

WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

The
Field
Identification
of ■
Feral
Parrots
in ■
Southern
California

by Kimball L. Garrett



Nandayus nenday,
color plate by Jonathan Alderfer

At least eight and perhaps as many as ten species of parrots and parakeets (Aves: Psittacidae) appear to be maintaining or increasing feral populations in urban and suburban habitats in California (Hardy 1972, Johnston and Garrett 1994). An important obstacle to further understanding the status and distribution of feral psittacids in the region is the scarcity of useful field identification information. Standard North American field guides inadequately treat the species pool of feral parrots in southern California. For example, of the seven exotic species treated by National Geographic Society (Scott 1987), only four are currently relevant to California. Peterson (1990) very briefly treats six exotic psittacids, five of which have populations in California. Both of these guides, however, treat a subspecies (perhaps full species?) of Canary-winged Parakeet (*Brotheris versicolurus*) which no longer maintains feral populations in California. Robbins et al. (1983) treat twelve species, five of which occur as feral populations in California (but again, they treat the “wrong” form of Canary-winged Parakeet). Finally, Farrand (1983) treats only Budgerigar (with no established feral populations in California) and Canary-winged Parakeet (with a photograph of the “correct” form but a text account of the “wrong” one).

Thus, only five of the eight or more feral psittacid taxa of the region are covered by standard North American field guides and most of these inadequately. The fact that our feral psittacids are derived from the avifaunas of Middle America, South America and India ensures that no other single regional field guide covers our entire species pool. The major monographic works on the Psittacidae (e.g., Forshaw 1973) contain a great deal of natural history information but are not field identification oriented.

The taxa covered in this note are those that currently appear to maintain stable or increasing feral populations in California, and thus are likely to be seen in numbers in a

free-flying state. To include all psittacid species ever observed in a free-flying state in the region would be counterproductive, as such a list would be greatly lengthened by a large number of species only occasionally observed as escapees. Nevertheless, I have tried to include species of questionable or marginal establishment in order to facilitate and encourage data collection on those species. An ongoing project (Garrett 1994) to gather data on the status and distribution of feral psittacids in southern California should soon provide a more rigorously defined list of the relevant feral species.

Parrot Identification

Parrots are often difficult to identify in the field for several reasons. They are most often observed in flight while traveling between feeding and roosting sites; specific field characters may be difficult to assess on distant flying birds. When foraging, they blend remarkably well with the foliage and can be exceedingly difficult to observe. Also, vocal repertoires are complex and extensive and undoubtedly involve varying degrees of interspecific vocal copying. These intrinsic characteristics of parrots, combined with the inadequacy of popular field guides, have led even keen birders to ignore or, at best, fail to become proficient at their field identification. A widespread lack of enthusiasm about feral and introduced birds in general has contributed to the phenomenon of parrot apathy.

Nomenclatural confusion also impedes the collection of information about southern California parrots. Avicultural “trade names” often differ from accepted ornithological nomenclature, and trade publications abound with inaccuracies and confusion regarding parrot taxonomy. Nomenclature and taxonomy used herein follow American Ornithologists’ Union [AOU] (1983); for species not treated by the AOU, I follow Sibley and Monroe (1990).

Key Field Identification Characters

The most striking plumage characteristic of nearly all of our feral psittacids is the predominantly green body coloration. This green coloration, while varying in shade among species, is in itself the least important character to concentrate upon for field identification.

General Shape

Our feral psittacids fall neatly into two groups based on overall body shape. The parrots of the genus *Amazona* are large (33–35 cm), large-headed and stockily built; they have relatively short, squared-off or very slightly rounded tails. All of our other species, usually called parakeets (some alternatively called “conures”), are more slender-bodied, with a graduated, pointed tail. The *Agapornis* lovebirds, often noted as escapees, are an exception to this dichotomy; they are very small in size but have short, squared tails.

Head Color

Many of the key plumage marks on parrots and parakeets involve the head, especially the crown and forehead. The presence or absence of a conspicuous bare eye ring is also important. Bill color may also be an important aid in identification.

Wing Pattern

Conspicuous red or yellow patches may be present on the secondaries, upper wing coverts or wing linings in many of our species.

Flight Style

Amazona parrots fly with a unique wingbeat: continuous, rapid, shallow beats with wings bowed downward and never lifted above the horizontal. *Aratinga* and related *Nandayus* also fly with continuous, rapid wingbeats, but the wings are slightly less bowed, with the up and

down strokes more centered on the horizontal plane. *Psittacula* has a deeper wingstroke than *Aratinga* and appears exceptionally long tailed. Our *Brotogeris* have a more irregular, twisting flight, with the wings closed briefly against the body after a series of rapid flaps.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Status and Distribution. Found locally in the coastal communities from Malibu to Palos Verdes and inland to w. San Bernardino County. Often found around native sycamores in coastal canyons. [Native to India, c. Africa]

Identification. 40 cm. The slender tail with very long central rectrices is distinctive, as is the bright red upper mandible. The overall coloration is a bright emerald green; only adult males show the thin black, rose-tinged collar. The distinctive call is a clear, downslurred flicker-like "kew."

Blue-crowned Parakeet

Aratinga acuticaudata

Status and Distribution. Individuals or small flocks have been noted at several sites around Los Angeles (e.g., Northridge, Redondo Beach) and San Diego. [Native to South America]

Identification. 37 cm. Typical *Aratinga* in shape, with a long, graduated tail. Unmarked green overall, with a suffusion of pale blue on the forecrown, extending in some birds through the face and center of the crown. Conspicuous bare pale fleshy ring around orange iris. The tail is tinged with reddish below on the basal half. The call is a loud, rapidly repeated "cheeeah" (Hilty and Brown 1986).



Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, Exposition Park

Mitred Parakeet

Aratinga mitrata

Status and Distribution. Flocks are widespread in the coastal communities from Malibu to Long Beach and locally through the Los Angeles Basin and interior valleys. [Native to South America]

Identification. 38 cm. Rather bright deep green throughout, with a deep red forehead and a variable amount of bright red on the forecrown and face, more extensive in adults. Most adults also show a few small flecks of red scattered on the hindcrown, sides of the head, breast and marginal coverts. The underwings are green on the coverts and yellowish olive on the flight feathers. The heavy bill is pale ivory-flesh; there is a bold white ring of bare skin around the eye. Very noisy, giving a loud, harsh, somewhat nasal "ehhh, eh hh, eh hh" series and an upslurred "kreeep."

Red-masked Parakeet

Aratinga erythrogenys

Status and Distribution. Occasionally seen with flocks of Mitred Parakeets. [Native to South America]

Identification. 33 cm. Similar to the Mitred, but smaller. The bright red of the head forms an extensive solid area through the crown, face

and chin, sharply set off from the green throat and neck. The lesser and median underprimary coverts are bright red, which shows as a red line along the bend of the wing when perched. Calls are not as harsh as those of the Mitred; the upslurred note tends to be more two-parted, "kree-eep?"

Black-hooded Parakeet

Nandayus nenday

Status and Distribution. Small flocks occur in the coastal region from Malibu to Redondo Beach, occasionally further inland. Often seen in sycamores of coastal canyons. [Native to South America]

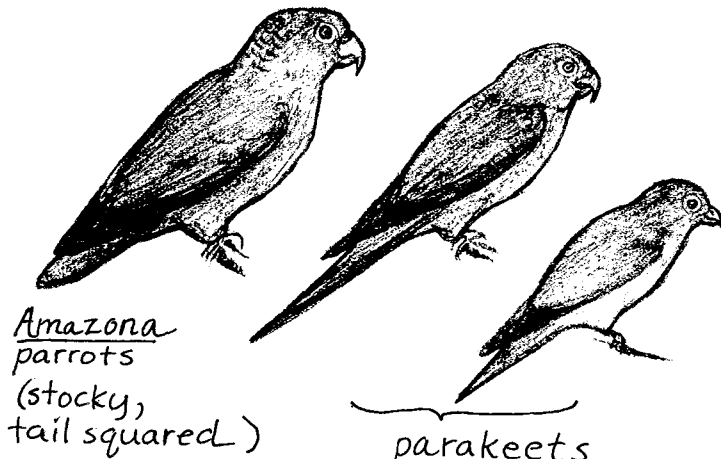
Identification. 30 cm. The black crown, face and bill are diagnostic; this black contrasts with the pale gray bare eye ring. The breast is washed lightly with blue, and the feathering of the thighs is bright red in adults. The call is a screeching "kreee-ah."

Canary-winged Parakeet

Brotogeris [v.] versicolurus

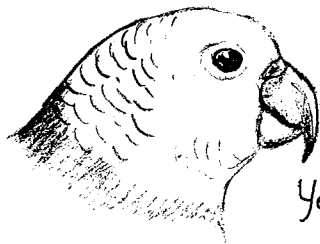
Status and Distribution. Formerly found on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and perhaps elsewhere; now largely replaced by the next form (species?). [Native to South America]

Identification. 22 cm. Small, with a medium-length, graduated tail.

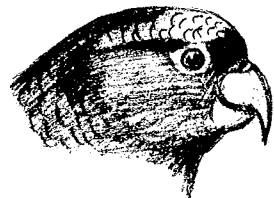


Amazona
parrots
(stocky,
tail squared)

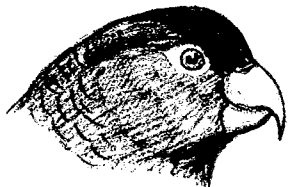
parakeets
(more slender,
tail graduated)



Yellow-headed
Parrot
(large, much
yellow on head)

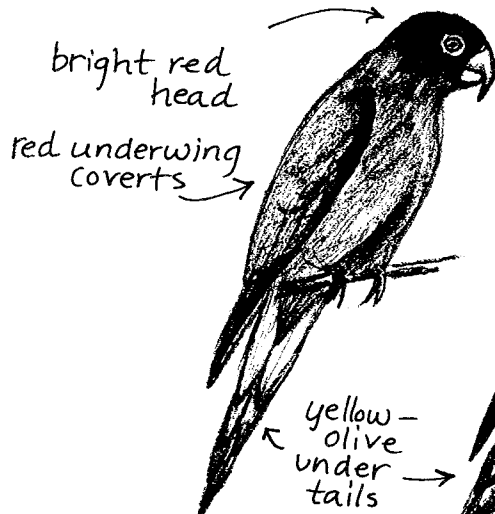


Lilac-crowned
Parrot
(deep red forehead;
crown tinged lilac)

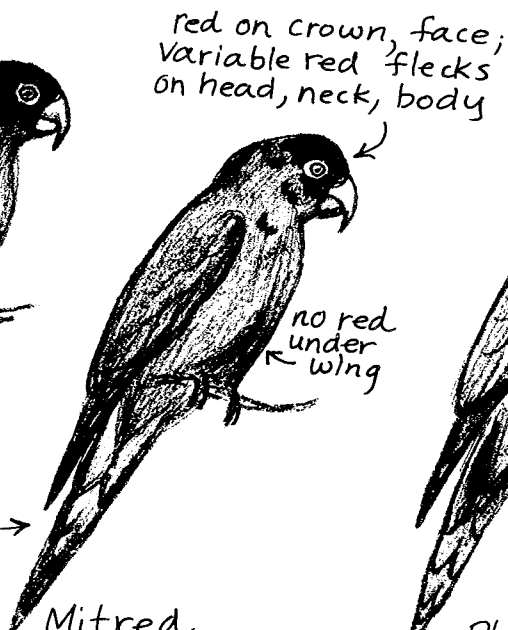


Red-crowned
Parrot
(bright red forehead
and forecrown)

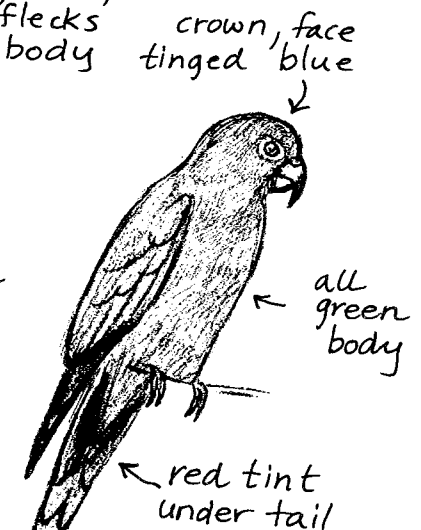
♀♀ Red-crowneds have
more restricted red



Red-masked
Parakeet

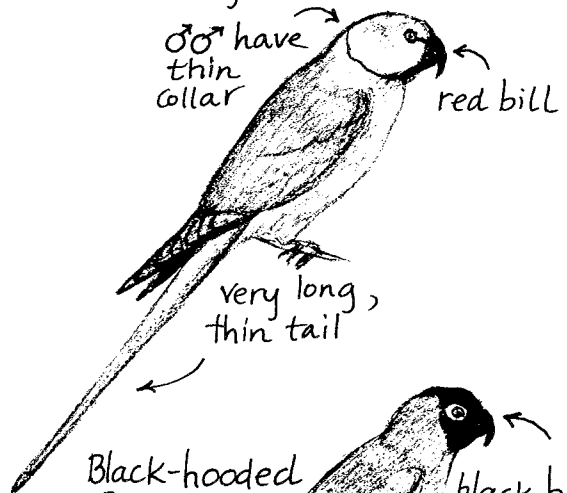


Mitred
Parakeet

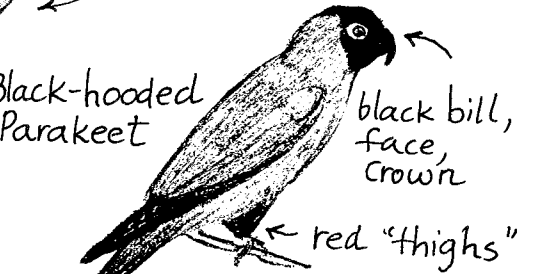


Blue-crowned
Parakeet

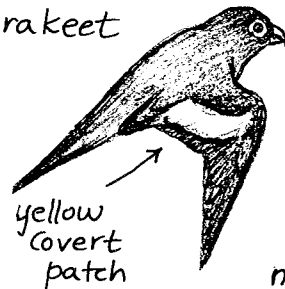
Rose-ringed Parakeet



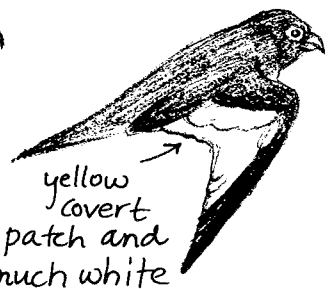
Black-hooded
Parakeet



Yellow-chevroned
Parakeet



Canary-winged
Parakeet



yellow covert
patch and
much white
in flight feathers

Overall plumage deep green, with a contrasting flesh-colored bill. Greater secondary coverts bright yellow; inner primaries and outer secondaries white.

Yellow-chevroned Parakeet

Brotogeris [v.] chiriri

Status and Distribution. Flocks are widespread through the Los Angeles Basin and locally in the coastal areas (e.g., Palos Verdes Peninsula) and interior valleys. [Native to South America]

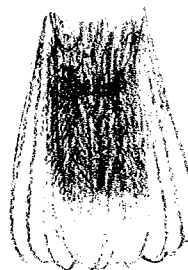
Identification. 22 cm. Similar to Canary-winged Parakeet (and usually treated as conspecific) but lacking white in the wing, and body plumage brighter yellow-green. Appears essentially all green with a yellow covert patch that may be difficult to see when perched. Call is a scratchy “kree-kree.”

Lilac -
crowned



tail longer;
central feathers
green to tip

Red -
crowned



tail shorter;
broad yellowish
band across
tail tip

Amazon tails — upper side

Lilac-crowned Parrot

Amazona finschi

Status and Distribution. Mainly in the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys, but locally along the coast (e.g., Zuma Canyon); often flocks with Red-crowned Parrot, and mixed pairs known. [Native to w. Mexico]

Identification. 33 cm. Very similar to Red-crowned Parrot, and not easily identifiable from it without careful study. Generally green, with red patch on secondaries. Forehead dark red, this red extending back only to the front of the eye. Crown and sides of neck strongly tinged with lilac throughout. Tail long compared to Red-crowned's. Central rectrices green throughout; remaining pairs broadly tipped with pale yellowish. Calls include a high, rolling “kree-ih” and a harsh “kr-ra-kr-ra.” See Howell and Webb (1995) for an excellent discussion of the identification of “our” *Amazona*.

Red-crowned Parrot

Amazona viridigenalis

Status and Distribution. Found in flocks (up to 100+ birds) in the San Gabriel Valley and Orange County, with smaller numbers in the San Fernando Valley, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Malibu, etc. [Native to e. Mexico]

Identification. 33 cm. Closely resembles Lilac-crowned Parrot, but the red of the forehead is brighter; in males this red extends back on the crown well past the eye, whereas in females it just reaches over the eye. The remaining crown is green, shading to deep blue on the sides of the crown. The body plumage is somewhat brighter green than in Lilac-crowned. The tail is relatively shorter, with a broad pale yellowish tip. The eye is yellowish, paler than the orange-

Dichotomous Key to Feral Parrots of California

- | | | | |
|----|--|------------------------------------|--|
| a | Stocky; tail squared off or slightly rounded | b | |
| aa | More slender; tail graduated | e | |
| b | Larger; head with at least some yellow | c | |
| bb | Smaller; no yellow on head | d | |
| c | Head entirely yellow | Yellow-headed Parrot (adult) | |
| cc | Yellow of head restricted to patch on face, crown or nape
[other related species similar] | Yellow-headed Parrot
(immature) | |
| d | Forehead dull red; forecrown green, tinged lilac;
tail longer; eyes orange | Lilac-crowned Parrot | |
| dd | Forehead and forecrown bright red; tail shorter; eyes yellow | Red-crowned Parrot | |
| e | Bill red; tail very long and slender, equal to or
greater than 1/2 total length | Rose-ringed Parakeet | |
| ee | Bill not red; tail less than half of total length. | f | |
| f | Smaller; bright yellow patch on wing coverts | g | |
| ff | Larger; no yellow patch on wing coverts | h | |
| g | Much white in secondaries and inner primaries | Canary-winged Parakeet | |
| gg | No white in secondaries or inner primaries | Yellow-chevroned Parakeet | |
| h | Face, crown and bill black | Black-hooded Parakeet | |
| hh | No black on head; bill flesh or ivory | i | |
| i | No red on head or wings; forecrown and sometimes
face light blue; red tint on undersides of rectrices | Blue-crowned Parakeet | |
| ii | Some red on body and/or wings | j | |
| j | Variable red patches or flecks on crown, face and
sometimes body; no red on underwing coverts; larger | Mitred Parakeet | |
| jj | Much red on crown and face; red on underwing
coverts; smaller | Red-masked Parakeet | |

amber eye of Lilac-crowned. Calls are harsh crow-like scolds and high squeals, distinguishable from Lilac-crowned with practice.

Yellow-headed Parrot

Amazona oratrix

Status and Distribution. Small flocks found in the Los Angeles Basin (especially West Los Angeles), San Gabriel Valley, etc. Probably more numerous in 1960s and 1970s than now. [Native from Mexico to South America]

Identification. 35 cm. Large amazon, all green on the body with a completely yellow head. Immatures have yellow restricted to forehead and face. Other Central America forms (species?) have yellow on head restricted to crown or nape; individuals of these (Yellow-naped Parrot, *A. auropalliata*, and Yellow-crowned Parrot, *A. ochrocephala*) may occur with Yellow-headed flocks. Call is remarkably human-like, a laughing "kraa-aah-ah-ow."



Marginal feral species in our region which are not treated in the accounts above or in the key include the Monk Parakeet (*Myopsitta monachus*), lovebirds (*Agapornis* spp.), cockatoos (*Cacatua*), the Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), macaws (*Ara*), other *Aratinga* and other Amazona.

I thank the dozens of people who have cooperated with The Parrot Project by turning in feral parrot data sheets, and gratefully acknowledge the indulgence of the California Bird Records Committee for allowing me to be Chair of the Introduced Birds Subcommittee. Annie Lin of Alhambra High School helped with collation of the parrot sighting data. 🐦

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New At The Bookstore

<i>Encyclopedia of Mammals</i> , Macdonald, 1984	69.95
<i>Birding in Ohio, 2nd Edition</i> , Thomson, 1994	24.95
<i>Birds of Chesapeake Bay</i> , Taylor, 1992	36.95
<i>Connecticut Birds</i> , Selanski, 1990	35.00
<i>Birds of Massachusetts</i> , Veit & Petersen, 1993	39.95
<i>Life on the Edge — A Guide to California Endangered Resources & Wildlife</i> , Thelander, et al., 1994	45.00
<i>Four Neotropical Rainforests</i> (soft), Gentry, 1990	29.95
<i>Where to Watch Birds in South America</i> , Wheatley, 1995	29.95
<i>Finding Birds in Britain, A Site Guide</i> , Speight, 1995	14.95
<i>Collins Guide, Birds of Russia</i> , Kaystautus, 1993	33.00
<i>Wild India</i> , Mountfort, 1991	39.95
<i>Bird Migration, An Illustrated Account</i> , Butler, 1992	27.95
<i>California Wildlife Viewing Guide</i> , Clark, 1992	7.95
<i>Exploring the Southern Sierra, West Side</i> , Jenkins, 1995	12.95
<i>Handbook of Birds of the World, Vol. 2</i> , Hoyo, et al., 1994	165.00

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Bird Songs of Dominican Republic, Reynard, 1981	11.95
Moroccan Bird Songs & Calls, Stromberg, 1994	14.95
Birding Southeastern Arizona (VHS), Werriott, 1995	25.00

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July 4th Butterfly Counts

This is a suggestion, if you are looking for something exciting to do during those summer doldrums (of course, if you are doing a block in the Los Angeles Breeding Bird Atlas, you already are having an exciting and fulfilling summer). You could participate in a July 4th Butterfly Count. These counts are similar to the Christmas Bird Counts in that they cover a 15-mile diameter circle. However, because they take place from early June to late July, the weather will be warm and beautiful (no rain!). All counts welcome beginners who have no experience in butterfly watching.

There have been six counts in southern California in past years:

- Mt. Baden-Powell (San Gabriel Mountains)

- Santa Ynez Canyon (Santa Monica Mountains)
- Palos Verdes Peninsula
- Orange County (Newport, Irvine, etc.)
- San Juan Capistrano
- Pomona

A Pasadena count may be added this year.

Next month's issue of the *Tanager* will have the dates of each count as well as the names and phone numbers of the compilers.

In the meantime, if you would like to know a little more about any of these counts or would like to start your own count, please contact Fred Heath at 310/826-0083. By the way, he is the compiler of the Mt. Baden-Powell Count which generally gets the most species in southern California. 🐦

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Bluebird Recovery Program

If you'd like to be a little more proactive about breeding birds, Doug Martin he has an idea for you. Besides being an Atlas Regional Coordinator, he is also the Los Angeles County Coordinator for the California Bluebird Recovery Program. The program goal is to promote and aid in any way possible the increase in population of native cavity nesting birds, especially bluebirds. It is an extension of the National Audubon's "Birds in the Balance" campaign.

Doug's responsibilities as coordinator involve recruiting volunteers to help monitor nest boxes as well as conducting "workshops" where people can learn how to successfully attract native birds to nest boxes and hopefully start projects of their own.

Doug placed 18 nest boxes in O'Melveny Park in 1992. Over the past three years, 138 Western Bluebirds have fledged from these nest boxes along with young from several other species. Specifically, he is looking for volunteers to monitor the boxes at O'Melveny Park and Sepulveda Basin. These volunteers will have the unique opportunity to observe firsthand the complete nesting cycle of several species that make use of the nest boxes. It's fun and educational and only requires about an hour or two a week.

If you would like to set up your own nest boxes (perhaps to augment your Breeding Bird Atlas species totals), Doug is available to help. Call him at 818/367-8967. You'll be glad you did! 🐦

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CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

In this dismal era of the Gingrich counterrevolution, perhaps we can find a ray of sunshine in Chatsworth Reservoir. For those of us who came in late, Chatsworth Reservoir is 1,300 acres of open space in the northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley. It was built in 1919 to irrigate the orange groves and bean fields of the Valley. Drained for alterations in 1969 and socked by the Sylmar earthquake two years later, the old reservoir was never filled again.

When it was closed for good, DWP, at the request of environmentalists, created a thirty-acre "ecology pond" that soon became an excellent habitat for waterfowl. The pond was a miniature replacement for the reservoir itself which had always been an unofficial wildlife sanctuary. DWP has also built a dike that permits storm water in winter to collect in the bottom of the reservoir which allows the formation of ephemeral ponds. Along with ducks and other water birds, a surprising appearance of breeding Virginia Rails was discovered in these marshy ponds in 1994.

The dry, unoccupied reservoir has been sitting there all these years as the Valley filled up with homes and malls and new neighborhoods: a tantalizing morsel for eager developers. Proposals have been made sporadically for condos and country clubs and low-cost homes for city teachers. Suggestions for golf courses have been common. DWP has not been interested — until recently. Mayor Riordan is pressuring all city departments to cut waste and sell off excess property.

DWP owns the lion's share of unused land.

Last May the city Recreation and Parks Department floated a trial balloon suggesting that money-making concessions might be built in the reservoir. These included two executive-style nine-hole golf courses with a driving range and club house, restaurant, family recreation center with banquet room, miniature golf course and video arcade. Well, as can be imagined, this prescription for Chatsworth did not go down easily. Homeowners in the area protested. The Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations said they would fight. Its leader declared, "I think you need more open space in this city, not more miniature golf courses. This city is already park poor." Environmentalists came on strong in opposition.

Fortunately, Hal Bernson, City Councilman of the district, has a long record of support for maintaining the reservoir as a wildlife refuge. A year earlier the Council, at his request, passed an ordinance declaring the area Open Space with uses "limited to a Nature Preserve," which may include "a nature center, environmental education center or local history display center." His response to the Rec and Park's proposal was a trenchant, "Over my dead body!" His office formed a task force to work for the preservation of the reservoir. Along with the green organizations are folks with the State Park Department, U.S. Fish and Game, local homeowners and the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy, with deputies of Valley congressmen sitting in on meetings.

The task force is concentrating on a brochure that will convince public officials and all the powers that be that the reservoir is worth saving. The 1,300 acres is in truth the last bit of undisturbed open space left in the City of Los Angeles, not just the Valley. The bird list is close to 200 going back to the 1950s with Christmas Counts and field trips every year. In 1994, Arthur Langton and Wanda Dameron made a splendid field survey of 60 visits in 12 months. They found 16 species new to the area including Baird's Sandpiper, Long-eared Owl, Costa's and Allen's hummingbirds, and Brewer's, Black-throated, Rufous-crowned and Swamp sparrows. Hundreds of migrating Canada Geese feed on the grassland area in the fall and winter and rest undisturbed on the pond. There are deer, coyotes, bobcats, bats, snakes and amphibians as well as the usual cottontails, lizards and squirrels. Two rare native plants that are candidates for state and federal listing as endangered have been found: the Santa Susana Tarplant and the Many-stemmed Dudleya.

Chatsworth Reservoir has other attributes. Thirteen Chumash archaeological sites have been located within a half-mile radius on the western half of the reservoir. There is a Spanish lime kiln that was declared a historical-cultural monument. Productive fossil-bearing layers are in the reservoir and may include highly unusual mollusk specimens. Valuable oaks — coast live oak and the rarer Valley oak — occur generously in the reservoir. The Chatsworth Reservoir Conservancy

has registered oaks ranging from 200 to 500 years old; acorns and seedlings have been planted by school children and scouts with the guidance of the Conservancy.

Some people are certain that development of golf courses in the reservoir is perfectly compatible with wildlife. Parking and floodlights in a driving range would hardly spell compatibility. And golfers are insatiable; will one or two golf courses be enough? Yes, the city needs the money, but must we sell off the last natural asset we have to get it? As

Councilman Bernson says, "Why not sell Yellowstone Park? The federal government has a deficit, too."

The bright spot in Chatsworth is that saving the reservoir makes sense to many people. Bernson is expressing the sentiments of his constituents. Members of Audubon, California Native Plant Society and the Sierra Club are on the task force. Legislators such as State Senator Tom Hayden, Assemblywoman Paula Boland (R) and Congressman Tony Beilenson favor the wildlife reserve. And there are un-

affiliated people all over the city who agree.

So, though the signs from Washington are not encouraging, this local battle can be won. As a wildlife sanctuary in perpetuity, Chatsworth Reservoir will tell the world that there must be limits to the sacrifice of nature to unreasonable human activity.

You can help by writing a letter or postcard to your councilmember and to Mayor Richard Riordan. Both are at 200 N. Spring St., Los Angeles 90012. ✍



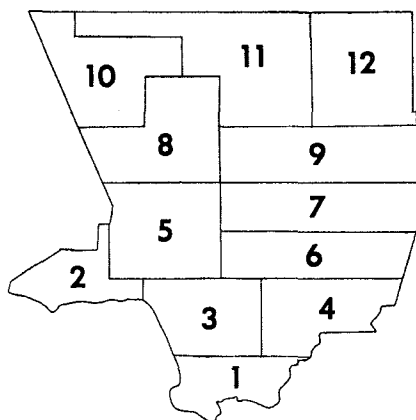
Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas Update

By the time you read this, the first breeding season of the five year Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas project will be well under way. By the end of March, breeding evidence for over 20 species had already been confirmed! If you do not have a block yet, there is still time to start one. All you need is a commitment of perhaps 20 hours (which can be spread over a number of weekends in the spring and summer). Other than being able to identify the common local birds in breeding plumage, no experience is necessary.

Cover the block where you live or maybe your favorite birding area. If you are more adventuresome, try a new area. Most of the blocks in the northern end of the county are still in need of atlasing help. Pick an area, then call the Regional Coordinator listed at right for the block that covers that area. If you'd like to help but are not sure as to which

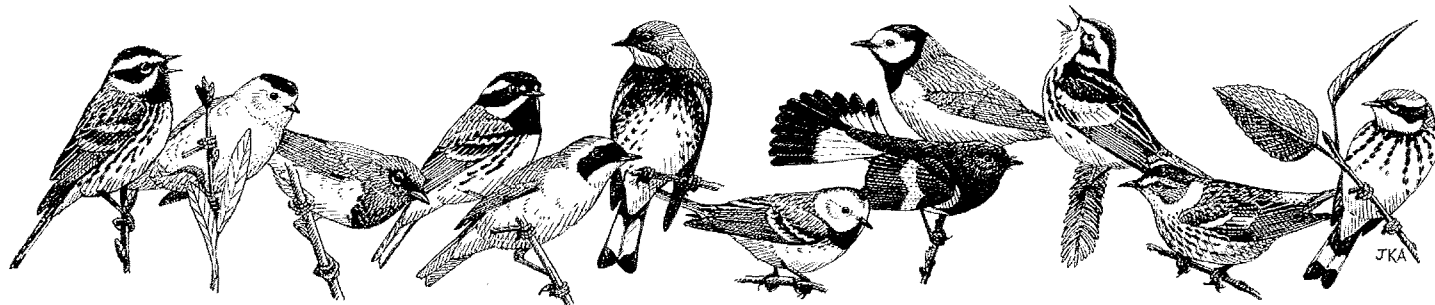
region your block is in or if you want to have a block assigned, call Breeding Bird Atlas Central at 213/745-BIRD [2473].

(Note the addition of Claudia Freitas in South Coast and Doug Martin as the new contact for Northwest County.) ✍



Mark Wimer, Project Coordinator
213/745-BIRD message machine
900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles 90007

- 1 SOUTH COAST
Claudia Freitas
310/420-2689
- 2 SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS
Larry Allen
213/221-2022
- 3 LOS ANGELES BASIN
Eleanor Osgood
310/839-5420
- 4 SOUTHEAST COUNTY
Dan Guthrie
909/621-4000
- 5 SAN FERNANDO VALLEY
Dustin Alcala
818/768-1222
- 6 SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS SOUTH
Mike San Miguel
818/355-5058
- 7 HIGH SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS
Jon Fisher
818/821-0263
- 8 SANTA CLARITA
Frank Hovore
805/250-8311
- 9 SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS NORTH
Kimball Garrett
213/744-3368 (work)
- 10 NORTHWEST COUNTY
Doug Martin
818/367-8967
- 11 ANTELOPE VALLEY WEST
Cal Yorke
805/943-3241 x544 (voice mail)
- 12 ANTELOPE VALLEY EAST
Fred Heath, Project Director
310/826-0083



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

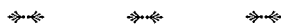
by Hank Brodtkin

May is the peak of the Atlas field season, and we hope this column finds you ready to spend another day covering your BBA block(s). Nevertheless, May is also the time of year that birders like to check the desert oases for that most sought after avian gem — the vagrant. For reasons only hypothesized, these are birds that migrate in the wrong direction and instead of returning to, say, New England, show up in California City. And, for reasons also unclear, these out-of-range birds drive the ordinarily reasonable birder around the bend. To take part in this madness, head for your favorite oasis — Galileo, Furnace Creek, Butterbrecht Springs, or even Harbor Regional Park or Huntington Beach Central Park.

If you are fortunate enough to locate one of these misplaced wanderers, please consider documenting it by writing a proper description for publication of the record in *FIELD NOTES* (formerly *AMERICAN BIRDS*). This should contain a complete description of the bird, type of optics used, viewing conditions, names of other observers, and should be accompanied by any photos, videotapes or tape recordings you may have made.

For southern California in general, send your report to: Guy McCaskie, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, P.O. Box 1390, San Diego, CA 92112. Los Angeles County reports should go directly to Kimball Garrett, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, 900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90007. If your sighting is of a species on the Cali-

fornia Bird Records Committee review list; it will be forwarded to that committee. And by all means, get the word out as soon as possible. Call any of the various county Rare Bird Alerts or call me at the number at the end of this column.

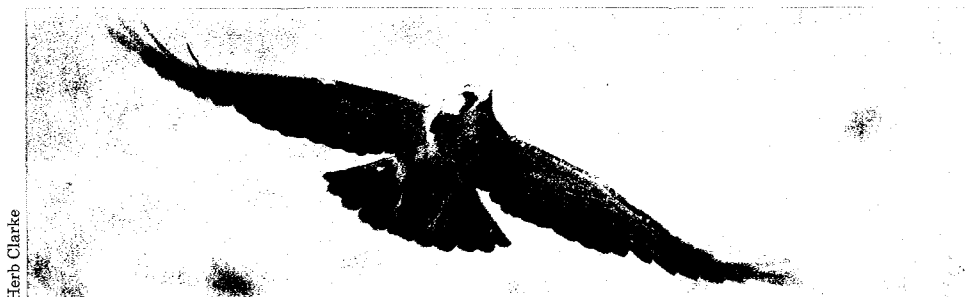


This past reporting period — 20 February to 20 March — found spring migration gathering steam.

A **Black Scoter** and seven **White-winged Scoters** were seen off El Segundo on 28 February (Kevin Larson). **Swainson's Hawks** — the first spring reports I've received — were seen at Bob's Gap on 18 March (David Powell) and over La Crescenta on 15 March (Kimball Garrett).

A **Stilt Sandpiper** was seen at Prado Basin on 26 February (Gene Cardiff), and a **Red Phalarope** was reported from the Ballona Wetlands on 6 March (Richard Barth). Up to 130 **Black Skimmers** at Shoreline Aquatic Park in Long Beach at the end of February were undoubtedly an all-time high for the county (Charlie Collins). A **Northern Pygmy Owl** was at Chantry Flats in the San Gabriel Mountains on 4 March (Mike San Miguel).

Swainson's Hawk



The first **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** report also comes from the lower slopes of the San Gabriels on 15 March (Rich Pagan). The first **Western Kingbirds** were seen at Borrego Springs on 11 March (Hank & Priscilla Brodtkin) on the LAAS field trip and in Van Nuys on the same day (KG).

Another spring first on the field trip was a **Wilson's Warbler** at Yaqui Wells on 11 March (Fred Heath). Very early vagrants were a **Northern Parula** at Yorba Regional Park in Yorba Linda on 19 March (Doug Willick and Tom Wurster) and a **Black-and-White Warbler** in Norwalk on 12–13 March (John Schmitt). The first report I have of a **Hooded Oriole** is one from Cheesebro Canyon on 18 March (Robert Weissler).

Good Birding! 🐦

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

Hank Brodtkin

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

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

Continued from page 12

Saturday, May 20 — Santa Anita Canyon. Leader **Mary Carmona.** Take the 210 Fwy toward Arcadia. Take Santa Anita Ave. N to the parking lot at the very end of the road. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the trailhead at the bottom of the lot. Four mile round-trip moderately strenuous walk through oak and chaparral canyons. Good selection of breeding and migrating birds including warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Band-tailed Pigeon, three hummers and American Dipper possible. Bring a lunch.

Sunday, May 21 — Butterbrecht Springs Lizards. **Harvey Fischer,** L.A. Zoo herpetologist and LAAS member, will lead our search for Leopard Lizard and others seen in Jawbone Canyon. We will briefly bird Butterbrecht Springs and then look for herps. Take Hwy 14 past Mojave and continue N on Hwy 14 about 17 miles to Jawbone Canyon

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.

Rd. Head W and meet at 8:00 A.M. at the message board 100 yards W of the Hwy 14 intersection. Anticipate heat, hunger and rock-hopping. Red Rock Canyon State Park five miles N is good for camping. About two hours' driving time from L.A. Limited signup by phone with LAAS. Carpool from Denny's at Roxford and 5 Fwy at 6:00 A.M.

 **Sunday, May 21 —** 12-hour trip on the *R.V. Vantuna* out of San Pedro to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. \$37.

Saturday, June 3 — O'Melveny Park Bird Box Walk. Take in a morning of breeding birds with **Doug Martin**, concentrating on Western Bluebird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, House Wren and other cavity nesters that use the nesting boxes he constructed in conjunction with the North American Bluebird Society and National Audubon's Birds in the Balance. Learn general information about the importance of nest boxes and how to be successful in the construction and placement of them. Take the 405 Fwy N to the 118 Fwy W. Take the Balboa Blvd. offramp N. Turn left onto Jolette Ave. and right onto Meadowlark Ave. Park at the side of the street where Meadowlark deadends into Van Gogh St. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

Sunday, June 4 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See May 7 write-up for details.

Saturday and Sunday, June 10 and 11 — Yosemite. Leader **Louis Tucker.** Will concentrate on Goshawk, Pileated and Black-backed woodpeckers, Pine Grosbeak, Great Grey Owl, Blue Grouse, other local specialties. Trip ends Sunday afternoon in Owens Valley. Possible snow on ground, in air. Strict silence enforced during owl watch. Bring Saturday night sack dinner. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the Mariposa Grove parking lot just beyond the Yosemite south entrance. Suggest staying in Oakhurst area south of park Friday night. We plan to reserve 12 free campsites for Saturday night at Crane Flat. Yosemite campsites on sale April 14 through Mistix (800/365-2267). Trip limited to 14. Reserve with SASE and \$20 to LAAS for info sheet with accommodations and itinerary.


Sunday, June 11 — Annual Picnic. Charlton Flat Picnic Area. See story below.

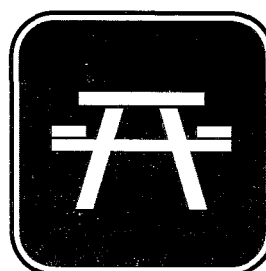
Friday through Monday, June 23 through 26 — Southern Sierras Weekend with Bob Barnes. Itinerary flexible, but similar to last year: Friday — Great Basin, Walker Pass, Troy Meadows. Saturday and Sunday — Butterbrecht Springs, Kern River Preserve, Bloomfield Ranch, eastern Sierra. Monday — Western Divide, Giant Sequoias. Owling Sunday night. Limited participation. Reserve with SASE and \$11 for each day (\$44 for 4 days) to LAAS for more info and lodging. 

Annual Picnic Sunday, June 11

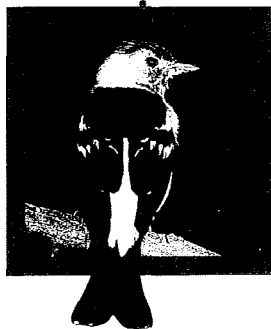
Join us on Sunday, June 11, at the Charlton Flat Picnic Area in the San Gabriel Mountains along the Angeles Crest Highway for more than just a fun-filled day of picnicking. Kimball Garrett and Fred Heath will spend the morning looking for nesting birds in order to entice you to

be part of the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas. There will be butterflies, botany and just plain birding for those of you who are still allergic to breeding birds.

Bring a lunch. LAAS will supply the cold drinks. Everyone — kids, grandparents, friends, etc. — are invited and encouraged to come. More details in next month's *Tanager*. 



— An Introduction to —
**Northern
 California Birds**



— Herbert Clarke —

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.

May 9, 1995

John Cox

The Cox's Sandpiper Story

Experience the story of this enigmatic bird, first thought to be a hybrid or an unknown race of Darwin. It was then described as a new species, but is now known to be a hybrid between Pectoral and Curlew Sandpipers.

June 13, 1995

Herb Clarke

An Introduction to California Birds

Herb will discuss and show selected pictures from his new book, *An Introduction to Northern California Birds*, along with reviewing the very successful previously published southern California companion volume. He will be happy to autograph either book, both of which are in stock at the Bookstore. Come and enjoy a beautiful and informative talk illustrated by Herb's slides, photographed at some of California's most scenic birding sites.

F I E L D T R I P S

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

↓ **Denotes Pelagic Trips**

Saturday, May 6 — A Great Day to do a Birdathon!

Sunday, May 7 — **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 turn left into the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$5 parking fee.

Saturday, May 13 — **Lakeview Area.** Leader **Howard King** will scour the coastal sage scrub and

lakeside habitats around Mystic Lake and the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. Bring \$2.25 fee or a fishing/hunting license for admission. Breeding hopefuls include four blackbirds, California Gnatcatcher, White-faced Ibis, Golden Eagle, Sora and Virginia's rail and Rufous-crowned and Black-chinned sparrows. Take the 60 Fwy E to 215 Fwy S to Ramona Expressway E. Turn left onto Davis Rd. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the headquarters building on the right. Bring lunch.

↓ **Saturday, May 13** — 12-hour trip out of Ventura to Anacapa, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands. Full galley on board. \$60.

Sunday, May 14 — **Whittier Narrows Regional Park.** Ranger **Ray Jillson**. 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 605 Fwy). Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right), and turn left into the Nature Center.

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