

# WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

## Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas

by Fred Heath

In the April 1994 issue of the *Western Tanager*, I introduced the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas which will begin in 1995. Although this will require a gigantic effort on the part of the birders of the area, it is an undertaking that has been successfully completed in many other areas throughout the U.S. and the world.

### History

In 1954, the British Botanical Society began a project to map the plant species of the British Isles. They developed a grid system with square blocks 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) on each side. In 1962, the *Atlas of British Flora* was produced using this system. Between 1968 and 1972 (five years), British ornithologists using the same 10k grid covered the 3,862 squares which made up the British Isles including all of Ireland. In 1976, a book entitled *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* was published. For each species the degree of confidence in breeding was shown by different sized dots in each grid square. The smallest meant possible breeding, the next probable, and the largest dots for confirmed breeding. New Zealand



*Nesting  
Mourning Dove  
by John Schmitt*

and several European countries soon completed atlases of their own.

The first atlas project in North America was started in 1971 in Montgomery County, Maryland. Massachusetts was not far behind with the first statewide atlas. At present, many of the states and Canadian provinces have completed atlas fieldwork. In California, mainly because of its vast size, atlasing has been carried out at the county level with the first such effort in Marin County. Atlases for Marin and Monterey have been published (a

review of the Monterey Atlas will appear in a future *Tanager*). In Southern California, field work has been completed in Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside. So as you can see, we clearly need to get moving here in Los Angeles County.

### The Plan

The one thing about all of the atlases that have preceded ours is that we have the benefit of their collective experience. We really don't have to invent anything new to get this project off the ground. As we

mentioned in the April article, it was decided to use blocks defined by dividing U.S. Geological Survey topo maps into six equal parts. Many U.S. atlases have used square blocks of 5 kilometers per side using the Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM). This gives nice uniform blocks, but we felt the hassle of map-making wasn't worth it.

We've stuck to the five year time frame used in most atlas projects. The five years allows us to make the trade-off between complete coverage and the ideal "snapshot" in time. Thus our atlas will start in 1995 and end in 1999, with the atlas actually published in time for the kick-off of the new century.


Another place where we borrowed heavily from past atlas efforts is in the so-called Breeding Behavior Criteria. One of the most important needs in doing an atlas is having an ordered set of easily understandable and consistent criteria for defining the degree of confidence in breeding. The ordering must be from "least certain" to "most certain." The difficult task was fairly well established by the British for their efforts. Various states and counties have modified the original slightly. The differing criteria and codes were studied by the North-eastern Breeding Bird Atlas Conference and a standardized behavior code for North America was recommended. We have taken a system very similar to that recommendation (shown in the table at right).

The information will be recorded on a field card that will be used for one year in each block. Once a bird has been confirmed in a particular block any time within the five-year period, it really doesn't have to be noted again. However, many observers find it fun to get to a higher level of confirmation for various species. It has been found that the easiest time to confirm breeding is just after the young have fledged. Thus, you don't have to be an expert nest finder. But from my own personal experience, when you start looking for breeding birds you become an "expert" at nest finding. Again, finding nests isn't necessary

in many cases. As a matter of fact, visits to nest sites are sometimes harmful as they can lead predators straight to the site.

In addition to the breeding criteria, we have decided to try to get a rough guess of the number of pairs breeding in a block by using the following abundance codes: A) 1-10, B) 11-100, C) 101-1000 and D) >1000. A column for abundance has been added to the field card in addition to the columns for noting breeding evidence criteria. The field card lists almost 200 species including introduced species which should be expected to breed in Los Angeles County. This field card has been completed and is available to potential atlas field volunteers.

## The Next Step

The next step is up to you. We are close to having Regional Coordinators for the ten or so regions into which we will divide the County. A list of these Coordinators will be published in the *Tanager* and some of the other Audubon Chapter newsletters in L.A. County. Until that time, if you are interested, please contact me through LAAS. Pick your favorite block or have one or more assigned. This is a project which is an opportunity to have fun birding, learn a little something about bird behavior and add to the database of knowledge about our local avifauna. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime endeavor! 

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

### Breeding Behavior Criteria/Codes

#### OBSERVED

- O Species observed in block but not believed to be breeding.

#### POSSIBLE

- + Individual(s) observed in suitable breeding habitat within safe-date period (non-migrant).
- X Singing male observed in suitable breeding habitat within safe-date period.

#### PROBABLE

- M Multiple singing or territorial males reported within one block in one day (indicate number, e.g. M-8).
- A Agitated behavior or anxiety calls from adult.
- P Pair observed in suitable breeding habitat within safe-date period.
- T Territorial behavior or singing male present at least two dates seven or more days apart.
- C Courtship or copulation observed.
- N Visiting probable nest site (hole nesters).
- B Nest building by wrens or excavation of holes by woodpeckers.

#### CONFIRMED

- PE Physiological evidence (brood patch or egg in oviduct) based on a bird in the hand.
- NB Nest building (except wrens, woodpeckers).
- DD Distraction display or injury feigning.
- UN Used nest.
- ON Occupied nest (nests in holes or high nests where contents are uncertain).
- FL Recently fledged or downy dependent young.
- FS Adult carrying fecal sac.
- FY Adult carrying food for young
- NE Nest with eggs or eggshells on ground.\*
- NY Nest with young seen or heard.\*

\*Presence of cowbird eggs or young is confirmation of both cowbird and host species.

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

## Casual Observation Form

SPECIES \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION — BLOCK # (IF KNOWN) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### BREEDING STATUS

OB

POSSIBLE + X

PROBABLE M A P T C N B

CONFIRMED PE NB DD UN ON FL FS FY NE NY

ABUNDANCE \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVER'S ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVER'S PHONE ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Kimball Garrett

## PERSONAL HIGH

by Kimball L. Garrett

Most birders will readily admit that their birding pinnacles usually involve seeing something new, whether on a chase for that one certain bird or on a visit to an entirely new biogeographical region. But, for many, there's a more important element to a birding high — that of exploration and discovery. I've been overwhelmed and delighted on birding voyages to the Galapagos Islands, Antarctica, Kenya's national parks, and elsewhere, but those were hardly Darwinesque voyages of discovery. Checklists and field guides told me exactly what I would see, and indeed I saw what thousands of birders before me had seen.

Ironically, the biggest rewards of exploration for me have come much closer to home, within hours of Los Angeles. By the late 1960s and early 1970s I had done enough birding in Southern California's mountains to know that many discoveries awaited. Having been witness to California's first nesting Hepatic Tanagers east of Big Bear Lake and the 1973 Red-faced Warbler at Buckhorn Campground, I was well aware that our knowledge of mountain bird distribution was patchy. My budding interest was further piqued by an intriguing note by Alden Miller in a 1940 issue of *The Condor* (Miller, as Tom Howell's major professor at U.C. Berkeley, was, in a sense, my "academic grand-

father"). He described a "transition island" in the Mohave Desert called Clark Mountain, a 7,900' peak which lies just north of what is now Interstate 15, some 13 miles inside California from the Nevada border. The shaded fir forest on the north side of the mountain held isolated populations of Mountain Chickadees, Hermit Thrushes, Virginia's Warblers and other montane birds. I tried to imagine myself on an expedition such as Miller's.

Segue to Berkeley in the winter of 1973–74. With the blessing of ornithologist Ned Johnson and under the unofficial tutelage of then graduate student Van Remsen, a group of us — dead bird aficionados all — met regularly to review the collections at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and discuss matters of identification, taxonomy and ecology of birds. The subject of Clark Mountain and Miller's visit 35 years earlier occasionally surfaced. When Ned visited Clark Mountain in May of 1974, bringing word of such tantalizing birds as Grace's Warbler, our "expedition" was hatched. On 21 June 1974 Stephen and Karen Bailey, Bill Principe and I were on our way, slowed only by obligatory stops at various oases in the White Mountains and Death Valley.

We arrived at our base camp at the northern foot of the mountain in the late afternoon of 22 June. Steve and Karen went no further — a glance at the steep mountain convinced them to limit their surveys to the mountain's base! Bill and I trudged up the mountain with no trail to guide us, but with 40 acres

of white firs beckoning us 2,000' above. Carrying water and sleeping gear, we reached the lower limits of the firs at dusk, found a couple of flat spots (rarer than Grace's Warblers on Clark), and bedded down to the vocal accompaniment of a Whippoorwill, the first ever found on California's desert mountains.

Dawn's first hints on 23 June came around 4:30 A.M. Two Whippoorwills were living up to their name by calling vociferously. Dusky Flycatchers joined the early chorus, and soon we were stumbling through the steep fir-clad slopes racking up a fascinating list of mountain birds on this island in the Mohave desert. A pair of Hepatic Tanagers represented one of several species at the limits of their geographical range, and one not detected by Miller in 1939. Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Mountain Chickadees, Warbling Vireos, Virginia's Warblers, a Western Tanager and "Gray-headed" Juncos were all of distributional significance.

By 9:00 A.M., Bill and I reluctantly began our descent, well aware that 85° temperature would soon climb. Singing Gray Vireos enlivened the trip down, but the heat was oppressive and Bill seemed close to losing his battle with the relentless sun. After two hours we reached the car, swapping stories with Steve and Karen (their highlights included Le Conte's and Bendire's Thrashers, and a surprisingly low Hepatic Tanager).

On 17–18 May 1975 I returned to Clark Mountain, this time with my brother-in-law Alan Heller.

From the same starting point, we began our climb in mid-afternoon, with a welcome cloud layer and cool patches of snow at the foot of the mountain's crowning cliffs. As we neared the fir zone, Broad-tailed Hummers were very much in evidence, and the memorable songs of four Hermit Thrushes were heard until darkness fell. We heard no Whip-poor-will after dark, but a pair of Flammulated Owls called incessantly.

While drifting off to sleep, I reflected that it was 36 years to the day since Alden Miller first discovered Clark Mountain's firs and associated montane avifauna. A traverse of the fir patches the following morning added to the list of montane species present on Clark Mountain, including Pygmy and Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Brown

Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and "Oregon" Juncos. The overcast allowed us to remain in the fir zone until late morning this time, and we completed our descent shortly after noon. I haven't been up Clark since, but I've retained a keen interest in the avifaunas of Southern California's mountains.

Clark Mountain has since been visited nearly annually by various birders. My two trips were hardly standouts in terms of "good birds." Better birds have been seen since by far better twitchers than I. But the mountain's remoteness and stillness, and the possibilities it held for mountain-hopping birds and birders, have remained with me as indelibly as the steep slopes and loose talus we negotiated.

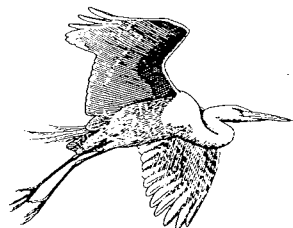
The mid-1970s were heady times in California birding. This was a

period of great advance in ornithological and environmental awareness, even in the days before biodiversity, neotrops and tertial fringes were household words. We were poised then to save the world and its birds... only to be defeated by the indignities of 1980s and '90s politics and greed.

It is sadly ironic that it was not out of ignorance that we pushed our world over the brink of ecological disaster. Rather, having developed an understanding of what threatened our natural world, we continued our growth-at-all-costs greed for the *coup de grace*. Now, 55 years after Alden Miller's ascent to the island of firs in the Mohave, and some 20 after mine, it seems that the Clark Mountains of the world are losing their birds faster than we can explore them. 🐦

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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WATER  
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Convention 1994

**P**lease join us in Florida for National Audubon's 1994 Biennial Convention, co-hosted with Florida Audubon. The theme, "People, Water and Wildlife," comprises the most important environmental issues challenging our nation. These inter-relationships cannot be better demonstrated than in south Florida — a land of spectacular bird life, vast wetlands and growing human population.

After the Fort Myers Convention, a special Mobile Learning Lab tour through the greater Ever-

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"The Road From Cairo"  
Friday – Sunday, November 18–20  
Miami, Florida

glades ecosystem is offered, along with many field trips into local areas.

In addition, National Audubon will host a major Population Conference in Miami as a follow-up for action to the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, to be held in September of 1994.

Attend one, two or all three components of the Audubon '94 Convention.

Call the National Audubon Convention Office at (303) 499-3622 for further information. 🐦

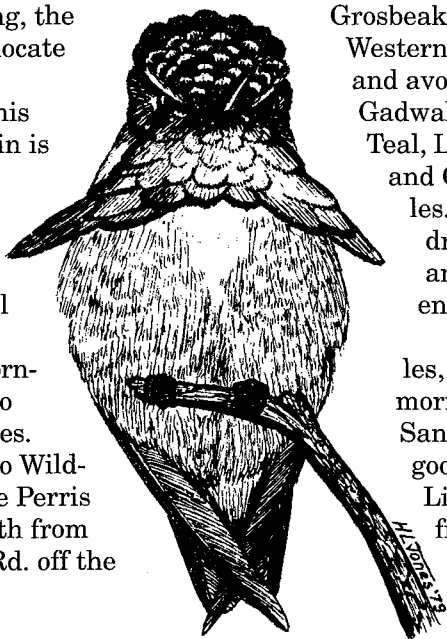
# Birding the Inland Empire in Summer

by Henry E. Childs, Jr., Ph.D.

**B**y the time June arrives, birding at the lower elevations in Southern California is less than exciting. Territories have been established, nesting is underway or completed, midday is hot and molting has begun. All these result in the reduction of movement and song, the major ways that we locate birds. To bird in the desert is absurd at this time; up the mountain is the usual solution as there is still some action at 7,000+ ft. However, all is not lost and there are still some good birds to be found in the early morning in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

At the San Jacinto Wildlife Area east of Lake Perris on Davis Rd. (go north from Lakeview on Davis Rd. off the

*Costa's Hummingbird*



Ramona Expressway OR go south from I-60 on Theodore St. which merges into Davis Rd.), the following summer residents may be found: nesting Virginia Rails, White-faced Ibis (45+), Tricolored and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Common Yellowthroats, Blue Grosbeaks, Cassin's and Western Kingbirds, stilts and avocets, Ruddy Ducks, Gadwall and Cinnamon Teal, Loggerhead Shrike and Great-tailed Grackles. It's a one-hour drive from Upland and well worth the entrance fee of \$2.25. Closer to Los Angeles, birding in early morning along the Santa Ana River can be good. In Corona, take Lincoln Ave. north from Hwy. 91 to Rincon St. (south side). Turn left and go to the end

at the sewer ponds (this road does not go through as indicated by the AAA map for Corona-Norco). Bird the sewer ponds for early arriving shorebirds. Walk to the willows along the road listening for Bell's Vireo (I challenge anyone to identify the subspecies in the field, except by locality!), Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-breasted Chat (common and loud), American Goldfinch and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. **Do not use tapes for rarities, the vireo or the cuckoo**, as this is a study area.

Backtrack on Rincon to Auburndale St. Go north to River Rd. and left to Corydon St. Go south to Rincon Rd. (north side). Park at the marsh. Chats and both species of grosbeaks are common and feeding on/in elderberry bushes. Look for Green and Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons, Northern and Hooded Orioles, Common Ground Doves and Common Yellowthroats.

Your next stop should be Prado Park (Riverside Co.): backtrack from above to River Rd. and go left. Turn left again after crossing the Santa Ana River and find the park on your left. The park is closed, a victim of Prop. 13. Walk in to the end, across the fence and follow the trail. This is also Bell's Vireo and Yellow-billed Cuckoo land. **No tapes, please!** Vermilion Flycatcher is usually here in winter but only the two kingbirds and Black Phoebe in summer (the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher of spring is gone) plus the birds of the edge and the tall willows.

Continuing along River Rd. past the park, take the short dirt road on the right to its end. Bird the wet area past the last house. Look for Common Moorhen, nesting stilts, Killdeer, Tricolored and Red-winged Blackbirds, Cinnamon Teal and Mallards. Blue-winged Teal, Ferruginous Hawk and Wilson's Phalaropes may be found at appropriate times.

Return to Los Angeles with a drive along the south side of Lake Serranos in Chino for the now-resident and breeding Great-tailed Grackles.

## Tricolored Blackbird Survey

**A**s part of its Partners in Flight program, the Western Regional Office of the National Audubon Society encouraged Audubon members to census Mountain Plovers throughout California during a single day in January of this year. The California Department of Fish and Game's Tricolored Blackbird Working Group took note of the success of that effort and asked the Western Regional Office to coordinate a single date statewide census of Tricolored Blackbird nesting and foraging locations. This was done on April 23, 1994.

Although that day is well past, the Department of Fish and Game

is still seeking any information on Tricolored Blackbirds which you may have observed throughout 1994.

Please send data such as location (a marked-up map would be appreciated), dates, numbers of birds, behavior (i.e., foraging flock or breeding colony), etc.; to:

Ms. Lyann Comrack  
California PIF Coordinator  
California Department of  
Fish and Game  
Wildlife Management Division  
Nongame Bird and Mammal  
Program  
1416 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

# ANNUAL PICNIC

## SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 1994

**T**his year's Los Angeles Audubon Society picnic will be more than just a fun-filled day of birds, food and friends. Join Fred Heath and Kimball Garrett and experience atlasing first hand! We'll spend the morning honing our Breeding Bird Atlas skills as we cover the Charlton Flat area for signs of nesting birds.

Those who are into butterflies, botany, or just good ol' birding are welcome too, of course.

Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Charlton Flat Picnic Area. Charlton Flat is along the Angeles Crest Highway, 22.5 miles above the Foothill Freeway in La Cañada Flintridge. After you enter the Charlton Flat Picnic Area, take the first right turn to the lower picnic area. Bring a picnic lunch. LAAS will supply cold drinks.



EVERYONE  
IS  
INVITED!

## Fourth of July Butterfly Count

**G**etting into the summertime doldrums? Waiting for the Breeding Bird Atlas to start next year? Thinking about the adventure of the Christmas Counts? Well, despair no longer. Trade in the summertime blues for the summertime Blues (like Lupine, Acmon and

El Segundo Blue butterflies). All the excitement of a Christmas Count without the lousy weather is yours to be had this summer by participating in a Fourth of July Butterfly Count.

The following counts have been scheduled this year:

COUNT	DATE	CONTACT	PHONE
Mt. Baden-Powell	July 3	Fred Heath	(310) 826-0083
Orange County	July 16	Larry Shaw	(714) 490-0219
Palos Verdes Peninsula	July 23	Jess Morton	(310) 832-5601
Santa Ynez Canyon	TBA	Walter Sakai	(310) 450-5150 x9702

Counts are also planned for Pasadena and Pomona Valley.

## WESTERN TANAGER

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EDITOR: Jean Brandt  
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# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

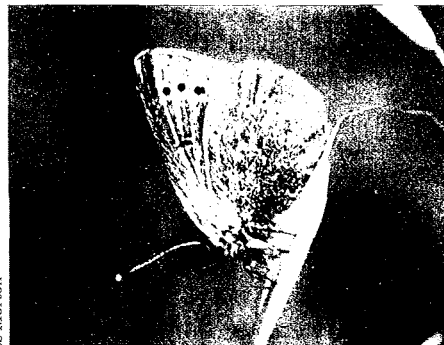
Jon Winter, Wildlife Biologist

When all the world looks like it's going to the dogs, when the northwest is losing salmon and ancient forests, when the Santa Clara River takes another oil spill and another mile of concrete bottom, a small environmental miracle can lift the spirit a millimeter or two. That's what happened when Rudi Mattoni and Rich Rogers found the long-lost Palos Verdes Blue.

The butterfly was listed as an endangered species in 1980 and was last seen on the Palos Verdes Peninsula in 1983 by Rudi Mattoni! (Where are you, Mr. Ripley?) Butterfly enthusiasts have been searching for the PV Blue ever since, combing the hills and fields for locoweed (*Astragalus*, sp.), the food plant on which it lays its eggs. As development eliminated coastal sage scrub (and gnatcatchers) over the years, enthusiasm for the chase sagged, with the reluctant realization that the Blue was probably gone for good. Mattoni's recent field guide, *Butterflies of Greater Los Angeles*, mordantly describes the PV Blue as "Extinct! Formerly abundant. Habitat lost to development."

On March 10, Mattoni and two fellow entomologists were making a biological survey of the peninsula and were investigating the remnant vegetation on the Navy Defense Fuel Supply Point. Like archaeologists stumbling on a rare fossil, they were astonished to see a PV Blue fly by. Rushing after it, they found it — and two more — in a clump of deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*). Deerweed is now believed to be another food plant for the butterfly larvae. Mattoni said,

"We were there at the right time on the right day." He wasn't kidding. Bulldozers at that very moment were digging up the site for a Chevron pipeline and might well have scooped up the shrubbery. Mattoni asked Chevron to stop the project,



Jess Morton

which they did promptly. The company is paying for more field work and promises to find ways to preserve the habitat and still get its pipeline work done. (Skeptics who wondered about a giant corporation's commercial slogan "People care!" may have to review their prejudices.)

The day after this extraordinary discovery (Mattoni called it "total serendipity"), several more PV Blues were seen. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hedging its bets, allowed Mattoni to net a few of the butterflies in an attempt to breed them. He estimates that there are between 100 to 200 Blues on the Navy property, far too low a population to assure survival. Restoration and protection of locoweed and deerweed there, he feels, will ultimately increase the numbers.

An interesting and revealing aspect of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) comes to the surface in the exciting story of the Palos Verdes

Blue. The ESA is an obstacle to landowners if their property harbors an endangered or threatened species and they want to develop it. When the PV Blue was assumed to be extinct after many years, it was natural for landowners to ask for it to be removed from the list. But Fish and Wildlife prefers to keep a species on the list for a very long time because if it does reappear and has been delisted it will have no protection. The lesson here is that the ESA *works*. With care and lots of luck, a species will be saved.

The PV Blue story is a fascinating tale. It has the popular appeal of a Frank Capra movie: the trials and tribulations of a vulnerable innocent with a heart-warming cliché finish. (Rudi Mattoni reports calls from *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and others for details and comment.) If all goes well and the butterfly flourishes, it will indeed be a significant victory. Although most people want to see wildlife and the wild lands that harbor it survive and prosper, there is a dark cloud of opposition to the ESA gathering all over the country. In the name of jobs and the economy, the opponents of the ESA are influencing legislators at all levels to support their drive for exploitation and profit. If the "deregulation" of the environment occurs, the resurrection of the Palos Verdes Blue may be one of its last victories.

Rudi Mattoni is a visiting professor in the geography department at UCLA and is stimulating widespread interest in butterflies, especially in birding circles.



# Urban Raptors

by James T. Jennings

It is amazing what you can see if you are alert, keep your eyes open and have a little bit of luck. If I said I lived in a neighborhood where I had seen six species of raptors within a two-mile radius of my apartment, you might suspect I lived in the mountains or nearby deserts. Not true. My apartment is right here in Greater Los Angeles — Glendale, to be exact.

A little over a mile from my front door, along a route that I use when I go out for my morning run, is a small park. My first encounter with raptors here was on one of these runs. It was a warm spring morning when I noticed some kind of buteo sitting in one of the many sycamore trees that line the streets and walkways of this park. With further inspection on subsequent mornings (being a serious runner, I could not stop to make a positive identification), I determined that the buteo was not only a Red-shouldered Hawk but was also building a nest. As the season progressed, the nest, incubation and chick rearing were completed. One chick was successfully fledged. After this first nest, the pair moved to a different location further along on my running route. I have not found another nest, but I still hear the birds and every now and then I get a glimpse of one flying through the trees.

Although it does not appear, upon cursory examination, to be the ideal habitat, the urban environment can offer acceptable alternatives to completely wild and natural areas. Next to the park is a baseball

field used by the local community college. This baseball field has several tall light poles. Also on one of my many morning runs I first noticed a Red-tailed Hawk building a nest on one of these poles. I had seen Red-tails many times soaring over the houses and the nearby hills, but there was no real connection with my immediate surroundings until that first sighting on the light pole. The pair eventually fledged two offspring, and I am waiting to see if they return to the light pole this year.

One morning as I was getting out of my car in the parking lot of my local bank, my eyes fell upon a feather laying on the asphalt surface. It was a primary feather from a Peregrine Falcon! There was a building across the street from the bank that was tall enough to be of use to Peregrines, so I decided to come back late in the evening to see if it was being used as a roost. Sure enough, when I arrived just before last light, there was a pair of Peregrines sitting peacefully on two lighting fixtures on the side of the building very near the top. It remains to be seen if they will make this building their home "cliff."

Not all of my sightings are of resident birds. There is a Cooper's Hawk that periodically shows up in the fall. The first year I saw her sitting on a telephone pole behind my

apartment. This fall I was leaving my apartment one afternoon when I saw a Cooper's Hawk just miss slamming into the roof next door after just missing one of the Mourning Doves that hang out in the front yard. It regained its composure and flew off to the west. One afternoon as I was getting out of my car in a supermarket parking lot, I looked up and to my right and there just flying over the roof of the market was a Sharp-shinned Hawk. It flew almost directly over my head, circled around toward the market and then turned back on its own path and out of sight over nearby houses. If I had not looked up exactly when I did, I would not have seen this bird. Another bird observed at the supermarket was an American Kestrel. It was perched in a tree next to the parking lot and it flew off within seconds of my sighting.

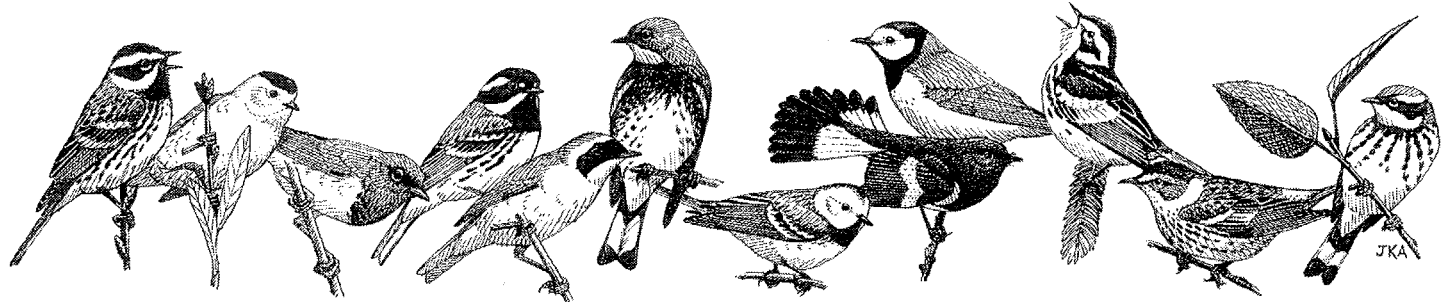
Even though we humans are encroaching more and more upon the wild habitat of raptors, if we leave them alone and perhaps help them a little when we can or when we must, we can coexist with many raptors we used to think we were displacing. Keep your eyes open at all times. In addition to the birds that you see every day, there are many birds that are *there* but can only be seen for fleeting moments if you are constantly aware — or just happen to be lucky. 🦅

## Correction

In Harold Swanton's article on Birders, Ducks and Hunters in the May 1994 *Western Tanager*, please know that the annual assessments are \$10,000, **not** \$100,000.



Herb Clarke



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodtkin

**T**he first half of June frequently sees the last and the most interesting of the spring vagrants. These birds are really lost!

Males seem to be in full song at this time of the year — so listen for that unfamiliar song and track it down. Priscilla, my wife, and I tracked down a male White-eyed Vireo hiding in a thick willow at the southeastern base of the Sierra just this way. If this bird, noted for its shyness, had not been singing, we never would have seen it. If you have a somewhat rugged vehicle, runs up the canyons in northern Kern and southern Inyo counties can be a profitable way to spend a late spring weekend. Most of the area is BLM land and the camping is free. And keep your ears open — especially further north and at higher altitudes — for a Cordilleran Flycatcher.

As of this writing (in late April) spring migration was just breaking loose. Nevertheless, the past month has produced some intriguing reports.

A **Laysan Albatross** landed on a San Marino lawn on 14 April and was removed for rehabilitation (*fide* Kimball Garrett). A flock of 300 **American White Pelicans** was seen flying north over the flower-covered slopes of Tejon Pass (Hank & Priscilla Brodtkin).

For the second year in a row, a **Zone-tailed Hawk** has been found in Los Angeles County in April, this time at Valyermo (Mike San Miguel, 25 April).

A **Curlew Sandpiper** was found at the north end of the Salton Sea on 17 April (Guy McCaskie) and

was still present on 24 April. Among the thousands of dowitchers and peeps at Piute Ponds on 24 April was a female **Ruff** (KG).

**Franklin's Gulls** were at Harbor Park on 18 April (Kevin Larson)



Herb Clarke  
*Grasshopper Sparrow*

and at the south end of the Salton Sea on 10 April (Kathy Molina). The first **Least Tern** report of the season comes from Ballona Lagoon on 14 April (HB).

A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was found at the San Jacinto Wildlife Preserve on 7 April (Peter Barnes), and **Northern Saw-whet Owls** are showing up on the coastal side of the San Gabriel Mountains (Charles Collins, KG).

A **Gray Flycatcher** was reported from the L.A. Arboretum in Arcadia on 11 April (Gayle Hightower), and a **Vermilion** was seen at Sepulveda Basin on 2 April (Jim Royer). **Purple Martin** reports include one at Chatsworth Reservoir on 20 March and one at Orcas Park on 21 March (Dustin Alcalá). Three **Palm Warblers**, probably over-wintering birds, were seen at Harbor Park on 14 April (KG).

A **Summer Tanager** was seen in Averill Park on 18 March (Lori

Conrad). A **Grasshopper Sparrow**, found at Porter Ranch in Northridge on 20 March (Ron Beck), was joined by a second bird on 26 March (Doug Martin); several have been present since, and they appear to be nesting (RB).

Just a quick word about crediting sightings in this column. Since most of my information has been coming to me secondhand, unless I know for sure who made the original sighting, I will credit the report to the person who notifies me. I regret not having the time to track down all the sightings. To be sure you are credited with a bird you find, please contact me directly.

Two long-awaited books are due out in July. Volume II of *The Birds of South America* by Robert Ridgely and Guy Tudor will cover the suboscine passerines — woodcreepers, ovenbirds, antbirds, manakins, cotingas and flycatchers. A *Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America* by Steve Howell and Sophie Webb should redefine the avifauna of that area.

Good Birding! 🐦



**R**ecords 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 Brodtkin**  
27½ Mast Street, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292.  
(310) 827-0407 E-Mail: hankb@kaiwan.com

Or call **David Koeppel** at (310) 454-2576.

*Continued from page 12*

afternoon in Owens Valley. Call Audubon House for details. Reserve with SASE and \$20 to LAAS for itinerary and lodging information.

**Sunday, June 12 — LAAS Annual Picnic in the Charlton Flat Picnic Area.** See Page 7 for details.

**Sunday, June 12 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park.** Join ranger **Ray Jillson** to see song-birds, migrants, breeding raptors and others. A population of 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.

**Sunday, June 19 — Van Norman Reservoir.** Leader **Dustin Alcalá**. 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 7:00 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.

**Friday to Monday, June 24 to 27 — Southern Sierra Weekend**

with **Bob Barnes**. **Friday:** Great Basin, Eastern Sierras and Troy Meadows. **Saturday:** Kern River Preserve and Giant Sequoias. **Sunday:** Kern River Preserve, Butterbrecht Springs, Lake Isabella and Greenhorn Mountains for day and night birds. **Monday:** Giant Sequoias and Western Divide. Probably 160 species over four days. Hopeful-to-likely species include Evening Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, Calliope Hummingbird, Wood Duck, Pileated Woodpecker, Goshawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Willow, Grey, Hammond's and Brown-crested Flycatchers. Some night birding with seven owls and Poorwill in the area. Limited participation. Fee: \$11 for each day reserved (\$44 for four days). Reserve with SASE to LAAS for trip and lodging information per field trip policy.

**Sunday, June 26 — Chatsworth Reservoir.** Leader **Dustin Alcalá**.

Observe mostly breeding resident birds in a 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, July 3 — Topanga State Park.** Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See June 5 write-up for details.


**Sunday, July 10 — Big Bear Lake Vicinity.** Leaders **Nick Freeman** and **Mary Carmona**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. outside Coldbrook Camp-ground in Big Bear. Take Hwy 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, then proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy. 18. Turn S on Tulip Lane.


The campground is on the SW side as the road curves. Target birds include Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds and White-headed Woodpecker. It should be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Bring lunch.

**Saturday, July 16 — Mt. Pinos Vicinity.** Leader TBA. Hummers, mountain woodpeckers, Hermit Warbler, etc. Anticipate the elements and bring a lunch. Take Hwy 5 N past Tejon Pass to the Frazier Park offramp. Turn left and follow Frazier Mountain Park Rd., bearing right onto Cuddy Valley Rd. Meet at 7:45 A.M. **promptly** at the "Y" formed by the junction of Cuddy Valley Rd. and Mil Potrero Hwy. Park in the obvious dirt clearing. Rain cancels.

**Sunday, July 17 — Van Norman Reservoir.** Leader **Dustin Alcalá**. Meet at 7:30 A.M. See June 19 write-up for details.

 **Friday, August 5 — From Ventura on the M.V. Vanguard.** This 30-hour trip will go northwest from Ventura and west to the Continental Shelf. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Mitch Heindel**. Call Audubon House for reservations.

 **Sunday, August 14 — From San Pedro on the R.V. Vantuna.** This 12-hour trip will go out to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. Leaders **Arnold Small** and **Jonathan Alderfer**. Fee: \$37.

**August 13 to 18 — Southeast Arizona.** Leaders **Larry Allen**, **Nick Freeman** and **Mary Carmona**. Even with all this time, we will barely have time to cover the best-known spots in this birding mecca. Camping plus some motel options. Only leadership and camaraderie will be provided. Enthusiasm and willingness to research Southeast Arizona birds are requirements. \$45 reservation fee for all or part of trip (\$20 of this refunded in AZ). Send SASE to LAAS to reserve or for a very detailed trip description. Limited to 16. 

## 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.

# EVENING MEETING

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

## ANNUAL PICNIC SUNDAY, JUNE 12

BIRDS  
BUTTERFLIES  
BOTANY  
FOOD  
FRIENDS

SEE PAGE 7  
FOR ALL THE DETAILS!

EVERYONE  
IS INVITED!

June 14, 1994

**Jared M. Diamond, Professor of Physiology, UCLA**  
**What New Guinea People Know About**  
**New Guinea Birds**

For the past 30 years, Dr. Diamond has been carrying out ornithological exploration of the tropical island of New Guinea. The moist forests of New Guinea are not only home to such avian wonders as the birds of paradise and bowerbirds but to one of the world's most interesting people (about 1,000 different languages and equally diverse cultures). Most New Guineans were until recently stone-age hunters and farmers, with an encyclopedic knowledge of local birds, other animals and plants. Dr. Diamond will discuss some of their remarkable discoveries about their own birds.


**ID Workshop: Kimball Garrett**

**Next meeting: September 13, 1994. No meetings in July or August.**

## F I E L D T R I P S

**B**efore 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**

**Friday, June 3** — From  Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. This 30-hour trip will go southwest to the San Juan Seamount, an 11,000 foot underwater peak which rises from the 2,000 fathom deep ocean floor. Leaders **Richard Webster** and **Mitch Heindel**. Call Audubon House for reservations.

**Sunday, June 5** — **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.

**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, etc. Trip ends Sunday

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