

# WESTERN TANAGER



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Edna Alvarez

## REPORT FROM BAJA

# THE LAAS EXPEDITION OF APRIL 1994

by Dexter Kelly

I didn't have high hopes for a spring field trip to Baja. It wasn't the best time of year for rare migrants, especially shorebirds, and it might be too late for flowers. Besides, I hadn't been through the area in two years, and I couldn't guess how much the land had been changed by rapidly increasing agricultural development. Would the same birds be there this time? Would the people I was guiding put up with the bad roads and unpredictable conditions in the back country?

At daybreak on Friday, we gathered at our jumping-off place, the Econolodge in La Mesa. There were ten of us in four vehicles, all high-clearance and with four-wheel drive, just in case it got rough. And we had CB radios for easy communication.

We crossed the border at Tecate and headed east on Mexico 2. Just after leaving town, we had to drive around an overturned tractor trailer rig, an increasingly common sight in Baja these days. It made us all the more eager to get off the main road, which we did 17 miles further at La Rumorosa, turning south on the road marked "Parque de la Constitucion de 1857." We started kicking up dust and bouncing over ruts and gullies; this was where the real Baja begins!

After about five miles, by popular demand, I pulled over by the Chichi Hill across from the tungsten mine. This land is too close to the settlements to be good for birds — or so I thought. The pinyons and junipers were alive with birds: Bewick's Wren, Plain Titmouse,

White-crowned Sparrow, Western Kingbird and other common stuff; also Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Townsend's Warbler, flocks of Pinyon Jays and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. A surprise from the desert flew by — a White-winged Dove. Further up the road we made the first of several stops to check for Gray Vireos and found another desert bird: a Black-throated Sparrow, along with a flock of Chipping Sparrows and Black-throated Gray and Hermit Warblers.

But the next stop held the biggest surprise. Richard Hughes, a raptorophile, spotted a buteo heading north which, at first, looked like a Red-tailed Hawk. But the underside of its tail was white, with a black subterminal band. The underwing coverts and axillaries were dark, but the carpal patches were darker still. Flight feathers were light, with a very distinct dark edge on the trailing edge. When the wind gusts caused the bird to roll over on its side, we saw a large white patch at the base of the tail. The back appeared dark brown. Richard identified the bird as a Rough-legged Hawk and has so reported it to the *Euphonia*.

There has only been a single sight record Rough-legged Hawk in Baja, although the southern end of its winter range extends a few miles into Sonora and Chihuahua. Now there are two. And this was in early spring, not winter. We had been birding only for a couple of hours and already had found the "bird of the trip." But there was much more to come.

We continued on down the winding, sometimes bumpy dirt road, encountering only a couple of pickup trucks along the next ten miles or so. Finally we reached the Gray Vireo habitat, where the pinyon-juniper forest had an understory of dwarf oak bushes and was interspersed with round boulders projecting from the ground. I heard the singing male as we stopped and charged after it. The clever bird led us on, moving invisible from bush to tree to bush. We were a hundred yards from the road before the bird

showed itself well enough to be visually identified. Some could not keep up with our scramble, so not everyone saw this bird. But there were other attractions along the road: a single Red Crossbill and the seldom seen gray phase of the California Quail.

The way further south to Laguna Hanson led up a steep grade, eroded down to a rough bedrock by recent storms. As we drove up, it looked like a sheer cliff. Some of us were totally inexperienced in four-wheel driving. But we all made it, without breaking axles or even busting a tire, taking it slowly and carefully. Our slow pace enabled us to spot birds, among them a Gray Vireo. This one perched in the open for a couple of seconds, offering a view for all those who missed it before. At Laguna Hanson, we stopped by the shore to spot some ducks and saw Mountain Bluebird and Pygmy Nuthatch in the pine trees.

By now it was getting late, so we didn't stop on the way down from the Sierra to Ensenada, not even to look for Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Hussong's Ranch near Ojos Negros. We checked into the Travelodge in Ensenada and after a delicious seafood dinner, slept soundly in spite of all the noise coming from the bar.

The next morning we left early, by 6:30, to get to the next "hot spot" before the birds stopped singing. It was a long trip, half an hour south on Mexico 1, followed by an hour on the bone-jarring dirt road that leads to La Bocana, the mouth of Santo Tomás Canyon. This is a beautiful place, a long deep canyon with wil-



Edna Alvarez, Dexter and Elizabeth Kelly

lows and oaks, sparsely settled with several small *fincas* with olive groves, corn fields and a few cattle — what coastal San Diego County must have looked like a hundred years or more ago. On the way we stopped to look for Indigo Buntings, without success; the brushy meadow they had been singing in a few years before has been scoured out by the floods of winter 1993. But there were Hooded Orioles, a Yellow Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawks nesting on top of a power pole and, alas, a cowbird, a single male. A bobcat ran across the road in broad daylight.

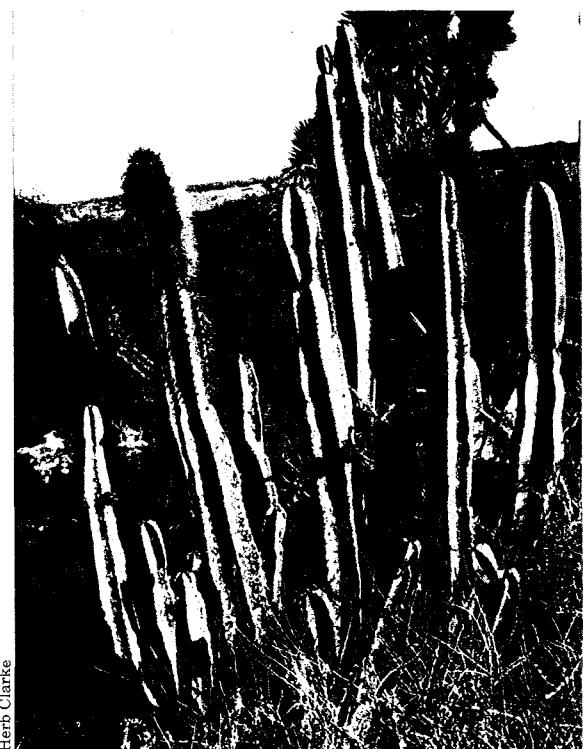
Our main goal was the thick willow forest just inland from the canyon mouth. Even though many of the trees had been cleaned out by the floods, the Bell's Vireos were still there. A male was singing inside the grove, but he was tiny, quick and evasive, just like his gray cousin in the mountains. It took some time for everyone to get a good look. More accommodating were a Solitary Vireo, Wilson's Warbler, Pacific-slope Flycatcher and a

lingering wintering Willow Fly-catcher. A pleasant surprise was a Black-chinned Sparrow in the farm garden on the slope across the road from the willow grove.

We had lunch on a bluff overlooking the beach at the mouth of the canyon. On nearby rocks were Wandering Tattlers and Surfbirds, some almost changed into alternate plumage. The beach had gulls, Caspian Terns and Black Turnstones. Pelicans and cormorants cruised offshore. A fine view up and down the coast; a great place to camp, someday.

But we were going to spend the night in San Quintín, some 90 miles to the south. So we had to get moving. Mexico 1 led through the village of Santo Tomás, up the south side of the canyon, over a rolling hilly plateau with huge vineyards and back into another river valley that marked the northern limit of the range of Baja Norte's only endemic bird, the Gray Thrasher. The intersection of the paved highway with the road up into the Sierra San Pedro Martir used to be the first good place to look for the thrasher. But now the desert plants have been displaced by cultivated fields, so we had to head up the road to

#### Old Man Cactus



Herb Clarke

San Telmo to get to the desert habitat, which ranged up steep slopes. A thrasher was spotted from the road; we ran up the slope but the bird got away before most could get a look. We failed to find Xantus' Hummingbirds in the little village of San Telmo but were compensated by the appearance of real cowboys — *vaqueros* — on horseback, with ropes and chaps, an increasingly rare sight north of the border.

At San Quintín, we stayed right on the bay surrounded by open expanses of marshland and desert scrub. The place was the Old Mill, a motel for brant hunters that has recently become a popular resort serving fishermen who pursue yellowfin tuna during most of the months outside of brant season. The rooms were as bare and crude as when we stayed there almost twenty years ago, but the new owner has added a fancy bar and restaurant serving pretty good fresh-caught seafood.

The real advantage of the Old Mill was its access to the extensive marsh surrounding the San Quintín estuary. This is one of the largest and least-polluted marshes left on the entire coast of the Californias and harbors a healthy population of two birds endangered elsewhere: the Belding's Savannah Sparrow and the Light-footed Clapper Rail. Both were easy to find during a visit at dawn to the nearest stretch of marsh. The rails were calling from several spots, but we didn't step in to flush them, so they were only heard. Just as well. The sparrows jumped out of the *spartina* and perched on bushes for easy viewing. Gazing out over the marsh into the estuary, we spotted both Great and Little Blue Herons, along with Great and Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons, Marbled Godwits, various ducks and a few lingering Black Brant. There was also a distant Long-billed Curlew who looked so big

we thought it might be a bittern before we got a decent look. Moral: don't go to San Quintín without a scope!

But the main goal of the day lay to the south. So, after a big Mexican breakfast, we headed out along the rutted and bumpy farm roads to the paved highway. Heading south out of San Quintín, the road moved closer to the beach (or vice versa) before it climbed up on a high plateau and descended steeply into the canyon of El Rosario, the traditional "jumping off" place for Central Baja. For most of this century, the paved road ended here, and the rest of the way to the cape was over dirt roads. Now the paved road crosses the wide El Rosario wash and enters the central desert. We followed it as it snaked in and out of the long Canada de los Aguajitos, where for the first time we saw the bizarre "Boojum Trees" or *cirios*, one of the most conspicuous of Baja's endemic plants. The place where the road finally crossed the Canada marked the northern limit of the giant Cardon cactus. It was there that we pulled over and parked.

The Canada de los Aguajitos offers a rich and accessible sample of desert plants, many of which were still in bloom. It is usually a good place to find the Gray Thrasher, but this day that bird was acting elusive. We heard the bird singing on the far side of the Canada and clambered in and out of the wash to chase it. It appeared and disappeared before most of us could see it. We thought we found it again, but it was only a mockingbird, bouncing around and calling, causing endless confusion. This was a desert first for me, though an irritating one. Finally, the thrasher made a brief, shy appearance before disappearing for good. Never had this bird been so hard to find here. We were consoled by the abundance of *Pontilis California* Gnatcatchers buzzing in the bushes on the north-facing slopes and the abundant flowers in the side canyon. A Black-chinned Sparrow put in a surprise appearance, and there were plenty of Verdins calling.

We had seen Harris Hawks soaring far up in the sky during our hunt for the thrasher. While eating lunch, we noticed them moving in closer, low over the hills on the far side of the canyon. After lunch, those who did not choose to take a well-earned siesta moved out into the countryside to look for both birds and plants. We found a Harris Hawk perched on the end of a branch of a Cardon cactus, the classic pose for this bird. It was a small one, dull in color, probably a juvenile. Soon it was joined by a larger bird, probably its parent. Then another hawk came in. We had an entire family group of Harris Hawks on one cactus, close enough to study their rich bay and black color patterns. What a sight! Did we have a camera? Of course not. I ran back to rouse the others but when we got back only one bird was left. No matter — the scene may repeat in this area in following springs if nothing happens to the habitat. This was certainly a great trip for hawks! We had been seeing Northern Harriers all along the coast, Ospreys near the motel, and here, after the Harris Hawks, a Merlin was spotted.

On the way back to the motel, before entering San Quintín, we turned left down a side road that led to the beach near the Cielito

Lindo Motel and Restaurant. This road is also paved and is lined by most of its length with shady poplars and tamarisks. The dark places on the road appeared to be the shadows of the trees but many turned out to be huge, deep potholes. Sometimes paved roads in Mexico can be more dangerous than the dirt ones; all should be driven with foresight and caution. We made it to the beach without breaking an axle. The dunes here were high, extensive, beautifully sculpted and constantly shifting. At first, it appeared that any attempt by Snowy Plovers to nest here would be buried by sand, but we soon saw one scurrying through the parking lot and another on the flats just inland from the dunes. Least Terns chattered overhead, and from the dunes' summit we spotted a pod of six Gray Whales spouting not far beyond the break zone. As the sun faded beneath the waves, we repaired to the Cielito Lindo for a delicious feast of cracked crab. My wife and I were graciously treated by the other members of the expedition. Thanks again, folks!

This might have marked the end of a perfect trip but there was an encore. On the way back to the Old Mill, we spotted what appeared to be Burrowing Owls flying off in the

headlight beam. These ghostly apparitions were not seen by those in the back of the caravan. The next morning, on the way home, we stopped by the historic "English Cemetery," a relic of the days when San Quintín was settled by immigrants from England. There are virtually no English graves left in the cemetery, which is the favored resting place for San Quintín's more affluent recently defunct citizens. It is situated on the south shore of the estuary, at a location that offers good views of the marsh and shorebird flats, but to reach it we had to drive through the city dump, navigating around the exposed remains of local automobiles. There weren't many birds to see on the water or on the shoreline at this season, but perched on top of several car wrecks were pert little Burrowing Owls in full daylight view of all.

Well, that was it for this trip. I will probably go back to San Quintín in September — for hawks especially — and try to explore the Juarez on some late fall or winter weekends, weather permitting. I won't make it to the Sierra San Pedro this year but may try next summer if I have the time. Other birders will, I hope. There's so much to discover in this still rich relatively unknown land just below our border. ■

## Campers! Birders! Fellow Travelers!

### The Mystery of the Missing Plovers

**H**ave you ever seen a Mountain Plover during August, September or October? Most plovers breeding in northern Colorado the last couple of years have pulled out of the breeding area in late July. Yet, they haven't arrived on the California wintering grounds in appreciable numbers until early November.

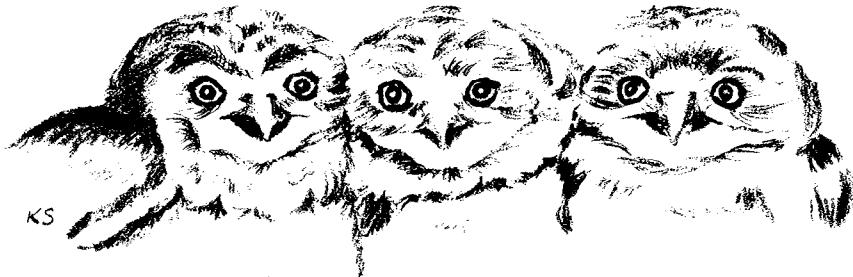
We suspect they are lazing around in the southwest in disturbed sites such as freshly plowed

ground or on sites dominated by very short grasses. (We have a few reports of birds on sod farms in the Albuquerque vicinity.)

If you have any records of appreciable numbers of this species somewhere during this time interval, biologists at the National Biological Survey would like to know about them as this species has declined 63% in the last 25 years and is being considered for listing as Threatened or Endangered.



Please send any sightings (old or new) to Fritz Knopf, National Biological Survey, 4512 McMurry, Fort Collins, CO 80525. ■



# OPEN EYES

A Column for Young People

## Leaves

*from Audubon Adventures*

**H**ave you ever had a "tree friend" outside your window, or near the place where you wait for a bus, or in the park where you play ball? Perhaps it's a tree on which someone hung a rope swing or where you built a tree house.

Then you know that tree pretty well. But if you put your ear to the ground under it, you don't hear anything. If you run your hand over the trunk, you feel only the bark. If you look up into its leafy branches, there isn't much action. Is the tree really alive?

Yes! When you look up at the leaves, you may only see a tangle of green. Look again. Each leaf turns on its stem to face the sun so that it gathers all the light possible. The leaves hang along twigs that come off branches. *Here* is where the tree makes food. Hold up a leaf and you can see through it. Its thin skin lets in sunlight, which supplies energy to make food.

Inside each leaf is chlorophyll (*klor-o-fil*). This green chemical uses the sun's power to mix water with air, helping make sugar.

### Why do leaves change color?

Leaves contain other colors — or pigments — besides green, such as yellow and orange. But the chlorophyll is usually so strong during the summer that only the green is seen.

In fall, the leaves' work is done. The chlorophyll breaks down. Yellow and other colors appear.

Some colors, such as red, are not there at all in summer. But, in fall, several kinds of trees still have lots of sugar in their sap. This sugar appears in the leaves as bright red.

### Why do some trees drop their leaves in the fall?

Plants get rid of parts that are no longer useful.

The bright sunlight of summer grows weak in fall. Soon, very little water will flow up into the leaves and they will stop making food.

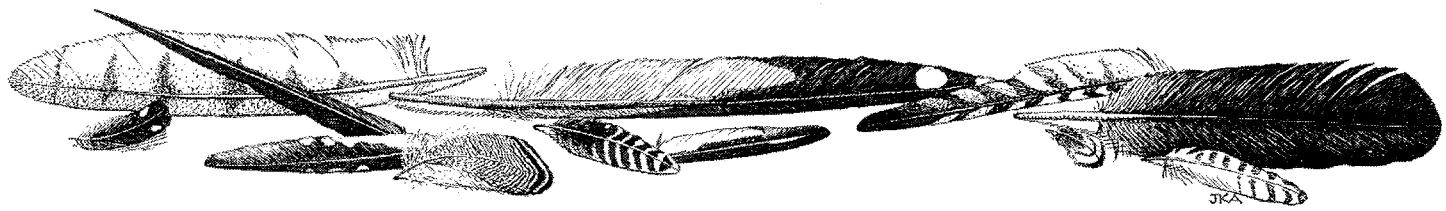
The stem of a leaf is held to the twig by strong cells. These connecting cells are like cement. But as the days become short and cool, the connecting cells break.

The winds of fall tug at the leaves. Some of them go swirling away in the wind. Others simply come loose and slowly drift to the ground.

**This is the story of what happens on the forest floor.** The millions and millions of leaves drift into piles on the ground. Thousands of other plants and animals live in this leaf litter. Fungi and bacteria begin to break down the dead leaves, which then become food for earthworms, pill bugs, millipedes and snails. What's left rots to form rich soil and nourish trees in the years to come.

Now is a good time to look at trees. Can you find any trees with brightly colored leaves? Do you know why they are so colorful? You can collect some leaves, write down which tree they came from, and next spring look on as the new leaves form. Will these leaves be different from the ones you have collected? Why?





## A CLOSER LOOK

by Kimball L. Garrett



Kimball L. Garrett

Two immature Roseate Spoonbills near Rockport, Texas, 15 April 1992

### ROSEATE SPOONBILL *Ajaia ajaja*

**B**irders spend an inordinate amount of time, energy and often money to see birds where they (the birds... and sometimes the birders) aren't supposed

to be. Out-of-range birds, whether "vagrants," "casual migrants," "post-breeding wanderers," "accidentals" or some other (usually undefined and imprecise) term, pro-

vide more birding excitement than most of us care to admit. For some, it is fashionable to downplay the scientific significance of vagrancy in birds — the thinking being that

these wanderers are merely geographic/demographic blips that prove little except that birds can make wrong turns with the best of us. Others might be equally guilty of overstating the importance of the study of vagrancy in birds — perhaps to justify as science the hobby of generating large species lists for a given region. Not surprisingly, reality probably lies somewhere between these points of view: there is much to be learned from the out-of-range wanderings of birds, but such knowledge is little more than a fringe topic of a complex body of information that makes up population biology.

One interesting question related to vagrancy in birds is this: what does it mean when a species stops showing up as a vagrant in a particular region? Why, for example, were there numerous records of Roseate Spoonbills, often in multiples, in California prior to the 1980s, but none since 1983? Spoonbills, almost always young of the year, turned up in Southern California (mostly at the Salton Sea) in at least 11 different years from 1951 to 1980. In some of those years there were flocks present, involving over 50 birds in 1973 and over 30 in 1977; during those two big flights, spoonbills even made it to the coast, as far north as Monterey County.

Since 1980 the California Bird Records Committee has reviewed (and accepted) only one Roseate Spoonbill record, a bird present at the south end of the Salton Sea in September of 1983. There's been nary a record since then (not counting a report that recently reverberated through the birding hotlines by an overzealous observer who found what turned out to be a Cattle Egret that had been dyed pink!).

Of the possible explanations for the recent dearth of spoonbill records, a few can be quickly dismissed. Observer coverage has certainly not decreased in the past ten years, so the lack of records must have more to do with the birds than the birders. It seems very unlikely that Roseate Spoonbills have "learned" not to straggle north any

more. And although the Salton Sea certainly has some dire ecological problems and an uncertain future, it cannot be argued that it has stopped attracting birds from western Mexico (numbers of Yellow-footed Gulls and Brown Pelicans at the Sea are at all time highs, Laughing Gulls remain common post-breeding visitors, and records of subtropical herons such as Tricoloreds and Little Blues appear to be increasing).

The spoonbill's closest relative at the Sea, the White-faced Ibis, seems never to have been more numerous than at present. However, one post-breeding visitor has decreased alarmingly in numbers: the Wood Stork. This, perhaps, suggests the root of the problem. The source populations of storks and spoonbills in western Mexico may have declined dramatically. Wood Storks moved regularly and in good numbers into Southern California after their Mexican breeding season, but in recent decades they have largely been restricted to the Salton Sea, and numbers there are now about one-tenth of what they were in the 1970s and early 1980s. This decline suggests that Mexican colonies aren't cranking out as many Wood Storks as they used to. The same is very likely the case for Roseate Spoonbills. Cut back the source of vagrants and — *voila!* — they cease to occur.

What do we know about the status and trends of Roseate Spoonbills in western Mexico? Very little, unfortunately. A recent note (Carmena and Danemann, *Western Birds* 25:158-162, 1994) describes a colony in Sinaloa, Mexico, that had 600 breeding pairs of spoonbills in 1988. This report provides hope that conservation awareness and appropriate management steps can preserve the west Mexican colonies of this species and reverse any declines that might have been occurring.

Having written the above, I fully expect a Roseate Spoonbill to turn up at the Salton Sea very soon. When you see it and get that out-of-breath rush from an out-of-range bird, you can thank me. ■

## WESTERN TANAGER

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*The Birds of South America, Vol. II, The Suboscine Passerines*, by Robert S. Ridgely and Guy Tudor, 1994, hardcover: \$85

This long-awaited tome encompasses over 1,000 species, with 54 color plates and descriptions of habitat, range, behavior, songs and distribution maps. Anyone with an interest in the Ovenbirds, Woodcreepers, Antbirds, Gnatcatchers, Tapaculos, Tyrant Flycatchers, Manakins and Cotingas of South America will certainly want to add this book to their library. Many species illustrated have never been pictured before.

*California Birds: Their Status and Distribution*, by Arnold Small, 1994, hardcover: \$55

Contains 336 color photographs of California's birds, chapters on the landform regions and climate relating to the ecology and distribution of this state's birds, including an annotated listing, ranges, seasons of occurrence, habitats and breeding status. This large book is not intended as a field guide, but does provide the current status of California's birdlife. A useful addition to one's library.

*The Birds of Santa Barbara County, California*, by Paul Lehman, 1994, soft cover: \$25

A fine work with much information on the results of a long-term study on the birds of mainland Santa Barbara County, California. Chapters include sections on topography and climate, habitats, ornithological history, bird migration, species accounts and an excellent section on bird-finding in the county of Santa Barbara. (Limited autographed copies available.)

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# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

**L**ike it or not, the environment is being dragged into the cauldron of hot-button politics. When the witch doctors of the ultra right deliver their revelations, the sins of their opponents include health reform, minority rights, feminism, secular humanism, homosexuality — and *environmentalism*. Whatever our political inclinations may be, we are all tagged with the scarlet "L." We're left-wing Liberals. Oliver North, hero of Iran Contra and candidate for Senator from Virginia, told a cheering audience recently, "Something is terribly wrong in a government that worries more about some *fish* than it does about hard-working families."

This contempt for endangered species is shared by the so-called "Wise Use" movement, the grassroots front for mining, oil, agribusiness and others. The Wise Users' leader has said, "Our goal is to destroy, to eradicate the environmental movement. We want to exploit the environment for private gain, absolutely." I suppose we must applaud his candor, if nothing else. It brings to mind the immortal words of former Interior Secretary, James Watt, in the early Reagan years. Speaking of environmentalists — and National Audubon in particular — he said, "They are political activists, a left-wing cult which seeks to bring down the type of government I believe in."

We are not just hearing the voices of a small fringe group here. Watt was speaking for the Administration at the time. Mainstream corporations are financing the Wise Use people who are promoting the

same greedy agenda. Cattlemen have been sponging on the government for years through below-cost grazing fees on public land. When Interior suggests increasing fees, they go charging into Washington and the increase never happens. Mine companies are clinging to the obsolete 1872 mining law that permits them to buy federal land at 19th Century prices and levies no tax on the lucrative ore. And so on. This is "the type of government [they] believe in:" one that provides a kind of socialism for the rich, a government that will not only stay off their backs but give them a boost.

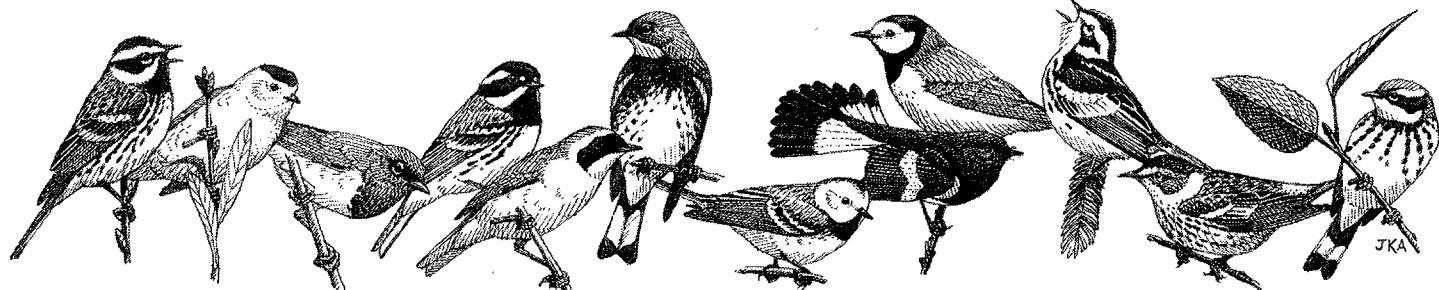
In the Lucas case, South Carolina's environmental regulations prevented a developer from building homes on a barrier island where hurricanes can destroy homes and lives. He sued the state, claiming that his property was being taken without compensation. He won his case before the U.S. Supreme Court. This set off a rash of "takings" lawsuits based on the Fifth Amendment's call for just compensation. Opponents of the Endangered Species Act insist that the government is taking their property when a listed species on their land prevents them from destroying the habitat. But wildlife and rare plants belong to all of us. Our health and safety are important to all of us. What entity beside government should protect the quality of our lives — the air, water, food and the integrity of ecosystems that nourish the soul? Can we depend on the benevolence of business and industry to regulate themselves for the public good?

Most of the progressive environ-

mental legislation of the '70s is at risk in Congress and state legislatures. The Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act are all lined up in the gunsights of the anti-environmental mafia. The Clinton Administration seems to be committed to compromise in a fashion that tries to appease all — but satisfies none. It is the embattled environmental community that stands staunchly in the way of those who would sell our natural treasures for short-term profit. We are the people who lobby, who write letters, who bring lawsuits, who spend our money and time selflessly. So we are labeled the enemy, we become the new Bolsheviks. But we are not revolutionaries. Most of us are reasonable folks who think it is stupid to foul your own nest. We believe it is possible to have a productive society without destroying the earth. And we understand that the alternative to achieving this balance is to invite a bleak future for all forms of life.

## Musings...

**J**uly 20, 1994 — LAAS Field Trip 25 years ago today. This is probably not worth mentioning except for the details. We were atop Mt. Pinos. Russell Wilson had his radio turned to CBS when Neil Armstrong announced, "The Eagle Has Landed!", and we were watching *nineteen* California Condors lazily circle overhead. A "Personal High" for some very lucky birders.



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodkin

**O**ctober finds the fall migration slowing down, and we will want to search for patterns of winter invasions by such species as Varied Thrush, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee and others. Also to be looked for are Siberian vagrants. When conditions are right in the North Pacific, almost any Siberian migratory species can show up in California in late fall.

Before going into a rather short list of midsummer bird reports, I would like to discuss briefly a rather disturbing matter. My wife and I have just returned from a two week birding tour to Paraguay and have seen first-hand the unbelievable destruction that is taking place. Most of the eastern portion of the country appears to have been deforested, and the few islands of forest left are going fast. On a 400 kilometer drive from the eastern border to the capitol, Asunción, in the center of the country, we were under a constant pall of smoke. Where forest is not being cleared for

agriculture, it is being converted into charcoal. Along the Trans-Chaco Highway the remaining woodlands are systematically being burned for pasturage.

Dams are being built on the Rio Paraná to irrigate vast portions of the Chaco. At least these dams are providing electricity! The standard method of creating electricity not supplied by the dams is to burn charcoal to turn the turbines.

Worst of all, discussions with concerned Paraguayans reveal that there are no solutions forthcoming to these problems. Forest reserves seem to be quite small, though there is still some wilderness in the Chaco regions of the north and west. We can expect the rest of the country to be denuded in record time.

\*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*

A **Brown Booby** was spotted in L.A. Harbor on the LAAS pelagic trip of 14 August (Jon Alderfer and Arnold Small) and was last seen on the Cabrillo breakwater when the boat returned.

A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was seen briefly on the L.A. River at Del Amo Street, Long Beach, on 22 July (Mitch Heindel) but was not relocated. A male and two female **Wood Ducks** were reported from Upper Franklin Canyon Reservoir on 21 August (Geoffrey Oblath). A **Black-bellied Whistling-**

**Duck** was found at the south end of the Salton Sea on 10 August (Roger Higson).

Two **Solitary Sandpipers** were found in Wilderness Park, Arcadia, on 18 August (Mike San Miguel), and seven were along the lower L.A. River on 21 August (MSM, Brian Daniels). A **Curlew Sandpiper**, L.A. County's first, was at Piute Ponds, Edwards Air Force Base, on 23 July (Kimball Garrett).

California's second **Sooty Tern** was found at Bolsa Chica on 30 July (Doug Willick) but was not refound by a large crowd of birders the next day. A **Xantus' Murrelet** was seen in L.A. Harbor on the pelagic trip of 14 August (JA and AS).

An early report of **Lark Bunting** comes from San Pedro on 19 August (MH).

I would strongly recommend that all who are interested in California birds call Audubon House for a copy of Arnold Small's new *California Birds: Their Status and Distribution*. This superb new volume will be reviewed next month in the *Tanager* so it will be enough to say buy it and have most of your questions about California birds answered. 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.

*Solitary Sandpiper*



Herb Clarke

## FIELD TRIPS

Continued from page 12

Harbor Lake, Wilderness Park and other areas that have produced a plethora of vagrant reports in the last few years. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at Banning Park. Bring lunch. Take 110 Fwy S to Pacific Coast Hwy E past Avalon Blvd. and into the park. Meet in the lot at the NE corner of Banning Park at Eubank and PCH.

**Sunday, October 9 — 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 Nature Center.

 **Sunday, October 23 —** From San Pedro on the *R.V. Vantuna* to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. In the past three

### 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.

years we've had five species of storm-petrels and a Brown Booby. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Jonathan Alderfer** 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

**Sunday, October 23 — Santa Rosa Island.** **Irwin Woldman** will be with us on the island and on the return trip only. 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. About four hours will be spent on Santa Rosa Island. *Read listing in the September Tanager for important details.* Call National Park Service at (805) 658-5730 for an info packet. Write Island Packers at 1867 Spin-naker Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, (805) 642-1393 to reserve. Ask them to note LAAS affiliation. \$52 for adults, \$45 for children. Depart from Ventura Harbor at 7:00 A.M. and return about 6:00 P.M.

 **Friday Night, October 28 —** From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. 30-hour trip departs at 10:00 P.M. Friday and returns at 4:00 A.M. Sunday. Meals and bunk included in price of trip. We'll look for Cook's and Mottled Petrels. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Arnold Small**.

**Saturday, October 29 — Sketching Birds in the Field.** Renowned bird artist **John Schmitt** will show us how to render useful bird sketches for field documentation. Spotting scope, folding chair, pencils and sketch pad a must. Very limited enrollment. Phone LAAS to sign up.

**Sunday, October 30 — Sepulveda Basin Natural Area.** Leader **Steve Ducatman**. Some good birds have shown up here in past years. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at Woodley Park. Take Burbank Blvd. W from the 405 Fwy, turn right onto Woodley Ave. and continue to the Woodley Park entrance on the right. Meet in the first parking area.

**Saturday, November 5 — Newport Back Bay.** Leader **Mary Carmona**. The 6'9" high tide should flush a few rails. Royal Tern and California Gnatcatcher also good bets. Take the 405 Fwy S to Jamboree Rd. Drive S over the channel past San Joaquin Hills Road to Back Bay Dr. on your right. If you hit PCH, you've gone too far. Continue to the first pullout hugging the bay along Back Bay Dr., 1/4 mile off Jamboree Rd. Meet at 8:00 A.M. for a full day in the area.

**Sunday, November 6 — Topanga State Park.** Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See October 2 write-up for details.

 **Sunday, November 13 —** From San Pedro on the *R.V. Vantuna* to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Arnold Small**.

**Sunday, November 13 — Whittier Narrows.** Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See October 9 write-up for details.

 **Friday Night, November 18 —** From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. 30-hour trip departs at 10:00 P.M. Friday and returns at 4:00 A.M. Sunday. Meals and bunk included in price of trip. Fall is the best time to look for fall *Pterodromas*, including Stejneger's Petrels. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Mitch Heindel**.

**Saturday November 19 — Piute Ponds.** Former ABA and LAAS president **Gerry Maisel** and his wife **Laurette** will lead us into this limited-access bird haven on Edwards Air Force Base. Bring a lunch and bird until about 3:00 P.M. White-faced Ibis, Redhead and Sora likely. Rough-legged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and owls have all been seen in the past. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the LaMont-Odett Overlook on the east side of Hwy 14, N of the Pearblossom Hwy turnoff and before Palmdale. ■

# EVENING MEETINGS



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

**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.

**November 8, 1994      Bob Johnson  
Birds and Mammals of Kenya**

**O**nly in Kenya can one log 700 bird and 60 mammal species in just three weeks. Bob and his slides will take us there for a wildlife spectacular second to none.

## 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

**Saturday, October 1** — From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard* to Anacapa, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands. We will look for the American Oystercatcher at Anacapa. Leaders **Arnold Small, Herb Clarke and Mitch Heindel**. 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.

**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.

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**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 2 — Topanga State Park.** Leader **Gerry Haigh** will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new in the area. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. heading SW from the Valley, turn E (uphill) on Entrada Rd. (7 miles S of Ventura Blvd., 1 mile N of Topanga Village). Follow the signs and make a left into the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch \$5 parking fee.

**Saturday, October 8 — South Bay Vagrant Spots.** Leader **Martin Byhower** will take us to

*Continued on page 11*