mojave on 13 May (H&PB).

Two pairs of Summer Tanagers were on territory at Big Morongo on 3 May (Dick and Bea Smith), a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was reported from Palmdale on 11 May (DK), and an Indigo Bunting was singing at Butterbreyt Springs on 1 May (DR).

A very rare Cassin's Sparrow was seen skylarking at Dominguez Hills on 29 April (MiH) and a Clay-colored Sparrow was at the San Joaquin Marsh, Irvine, on 4 May. A Swamp Sparrow was found at Mojave on 9 May (JW). White-throated Sparrow reports include single birds at Butterbreyt Springs on 28 April (Brad Sillasen), at Descanso Gardens on 7 May (Gayle Benton), and at Mojave on 5 May (MaH), with two individuals there on 13 May (H&PB).

Fifteen Red Crossbills were at Chilao on 22 April (JA) and five were at California City on 11 May (VH).

Have a wonderful summer and Good Birding! ➤

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.

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

Hank Brodkin
27-1/2 Mast Street
Marina del Rey, CA 90292
(213) 827-0407
- or -
David Koeppel
(213) 454-2576

Lens View

by Herb Clarke

One of the great pleasures of taking pictures is sharing them with friends. But sometimes a self imposed problem is created when a photographer is so enamored with his photographs that he inflicts his cherished productions on a disinterested audience. I know an excellent photographer and lecturer who many times will show slide after slide of an identical subject in a very long program, albeit composed of good pictures, until people mutter to themselves — enough already!

The answer to this situation is for the photographer to be ruthless in editing his material, whether it is prints or slides. It makes no difference how rare the bird is or how much trouble or expense was involved in getting the picture, the rule is — throw it away if it is bad or has to be explained or apologized for. How often have we heard an excuse such as: If I had not goofed in some way, this would be a great picture. Sometimes the person is so happy to get anything that he doesn't realize how terrible (out of focus, poorly exposed, tiny image size) the photograph is. Usually people are too polite to criticize. As always, there are exceptions to this rule. If the subject is of rare interest or there is some need to validate a record of an usual sighting, then even a poor picture can be useful and may be retained. Use discretion.

When displaying pictures, make sure your audience stays interested. Keep your comments brief, don't show too many views of the same subject, and end your presentation with

your viewers wishing it could go on longer. I usually try to give programs of no longer than 45 minutes. After that length of time, people often begin to squirm — especially if their seats are uncomfortable, talk among themselves, doze off or may even walk out.

Here are some tips which can help make your slide program a smooth, interesting, professional appearing, enjoyable experience for yourself and

your audience. Run through your program a few times before your presentation. It's a little upsetting to have an upside down picture unexpectedly appear on the screen. Try to maintain continuity, avoid sudden shifts in subject matter. You might show a picture of a sign, highway or something similar to lead your audience into the next segment. Don't leave a picture on the screen too long.

Often you are asked to give programs in a location with poor lecture facilities and equipment. Bringing your own projection equipment, especially a spare projector bulb and extension cord, solves many problems. Recommended is a Kodak Carousel projector with a zoom lens, along with a lightweight, collapsible projection stand. If you are prepared and give a polished presentation, your success will be assured. There is nothing better in ego building than plaudits from an appreciative audience.

As mentioned before, I would like to make these columns an open forum for bird photography. Comments or criticism regarding contents, suggestions for future discussion, technique or equipment information are always welcome. Address all correspondence to my attention at Audubon House, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046.



BROWN PELICAN — breeding. Taken in April 1991 at the Oxnard marina using a Nikon N8008 camera and a Sigma 400mm lens mounted on a shoulder brace. Exposure was 1/500th of a second at F5.6, slightly side lighted. Note that the subject is off center so that the bird appears to be looking into the picture. Film is Kodachrome 64 and the distance was about 20 feet. 

Quick Action by LAAS Nets \$82,500 Grant

On April 23, a small item in the newspaper stated that an electroplating company in Van Nuys was convicted of dumping toxic wastes into the sewer system. The judge fined the company and ordered it to donate \$165,000 to non-profit environmental organizations.

Los Angeles Audubon flew into action. Innumerable phone calls were made to attorneys, the city bureaucracy and influential citizens. Quickly, a proposal for restoring and developing the Sepulveda Wildlife Area was composed and the next day (!) it was in the hands of the decision makers. Letters from Congressman Tony Beilenson, Councilwoman Joy Picus, Lloyd Kiff, Curator of Ornithology at the Natural History Museum, National Audubon, the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology — all sup-



Left to right: Dr. Hartmut Walter, UCLA Professor of Geography; Sandy Wohlgemuth, LAAS Conservation Co-Chairman; Robert Van Meter, LAAS President; James Hahn, Los Angeles City Attorney and Bill Principe, LAAS Second Vice President

porting us — were faxed the same day.

On May 2, the judge awarded the fine to Heal the Bay and Los Angeles Audubon — \$82,500 each! On May 7, City Attorney James K. Hahn presented a check to President Robert Van Meter at the new wildlife lake in the Sepulveda Basin.

Congratulations to Sandy

Wohlgemuth, Bill Principe and Hartmut Walter who worked with extraordinary skill, speed and hard work to achieve this milestone for LAAS. We are trying to create an area that belongs to wildlife in the heart of an urban metropolis. There is nothing like it in the entire city. This \$82,500 is a giant step toward that goal. ➤

Reviewed... "Ocean Birds of the Nearshore Pacific" A Guide for the Sea Going Naturalist By Rich Stallcup

Point Reyes Bird Observatory. 1990; 214 Pages; Paper; 8 7/8 X 5 1/2; Price: \$19.95

This sturdy 214-page paperback is an absolute necessity for those interested in pelagic birding and marine biology. In this book there is a wealth of information on identification, behavior, and occurrence of birds, mammals and sea turtles which are encountered from the California Coast to the edge of the Continental Shelf (approximately 200 miles). Information in the book pertains to all pelagic species likely to be seen from Baja California to North Alaska.

Ocean Birds is generously illustrated with black-and-white photographs of not only the common species, but shows us the rarer phases and anomalies, as well as those species to

be looked for in the future. It is also filled with original ink drawings by Keith Hansen, Tim Manolis and Ann Rovetta. These drawings help to clarify the differences between similar appearing species such as Short-tailed versus Sooty Shearwaters.

Species accounts comprise the bulk of the book, and include the tubenoses, tropicbirds, boobies, frigatebirds, phalaropes, some gulls, terns and the alcids. Each species is discussed with regard to its behavior, description of plumage, Pacific distribution, and the time you can expect to find this bird in our nearshore waters. Rich shares with us his tips on identification, giving us the general shape and overall impression of the bird.

The ink drawings and the photographs of the marine mammals are in

their natural habitats and show only bits and pieces (back dorsal fins, etc.), the way you see them from boats, and are more instructive than drawings of the whole animal.

In addition to the field guide aspects of this book, Rich discusses the ocean currents and topography of the Northeast Pacific. There is advice on pelagic birding including how to locate a boat and where the best spots are found on that boat. He also gives information on how and when to find sea birds from coastal points on the mainland.

Rich Stallcup is recognized as one of North America's premier field ornithologists. His vast knowledge of wildlife and superb observation skills combined with his unique sense of humor make him a vital, interesting

C A L E N D A R

Continued from page 12

and park in the paved lot on the left across from the 7,000 ft. elevation marker. Meet at 8:00 a.m. (LA, p.199)

Sunday, August 11 - Mt. Piños Vicinity. Leader Shirley Rubin. Hummingbirds, mountain woodpeckers, Hermit Warbler, etc. Anticipate the elements, and bring a lunch. Take Hwy. 5 N past Tejon Pass to the Frazier Park offramp, turn left, and follow Frazier Mountain Park Rd. bearing right onto Cuddy Valley Rd. Meet at the "Y" formed by the junction of Cuddy Valley Rd. and Mil Potrero Hwy. at 8:00 a.m. promptly, and park in the obvious dirt clearing. Rain cancels. (CAL, p.88, C-1)

Saturday, August 17 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join David White on the first of his monthly morning walks of the year. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. in South El Monte, off Fwy. 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Drive exits, west of Fwy. 605. (LA, p. 47, D-5)

Saturday, August 24 - Santa Clara River Estuary. Leader Irwin Woldman. Shorebirds in the morning and landbirds after lunch. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the small parking lot on the sea side of Spinaker Dr. Take Hwy. 101 W to Victoria Ave., proceed S to

and valuable teacher. In this excellent book, he translates his knowledge into a great learning experience for his readers. The following is a quote by Roger Tory Peterson from the foreword of the book: "No one is more skilled at the game than Rich Stallcup, and in these pages he shares some of his secrets and insights about these ocean wanderers."

Rich participated in the founding of Point Reyes Bird Observatory in 1965. He has led many trips throughout Western North America. He currently resides near the Point Reyes peninsula with his daughter Willow. All proceeds of this book will go to ornithological research at Point Reyes Bird Observatory.

I highly recommend this book to both the novice and the experienced pelagic birder. If you can't stand next to Rich Stallcup on your next trip, then take along his book.

Phil Sayre
Glendora, California

Olivas Park Dr., and take this W. Las Olivas becomes Spinaker Dr. after crossing Harbor Blvd.

Thursday, September 12 - Seabird Workshop. Alcids, petrels, etc. reviewed by Arnold Small. Lecture participants are guaranteed a spot on the Saturday, September 14 pelagic trip (\$60 fee for boat trip only, \$12 fee for lecture only). 7:30 p.m. Location TBA.

Sunday, September 15 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Leader David White. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See August 17 write-up for details.

Sunday, September 29 - Mojave Vicinity. Leader Larry Allen. We will bird the California City Central Park for 1 hour (in case you're late), eat a picnic lunch when the mood strikes us, and bird surrounding areas 'til we drop. Come prepared for a possibly very hot, dusty, fun day. Take Hwy. 14 out past Mojave, continue N on Hwy. 14 about 10 miles to California City Boulevard, turn right and proceed into the town, past the shopping center about 1 mile, left at Central Park sign just past the overpass. The first right turn will take you into the parking lot. We will meet in the lot at 6:30 a.m. About 2 hours driving time from Los Angeles.

Saturday, October 5 - Santa Cruz Island. Leaders Irwin Woldman and Nature Conservancy ranger. The boat will leave Ventura at 8:00 a.m. for Pelican Cove, and return at 6:00 p.m. Reserve with Island Packers at (805) 642-1393. LAAS spaces reserved until September 10. Signify LAAS membership. \$42. 

Wanted

Original art work, photos or cartoons for the *Western Tanager*.

Illustrations are frequently needed for our newsletter. Appropriate cartoons would be a welcome addition to our Conservation Conversation columns. Let us see what you can do. Fame is just around the corner. Please contact: Jean Brandt, editor, at (818) 788-5188.

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Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year, \$21 for seniors, and presently \$20 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon* magazine, a national publication.

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

Non-members may subscribe to the *Western Tanager* for \$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.

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(212) 832-3200
Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library and Bookstore are open
Tuesday - Saturday
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(213) 876-0202 - office
(213) 874-1318 - bird tape
(updated Thursdays)

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 Tuesday - Saturday for most reservation services.

CALENDAR

EVENING MEETINGS

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

Next meeting will be September 10, 1991. Have a nice summer!

PELAGIC TRIPS

Saturday, August 17 - Orange County trip (from San Pedro); Catalina to Lausen Sea Mount; 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Cost \$36. Leaders: Brian Daniels and Lee Jones.

Sunday, August 18 - Los Angeles toward Santa Barbara Island; 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Cost \$32. Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Lee Jones.

Saturday, September 14 - Ventura to the back side of Santa Rosa Island - weather permitting; 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Cost: \$60.

Saturday, October 12 - Los Angeles to Santa Barbara Island and beyond; 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Cost \$32. Leaders: Herb and Olga Clarke.

Saturday, November 16 - Los Angeles to Santa Barbara Island and beyond. Trip is planned to look for ALCIDS; 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Cost \$32. Leaders: Arnold Small and Herb Clarke.

Note: Surcharge may be required for all trips if fuel costs rise.
See Reservation Policy on page 11

FIELD TRIPS

CALL THE TAPE!

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

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

Sunday, July 7 - 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 and Sunday, July 13 and 14 - San Jacinto Area. Meet Monte Taylor at Hurkey Campground at noon on Saturday. Bird, camp, and bird again on Sunday. Night birding included. No fee, but reserve by phone or SASE. Participation strictly limited.

Saturday, July 27 - Bolsa Chica. Tom Chell leader. Shorebirds, skimmers and a number of tern species likely. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Bolsa Chica estuary parking lot on the east side of PCH. Take the 405 S to Golden West St., take this S to PCH, and turn right onto PCH. Don't miss the small parking lot for the Bolsa Chica Marine Preserve on your right. Some paid parking across the street at the beach may be required. (OC, p.25,D-2)

Sunday, July 28 - Lancaster Shorebirds. Leader Kimball Garrett. Shorebirds migrating through should still be in breeding plumage. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Lamont-Odett Overlook rest area located on Hwy. 14 north of the Pearblossom Hwy.

turnoff. Access to the overlook is from the south only. Stops will depend on scouting reports and accessibility. We will probably finish up shortly after noon. It will get hot.

Sunday, August 4 - Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See July 7 write-up for details.

Sunday, August 4 - Bird/Botany Walk in Cooper Canyon. Leader Dustin Alcala of the Theodore Payne Foundation. Fairly strenuous walk descending 900 ft. in 1 mile to a stream, and back. Spectacular wilderness. Trees, shrubs, late bloomers and birds. Eat lunch and continue birding at Chilao afterwards. Take Angeles Crest Hwy. past Chilao to Cloudburst Summit,

Continued on previous page

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