

# WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

## THE PARROT PROJECT

Kimball L. Garrett



*Lilac-crowned Parrot*

by Kimball L. Garrett

**A**ny birder or even non-birding resident in the greater Los Angeles region is perfectly (painfully?) aware that parrots are a regular part of our urban and suburban avifauna. Escaped parrots have occurred around Los Angeles as long as people have kept and imported parrots as pets. With the vast human population explosion in the region during this century, two things have promoted and

sustained the establishment of feral parrot populations: the ever-increasing number of imported and captive bred parrots, each of which is a potential escapee, and the planting of an astonishing variety of exotic trees and shrubs which provide food, shelter and nest sites for escaped parrots. Several species of parrots and parakeets have escaped and survived in sufficient numbers to establish reproductive popula-

tions. Though unwelcome in the sense that exotic species can potentially have severely negative impacts on our native birds, the parrots have fortunately shown little tendency to move beyond the urban/suburban landscape into our native habitats.

Much of what we don't know about our populations of parrots and parakeets is due to their retiring habits, particularly when nest-

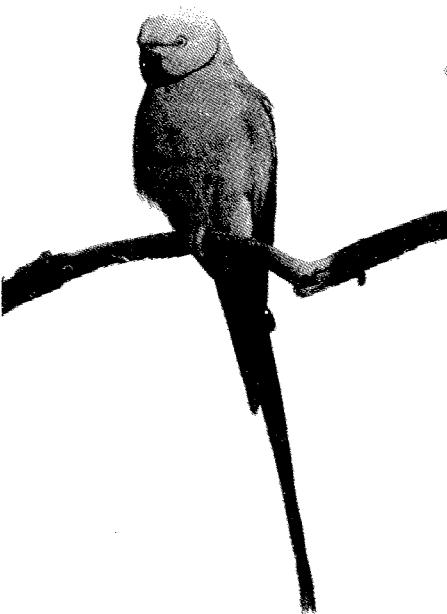
ing. Although commuting, pre-roosting and socializing parrots can be noisy and conspicuous to a fault, these same birds often clam up (and blend in amazingly well) when foraging during the day. Nesting parrots are quite secretive, and nest sites are usually inaccessible. But much of what we don't know is due to an apathetic attitude from birders: the same birder who will go to great lengths to study tertial fringe differences in Palearctic stints or call note subtleties in warblers or flycatchers will simply dismiss a free-flying parrot as "some stupid green thing that came out of a cage." Birders should realize that although there are dozens of parrot species that are noted as escapees, there are only about eight to ten species that appear to have established significant populations, and none of these are terribly difficult to identify.

Published information on Southern California's feral parrots is scanty. Some existing references are included at the end of this article. It is clear that if we want to learn more about the identity, population sizes, trends, distribution and habitat requirements of our local feral parrots, we are going to have to do some field work. I propose that a good start would be for local birders to record information each and every time they encounter wild parrots, and submit this information on a regular basis to "parrot central," which, not coincidentally, is me, at the Natural History Museum. Many of you have already seen the parrot sighting data sheet that is reproduced with this article, and some of you have been regularly submitting your sightings (a great big thank you to those who have cooperated!). With the assistance of Annie Lin, a student at Alhambra High School, I have begun a preliminary analysis of the sightings already submitted, but we need much more cooperation to paint a more complete picture. ■

*Kimball L. Garrett has been Ornithology Collections Manager at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County since 1982. He contributes to the Western Tanager ad nauseam and spends his spare time maundering, looking at parrots and other birds.*

Sharon L. Milder

*Rose-ringed Parakeet*



## So here is how YOU can help:

- Photocopy the data form accompanying this article; you may write to me or to Audubon House for additional data forms. Give forms to any friends, neighbors or co-workers who might be interested in helping out.
- Fill out as much of the requested information as possible EACH AND EVERY TIME you see wild parrots in the greater Los Angeles area. If you see the same birds regularly, you may fill out one form and show the date span on that form, but fill out a new form if you obtain new information on feeding, roosting, nesting, etc.
- On a regular basis, send these forms to:

Kimball L. Garrett  
Natural History Museum  
of Los Angeles County  
900 Exposition Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90007

## Additional Reading

Froke, J. B. 1981. Population, movements, foraging and nesting of feral *Amazona* parrots in southern California. MS thesis, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA.

Garrett, K. L. 1986. Southern California's exotic birds. *Terra* 24:5-11.

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Hall, L. A. 1988. Habitat variables which influence the dissemination and colonization of introduced psittacines in southern California. MS thesis, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

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Johnston, R. F. and K. L. Garrett. 1994. Population trends of introduced birds in western North America. Pp. 221-231 in J. R. Jehl, Jr. and N. K. Johnson, eds., *A century of avifaunal change in western North America. Studies in Avian Biology* No. 15.

Smith, P. W. and S. A. Smith. 1993. An exotic dilemma for birders: the Canary-winged Parakeet. *Birding* 25:426-430.

# DATA SHEET FOR FERAL PARROT SIGHTINGS LOS ANGELES REGION

I am seeking information on the identity, distribution, movements, feeding, ecology and nesting behavior of feral (non-native) populations of parrots, parakeets and their relatives as part of an ongoing study of exotic bird species in Southern California. Target species, for which there is already some evidence of viable feral populations, are the following:

NAME	OTHER "TRADE" NAMES	NAME	OTHER "TRADE" NAMES
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	"Ring-necked Parakeet"	Yellow-chevronned Parakeet <i>Brotogeris chiriri</i>	"Canary-winged Parakeet" (part)
Mitred Parakeet <i>Aratinga mitrata</i>	"Mitred Conure"	Yellow-headed Parrot <i>Amazona oratrix</i>	"Yellow-headed Amazon" "Double Yellow-head"
Red-masked Parakeet <i>Aratinga erythrogenys</i>	"Cherry-headed Conure"	Red-crowned Parrot <i>Amazona viridigenalis</i>	"Green-cheeked Amazon" "Mexican Red-head"
Black-hooded Parakeet <i>Nandayus nenday</i>	"Nanday Conure"	Lilac-crowned Parrot <i>Amazona finschi</i>	"Lilac-crowned Amazon" "Finsch's Amazon"
Canary-winged Parakeet <i>Brotogeris versicolurus</i>	"White-winged Parakeet" "Beebee Parakeet"		

Many additional species might be encountered in the "wild," including, but not limited to, the following: Sulfur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*), Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), Budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), Eastern Rosella (*Platycercus eximius*), lovebirds (*Agapornis*, spp.), macaws (*Ara*, spp.), Blue-crowned Parakeet (= "Blue-crowned Conure," *Aratinga acuticaudata*), Patagonian Conure (= "Burrowing Parakeet," *Cyanoliseus patagonus*), Gray-cheeked Parakeet (*Brotogeris pyrrhopterus*). Information on these and any other free-flying species is also sought.

#### RETURN DATA SHEETS TO:

Kimball L. Garrett; Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County; 900 Exposition Blvd.; Los Angeles, CA 90007.

#### DATA SHEET FOR FERAL PARROTS AND PARAKEETS, LOS ANGELES REGION (fill out new data sheet for each separate observation)

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

LOCALITY (be as exact as possible; give intersection or other landmarks) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SPECIES (or group if not identified to species, e.g. "amazon, spp.") List all species if a mixed flock; give numbers of individuals.

Species	Number	Exact Count?	ID Certain?
1. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
2. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
3. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

#### ACTIVITY

<input type="checkbox"/> Perched	On what? _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Flying	Compass direction? _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeding	Food type? _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Roosting	In what? _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Nesting	Describe in detail on attachment _____

Please write additional notes, descriptions, etc., on attachment; include photos if available.

*James F. Clements*

## PERSONAL HIGH

by James F. Clements



**W**hat is your favorite bird?" If I've heard that question once, I've heard it a thousand times during the course of a 50-year birding career. As Jimmy Durante would have so succinctly answered, "I've got a million of 'em."

The winter of 1937 was particularly severe in upstate New York, and in March huge blocks of ice came floating down the Hudson River after the weather turned warm. As a 10-year-old boy, I was crossing the river on the ferry from Tarrytown to Nyack when a large raptor (I later learned was an Osprey) lifted off an ice flow carrying a large fish and flew slowly right over my head. Moments later an even larger bird—all black with a glistening white head and tail—appeared from nowhere and dive-bombed the Osprey, causing it to drop its prey. I watched spellbound as the intruder swooped down and caught the fish before it hit the water. I was hooked—my first Bald Eagle!

From the age of 10 it has been one long, wonderful life with the birds. Confucius said, "Life is a journey, not a destination," and that has more or less been my philosophy about birding ever since. World War II, with its opportunity to travel (at the expense of the government) gave me a wonderful opportunity to study pelagic birds for two years on the high seas and only whetted my appetite for more. And after completing my studies at the University of Minnesota, the Korean War intervened with more travel and more birding. It didn't

matter where they sent me—there were always birds around.

One of my most memorable highs came in 1978 when my brother and I spent two weeks in a remote swamp in southwestern Cuba and rediscovered a bird thought to be extinct for over 60 years—the elusive Zapata Rail.

In retrospect, my major birding highs have usually been with compatible birding friends. My 1989 trip to India with Arnold Small, Bob Pann and Larry and Pam Sansone, where we had an Ibisbill and a Wall Creeper in the scope at the same time, was a mind blower. And how can I ever forget Clyde Bergman disappearing next to me while wading back to our anchored ship in the Philippine Sea—and then watching him calmly throw \$5,000 worth of Nikon equipment overboard when Lee Jones announced that his 500mm lens had salt water in it!

Even today I have to smile at the memory of Alec Forbes-Watson stepping back to take a photograph in a primordial swamp in Madagascar and disappearing up to his neck in Mesozoic muck. Even the odor of the affair still lingers in my mind—yet another high, and we missed our target bird, the Sakalava Rail (like the Zapata Rail, another notorious skulker, this one not recorded since 1929).

My fund-raising efforts in 1989 to help complete the Ralph Schreiber Bird Hall at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, during which I traveled over 250,000 miles and birded 25 countries, resulted in a world record 3,641 species sighted (all seen) in a

single calendar year. This, coupled with my work on *Birds of the World: A Check List* (first published in 1974), has helped keep me on a birding "high" for the past 20 years.

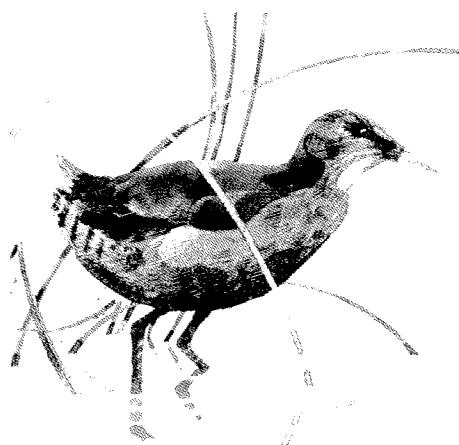
But above it all, my most memorable high came on a pelagic trip off Monterey, California several years ago. A Streaked Shearwater, rare in our waters and a life bird for almost everyone on board, had obligingly circled the boat several times.

One particularly enthusiastic birder turned to her companion and lamented, "I just knew it! A life bird... and I left my Clements at home."

That's going to be a tough high to beat! ☺

*James F. Clements has been an avid bird watcher since he was 10 years old. He is the author of Birds of the World: A Check List, now in its fourth edition. A Southern California resident since 1952, Jim has birded most of the world, and his current life list (all seen) stands at 6,659 species.*

### *Zapata Rail*



# Oops!

Computers are wonderful tools. I especially like word processing software which make tasks like writing articles for the *Western Tanager* much simpler. The spell check feature in such software helps to reduce the number of spelling mistakes to almost nil. If such software were commonly available back in the days when I was the editor of the *Tanager*, the number of typographical errors would have been held down to an almost acceptable magnitude.

With all this wonderful computer power at our fingertips, it shouldn't surprise me that when a mistake is made today, it is a deucey. I was

however taken aback when I opened the July-August issue of the *Tanager* to find that in the book review of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Monterey County*, Maunder (?) County had been substituted for Monterey County. This was done with great consistency to all 13 mentions of Monterey County including the title! It didn't take long to figure out what had happened. If you do a spell check in WordPerfect, the word **Monterey** is not recognized and the very first alternative word suggested by the computer is **maunder**.

I had to look it up because I didn't even know such a word existed. It means to wander aimlessly. This was a terrible choice of words. If you read the book review you'd

know that the people who did 3,561 hours of field work to complete this atlas did not maunder. My sincerest apologies to the atlases and especially the editors, Don Roberson and Chris Tenney, for the terrible slander on their wonderful county. One good thing is that, unlike during my tenure as the editor when typos were all my fault, we can blame this one on the computer.

One other thing: I've written another book review which appears in this issue of the *Tanager*. It is on *The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas*. I'm almost afraid to look. I sure hope "Marin" didn't turn out to read "Moron!"

—Fred Heath

## A Bird Finding Guide To Alaska

A Book Review by Jean Brandt

Nick Lethaby, Author

If you spend all of your non-birding time thinking about, reading about, talking about places to go birding, this book is an absolute must when you plan a trip to Alaska. Even if you are taking one of the excellent birding tours offered by the many professional tour groups, you should plan some extra time in or around Anchorage on your own.

Remember, there are birds everywhere — and they live in the midst of the most spectacular scenery and magnificent abundance of mammals that North America has to offer. To go to Alaska and *not* see caribou, bears, sheep, otters, whales, etc., etc., would be nigh unto a sin.

Our 49th state is an easy place to bird. You can drink the water, eat the food, speak the language, drive on the right side of the road and fly anywhere you can't drive. It is also an expensive place to bird so if you can get a couple of friends to go

along to share the cost, so much the better.

This book is a valuable resource. It is divided into three main parts: planning your visit, site descriptions and species accounts. The site descriptions of all of the major and most of the lesser-known birding locations in Alaska give directions, expected birds and rarities, how to get there, where to stay and whom to contact. This information is cru-

cial to anyone planning a trip on their own and is not available anywhere else. Nick Lethaby has collected data from many sources all over the state and collated it into a very practical and useful format.

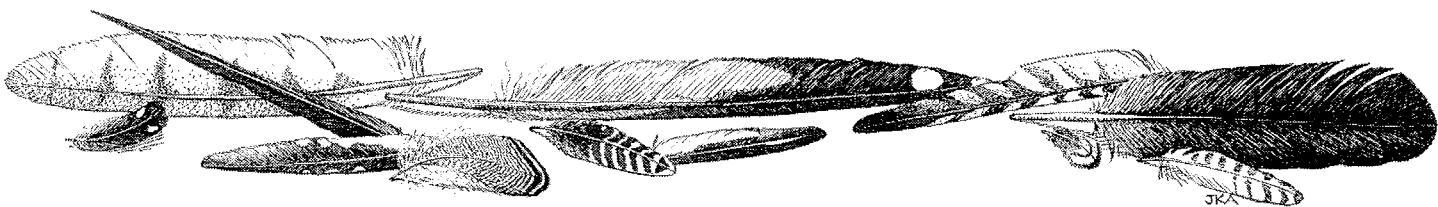
The only things missing, and something I hope he adds to the next edition, are bar graphs. I realize that the peak birding is between 15 May and 15 June in the far north, but I sure would like to know what is to be expected in fall, in winter, in early spring.

I fervently wish that there were books as thorough as this one on all of the areas we birders visit. I can't recommend this one highly enough.

*A Bird Finding Guide to Alaska* may be purchased from the LAAS Bookstore for \$14.95. □



Jean Brandt



# A CLOSER LOOK

by Kimball L. Garrett

In a relatively short period, the Mitred Parakeet (or "Mitred Conure") has risen from obscurity in the Los Angeles area as a rarely seen escapee to its current status as perhaps the most numerous and widespread parrot in the region. There are few local reports of this species prior to the 1980s, and the summary of exotic birds in Southern California by Bill Hardy in 1973 does not mention this species.

It is possible that small populations of this species have been overlooked in the past. Not overlooked in the sense of undetected (how can one fail to detect such a noisy bird?), but rather by being lumped into that useless catch-all category of "unidentified green parrot."

There are several related species in the genus *Aratinga* which can easily be confused with the Mitred Parakeet, and at least one of these, the Red-masked Parakeet (*Aratinga erythrogenys*), is frequently seen in the wild in the Los Angeles region.

The largest populations of Mitred Parakeets appear to be in the beach communities (e.g., Zuma Canyon, Pt. Dume, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, San Pedro and Long Beach), in portions of the L.A.

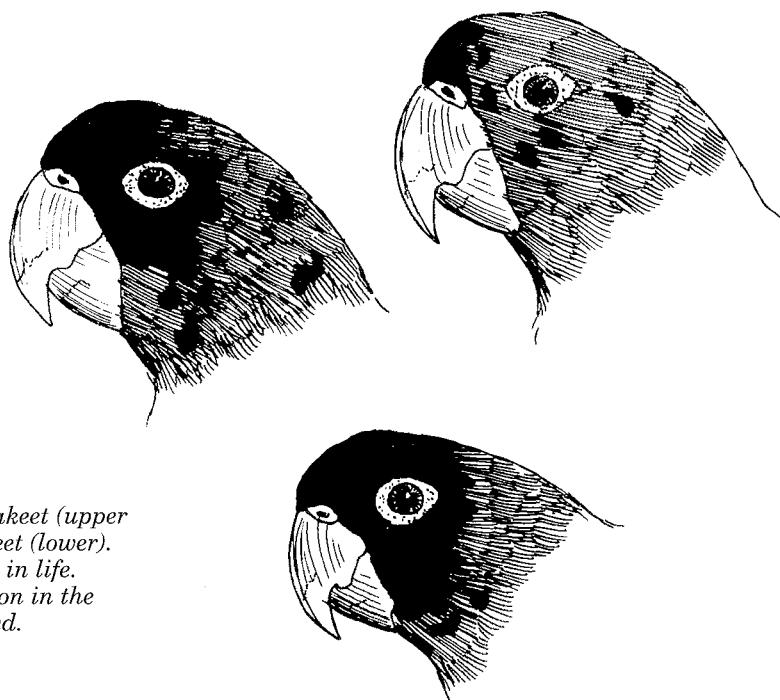
## Mitred Parakeet

*Aratinga mitrata*

Basin (West Los Angeles, downtown area) and in the San Gabriel Valley (e.g., Arcadia). The total number of birds in the region is probably on the order of several hundred (but not "several hundred **thousand**," as erroneously printed in the Johnston and Garrett paper cited in the lead article!).

Mitred Parakeets are big, stocky *Aratinga*, considerably larger and heavier than a Mourning Dove but

sharing the characteristic of a long, pointed tail. The bill is quite heavy and pale flesh in color. In plumage they're a rather dark olive green throughout, with lighter yellow-olive on the undersides of the flight feathers. There is a conspicuous whitish ring of bare skin around the eye and variable red markings on the forehead and face. Normally the red is solid only on the forehead (where darker and duller),



Head patterns of Mitred Parakeet (upper two) and Red-masked Parakeet (lower). Areas shown in black are red in life. Note the considerable variation in the amount of red found in Mitred.

forecrown and down around the eye, with additional sparse red flecks elsewhere on the face, neck and chest. In some birds the red coalesces to form a nearly solid red forehead, crown and face. There is a touch of red on the marginal wing coverts in many birds. Younger birds have more restricted red, often limited to just a few flecks on the face.

Mitreds are told from the similar Red-masked Parakeet (known to aviculturists as the "Cherry-headed Conure") by the following characters: (1) Mitreds are about 10% larger in linear measurements, and considerably heavier; (2) the Red-masked shows considerable red at the bend of the wing and on the outer underwing coverts, noticeable when the bird is at rest or in flight; Mitred shows just a touch of red at the bend of the wing and none on the coverts; (3) the cheeks are more extensively and solidly red in Red-masked; (4) the green of the body plumage is slightly darker and more olive in Mitred, brighter in Red-masked.

The calls of the Mitred Parakeet are loud and — let's not mince words — obnoxious. Most commonly heard is a loud, harsh and somewhat nasal "ehh ehh ehh;" also given is an upslurred whistle. Red-masked typically gives a rasping upslurred note with a slight break in the middle; it does not give the harsh "ehh..." call of the Mitred.

Observers who encounter these *Aratinga* parakeets should also keep in mind that Red-fronted

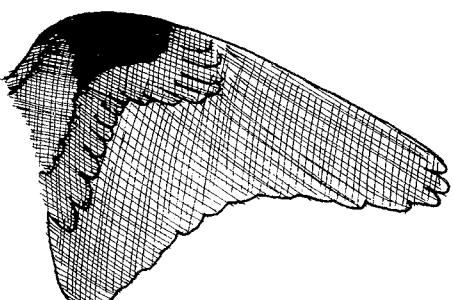
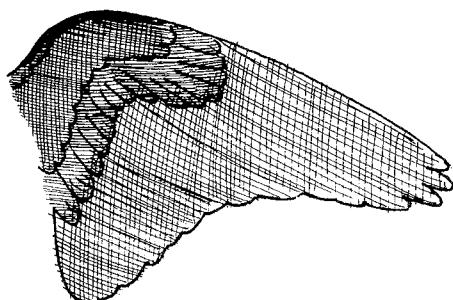
*Underwing patterns of Mitred Parakeet (upper) and Red-masked Parakeet (lower). The areas shown in black are red in life, the remaining areas are yellowish-olive.*

Kimball L. Garrett



*Mitred Parakeet (Aratinga mitrata) at Pt. Fermin Park, San Pedro, 4 July 1994.*

(*A. wagleri*), White-eyed (*A. leucophthalmus*) and Green (*A. holochlora*) parakeets are all possible as escapees in the region; all are similar to the Mitred and Red-masked, but show more restricted red. Also, the Blue-crowned Parakeet (*Aratinga acuticaudata*) is a fairly frequent escapee in our area. See Forshaw and Cooper's *Parrots of the World* or various Neotropical field guides for the identifying characters of these species. □



## WESTERN TANAGER

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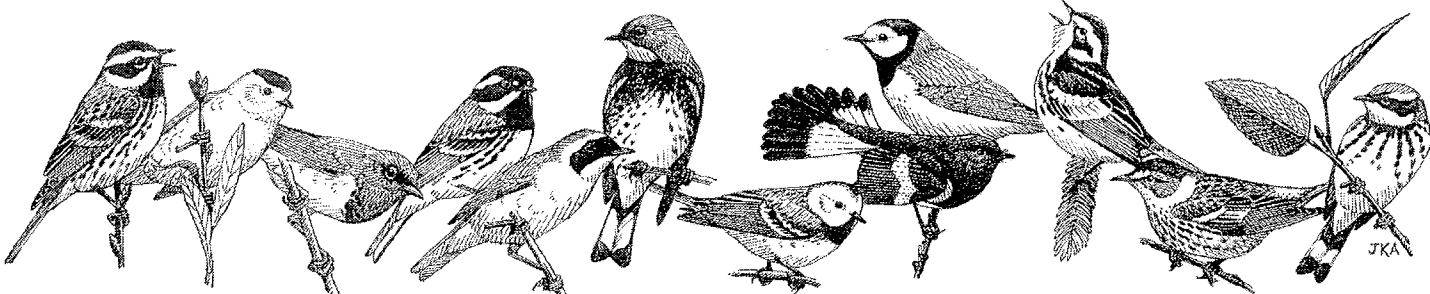
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# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodkin

**S**eptember is time to start checking for vagrants again. From the still-broiling desert oases to the coastal hotspots (hot for birds if not for temperatures) to the ocean waters off our coast, birders will be fanning out, studying the expected while they hope for the unexpected. For those new to our hobby, most of the good areas are listed in *Where Birders Go In Southern California*, by Henry E. Childs, Jr., available at the LAAS Bookstore.

Please remember to document any rare or unusual sighting by photograph, if possible, and by writing down a complete description of what you see — not of the picture in the field guide. Fall is a most challenging time when birds have many confusing plumages — some of which are not in the guides — so be as thorough as possible. Also tell as many birders as possible as soon as possible, including a call to the numbers at the end of the column.

This report covers late May though late July — from the end of spring migration, through most of the breeding season to the beginning of fall migration — so we have quite a spread of interesting sightings.

Totally unexpected (and inexplicable) was a **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** seen off Bodega Bay on 17 July (Rich Stallcup *et al.*).

A **White Pelican** was seen resting on a sand bar just west of the 90 Freeway in Ballona Creek on 10 July (Kathy Wilson), and a **Tricolored Heron** was found in Upper Newport Bay on 21 June (John

Fox). A breeding plumaged **Rufous-necked Stint** was found at McGrath State Park on 29 June (Brad Sillasen), and two **Ruddy Ground-Doves** were still at Furnace Creek as of 22 May (Roy Poucher).

A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** and three **Chimney Swifts** were in Santa Anita Canyon on 2 June (Mike San Miguel and Tom Wurster). An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was calling from the same group of eucalyptus trees in Zuma Canyon that sheltered a successful breeding pair last year on 13 July (Hank Brodkin), and a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was found in McGrath State Park on 28 May (Walter Wehtje).

A **White-eyed Vireo** was at Galileo Hill, eastern Kern County, on 28 May (Jon Fisher), and a **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Butterbredt Springs, also in eastern Kern County, on the 27th (Matt Heindel).

Warbler reports include a **Golden-winged** in Banning Park on 27 May (Peter Barnes), a **Northern Parula** at Vincent Gap in the San Gabriels on 25 June (Mitch Heindel), one **Magnolia** at Furnace Creek on 28 May (Brian Daniels) and another at Harbor Park on 30 May (MiH), a female **Black-throated Gray/Hermit** hybrid nesting with a **Black-throated Gray** at Charlton Flat (Kimball Garrett), an **Ovenbird** in Jawbone Canyon on 23 May (Bruce Broadbooks) and another at Butterbredt Springs on 27 May (MaH), and a **Hooded** on Galileo Hill on 28 May (JF). Several **Yel-**

**low-breasted Chats** were singing near Hansen Dam on 28 June in likely habitat for breeding (Cosmo Bloom).

A female **Scarlet Tanager** was reported from Banning Park on 25 June (MiH), and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Ridgecrest Community College on 18 May (Phil Davis). Two or three **Black-chinned Sparrows** were singing on territory in burn habitat in the Santa Monica Mountains (Hank & Priscilla Brodkin). An **Indigo Bunting** was in Harbor Park on 27 June (MiH), and one was in lower Santa Anita Canyon on 17 July (MSM). A **Blue Grosbeak** was reported from Palos Verdes on 27 June (Lee Lockie). Four male and one female **Great-tailed Grackles** were seen at El Dorado Nature Center on 31 May (Gayle Hightower), and a **Common Grackle** was at Panamint Springs on 28 May (Scott & Linda Terrill).

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 Brodkin**

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

Or call **David Koeppel** at (818) 784-0425.

# The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas

by W. David Shuford

In the last issue of the *Tanager*, a review of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Monterey County* was presented. Although *The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas* was published at about the same time, field work for the Marin County effort was carried out much earlier (during 1976-78 and in 1982). Marin was by far the first atlas project in western North America, and it is good to finally see the results of that early effort.

Marin, being a somewhat small California county, was divided into smaller blocks than the 5 kilometer squares defined by the UTM grid used by Monterey and other California atlases. The Marin Atlas used the 7.5 minute U.S. Geological Survey maps and divided them into 24 blocks. The Los Angeles County Atlas will use these same maps divided into six blocks. Thus, four Marin County blocks are comparable to a single L.A. County block (which is close in area to a 5 km square). The size of the Marin County blocks resulted in a total of 221 blocks (as compared to 414 in L.A. County).

The amount of time spent on this

*Fred Heath and Kimball Garrett find nesting Western Wood-Pewee at Charlton Flat, June 1994.*



Jean Brandt

A Book Review by Fred Heath

project was only kept in 1982 when 92 observers logged over 2,800 hours. All blocks were covered, with only a very few deemed to have had unsatisfactory coverage. Excluding night birds, it was felt that evidence was found for 90-95% of the breeding birds in each block. The breeding records which covered 157 species breeding (143 of these were confirmed) in Marin County broke out as follows:

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE	% OF RECORDS
Confirmed	32.6
Probable	34.0
Possible	33.4

Because of the relatively small size of the blocks, the somewhat low percentage of confirmed breeding evidence (40% for Monterey, for example) did not adversely affect the overall picture of most species' distributions when the maps were complete.

The Marin Atlas has chapters of introductory material, discussions on topography, geology and climate as they relate to bird distribution, an in-depth description of the various habitats, Marin County land use, methodology, discussion of results, a brief essay on using the atlas as a conservation tool and finally the heart of any atlas: the species accounts.

Each species account has the standard maps showing in which blocks breeding evidence was found as well as a brief rundown on breeding distribution of the species in Marin County. A section in each species account entitled Historical

Trends/Population Threats is of immense value and interest especially from a conservation perspective.

But the very best part of each species account is the section called *Ecological Requirements*. This is a carefully researched and thoroughly referenced detailed description of the requirements of each species known to breed in Marin County. These descriptions alone make this book a must in any serious California birder's library. The time needed to put this material together probably explains why this book took so long to be published after the field work was completed. It was worth waiting for.

Sixteen magnificent Keith Hansen drawings are sprinkled

throughout the book along with landscape and habitat drawings by Ane Rovetta and selected photographs (most with nearby nests) by Ian Tait. This somewhat novel visual presentation helps set this atlas apart from the usual atlas which has a drawing of each species with the species account (the Monterey Atlas for instance).

With both the Marin and the Monterey atlases now having been published, our appetites most certainly are whet to start on the Los Angeles County Atlas. To learn about how you can participate in this project, please don't miss our September meeting where you will be introduced to the fun and excitement of this wonderful learning experience.

The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas is available through the LAAS Bookstore for \$26.95.



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

**I**magine my surprise when I awoke one morning and discovered that I was suffering from **biophilia!** It seems I have a “natural affinity for natural environments” and there’s no known cure. According to Edward O. Wilson, biophiliacs like me have an “innate tendency to focus on life and life-like processes.” He postulates that you and I are not alone, that the world is loaded with folks who strongly feel the need to stay in touch with nature. This need may be satisfied by a walk through the woods, climbing a mountain, watching tadpoles in a creek, responding to flowers or lizards or butterflies or birds. Wilson, the eminent Harvard biologist who is known as “the father of biodiversity,” believes that biophilia may be hereditary, part of our genetic makeup. He reasons that humans have successfully evolved for two million years by adapting to natural environments and must have survived by acquiring a special ingrained sensitivity to the demands of their surroundings.

Over the millennia this closeness to nature has become innate, he says, woven into our DNA. So it’s not just elitist tree-huggers who are subject to biophilia but the whole human race. Why, then, are so many people apparently indifferent to the charms of Mother Earth? Because most people live in cities where the jobs are and contact with nature is limited. Only a minority has the desire or the means to seek out the wide open spaces, to take the kids camping, to feel the forest duff underfoot and to hear the unaccustomed silence.

Extinction is nothing new. Since life began, species have come and gone. But when humans arrived on the scene the rate of extinction increased phenomenally, especially in the last few centuries. The impact of 5.6 billion bodies today — doubling, we are told, in 40 years — on a non-expansive planet has extended the presence of humans to previously untouched territory. The frontier is gone. The fate of the flightless Dodo on the island of Mauritius — clubbed to extinction by hungry sailors in the 18th century — is small stuff compared to our present predicament. The dubious fruits of technology are scattered in all directions: radioactive wastes, pesticides, oil spills, greenhouse gases, ozone depletion, rainforest destruction, air and water pollution... Worldwide we are said to be losing one species every hour!

Our earth is losing biodiversity. Paving over habitat, chopping up wilderness, spraying chemicals willy-nilly: the global gene pool is being drastically reduced. It took billions of years to produce the DNA that enables living things to adapt to the environment, to interact with other organisms in the ecosystems and to generate evolutionary change. Accelerated extinction of species upsets the balance and

weakens the ecosystems that all life — including ours — depends upon. The ultimate destination of this environmental crisis, if unabated, is seen by many scientists as Doomsday, the end of all life. Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, says “Unless current trends are reversed, Americans will gradually be living in a nation that has fewer warblers and ducks and more starlings and herring gulls, fewer native wildflowers and more noxious weeds, fewer swallowtail butterflies and more cockroaches, smaller herds of elk and bigger herds of rats, less edible seafood, less productive croplands, less dependable supplies of pure fresh water, more desert wastes and dust storms, more frequent floods and more uncomfortable weather.” If we survive Ehrlich’s scenario, we will be living in a most forbidding circle of Dante’s Hell.

What does biophilia have to do with biodiversity? If professor Wilson’s hypothesis is correct, biophilia may save our bacon. People will have to be educated, their latent biophilia stimulated and encouraged. We know that children react with great interest and excitement to animals. A class of kids on an environmental field trip has no problem understanding that the ducks and fish in the lake need unpolluted water and natural food to thrive. Children are our best hope for the future. As Wilson says, “Educate, educate, educate. Keep talking, keep pointing out, keep explaining, keep demonstrating — show the wonderful beauty and promise of the natural world.”



## FIELD TRIPS

Continued from page 12

**Saturday, September 17 — Lake Palmdale.** Jonathan Alderfer will lead a select few on a tour of this restricted and little-birded bit of L.A. County. Sign-up by phone with Audubon House. *Limit 10.*

**Sunday, September 18 — Mt. Pinos Vicinity.** Leader Shirley Rubin. Hummers, mountain woodpeckers, Hermit Warbler, etc. Bring a lunch. Anticipate the elements. 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 junction of Cuddy Valley Rd. and Mil Potrero Hwy. Park in obvious dirt clearing. Rain cancels.

**Sunday, September 18 — Van Norman Reservoir.** Leader Dustin Alcala. Riparian and grassland habitat surround the reservoir and adjacent ponds. Take the

### 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.

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, September 25 — Chatsworth Reservoir.** Leader Dustin Alcala. Migrants will augment the resident birds in this grassland/oak scrub habitat surrounding the sump. 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.

 **Saturday, October 1 —**  
Anacapa Island to Santa Rosa Island. We will look for the American Oystercatcher at Anacapa Island and Long-tailed Jaegers and Skuas. Leaders Arnold Small, Herb Clarke and Mitch Heindel.

**Saturday, October 1 — Franklin Canyon.** Leader Steven Saffier. Franklin Canyon is between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Over 100 species of birds have been documented in the chaparral, lakeside and oak/pine woodland habitats of the canyon. From the 101 Fwy, take Coldwater Canyon S into the hills. Immediately after Mulholland Dr. merges from the west with Coldwater, make a 90° right turn onto Franklin Canyon and continue to the nature center. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the parking lot past the gated drive on the left.

**Sunday, October 2 — San Diego Area.** Leader Nick Freeman. A good portion of the morning will be spent at Pt. Loma. Other areas may include the Tijuana Marsh and nearby farm fields. Take the 5 Fwy S about three miles past Route 52 to the Clairemont Dr. offramp. Head W into the small lot adjacent to the Mission Bay Info Center. Meet at 8:00 A.M. east of the kiosk. Bring a lunch. Send \$5 fee to LAAS.

**Sunday, October 9 — Whittier Narrows.** Leader Ray Jillson. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See September 11 write-up for details.

 **Sunday, October 23 — Santa Rosa Island.** Some birds may be seen on the 3.5 hr. trip to the island, but this is not a birding boat trip; we will cruise quickly and directly to the island. Visitors should be agile and in good condition, as small shuttles may make for eventful landings. About 4 hours will be spent on Santa Rosa Island. Enjoy the shoreline and canyons or explore the marsh or interior on a ranger-led hike. The only other stand of Torey Pines is in San Diego, and the Endemic Island Fox is often seen. This is a new trip for LAAS and only recently accessed to the public, so we don't know what the bird life will be like. Food can be bought on the boat. Call National Park Service at (805) 658-5730 for an info packet. Write Island Packers at 1867 Spinnaker Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, (805) 642-1393 to reserve. Ask them to note LAAS affiliation. \$52 for adults, \$45 for children. The 65' boat will leave from Ventura Harbor at 7:00 A.M. and return about 6:00 P.M.

 **Sunday, October 23 —** From San Pedro on the R.V. *Vantuna* to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. In the past three years we've had five species of storm-petrels and a Brown Booby. Leaders Kimball Garrett and Jonathan Alderfer.

 **Friday Night, October 28 —** From Ventura on the M.V. *Vanguard*. Leaders Kimball Garrett and Arnold Small.

 **Saturday, November 12 —** From San Pedro on the R.V. *Vantuna* to Santa Barbara Island and beyond. Leaders Kimball Garrett and Arnold Small.

 **Friday Night, November 18 —** From Ventura on the M.V. *Vanguard*. Leaders Kimball Garrett and Mitch Heindel.

# EVENING MEETING

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

**September 13, 1994      Kimball Garrett and Fred Heath  
Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas**



Jean Brandt

**J**oin this dynamic duo as they unfold before your very eyes the secret of how to add excitement to your summer birding for the next five years while participating in this major worthwhile endeavor.

**October 11, 1994      Arnold Small  
Arctic and Antarctic — Poles Apart**

**S**ee a fascinating slide presentation of comparisons and contrasts between the Arctic and Antarctic regions and the birds and animals that inhabit them.

## 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 — call Audubon House for fees and additional information.**

**♪ Friday Night, September 2 —**  
From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. 30-hour trip will go NW from Ventura and W to the Continental Shelf. Hope to see fall

*Pterodromas* and tropicbirds, sperm whales, two species of beaked whales and orcas. Leaders **Arnold Small** and **Richard Webster**.

**Sunday, September 4 — Topanga State Park. Gerry Haigh** will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. 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, September 10 — Bolsa Chica. Leader Irwin Woldman.** Shorebirds, skimmers and a number of tern species likely. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the Bolsa Chica estuary parking lot on the east side of PCH. Take the 405 Fwy S to Goldenwest St., take this S to PCH, and turn right onto PCH. Don't miss the small parking lot for the Bolsa Chica Marine Preserve on your right. Some paid parking across the street at the beach may be required.

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**Sunday, September 11 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park.** Join ranger **Ray Jillson** to see songbirds, migrating raptors, resident cardinals, etc. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. Take the Peck Dr. exit S off the 60 Fwy in South El Monte (just W of the 605 Fwy). Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center.

*Continued on page 11*