



WESTERN TANAGER

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Merlin— and the other falcons

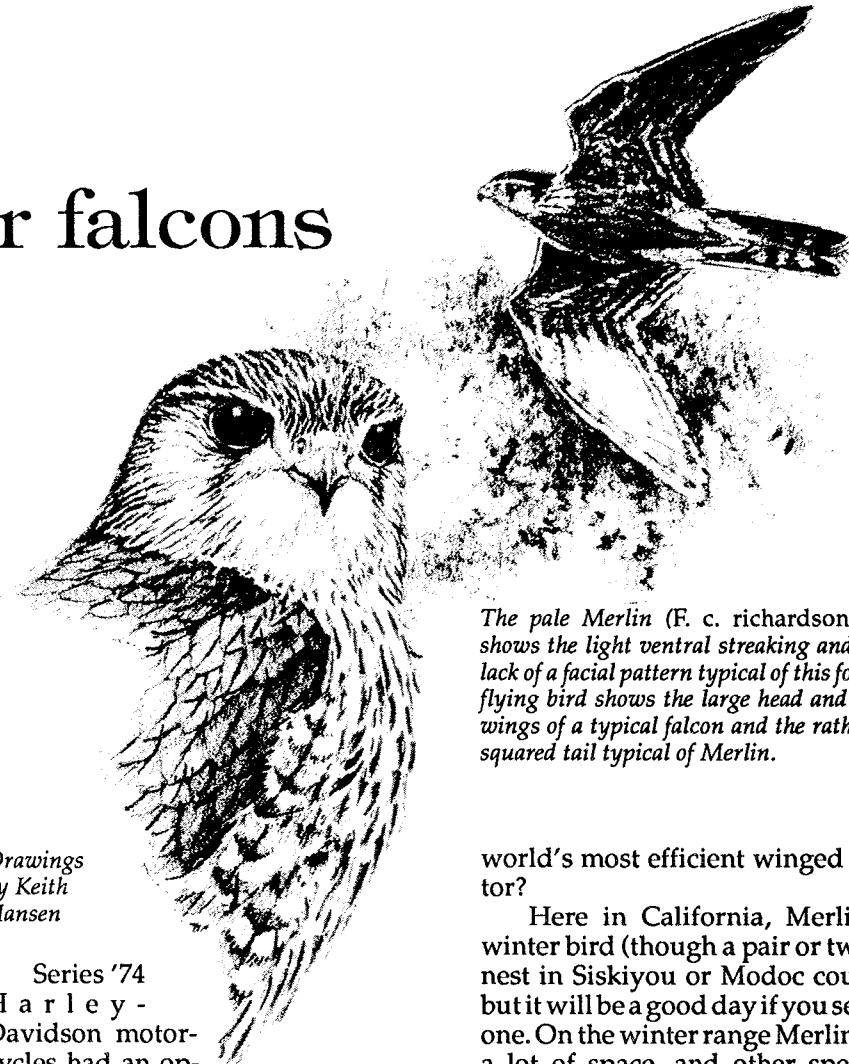
by Rich Stallcup

Suddenly the mudflat explodes and shorebirds rocket into flight going every which way. Huge flocks of sandpipers are wheeling and winding, flashing white then dark. Willets, godwits and curlews are screaming, terns lose their graceful composure, herons and egrets cock an eye to the sky, close their necks, and freeze. A Scrub Jay in the border thicket goes still as stone. An attack is in the works, and the target is known only to Merlin.

From somewhere a 150-mile-per-hour bullet with claws is on the way, focused on a single soul amongst the chaos. As pictured here, the victim will be a Dunlin. Merlin easily catches the flock and cuts a wake through it, emerging, this time, with a meal. The crease in the flocks rounds out.

A couple of feathers drift and rock slowly back to earth and before they land, Merlin is feasting two miles away, perched with its kill on an open Douglas fir branch. Waders settle back to nervous feeding and quiet roost. Merlin will be back on the next low tide.

Merlins don't hover. There isn't time. Unlike Kestrels, it isn't part of their style. The world of Merlin is quick and intense. In flight, Kestrels often hover and flow around like overgrown swallows, but Merlins beat at the air like they are always late and trying to catch up.



Drawings
by Keith
Hansen

Series '74

H a r l e y -
Davidson motor-
cycles had an op-
tion called the sui-
cide clutch that did not

engage gradually. You were either at idle, or ripping along; nothing in between. That, too, is the way of the Merlin... they do not engage gradually. In the Scilly Isles where hundreds of British birders go in October to look for rarities, this standard dialogue has evolved. If the question is, "Was that a Merlin?", the answer is "Yes, because if it were a Kestrel, it would still be here."

Timing: Merlin is a scarce bird throughout its Holarctic range. Isn't this a surprise for what might be the

The pale Merlin (F. c. richardsonii), left, shows the light ventral streaking and virtual lack of a facial pattern typical of this form. The flying bird shows the large head and pointed wings of a typical falcon and the rather short squared tail typical of Merlin.

world's most efficient winged predator?

Here in California, Merlin is a winter bird (though a pair or two may nest in Siskiyou or Modoc counties), but it will be a good day if you see even one. On the winter range Merlin needs a lot of space, and other species of raptors, especially other Merlins, are physically excluded.

Habitat: Merlins aren't much for following rules or staying within the cage of definition. From mid-September through mid-April, one of them might be found anywhere in any habitat. Although some individuals maintain distinct foraging territories at coastal, valley, or Great Basin localities, others are nomads and follow food sources—crossbills moving with the cone-nut crop, thrushes at berry outbreaks, or waxwings and solitaires ranging through juniper forests. Merlins have been seen chasing Red Pha-



A dark Merlin (perhaps *F. c. suckleyi*) cuts a crease in a flock of sandpipers.

Iaropes ten miles offshore, warblers at Furnace Creek in Death Valley, and Rosy Finches at 12,000 feet along the Sierran crest. Merlins are small-bird-harvesters and may occur wherever there are any, ripe to pick.

Identification: Compared to American Kestrel, Merlins are bigger-headed and have relatively shorter wings that are broader at the base. The tail of Merlin is shorter and clearly squared (not rounded) at the tip. As said above, the two are behaviorally very different. While Kestrels drift, slide, and hover, Merlins always seem late for some distant appointment and break the speed limit to keep it. For plumage differences the field guides are adequate, but many Merlins can be

(and should be) identified to subspecies (see below).

Compared to Peregrine and Prairie Falcon, Merlin is smaller (though a small Peregrine versus a large Merlin could be a hard call) and has shorter wings and a shorter tail. Most Peregrines here are very dark on the upperparts, and the dramatic facial pattern is easily discerned, even at a distance. Prairie Falcons are always light sandy brown above, and all individuals have blackish axillaries or "wing-pits" that contrast with the otherwise white underparts.

Perhaps the bird most often mistaken for Merlin is the immature Sharp-shinned Hawk. Both are small hawks with squared tails and heavily streaked breasts. Though Sharp-shinneds have "rounded" wingtips and Merlins have "pointed" wing tips, Sharp-shinned's wings can appear pointed, especially if it is diving or hurrying down-wind. Good distinc-

tions may be Merlin's much larger head mounted on a thick neck and its cleaving flight performed with aggressive intent. Sharp-shinned Hawk has a small head pressed against the leading edge of the wings (yes, in the middle) without much neck. Flight-at-ease is typical accipitrine—flap-flap-flap-glide—but may appear wilder when the bird is clipping along downslope. Merlins have dark irises, Sharp-shinneds, yellow.

Subspecies of Merlin: Three distinct Merlin subspecies occur in North America, and all are represented in California during migration and in winter. Many individuals can be identified to subspecies in the field; others may not. Please try to do this (carefully), and report your findings to the regional editors of *American Birds*. Our understanding of local avifauna and your enjoyment of birding may be heightened.

The "taiga" Merlin (*Falco columbarius columbarius*) is probably the most common race found in California. It is intermediate in color tone between the next two and, like the others, males, females, and immatures are distinct. This type may be more difficult to identify with certainty than the very light and very dark races.

The "prairie" Merlin (*F. c. richardsonii*) is very pale (gray or tan) on the upperparts with light ventral streaking, and the "black" Merlin (*F. c. suckleyi*) is blackish or dark chocolate brown above with dense, black streaking below.

Merlins are special. Their scarcity, unpredictability, and mystique make them one of the very most striking players in the wilderness of wonder. Be like the Dunlin and, while in the winter field, watch constantly for the imminent, flashing presence of this feathered prince.

This article is reprinted from the Observer, the quarterly journal of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, with the kind permission of the author, Rich Stallcup, the artist, Keith Hansen and the editor, Claire Peasley. Rich Stallcup's identification articles appear regularly in the Observer. An annual membership in the Point Reyes Bird Observatory is \$35. LAAS encourages everyone to support them. Their address is: Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 4990 Shoreline Highway, Stinson Beach, CA 94970.

Lens View

by Herb Clarke

It has been brought to my attention that many people do not realize these columns are part of a series appearing irregularly in the *Western Tanager*. This one is number six. Frequently I am asked questions about photography that I have already answered in print. A folder containing all previously published columns is for sale at the LAAS Bookstore in Plummer Park. Hopefully, reading past and future columns will help solve most field problems. Discussing nature photography is always a pleasure for me, so if you have a question I have not answered or explained to your satisfaction, let me know and I will elaborate.

Last time, I alluded to a recent development in flash photography. As previously stated, all commercial flash units are designed to illuminate subjects at relatively close range. Unsatisfactory ways to overcome this problem have been to use faster film, larger, more powerful (awkward, heavy, and expensive) flash guns or multiple flashes. I have often wished for a way to concentrate and aim a flash like a small flashlight. Lighthouses and searchlights have long used a lens called a Fresnel lens to do just what I needed but on a much larger scale.

An innovative fellow nature photographer has developed a practical adaptation of this method and is offering various models for sale. By using one of his units (which I greatly modified for my personal requirements), I have been able, in situations that would have been impossible before, to obtain excellent photographs of birds. This device consists of a bracket which holds a flash about six inches behind a small plastic flat Fresnel lens all of which, with camera and lens, can be mounted on a shoulder brace or tripod. Depending on model, the emitted light is concentrated three or four times the guide number of the flash used. Using Kodachrome 64, I can sat-

isfactorily illuminate a fairly small bird at a distance of 25 feet or more, depending on the lens and ambient lighting conditions.

All this equipment is somewhat bulky and heavy, but still portable. The resulting illumination is flat with surprisingly little of the harsh shadows and black backgrounds often associated with flash pictures. In addition, most birds do not seem to notice

birds or wading birds, is to stand still or, better, sit and let them approach while they're feeding. Using a car as a blind while shooting out of an open window also works well. Setting up near a feeder or small pool of water such as a puddle or bird bath can be very rewarding.

Photographing at a nest requires special precautions. Safety of the birds must be the primary concern. Most



the brief light of the flash. I highly recommend this system to any serious bird photographer. Purchase or more information can be obtained by contacting Jack Wilburn at Nature's Reflections, Post Office Box 9, Rescue, CA 95672, phone (916) 989-4765.

As mentioned in a prior column, there seems to be a tolerance point beyond which a wild creature will not allow a person to approach without fleeing. This makes it difficult to obtain a satisfactory large image of the subject in the picture. It must be remembered, to most birds or animals a standing human appears to be a predator ready to attack.

When approaching a target, always move forward slowly, stopping frequently to let your prey relax and continue its normal activities. Take some pictures at each stop because you never know exactly when your subject will move out of range. Wear subdued-colored clothing and avoid letting any of your equipment or clothing flap in the wind. This stalking method works better if you can crawl or at least crouch when approaching. Another method that frequently works well, especially with shore-

birds will overcome their initial fear fairly quickly, but don't keep the adults away from their eggs or young for long periods. Restore any altered cover, such as vegetation, to prevent attacks by predators.

Constantly practice and refine your techniques by analyzing mistakes. Enjoy the challenge; try to out-think your subject; always remember that the bird or animal will usually do the unexpected.

Next time, I will discuss photographic blinds. 

PHOTO

Red-faced Warbler, taken near Silver City, New Mexico, June 1991. Parents were feeding young in a nest on the ground. In order to minimize disturbance, I sat about 12 feet away in the open, shooting when the bird landed on a favored perch. Equipment used was a Nikon N8008 camera and a 400mm f3.5 Nikon lens, together with a 1.4 teleconverter and a 27.5mm extension tube, all mounted on a tripod with a Wilburn Fresnel unit and a Sunpak 433D flash. Effective aperture was f11.0, and effective focal length of the lens was 560mm. Everything was in deep shadow. Two 36 exposure rolls of Kodachrome 64 were taken over a period of several hours with no apparent awareness by the birds.

Ten Years of Birding at Whittier Narrows

by David White

Sunday, November 17th, will be my tenth anniversary LAAS field trip at Whittier Narrows. I began birding Whittier Narrows in October 1979, about a year after coming to southern California; I guided my first field trip two years later. Since then, we've had more than eighty successful trips. Remarkably few were rained out; I missed three, which Chuck Murdoch, Larry Steinberg, and Nellie Gryk took over for me. We have joined with El Dorado Audubon and Whittier Audubon, and I've guided two trips for a Sierra Club group. Some years included field trips only from September through May, while trips were scheduled every month in 1984-1986, and thereafter I've attempted to hold at least one summer trip each year for species seldom if at all seen at other times.

"So, how many species did we see?" I've frustrated many people, toward the end of a walk, by shrugging

this question off. I constantly take notes, so it's easy to assume I would know right off—"Oh, fifty-three." But I never do. My notes are jumbled with duplicate references to species in different locations doing different things, and with observations on things other than birds, so the numbers aren't readily apparent to me.

At last, I've compiled a month-by-month observation record from 1979 through 1990; the 79-page report is available for reference at the Whittier Narrows Nature Center and the LAAS Library in Plummer Park. But this doesn't tell how many species we saw during the field trip of, say, October of 1983. The list does include species I saw while scouting the area during lunch hour or after work (I'm employed in nearby Rosemead), so

monthly totals are almost always higher than those for field trips.

During the ten years, I recorded 171 species. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center has a list of 267, but many are accidental or rare; some, like Yellow-billed

Cuckoo and California Gnatcatcher, have now disappeared. February has been my most productive month, with 116 species, followed by October with 115 and December with 113; June has been the slowest, with only 63 species seen, and July only slightly better, with 67. But almost every month has its specialties or unique mixes.

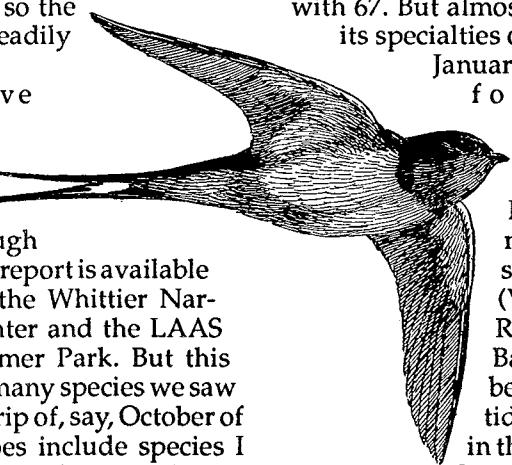
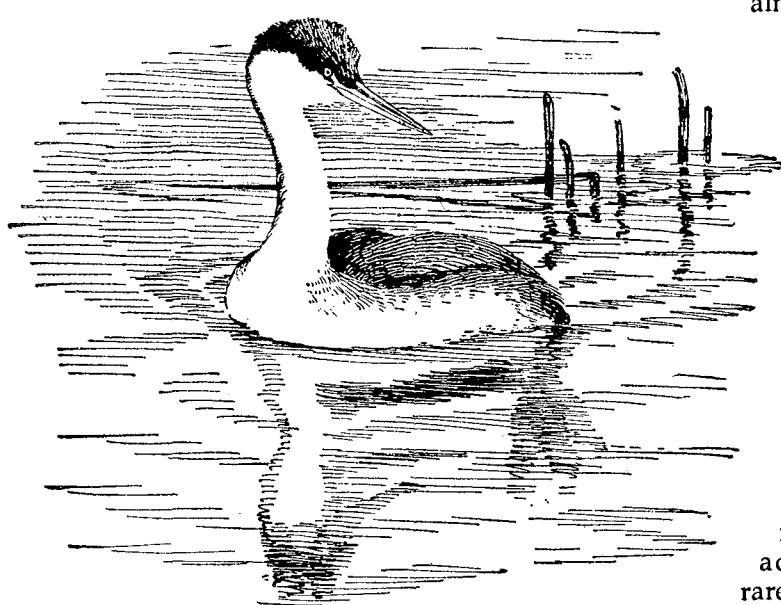
January is the best month for "Western"

Grebe, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and Osprey.

February is the only month in which five species of swallows (Violet-green, Tree, Rough-winged, Barn and Cliff) have been seen—pass that tidbit on to believers in the Mission San Juan

Capistrano legend that the swallows don't return until March! March has a mixture of lingering winter visitors like Say's Phoebe, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Oregon Junco, along with early migrants or summer residents such as Western Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, and Wilson's Warbler.

April is the best month for Sora, the last month for most wintering ducks (though some species depart after February) and the earliest appearance of many migrants and summer residents such as Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Black-headed Grosbeak; it has also been the best month for seeing Great Blue Heron nestlings at the Legg Lake complex and the month when baby American Coots usually first appear (this is the time to see them, while they're fuzzy, red and cute). May has several lingering species of wintering waterfowl; it marks the appearance of

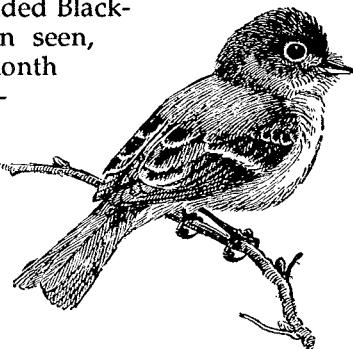


Western Wood Pewee, is the only month when Yellow Warbler and Yellow-headed Blackbird have been seen, and is the month when our accidental Common Ground Dove was found. May is also the best month for baby Ruddy Ducks and Red-tailed Hawks.

June is one of two months when Virginia Rail has been seen and is the best month for baby Cinnamon Teal.

July is the only month when Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds have been seen, and Greater Roadrunner appeared (once). August is one of the better months for Least Bittern and marks the earliest fall appearances of Pintail, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, and Wilson's Warbler; it is also the best month for Nashville Warbler. September is the best month for Black-necked Stilt, and Turkey Vulture; more wintering waterfowl arrive, and the first White-crowned Sparrows appear.

October is the best month for American Bittern and Wood Duck and

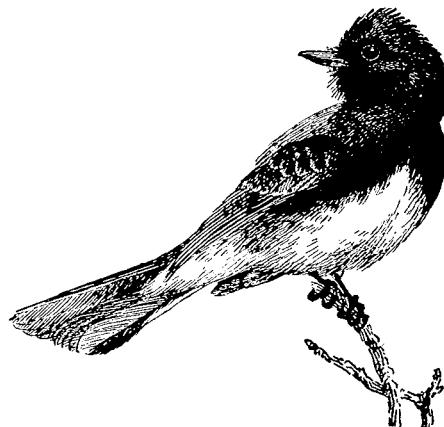


the only month when American Avocet was recorded; it marks the first fall appearance of Eared Grebe and several species of ducks. November occasionally brings the first appearance of Canada Goose, Common Snipe, Purple Finch, and Golden-crowned Sparrow. December is the only month when Ross' Goose, Semipalmated Plover, and Short-eared Owl have been recorded.

The peak months for waterfowl are October through February; for migrants, April and May are the best spring months and September and October the best fall months; summer residents dominate June through August. And then, of course, there are the year-round residents seen on most visits: Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, Ruddy Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Scrub Jay, American Crow, Common Bushtit, Northern Mockingbird, California Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, European Starling, Common Yellowthroat, American Goldfinch, House Finch, and California Towhee.

There is much that the list doesn't tell. We've had some magical birding moments at Whittier Nar-

rows. In particular, I recall Ospreys flying over the San Gabriel River, with fat goldfish in their talons; a bare-branched walnut tree festooned with nearly two dozen Snowy Egrets; a singing Yellow-breasted Chat that allowed everyone to take two turns at the spotting scope, watching his pulsing vocal chords; and the most improbable sight of all, a dead tree on an island in Lake Aquatecos with seven species present, all at once—two Northern Mockingbirds, a Western Kingbird, a male Black-headed Grosbeak, a male Bullock's Oriole, a male Western Tanager, a Black Phoebe, and a Cedar Waxwing. Won't you join us to see what we find next? 



In Memory

A donation of \$1,000 was made to The Nature Conservancy in loving memory of Dorothy Dimsdale.

Bookstore News

Hot off the press: *Birds of the World: A Checklist*, by Clements, 4th Edition \$29.95; *Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds*, by Terres (reprint) \$39.95.

Now available in soft cover: *Seabirds An Identification Guide*, by Harrison, \$24.95; *Shorebirds An Identification Guide*, by Hayman, et al., \$24.95. 

Armchair Activists Needed

Los Angeles Audubon Society has joined the growing number of Audubon chapters nationwide which are participating in the Armchair Activist program.

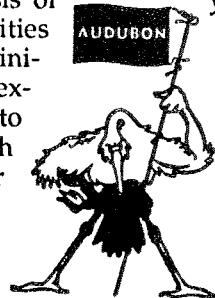
Letters and phone calls to government officials form the basis of Armchair Activist. The activities are designed to require a minimum amount of time and expense for participants, but to maximize those efforts with focused, coordinated letter writing and telephone campaigns.

Letter of the Month Club requires about a half hour per month. The only expense is for postage and stationery. Participants write one letter per month to elected officials on topical issues. A

summary of the topic is sent to volunteers, along with an explanation of current legislation and a sample letter.

The Telephone Rapid Response Team requires only an occasional phone call. As a member of the team, you stand ready to call government officials on short notice to voice a timely opinion on environmental issues. Participants also agree to call two other Team volunteers in a "phone tree" to solicit their involvement.

If you are interested in signing up for either of these options, or as a production coordinator, then call (213) 306-4889 before 10:00 p.m. If no one is home, then leave your name, address, and telephone number. 



Birds Of The Season

by Hank Brodkin

November presents many opportunities for the birding enthusiast to seek out the rare and unusual. Late fall in the deserts of southern California, from Imperial to Inyo Counties, could yield such rarities as Ruddy Ground-Dove, Rusty Blackbird, Tree Sparrow, and three species of long-spur, among others. Any isolated grove of trees with a little water is a good prospect. Of course the coastal canyons can also yield the unusual and unexpected and should be searched diligently. Also in November, winter invaders such as Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Mountain Chickadees, and Varied Thrushes can be located and staked out for the Christmas bird counts.

Fall migration did not let us down this past month with many of the rarer species showing up—both on the coast and in the desert. However, the vagrant prize for the past few years has to go to the San Diego area for the weekend of 14 September. Some of the species seen there on that weekend include Red-eyed Vireo, Magnolia, Cape May, Blackburnian, Prairie, Canada, Blackpoll, and Prothonotary Warblers, Orchard Oriole, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, among others!

In the areas usually covered by this column, we also had a wide variety of interesting species:

A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was discovered in the L.A. River near Atwater on 13 September (Kimball Garrett), and 10 White-faced Ibis were further down river at Willow Street in Long Beach on 18 September. We should all lend our support to the preservation and upgrading of this important wildlife habitat in the center of our "concrete jungle."

Eight American Plover (*dominica*) were on the Oxnard Plain on 1 September (Ed Navojosky), an American Oystercatcher was found at Pt. Fermin on 21 August (Graham Metson), and a Solitary Sandpiper

was at Galileo Park, Kern County, on 15 September (Hank and Priscilla Brodkin). A flock of 13 Red Knots was seen at Malibu Lagoon on 22 August (Sandy Wohlgemuth). On 7 September, two Ruffs were found—one at the Santa Clara River Estuary (Ken and Sue Younglieb) and one at the Lancaster sewer ponds (KG).

An adult and an immature Sabine's Gull were at the Lancaster sewer ponds on 20 September (Art and Jan Cupples, Dick and Bea Smith), and a Xantus' Murrelet was seen off Pt. Mugu on 1 September (EN).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos most likely bred this year near Big Pine, Inyo County (Tom and Jo Heindel), so at least two individuals seen in town on 1 September (H&PB) were not unexpected. Five Common Nighthawks were over Table Mountain in the San Gabriels on 24 August (Betty Jo Stephenson), and a Broad-tailed Hummingbird was found in California City Central Park on 7 September (Matt Heindel).

Two very rare Mexican flycatchers were found within two days of each other at Huntington Beach Central Park: a Greater Pewee on 11 September and a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher on 13 September (Brian Daniels). An Eastern Kingbird was at Harbor Park on 7 September (Mitch Heindel).

California's seventh Veery was found at Galileo Park on 19 September (Dick Erickson) and was seen by many through at least 22 September.

A Virginia's Warbler was at Galileo Park on 12 September (Bruce Broadbooks) and another was at Palos Verdes on 16 September (Martin Byhower). An adult male Northern Parula was at Butterbreyt Springs, Kern County, on 15 September (H&PB), a Yellow-throated Warbler was at California City on 22 September (Phil Sayre), and a Blackpoll Warbler was at Wilderness Park, Redondo on 5 September (David Moody). A male Prothonotary Warbler was found on the LAAS trip to Lake

Palmdale on 22 September (Jonathan Alderfer). An Ovenbird was at California City Central Park on 12 September (BB). This bird was in the exact same location as the one seen last spring. A Northern Waterthrush was reported from Wilderness Park on 7 September (DM), and one was at Lake Palmdale on 22 September (LAAS).

A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen on Hunter Mountain, Inyo County, on 2 September (Julian and Katherine Donahue), a female Dickcissel was found at Galileo Park on 13 September (Jack Nash and John McMannis), and a Lark Bunting was at Palos Verdes on 11 September (DE and Bill O'Connell).

A "Baltimore" Northern Oriole was seen at Galileo Park on 20 September (A&JC).

Thanks again to all of you who contribute to this column by supplying your observations to David and me. While time constraints prohibit me from replying personally, please know that we deeply appreciate your input. This, after all, is what makes both this column and the bird tape work. 

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

Editor's Lament:
A Trogan is a Trogon is a Trogon.

CALENDAR

Continued from Page 8

been actively supporting. Meet at Woodley Park at 7:00 a.m. From the 405 Fwy, take Burbank Blvd. W, turn right onto Woodley Ave. and continue to the Woodley Park entrance on the right. Meet in the first parking area. [LA, p.15, B-6]

Sunday, November 17 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park 10th Anniversary Trip. Leader David White. Renowned area for wintering waterfowl and other birds. 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, west of 605 Fwy. [LA, p.47, D-5]

Saturday, November 23 - Antelope Valley. Fred Heath, who organizes the Antelope Valley Christmas Count (December 14) will take us on a tour of the grassland, marsh, high desert and agricultural areas that make up this distant strip of L.A. County. Good raptors likely. Possible cold or windy weather. Bring a lunch. Meet at 8:00 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. [LA, p.183, B-3]

Sunday, November 24 - Pt. Mugu. Base biologist Tom Keeney should find plenty of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, scoters and other wintering birds to remark upon in this limited access area. Take 101 Fwy W to Las Posas Rd. S, 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

as, please. Include in your reservation request a SASE, citizenship status, phone number and a \$5 deposit to be refunded at the gate.

Sunday, December 1 - Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See November 3 write-up for details.

Saturday, December 7 - Carrizo Plains. Leader Sam Fitton of BLM. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in Maricopa. Vehicles \$13 each. Good buteos, eagles, and Mountain Plover for sure! Cross fingers for cranes. Priority given to 4-person cars and carpoolers.

Saturday, December 14 - Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Leader David White. Meet at 8:00 a.m. See November 17 write-up for details.

Saturday, December 21 - Newport Back Bay. Leader Mary Carmona. Notable high tides on this day. Meet for high tide birding at 7:30 a.m. at the first pullout along the bay along Back Bay Drive just off Jamboree Rd. Take the 405 Fwy S to Mac Arthur Blvd. S, turn right on Jamboree Blvd., drive past San Joaquin Hills Road to Back Bay Drive on your right. If you hit PCH you've gone too far. (OC, p.31, F-5).

Friday, January 17 - Raptor Workshop Lecture. Speaker Ned Harris. Fee TBA. Time and Location: 7:30 p.m. in West L.A.

Sunday, January 19 - Antelope Valley Bus Trip. Leader Ned Harris. Given in conjunction with above lecture. Specifics TBA next month. 

Subscribers Lost?

Due to circumstances far beyond our control, LAAS has lost or misplaced over a hundred names of valuable subscribers and first class upgrades to the *Western Tanager*. Renewal notices were not sent for a long time and many of these fine people had been carried for over a year without being notified that their renewal payment was due. Those names were purged from the list.

We appreciate the support of our many subscribers and the enthusiasm of our first class upgrades and WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU!

What can you do? Ask your friends if they are receiving the *Tanager* regularly. If they mention any problems in receiving the *Tanager*, ask them to notify Audubon House. If they are not already members or subscribers, ask them to subscribe. Give subscriptions as gifts. Spread the word. 

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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.

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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)

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.

C A L E N D A R

E V E N I N G M E E T I N G S

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

ID Workshop precedes the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

November 12 - Chuck Almdale will take us on a remarkable photo-safari into war-ravaged Uganda and neighboring Kenya. Chuck and his wife, Lillian, saw nearly 430 species of birds in 68 families in 6 weeks (we won't be able to show them all)! Don't miss this rare opportunity to experience the sights of the heart of disappearing wild Africa.

November Workshop: To be announced

December 10 - A member of the Condor Recovery Team will provide us with up-to-the-minute coverage of the soon-to-be-released California Condors.

December ID Workshop: To be announced.

the adjacent lot. See November 10 for field trip.

Sunday, November 10 - Sparrow Field Trip. The affiliated field trip to California City with Jon Dunn will take us through the ins and outs of sparrow identification in the field. Sparrows should be migrating or wintering in fair numbers at this time. Sign-up with LAAS for exact directions. \$15 fee for limited participation field trip only. See November 8 for lecture.

Saturday, November 16 - Sepulveda Basin Natural Area. Leader Dustin Alcala anticipates seeing fair numbers of wintering birds and resident riparian and grassland species. This is an easy walk and a good chance to see a park that LAAS has

Continued on page 7



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P E L A G I C T R I P S

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.

Saturday, February 5 - Los Angeles to Palos Verdes Escarpment and on to Redondo Canyon and Knoll; 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Cost \$18. Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Mitch Heindel.

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

F I E L D T R I P S

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, November 3 - 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, 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]

Friday, November 8 - Sparrow Seminar. Ever have trouble sorting out Clay-colored and Chipping sparrows? Our own Jon Dunn will draw on his extensive field experience and impressive slide collection to familiarize us with this often difficult family of birds. Bring binoculars to view slides. Lecture only fee \$8. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at the Van Nuys Senior Citizens' Center. Take the 101 Fwy to the Van Nuys Blvd. offramp in Sherman Oaks, head N, and turn right onto Addison St. Make a quick left on Tilden Ave. and continue into

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