

# WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 62 Number 9 June 1996

Los Angeles Audubon Society

## BIRDING

## *Downtown Los Angeles*

by Kimball E. Garrett

Swift roost north of Ninth Street,  
between Hill and Broadway.  
Thousands of Vaux's Swift  
use this roost site in  
spring and fall.

A number of major cities in the United States have well-known birding areas in their core, with New York City's Central Park being perhaps the best-known example. Los Angeles, often described as a collection of suburbs in search of a city, has a vibrant, high-rise downtown which remains a mystery to the majority of the county's populace. And downtown has certainly not been an attraction for the region's large corps of birders, for birding opportunities would seem rather limited in a sea of glass, concrete, steel and asphalt. Up to now, downtown Los Angeles has probably been best known ornithologically for its population of Ringed Turtle-Doves (now apparently completely extirpated) and its perennial nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons. The thought of a birding trip to downtown Los Angeles has probably entered the minds of few birders. This began to change, however, with a bit of serendipity early in 1996. A local birder serving jury duty in the civic center happened to spend part of a lunch break checking out the birds in the landscaped plaza adjacent to the County Criminal Courts building. Much to his astonishment, a first winter male American Redstart appeared in a small group of podocarpus trees. Then the "Patagonia Picnic Table Effect" leapt into action. I checked out the redstart in February, found it readily, then walked west across Hill Street and out popped a male Prothonotary Warbler, one of the few winter records for California. Other birders searching for the redstart and Prothonotary added a variety of interesting species, including a Swainson's Hawk, Merlin, Band-tailed Pigeons, Yellow-chevrons Parakeets, and a probable Broad-tailed Hummingbird. Recognizing that downtown Los Angeles is now on the "birding map," I'll attempt in this article to describe some of the area's ornithological attractions.

To begin, it might be instructive

to view the habitats of downtown Los Angeles from a bird's point of view. For some species, including the Peregrine Falcon, Rock Dove, and White-throated Swift, the concrete, bridges and buildings of downtown are prime nesting habitat, and it matters little that they are constructed by humans rather than being natural cliffs, crags, crevices and ledges. What matters is that these nest sites are in far greater abundance here than in any natural situations in the Los Angeles Basin, and that they are readily and successfully used by the birds. There is certainly a dearth of hollow trees in downtown Los Angeles, but from the point of view of a *Chaetura* (Vaux's or Chimney) swift, the occasional unblocked ventilation shaft or chimney is an ideal substitute. For the great majority of birds, however, the concrete, asphalt and edifices are as irrelevant as the barren sand dunes and alkali flats a desert migrant might encounter before finding the sustenance of a lush oasis such as Death Valley's Furnace Creek Ranch. A migrant songbird might find the majority of the downtown landscape worthless, uninviting and irrelevant, keying in instead on those isolated pockets of green in the form of little parks and landscaped plazas. Just as Galileo Hill, Furnace Creek Ranch and Iron Mountain Pump Station are well-known migrant bird traps in a dry desert landscape, the handful of green patches in downtown Los Angeles hold considerable potential for concentrations of migrants. The flora of downtown's plazas includes only a few species native to the region (an occasional planted live oak or sycamore). But the diversity of exotic trees and shrubs guarantees that some food will be available in the form of fruit, nectar, buds, seeds or insects throughout the year. Commonly planted trees include pine, eucalyptus, jacaranda, *Ficus*, carob and bottlebrush. Human social concerns explain the lack of dense planted shrubbery in our urban parks, but enough hedges and shrubs are available to provide con-

siderable cover for birds. Seed-producing grasses and forbs are scarce, replaced by neat but generally sterile lawns.

### **CIVIC CENTER PLAZA, BOUNDED BY HILL, TEMPLE, GRAND AND FIRST**

This is the site of the Prothonotary Warbler of winter and spring 1996. Parking is free on Hill Street before 8:00 A.M. Monday through Saturday, and all day on Sunday. Otherwise the metered parking is expensive (10 minutes for a quarter, one hour maximum). Many parking garages are available. The entire plaza bounded by the above streets is worth checking out, but pay special attention to the tall bottlebrush shrubs adjacent to the County Hall of Administration in the northwest corner of the plaza. Also check fruiting *Ficus* and flowering eucalyptus trees carefully. Allen's Humming-



*Los Angeles Civic Center. This plaza immediately south of the County Hall of Administration turned up a Prothonotary Warbler, American Redstart and other gems early in 1996.*

bird are probably present year-round here, and Anna's are always common; migrant Black-chinned and Rufous appear in spring. White-throated Swifts are almost always evident overhead, and Spotted Doves are numerous in the plantings. Migrants can abound in April and May and again from August through October. Since relatively few species winter in this plaza, it can be an interesting place to chart the timing of migration. For example, I saw a small "fallout" of White-crowned Sparrows there on 23 April 1996; these birds were clearly

migrants, since no White-crowns wintered here; because wintering White-crowns are generally so widespread and abundant, even on the colder deserts, we can rarely see such evidence of "pure" migration. Migration of species such as Lincoln's Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat can also be evident in this kind of situation.

Other small landscaped areas in downtown are worth checking in winter and during migration. These include the landscaped terraces north of Fifth Street near the Central Library, Pershing Square, and the small park at Ninth and Hope.

### SWIFT CITY

A true birding spectacle downtown is the concentration of migrant Vaux's Swift in late April and May, and again from late August through October. These birds range widely to feed — perhaps mainly

hour before darkness. The roosting shaft is at the south end of the Broadway Trade Center building, and is best viewed from the parking lot between the building and Ninth Street.

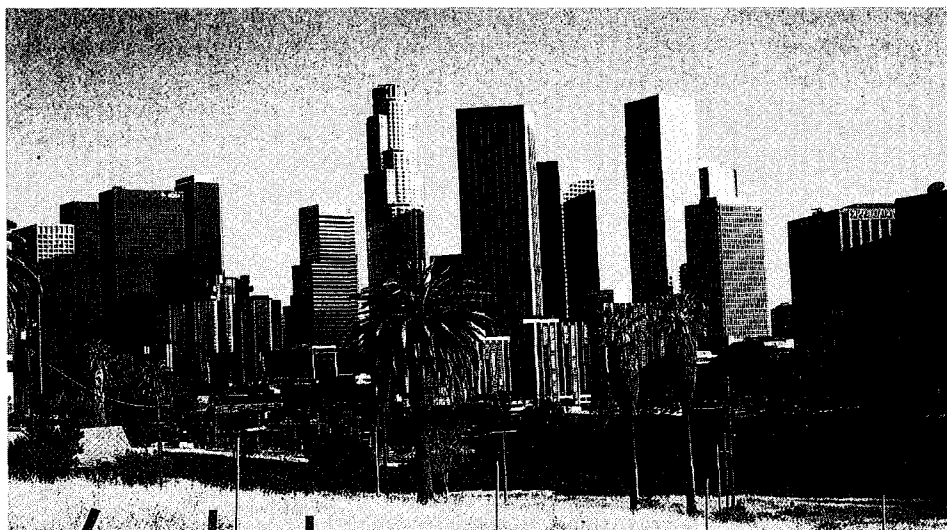
In some years the number of swifts appears to exceed the capacity of the roost site, and flocks of birds wheel around the downtown high-rises well after dark, and many birds cling to the sides of the buildings. From mid-May through mid-September there are usually a few Chimney Swifts at the roost site (listen for their calls, louder and harder than those of Vaux's), and from early June through early August there should be no Vaux's around for confusion. Chimneys were thought to nest in this roost site during the summer of 1995. Often an American Kestrel will perch just outside the entrance to the building shaft, picking off a swift or

sided Warbler and Clay-colored Sparrow. The trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the Rose Garden are the most productive. A small flock of Tricolored Blackbirds is often present in the Rose Garden in winter. And the birds you don't see can be viewed in the Schreiber Hall of Birds in the park's Museum of Natural History (open Tuesday through Sunday 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. For admission and membership info call 213/744-DINO). The **University of Southern California campus**, immediately north of Exposition Park, has some wooded glens that are excellent migrant traps.

**MacArthur Park** (Wilshire and Alvarado) is worth a check for gulls and ducks in winter, but Ringed Turtle-Doves are a thing of the past. This is one of the few public areas downtown where urban social ills are painfully (and sometimes obtrusively) evident, so exercise appropriate cautions. Nearby Lafayette Park often has a large flock of Yellow-chevrons Parakeets.

**Hollenbeck Park**, a pleasant urban oasis lying just east of the Santa Ana Freeway between Fourth Street and Whittier Blvd., has tall pines and sycamores and some live oaks and great potential for migrants. A visit there in March 1996 was highlighted by a Hermit Thrush in full song, high in a sycamore immediately adjacent to the Santa Ana Freeway, a striking juxtaposition of wilderness and urban chaos!

I don't expect local or visiting birders to forsake coverage of the region's diverse natural habitats to become urban bird junkies. But birders who travel hundreds of miles in migration to visit remote desert oases should be aware that the oasis effect applies, albeit on a more modest scale, right here in the heart of the nation's second largest city. Give downtown birding a try, and... if you strike out... there are a few restaurants, galleries, museums and historical sites that are also worth a look. Who knows? Maybe you'll find a Rosy Finch at the top of Angel's Flight! 🐦



*Downtown Los Angeles: A few islands of green in a sea of concrete, steel and glass.*

over the Los Angeles River adjacent to Elysian and Griffith Parks; they gather to roost downtown. My estimates of roosting numbers have been as high as 15–20,000 birds at peak periods in early May and again in late September and early October. The majority of these birds roost in a single building shaft just north of Ninth Street, between Hill and Broadway. There is free parking after 6:00 P.M. on Hill, and after 7:00 P.M. on Ninth. The best time to view the swifts is during the last

two for a bedtime snack; Peregrines will chase swifts on the wing (what other bird could succeed at that?!).

### OTHER SITES

Numerous other parks and green areas lie within a few miles of downtown.

**Exposition Park**, south of Exposition Blvd. and west of Figueroa Street, boasts a bird list of over 120 species, including such oddities as Least Tern, Short-eared Owl, Red-eyed and Hutton's vireos, Chestnut-



Herbert Clarke

# P E R S O N A L H I G H

by Herbert Clarke

In an attempt to recall a single birding personal high, a kaleidoscope of images comes to mind. As with all birders, observing wild birds in the field is a continuing source of wonderment, no matter how long or how often one participates in this enjoyable activity. Rather than reminiscing about a single personal high, I have a number of montages of what I call "life points." Here are three.

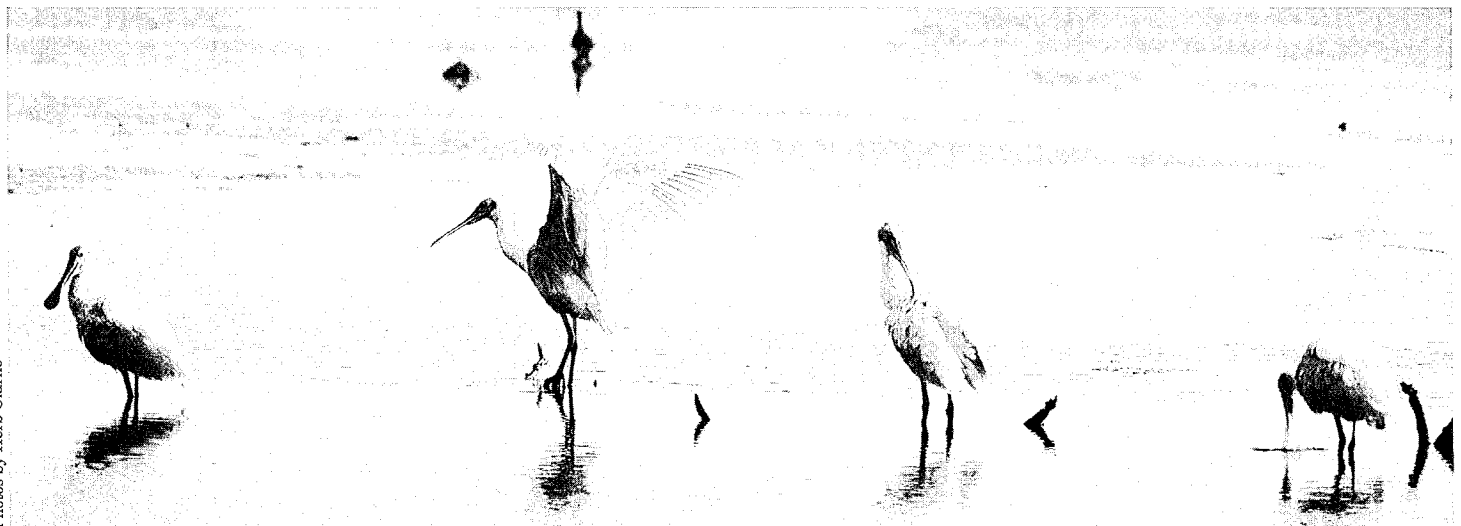
I'll always remember with fondness the first day of our honeymoon. I was standing on the bank of a small pond in Texas with my new bride, Olga. I had not previously divulged to her the depth of my obsession with birds, fearing she might not understand, so she had only a vague idea what birdwatching was all about. It was a beautiful day; balmy, sparkling blue sky dotted with clouds like puffs of cotton floating overhead. The pond was bordered by gnarled oaks draped with Spanish moss.

*Roseate Spoonbills*

The air was filled with bird song. Just then, out of nowhere, a flock of bright pink Roseate Spoonbills alighted just in front of us and began feeding in their distinctive manner, swinging their spatula-shaped bills back and forth with perfect reflections on the surface of the water, paying no attention to us. I'll never forget the look of astonishment on Olga's face. She was instantly hooked on birding and, after over 40 years, I still am running to keep up with her pursuit of birds. If I had to choose my single birding personal high, this would be the one. The euphoria of sharing together many more such events over a long time has been a continuing source of satisfaction.

Another occasion — while birding with a group of friends in the highlands of western Panama — we paused to take a brief rest after an exciting morning of observing the colorful birds of the region, when I spied a flash of iridescent green out

of the corner of my eye. I leisurely strolled over to the spot for a better look. Instantly I startled what appeared to be a bird with long streaming ribbons fluttering behind as it flew. The apparition landed on an exposed limb in the sunlight nearby. Behold, it was a male Resplendent Quetzal in full breeding plumage. Pandemonium immediately broke out. We were stunned at such a marvelous view of what I consider the most beautiful bird in the world. Some of the ladies broke into tears of joy as we drank in the scene. The bird seemed to be as interested in us as we were of it. We savored leisurely looks of this 14 inch, shimmering green-backed bird with its brilliant red underparts, bright yellow bill and 24-inch streamers gently swaying in the light breeze. After a while, the quetzal flew off trailing his ribbons (which are actually upper tail coverts) behind. Needless to say, this sighting was the fulfillment of a



Photos by Herb Clarke



*Resplendent Quetzal*

long, cherished dream for all of us.

Our first visit to east Africa had been more than living up to its reputation. Many birds, animals, exotic-appearing natives and spectacular scenery had almost overwhelmed our senses. We had reached western Uganda when we encountered another birder who had heard a rumor that a strange bird called Shoebill or, frequently, Whale-headed Stork (so-called because of its grotesquely shaped head) might be found in the marshes nearby. This species is one of the most wanted birds by world listers. It is shy, uncommon and is resident in dense papyrus swamps, making observation extremely difficult even though it is large, standing some five feet tall. We had harbored no expectations that we would ever see this bird. The next day, at the suggested location, we stood on an embankment, peering with telescopes over a vast marsh.

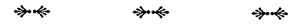
A herd of elephants was grazing nearby in the swamp. A tiny speck was noticed far out in the thick vegetation. Was this the fabled bird? How could we get a better look? How deep was the muck we would have to wade through to get closer? What about those elephants? Would they tolerate us walking near them? Lastly, would the bird even allow us to get reasonably close before it decided to disappear into the reeds? Throwing caution to the wind, as eager birders are known to do, we dashed

into the swamp. Amazingly, the shallow water and mud were fairly easy to walk in, the elephants obligingly moved out of the way and, even more astounding, the target allowed us to get near. I was even able to get some fairly decent photographs before the stork laboriously flew off. Although 25 years have passed since this event, the memory of this high is as vivid today as if it occurred only yesterday.

At the time, I never thought any of these adventures could ever be topped. But now, after all my decades in the field, I could go on and on describing many more such exciting "life points." That's what is so wonder-

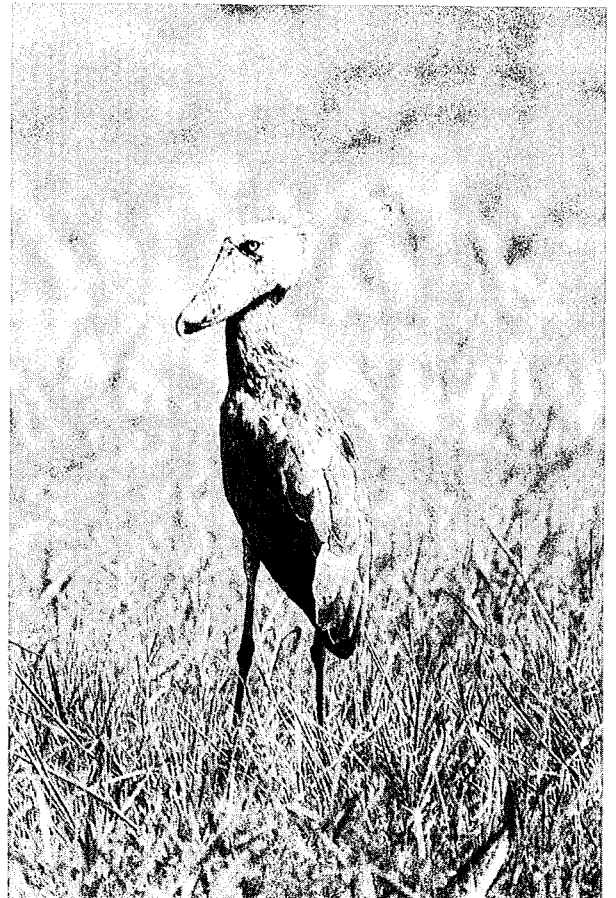
ful about birding and other nature observing. Who knows what unexpected marvels await you at the next turn, not only abroad but right in your home territory?

Good birding, and here's to more personal highs and life points! ~



*Herb Clarke has always been a good friend of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. In addition to holding Board positions including President, he has always generously supported the Western Tanager. His huge collection of bird and butterfly photographs has helped us out on many occasions throughout the years and we are most appreciative. Herb's wife, Olga, has been the driving force behind the LAAS Bookstore and tirelessly continues to promote it whenever and wherever she can around the globe. It is primarily because of Olga that the Bookstore catalogs can be found on every continent.*

*Whale-Headed Stork*



# Bookstore News

**D**URANON TICK REPELLANT is now available at the LAAS Bookstore. Long recognized as the best bug repellent, DURANON spray offers maximum protection from biting and bloodsucking insects and arthropods and vector-

borne diseases. It has been thoroughly field tested by the U.S. military and used by concerned birders worldwide.

Thoroughly spray your field clothes, including hats and socks, with DURANON *before* you go on a trip. The treatment will last two weeks, and still be effective after two launderings! The cost is \$6.95 per can and your editor can attest to the fact that it really works! ➤

*Voices of Costa Rican Birds: Caribbean Slope*; 220 species; Cornell-Ross Jr., 1996 Cass. \$21.95; CD \$24.95

*Frog and Toad Calls of the Pacific Coast: Vanishing Voices*; 25 species plus 28 page booklet; Cornell-Davidson, 1995 Cass. \$12.95; CD \$14.95

*Deepest Valley: Guide to Owens Valley, Its Roadsides and Mountain Trails*; discover and explore the natural beauty; Putman and Smith, 1995 \$14.95

*Photographic Guide to Birds of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore*; 144pp, 30,000 words, 252 species in color; Davison, 1995 \$15.95

*Book of Birdhouse Construction for Woodworkers*; Campbell, 1984 \$1.95

*Directory of Neotropical Ornithology*; information on 400 organizations involved with research, education and conservation; Rosenberg, 1993 \$10.95

*Birder's Guide to Trinidad and Tobago*; updated goldmine of information on where to go and what to see; Murphy, 1995 \$15.95

*Checklist: Keoladeo National Park Flora and Fauna — Bharatpur, India*; Kumar, 1992 \$4.95

*Audubon Society Butterflies for Beginners*; an up close look at 32 of the most common North American species; 64 minutes Video \$13.95

*Butterflies of Indiana*; color plates for all 149 species; Shull, 1987 \$30.00

*Michigan Wildlife Viewing Guide*; 121 sites identified; Seng, 1994 \$9.95

*Alberta Wildlife Viewing Guide*; 62 sites, color photos and maps; facilities and programs; 1990 \$7.95

*Field Guide to Plants of Arie Ona*; 900 photos arranged by color include blooming period, elevation and habitat; Epple, 1995 \$24.95

*Princeton Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*; covers all species; distribution maps and more; Simpson & Day, 1996 \$39.50

*Field Guide to Birds of Big Bend*; 450 species; Wauer, 1996 \$18.50

*Field Guide to the Families and Genera of Woody Plants of Northwest South America* (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru); with supplementary notes on herbaceous taxa; Gentry, 1996 \$45.00

DURANON TICK REPELLANT: Odorless, nonstaining spray repels ticks, chiggers, mosquitoes, mites, red bugs, fleas and lice \$6.95

*African Insect Life*; spectacular color photos, extensive text; introduces hobbies of insect study and photography, Skaife, 1994 \$59.95

*South African Frogs: A Complete Guide*; revised edition covering all species, color photos, descriptions and distribution maps; Passmore, 1995 \$44.95

*A Birders Guide to Mexico*; where and how to find difficult and endemic species, accurate site maps, accommodations; Sargeant, 1995 \$24.95

*A Birders Guide to Gabon, West Africa*; extensive identification and where to find for rare species, guides, maps, checklists; Sargeant, 1993 \$24.95

*Outdoor Travelers Guide to Canada*; explores national parks, wildlands and bird sanctuaries across the country, 15 maps, color photos; Dunbar, 1991 \$25.00

*Voices of a Borneo Rainforest: Danum Valley, Sabah, Malaysia*; 67 species; Stuebing, 1996 CD \$23.95



# Phainopepla Sighting Project

by Miyoko Chu

**P**hainopeplas in California are known to breed in both desert habitats and riparian areas along the coast. However, the migrational pattern and the status of breeding birds is something of a mystery. While some researchers believe Phainopeplas in the two regions constitute different populations, others believe the same individuals may move from desert to coastal riparian habitat, breeding in both places in the same year.

With your help, and since so many of you are actively involved in the Los Angeles County Breeding Breed Atlas, we will be able to better document the migratory pattern to assess with more precision the interesting possibility that the same individuals could be breeding in two very different habitats. You can contribute valuable information by noting the presence of Phain-

opeplas in your region, as well as any clues about their breeding status. In addition, I have been color banding some individuals. If you see any of them, you may be witnessing a case of direct dispersal!

Tips on breeding behavior and how to age and sex Phainopeplas are found below. The data sheet is on page 8 of this *Tanager*. Please send completed data sheets to:

Miyoko Chu

Museum of Vertebrate Zoology  
319 Alcatraz Avenue, Rear  
Oakland, CA 94618.

Or you may call Henry E. Childs, Jr., Ph.D., at 909/985-8182.

Thank you for your time and interest. Studying the timing and distribution of breeding Phainopeplas alone is a rather daunting, if not impossible, task. For this reason, I will deeply appreciate each and every one of your observations. 🐦

## KEY TO PHAINOPEPLA CHARACTERISTICS

### PLUMAGE AS INDICATORS OF AGE AND SEX

**Second-year males:** May be mottled mixture of gray and black. Degree of mottling varies from extremely patchy to entirely black, except for white edging on wings and/or under the tail.

**Mature males:** Feathers uniformly glossy black, except for white patches beneath wings.

**Females:** Feathers gray with white or gray indistinct wing bars. Second-year females not readily distinguished from older females.

**Juveniles:** Like females, but relatively buffy wing bars and brownish washed upper parts. Male and female juveniles look alike. Best told by behavior, if begging from adult.

### BREEDING BEHAVIOR

**Male-melodic song:** Consists of a combination of bright whistles, churrs and quiet warblings. Distinguished from the general call note, which sounds like a questioning "wurp?"

**Nests:** Males or females may be seen carrying nest material to trees. Males in particular may approach the tree slowly, angling down with tail depressed in what may be a type of display.

**Courtship:** Females may crouch and quiver their wings, as if begging. Males may courtship feed females. Copulation sometimes follows.

## WESTERN Tanager

Published 10 times a year by  
Los Angeles Audubon Society,  
a chapter of National Audubon Society.

EDITOR: Jean Brandt  
CONSERVATION: Sandy Wohlgemuth  
CO-CONSERVATION: Catherine Rich  
ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:  
Kimball Garrett  
FIELD TRIPS: Nick Freeman  
PELAGIC TRIPS: Phil Sayre  
DESKTOP PUBLISHING: WP Plus  
PRINTING: CP Graphics

Opinions expressed in articles or letters  
herein do not necessarily express the  
position of this publication or of LAAS.

PRESIDENT: Fred Heath  
1st VICE PRESIDENT: Pat Little  
2nd VICE PRESIDENT: Travis Longcore  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:  
Mildred Newton  
RECORDING SECRETARY:  
Pat Nelson  
TREASURER: Richard Epps

Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year and \$20 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon* magazine, a national publication. Renewals of membership are computerized by National Audubon and should not be sent to LAAS; however, new memberships may be sent directly to LAAS. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society.

*Western Tanager* subscription rates for nonmembers are: \$15 per year for third class delivery or \$22 per year for first class delivery. LAAS members may receive first class delivery by paying an additional \$7. Make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
Headquarters, Library  
and Bookstore are open to the public  
Tuesday-Saturday  
10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.  
213 876-0202 — office  
213 876-7609 — fax  
laas@ix.netcom.com

Printed on Recycled Paper



## Phainopepla sightings

<u>Location:</u>				
<u>Date of Observation:</u>				
<u>Time:</u>				
	Enter numbers below	Locally transient? (✓)	Locally Settled? (✓)	Evidence of breeding behavior? Male melodic song? Nests? Courtship? Other comments?*
Total phainopeplas seen				
Males--entirely black				
Males with patchy (second-year) plumage				
Females				
Juveniles (if recognizable)				

*Please take special note if you see color bands!*

<u>Location:</u>				
<u>Date of Observation:</u>				
<u>Time:</u>				
	Enter numbers below	Locally transient? (✓)	Locally Settled? (✓)	Evidence of breeding behavior--male melodic song? Nests? Courtship? Other comments?*
Total phainopeplas seen				
Males--entirely black				
Males with patchy (second-year) plumage				
Females				
Juveniles (if recognizable)				

\*For more space, use  
reverse side.

Observer name:

Observer address and/or phone number:

Please return forms to: Miyoko Chu, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology,  
3101 VLSB, University of CA, Berkeley, CA, 94720

For additional copies, write to my home address: 319 Alcatraz Ave. Rear, Oakland, CA 94618

*My sincere thanks for your effort and interest!*



# California Office First to Form Under Strategic Plan

A cornerstone of National Audubon's new field office development program will be the decentralization of Audubon through the building of strong and effective state programs. This will significantly enhance the partnership of Audubon staff and volunteers working together to chart the course of wildlife conservation in the future. National Audubon chapter leaders in California are getting an up-close glimpse of the future as they observe and participate in the first Audubon field office formed under the new Strategic Plan.

The California Field Office is now about three months old and is making some impressive strides toward implementing the Audubon Strategic Plan. The California Office is headed by Executive Director Dan Taylor. He is a 17-year veteran of the Audubon staff and has worked closely with Audubon chapters for many years on issues ranging from the campaign to protect Mono Lake to the Ancient Forest Campaign. The California Office is developing an action plan to guide the work of the field program that

will sharpen our focus on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats; invest in our distinctive system of grass-roots chapters; and use education and advocacy as the primary tools to achieve our mission.

Audubon's Strategic Plan calls for implementing specific changes that will place the Society in a better position to protect habitats for birds and wildlife in states across the country. In California, Audubon is building on the strengths it possesses and making significant changes in how work is done in order to better reflect its Strategic Plan. The primary focus of the California Field Office will be to work with local chapters and state volunteers to strengthen Audubon's capacity at the local level. The California Office will have the authority, the capacity and the flexibility to do what works best in that state. Existing staff roles are being refocused to fit the needs called for in the Strategic Plan. These needs include: 1) grass-roots training and outreach, 2) fund-raising, 3) conservation policy, 4) communications, 5) education and 6) sanctuary man-

agement. An important product of the reorganization is a much greater sense of integration among all of National Audubon's programs in the state.

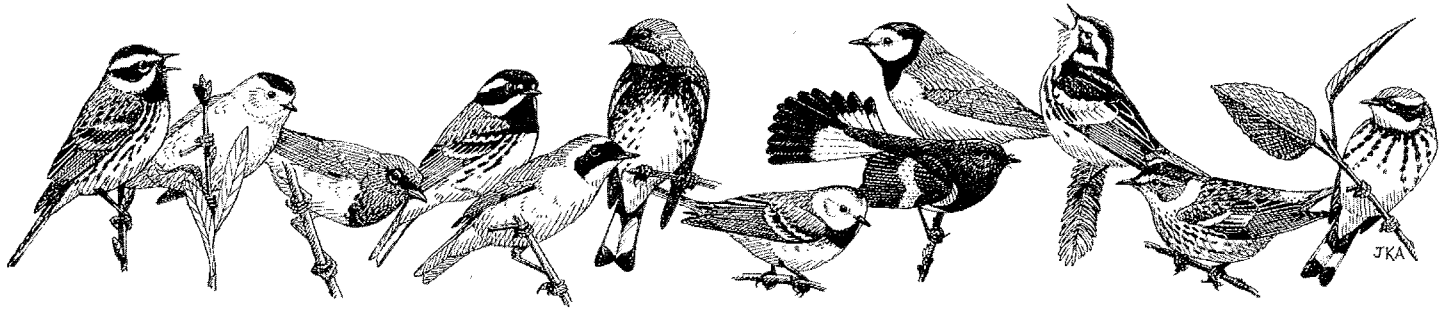
A key element of the new field office program is the emphasis on building proactive, comprehensive campaigns that channel the conservation energies of the organization statewide. The objectives emerging for California include: 1) restoring critical riparian habitats for Neotropical migratory birds and important interior wetlands for other migratory birds; 2) conserving fragile and declining coastal scrub habitats from rapid urbanization; 3) preserving wetlands in the San Francisco Bay Area; and 4) initiating an education curriculum that promotes a culture of conservation.

There is much work to be done in fully implementing this bold new vision for Audubon in California. So far, chapter leaders are seizing the opportunity to participate as full partners in creating this new Audubon that focuses on birds, wildlife and habitat, and the outstanding strength and capabilities of our chapters. For more information, write: Dan Taylor, California Field Office, NAS, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825; 916/481-6533.

## Fourth of July Butterfly Counts

Pasadena .....	mid to late June .....	Jack Levy .....	714/856-3604
Pomona Valley .....	June 22 .....	Wanda Dameron .....	818/340-0365
San Juan Capistrano .....	June 30 .....	Don Mitchell .....	714/550-7420 x3204
Mt. Baden-Powell .....	July 6 .....	Fred Heath .....	805/389-3203
Santa Ynez Canyon .....	early July .....	Walt Sakai .....	310/450-5150
Orange County .....	mid July .....	Larry Shaw .....	714/971-2421 x121
Palos Verdes Peninsula .....	July 20 .....	Jess Morton .....	310/832-5601
Ramsey Canyon .....	August 5 .....	(SASI*) .....	602/883-3945
Patagonia .....	August 10 .....	(SASI*) .....	602/883-3945
Atascosa Highlands .....	mid August .....	(SASI*) .....	602/883-3945

\* Sonoran Arthropod Studies, Inc.



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodtkin

**T**he first half of June often produces some very interesting — and really lost — vagrants. The best way to find these is to learn the local bird songs and listen for something different. Most of these vagrants turn out to be males; and in June, males sing. So if you hear a strange song, track it down.

Many birders now own some type of four wheel drive vehicle. An interesting and often productive weekend can be spent this time of year by exploring the canyons on the east slope of the southern Sierra. Most of these have dirt roads of varying degrees of ruggedness and facilities — and the camping is free. The small groves of cottonwood and willow in these canyons make excellent “vagrant traps,” so keep your eyes and ears open.

Kimball Garrett reported (after the last *Tanager* went to press) that on 28 February a sick **Red-legged Kittiwake** was found near the intersection of Lincoln and Magnolia in Anaheim. The bird was taken to the Pacific Wildlife Project rehab center where it died on 15 March. According to Kimball: “It is a male, essentially in definitive basic plumage” and the specimen has been placed in the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum as LACM 109199. If the record is accepted, this would be a first for California.

Spring migration was generally uneventful so far with few reports coming in. A **Sacred Ibis** at Piute Ponds near Lancaster on 12–14 April was surely an escapee, but from where? (KG) A **Ross’ Goose** was reported from the Playa del

Rey Lagoon on 29 March (David Van der Pluym). **Harris’ Hawks** continue to show up in California with Los Angeles County’s first record (if accepted) turning up in the western Antelope Valley on 26 March (Mark Miller).

Two **Solitary Sandpipers** were seen in Pasadena — one at Pasadena Glen on 6 April (Bob Neuwirth) and the other at Devil’s Gate Dam Basin on 14 April (Jon Fisher). An unusual spring sighting of a **Long-tailed Jaeger** comes from Point

serve in Norco on 18 April (Peter Barnes).

The wintering **Prothonotary Warbler** was still present in downtown Los Angeles on 23 April (KG). A **Northern Cardinal** was found at the mouth of Vidal Wash near the Colorado River on 8 April (Jim Pike), and several **Grasshopper Sparrows** were at Hidden Valley Preserve on 18 April (PB). A male **Varied Bunting** was found in Lancaster on 21 April (Ron Smith); if accepted as a naturally occurring bird, this would be a first record for L.A. County.

For those of you on the internet, set your browser to:

<http://www.audubon.org/>

[audubon/socal.html](http://audubon/socal.html)

Steve Sosensky has done a fantastic job by putting all sorts of information on southern California birding in one place, including forms, phone numbers and details relating to reporting rare and unusual bird sightings in southern California as well as field trip and meeting information for all the southern California Audubon chapters.

Good birding. 🐦

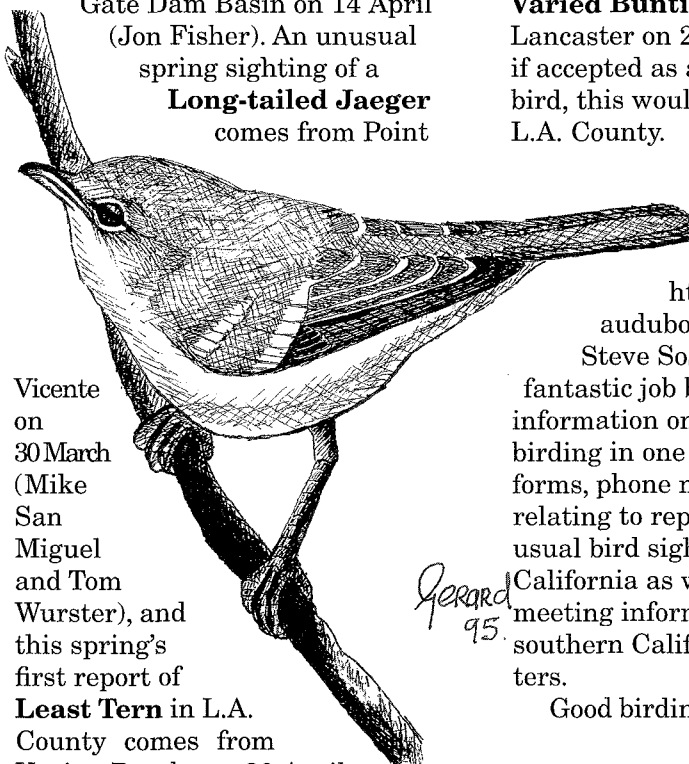
**R**ecords of rare and unusual bird sightings reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the *FIELD NOTES* Regional Editors or, if appropriate, by the California Bird Records Committee. Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

**Hank Brodtkin**

27½ Mast Street, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292.

310/827-0407 E-Mail: [hankb@kaiwan.com](mailto:hankb@kaiwan.com)

Or call **Jon Fisher** — 818/544-5009



Vicente on 30 March (Mike San Miguel and Tom Wurster), and this spring’s first report of **Least Tern** in L.A. County comes from Venice Beach on 20 April (Hank Brodtkin).

An **Eastern Phoebe** was discovered at Devil’s Gate Dam Basin in Pasadena on 1 April (JF). A total of six **Bendire’s Thrashers** were found in the Cima area on 27 March (Andrew and Vernon Howe), and several **Bell’s Vireos** were heard at Hidden Valley Pre-

## FIELD TRIPS

*Continued from page 12*

the 101 Fwy in the Valley, 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 Dr. Continue about a half mile to the Nature Center. The lot is past a gated drive on the left.

### **Friday through Monday, June 28 to July 1 — Southern Sierras Weekend with Bob Barnes.**

Likely: 5 empids, 2 buntings, 4 grosbeaks, Goshawk, Pinyon Jay, 7 warblers, 14 sparrows, 3 goldfinches, 9 woodpeckers, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-billed cuckoo and lots more. Pileated Woodpecker and local owls possible. Participation limited to 20. For information flyer, reserve with SASE to LAAS. Fee: \$11 for each day attended (\$44 for 4 days). Reserve rooms early.

#### **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.

### **Saturday, July 6 — San Gabriel Mountains. Leader David Koeppel.**

Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the entrance to Charlton Flat picnic grounds. Likely spots along Angeles Crest Hwy. for a full day of mountain birding including Chilao, Buckhorn and Grassy Hollow. Probable Mountain Quail, Dusky and Olive-sided flycatchers, White-headed Woodpecker, MacGillivray's Warbler. Bring lunch. The drive along Angeles Crest Hwy. is about one hour from La Cañada to Charlton Flats.


**Sunday, July 7 — Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See June 2 write-up for details.


**Saturday and Sunday, July 13 and 14 — Yosemite. Leader Louis Tucker** will concentrate on local specialty birds such as Black-backed and Pileated woodpeckers, Blue Grouse, Great Grey Owl and Pine Grosbeak. Trip ends Sunday afternoon in Owens Valley. Possible snow on ground, in air. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the Mariposa Grove parking lot just beyond Yosemite's south entrance. We plan to reserve two free campsites for Saturday night at Crane Flat (to accommodate 12 participants). We may need a participant to reserve a third campsite (call LAAS to confirm).



Campsites on sale NOW through Destinet (800/436-7275). Trip limited to 14 participants by park rules. Reserve with SASE and \$20 to LAAS to receive trip flyer.

**Sunday, July 14 — Whittier Narrows. Leader Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See June 9 write-up for details.

**Sunday, July 21 — Big Bear Lake Vicinity. Leaders Nick Freeman and Mary Carmona.** Meet at Coldbrook Campground in Big Bear at 8:00 A.M. Details in July *Western Tanager*.

 **Saturday, September 14 —** 12-hour trip on the *R.V. Vantuna* out of San Pedro to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. \$40.

 **Sunday, October 6 —** Three-island, 12-hour trip on Island Packer's *M.V. Vanguard* out of Ventura Harbor to Anacapa Island, Santa Rosa Island and through the Santa Rosa Passage to Santa Cruz Island. \$65.

 **Saturday, November 16 —** 8-hour trip on the *R.V. Vantuna* out of San Pedro to the Palos Verdes Escarpment and Redondo Canyon. \$25. 

## **SOUTHWEST WINGS BIRDING FESTIVAL**

SIERRA VISTA, ARIZONA  
AUGUST 15-18, 1996

**J**oin the 5th Annual Southwest Wings Birding Festival to experience and appreciate the wildlife and natural beauty of southeast Arizona. This cross-road of two great mountain ranges and two great deserts is home to more plant and animal life than any other inland area north of Mexico. With nearly 500 species of birds recorded in Cochise County, including such "tropical" species as Gray Hawk, Green Kingfisher, Violet-Crowned Hummingbird and Elegant Trogon, this area is the number one birding "hotspot" in the U.S.

Call 520/458-7353 or 800/946-4777  
for brochure and reservation form.



# EVENING MEETING

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

**June 11, 1996**

**Olga Clarke**

**East Africa — Nature's Paradise**

Olga's program will feature highlights of the LAAS African Wildlife Safari she will escort in November, 1996. Come have your birding appetite whetted for this almost-soldout adventure.

**July and August**

**No Meetings**

**September 10, 1996**

**Meetings Resume**

# 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, June 1 — Sierra Vista.**

Biologist, birder and ex-docent **Scott Harris** will traipse through the tussocks in search of the elusive Grasshopper Sparrow, as well as other foothill and grassland species. This is one of the few spots in the Southland that reports this bird annually. A visit to the Satwiwa

Indian Cultural Center will follow, if open. Take the 101 Fwy N, exit at Wendy Ave. in Thousand Oaks, and continue S to the end. Turn right onto Potrero Rd., left at the first stop sign (still called Potrero Rd.) and left at the next stop sign onto Pinehill Rd. (which dead-ends into the parking lot). Meet at 7:30 A.M. and bird until noon.

**Sunday, June 2 — 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 its intersection with Ventura Blvd. in the Valley, take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles S, then turn E (uphill) on Entrada Rd. (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.

**Sunday, June 9 — Whittier Nar-**

**rows Regional Park.** Join ranger **Ray Jillson** at 8:00 A.M. to view colorful breeding and resident birds, including Northern Cardinal. 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, 1000 Durfee Ave. \$2 voluntary donation suggested by the park.

**Saturday, June 15 — Franklin**

**Canyon.** This morning walk will be led by **Steven Saffier**. Franklin Canyon is located between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Wood Ducks bred in the lake last year. Chaparral, lakeside and oak/pine woodland habitat. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the parking lot. From

*Continued on page 11*

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard  
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

*DATED MATERIAL  
Please Expedite*

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Glendale, CA  
PERMIT NO. 276