

WESTERN TANAGER



SPECIAL
1994 PELAGIC
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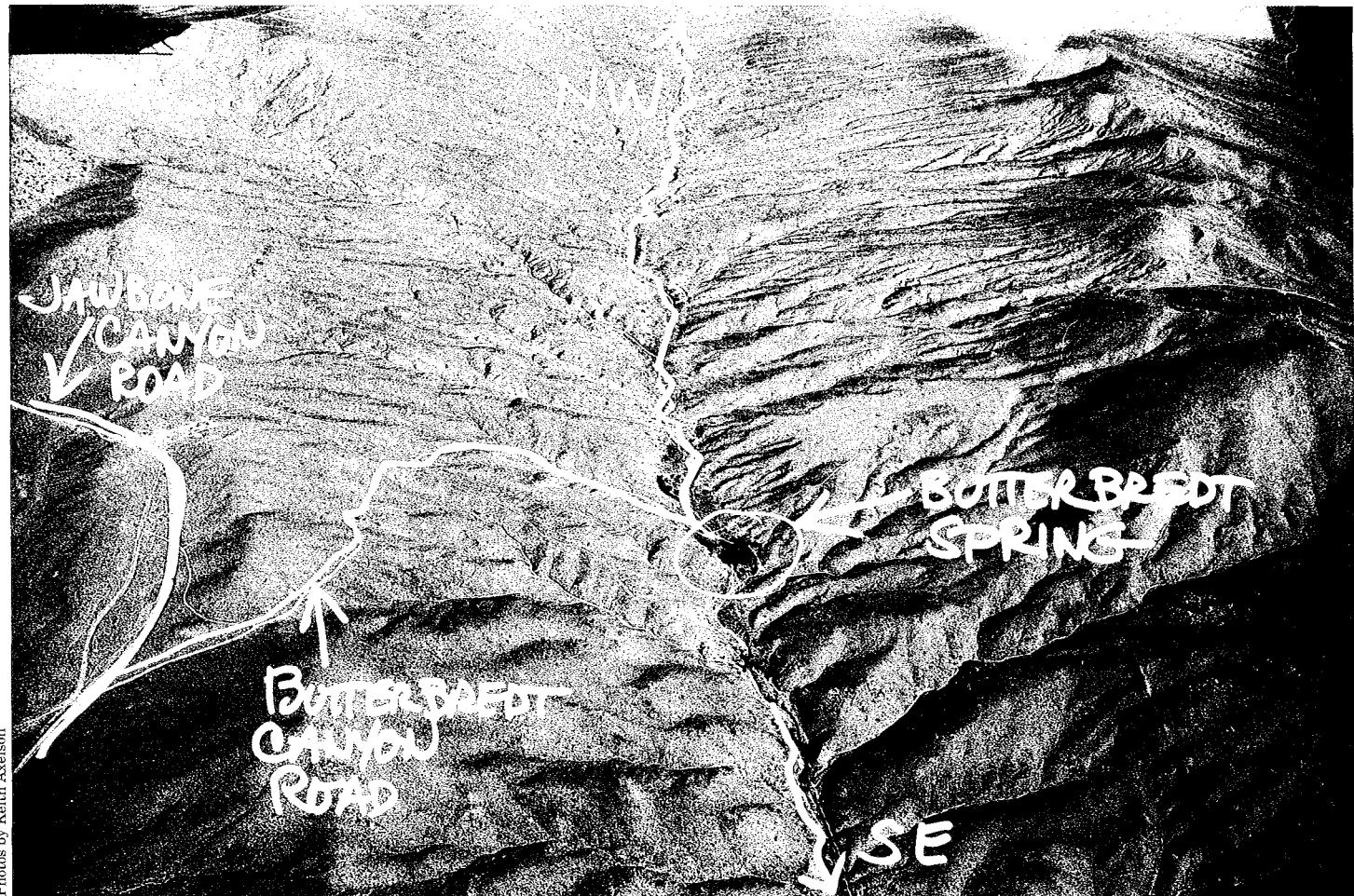
Volume 60 Number 4 December 1993

Los Angeles Audubon Society

THE
DESERT
CARNIVAL:

Butterbredt Springs

by Chuck Bernstein



The Jawbone's connected to the Funbone! If it's true that getting there is half the battle, getting to Butterbredit is also half the fun. The last few miles of a two-hour trip to a birding spot can get dull and tedious. Jawbone Canyon Road leading to Butterbredit Springs, a high desert Kern County oasis, is as interesting and filled with birding surprises as its destination. Along with a few potholes and loose boulders marking the way, around every curve there is all the wonder, beauty, serendipity and flat-out fun as a ride in a fantasy amusement park... only more exciting. Bring sunscreen, water and a dry sense of humor.

Once before I brought Ron Beck to Butterbredit in search of his much-needed LeConte's Thrasher. Jawbone Canyon is *good* for the resident LeConte's. I've had them flying alongside my car there. But on that initial trek, though we saw many fine birds — six species of raptors, including a Golden Eagle and a pair of Long-eared Owls — we did not find Ron's most-wanted bird.

A month later, on 24 April 1993, further lured by the seductive magic of migration, we try for it again. But just at dawn, gassing up in Mojave, with a wind threatening to blow over the power poles, and later, even as we turn into Jawbone Canyon from Highway 14, the wind blows with such strength that secretly I have my doubts. Actually, I had guaranteed him the bird — while praying silently with my fingers crossed.

I wish I could say that we found the LeConte's Thrasher only after a long and harrowing day under a blazing sun, when weary and foot-sore we were ready to leave the area in utter disgust. I can't. That bird was the first bird of the day!

And what do you do when you find the species you're after just as you start birding? Turn around and go home? And as for me hoping to piece a story out of this trip — ughh! Where's the *drama*, the *chase*, the *suspense*? After achieving the objective, everything else is



Long-eared Owl at Butterbredit Springs.

anticlimactic. Or is it?

Truth is, after giving Ron a chance to study his dream bird, we high-five, whoop and holler and then go birding. There are two huge aqueducts carrying water from the Owens Valley to Southern California that cross over Jawbone Canyon Road. The first one you come to is painted white. It is close to this conduit that a bird rockets across the road and into a bush to our right. It is the LeConte's which we find hunkered down out of the wind, close to the protective wall of a dry stream bed. Now, that could have easily ended this story.

To our left, between the road and the varicolored hills in the distance, are acres and acres of desert meadow quietly growing creosote and shadbush and a few treacherous cacti. Inhaling the heady aroma of sage, we walk through the wind-swept field, finding Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and MacGillivray's, Yellow and Orange-crowned Warblers, as Barn Swallows cavort on the wing and wildly acrobatic Ravens challenge the winds high overhead. Down on the canyon floor the wind eases, and just beyond the second aqueduct, which is painted black, we stop at the tree-shaded hillside yard of the "Conduit House." There was a time when birders were cautioned to stay off the property and to watch out for the dogs. We keep a respectful distance from the house

itself, but at least today both dogs and humans are absent. And with every indication that this will turn into a blast-furnace type day, as luck would have it, a sprinkler is watering the diminutive front lawn. An oases can be other than a water-filled hole in the sand. As any "desert rat" can tell you: "Ye takes yer oases where ye finds 'em!" For parched migrants passing through the desert, this minuscule patch of wet weeds is *Bird Heaven*!

In the trees and shrubs are Lark, Lincoln, Chipping and White-crowned Sparrows; several Wilson's and two Virginia's Warblers. In a panoply of color, there are many orange Black-headed and several striking Blue Grosbeaks perched next to, in different shades of orange and yellow, Lesser and American Goldfinches and Hooded and Northern Orioles, and the greenish-yellow female Scott's.

As I zero in on movement in an old conifer at the back of the house, a Barn Owl spooks from a nearby patch of brush to ponderously disappear over the hill to the rear. Ron is on the driveway near the front of the place when I excitedly glob onto five Lawrence's Goldfinches, male and female, in the old conifer. Calling him the news, he says that he was about to call *me* to witness *his* stash of ten Lawrence's! Just then another Barn Owl flushes from the brush to follow its probable mate.

In the apple tree at the front appears a Western Wood Peewee and a stunningly bright male Western Tanager. Then there is a gaudy Purple Finch high in a tree, as an immature Red-tailed Hawk, like a TV news helicopter, soars in circles overhead. The rose bushes seem to be growing Ash-throated Flycatchers, and noisily scurrying about in the background is a nervous Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Western Kingbirds fly in from the field across the road presumably waiting their turn for a drink, and just outside the yard a Gray Flycatcher drops its tail s-l-o-w-l-y. A Solitary Vireo eyes us moodily while a dazzling Yellow-breasted Chat peers at us in

puzzled silence while a sputtering House Wren scolds relentlessly from a safe distance. Overhead, feeding Cliff and Rough-winged Swallows, in invisible ink, write their own cryptic gang graffiti against a wind-swept clear blue sky. Ron suggests that we bottle this clean air and sell it back in L.A. Now, I could close this story here, but there is more... much more.

Leaving this unexpected oasis-before-the-oasis, we move on. But with the car windows open it is maddening to go very far before we *absolutely must stop* to identify some mysterious feathered vocalist or yet another phantom bird that has hurtled itself across the roadway into the brush. There are also unscheduled but irresistible stops to compare and determine the subtle differences between the songs of the Sage and the Black-throated Sparrows, singing almost side by side, and to study the streaked beauty of Brewer's Sparrows. When finally we vow to stop stopping, the *Whoop! Whoop! Whoop! I-am-here-Where-are-you?* calls of Mountain Quail from every side is more than we can bear.

Parking the van (in most places a problem on this road), we separate to mosey across the rock-strewn hills sloping precipitously from the roadway. In no time at all a Mountain Quail flushes from almost under my boot. Then I watch one dash from one creosote bush to another. And soon another follows. I have seen perhaps six when Ron's yell directs me to a rocky crag where there is profiled a beautiful male bird calling, its majestic head plume atremble — as close to a car hood ornament as a Mountain Quail will ever get!

This story could well have been ended *here*, but just as I was loathe to stop birding then, I am reluctant now to stop reliving the day. Intrigued by seeming activity down the sandy road *beyond* Butterbredt toward Kelso Valley (treacherous without a four-wheel drive), we join up with a trio of birders trying to chase down, across the hills, a sus-

pected Bendire's Thrasher, a bird we never find; but on the hike we do add Cactus Wrens, Phainopeplas and surprisingly, a *hooting* Greater Roadrunner. On our return to, but just before reaching, Butterbredt, we turn right onto a dirt lane to park and walk up to what remains of a one-time dwelling, a remnant fireplace topped by a tall chimney, now overgrown with a green stand of scrub brush and trees, mostly willows. Through the thicket of twigs and branches a pair of large yellow eyes follows our every move, and so watching him watching us, we find, quietly roosting and well camouflaged, one of the Long-eared Owls we had seen a month before.

With our trip list close to 80, we finally arrive at Butterbredt where we soon find a Willow then a Hammond's Flycatcher. Later, ambling down the trail alongside the dry sand-filled creekbed in the long chain of willows and scrub, there are Nashville Warblers, Hermit and a Swainson's Thrush, California Thrasher, California Towhees and every hundred feet or so, Costa's Hummingbirds flaunting their exquisite male gorgettes. While watching the spectacle we hear the downhill tumbling trill reminiscent of Canyon Wren — the singing of

Black-chinned Sparrows! One male, either belligerent or blinded by love, perches to sing on a boulder within arm's length of me!

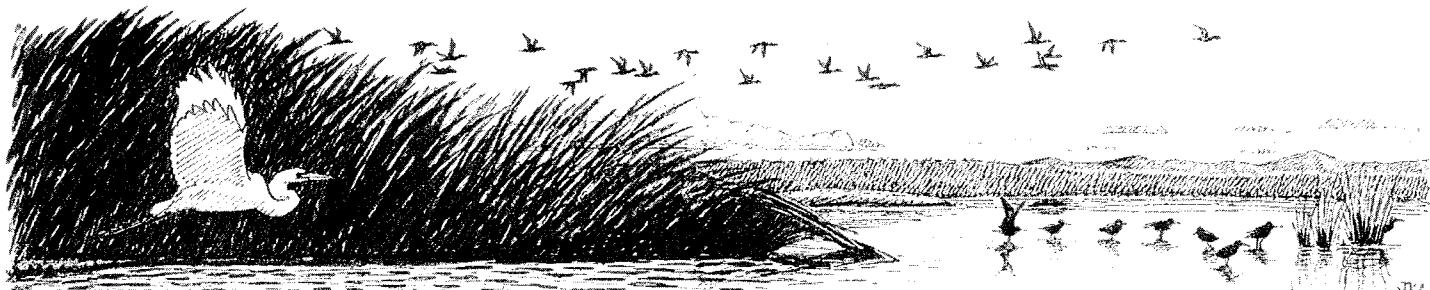
Further downstream, we turn up Bewick's and Rock Wrens, and at a point where we are in a rather deep and narrow gorge, we experience the most exciting find of the day. Quietly feeding on the slope to our left are California Quail, on the hillside to our right are calling Mountain Quail, and strutting atop the highest pinnacle of rock on the ridgeline to our right, overseeing his *work party* and *chup-chup-chup* his commands, the Sergeant of the Guard — a male Chukar!

Ron and I had one helluva great birding day. True, with the sun directly overhead, it got *hot*, but as today's kids would say, "It was *cool!*" Ron got his bird. I got my story. Properly put, it was lots of *fun*, which is what birding is supposed to be, and which is where this story properly ends. ■

Chuck Bernstein is an avid bird watcher and the author of The Joys of Birding. He is well known as the funniest birder in captivity. He lives in North Hollywood, but the world of birds is his milieu.

The Spring in winter, 1974





CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Technically, golf courses are "open space." That's what the Planning Department says. I suppose we must agree. Although there are few structures on it, a golf course is made up of long fairways, trees and shrubs, an occasional water hazard and those smooth rolling greens. Yes, open space — technically.

But open space usually implies a relatively natural scene, informal and unstructured, with long vistas of fields and hills, soothing to the soul. Passionate golfers will say that golf soothes the soul — or at least relieves the stress. Granted. But a golf course is far from a benign and innocent entity. It is rigid, patterned, artificial park. For an outdoor playground, it has a minimum amount of wildlife. A golf course requires the constant application of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers — unnatural chemicals that can seep into the groundwater and cause serious problems.

Golf courses swallow real open space. They must be built on vacant land which nowadays is rarely found in the city. Vacant land may not be so vacant. It may be wildlife habitat with a long-established mixture of native trees, shrubs and a variety of undergrowth.

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Pierce College's farmland, though hardly a pristine natural area, has been the winter host for more than a thousand Canada Geese. Many friends and neighbors of the farm are afraid that the financially strapped school is trying to sell or lease its heritage for a one-

time skimpy pot of gold. The college president has seriously suggested a golf course. Once that occurs, the grassland is gone, the food source is gone and the geese are gone. A golf course would wipe out the best of the four remaining goose-foraging areas in the city.

*** *** ***

for their development plan. The County Board of Supervisors has the final say. (An interesting note: Canyon Oaks' general manager came to LAAS asking for our blessing for their project, offering 200 acres of land and a tempting amount of money. A transparent attempt to cover themselves with Audubon's mantle, the offer was de-

The Golf Course That Ate Los Angeles

Driving south on Topanga Canyon from the Valley, just past Mulholland, we come to Summit Valley, a nice, untrammeled stretch of fine chaparral habitat. For 15 years, developers have been trying to build a golf course there with dozens of expensive homes. Topanga free spirits who treasure the rural setting of their nontract homes below Mulholland have successfully fought off previous efforts to develop Summit Valley. At hearing after hearing, they've talked about the bad effect a golf course would have on the watershed of Topanga Creek, of the disruption of wildlife corridors, of traffic problems, of the environmental insult to a working ecosystem.

Canyon Oaks, a Disney enterprise and current owner of the property, has just won the approval of the County Planning Commission

clined.) The 97 luxury estates with an exclusive private golf course have almost won the prize. If they triumph, rustic Topanga will be seriously affected. The wild, undeveloped chaparral will lose 257 acres; birds, mammals and reptiles will lose their homes and familiar trails; and the humans along Topanga Creek may be flooded out.

*** *** ***

Another golf course?! *Mais oui, ma cherie.* Welcome to Cosmo World! Another super expensive, super private membership club to be built in Southern California. Where is this would-be championship course to be built? Why, in Big Tujunga Wash, of course. The wash is an extension of unchannelled Big Tujunga River that flows out of the San Gabriel Mountains to Hansen

Dam and then to the Los Angeles River. Its rare alluvial scrub habitat supports Cactus Wrens, night-hawks, tree frogs and — last year — a lonesome Least Bell's Vireo singing in vain for a mate. It is magnificent open space and contains the slender-horned spine-flower, a state and federally listed endangered species.

As this is written, the Cosmo World Corp. has told U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game that if they don't "salvage" the spineflowers in 10 days, the company will bulldoze them. Talk about *chutzpa!* (Why Tujunga Wash or a mountain or a lake is permitted to be private property is a consuming mystery. But that's a discussion for another time.) Although no permit has been issued to build the golf course, a loophole in the laws allows Cosmo to engage in agriculture. They now say they want to plant an orchard where the spineflowers grow, but of course they have no interest in fruit trees; money trees are closer to their heart. This obvious attempt to blackmail the wildlife agencies may backfire. Audubon and others are asking for a court injunction, and Assemblyman Richard Katz is calling for purchase of the property. Stay tuned.

We have nothing against golf. (The writer was an avid duffer in his youth until birds weaned him away.) It's the *course* that bothers us. It's the mind's scratchy film of a Golf Course Godzilla engulfing scarce and dwindling habitat that chills.

Canyon Oaks and Cosmo World are not for the *hoi polloi*, not for the weekend golfer used to public courses and reasonable greens fees. A membership in Cosmo's club will cost \$75,000. There is no community recreational benefit. No claim can be made that either project is answering an urgent public need. If you want to play golf, there are an estimated 120 golf courses in Los Angeles County alone. Fore! ■

Timely Tips

Holiday Shopping?

The Los Angeles Audubon Bookstore has an excellent selection of books, tapes, optics, feeders and gift items suitable for the most eclectic tastes!

And consider giving a gift subscription to the *Western Tanager* to your nonmember birding friends. We thank you.

Remember To Recycle

When you've taken that last ornament off your Christmas tree, instead of throwing the tree in the trash, call the Los Angeles County Recycling Hotline at (800) 552-5218 for the address of the nearest Christmas Tree Recycling Center.

Brush Fires

Due to the numerous brush fires in Southern California, it is particularly important to call the Audubon Bird Tape at (213) 874-1318 to determine if a field trip has been cancelled.

Treeless Paper?

Paper is made from wood as every school kid knows. And we all know that wood is becoming a scarce commodity as forests are being cut down all over the world. If we could make paper from something else beside wood pulp, it would save a lot of nice scenery not to mention some choice ecosystems.

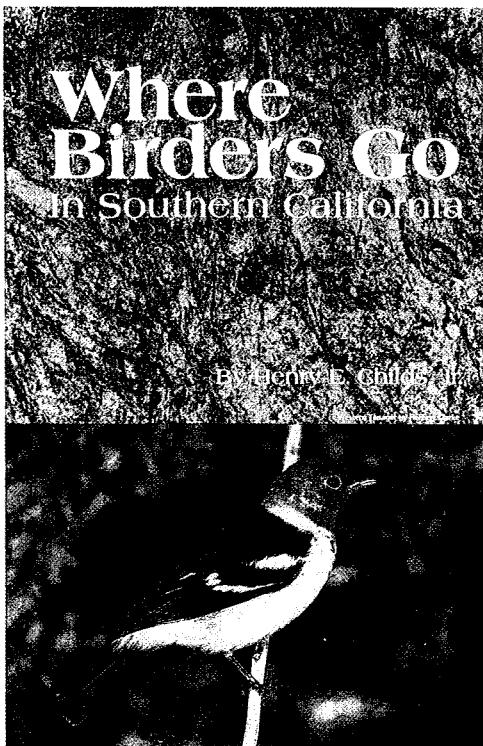
Sure, the ancient Egyptians made paper out of papyrus, but isn't that a little out of date? It may surprise many of us to discover that today treeless paper is made in 45 countries which accounts for 9% of world paper production. Half of the raw fiber for paper comes from agricultural waste: cereal stalks (rice, wheat, oats), sorghum and sugarcane stalks to name a few. Since it is a by-product of food production, agro-waste does not require additional land. Using waste for paper helps solve the disposal problem — 5.3 million metric tons of the stuff a year. Most of the material formerly was burned and produced a horrendous amount of air pollution.

The balance of treeless paper is made from fiber crops: bamboo, hemp and an Australian plant

called kenaf. These plants require less than half as much land as trees to produce the same amount of paper. A big advantage is that they all are fast-growing and can be harvested every year whereas trees require 7 to 30 years of growth. Some fiber crops fix nitrogen in the soil and reduce the need for herbicides; some are naturally white, use less chlorine bleach than wood and produce quality paper. Also, processing these fibers consumes far less energy than processing wood pulp.

With all the advantages of treeless paper, one wonders why the United States, which uses six times more paper than the rest of the world, hasn't leaped into this field enthusiastically. The fact is that we are faced with a glut of wood pulp which discourages investment in new plants. We are told it may be some time before there is capital available. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been studying these alternative sources for years, and one USDA scientist calls kenaf "a sleeping giant... waiting for... a major pulp conversion facility" to materialize. ■

Source: World Watch magazine, September-October 1993.



A Book Review by Hank Brodkin

Where Birders Go In Southern California by Henry E. Childs Jr., Ph.D., 1993. Los Angeles Audubon Society, v + 228 pp., \$16.95.

When I reviewed the first edition of this book in the March 1991 *Western Tanager*, I concluded by writing that "... hopefully LAAS will update it every few years to keep it as informative and useful in the future as it is now." Happily, the first of these updates has just been printed.

The book is still 5½" by 8½", but it now has a four-color process cover featuring a Western Tanager photo and is wire bound with a fold-back cover to be used as a bookmark — similar in design to the newer Jim Lane guides.

Hank Childs has been birding almost 60 years — mostly in Southern California. This, plus a Ph.D. in Zoology (and his years of teaching as a professor of Biology at Chaffey College in Alta Loma), as well as his leadership on numerous Audubon trips, qualify him as few others on

the local birding scene to write this guide. Hank is no stranger to the pages of the *Tanager* and has generously assigned all royalties from this book to LAAS.

The introductory chapters cover the basics of birding — field guides, travel tips, desert birding and our local habitats. Included is a Code of Birding Ethics developed by the Sacramento Audubon Society. Southern California migration is thoroughly discussed, and a summary of arrival months for some of the more common species is presented as well as a list of our pelagic birds. Maps from the Southern California Automobile Association, and how they can be used in the county-by-county bird finding chapters that follow, are de-

scribed. Symbols and abbreviations used in the book, including the helpful "RR" (restroom), are listed.

Each county has its own chapter of birding localities. From San Luis Obispo, Kern and Mono counties in the north to San Diego and Imperial counties in the south, some 450 birding spots are described, 75 more than in the original printing. Each county has a simple map with the major routes and bodies of water shown and with number keys to descriptive paragraphs in the text. County birding hotlines, if available, are given — as well as phone numbers for places that are usually off limits. Succinct directions are given to each locale — some laid out in loop trip form. Some of the birds to be expected at each area are given along with an occasional interesting historical sighting. Following the county chapters is a list of "Special Birds" keyed to locations in those chapters.

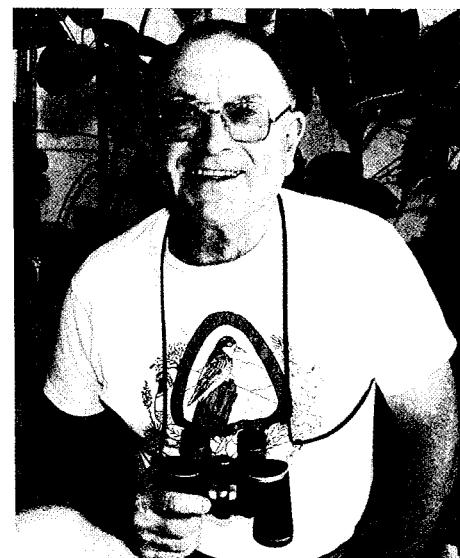
A birding expert from each county aided in compiling the information. It should be understood

that not all the birding locations in Southern California are listed — for one reason or another — nor are all the good birds, but most of the "hot spots" are here. Indeed, a beginning local birder or a birder new to Southern California could use this information to build a respectable list in relatively short order.

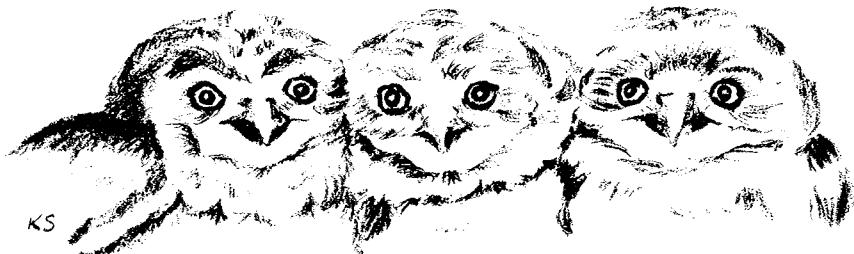
A chapter on "Sources of Additional Information" lists places to obtain books and maps, Natural History Museums, Audubon Societies, Rare Bird Alerts and more. It is followed by a list of references for each chapter. A complete checklist of the 579 species recognized by the California Bird Records Committee as of July 15, 1992, plus nine introduced species not recognized, is published.

New for this edition is a somewhat modified form of the distributional bar graph from the now out-of-print *Birds of Southern California, Status and Distribution* by Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn. It is easy to use and is simplified to reflect "the current status of the species and is a useful tool to the readers of this book in their search for that good bird."

A locale index completes this fine and ongoing effort. Hank welcomes additions and corrections for inclusion in future editions. ■



Henry E. Childs, Jr.



OPEN EYES

by Dan Kahane

The hawk sailing through the clouds above the land and the man in a canoe floating over the quiet waters of a pond have one thing in common. They are both looking down at a world of life below them. The hawk sees fields and forests anchored to the ground, while the canoeist looks down at the fertile green of a pond that lies just

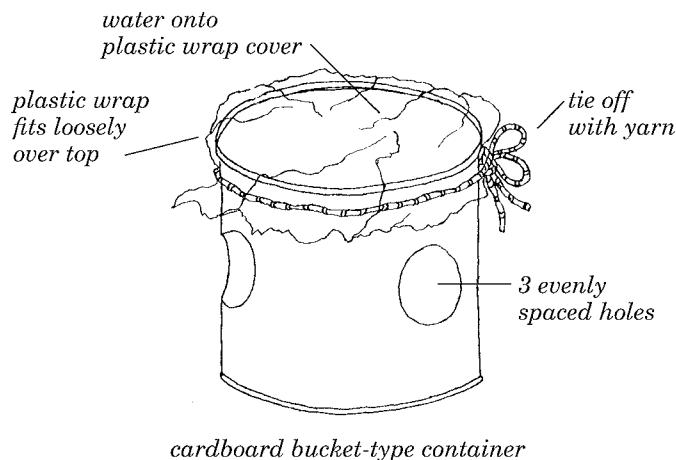
below his boat, near the surface of the water. Just as we depend on the rooted plants of field and forest as the ultimate source of our food, so do pond creatures depend largely on the green plants floating in the upper layers of the water. Many microscopic plants float in the pond, not only near the top of the water, but also as far down as light pen-

etrates into the pond. This floating mass of plants, together with some equally tiny animals, makes up plankton. Planktonic animals can move about some, but both plant and animal plankton float at the mercy of wind and wave. ■

Reprinted, with permission, from *Audubon Adventures*.

How to make a Water-Lens, Paper-Bucket Magnifier

You will need: large cardboard bucket-type containers (ask ice cream stores to save those really big tubs for you. In a pinch, the gallon size, supermarket variety will do; paint-mixing containers are also good); plastic wrap; yarn; scissors.



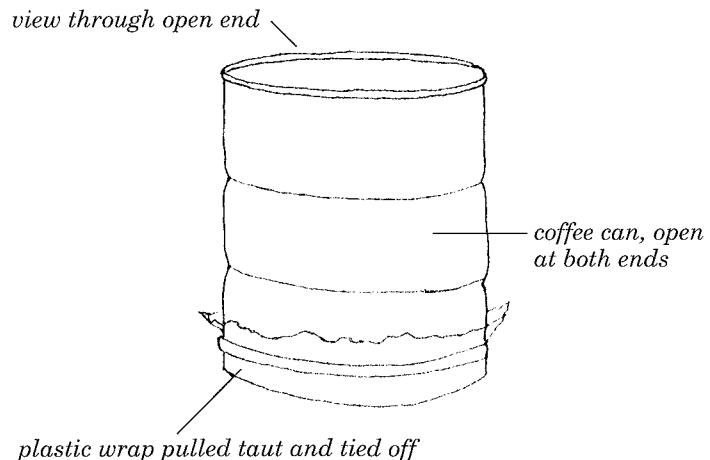
Procedure:

Cut three evenly spaced holes on sides of the cartons (large enough to insert hands). Cover the top with plastic wrap, leaving the surface slightly loose, and tie off with yarn.

Pour a small amount of water onto plastic wrap to create your magnifying lens. Objects to be magnified may be held inside the carton under the lens for viewing.

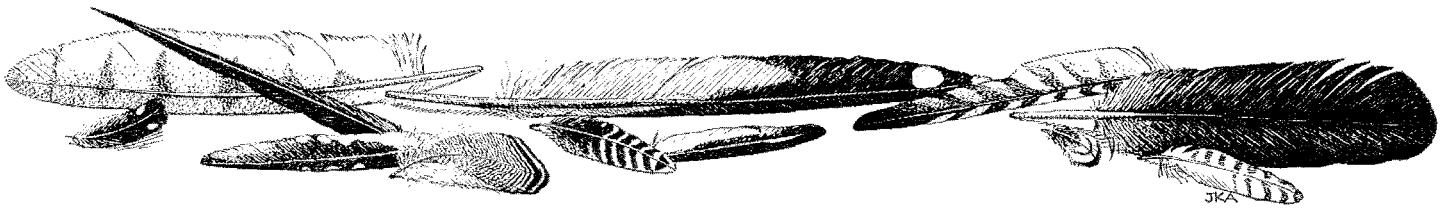
How To Make a Pond Scope

You will need: coffee can, open at both ends (check for sharp edges, tape if necessary); plastic wrap; rubber band or string.



Procedure:

Stretch plastic wrap taut across bottom of coffee can and tie off with rubber band or string. Insert the bottom of the scope into a pond and view through open end. You'll get a snail's-eye view of what's going on!



A CLOSER LOOK

by Kimball L. Garrett

Sometimes we California birders forget — or take for granted — that our regular avifauna includes some of the world's most geographically restricted species. Some of these species are now artificially and severely reduced in range and numbers due to human influence, the California Condor being the most extreme example. The restricted distribution of others, however, is a legacy of a complex set of geographical and evolutionary factors which have generously provided the raw material (isolation and differentiation) necessary for species formation in our part of the globe.

Most of us are aware that species such as the Yellow-billed Magpie, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Wrentit, California Thrasher and California Gnatcatcher are primarily restricted to California and, within this range, confined to habitats which are often very localized. No other region of North America boasts such a large collection of restricted species. We tend to forget, however, that some of our seabirds have even more severely restricted breeding ranges, and even non-breeders in these species may travel over a limited pelagic range. The Ashy Storm-Petrel is perhaps the best example. This species breeds only on the Farallon Islands and Channel Islands with a few additional pairs on Los Coronados Islands of extreme northwestern Baja California. The majority breed on the Farallones. The total world population of the Ashy Storm-Petrel may not exceed 8,300 individuals (see "Seabirds of the Farallon Is-

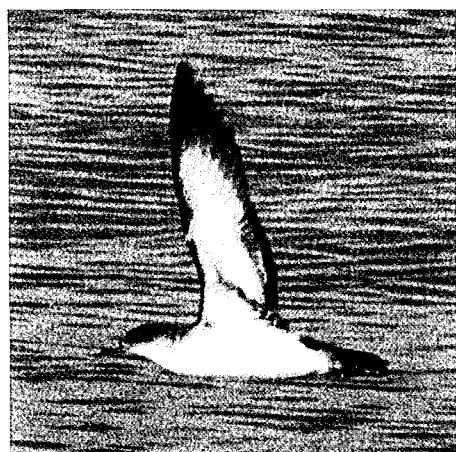
The Black-vented Shearwater

Puffinus opisthomelas



Kimball L. Garrett

This Black-vented Shearwater shows heavy wing and body molt; Redondo Canyon, off L.A. County, 25 August 1992.



Ventral view of Black-vented Shearwater; San Pedro Channel, off L.A. County, 8 February 1992.

lands," edited by David Ainley and Robert Boekelheide, Stanford University Press, 1990). Imagine the vulnerability of a species which finds safety from predators at only five nesting sites and concentrates over 80% of its total population in the Monterey Bay area for much of the late summer and fall!

Another very restricted species is one that we can see in large numbers along our coastal waters, especially from San Diego to Pt. Mugu and often farther north. This is the Black-vented Shearwater, a member of a widespread complex of taxa

formerly lumped under the umbrella heading of "Manx Shearwater" (*Puffinus puffinus*). Distinctive plumage and behavioral traits led to the recognition of full-species status for the Black-vented Shearwater by the 1980s. Black-vents are known to breed only on three islands off the west coast of Baja California (Isla Guadalupe, Natividad and San Benitos). Even generous estimates of nesting populations suggest that the world population probably consists of no more than 10,000 pairs plus nonbreeders. Some 20,000 to 30,000 birds, the

vast majority of the world's population, move into the waters off Southern California in fall and early winter. In some years this species appears in our waters by the thousands in August, while in other years large numbers do not appear until October or November. By February, most move south toward the breeding grounds, but significant numbers remain in our area into March and April, and a few may remain all summer.

Black-vented Shearwaters are most easily observed from coastal promontories such as Pt. Mugu, Pt. Dume, Pt. Vicente, Dana Point or La Jolla. Better yet, short-range pelagic trips to local areas such as Redondo Canyon and the Palos Verdes escarpment often provide close-up views of great rafts of these birds. On some of these trips the birder might realistically look through a quarter or more of the world's population of Black-vented Shearwaters! Leucistic birds, showing white heads, wing patches and other unusual markings, are occasionally seen in these large winter flocks. Worn or molting birds may appear to show white wing stripes or white patches on the sides of the rump, sometimes recalling other small black and white shearwater species. Birders trying to pick out other small shearwaters in our waters should keep in mind that none of the few Manx Shearwaters to appear in the North Pacific have occurred with Black-vented, and there remain no fully convincing

records of Townsend's (*P. auricularis auricularis*) or "Newell's" (*P. a. newelli*) Shearwaters here.

For more information on this fascinating species see Bill Everett's 1988 paper entitled "Biology of the Black-vented Shearwater" in *Western Birds* 19:89-104. (Incidentally, *Western Birds* is a journal that should be read by all serious California birders.) And keep in mind how much we still don't know about this species: its taxonomic relationships are still being worked out, its population size has still only been crudely estimated, its annual movements are not well understood, and the threats to its declining breeding populations (especially feral cats) are not being adequately addressed.

It seems in vogue among university and museum administrators and granting agencies, in these days of dwindling resources, to suggest that we now know enough about birds and must concentrate on more poorly known invertebrate faunas, or to abandon whole animal research altogether in favor of cellular work. With species like Black-vented Shearwaters out there reminding us of how little we really do know about birds, the shortsightedness of this attitude is evident. As more and more bird species spiral toward extinction, the politics of science are conspiring to rob us of trained avian systematists and ecologists who could help provide the scientific information required to save these species. ■

Local 1994 Christmas Counts

Call the compiler if you wish to participate in the counts listed below.

Lancaster Saturday, Dec. 18
Fred Heath (310) 826-0083

Malibu Sunday, Dec. 19
Larry Allen (213) 221-2022

Grass Mountain Sunday, Dec. 26
Cal Yorke (805) 270-0222

Los Angeles Sunday, Jan. 2
Compiler's name unavailable

Call the tape at (213) 874-1318 for up-to-date information on these counts. ■

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TREASURER: Richard Epps

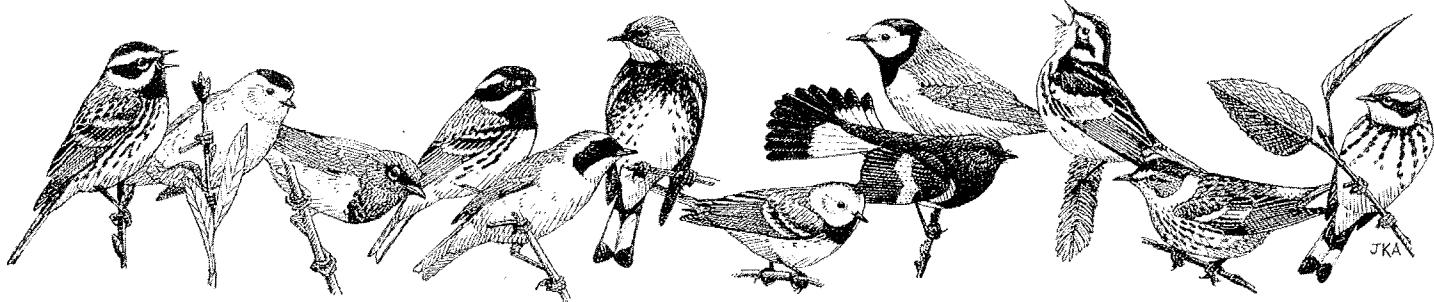
Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year and \$20 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon* magazine, a national publication. Renewals of membership are computerized by National Audubon and should not be sent to LAAS; however, new memberships may be sent directly to LAAS. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society.

Nonmembers 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.

Los Angeles Audubon Society
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BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodkin

It's time again to start thinking about the Christmas counts. In 1991, Volume 46, Number 4 of *AMERICAN BIRDS* reported a record 1,646 counts, including 37 from the tropics and 10 in the Pacific Islands, with 43,588 observers participating. LAAS sponsors the Los Angeles, Malibu and Lancaster counts — but almost anywhere you spend your holidays, there is likely to be a count nearby. Check with *AMERICAN BIRDS* at (212) 546-9154 for dates and locations of other counts. You will be more than welcome — no matter what your birding skills. It is advisable to get your route assigned as soon as possible so that you can scout the area for rarities. Although counts of common species are used for scientific purposes, there is a rumor — and it is only a rumor — that there is some competition among the various counts.

Fall migration is going quite well. A good number of vagrants and invasive winter populations of Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets and Varied Thrushes are starting to show up. A sampling of reports follows.

Two **Black-footed Albatrosses** and a few **Least Storm-Petrels** were seen on a pelagic trip off San Nicolas Island on 2 October (Mitch Heindel). Twenty-five **Least Storm-Petrels** were with some 1,500 **Blacks** about seven miles off Palos Verdes on the 16 October pelagic trip (Kimball Garrett & Jonathan Alderfer). There were two sightings of **Little Blue Herons** along the San Gabriel River in the Downey/Whittier area — one on 26 September and one on 12 October

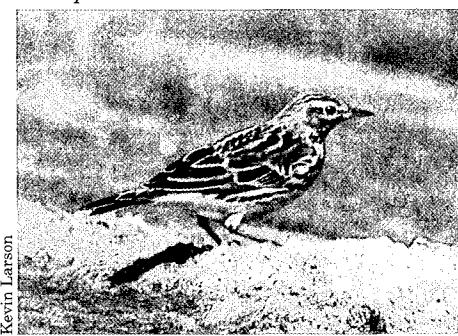
(John Schmitt), and a **Reddish Egret** was reported from Upper Newport Bay on 26 September (Russell Stone).

A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was over Laguna Beach on 23 September (Rob Hamilton & Doug Willick). **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were found on the Oxnard Plain beginning 22 September (and are still present at this writing) along with a **Mountain Plover** there on that date (Jack Nash & Debbie Williams). A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was there on 1 October (MH).

A **Pomarine Jaeger** was seen going the wrong way up Ballona Creek on 13 October (Dan Kahane). An adult **Long-tailed Jaeger** was between Catalina and Santa Barbara Islands on the 16 October pelagic trip (Jean Brandt, John Ivanov, *et al.*).

A female **Williamson's Sapsucker** was at Veteran's Park in Sylmar on 9 October (Doug Martin). Single **Vermilion Flycatchers** were at Death Valley Junction and Furnace Creek on 30 September (John Sterling), and a **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** was reported at Huntington Beach Central Park on 26 September (RS). A **Dusky-**

Red-throated Pipit, Hansen Dam, 18 September 1993



capped Flycatcher was reported from Hansen Dam on 1 October (DM), and two **Tropical Kingbirds** were at Harbor Park on 2 October (Jerry Johnson).

A **Varied Thrush** was at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on 10 October (JA), and a **Philadelphia Vireo** was found at Huntington Beach Central Park on 11 October (Steve Mlodinow).

Warbler reports include single **Magnolias** at Iron Mountain, Riverside County, on 26 September (Mike Patten); at Baker on 30 September (JS); at Galileo Park, Kern County, on 30 September (Matt Heindel); at Hansen Dam on 2 October (Dustin Alcala & Ron Beck); at Banning Park on 5 October and at Redondo Wilderness Park on 11 October (both sightings, JI); single **Black-throated Blues** at California City on 29 September (JS); at Galileo Hill on 1 October (MaH); at Furnace Creek and Stovepipe Wells on 3 October (Jon Dunn); and at Sand Dune Park on 9 October (JI & Kevin Larson); a **Cape May** at Dominguez Hills on 7 October (JA); a **Black-throated Green** on Bonsall Road in Malibu on 10 October (KG); single **Palms** at Sepulveda Basin on 2 October (Bob Pann) and at Cal State Dominguez Hills on 4 October (JI); a female **Kentucky** at Galileo Hill on 10 October (Hank & Priscilla Brodkin); a **Canada** at Dominguez Hills on 4 October (JI); and lastly, a **Painted Redstart** in Laguna Beach on 10 October (RH).

An **Hepatic Tanager** was reported from O'Melveny Park in Granada Hills on 5 October (DM), and a **Summer Tanager** was at

Sand Dune Park on 14 October (Laurie Conrad).

A female **Lark Bunting** was at the mouth of the Santa Ana River on 2 October (RH), and single **Clay-colored Sparrows** were at Sand Dune Park on 10 October (JA) and at Irvine Park on 13 October (SM). There were numerous reports of **Brewer's Sparrows** on the coastal slope. Two **Swamp Sparrows** were reported, one at Furnace Creek and one at Stovepipe Wells, on 2 October (Mike San Miguel).

Two **Bobolinks** were on the Santa Ana River bottom at Lincoln

on 24 September (Arnold & Brian Small and Jay Fuhrman), and three were at Hansen Dam on 2 October (DA & RB). 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 OR David Koeppl
27½ Mast Street (310) 454-2576
Marina del Rey, CA 90292
(310) 827-0407

Los Angeles County Birds

To Whom It May Concern, a letter from Kimball Garrett.

Dozens, if not hundreds, of interesting records are being "lost" annually because of poor reporting by area birders to *American Birds*. As you are undoubtedly aware, the *American Birds* regional reports are THE vehicle for publication of interesting sightings of birds. Our area is included within the Southern Pacific Coast Region, edited by Guy McCaskie. In turn, there is a sub-regional editor for most of the ten counties that make up the region. I have been serving as the Los Angeles County sub-regional editor since 1979. My Los Angeles County files are available for anybody's inspection at the Natural History Museum.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE submit to me all of your sightings of interest, whether of rarities, early or late dates, exceptionally large (or small) numbers, significant nesting records, etc. Provide detailed descriptions of any species unusual within Los Angeles County (including, but not necessarily limited to, those species with asterisks in the 1989 Los Angeles County Checklist by Garrett and Dunn, and unseasonal records of other species). I will NOT include records of rarities in my reports if they are not documented by adequate and convincing details. I would be delighted to receive documentary photos; with your permission I will pass these along to Guy McCaskie for possible publication in *American Birds* and, for review, to the California Bird Records Committee.

If possible, please arrange your reports in taxonomic sequence. Don't assume that "somebody else" will report a bird that you and many others saw — include it in your report.

The *American Birds* seasons and corresponding deadlines are:

SEASON	MONTHS	REPORT DEADLINE
Spring	March through May	10 June
Summer	June through July	10 August
Fall	August through November	10 December
Winter	December through February	10 March

Please submit your **Los Angeles County only** reports to: Kimball L. Garrett, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007. Thank you for your cooperation! ■

FIELD TRIPS

Continued from page 12

Friday and Sunday, January 7 and 9 — Raptor Workshop with Ned Harris. At the Friday Lecture, see slides of age, sex and morph differences in all 22 species of western raptors. On the Sunday Bus Trip, Ferruginous and Red-tailed Hawks and Prairie Falcon will be seen; Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle and Merlin are also often seen. Limited attendance. Lecture will be at 13300 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks. \$10 fee for Friday LECTURE ONLY, 7:30 P.M. — 10:30 P.M.; \$15 fee for Sunday Bus TRIP ONLY, 7:30 A.M. — 4:00 P.M. Send check, all names and phone numbers to LAAS for more info.

Saturday, January 8 —

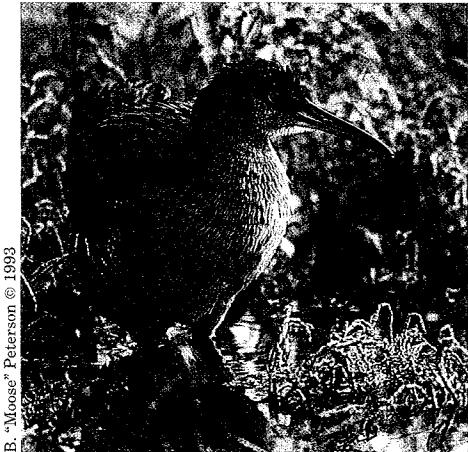
Chatsworth Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala.** Grassland/oak scrub habitat with a large body of water attracting geese, raptors and other wintering and sedentary birds. Finish early afternoon. Take the 405 Fwy N to Roscoe Blvd. and head W to Fallbrook Ave. Take this N to the DWP entrance at the end. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the gate. Bring lunch and water. No restrooms.

Saturday, January 15 — Van

Norman Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala or Doug Martin.** Meet at 7:30 A.M. See December 4 write-up for details.

Saturday, January 22 —

Pt. Mugu. **Louis Tucker** will lead as we visit this limited access Naval base. Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck and Peregrine are possible. 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 one SASE for your group. Each person in your reservation request must include citizenship status, phone number, *Social Security Number* and a \$5 deposit to be refunded at the gate. Meet at 8:00 A.M. Details next month. ■



B. "Moose" Peterson © 1993

Clapper Rail

■ Art Show

Works by John Schmitt
December 12, 1:00–4:00 P.M.
National Audubon Society
200 Culver Blvd., Playa del Rey
(310) 574-2799

F I E L D T R I P S

Before setting out on any field trip, please **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.

Saturday, December 4 — Van Norman Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala or Doug Martin.** Riparian and grassland habitat surround the reservoir and adjacent ponds. Wintering passerines,

raptors, Canada Geese, other waterfowl. Take the 405 Fwy N to the Rinaldi offramp just S of the 5 Fwy interchange. Go W on Rinaldi about a mile to the front gate on the right (N) side. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the lot inside the gate on the left. We will carpool from there and stop about 1:00 P.M. Restrooms on-site.

Sunday, December 5 — Topanga State Park. **Gerry Haigh** will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. This is an ideal trip for a beginning

Los Angeles Audubon Society **DATED MATERIAL**
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard *Please Expedite*
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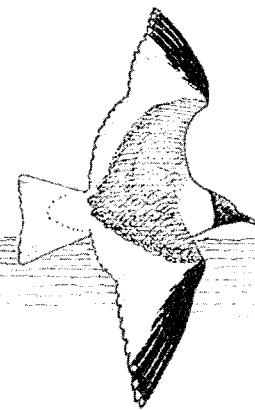
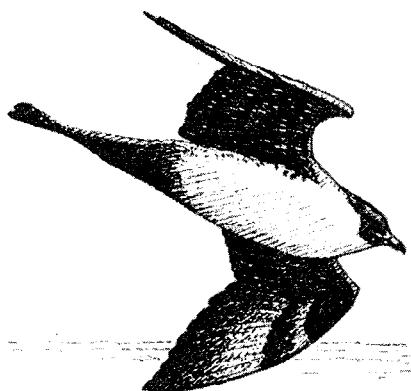
birder or for someone new in the area. A botanist is usually present. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. heading SW from the Valley, turn E (uphill) on Entrada Dr. (7 miles S of Ventura Blvd., 1 mile N of Topanga Village). Follow the signs and make a left into the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$5 parking fee.

Saturday, December 11 — Carrizo Plains. Leader **Sam Fitton** of BLM. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in Maricopa. Vehicles \$13 each. Good hawks, eagles and Mountain Plover. Sandhill Cranes hopeful. If possible, please carpool. Sign-up with Audubon House for exact directions. Trip limited to 8 cars.

December 21 — There will not be a field trip as mentioned in the November *Tanager*.

Sunday, January 2 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See December 5 write-up for details.

Continued on page 11



1994 Pelagic Trip Schedule

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Trips out of Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*

Spaces:

21 total (5 double bunks and 11 single bunks)

Cost:

\$145 for a single bunk
\$250 for a double bunk —
\$125 each for two people

Meals:

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included in cost.

Time:

30 hour trips depart at 10:00 P.M. Fridays and return 4:00 A.M. Sundays

Routes:

Northwest from Ventura past Pt. Conception to Arguello Canyon and west to the Continental Shelf with several daylight hours over the Shelf.

*Southwest to San Juan Seamount, an 11,000 foot underwater peak which rises from the 2,000 fathom deep ocean floor. Red-billed Tropicbird and Cook's Petrel have been seen here.

Departures/Leaders:

Friday, January 28

Mitch Heindel
Brad Schram

Friday, February 4

Guy McCaskie
Richard Webster

Friday, April 8

Arnold Small
Mitch Heindel

Friday, April 22

Brad Schram
Mitch Heindel

Friday, April 29

(backup trip for April 8 or April 22, if needed)
Mitch Heindel
Brad Schram

Friday, June 3*

Richard Webster
Mitch Heindel

Friday, August 5

Kimball Garrett
Mitch Heindel

Friday, September 2*

Arnold Small
Richard Webster

Friday, October 28

Kimball Garrett
Arnold Small

Friday, November 18

Mitch Heindel
Kimball Garrett

Special one day trip:

Saturday, October 1

Anacapa Island to Santa Rosa Island, through the Santa Rosa Passage to Santa Cruz Island;
7:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M. \$56;
33 spaces; led by Arnold Small, Herb Clarke and Mitch Heindel.

Trips from San Pedro on the *R.V. Vantuna*

Saturday, February 19

Palos Verdes Escarpment to Redondo Canyon;
led by Herb Clarke and Mitch Heindel;
7:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M. \$25

Sunday, March 27

Palos Verdes Escarpment to Redondo Canyon;
led by Mitch Heindel and Barney Schlinger;
7:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M. \$25

Saturday, May 21

Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank;
led by Kimball Garrett and Barney Schlinger;
6:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M. \$37

Sunday, August 14

Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank;
led by Arnold Small and Jonathan Alderfer;
6:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M. \$37

Sunday, October 23

Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank;
led by Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer;
6:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M. \$37

Saturday, November 12

Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank;
led by Arnold Small and Kimball Garrett;
6:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M. \$37

Note: All deep water pelagic trips must be filled 35 days prior to sailing

NOTE: Marine mammal expert Linda Lewis will be one of our leaders when her schedule permits.

Possible Birds From San Pedro to Santa Barbara Island or the Redondo Canyon

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Black-footed Albatross **			R				R					
Northern Fulmar *	C	C	C	U	U	R	R	R	U	C	C	C
Pink-footed Shearwater	U	U	U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U	U
Flesh-footed Shearwater										R	R	R
Buller's Shearwater										R	R	
Sooty Shearwater	U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U
Short-tailed Shearwater *	U	U	R								U	U
Black-vented Shearwater	C	C	U	U	U	U	U	C	C	C	C	C
Leach's Storm-Petrel								R	R	R		
Ashy Storm-Petrel					U	U	U	U	U	U		
Black Storm-Petrel					U	C	C	C	C	C	U	
Least Storm-Petrel								U	U	U	U	
Red-billed Tropicbird							R	R	R	R		
Blue-footed Booby **									R			
Brown Booby **										R	R	
Red-footed Booby **										R	R	
Red-necked Phalarope	R	R	U	C	C	U	U	C	C	U	U	R
Red Phalarope	U	U	U	U	R	R		R	U	U	U	U
Pomarine Jaeger	U	U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U
Parasitic Jaeger	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Long-tailed Jaeger **							R	R	R			
South Polar Skua						U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Heermann's Gull	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Black-legged Kittiwake	U	U	U	U	R	R	R	R	R	U	U	U
Sabine's Gull					U	C	U		U	U	R	
Arctic Tern						U	U		U	U		
Common Murre *	U	U	U	U	U	R	R	R	R	R	U	U
Pigeon Guillemot ***		U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U		
Xantus' Murrelet <i>scrippsi</i>	U	U	C	C	C	C	U	R				
Xantus' Murrelet <i>hypoleucus</i>									R	R		
Craveri's Auklet								R	R	R		
Ancient Murrelet	R	R										R
Cassin's Auklet	C	C	C	C	C	C	U	U	U	U	C	C
Rhinoceros Auklet	C	C	C	C	U	R	R	R	R	U	C	C
Tufted Puffin *	R	R	R	R	R							
Horned Puffin *						R						

C = Common; expected in good numbers

U = Uncommon; probable in low numbers

R = Rare; recorded, not seen annually

* = Irregular

** = less than 10 records

*** = near Santa Barbara Island

Plus the following birds seen in season: Loons (3 species), Cormorants (3 species), Brown Pelican, Brant, rocky shorebirds (5 species), additional gulls (up to 10 species) and terns (up to 6 species).

Possible Birds From Ventura to the Continental Shelf or the San Juan Seamount

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Black-footed Albatross	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Laysan Albatross **		U	U	U	U							
Northern Fulmar *	C	C	C	U	U	R	R	R	U	C	C	C
Cook's Petrel**	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R		
Pink-footed Shearwater	U	U	U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U	U
Flesh-footed Shearwater *								R	R	R		
Buller's Shearwater							R	R	R	R	R	
Sooty Shearwater	U	U	U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U
Short-tailed Shearwater	U	U	U	R						U	U	
Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel	R	R	R	R	R							
Leach's Storm-Petrel	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U		
Ashy Storm-Petrel				U	U	U	U	U	U	R		
Black Storm-Petrel				U	C	C	C	C	C	U	R	
Least Storm-Petrel						R	U	U	U	U		
Red-billed Tropicbird					R	U	U	U	U	R		
Pomarine Jaeger	U	U	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	U
Parasitic Jaeger	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Long-tailed Jaeger							R	R	R	R		
South Polar Skua					U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Sabine's Gull					U	C	U	R	U	U	R	
Arctic Tern					U	U		U	U			
Cassin's Auklet	C	C	C	C	C	C	U	U	U	U	C	C
Rhinoceros Auklet	C	C	C	C	U	R	R	R	R	U	C	C
Tufted Puffin	R	R	R	R							R	
Horned Puffin **					R	R	R					
Xantus' Murrelet	U	U	C	C	C	C	U	R	R	R		
Mottled Petrel **		L	L	L						L	L	
Murphy's Petrel **					L							
Stejneger's Petrel **									L	L	L	
Red-tailed Tropicbird **									probably year-round from 125+ miles out			
Parakeet Auklet **					LR	LR						

C = Common; expected in good numbers

U = Uncommon; probable in low numbers

R = Rare; recorded, not seen annually

L = Long shots; have been recorded in deep water off California

* = Irregular

** = Deep Water

Thanks to Pelagic Consultants:
Kimball Garrett, Mitch Heindel,
Tom Lewis, Guy McCaskie,
Millie Newton, Phil Sayre,
Arnold Small and Richard
Webster.

Possible Marine Mammals

Cetaceans	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Status
<i>Whales:</i>													
Minke	C	C	C	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	C	C	resident
Blue	R	R	R	R	R	P	P	P	P	P	P	R	migrant
Fin	R	R	R	R	R	P	P	P	P	P	P	R	migrant
Humpback	R	R	R	R	R	P	P	P	P	P	P	R	migrant
Gray	C	C	C	C	P	R	R	R	R	P	P	P	migrant
Sperm *	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	resident *
Baird's Beaked *	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	resident *
Cuvier's Beaked *	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	resident *
<i>Dolphins:</i>													
Short-snouted Common *	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	resident *
Long-snouted Common	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	resident
Short-finned Pilot Whale	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	irregular
Risso's	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	resident
Pacific White-sided	C	C	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	C	C	resident
Northern Right Whale *	P	P	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	P	P	P	irregular
Killer Whale (Orca)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	migrant
Pacific Bottlenose	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	resident
<i>Porpoise:</i>													
Dall's	P	P	P	P	P	R	R	R	P	P	P	P	irregular
<i>Pinnipeds</i>													
<i>Eared Seals:</i>													
California Sea Lion	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	resident
Northern Fur Seal	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	vagrant
<i>True Seals:</i>													
Elephant	C	C	C	P	P	R	R	R	P	C	C	P	migrant
Harbor	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	resident

C = Common

R = Rare

P = Possible

* = Deep Water species

1994 Los Angeles Audubon Society Pelagic Trips

Reservations for LAAS trips will be accepted only if all the following has been supplied:

1. Trip(s) desired
2. Separate check (no cash please) for exact amount of each trip
3. SASE if you want confirmation and associated trip information
4. Phone numbers: usual and evening before event, in case of emergency cancellation or changes.
5. Full name, address and phone contact of each participant is required by the Coast Guard.

Trip Cancellation:

Trips out of San Pedro on the *Vantuna* will be cancelled if not filled 30 days **prior** to departure, and trips out of Ventura on the *Vanguard* 35 days prior to departure.

Refund Policy:

If LAAS cancels, participants will receive a full refund. If participants cancel at least 31 days prior to departure on the *Vantuna*, there will be a five dollar service charge for their refund. Participants must cancel at least 36 days before departure on the *Vanguard* to obtain refund (less five dollar service charge). There is no participant refund after that time (30 days or less for the *Vantuna* and 35 days or less for the *Vanguard*) unless there is a replacement available. Please contact Audubon for possible replacement. *Do not offer the trip to a friend. In all fairness, the replacement must come from the trip waiting list.*

Pelagic Reservations

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard
West Hollywood, CA 90046
(213) 876-0202