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Planning for Parks in the Panama Canal Watershed

Rainforest Protection and Visitor Use

by Larry L. Norris

In 1993–94, at the request of the Government of the Republic of Panama, a team of planners from the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) was temporarily assigned to the NPS Office of International Affairs to provide planning assistance to the Panamanian National Institute for Renewable Natural Resources (INRENARE) for the four national parks and one recreation area within the watershed of the Panama Canal. During the planning process a methodology was adopted that answered resource protection issues first by quickly producing an action plan that dealt with boundary demarcation, resource protection patrols and protection staff, support facilities and equipment for each unit. Followup

planning was conducted that produced a master plan for each of the five protected areas. The master plans were based on each area's legal foundation and were concerned with the issues of resource management programs, management zoning, visitor experience, interpretive themes, appropriate facilities and sustainable strategies for dealing with the many external threats that surround these wonderful parks.

The Parks

The Republic of Panama has an impressive national system of protected wild areas which includes thirteen national parks, six wildlife refuges, six forest reserves (managed for multiple use), two protected forests (no logging), three wa-



All photos by Larry Norris

tershed reserves, one natural monument (the famous Barro Colorado Island), one natural park (like a regional park) and one recreation area. Some of these protected wild areas are rather large; when combined, the area of the entire system equals 20% of the land base of the country.

Panama's national system of protected wild areas affords some degree of protection and management for every major habitat in the country, from coral reefs and mangrove covered tidal zones up through the various types of rainforest associations to the high cloud forests perched on the shoulders of massive volcanos, and on up to the wind-swept, barren lava summits above timberline.

It is a wonderful system that has been quietly expanded (in the sense of international attention) over the last two decades and is now poised on the threshold of discovery by the global ecological tourism market. Within the topographic watershed that supplies the Panama Canal are portions of four national parks and one recreation area. These five protected areas received the initial focus of NPS planning assistance in Panama.



The premiere park in the watershed is Soberania National Park which was established in 1980. The park is the showcase of the system, and its very name Soberania (translated Sovereignty) attests to the Panamanian's pride in their natural and cultural heritage. The park en-

Pipeline Road, PN Soberania



compasses 22,000 hectares (ha.), or 54,363 acres (ac.), and is said to be the most accessible tropical rainforest in the world. An estimated 1,500 plant species and 650 animal species are thought to occur within the boundaries of the park. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count Circle that holds the world record for the most species is centered in Soberania National Park.



Camino de Cruces National Park is the newest park in the system, established in December 1992. It is the largest remaining open space (4,000 ha. or 9,876 ac.) near Panama City and is equivalent to our Santa Monica National Recreation Area in its open space function.

The park commemorates its namesake preserving the historic conquistador's road that crossed the isthmus of Panama. Inca gold was taken east on this road to the Chagres River where it was loaded on boats and taken down to the Atlantic Coast for shipment to Spain. The park also preserves a large lowland tropical forest that is becoming increasingly significant as a refuge for wildlife as Panama City continues to expand.

Ruins, PN Camino de Cruces



Chagres National Park was established in 1984 with a primary mission to protect the major portion of the watershed providing water to the Panama Canal. The watershed, which includes the Chagres River drainage, is globally significant in this role and nationally important as the supplier of domestic water to more than half of the country's population. The 129,000 ha.



Typical pirogue, PN Chagres

(318,518 ac.) park is a biologically diverse resource area that covers four life zones and provides habitat for at least ten endangered species. Its function is very similar to our large Sierran parks that have huge backcountry areas that are in pristine ecological conditions and frontcountry areas that interface with small towns and rural agricultural activities.



Altos de Campana National Park is Panama's oldest national park, established in 1966. It protects a large portion (4,816 ha. or 11,891 ac.) of a unique mountainous area that is a zone of overlap for flora and fauna representative of North America, Central America and South America. This is an extremely scenic park that is also very important to science. Rising abruptly from the Pacific coastal plain, the intrusive volcanic rocks

in this park shoulder up, ridge after ridge, to culminate in the high bell-shaped granitic domes and peaks of the Continental Divide (*campana* means "bell" in Spanish).

The park extends for eight kilometers along the Continental Divide and protects a segment of the extreme southwestern edge of the Panama Canal watershed. The park's vegetation is the most varied in Panama, if not in the world. Three of the four life zones in the

area is becoming more important as wildlife habitat with each passing year.

The People

At the risk of making a pun, I will state that Panama is at a crossroad. Yes, the country is globally recognized as the crossroad of the world in terms of international shipping, but the crossroad I am referring to is one of choosing a national conservation

direction that reverses the 500-year-old trend of deforestation, or choosing to ignore the environmental alarms that are now being sounded and continue to cut away at the rainforest.

Panama is indeed faced with a crossroad decision. In 1993 the country's

population was at 2.3 million and was increasing at 2.3% per year. Good agricultural land is certainly limited in Panama, and traditionally, when land was worn out by farming, there was always more forest to clear over in the next drainage.

This tradition is rapidly changing because deforestation has become a grave concern in Panama. The Panama Briefing Packet that I received for this planning project

stated that "By 1985, only 40% of the original natural forest [in Panama] remained. At current land clearing and wood consumption rates the majority of Panama's [remaining] forests will be gone in less than 20 years." Make that 19 years, now.

The Packet went on to summarize why this is so. "The original abundance of forests and unoccupied land in Panama delayed national recognition of the importance of conserving natural resources. The occupation of new lands was encouraged without regard to land capability or sustained use. Private sector investment was largely exploitative, stressing short-term income generation. It was not until the 1970s that a national awareness of the devastation of natural resources began to emerge." Through the efforts of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, environmental education and awareness is fast taking hold in urban Panama.

The Panama park superintendents and their staffs are a significant portion of the first generation of Panamanians that have come forward in their professional and personal lives to challenge the 500-year-old concept that the rainforest is only in the way, that it is just something to cut down for wood, that it is useless if not developed in some way. The Panama parks people that the NPS planning team worked with were all relatively young, dedicated and well-educated managers and support staffs. They intend to prove during their careers that the best long-



PN Altos de Campana

country of Panama are found in the park: the humid tropical forest, the humid premontane forest and the tropical montane forest. All of this forest is watered by between two and three meters of rain fall each year! Wildlife is common in the undisturbed core areas of the park. More than 170 species of birds have been documented as occurring within the park boundaries.



Lago Gatun Recreation Area, which was established in 1985, covers almost 350 ha. (864 ac.) of forest and shoreline on the northeast side of Lake Gatun, the artificial lake created to provide part of the route of the Panama Canal. Bird life is common in the undisturbed forests and along the shoreline of the recreation area. In fact, in the rapidly developing area around Colón, Panama's second largest city, the protected forest in the recreation

Trail down to lake



Swimming area — Lago Gatun



term benefits for Panama, both economically and culturally, will come from the preservation and controlled use of protected areas, and not from ecological destruction for short-term economic profits alone.

These professionals are the first wave in a rising tide that wants the best opportunities for Panama to be through sustainable development and ecologically responsible enterprises. They have huge cultural, social and economic barriers to overcome. It will not be an easy task, but it must be done in this generation. If the rainforests are not protected in this generation, then in the next all that will remain will be that which is already nominally protected in the existing park system.

The Pressures

The developmental pressures and environmental issues that confront the protected areas within the Panama Canal watershed are phenomenal. It was not an easy assignment to develop conservation strategies that would aid park managers and their staffs in protecting the resources for which they were responsible. Each park has multiple resource protection and visitor use problems, and this article cannot present them all. An example of an environmental issue facing each of the five Panama Canal watershed parks is presented below.

* In Soberania National Park the primary environmental issue is poaching. The wildlife in the park is under attack from all sides. A hike through the rainforest can, in some places of the park, be a fairly quiet, somber experience. One wonders where all the teeming tropical life has gone. Can it all be hiding? Much of it does hide and for good reason; but a lot of the wildlife has simply been poached out. Most of the poaching is done by *campesinos* looking for food, the rest is done to supply the pet trade.

Either way, many of the large mammal and bird species have been extirpated from the areas of the park closest to the surrounding villages. Both the action plan and the

master plan make proposals that, when implemented, would stem the poaching and reintroduce extirpated species after appropriate habitat assessments.

* Chagres National Park has a major problem with over 4,500 people living in 18 named villages and scattered out on subsistence farms within the park. They do so under the establishing legislation that allowed certain communities to remain in the park after establishment in 1984.

About 30% of the land within the park is private property. A huge segment of this private land is high in the cloud forest of the Chagres River watershed. Over 500 "summer" homes and a score of chicken farms have been built in the cleared cloud forest. It is great to escape the oppressive heat of the lowlands, and chickens do fare better in the cool climate, but inside a park (!?), with all the attending erosion and water pollution from septic systems and runoff from chicken coops?

These are serious environmental concerns for which the plans had to provide long-term management and research direction.

* Because Panama City is next to Camino de Cruces National Park most of the park's environmental problems stem from urban land use issues, the most serious of which is that the Panama City municipal landfill is adjacent to and uphill of the park.

About 300 people, called squatters, barely survive as scavengers at the landfill collecting whatever discards they can use or recycle for cash. It is a miserable, pitiful existence. When they are hungry, the squatters hunt in the park.

Efforts have been made to contain the polluted runoff from the dump, but a U.S. Department of Defense water quality monitoring system set up in Fort Clayton, downstream of the park and landfill, has documented pollution of the affected stream courses all the way to the Panama Canal.

The common boundary between the park and the landfill site, 3.5 kilometers long, will continue to be a law enforcement and resource protection "hot spot" as long as the landfill stays in operation.

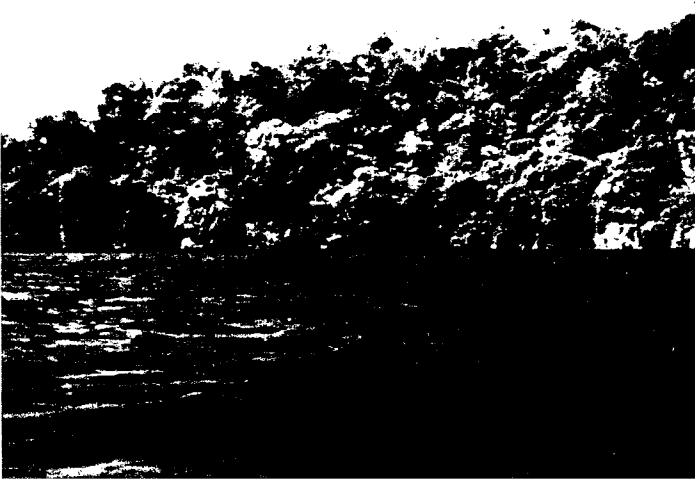
Visitor use along the Camino de Cruces and on the proposed riding and hiking trails in the area will always be at risk if the population of squatters continues to occupy the area and poach in the park.

* Altos de Campana National Park is a park under siege. The entire park is surrounded by small villages and subsistence farm plots. Twenty-four families are currently permitted to practice subsistence farming inside the park boundaries.

Since the slopes are very steep, erosion can be severe on recently planted hillsides. Some subsistence plots could be impacting the critical habitat of the endangered golden frog (*Atelopus zeteki*). Long-term protection for the golden frog habitat and management strategies to control erosion in the park had to be addressed in the plans for the park.

* Lago Gatun Recreation Area has had a major government sponsored low-income housing project





built on its boundary, and a four-lane highway is planned for construction which will "nick" the area's northern boundary. It is incredible to think that a housing project that will hold 500 families (2,000 people) at a minimum would be built on the very edge of the last remaining wild space near Panama's second largest city, Colon.

The impacts that such a large group of permanent residents will have on the park is not known. The team could find no impact analysis regarding the construction of the housing area or the new highway. Only a slight increase in the number of visitors who now come to this little park would easily overwhelm its minimal visitor facilities, and now it has 2,000 new neighbors, with no additional staff, facilities or budget increase in sight.

The Prescriptions

The planning team's task was to complete an action plan and a master plan for each of the protected areas within the canal watershed.

The action plans were completed first and dealt with the immediate protection needs of the park. They proposed short-term actions for immediate implementation, such as boundary demarcation, construction of entrance stations, ranger housing and patrol shelters, numbers of personnel needed for adequate resource protection and monitoring, and the kind and number of equipment nec-

essary to protect the parks.

The master plans dealt with the long-term management needs of the parks such as recommendations for visitor use, resource management programs, management zoning, boundary concerns and adjacent land uses, and park operations.

★ The action plan for Soberania National Park calls for a complete boundary demarcation using signs along the land boundaries and a buoy system on the northern boundary which is in Lake Gatun.

Patrol shelters were proposed at strategic locations around the perimeter of the park. The proposed arrangement of patrol shelters would allow the edge and interior of the park to be patrolled at random times.

Unpredictable patrol patterns — both routes and times — would increase resource protection because poachers would not know when or where they may encounter park guards. The number of park guards would be increased and the quality of their equipment would be substantially improved.

In combination with the increased resource protection effort would be an outreach effort to the surrounding villages conducted by the park naturalists and guides that would teach the value of long-term protection of natural resources and would find ways to economically link the locals to the park through crafts concessions and guide services so that the locals see it in their best interest to support the park.

★ The master plan for Chagres National Park establishes a zone of regulated multiple use for the populated area of the park. The number of people allowed to live in the park would be limited to the current

4,500 residents. Through attrition and emigration this number should stay constant.

However, park management will monitor the population because the amount of land allowed to be cleared for subsistence farming and the effects on the ecosystem of other subsistence activities are regulated on the basis of 4,500 people.

The remainder of the undeveloped lands (private and public parcels alike) in the park would be designated as the natural zone where no development takes place and no new subsistence farming is allowed. No hunting, no gold mining, no *nada*.

It is a primitive area, a huge wilderness where the forces of nature and the wildlife of the forest continue on, as they have for millennia, without the influence of humankind. This is the only way to ensure the continued adequate flow of water to the Panama Canal, by letting nature do what it does best.

For those areas in the cloud forest that are already developed private land, a water quality monitoring program would be established. Closed watersheds that are entirely contained within the park would act as controls for gathering background data on water quality. These data could be compared to information collected from the affected (polluted) drainages.

These comparisons would provide valuable insights into the effects of development on the park water supply and would be instrumental in any long-term management decisions regarding the quality and quantity of water available in the park.

★ The master plan for Camino de Cruces National Park recommends that the landfill adjacent to the park be relocated. A new location for solid waste from Panama City must be found that is not near or upstream of a park or suburb, is on an already impacted site, and is close enough to the city for practical operations. A search should be conducted by appropriate agency staff to locate several areas near Panama City that meet these criteria.

The population of the country is growing faster in the Panama City area than anywhere else. In time, other landfill sites will be needed. These areas should be identified and secured now. The landfill at the current site should be closed at the earliest possible time, and the impacted area reclaimed and revegetated to reduce erosion and pollution. The relocation of the landfill would not solve the squatter problem; they would quickly relocate to the new dump site, but at least poaching in the park would be greatly reduced.

* The master plan for Altos de Campana National Park calls for a reforestation program. The large forest areas still left around the high peaks inside the park are remnant forests. Because of this, their value as genetic reserves is very high. All resource management concerns about vegetation in this park should be focused on the preservation of what still remains and the reforestation of all land in the park. A reforestation program in the park would be a component of the overall effort to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation in the rivers. The program would plant as many trees as possible.

The park needs to collect the following baseline data on areas that require reforestation: the type and condition of soils, the angle and aspect of the slope, the percentage of canopy cover still remaining, and the presence/percent of cover of invasive weed species. All of these physical conditions would need to be quantified to prioritize areas for reforestation action.

Once these data and priorities are known, park management can proceed with an adequate reforestation effort and meet the preservation mandates of the park's founding legislation.

* Probably the most serious resource management concern for Lago Gatun Recreation Area is the proximity of the new public housing project and the effect 500 families will have on the wildlife that inhabits the recreation area. How these relocated urban people will interact

with the recreation area and its resources is unknown.

It is reasonable to assume that wildlife populations will be negatively affected by such a large concentration of people if those people's attitudes toward wildlife do not have a preservation basis and their access to the recreation area is uncontrolled. Outreach programs emphasizing the values of the protected area would be central to a successful relationship between the recreation area staff and the residents of the public housing project. To help make such programs possible, an environmental education center is proposed to be constructed on a existing building site in the recreation area, and a companion outreach program to the residents of the public housing area would be developed.

Success of the program would be measured in how well the new residents respond to the purpose of the recreation area, how well they recognize its significance, and ultimately how much they value the open space, the recreational opportunities and the pleasure that can be derived from an outing in nature. Building another building, or starting another program is easy compared to changing a neighborhood's perceptions and values about nature. This will be a difficult task. The staff of Lago Gatun Recreation Area have a long road ahead.

Visitor Experience Planning

In each master plan a vision for appropriate visitor use and geographic experience areas was detailed. Each park is unique, and the visitor activities in each of these parks are necessarily different. The recommended visitor activities and supporting facilities in any given plan support the preservation and education goals of the park and Panama protected areas in general.


Some examples of the recommended interpretation and environmental education themes are: Ecological Dynamics of the Rainforest, The Web of Life and Biodiversity,

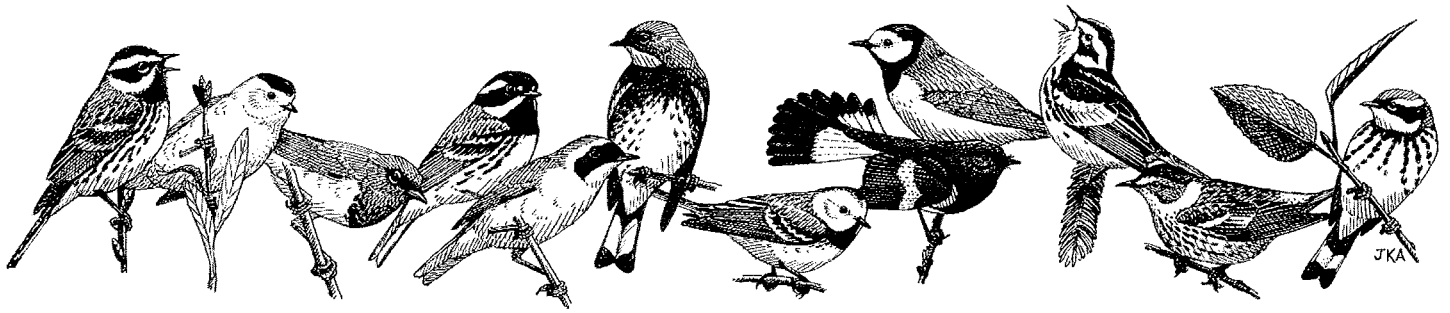
Watershed Protection, The Water Cycle, Restoration Ecology, History of the Road of Crossing (Camino de Cruces), Indigenous Peoples, and Native Arts and Crafts Demonstrations.

Visitor experience activities were fashioned to fit the stories that need to be told in each park within the context of the physical and biological geography of each park. For instance in Soberania National Park, a river tour would be offered that would take visitors by boat up the Chagres River into a truly wild area for a "jungle" experience. While there, the group would learn about the dynamics of the rainforest, its biodiversity and about the resource threats that are occurring today.

The goal of all this visitor experience and interpretation planning is to create visitor friendly parks, that have adequate facilities, orientation and activities to provide a good experience to the visiting public without compromising the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources.

The planning team believes that the future preservation of Panama's protected areas will be dependent on how strong the support is from the local public and international visitors. Panama's national parks and other protected areas need friends from around the world now. By constructing some small scale visitor facilities and offering visitor tours within the parks that focussed on the long-term value (both economically and culturally) of protected areas and rainforest ecosystems to Panama, many supporters of the parks would result worldwide.

The NPS planning team had a wonderful year assisting the government of Panama in planning for the preservation, visitation and management of its globally significant parks. The Panama park superintendents and their staffs are a good group of dedicated professionals spending their lives to ensure the protection of the rainforests under their care, to keep the rivers flowing clear and to keep the wild birds flying. We all wish them well in the work ahead. 



by Hank Brodtkin

January and February are slow months for birding, but by the end of January "spring" migration will start with the first movement of some of the hummingbirds and swallows. Although the excitement of the rarities found on Christmas Bird Counts has subsided, there is always a chance that a Siberian stray might show up. Keep checking those gull flocks and waterfowl down at the Salton Sea for the once-in-a-lifetime find that makes this pursuit so exciting.

Let me take this opportunity to explain how folks are credited for bird sightings reported in this column. If the person who discovers an unusual bird does not report it to me or if the sources I use do not give me the name of the actual discoverer, I credit the report to the person who reports the bird. So, if you find a good bird and want to be sure you get credit in this column for finding it, please let me know. My phone, listed at the end of this column, has a message machine if I am unable to answer when a call comes in. It would also help if you spell your name in the message.

A **Horned Grebe**, uncommon inland, was on Quail Lake near Gorman on 20 November (Nina Merrill and Cal Yorke). A "Cackling" **Canada Goose** was found in Apollo Park, Lancaster, on 28 October (CY) where a **Wood Duck** was seen on 29 October (NM); five more "Cackling" geese were with a flock of 60 Canada and four **Snow** at Holiday Lake in the Antelope Valley on 20 November (NM & CY). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was seen on a Pasadena Audubon field trip to Bolsa Chica on 23 October (Mickey Long);

two female **Oldsquaws** in Ballona Creek on 12 November (Bob Pann) were joined by a third bird a week



Northern Wheatear, La Mirada, 11/5/94

later. A **Surf Scoter**, unusual inland on fresh water, was found on 22 October (CY) at Bouquet Canyon Reservoir, and two **White-winged Scoters** flew by Seal Beach Pier on 17 November (Doug Willick). Four **Common Goldeneyes** were on Quail Lake on 20 November (NM & CY), and a pair of **Hooded Mergansers** were at Lake Hollywood on 11 November (Thomas Miko). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was reported from Upper Newport Bay on 12 November (Sandy Koontz). **Merlins** were widespread, including one in Rustic Canyon on 9 November (Bernard Willits) and three more seen along Pine Canyon Road south of the Antelope Valley on 20 November (NM & CY). Seventy-five **Snowy Plovers**, a good number for this at-risk species, were seen at Zuma Beach on 22 October (Bill Principe), and a **Ruff** was found on the Oxnard Plain on the LAAS field trip of 12 November (Lori Conrad). An **Ancient Murrelet**, one of our scarcer winter alcids, was seen off Seal Beach Pier on 16 November (DW).

Nine **Inca Doves** were found at Lake Los Angeles in the eastern An-

telope Valley on 12 November (Janet Murphy). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, thought by some to be a hybrid, was found at Galileo in eastern Kern County on 21 October (Gail Hightower); another Yellow-bellied was at Hansen Dam on 4 November (Doug Martin) and one was in La Crescenta on 5 November (Kimball Garrett). The best bird of the fall had to be the **Northern Wheatear** discovered at Biola University in La Mirada on 5 November (Scott Smithson). It was seen all that afternoon by many lucky birders but missed the next morning by dozens of very frustrated others. A **Brown Thrasher** was at Galileo on 21 October (David Blue), and a **Red-eyed Vireo** was found at Huntington Beach Central Park on 22 October (Brian Daniels).

Warbler reports included a **Lucy's** on the LAAS field trip to the Oxnard Plain on 12 November (Larry Allen); a **Black-throated Blue** at Huntington Beach Central Park on 21 October (Tom Newhouse); a **Blackburnian** also at the park on 5 November (BD); a **Palm** at Apollo Park, Lancaster, on 28 October (CY); a **Worm-eating** in Westminster on 1 November (Robb Hamilton); two **Hoodeds** were at Furnace Creek, Death Valley, one on 22 October (Cosmo Bloom) and another on 6 November (Geoffrey Rogers); and a **Canada** was at the San Joaquin Marsh on 22 October (BD). A **Scarlet Tanager** was found near Malaga Cove, Palos Verdes Estates, on 6 November (Kevin Larson).

Sparrow reports include an **American Tree** at Malibu Creek State Park on 22 October (Richard

Barth); a **Grasshopper** at Duarte on 29 October (Mike San Miguel); a **Le Conte's** at Furnace Creek on 6 November (GR); a **Swamp** in Big Santa Anita Canyon on 29 October (MSM); two **White-throateds** at Galileo on 21 October (DB); and a **Harris'** at Furnace Creek on 6 November (CB). A **McCown's Longspur** was discovered on the Oxnard Plain field trip on 12 November (LC). A **Rusty Blackbird** was at Harbor Park on 18 November (KL), and a **Common Grackle**, certainly not common in California, was found at Galileo (CY).

Have a very happy, prosperous and birdy New Year! ~

Records of rare and unusual bird sightings reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the *AMERICAN BIRDS* Regional Editors or, if appropriate, by the California Bird Records Committee. Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

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

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- 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.
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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.

The Birds of South America Volume II The Suboscine Passerines

by Robert S. Ridgely and Guy Tudor
Reviewed by James F. Clements

This is the second volume in the eventual four-volume series that will cover all the birds of South America. I was fortunate in leaving for a six-week trip to Guyana and Peru shortly after the second volume arrived, which gave me ample time to study the weighty tome carefully during the trip. I say weighty advisedly since it is a large, 826-page work that weighs close to five pounds. Carry both volumes with you and you know you've got some heavy-duty baggage along!

Unfortunately (or fortunately) it is the only complete work on the bird continent that will satisfy the serious ornithologist. Outside of Venezuela and Colombia, there is no field guide to most of the important South American birding destinations (particularly Peru, Ecuador and Brazil), and this book fills that void admirably.

Like the first volume, Guy Tudor has illustrated at least one of every species in each genus. This is particularly helpful in a guide that covers such nondescript families as the ovenbirds and woodcreepers, and in many instances he illustrates many of the confusing congeners. The volume also includes the antbirds, gnateaters, tapaculos, manakins, cotingas and that most frustrating of all neotropical families—the tyrant flycatchers! The 52 color plates are superbly reproduced, and I found the printing superior to volume one, where the ink density on many of the illustrations seemed washed out.

Each species' account deals extensively with its description, similar species, habitat and behavior, and range. This is accompanied by a range map which, in all but a few cases, is easily read. I would liked

to have seen the bird's range in a color, since many birds with pinpoint ranges are difficult to spot—especially where the range comes close to a boundary line and is broken up by the printer's screen (Restinga Tyrannulet, Eye-ringed Flatbill and Buff-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher).

The book is virtually free of typographic errors. I was unable to find the reference to Narosky and Yzurieta (1987) in the index, which I assume is a rare error of omission. *Elaenia modesta* is on page 436, not 536 as listed in the index. The placement of *Gyalophylax hellmayri* between *Synallaxis cinnamomea* and *Synallaxis stictothorax* was particularly confusing. I don't ever recall seeing a monotypic genus stuck in the middle of another genus before.

I question the wisdom of the change from volume one, where the headers gave the family names (wrens, vireos, tanagers, etc.), to the format in volume two that lists the genera occurring on the spread. (This may have been caused by the error in volume one where Bananaquit appeared on the header on 46 pages and Plushcap on 66 pages). I think most of the readers of this volume would find it easier browsing through a header that reads "Antbirds" rather than one that reads "Hypocnemoides; Sclateria; Percnostola."

There are a number of splits and lumps that I hesitate to accept at this point until the book is reviewed in the scientific literature. I find it difficult to believe that all of these will stand up under the intense scrutiny of the authors' peers. One comment that I found particularly interesting regards the Narino

Tapaculo. "The tapaculo found on Cerro Pirre in e. Panama, though previously identified as *S. vicini*, cannot be that species, based on its different voice; the Pirre birds evidently have no valid name." This is a surprising statement for someone who wrote *The Birds of Panama* and doesn't hesitate to name (or change the name of) anything that sings!

My main concern with this volume is the authors' predilection for changing English names at will. The change from White-naped Xenopsaris to simply Xenopsaris is explained as an unnecessary modifier since there is only one Xenopsaris. To be consistent, why not drop the modifiers for the Spotted Bamboowren, Kinglet Calyptura, Lark-like Brushrunner, Crag Chilia, Short-tailed Field-Tyrant, Canebrake Groundcreeper, Chestnut-winged Hookbill, Point-tailed Palmcreeper, *ad infinitum*.

I counted a total of 32 English name changes, most of them with a different rationale. The change from Iquico Canastero to Maquis Canastero was particularly confusing, since I doubt if many South American birders are familiar with the Mediterranean *maquis*. Better to have called it the Chaparral Canastero, which most of us would have identified with. And the name change of the Alagoas Antwren to Orange-bellied Antwren seemed particularly pointless, since only the female of the species has an orange belly and the bird is endemic to Alagoas. This is surprising since many of the name changes are based on endemic localities.

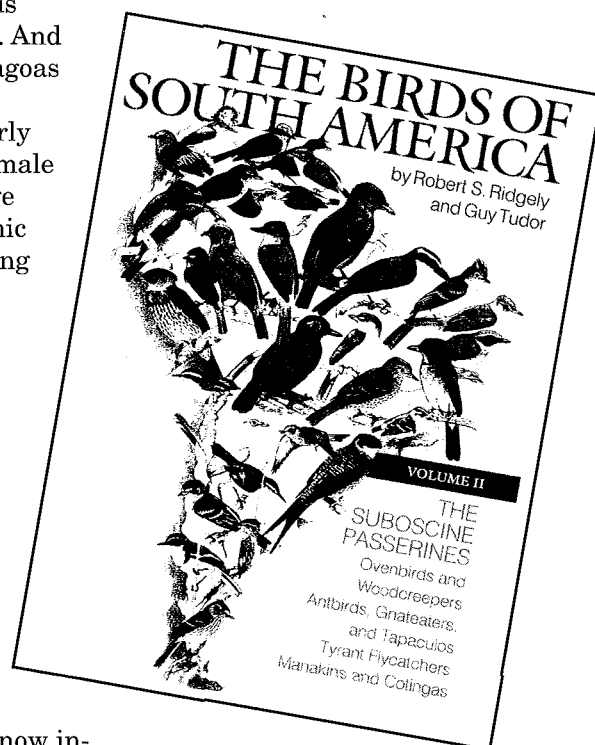
One of the more confusing changes to longtime neotropical birders is the change from Thrush-like Schiffornis to Thrush-like Mourner. This bird was formerly known as the Thrush-like Manakin and, while not a true manakin, its taxonomic status is still uncertain. It has come full circle and is now in-

cluded in the subfamily *Piprinae* (Manakins). This is equally confusing since the Rufous, Grayish and Pale-bellied Mourners are still retained in the Tyrant Flycatchers.

But the ultimate disregard for historical precedent is the name change of the recently described Such's Antthrush to Cryptic Antthrush. The noted neotropical ornithologist Edwin O. Willis named this species after the collector, Dr. George Such, and the published paper appeared in the *Condor* in February 1992.

Aside from these minor irritations on my part, the two volumes are indispensable for the birder traveling to South America. While the two volumes present a formidable transportation problem, once in the hotel or car, they are well worth the effort when struggling through a mystifying array of over 300 tyrannids or 200 skulking antbirds.

Anyone with any interest at all in the world's greatest birding area will find *The Birds of South America* a must. Until some distant time in the future when each of the major South American countries has its own field guide, you simply can't leave home without these two major works on the passerines. ➤



WESTERN TANAGER

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Continued from page 12

Sunday, January 8 — Quail Lake Vicinity. Leader **Louis Tucker.** Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk color morphs, both eagles, Common Goldeneye, Mountain Bluebird and longspurs all possible. Bring lunch and very warm clothes. Leave promptly from Carl's Jr. in Gorman at 8:00 A.M.


Sunday, January 15 — Lakeview Area. Leaders **Gilbert Herrera** and **Howard King** will show us around this excellent winter birding area in search of buteos, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, longspurs, owls and myriad waterfowl. Take the 60 Fwy E past the 215 Fwy. Exit S on Gilman Springs Rd. and continue about 6 miles to the Bridge St. intersection. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the intersection. Bring lunch, scopes, warm clothing and footwear for possible mud. Entrance fee of \$2 or less. Bring change.

Saturday, January 21 — Point Mugu. A base field biologist and an LAAS expert will lead in this limited access area. Peregrine Falcon and White-winged Scoter possible. *Signup by January 10 required.* Must be 16 years old. No cameras, please. Include one SASE and, for each person in your request, name, citizenship status, phone number, social security number and a \$5 deposit to be refunded at the gate. Take the 101 Fwy W to Las Posas Rd. S, to PCH N onto Wood Rd. W. Head S on the frontage road to the lot at the main (#2) gate. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

Monday, January 23 — Van Norman Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcalá.** Riparian and grassland habitat surround the reservoir and adjacent ponds. Good for Canada Geese, Merlin and other wintering birds. Take the 405 Fwy N to the Rinaldi offramp just S of the 5 Fwy interchange. Go W on Rinaldi about a mile to the front

gate on the right (N) side. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the lot inside the gate on the left. We will carpool from there and finish about 1:00 P.M. Restrooms on-site.

Sunday, January 29 — Franklin Canyon. Leader **Steven Saffier.** Franklin Canyon is located 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. Wood Ducks winter here. From the 101 Fwy, take Coldwater Canyon S into the hills. Immediately after Mulholland Dr. merges from the W with Coldwater Canyon, make a 90° right turn onto Franklin Canyon and continue on to the Nature Center. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the parking lot past a gated drive on the left.

 **Friday Night, February 3 —** 30-hour trip departs 10:00 P.M. Friday; returns 4:00 A.M. Sunday. From Ventura on Island Packer's *M.V. Vanguard*, NW past Point Conception to Arquello Canyon and W to the California continental shelf with several daylight hours along the shelf. \$250/double bunk, \$145/single bunk (meals included).

Sunday, February 5 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 1 write-up for details.

Friday, February 10 — Gull Identification Workshop. **Larry Allen** will band together with **Ned** and **Linda Harris** to make this year's treatment of gulls seen in California a fairly comprehensive one. The important skill of ageing a gull will be covered. ID marks of common, less common and sporadically appearing gulls of the west coast, from Western to Thayer's and Little to Glaucous, will be reviewed with slides (when possible) in their various plumages. Meet at 7:30 P.M. in the LAAS General Meeting Room at Plummer Park. Fees: \$4 for lecture, \$3 for field trip. Reserve by phone and pay at the door or reserve in writing (with appropriate

fee enclosed) for either event. Signup by February 5 for field trip priority. See field trip listing below.

Sunday, February 12 — Gull Identification Field Trip. **Larry, Ned** and **Linda** will make stops from Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach looking for gulls to demonstrate points made during their Friday lecture (see above). Thayer's Gull likely. We will meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Malibu Lagoon parking lot kiosk. Free parking on Cross Creek Rd. located just W of lagoon bridge. Trip will finish at McGrath State Park in Oxnard. 25 participants maximum. Reservation fee \$3. Lecture participants reserving before February 5 will have priority. Bring lunch, an NGS field guide and scopes for a full day.

Sunday, February 12 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 8 write-up for details.

Saturday, February 18 — Ventura County Game Preserve. Leader **Doug Martin.** This duck club is an excellent spot to observe wintering birds. We have seen Sora and Virginia rails well here, as well as bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark Red-tails and Snow Geese — all due to the sheer numbers of birds on the property. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 W to Las Posas Rd. S, then take Hueneme Rd. W to Casper Rd. We will meet at 8:00 A.M. at the corner of Casper and Hueneme Roads. Limited phone signup with LAAS.

Monday, February 20 — Chatsworth Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcalá.** Wintering birds including raptors will augment the resident birds in this grassland / oak scrub habitat surrounding the sump. Take the 405 Fwy N to Roscoe Blvd. Head W to Fallbrook Ave. Take this N to the DWP entrance at the end. Meet at 7:30 A.M. and finish up early afternoon. Bring lunch and water. No restrooms.

Saturday and Sunday, February 25 and 26 — Salton Sea. Leader **Nick Freeman.** For Sandhill Cranes and White-faced Ibis, meet at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley to **depart at 3:30 P.M. on Saturday.** Take Hwy 111 S to Brawley. Head W thru town on Main St., then continue S on Hwy 86 to a fairly quick right on Cattle Call Dr. Continue to the fenced grassy area by the arena. Sunday morning we will regroup (and welcome latecomers) at Carl's Jr. at Main and First Streets in Brawley, **leaving there at 7:00 A.M.** A good trip for Canada, Snow and Ross' Geese, Burrowing Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Great-tailed Grackle and Yellow-footed Gull. Anticipate mud. Bring lunch, scopes, warm clothes. Large group may be split. Registration fee \$5. No limit. Leader stays at El Centro Motel 6.

Sunday, February 26 —
⚓ 8-hour trip on the *R.V. Vantuna* out of San Pedro to the Palos Verdes Escarpment and Redondo Canyon. \$25.

Sunday, March 5 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 1 write-up for details.

Sunday, March 12 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 8 write-up for details.

Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2 — Owens Valley Grouse Trip. **Mary Carmona** leads. Limited to 20. Meet in Big Pine Saturday. Fee \$10. For more details, check March trip listing and include SASE.

Friday Night, April 21 —
⚓ 30-hour trip departs 10:00 P.M. Friday; returns 4:00 A.M. Sunday. From Ventura on Island Packer's *M.V. Vanguard*, NW past Point Conception to Arquello Canyon and W to the California continental shelf with several daylight hours along the shelf. \$250/double bunk, \$145/single bunk (meals included). 🐾

The Los Angeles Audubon Society Field List of the Birds of Los Angeles County:

An Update to the Checklist

by Kimball L. Garrett

In March 1994, the Los Angeles Audubon Society published an updated checklist of the birds of Los Angeles County.

A phenomenal birding year in Los Angeles County has added six species since the publication of this checklist, along with new breeding evidence for several species.

To update your checklists, add the following species. The five species marked with a double asterisk (**) are included on the list pending acceptance by the California Bird Records Committee.

Masked Booby**

(Insert before Blue-footed Booby)

An immature bird was well studied and photographed off the Palos Verdes Peninsula on 30 April 1994.

Curlew Sandpiper**

(Insert between Dunlin and Stilt Sandpiper)

An adult was at Piute Ponds near Lancaster on 23–24 July 1994.

Thick-billed Murre**

(Insert between Common Murre and Pigeon Guillemot)

An alternate plumaged bird was seen and photographed on an LAAS pelagic trip off the Palos Verdes Peninsula on 21 May 1994.

Inca Dove (B?)

(Insert between Mourning Dove and Common Ground-Dove)

A small population is resident and presumably breeding in Lake Los Angeles in the eastern Antelope Valley. Two birds were first noted by a local resident in 1991, and at least nine birds were present in November, 1994.

Northern Wheatear**

(Insert between California Gnatcatcher and Western Bluebird)

One was seen and photographed in La Mirada on 5 November 1994.

Yellow-green Vireo**

(Insert after Red-eyed Vireo)

One was in Banning Park in Wilmington on 16–17 October 1994.

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Definite breeding evidence was obtained for the following species, so their listing on the checklist should be amended as follows:

Northern Shoveler (B):

Bred at Piute Ponds in May 1994. There are also breeding records for around the turn of the century.

Black Oystercatcher (B):

Bred in 1994 on the Long Beach Harbor breakwater; possibly also breeds on the Marina del Rey breakwater.

Vermilion Flycatcher (B):

A pair bred in the Leona Valley near Palmdale in 1994.

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One correction should be made on the March 1994 checklist: Insert **SHRIKES** between **Phainopepla** and **Northern Shrike**. The family name for shrikes was accidentally removed in the layout process, leaving the mistaken impression that shrikes and *Phainopeplas* all belong to the "Silky-Flycatcher" family. 🐾

EVENING MEETING

Meet at 8:00 P.M. in Plummer Park.
ID Workshop precedes the meeting at 7:30 P.M.
Call the Bird Tape for possible information on ID Workshops.

January 10, 1995 Beginning Butterflying

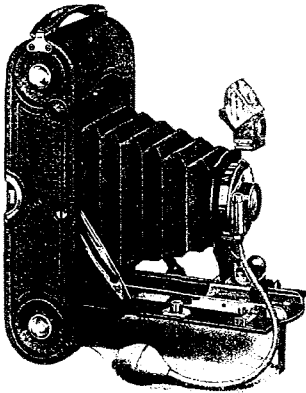
Fred Heath, beginning butterflyer, will introduce the new sport of butterfly watching which is becoming increasingly popular among birders. This illustrated talk provides tips, ID help and the general idea of how to get started in this fascinating vocation.

February 14, 1995 Members' Annual Photo Contest

There are four judging categories. Photographs taken 1) within the ABA North American birding area; 2) outside the ABA North American birding area; 3) within Los Angeles County and 4) humorous photos taken anywhere.

Photos must be of wild, unrestrained birds only. Submit up to five (5) 35mm slides per photographer. Place a dot in the upper-right corner of each slide as you would insert the slide in a slide tray (when the slide is upside down and backwards). Write your name and phone number on each slide. All participants must be present at the show to accept their honors and divulge their winning technique (or good fortune). Bookstore gift certificates to all winners. Photo contest participants: please be present with your submissions no later than 7:45 P.M.

Fred Heath



F I E L D T R I P S

Before setting out on any field trip, **please call the Audubon bird tape at (213) 874-1318** for special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

⌄ **Denotes Pelagic Trips**

Sunday, January 1 — 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 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.

Sunday, January 8 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join ranger **Ray Jillson** to see wintering raptors, songbirds and others augment resident and breeding species. 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.

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