

WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

Big Birdathon Day

By Travis Longcore

Birdathon is Audubon's yearly fundraising effort. Like any "-athon," the point is to gather pledges for each item in question, (in this case, bird species), then go see as many birds (or walk as many miles, or collect as many bottle tops) as possible. Given a lack of other volunteers, I had the pleasure of organizing this year's Birdathon, and I'm proud to report that several teams of Birdathoners collected over \$4,800 to support our education programs on the local and national levels. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

I had never even heard of the Birdathon before I became the Chapter coordinator. I knew that I wasn't a good enough birder to find many more than fifty species in a day, so I put together an expert birding team. Kimball Garrett, ornithologist at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and L.A. Audubon's Scientific Advisor, was the expert; I was the team. We scheduled our "Big Day" for Sunday, April 28. Kimball really knows how to put together a "Big Day." When we met at a Denny's in the North Valley at 5:30 a.m. (a late start, I'm told), he had a schedule made out (in military time) accounting for every hour until seven at night. It wasn't light yet, but I heard a rooster crowing. We decided not to count domestic birds.

As the sky started to lighten in the east, we drove out Hwy. 14 on the way to Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base. Our first bird of the day, and perhaps the most ubiquitous, was the Common Raven. On the dirt road leading to the ponds we bumped by the "no entrance" signs. Kimball, in exchange for written field notes, had a letter of permission, giving us license to ignore the signs absolutely denying entrance. While I kept my eyes on the potholes, Kimball spotted our first big bird, a Golden Eagle watching us from a telephone pole. We were in Kern County at the time so Kimball didn't think it counted toward our "Los Angeles County Big Day." I never promised to stay in L.A. County, so the eagle went on my list. Not much further, we spotted a Prairie Falcon on another pole. Also along the road were many Horned Larks, which Kimball easily spotted by flight pattern or some such *gestalt* method. I had a much harder time. He explained, "After seeing a couple thousand of them over thirty years it would be pretty bad if you didn't recognize them." Somehow I didn't feel a whole lot better.

The Piute Ponds yielded quite a few species. We found four grebe species, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe (a bonus), Eared Grebe, and Clark's Grebe. There were

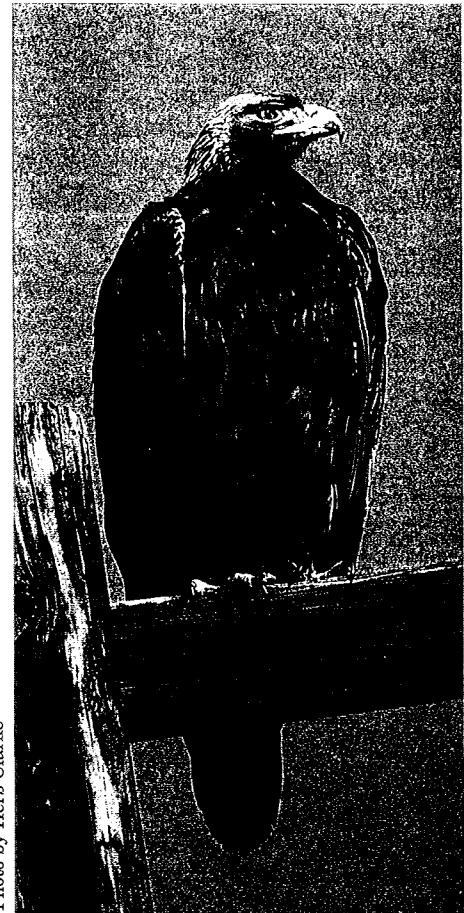


Photo by Herb Clarke

*Golden Eagle -
the only non-Los Angeles County bird.*

Black-crowned Night-Herons everywhere, as well as lesser numbers of Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, and Double-crested Cormorants. In the reeds and along the shore were White-faced Ibis, Sora, and Virginia Rail. For

ducks, we saw Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Redhead, Bufflehead and Ruddy Duck. We looked in the lines of Tamarisk for migrant warblers but didn't have much luck. The winds were strong from the east all day, which didn't favor trapping any migrants. But we did find Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Wilson's Warbler.



Photo by Herb Clarke

Common Raven - The first bird of the day and perhaps the most ubiquitous.

Another perk of poking around in the Tamarisk was flushing both a Great Horned Owl and a Barn Owl. Of course, there were plenty of shorebirds, and I really needed Kimball to identify Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover and Dunlin. I did better with some of the other shorebirds: American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Killdeer and Wilson's Phalarope. There were plenty of Marsh Wrens and American Coot, and Kimball detected two Common Snipe. Overhead were Northern Harrier and Red-tailed Hawk.

As we drove around the ponds, the fact that I was in the presence of birding greatness became more and more evident. In one spot we got out of my truck, munching on Fig Newtons, and heard a faint, nondescript chirp. Or at least I thought it was nondescript. Kimball immediately said, "Ladder-backed Woodpecker," and set off in search of it. Sure enough, the small bird sat a hundred yards away in a tree.

Between ponds we picked up some other non-waterbirds: Western Kingbird, Northern Mockingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, California Quail, Sage Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Black-headed Grosbeak, and the evil Brown-headed Cowbird. Of course the cowbirds weren't keeping away from the water; there were plenty of Red-winged Blackbirds and Yellow-headed Blackbirds to parasitize. We also saw a flock of Tricolored Blackbirds. Competing with the blackbirds were many rather raucous Great-tailed Grackles. Swooping gracefully overhead were Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Cliff Swallow. Mourning Doves were cooing, and one lone pigeon (Rock Dove) flew by. There weren't any terns, and very few gulls, only a flock of California Gulls and a single Ring-billed Gull.

All of this by 8:30 a.m. We finished up at Piute and started off back toward the mountains right on schedule. Literally, Kimball's schedule read "0630-0830 Piute" and we had done it. Looking at the list of stops on the rest of the schedule I knew that even with diminishing returns and the east wind Kimball was complaining about we were going to see a whole lot of birds by nightfall.

Next stop was a staked-out Swainson's Hawk nest. It was in a row of trees near a ranch yard in the Antelope Valley on the way back to the mountains from Piute. As hoped, a hawk was circling overhead, and we also saw a Golden-crowned Sparrow, a Vaux's Swift, and an Anna's Hummingbird. We continued through the back roads of the Antelope Valley and started to work our way up the back side of the San Gabriel Mountains. We made fre-

quent stops alongside the road to try to pick up the desert birds.

Photo by Herb Clarke



Yellow-headed Blackbird - one of the many species found at Piute Ponds.

Despite the noise of the heavy east wind, Kimball did his best to roust out new species. When we stopped in some Joshua Tree woodland, Kimball whistled a complex three-second song several times. "There ought to be Scott's Orioles here," he mused. At the next stop and a few whistles later in flew a male Scott's Oriole, who began to sing back the song at Kimball. We left the oriole to its territory, Kimball deciding not to challenge the bird for claim to that particular bit of desert, but also found some other desert dwellers:

Black-chinned Sparrow and Black-throated Sparrow.



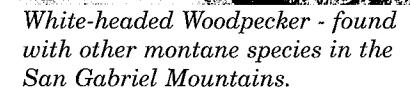
Photo by Herb Clarke

Black-chinned Sparrow and Black-throated Sparrow.

We then drove up the San Gabriel Mountains to the Table Mountain campground, stopping frequently along the way. We added Cooper's Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Acorn Woodpecker, Nuttall's Wood-pecker,

Hairy Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee (some of which were willing to get into territorial battles with Kimball's chickadee imitation),

White-headed Woodpecker - found with other montane species in the San Gabriel Mountains.



Plain Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Bluebird, House Wren, American Robin, Western Tanager, Spotted Towhee, California Towhee, Green-tailed Towhee (my favorite — it's really green), Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, Cassin's Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, Lawrence's Goldfinch and American Goldfinch. There are a lot of bird species here, but please don't think I would have



Photo by Herb Clarke
California Thrasher - the afternoon hike into the Santa Monica Mountains yielded this chaparral resident.

found even half of them on my own. We would stop the truck, get out, listen, then Kimball would hear a call in the distance, and off we would go in search of the bird. I tried to learn as many of the calls as I could, and I might remember a few in another thirty years or so.

Our transect up and down the mountain took us until lunch, which we ate by a stream on the way back around the mountains. We came back into the Los Angeles basin (picking up White-throated Swift and American Crow on the way) and stopped first at the Sepulveda Dam wildlife area. The habitat restoration work sponsored by the Audubon Society is starting to pay off; we spotted a Blue Grosbeak and a Yellow Warbler in the trees, as well as Bullock's Orioles along the ditch.

To find some good chaparral birds, we headed out to Malibu Canyon, and hiked a stretch of the Santa Monica Mountains Backbone Trail. Here we saw American

Kestrel, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hooded Oriole, California Thrasher, Bewick's Wren, Wrentit, Scrub Jay, Bushtit, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, and Phainopepla.

A quick cruise took us down to Malibu Lagoon, where we endured the sun-addled public (letting their dogs chase the birds) to pick up a few more shore species. There were Brown Pelican, Red-breasted Merganser, Western Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Heerman's Gull, Elegant Tern, Forster's Tern, Willet, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Black-bellied Plover, Barn Swallow, House Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, and the ubiquitous European Starling.

After dodging surfboards and trying to avoid the smell of suntan lotion we set off up the coast to Zuma Canyon. We stopped in a residential neighborhood that Kimball knew had resident population of feral parrots. As promised, we found a flock of very noisy Mitred Parakeets and a few Lilac-crowned Parrots. A short walk up a dry streambed also yielded a Hutton's Vireo and an Allen's Hummingbird.

For the grand finale of the day Kimball had planned watching for migrants from Point Dume. This proved to be a good idea, mostly because after a day of running around looking for birds we could stand there and wait for them to come to us. It was a fine end to a long day. We watched three species of loon (Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, and Pacific Loon) on their way up the coast, as well as Brant and Surf Scoter. Resting on the rocks were Brandt's Cormorant and Pelagic Cormorant, and both a Herring Gull and a Royal Tern soared by. At roughly seven o'clock we decided to call it a day.

There are two more species for the day, Violet-green Swallow and Townsend's Warbler, and these are

well into the "Kimball zone." That is, I know we saw them, but I can't remember where. You see, I hardly had time to see the birds and hear the songs (and drive in between), let alone write them down.

Kimball, on the other hand, seems to have a photographic memory, complete with a checklist of the birds of Los Angeles County with which he is able to keep track the day's sightings.

So the day's total, officially counted by Kimball Garrett, was 157 species. Thanks to generous donations from friends and family, including a pledge of ten dollars per species from a corporate sponsor, 1-800-U.S. SEARCH, Inc., the 157 species translated into pledges of over \$3,000. In addition, donations of over \$1,800 were collected by our other enthusiastic Birdathoners — a team of Chuck Bernstein and Ron Beck, a team of Gretchen Keeler and David Richardson, and individuals Ken Kendig and Stephen Dexter. Together we raised \$1,000 more than last year's Birdathon! One hundred percent of the money raised will be used to support Audubon Adventures, a program that provides environmental education materials to elementary school classrooms right here in Los Angeles and across the nation. I



Photo by Herb Clarke
Surf Scoter - seen from Pt. Dume, one of the last birds of the day.

would like to extend a special thanks to all of the Birdathon volunteers and donors whose gifts of time and money make our continuing support of this important program possible. 

Salton Sea International Bird Festival

Living in Southern California, we have long been aware of the celebration of the return of the swallows to the mission at San Juan Capistrano on Saint Joseph's day which is March 19. Because the Chamber of Commerce of San Juan Capistrano has realized that they could attract many more people, if they could get the swallows to return on a weekend, the festival now occurs on the weekend closest to March 16. Not to be out done, the good people of Hinkley, Ohio, have long been celebrating the return of the Turkey Vulture to their fair town each spring. We hear that roadkill is big on their menus.

Lately, a number of other communities throughout the United States, realizing the economic value of such festivals, have been coming up with their festivals centered around birds and other natural creatures. Environmental folks like us, have realized that if people are made aware of the economic value of natural resources, they might think twice before clear-cutting that forest or building that dam.

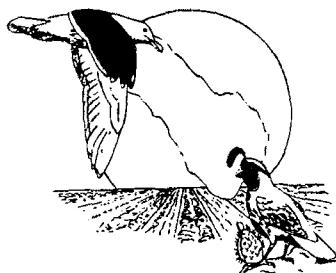
With that in mind, it is with pleasure that we tell you about the latest festival planned in our own back yard—The Salton Sea International Bird Festival, scheduled for the three day Presidents Weekend, February 14-17, 1997.

Their slogan is "Sun and Fun in the Desert." It is a good thing it was not scheduled for August when the slogan would be "Sun and Sun and more Sun in the Desert!"

The festival will have guided and self-guided tours to the birding "hot spots" around the Salton Sea, Imperial Valley, and Northern Baja California, Mexico (Thus the

International in the name). There will be a number of well known birding specialists to provide slide illustrated talks on such things as bird identification, migration, creating backyard habitat, etc. In addition, adjacent to the speakers hall, over 50 booths for bird-related products and exhibits will be found.

Another really exciting aspect is that the Imperial Valley schools will have a special bird-related curriculum the week before the festival. In support of this, a hand-



painted tent done by local artisans that simulates the Imperial Valley habitats of local bird populations, dubbed the "Bird's Nest" will house a wide range of fun and educational activities for the local school children.

Since the Salton Sea is a unique birding location for the United States and the good will of the people of this area might be important during some future land use decisions, we hope some of our readers can find time to attend or maybe even help out by giving a program or being a guide. Most of the folks attending this festival will probably be novices so you won't have to be pointing out the finer points of immature gull identification or some such. These folks will be impressed that you can recognize the difference between a Snowy and a Cattle Egret. To these people you will be like their own Roger Tory Peterson or Kimball Garrett.

•For more information, contact:
Salton Sea International
Bird Festival
P.O. Box 156
Imperial, California 92251
Phone: (619) 344-3160
Fax: (619) 344-7611

The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Environmental License Plate

The Sanctuary plate, with its fetching image of a sea otter, is one of the latest in a series of commemorative environmental license plates in California. These plates raise money for both specific causes, such as the Sanctuary and for the California Environmental License Plate Fund, which provides money to buy park land and preserve habitat.

"This plate provides a meaningful state commitment to the Sanctuary, while at the same time giving members of the public a way to show their enthusiasm about the beauty of Monterey Bay," said State Sen. Henry Mello when the bill he authored was signed.

The otter design by Boyd Tveit, of Felton, chosen for the Sanctuary Plate, was formally unveiled at Monterey Bay Aquarium June 9, 1995.



The Plate costs \$50 per vehicle the first year and \$40 each renewal year. The cost for personalized plates is \$90 the first year and \$65 each renewal year. Plates will be issued once 5000 paid applications are received by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments. Deadline for applications is Dec. 31, 1996.

Continued on page 11

Fall 1996 Pelagic Trip Schedule

TRIPS ON THE M.V. VANGUARD OUT OF VENTURA HARBOR

Sunday, October 6 (special one-day, three island trip) - 12-hour trip to Anacapa Island, Santa Rosa Island, and through the Santa Rosa Passage to Santa Cruz Island. \$65.

Friday, November 29 - 30 Hour trip (10 P.M. Friday to 4 A.M. Sunday). NW out of Ventura Past Point Conception to Arquelle Canyon and W to the California continental shelf with several daylight hours along the shelf. \$260/double bunk, 150/single bunk, meals included.

Field Trips

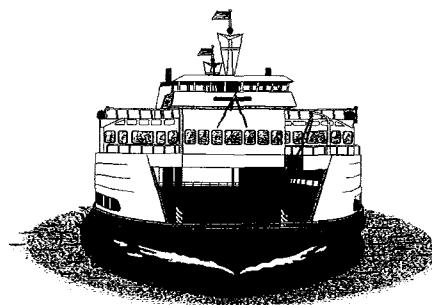
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Saturday, September 14 -

Walker Ranch. Doug Martin and his followers will explore the oak woodlands and grasslands of the area and the chapparal of adjacent Placerita Canyon. There is usually an active water seep in the side canyon. Take Hwy. 14 to Placerita Canyon Road, and drive east (right) about 4 miles, passing Placerita Nature Center on the right. The unmarked and gated pull-out for Walker Ranch should be the next one on the right. Meet here at 7:30A.M. in search of resident and migrant song birds, and finish by noon.

Saturday, September 21 -

Malibu to McGrath. Larry Allen will be leading interested parties up the coast from Malibu Lagoon to McGrath Estuary, stopping along the way to bird and picnic. This is an excellent time of year to see resident and migrant species. Bail out early if a full-day affair doesn't suit you. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the shopping center adjacent to the Malibu Lagoon bridge. Take PCH northwest over the bridge, turn right and right again into the shopping



TRIPS ON THE R.V. VANTUNA OUT OF SAN PEDRO

Saturday, September 14 - 12-hour trip to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. \$40

Saturday, November 16 - 8-hour trip to the Palos Verdes Escarpment and Redondo Canyon. \$25

Note: Marine Mammal expert Linda Lewis will be one of our leaders when her schedule permits.

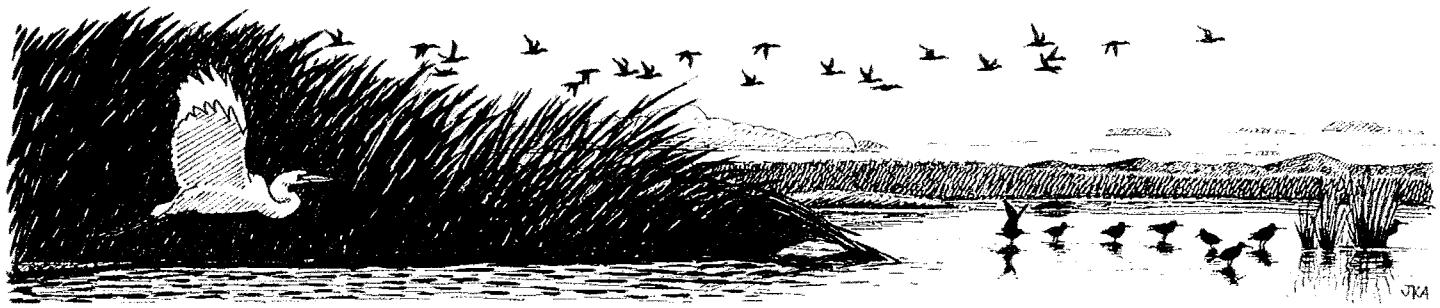


center across from the lagoon, and meet clear back in the northeast corner of the lot. Bring a lunch. Possible \$2 access fee at one spot.

Saturday, September 28 - Lake Palmdale. Kimball Garrett will lead a select few on a tour of this restricted and little-birded bit of L.A. county. Waterfowl and migrating passarines should be prominent. Meet at the E end of the Park-and-Ride adjacent to Lake Palmdale. Take Hwy 14 N to the Avenue S offramp heading E, followed by a quick right into the lot. Meet here at 7:00 A.M. sharp, and finish around noon. Trip tentative based on access availability. Sign-up by phone with Audubon House. Strict maximum of 15. No fee.

Sunday, October 6 - Topanga State Park. Leader Gerry Haigh. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See September 1 write-up for details.

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



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Good news for affluent property owners! As we were reminded recently in this space, the present California Coastal Commission, in cold blood, approved a permit for the construction of 3300 homes in Bolsa Chica, one of the last significant wetlands in southern California. Under a headline in the Los Angeles Times of June 13, "2 Critics Take Seats on Coastal Panel," we learn that the new critics are not criticizing the Bolsa Chica permit but think the commission is too tough on landowners!

The Speaker of the Assembly appoints four members of the commission as does the Governor and the Senate Rules Committee. Not much is known about two of Speaker Curt Pringle's new commissioners but the other two are raising a storm of opposition. Who are these people?

Arnold Steinberg started to build a house in the Cold Creek Sensitive Habitat Area of the Santa Monica mountains near Malibu without a permit from the commission. He ignored orders to stop and after a protracted lawsuit was forced to pay \$165,000 for a 2.3 acre parcel for open space. At his swearing-in he said the commission is abusing its power and "We are here to process [development] permits consistent with the law." Elsewhere he has said, "I have serious doubts as to whether the commission serves the

public interests," and thinks the commission should be abolished in favor of local controls. A Times editorial points out that Steinberg labeled the easements requiring beachfront owners to allow public access to beaches "involuntary servitude" and asked the commission to "undo them if we can, and stop doing any more."

The other militant critic is Patricia Randa who has fought the commission tooth and nail for 12 years. She bought a piece of land near Malibu Creek State Park for \$5000 and, without a permit, built a home there. She had an illegal road built on state park property. Eventually the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy was forced to buy her out for a scandalous \$1.85 million of taxpayers' money. She has said, "We never honored their little pieces of paper because they had no jurisdiction." (Do we detect the scent of anti-government "Patriots" here?)

There's more. Sacramento gets into the act with a vengeance. Resources Secretary Douglas Wheeler took an active part in support of the Koll Real Estate Group's plan and engineered the commission's permit to build the homes in Bolsa Chica. The commission's staff opposed the development and the wrath of Mr. Wheeler descended upon Peter Douglas, the staff's executive director. Wheeler has openly supported the dismissal of Douglas

and with 8 out of 12 commissioners now Republican there is little doubt at this writing that the executive director is history.

What is the commission for, anyway? In the 1970s, when concern for the environment spread with remarkable speed, when Congress passed the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act and more, rampant development of California's coast came into public perception. Passage of Proposition 20 was followed by the Coastal Act of 1976 which reads:

"The Legislature hereby finds and declares: That the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people and exists as a delicately balanced ecosystem.

That the permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation.

The Legislature finds...that the basic goals...for the coastal zone are to:

Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment....

Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resources conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners."

Peter Douglas believes the Coastal Act means what it says, that our 1100 miles of coast must be protected from excessive development, that a "delicately balanced ecosystem" must be preserved and that includes sensitive habitats, wetlands and wildlife. He is a dedicated public servant who has been a coastal advocate for almost 25 years, 11 of them as executive director. He has fought for public access to beaches, for preserving agricultural lands and wetlands and opposed offshore oil drilling.

With Douglas out of the way and commissioners who violate the Coastal Act eager to lead the attack upon it, our coast is in dire peril. The demise of the Coastal Act is an impossible nightmare. How have we reached this sorry pass? Twenty years ago the people clearly wanted a healthy, attractive coast with ample beaches; *they* voted for Prop 20, *they* motivated the Legislature to pass the Coastal Act. Has this desire evaporated? Certainly not.

We are suffering from 1994, the victory of the Republican "revolution" that captured Congress and now the California Assembly. The zeal of Curt Pringle in stacking the Coastal Commission reflects the spirit of Newt Gingrich's Contract With America. Governor Wilson and his Resources Secretary are in a hurry to remake the commission

in their own image. (The November election could send the leadership of the Assembly back to the Democrats.) A new executive director will be congenial to Mr. Wheeler, the Governor and any big developer worth his campaign contribution.

According to the polls, Newt Gingrich's stock has nose-dived. The voters seem to be having second thoughts about the Contract, wishing they had read the fine print. The 73 gung-ho first term Republicans, the Speaker's most ardent troops, are worried about reelection and are not eager for his help.

In California, where the entire Assembly is on the ballot in November, if the Coastal Act gets the axe and other similar atrocities are promised by the majority, the electorate may get the message and throw the rascals out. A consummation devoutly to be wished.

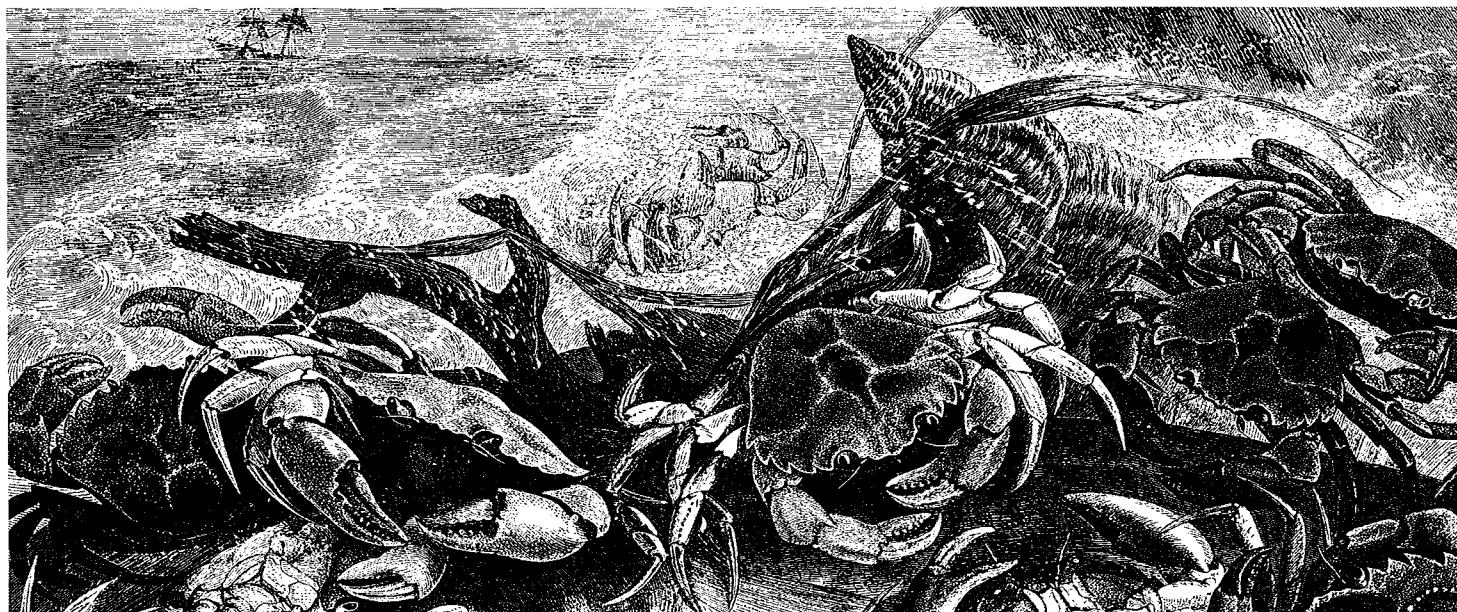
LAST MINUTE UPDATE:

The moment of truth arrived on July 12 in Huntington Beach when the special meeting of the Coastal Commission was held to consider "the future employment of the executive director." Hundreds of environmentalists and supporters of Peter Douglas jammed the hotel ballroom and vigorously applauded him after he spoke. He said he was

humbled by "the overwhelming outpouring of public support for effective coastal protection. I think it is an affirmation of public support for a high-quality professional staff that is politically non-partisan and can do its work free from inappropriate outside pressures."

Abruptly, the commission chairman (who had called the unorthodox meeting) announced that the meeting would be postponed, saying this was an in-house personnel matter which "has been turned into a circus by some in the media and by vocal special interests." ("Special interests" seems to be in the eye of the beholder. Those who have nothing to gain but unpolluted beauty can be special interests but 3300 homes in a wetland must be "friendly interests.")

Both the Los Angeles City Council and the County Board of Supervisors supported Douglas as well as the room full of environmentalists. No one can predict how this drama will spin out but it is clear that the determined presence of dedicated people can indeed make a difference. As someone said after the meeting, "You try to mess with the coast and the public will rise up." —bird



New at the Bookstore

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National Audubon Society Interactive CD-Rom Guide To North American Birds:
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Birds Of Tambopata - A Checklist:
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Common Bird Calls Of Southern Africa:
180 bird calls every birder should
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where & how to find many difficult
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Birding In Guatemala:
trip report with maps
Hornbuckle, 1993 11.95

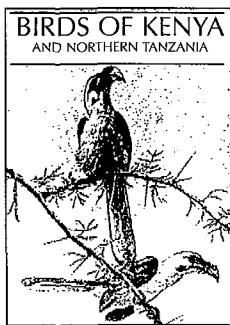
Finding Birds In The Canary Islands:
best sites, maps, what birds to
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Gosney, 1994 13.95

BIRDS OF KENYA AND NORTHERN TANZANIA
Dale Zimmerman, Don Tuner, David Pearson,
Ian Willis & H. Douglas Pratt

The Los Angeles Audubon Society is
pleased to announce the long awaited
arrival of the definitive new field reference
on East African birds. It covers
every species to have occurred in Kenya
and N. Tanzania. This book should be
part of everyone's library!.

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0-6910-2658-0

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He's Baaaack....

Hi, I'm back as editor of the *Western Tanager* for the third time. Now before you go cancel your subscription or join another chapter of Audubon, please give me a few lines here to explain why I believe the the third time will be the charm.

First of all, during the seven wonderful years which Jean Brandt has been the editor, she has made a number of positive changes to the look and, more importantly, to the content of the *Tanager*. She's kept the old favorites like Hank Brodkin's *Birds of the Season* and Sandy Wohlgemuth's *Conservation Conversation*. Then she got Kimball Garrett to do his *A Closer Look* column and added the ever interesting *Personal High* feature. Although neither of the latter two columns appear in this issue, you can rest assured they will in the future.

Since I believe that "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", I plan to make minimal changes to the *Tanager*. I feel that the *Western Tanager* has reached its zenith under the editorship of Jean Brandt with some not unsubstantial input from our desktop publishing guru, Steve Hirsh. My role will be to keep it at that high level.

Another reason the *Tanager* won't be as bad as during my previous stint as editor, is that there is "spell-check" in today's modern computers. Typographical errors

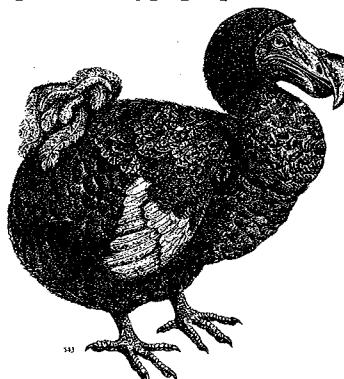


Fred Heath's back!

which were my hallmark back in those good old days will now be kept to a absolute munimim.

Finally I have mellowed with age. As a matter of fact over the last three years, I have been the President of the Los Angeles Audubon Society and you'll notice the chapter still exists, our fine book store still sells numerous titles to folks all over the world, and the main emphasis hasn't shifted from birds to butterflies (yet).

One last thing, publishing the *Tanager* is not a one person job. Tom Frillman has agreed to help me in the capacity of Assistant Editor and will be doing, among other things, all of the desktop publishing duties. Aside from Tom, I'll be depending on the many people like you to supply articles to continue to make this the award winning newsletter it has become. Specifically, I'm sure there are a number of you who have had interesting *Personal High* stories that you have not yet shared with our readership. The *Birds of the Season* column would benefit from photos of some of the rare birds mentioned in the column. The pictures don't have to be Arnold Small or Herb Clarke class to be in the *Tanager*. A decent record shot will do. Finally, I am soliciting any and all types of articles, poems, notes, drawing or photos that might be of interest to our many readers.



Thanks, Fred Heath

WESTERN TANAGER

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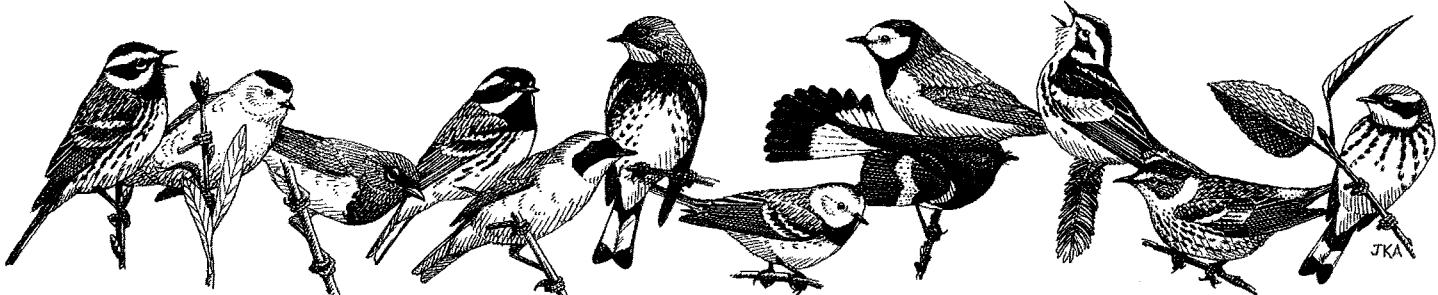
Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year and \$20 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and Audubon magazine, a national publication. Renewals of membership are computerized by National Audubon and should not be sent to LAAS; however, new memberships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

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BIRDS OF THE SEASON

By Hank Brodkin

September brings on the challenge of fall migration. The mix of juvenal and basic plumages makes for interesting days in the field. And September is also the month to start watching for fall vagrants. Coastal canyons and parks are good places to search for these "lost" individuals. For a good selection of these vagrant traps check a copy of *WHERE BIRDERS GO IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA* by Hank Childs - available at the LAAS bookstore.

The birder need not travel great distances from the city to find some very good spots. Harbor Regional Park, Huntington Central Park, and Hansen Dam are three examples of historically excellent Fall birding areas in urban settings.

This past June California added (pending approval by the California Birds Records Committee) three new species to its list of birds. A **Parkinson's Petrel** and a **White-winged Tern** were reported from northern California in June - and even more bizarre was the injured **Buff-collared Nightjar** found by Nancy Morgan in Oxnard on 8 June. The bird was taken to a rehab center - where it died on 6 July (fide Don Desjardin).

According to the new Western Field Ornithologists' checklist, the California species list is now officially at 592 - with about 10 birds still circulating through the committee. At least some of these will

be accepted. This should put California neck and neck with Texas, whose official list is now at 600 species.

Local recent sightings follow. Please remember that the folks credited with reporting the sightings are not necessarily those who originally discovered these birds. To be sure you are credited with a bird you find please contact me directly (see below).

Three **Reddish Egrets** were seen in Bolsa Chica Reserve on 10 July (Mike San Miguel Jr.) and an

immature **Little Blue Heron** was on the San Gabriel River in Whittier on 14 July (Larry Schmahl). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was over Moreno Valley on 26 May (Kitty & Richard Runge) and an eclipse plumaged **Tufted Duck** was on the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 14 July (Kimball Garrett & Mike San Miguel). An alternate plumaged **Curlew Sandpiper** was reported from the mouth of the Santa Margarita River in Camp Pendleton (Claude Edwards).

Two **Franklin's Gulls** were at the mouth of the Santa Clara River on 25 May (Richard Barth & Steve Tucker). The north end of the Salton Sea had a **Little Gull** on 27 May (MSM) and a Sabine's Gull on 7 June (Roy Poucher). A **Sandwich Tern** at Bolsa Chica, almost certainly the same individual as last year, was seen on 15 June (Bruce Broadbooks). The **Sooty Tern** returned to establish territory at Bolsa Chica on 6 June (Charles Collins). Another showed up at the Santa Margarita River mouth on 7 July, and was joined by a second bird on 8 July (Doug Aguillard).

A **Flammulated Owl** was at Bear Valley Springs, Kern County, on 8 June (Tom Farmington & GH). Six **Black Swifts** were over Harbor Lake on 25 May (Kevin Larson) and 6 **Chimney Swifts** were seen "chimneying" in downtown L.A. on 12 July (Jennifer Matkin & Joe Morlan).

Records of rare and unusual bird sightings reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the **NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD NOTES** regional editors or, if appropriate, by the California Birds Records Committee.

Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

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Marina Del Rey, CA 90292.
Phone: 310 827-0407.
E-Mail: hankb@kaiwan.com

or call Jon Fisher at 818 544-5009

A Broad-tailed Hummingbird was seen at Ft. Piute in the Eastern Mojave on 26 May (MSM). **A Lewis's Woodpecker** was seen near FawnSkin on 27 May (Kim Gould) and five **Purple Martins** were roosting on a snag along the Angeles Crest Highway just above La Canada on 20 May (KGa). A flock of 80 **Pinyon Jays** was at Big Bear City on 10 July (Peter Barnes) and a **Gray Catbird** was reported at Panamint Springs, Inyo County on 29 May (JMa & JMo).

A Red-eyed Vireo was at Zyzzx, San Bernardino County, on 7 June (Gene Cardiff) and a **Tennessee Warbler** was discovered at Buckhorn Campground on the Angeles Crest on 9 June (BB & MSM). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was reported from Ports-O-Call Village in San Pedro on 10 June (Jim Smith), a **Canada Warbler** was at Galileo Park, Kern County, on 31 May (David Blue) and a **Painted Redstart** was near FawnSkin on 29 May (KGa).

A Summer Tanager was reported from Valyermo on 21 May (Karen Johnson & Steve Sosensky), with nesting documented there on 7 July (KGa). **A Northern Cardinal** was at the Vidal Wash on the Colorado River on 27 May (MSM), and a **Pyrrhuloxia** was in a yard near El Centro, Imperial County, on 4 June (Gina Buckey & Sue Moss).

A Clay-colored Sparrow was found on an LAAS Field trip to Rancho Sierra Vista, Ventura County on 1 June (Nick Freeman et al.). Singing **Black-chinned** and **Grasshopper Sparrows** were seen in the hills near Whittier on 19 May (LS).

Good Birding!



Audubon YES! Takes Wing

By Jess Morton

This month, LA Audubon's fledgling Audubon YES! (Youth Environmental Service) Program spreads its wings. Chapter members are now working with student groups from around the Los Angeles area to bring student energy and enthusiasm to bear on community environmental needs. By the end of the month, over 200 hundred students from a half dozen LA high schools will be involved. However, we expect this to expand rapidly as more schools discover the Audubon YES! Program.

The YES! mission is to give Audubon a means for helping high school students perform significant environmental services in their home communities. Students everywhere know the need to improve the quality of the environment. They just don't know what to do. That is where Audubon comes in. We do! Not only is Audubon itself active in many places, but our members belong to community groups doing a wide variety of important things, all of which need

volunteers. Audubon YES! integrates that knowledge and takes it to our YES! students—the volunteers ready and willing to do what is needed!

YES! is featured in this month's Audubon Magazine as an important vehicle for Audubon education. This fall, hundreds of southern California students will be part of the YES! Program. Our own LA Audubon groups will be co-directed by Art Pickus (310) 641-0248 and me (310) 832-5601, and we welcome your help.

- If you belong to a group which needs volunteers for regularly scheduled or special environmental projects, tell us so we can put it on the YES! calendar.

- If you can give about five hours a month to YES!, we can use your help, either working directly with students or in support.

- If you work with, or have contact with high school students, ecology clubs, or service groups, call us to see what YES! opportunities exist.

- Make a tax-deductible contribution to Audubon YES!, 787 West 4th St., San Pedro, CA 90731, to support the LA Audubon YES! Program.



Otter

Continued from page 4

To apply for the plate and pay by VISA or MasterCard, call toll-free: 1-888-OTTERS1 (688-3771). Applications are also available at DMV, CSAA (No. Cal.), and at So. California Auto Club offices. An application can also be downloaded from the Internet web site, at <http://www.montereynet.com/otterplate.html>.

Revenues from the plate will

support the Sanctuary's public information and education programs. The Plate could generate revenues of at least \$100,000 per year for many years to come. The plate will also promote the Sanctuary as it is seen on roads of California. In these ways, the commemorative plate will be the Sanctuary's number one goodwill ambassador.



F I E L D T R I P S

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

Sunday, September 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 where it crosses Ventura Blvd. in the Valley, take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles further S, then turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. (1 mile N of Topanga Village). Follow the signs and make a left into the park. Meet in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch at 8:00 A.M. \$5 parking fee.

Sunday, September 8
Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join **ranger Ray Jillson** at 8:00 A.M. to view colorful breeding and resident birds including Northern Cardinal. Meet at the Nature Center at 1000 Durfee Ave. Take the 60 Fwy to south El Monte, just W of the 605 Fwy, taking the Peck Drive exit S. Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right), and make a left into the nature center. \$2 voluntary donation suggested by the park.

See Page 5 for
Fall Pelagic Trips

↓ ↓ ↓

See Field Trips Page 5

EVENING MEETINGS

Sept 10, 1996 Mono Lake: A Retrospective
Dan Taylor, Executive Director, NAS California Field Office

Dan will present this beautifully illustrated talk on the past, present, and future of this unique area. And share a little of what we learned about the Audubon Society's role in saving our natural heritage.

Coming on October 8 The Panda and Other Endangered Wildlife of the Suchan Province of China.

Dr Jim Clements, has spent many months in the Suchan Province will discuss the challenges of saving the Panda as well as many birds of this area including a number of the rare and endemic pheasant species.

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