

WESTERN TANAGER



FREE

— Inside —

1994 Checklist of the
Birds of Los Angeles County

Volume 60 Number 7 April 1994

Los Angeles Audubon Society



1st Prize — Inside ABA Area: American Kestrel by Brad Sillasen

Your Free Checklist

Did you know that over **450** species of birds have been recorded in Los Angeles County? That is almost half of the birds recorded on the ABA list, and new birds are being added as more and more people are out there looking.

How many birds have *you* seen in the County? It doesn't matter if you

are a world-class lister or a backyard feeder-watcher, it is fun to record the birds you see locally and a great way to introduce young people, shut-ins and senior citizens to the wonders of the birds around them.

The 1994 Checklist of the Birds of Los Angeles County was compiled by Kimball L. Garrett and Jon L. Dunn.

1994
ANNUAL
PHOTO CONTEST
WINNERS

Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas

by Fred Heath

A little over 10 years ago, I wrote an article with the same title which appeared in the *Western Tanager*. At the time, I suggested that we could start this five-year project in 1984. Sometimes I'm a little slow and I sure have been known to procrastinate (as a matter of fact, this article was completed a week after my dead-

broken down into rectangular grids, and the presence (or absence) of breeding activity (with notation of the degree of confidence) is noted in each grid block. Individuals or teams of birders cover each block and try to simply determine to the highest degree of confidence possible whether a species breeds in that block. An estimate of the species population is not necessary, just presence as a breeder in each grid block. To make it even easier, this is done over a five year-period. Thus, if a species which is thought to be breeding is missed in one year, there are four more years to find breeding evidence.

The value of such an atlas, once completed, is immense. It can be used in developing an ecological

database, in determining which breeding species may be threatened and thus what unique habitats should be protected, and by land use planners, developers, government and environmentalists. It provides a baseline to measure future changes against. And finally it helps

educate both the public and everyone concerned about birds. Even the most jaded listers will find that searching out breeding evidence adds a new dimension to his or her birding experience.

The L. A. County Effort

In order to get a running start in 1995, much preparation will be needed this year. Tom Frillman, Kimball Garrett, Mike San Miguel and I have formed a steering committee, and we are moving forward. The first decision we made was to simplify the map-making process by using the readily available 7.5 minute series of topographic maps published by the U.S. Geological

Survey. These maps are divided into six equal parts by bisecting them with a vertical line and dividing them into thirds horizontally. We then get rectangular blocks roughly three miles on a side. Using this grid, we end up with a little over 400 blocks in Los Angeles County.

The County will be broken up into perhaps ten regions (such as the San Gabriel Mountains, L.A. Basin, San Fernando Valley, etc.) with a coordinator for each region. By the time you read this we hope to have found our regional coordinators. However, the task of finding an overall coordinator will probably just be getting under way. If anyone out there is interested or has a suggestion, please contact me through Audubon House.

For this year we will do a few test blocks (probably one for each region) to see what some of the problems are, to use as training areas and help publicize the upcoming total effort starting in 1995. A few of the test blocks have already been chosen. They are the blocks which contain the following: 1) Exposition Park (Kimball had already found nesting Anna's Hummingbird as of February); 2) Charlton Flat (where the LAAS Picnic and Breeding Survey will take place); 3) Malibu Creek State Park and Tapia Park; 4) Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB; 5) Lovejoy Butte (these last two will be surveyed for breeding birds as part of a field trip on April 16; see "Field Trips" for details); 6) Upper and Lower Shake (west of Lake Hughes in the Angeles National Forest).

A field card for recording breeding data is being developed and may be ready for the April 16 field trip. Details of the methods and criteria for data collection will be discussed in the next *Tanager*. During the year, a manual will be put together to help all field workers. In addition, a newsletter will be published and distributed to all atlas project volunteers and interested parties. Finally, a computer program for data collection will be chosen. Needless to say, if any readers are interested in lending a hand in any of these activities, they are welcome to become a part of this project. ➤

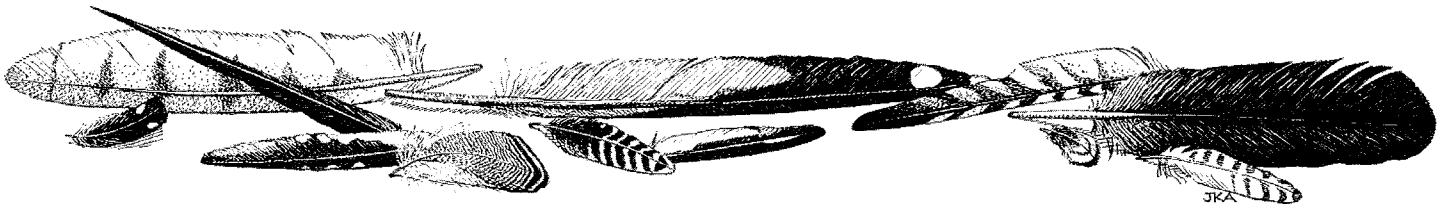


1st Prize — Within Los Angeles County: Wilson's Warbler by Jay Fuhrman

line), but the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas will finally start in 1995. For those of you who can't remember that far back or weren't reading yet, I thought an explanation of exactly what a breeding bird atlas is might be helpful. This article will be somewhat brief and will be followed up with more details in the next issue of the *Tanager* (if I finish in time).

Introduction

An atlas, of course, is a set of maps. A breeding bird atlas is a set of maps, usually one per species, which shows where the bird possibly, probably or definitely breeds. The map for each species is usually



A CLOSER LOOK

by Kimball L. Garrett

March 19th. St. Somebody-or-other's Day. The day that Cliff Swallows should already have been at the San Juan Capistrano Mission for anywhere from one to six weeks. The day the brain-dead news departments of local television stations show us pictures of Rock Doves or House Sparrows and pass them off as swallows, much as they might pass off a family squabble or local gossip as a news story. The day that birders go almost anywhere but San Juan Capistrano to see Cliff Swallows because they know that even these darlings of the southern Orange County tourist trade can only take so much concrete and asphalt.

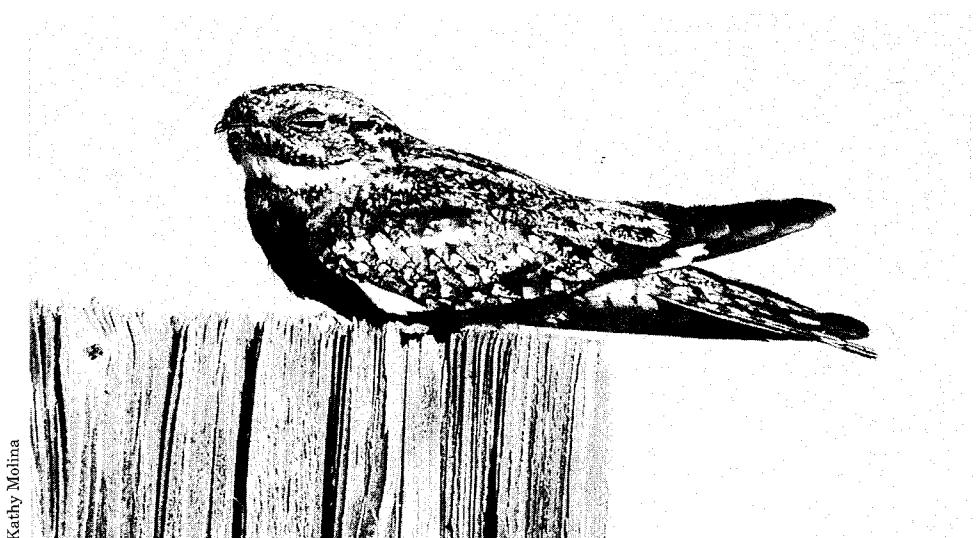
March 19th has come and gone again, bringing with it more than just the feathered fraud of a Chamber of Commerce think tank. Quite a few migratory species arrive in coastal Southern California around March 19th. One of the more interesting ones is the Lesser Nighthawk, a desert dweller that has found a handful of localities on the coastal slope to its liking as well.

Lesser Nighthawks are widespread throughout our deserts, though their crepuscular habits make them less familiar than many diurnal desert birds. Large numbers may be found in the Imperial, Coachella and Colorado River Valleys, as well as the high deserts (north through the Death Valley region, and also in the Owens and Fish Lake Valleys where they overlap with the Common Nighthawk).

Look for them hawking moths around streetlights in the evening in desert towns such as Brawley, Baker or Needles. Coastal popula-

The Lesser Nighthawk

Chordeiles acutipennis



Lesser Nighthawk at the south end of the Salton Sea, 3 June 1991

tions of Lesser Nighthawks are harder to come by, but the species has managed to hang on in a handful of alluvial washes on the southern flank of the Transverse Mountain ranges. Locally, a population of several pairs exists in the beleaguered Tujunga Wash; they are most easily seen at dusk on summer nights just upstream from Foothill Blvd. Developers are trying to push through a large private country club for this wash, an incredible way to treat one of the most endangered habitats in North America. Other washes where Lesser Nighthawks persist in Los Angeles County include the San Gabriel River Wash in Irwindale, Duarte and Azusa, and the lower portion of San

Francisquito Canyon in Santa Clarita. They probably occur in other washes in the Santa Clara River drainage and to the east in the Claremont area. Lesser Nighthawks are also widely, but sparingly, seen on the coastal slope in migration, especially in late summer and fall. The above, inexact account of the Lesser Nighthawk's breeding range again points to the benefits to be derived from a Breeding Bird Atlas of Los Angeles County. Five years of atlasing to close this century should teach us a great deal about the distribution of this species in coastal alluvial washes, and help us focus more clearly on the threats to its continued existence there.

The Spinepicker Penguin Species Novum

by Hank Childs

(Dedicated to Fred Heath, Editor, "Not The Western Tanager," April, 1983)

Evaluation of declassified satellite photos of north-eastern Greenland has revealed a new population of penguins (order *Ciconiiformes*, super family *Procellarioidea*, family *Spheniscidae*; fide Sibley & Monroe, 1990). Its northern hemisphere distribution and the tool-using behavior make this new species unique in the annals of ornithology. It has been named as follows:

Species Novum: Spinepicker Penguin, *Spheniscus pickeri*; Childs, 1993.

Range: Known only from the type locality: May Co. (+county), Greenland, latitude 75 degrees N, longitude 35 degrees E.

Habitat: Ice, normally cubed, fresh or mineral water nearby. More detailed information about the location was sealed by the AOU Checklist Committee to prevent collecting, "ticking" or victoremanuel-ism, possibly damaging activities to this relict population.

Type specimen: Collected December 27, 1993 and located in the Adult's Museum, Upland, California.

Description: Dorsal surface black, extending across head to bill; rest of body white, including bill and appendages (Fig. 1).

Tool use: Field work completed recently has shown that this penguin uses spines of the sea urchin (*Strongylocentrotus* sp.) in obtaining its principal food, manhaven, an Atlantic herring, and various species of shrimp. By lining up its catch along the spine, greater efficiency in food gathering is obtained. Although this use of a tool by a bird is new to science, it should be remembered that the Woodpecker Finch (*Camarhynchus pallidus*) of the Galapagos Islands has been known, since Darwin (1859), to use a cactus spine as a tool to obtain insect larvae. The size of this diminutive spe-

cies and its use of the spine is shown in Fig. 2.

Discussion: The similarity in the use of spinelike tools by the Woodpecker Finch and the Spinepicker Penguin cannot be a random occurrence. The closeness of relationship of the Galapagos Penguin and the Spinepicker Penguin is obvious on anatomical grounds, i.e., presence of vestigial wings. Re-evaluation of the movement of tectonic plates of Pangaea on the Cocos-Galapagos land mass during the Precambrian,

shows that some of that island mass could have moved in pre-Panamanian days directly north to its present position in the north Atlantic. Due to the change to the arctic climate, the Woodpecker Finch became extinct in Groenland (sic). The small size of this species indicates a variant from Bergman's Law regarding larger size for species in cooler climates. Avian paleontologists are renewing their efforts to obtain fossil evidence to substantiate the finch's existence there.

Why the Galapagos Penguin did not mimic the behavior of the resident Woodpecker Finch, as did the Spinepicker Penguin, has yet to be determined. Comparison of the El Niño effects in both areas is thought to be a fruitful, or piscatorial, area of research for future, advanced degree candidates in ornithology. ■

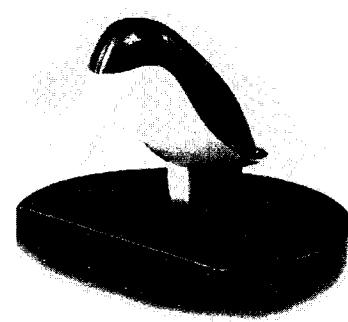
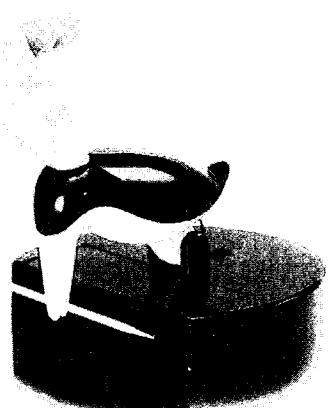


Fig. 1, above. Type specimen: Spinepicker Penguin. Photographed in situ on basalt outcrop.

Fig. 2, right. Penguin in hunting mode with sea urchin spine. Note small size.



Calling All Birders

I am collecting information on the historical and current distribution of the Purple Martin in California, and I would greatly appreciate any information on known or suspected nesting locations. I will be collecting this information throughout the 1994 nesting season, so please keep an eye out on your travels this summer. For further information or to send nest records, please contact:

Brian Williams
P.O. Box 605
Loomis, CA 95650
(916) 624-4861.



OPEN EYES

A Column for Young People by Dan Kahane

This month's "Open Eyes" is for Los Angeles Audubon Society parents and children alike. As we eagerly await the arrival of Birdathon season, I would like to share an update on *Audubon Adventures* and the outdoor education programs that your Birdathon efforts support.

LAAS is a national leader in conservation and environmental education. With funds raised through the LAAS Birdathon, the Society sponsors 210 *Audubon Adventures* classrooms, providing natural science curriculum materials to more than 6,500 students and their teachers! Each of these students receives the award-winning newsletter six times during the school year. This year's topics include Wildflowers, Marine Mammals, Songbirds, Animal Communication, the ever-popular issue on Snakes, and a brand new issue on Water. This year's Audubon Month poster will highlight endangered species. In addition, for the past two years, the success of the LAAS Birdathon has allowed the chapter to award two teachers full scholarships to Audubon Ecology Camp in the woods of Connecticut.

LAAS Birdathon dollars also help support the National Audubon Society's Ballona Wetlands Education Program. This exciting outdoor science program reaches young people in portions of our community where low environmental awareness and limited access to the out-of-doors often go hand in hand. Nearly 4,000 students, many of them from South Central and East Los Angeles, will visit the Ballona



Wetlands this year to participate in a hands-on outdoor science adventure that none will soon forget. For two hours they explore the last major salt marsh in Los Angeles County, peering through microscopes at the microorganisms that form the base of the wetlands food pyramid and discovering the wonders of birding using binoculars and spotting scopes. They study the unique adaptations of the plants and animals that inhabit the salt marsh, coastal dunes, Del Rey Lagoon and Ballona Channel.

Project Director Melanie Ingalls and I are extremely proud of the 30 volunteers who give so much of their time and energy, providing these young people with a positive

model of environmental advocacy. We invite all of you to visit the National Audubon Society office in Playa Del Rey and be our guest to observe our outdoor classroom in action. Field trips generally take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 10:00 A.M. to noon.

Finally, on behalf of all teachers and students who have had their "eyes opened" to the joys of nature, our heartfelt thanks to all the members of LAAS, and especially to all you Birdathoners (past and future) for your generous support of a program that we believe will help to secure a future for the earth's astounding diversity of wildlife and habitats and perhaps for we humans as well.

Not a PERSONAL HIGH

by Mike San Miguel

As birders, we expose ourselves to all of the extraordinary things nature has to offer. As much as we are thrilled by her subtleties and awesome displays of power, we are sometimes disappointed when the day's events are dull or don't live up to our expectations. That's what the chase for a rare bird is all about and why we can hardly wait for the next alert. We travel great distances and spend a lot of time and effort to experience as much as we can cram into our days or weekends in the field. And there never seems to be enough time.

Two of my favorite birding partners, Bruce Broadbooks and Bob Pann, and I recently rented a car for a three-day trip to Arcata and Crescent City to look for the Black Vulture, Snow Bunting and Gyrfalcon that had been seen and reported by many birders since early December — and in the case of the vulture, since last September. After spending the better part of a full day in the Arcata bottoms unsuccessfully looking for the vulture, we decided to move on to look for the bunting. We soon found the bird in its "favorite habitats" — a small gravel patch and on top of a light standard in the middle of the parking lot on Smuggler's Island near the Crescent City marina.

The following morning we drove on up to the Smith River bottoms north of Crescent City and, again, after only a short period of time, were rewarded with great looks at the Gyrfalcon. Surely this is one of the most impressive raptors in the world. It put on an excellent show, chasing several raven seemingly for the pure joy of it, harassing the

much larger Tundra Swans flying in small groups through the area, and absolutely terrorizing the large flock of wigeon, including a Eurasian, that grazed in the grassy field adjacent to a shallow pond. As is often the case with a bird as remarkable as a Gyrfalcon, we were soon joined by a group of birders from all over the state. Even after watching the Gyr for over two hours, it was difficult to force ourselves to leave the bird and our friends and move on.

Later that morning we birded the headlands near Crescent City for shorebirds, Harlequin Ducks and other specialties of the area. We then headed back south to try again for the vulture. Along the way, in the vicinity of Patrick's Point, we were treated to a Pileated Woodpecker that flew directly over our car as we sped down Highway 101. Once again in Arcata we spent the remainder of the day looking, without success, for the vulture.

Concluding that our prospects of finding the bird the following day were slim to none, we decided to head home. While we missed the vulture, which would have been a California state bird for all of us, the bunting and the Gyr were life birds for me. Because the trip had already been a success, the 700-mile, 11-hour drive back to L.A. after a long day of birding was no big deal. Right! Birders often do 24 hours straight, with only a few winks of sleep in the car and eating at fast food restaurants, and think nothing of it. Besides, our energy levels were still relatively high because we had been richly rewarded for our efforts.

Little of the two days of birding and other activities of the weekend, and for that matter from our collective years in the field, had prepared us for what we were about to experience.

As we drove south in the early morning on Interstate 5 about a mile north of its intersection with Highway 14, everything seemed as it always had. The faint glow from the millions of lights that illuminate our great city was there. Traffic was light but dominated by big rigs that are always found on this most important and heavily used highway in California.

We had planned to stop for gas (since the gauge was nearly on empty) at Roxford Avenue, a spot familiar to most L.A. birders as a meeting place for travels to the Antelope Valley and other birding spots to the north. From there we would drop Bob at his home in West L.A. and then go on to Bruce's in Westchester where I had left my car.

Suddenly and violently our car began to sway wildly from side to side and seemed to bounce from the pavement. I yelled to Bruce, "EARTHQUAKE!" The roadway in front of us was undulating and rippling as if it was liquid, and every crack and seam in the roadbed was spewing curtains of dirt and dust as the concrete slab beneath us literally began coming apart. Chunks of concrete seemed instantly to be everywhere, and the cars and big rigs, which until now were only anonymous travelers, seemed to be moving in every possible direction as their headlights flashed like tiny searchlights through the thickening dust that filled the air.

Behind us, through the rear window of the car, the sky suddenly turned a brilliant bluish-white as though a thousand arc-welders had been turned on, and columns of white smoke shot up out of the eerie glow. Having worked for Southern California Edison for the past 20 years, I am familiar with power transmission systems in the area and recognized that the 200,000 volt transformers at nearby Pardee Substation were likely blowing apart. Ahead of us, the horizon of the city flashed dozens of bluish-white and orange flashes as numerous transformers and gas fires ignited. For about 20 intensely frightening and terrifying seconds nature continued her awesome show of power and might.

By then traffic had come to a very slow crawl and many cars with flat tires pulled over to the side of the road. As we began cautiously to inch our way forward, additional aftershocks continued to shake our car. It became increasingly difficult to see anything through the thickening pall of dust as traffic began to back up and eventually came to a complete stop. It was obvious we were not going to get any farther, and we made a U-turn onto the freeway median divider and back the wrong way on the freeway to backtrack to the Lyons Avenue off-ramp and then hopefully head south along the Old Road. That route was also blocked.

As we waited for a few moments trying to figure out what to do next, I remember looking up to our left and seeing one of the freeway columns with strings of steel re-bar hanging like spaghetti from the top of the structure. Francis Ford Coppola or Oliver Stone never produced a movie as surrealistic as what we were experiencing. "Bruce, Bob, let's get out of here." Bruce was driving, and his ability to keep us on the road and out of trouble was remarkable, but it was time to go.

By now we knew the only possibility we had of getting home any time soon was to drive back toward Ventura on Highway 126 through Fillmore and Santa Paula and to

pick up the 101 into town. As we backtracked along the interstate, the roadway was an obstacle course of shattered concrete, boulders and dirt from nearby hillsides and stranded vehicles abandoned due to mechanical malfunction and, in some cases, by terrified motorists too afraid to drive any farther.

Our immediate concern was to find a service station because by now we were about to run out of gas. As we approached Fillmore there was a faint glow in the sky as if it were coming from the town. Rounding a long curve in the highway we realized the glow in the sky was not the lights from the town but a fifty foot pillar of fire shooting directly out of the highway. We now knew from radio reports that a 6.5 magnitude earthquake centered somewhere in the San Fernando Valley had ruptured a large natural gas main. I remember thinking, "Only 6.5! Surely what we had just experienced must have been greater than that."

After waiting for about 30 minutes, experiencing even more aftershocks, we watched the towering flame ahead of us slowly go out. Moving ahead on 126 past the flame that had just burned out, there was a small crater in the roadway with what ap-

peared to be spots of molten concrete and earth very similar to lava.

all of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties and the San Fernando Valley had brought business and commerce to a halt. Without power to run the pumps at any of the gas stations in the area, our prospects were very dim and we could be stranded in Santa Paula for a very long time unless we acted.

By now about four hours had passed since the quake. As luck would have it, and after some aggressive negotiating, a construction contractor we found working nearby had a gallon of gasoline that he offered to us. We were able to get as far as Oxnard where we found a small independent and very resourceful station open with pumps operated by a portable generator. The line for gas reminded us very much of the oil embargo days but we were very glad, in spite of the hour-long wait, to be finally headed home.

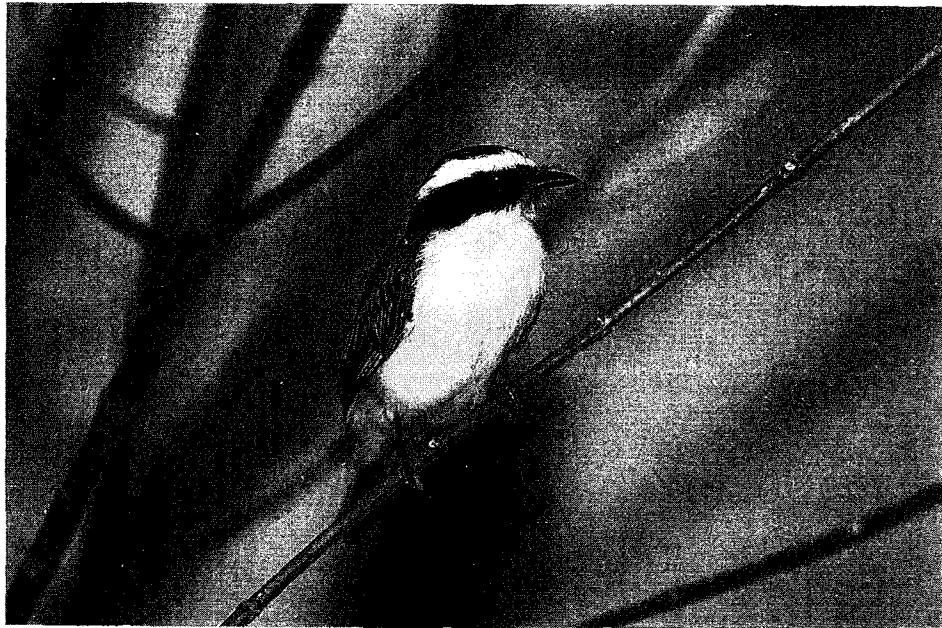
Reflecting upon the events of the 32 hours that began with the exhilaration of watching the Gyrfalcon, mother nature had not disappointed us. She had given us all we had hoped for, except this time she had shown us an awesome display of her power, and we had been right in the middle of it. Once again she reminded us of who is really in charge.

mother nature... had shown us an awesome display of her power...

peared to be spots of molten concrete and earth very similar to lava.

Radio reports began to fill in a picture of large-scale destruction to the interstate so vital to life and commerce in Southern California. In particular we learned that the interchange we had just left had collapsed. The reports also placed us very near the epicenter of the quake, now upgraded to 6.6, when it hit at 4:31 A.M. Massive power outages to

We finally got into L.A. at about noon. We were tired, still badly shaken from our incredible experience and anxious to get to the security of our homes and families. Driving the last few miles of our long journey and seeing some of the damage along the way, we realized how lucky we were just to be alive. We also knew we had just gotten through the longest day of birding we had ever experienced. ■



WESTERN TANAGER

Published 10 times a year by
Los Angeles Audubon Society,
a chapter of National Audubon Society.

EDITOR: Jean Brandt

CONSERVATION: Sandy Wohlgemuth
ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:
Kimball Garrett

FIELD TRIPS: Nick Freeman

PROGRAMS: Dan Kahane

PELAGIC TRIPS: Phil Sayre

DESKTOP PUBLISHING: WP Plus

PRINTING: Marcotte Printing

Opinions expressed in articles or letters
herein do not necessarily express the
position of this publication or of LAAS.

PRESIDENT: Fred Heath

1st VICE PRESIDENT: Pat Little

2nd VICE PRESIDENT: Peter Shen
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:
Mildred Newton

RECORDING SECRETARY:
Pat Nelson

TREASURER: Richard Epps

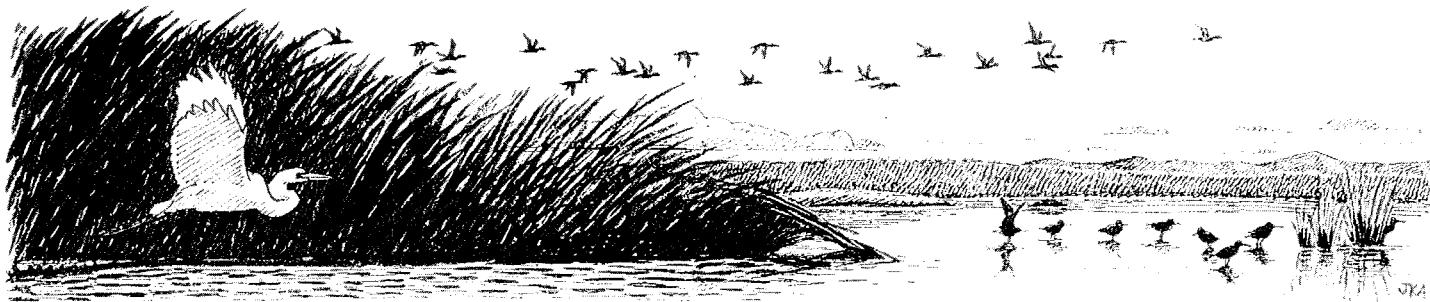
Annual membership in both societies is
\$35 per year and \$20 for new members for
their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon*
magazine, a national publication. Renewals of membership are computerized by
National Audubon and should not be sent to LAAS; however, new 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 news-
letter is sent by first-class mail to sub-
scribers and members who pay an addi-
tional \$7. Make checks payable to
Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Los Angeles Audubon Society
Headquarters, Library
and Bookstore are open to the public
Tuesday-Saturday
10:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.
213 876-0202 — office
213 876-7609 — fax

Printed on Recycled Paper





CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

If you read last month's *Tanager* article ("Volunteerism Under Attack") on the National Biological Survey Bill (HR 1845) and its infamous amendments, you'll know what environmentalists are up against. Here's a perfectly splendid bill that calls for a nationwide database of all our living creatures — mammals, birds, insects and plants — that would provide scientific input for such projects as delineating wetlands and protecting endangered species.

Then along came a death squad of congressmen that cut the guts out of the measure. One amendment denied the use of volunteers to supply the data, particularly singling out Audubon for condemnation. The other prohibited any staff person from doing a survey on private property without written permission.

The *Tanager* report was factual and relatively restrained (which suits our proper image). But these amendments should get the adrenaline pouring into the veins of any birder worth his or her salt. We have been insulted, defamed, red-baitied, denigrated and spat upon. To refresh your memory, here are a couple of quotes: "This research is too important to allow it to be handled by... potentially prejudiced individuals who will not be required to be accountable for the quality of the work performed." We would bring our own agenda to NBS, he says, (presumably a biased, sinister one). "You start with bad science, you end with bad science." (Billy Tauzin, D-LA). "The NBS is... everything that radical preservationists could ask for" and will lead to the establishment of a militant eco-

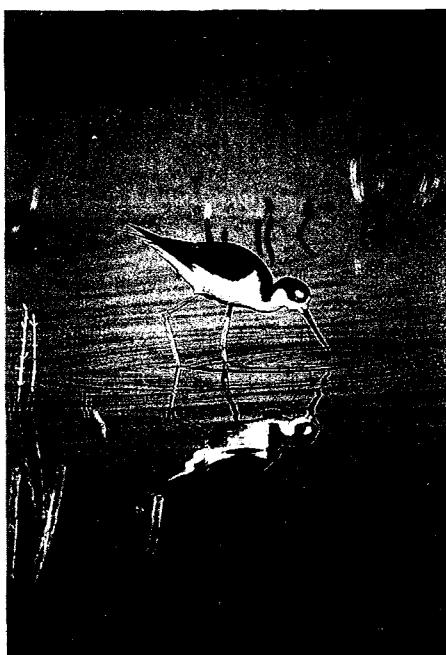
Gestapo force." (Bill Emerson, R-MO).

If this wasn't so serious and insulting, it would be laughable. What kind of mentality can conceive of Christmas bird counters faking a report? Especially *undercounting* to demonstrate that birds are in bad shape. Most of the fun of bird counts is to get the most species and the largest numbers of birds. If they are looking at National Audubon as a monolithic conspiratorial cabal that will order its members to cheat in this way, they are not only nuts but they are judging us by their own depraved standards. The chairman of the prestigious International Council for Bird Preservation says, "During the debate [on these amendments], images of crazed environmentalists tramping across the land, discovering endangered species under every

rock or log, were used to scare private landowners." Listen to the man. This unconscionable attack is part and parcel of the massive attempt to undermine the Endangered Species Act. The phalanx of developers, big agriculture, timber lords and grazing moguls wants to hold on to its power and crush us "special interests."

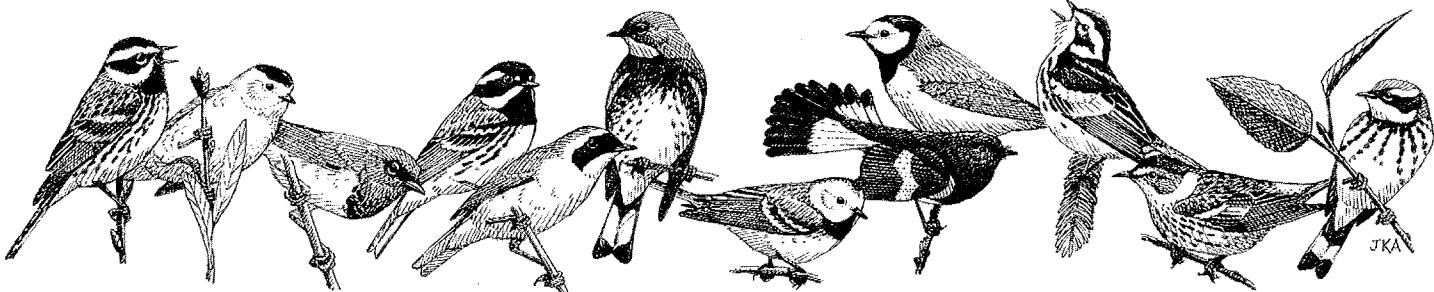
Have we had enough of this garbage? Are we going to take it anymore? The shocking truth is that our House of Representatives *passed* this bill with both miserable amendments. The only weapon we have short of a march on Washington is letters and phone calls. I know, I know, everything ends up with the old call for letters. But this is something special. Our honor as birders and citizens is at stake. We would be saving the government millions of dollars and countless hours of labor by volunteering, and these guys give us a bum rap. So tell your senators to pass HR 1845 in its original form, washed clean of amendments. Tell your congress member to do the same when the bill is reconsidered in conference with the Senate. Be polite but firm. If you make a local call to your representative, your opinion will be relayed to Washington. Do both. —

2nd Prize — Inside ABA Area:
Black-necked Stilt by Don Des Jardin



Honorable _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable _____
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodkin

April is the month of warbler migration. Sometime between the second and the third weeks of the month it will be possible to go into the flower perfumed coastal canyons and find oak trees dripping with up to nine species of warbler. *Empids* call from the alder trees while Lazuli Buntings sing from the chaparral. One particularly dependable site for this phenomenon has been the Walker Ranch section of Placerita State and County Park in Santa Clarita.

If the rain schedule is right, the recently burned hillsides will blaze again — only this time with kind and gentle wildflowers as if nature were apologizing for the devastation of last fall. The Theodore Payne Foundation's Wildflower Hotline — (818) 768-3533 — will keep you apprised of where the best displays can be found.

It is also time to think of giving something back for the pleasure that birding has given us. Project Tanager, designed to monitor tanager populations in our mountains, is organized by Cornell University. Contact Mindy Westgate, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. Birders who are familiar with bird songs can run Breeding Bird Surveys. Contact Bruce Peterjohn, Coordinator, Breeding Bird Survey, Pautuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD 20708.

Local reports were few and far between this past month. Other parts of the country have had Snowy Owls, Gyrfalcon and Redpolls. And Texas' Rio Grande Valley had a Collared Forest-Falcon — a bird of dense neotropical forests —

the first verified sighting of this bird in the U.S. But because of the earthquake and the usual pre-spring migration doldrums, we can only offer these few reports.

Three **Little Gulls** — two first-winter and one second-winter — were found at the Niland Boatramp on the Salton Sea on 29 January (Guy McCaskie), and they were still present in mid-February. An adult **Thayer's Gull** was on the Los Angeles River at the Anaheim Street crossing in Long Beach.

Three **Violet-green Swallows** — the first of the spring — were reported from Chatsworth Reservoir on 30 January (Wanda Dameron), and a ridiculously early **Bank Swallow** was at the San Joaquin Marsh in Orange County on the same day (Peter Shen).

A **Sage Thrasher** was found at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on

21 January (Ray Jillson), and on the same day a very rare **Field Sparrow** was discovered at Huntington Central Park (Jeff Boyd). The sparrow, California's fifth, remained through mid-February.

The steady spread of **Great-tailed Grackles** continues; a pair was at Castaic Lake on 16 February (Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer).

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

27½ Mast Street, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292.
(310) 827-0407 E-Mail: hankb@kaiwan.com
Or call **David Koepel** at (310) 454-2576.

1st Prize — Humorous: Snowy Egrets by John Branum



FIELD TRIPS

Continued from page 12

Saturday, April 16 — Wildflowers, Butterflies and Breeding Birds of the Antelope Valley. This trip is a **Birdathon** activity, so arrange sponsors for your efforts. **Fred Heath** will lead this trip to Bob's Gap and other areas in the vicinity in a Breeding Bird Atlas format. Contact Audubon House by phone for Birdathon forms and to sign up. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the Lamont-Odett Overlook. Take Hwy 14 N toward Palmdale and watch for the pull-out on the right side about 2.5 miles past the Pearblossom Hwy turnoff.

Saturday, April 16 — Franklin Canyon. Leader **Steve Saffier**. Franklin Canyon is located between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Over 100 species of birds have been seen in the chaparral, lakeside and oak/pine woodland habitats of the canyon. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the Sooky Goldman Nature Center lot. From the 101 Fwy in the Valley, take Coldwater S into the hills and make a 90° right turn at the ridge onto Franklin Canyon Dr. (not a through street). Continue ½ mile to the Nature

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:

LAAS Reservations
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694.

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 Wednesdays from noon to 4:00 P.M. to answer questions about field trips. Our office staff is also available Tuesday through Saturday for most reservation services.

Center. The lot is past a gate designating the William O. Douglas Outdoor Classroom.

 **Friday, April 22 —** From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. 30-hour trip departs at 10:00 P.M. Call LAAS for reservations. Leaders **Arnold Small** and **Mitch Heindel**.

 **Sunday, April 24 — Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary.** This unstrenuous walk through oak woodlands should be good for passerines and young raptors. Take the 5 or 405 Fwy to El Toro Rd. and go NE to Santa Margarita Pkwy. Turn right onto the parkway and continue to Antonio. Meet Park Ranger **Pete DeSimone** in the Ralph's lot at the NW corner of this intersection near the bank. We'll leave the lot at 8:30 A.M. and carpool into the park in private vehicles. Reserve by phone with Audubon House. Rain cancels. \$5 donation to Starr Ranch optional. Do not send money to Audubon. Participation limited.

 **Friday, April 29 —** From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard* (backup trip for April 8 or April 22, if needed). Leaders **Brad Schram** and **Mitch Heindel**.

Saturday, April 30 — Shake Canyon and vicinity. Leader **Doug Martin** will be touring the wilds of the Santa Susanna Mountains. Migrating warblers, vireos, flycatchers, etc., and breeding montane birds should make for a high species count. Bring sturdy shoes and food for a full day of birding. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at McDonald's in Castaic. Take the 5 Fwy N to Lake Hughes Rd. in Castaic.

Sunday, May 1 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. First Sunday each month. See April 10 write-up for details.

Saturday, May 7 — Van Norman Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala**. Meet at 7:30 A.M. See April 2 write-up for details.

Sunday May 8 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See April 10 write up for details.

Saturday, May 14 — Chatsworth Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala**. Meet at 7:30 A.M. See April 9 write-up for details.

Saturday, May 14 — Butterbredt Springs — Lizards. L.A. Zoo herpetologist and LAAS member **Harvey Fischer** will lead our search for Desert Horned, California Whiptail, Leopard, Collared, Zebra-tailed, Desert Spiny and other lizards seen in Jawbone Canyon. We will briefly bird Butterbredt Springs, then look for lizards. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the intersection of Jawbone Canyon Rd. and Hwy 14. Take Hwy 14 past Mojave and continue N on Hwy 14 about 17 miles to Jawbone Canyon Rd. on the west side. Meet 100 yds. along at the message board on the left. Anticipate heat, thirst, hunger and rock-hopping. Red Rock Canyon State Park five miles to the north is good for camping. About two hours' driving time from L.A. Sign up by phone with LAAS.

 **Saturday, May 21 —** From San Pedro on the *R.V. Vantuna*, 6:00 A.M.—6:00 P.M. Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Barney Schlinger**. Fee: \$37.

Saturday and Sunday, June 11 and 12 — Yosemite. Leader **Louis Tucker**. We'll concentrate on Goshawk, Pileated and Black-backed Woodpeckers, Pine Grosbeak, Great Grey Owl, Blue Grouse and other specialties. Trip ends Sunday afternoon in Owens Valley. Possible snow on ground, in air. Strict silence enforced during owl watch. Bring Saturday night sack dinner. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the Mariposa Grove parking lot just E of Yosemite's south entrance. Suggest staying in Oakhurst area south of park Friday night. We will plan to reserve sufficient campsites for the group for Saturday night at Crane Flat. Yosemite campsites on sale April 15 through Mistix — (800) 444-7275. Campsites and hotels in area sell out very quickly. Limited to 13. Reserve with SASE and \$20 to LAAS for itinerary and lodging information.

Friday to Monday, June 24 to 27 — Southern Sierra Weekend with Bob Barnes. **Friday:** Bloomfield Ranch, Walker Pass and Troy Meadows. **Saturday and Sunday:** Kern River Preserve, Lake Isabella, Great Basin and eastern Sierra. **Monday:** Western Divide and Giant Sequoias. Some night birding. More details in *May Tanager*. Limited participation. Fee: \$11 for each day you sign up (\$44 for four days). Reserve with SASE to LAAS for trip and lodging information per field trip policy.



EVENING MEETING

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

April 12, 1994

Dr. Charles Collins
The Santa Cruz Island Scrub Jay

To speciate or not to speciate... could you repeat the question? Dr. Collins will delight and amaze us with an illustrated account of his research on this distinctive relative of our pugnacious coastal form.

May 10, 1994

Herb Clarke
Birding the Southern Sphere

Join one of Southern California's premiere wildlife photographers on an illustrated trip from the tip of the neotropics to the tip of the Ethiopian biogeographic region.

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.

♪ Denotes Pelagic Trips

Saturday, April 2 — Van Norman Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala**. Riparian and grassland habitat surround the reservoir and adjacent ponds. 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.

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

DATED MATERIAL
Please Expedite

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
PERMIT NO. 276
Glendale, CA

in the lot inside the gate on the left. We will carpool from there and stop about 1:00 P.M. Restrooms on-site.

♪ **Friday, April 8 —** From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. 30-hour trip departs at 10:00 P.M. Call LAAS for reservations. Leaders **Arnold Small** and **Mitch Heindel**.

Saturday, April 9 — Chatsworth Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala**. Grassland/oak scrub habitat with a large body of water. 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. Finish up early afternoon. Bring lunch and water. No restrooms.

Sunday, April 10 — Topanga State Park. Second Sunday this month only. **Gerry Haigh** will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area spared by last fall's fires. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or 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 turn left into the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$5 parking fee.

Sunday, April 10 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join **Ray Jillson** to see songbirds, migrants, breeding raptors and others. Some lakes have been cleared, so visibility has improved. A population of introduced cardinals is resident. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. Take the 60 Fwy to South El Monte, just W of the 605 Fwy, taking the Peck Dr. exit S. Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right), and turn left into the Nature Center.

Continued on page 11