

WESTERN TANAGER

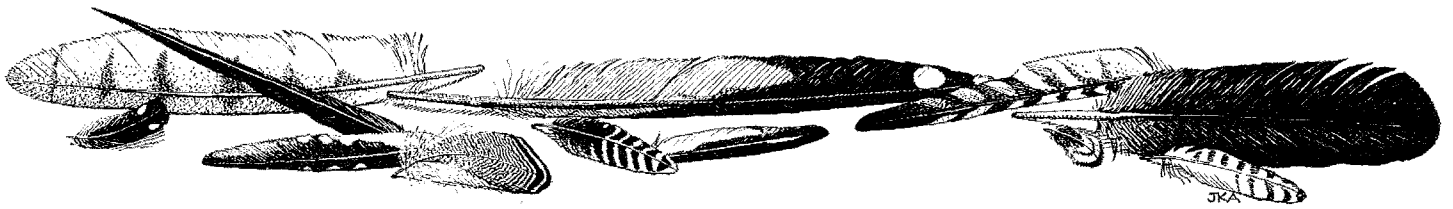


Volume 63 Number 5 January/February 1997

Los Angeles Audubon Society



Photo by Larry Sansone



A C L O S E R L O O K

by Kimball L. Garrett

Each southern California winter has a unique flavor, not only in terms of the weather, the snow pack or who won the USC/UCLA game (well, some things never change), but in terms of the birds as well. Winter 1995-96, for example, was characterized by a notable diversity of wintering warblers (Los Angeles County alone had Grace's, Blackburnian, Prothonotary, and Golden-winged) as well as two gulls new to the state (Ivory Gull, and Red-legged Kittiwake). Other winters see notable influxes (or absences) of raptors, and every winter has its unique imprint of when the Cedar Waxwings arrive, when they depart, and how many were here in the interim.

Occasionally there comes along a winter so special that birders start tossing out terms like "historic" or "unprecedented." The winter of 1996-97 might well be so remembered, for we have witnessed the largest "invasions" of certain montane species since 1972-73. Indications of a massive incursion of montane forest birds began the first few days of August, when a few Pygmy Nuthatches turned up here and there. By the time the fall had ended, significant numbers of all three nuthatches, Mountain Chickadees, Clark's Nutcrackers, Cassin's Finches, Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Lewis' Woodpeckers had been noted in the southern California lowlands, along with a few out-of-habitat Steller's Jays, Pinyon Jays, "Interior" Scrub-Jays and White-headed Woodpeckers. As I write

this, Christmas Counts are still in the planning stages, but it seems safe to predict that record or near-record numbers of some of these species will be counted in our region.

ter? Flight calls of the different crossbill "species" are diagnostic, but few birders are aware of these differences, and not all are necessarily distinguishable by the "naked ear." For fascinating reading

A Winter to Remember



Perhaps the hallmark species of this winter's incursion is the Red Crossbill. Flocks numbering up to 60 birds (and probably totalling thousands) have been noted in planted pines in the desert and coastal lowlands since late October. The crossbills have shown a particular fondness for Aleppo Pines (*Pinus halepensis*), which are widely planted in the region. There are several interesting sidelights to the crossbill invasion. First, two-thirds to three-fourths of the individuals in most flocks are red-plumaged adult males; this begs the question: Where are the females and young? Second, the crossbill invasion did not really begin until October, fully two months after the first lowland nuthatches appeared; what accounts for this differential timing? Finally, most birders are aware by now that the Red Crossbills of North America might actually represent as many as eight different biological species; the obvious question is: What sort of crossbills are we seeing here this win-

on the Red Crossbill mystery in North America, see Jeff Groth's "Evolutionary Differentiation in Morphology, Vocalizations, and Allozymes Among Nomadic Sibling Species in the North American Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) Complex" (University of California Publications, *Zoology*, Vol. 27, 1993).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread in desert and coastal lowlands this fall and early winter — the numbers are far too great to be accounted for by the small populations breeding in our local mountains. Christmas Count-based studies by Carl Bock and co-workers have shown that invasions of this and other "boreal" species over much of the continent are often synchronous, occurring about every two years when boreal cone crops are poor but follow a productive year (see Bock and Lepthien's "Synchronous eruptions of boreal seed-eating birds", *American Naturalist* 110:559-571, 1976). These "neat" patterns, however, don't hold for montane western North Ameri-

ca, where things appear much more complex. Our "invasions" of nuthatches, corvids and other species of western montane coniferous forests don't occur in regular alternate-year patterns. The best we can do is record numbers as carefully as possible (on Christmas Counts and otherwise) and see what emerges.

What common thread brings a Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Clark's Nutcracker and Red Crossbill to coastal southern California? Certainly a massive cone crop failure somewhere in the montane west is a likely culprit. But our attempts to solve the puzzle are hampered by our not knowing exactly where these birds are coming from (Utah? the Sierra Nevada? Oregon?). Is this winter's massive invasion of Snowy Owls into the Pacific Northwest somehow related? What about this winter's super-abundance of juncos, including a good mix of subspecies in seemingly every flock (and southern California's first "White-winged" Junco) — is there some correlation there?

In bird ecology it's easy to ask questions; it's harder to ask the right questions and often nearly impossible to answer them. But we can all help to answer such questions, even those that have yet to be articulated, by helping to provide the raw data on bird distribution and abundance. Christmas Counts, atlasings, good field notes — you know the litany by now. The winter of 1996-97 has served as a reminder that there's always something new and different going on in the bird world, and we can be part of it. ❄️



Photo by Larry Sansone

From the Editor

Oops! The cover of the last issue of the *Western Tanager* was graced with a magnificent photograph of a berry-eating Cedar Waxwing. Unfortunately, I forgot to include a photo credit for the photographer, Larry Sansone, who took that wonderful picture.

As you can see, he forgave me and took a chance by providing the Red-breasted Nuthatch which appears on the cover of this issue.

I hope you all notice that we haven't had a lead article in a couple of months. Luckily, my regular columnists Kimball, Sandy and Hank, with a couple of pages of field trips by Nick Freeman have been able to get us enough material to fill each issue. With Hank leaving, the task becomes more difficult. So, if you have any ideas for an article, please let me know.

Thanks,
Fred
(805) 389-3203

WESTERN TANAGER

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EDITOR: Fred Heath
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Tom Frillman
CONSERVATION: Sandy Wohlgemuth
CO-CONSERVATION: Catherine Rich
ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:
Kimball Garrett
FIELD TRIPS: Nick Freeman
PELAGIC TRIPS: Phil Sayre
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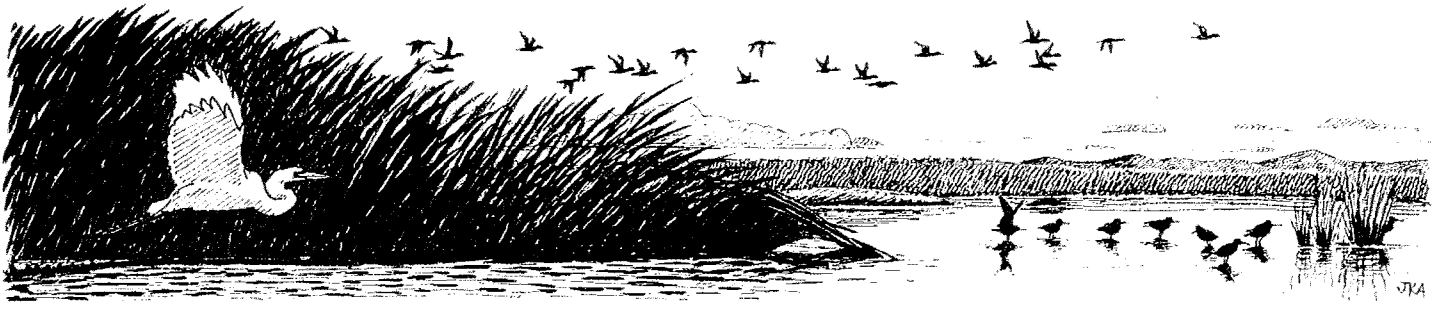
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CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

The Carrizo Plain is a 50-mile long, 200,000-acre valley, 80 air miles north of Los Angeles and is one of the last remnants of the rich habitats that sustained life in the San Joaquin Valley a century ago. There are great stretches of grasslands, exuberant fields of flowers in the spring, ancient Indian rock paintings and a splendid variety of wildlife.

For birders, winter is the magic season when as many as 3,000 Sandhill Cranes arrive to forage in the nearby fields and spend the nights in security on the edges of Soda Lake. Great flocks of Horned Larks and American Pipits criss-cross the road, swirl around the car, then disappear into the grass like flying fish slipping back into the sea. Mountain Bluebirds are plentiful, dazzling the observer with their incredible, ethereal hue. And this is raptor country. Ferruginous Hawks, piercingly white underneath, wheel confidently overhead, their rusty legs outlined against the whiteness. Rough-legged Hawks hover like Kestrels over potential prey. Kestrels abound. A Prairie Falcon dashes through the clear air. A Golden Eagle drifts lazily across the valley, lord of the flesh-eaters.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the state Department of Fish and Game (DFG) bought up ranch land in the 1980s to preserve forever this fragment of the original West. They

jointly manage it as the Carrizo Plain Natural Area whose Management Plan states that "hunting is allowed and encouraged." Several years ago Tule Elk and Pronghorn Antelope were introduced into the Plain where they had been shot to extinction in the early 1900s. In 1993, the season was opened on elk. In September of this year, it was the pronghorn's turn.

Consider the Nature Conservancy. It is the paragon of environmental organizations, widely

admired and respected. While Audubon, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society educate the public and their own members on environmental issues and bring pressure on legislatures to do the right thing, TNC buys the land! It attracts idealistic people and organizations, especially successful corporations and wealthy individuals. It is able to use its money to acquire land threatened with development with a minimum of time and red tape. TNC does not always



hold onto the land but sells it to responsible environmental groups or public agencies and then has more capital to make further acquisitions.

So far as we know, TNC allows little or no hunting on its other preserves scattered throughout the country. Its publications are quite silent on the subject. Many of its supporters would be shocked to know that the Carrizo Plain is the setting for this destructive sport. The grand purpose of TNC is to rescue some of America's bountiful gifts before they are lost for all time. What it calls, in the admirable phrase, "The Last Great Places." Why does it embrace hunting in this last great place? Is it because TNC is only a junior partner in the Carrizo Plain Natural Area triumvirate? Does it dutifully follow the lead of DFG whose most vocal constituency is the hunting fraternity? Many environmentalists accept hunting when there are benefits for wildlife. Duck hunters who maintain game preserves kill a limited number of ducks, but they create superior habitat for non-

game species like shorebirds, egrets and ibis. In the Carrizo Plain, there is no such trade-off. TNC is acquiescing to a practice that is contrary to the very essence of its mission: to preserve rather than to destroy.



There are about 400 pronghorn in areas close to the Carrizo Plain that can be hunted in season. Why must they be imported to the Carrizo to provide still another site for a pampered minority? The Plain is for the hundreds of people who visit in spring to enjoy the wildflowers, for others in winter to see

the cranes, or at any time to hike to Painted Rock and view the petroglyphs. There are those who are simply excited by the magnificent vistas, the stark mountains, the palpable San Andreas fault. Climb a small hill along the road and you can look for miles in all directions, sensing the power of the earth, a solitary human in the midst of an enormous endless valley.

The Nature Conservancy is doing wonderful things for the environment all over the country. Long may it prosper. In the Carrizo Plain, TNC may be in a situation where you "go along to get along" with formidable agencies. There is no desire here to damage TNC. It would be nice if they exerted their not inconsiderable moral influence to get rid of the stain of hunting in this unique place. 🐾

Your comments may be addressed to:

John C. Sawhill, President
The Nature Conservancy
1815 North Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209

Requests for:

Thrasher Information

I am preparing species accounts on **California** and **Crissal Thrashers** for the new *Birds of North America* and would welcome any input on ecology, behavior, distribution, breeding or other records. Please direct observations, information or obscure references on either species to:

M. L. Cody
Department of Biology
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1606
Voice: (310) 825-1327
Fax: (310) 206-3987
e-mail: mlcody@ucla.edu

All cited data will, of course, be duly accredited to the source.

...and Heron Observations

During the spring and summer of 1996, Pete Bloom and Robb Hamilton color banded about 450 juvenile **Black-crowned Night Herons** as part of a dispersal study in Orange County. Each bird has an aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band on the right leg and a plastic color band on the left. Each plastic band has a large horizontal 2-digit number or a letter and number engraved on it. All birds are presently in immature plumage. If you should observe a color banded heron, please note the numbers and/or letters, color, and which leg the plastic band was on. Also provide the date, location and your name, address and phone number.

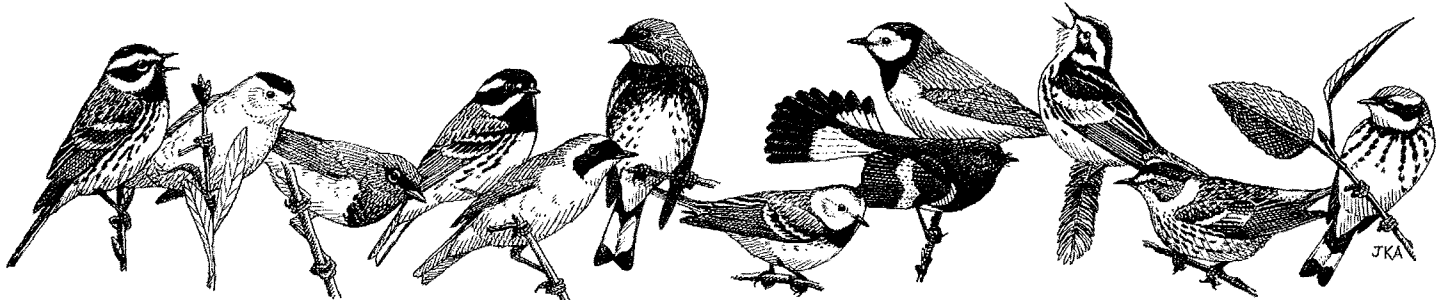
Please send observations to:

Pete Bloom
13611 Hewes Avenue
Santa Ana, CA 92705

We will report the numbers to the banding laboratory and provide you with an immediate response as to where and when the bird was banded.

Thank you for your help!



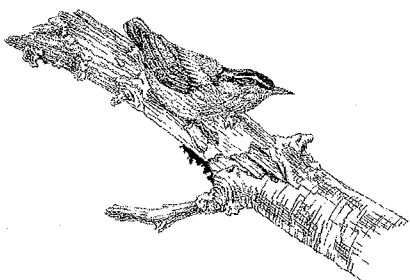


BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodtkin

January and February can be exciting months for birders, with many interesting "Christmas Count finds" likely to be hanging around. In addition, try birding our coastal areas after one of our major storms to look for interesting pelagic species. Furthermore, the amazing spectacle of waterfowl at the Salton Sea and Central Valley refuges can be overwhelming. The Carrizo Plain and the area south of Brawley are good for cranes and raptors, and the Owens Valley is always worth a trip.

The major bird story continues to be the winter invaders. **Red Crossbills** spread throughout the region. **Pine Siskins** are around in numbers. Lowland reports of **Cassin's Finches**, **Mountain Chickadees**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Lewis' Woodpeckers** were commonplace, and many reports of **Evening Grosbeaks** came from the deserts and local mountains. Even **Clark's Nutcrackers** made it to the Santa Monica Mountains. This phenomenon is widespread over the entire southwest; theories of causation range from the forest fires destroying large areas of evergreens to a failure of the cone crop caused by drought —



but the reason is probably more complicated than that.

A **Pacific Loon** was seen at the Salton Sea Recreation Area on 31 October (Dharm Pellegrini), and another was found inland at Apollo Park in Lancaster on 24 November (April Day, Fred Heath). A pelagic trip out of Ventura on 26 and 27 October yielded, among other species, six **Cook's Petrels** and 1,600 **Buller's Shearwaters** (David Koeppel). **Canada Geese** showed up earlier than usual at Silverlake on 22 October (Maryann Cook).

A **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Harbor Park on 25 October (Mitch Heindel). The first **Mountain Plover** reports were 1 November in Palmdale (Monte Taylor) and 3 November on the Oxnard Plain (Steve Tucker). Both a **Franklin's Gull** and a **Little Gull** were at the Corona Sewage Ponds in Riverside County on 8 November (Jim Pike).

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was in Quartz Hill, Antelope Valley, on 23 November (Kimball Garrett). A bright **Red-breasted Sapsucker** thought to be of the northern *ruber* race was seen at Malibu Creek State Park on 17 November (Steve Sosensky), and a **Williamson Sapsucker** was at Veteran's Park in Sylmar on 22 October (Tim Kastle, Nancy Pachana).

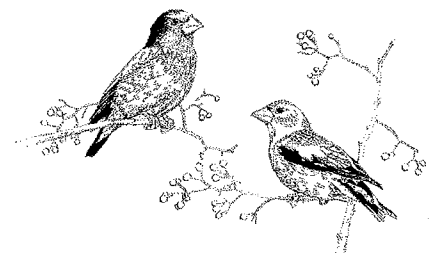
A vocal **Eastern Wood-Pewee** was found on 9 November at Huntington Central Park (Brian Daniels); this was only the second for southern California and the first to be widely seen and heard. A flock of 27 **Horned Larks** on Mt. Washington, Los Angeles, on 10 November, was

said by the long-time resident who reported them to be the first he had ever seen there (Julian Donahue).

On 27 October a flock of about 15 **Clark Nutcrackers** at Topanga State Park (Gerry Haigh) and a single bird on Castro Peak (Bonnie Clarfield) were among the few ever recorded so near the coast. A **Gray Catbird** was found at Desert Center, Riverside County, on 16 November (Bill Moramarco, Roy Poucher).

A **Worm-eating Warbler** was on the Cal State Long Beach campus on 6 November (Scott Smithson), and another was at Peck Park in San Pedro on 23 November (MH). A **Summer Tanager** was seen at Galileo Park, Kern County, on 5 November (Leo Ebsen), and a **Scarlet Tanager** was in Banning Park on 25 October (MH).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was along the Los Angeles River near Griffith Park on 4 November (Gerard Phillips), and a **Harris' Sparrow** was seen at Furnace Creek, Death Valley, on 2 November (Guy McCaskie et al).



California's second record of the "**White-winged Junco**" was at Desert Center on 3 November (Michael Patten).

The first **McCown's Longspur**


sightings are 1 November in Palmdale (MT) and 2 November on the Oxnard Plain (Don DesJardin). **Lapland** reports include four in Palmdale on 3 November, four on the Oxnard Plain on 3 November (ST), and one at Holy Cross Cemetery in Los Angeles on 10 November (Kevin Larson). A **Chestnut-collared** was at Harbor Park on 25 October (MH).

A **Rusty Blackbird** was in the Los Angeles River channel near Willow Street on 10 November (MH) and a **Baltimore Oriole** was found in Banning Park on 27 October (Jim Abernathy, Steve Sosensky).

This has been a great year for birds! I am really grateful to all of you who sent reports directly to me or indirectly through the various communication outlets open to birders in our area.

Many thanks also to editors Jean Brandt and Fred Heath, to Kimball Garrett for proofing and keeping us honest, and to Tom Frillman who has removed much of the drudgery from this task.

And most of all I would like to thank my wife, Priscilla, for her enduring patience and help this past year.

A very Happy Holiday Season to all and Good Birding in the New Year!! 

NOTE: Hank Brodtkin, long time author of *Birds of the Season*, will be leaving California in early 1997. We will miss him greatly. Fortunately, Kimball Garrett has agreed to take over the column. Please note his address.

Records of rare and unusual bird sightings reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by **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:

Kimball Garrett
Los Angeles County Museum
of Natural History
900 Exposition Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90007
Phone (213) 744-3368
E-Mail: garrett@bcf.usc.edu

or call Jon Fisher at (818) 544-5009.

Members' Annual Photo Contest

February 11, 1997

- 1st Prize - \$50 gift certificate to the LAAS Bookstore
- 2nd Prize - \$35 gift certificate to the LAAS Bookstore
- 3rd Prize - \$25 gift certificate to the LAAS Bookstore

Rules and Regulations

- Participation is limited to members of LAAS or current subscribers to the *Western Tanager*. Membership sign up at-the-door is welcome.
- Each contestant may submit up to five 35mm slides for consideration.
- Only images taken of free and unrestrained birds are acceptable.
- Slides must be submitted by 7:30P.M. on the evening of the contest.
- Contestants must be present to win.
- Write your name on each slide and place a red dot in the upper right corner of the slide (right side up) to orient placement in the slide tray.

The winning photos will be printed in the *Western Tanager*. Join us for a FUN evening. Cheer your favorite slides. Your enthusiasm is necessary if this is to be a successful event.

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Los Angeles Audubon Society

WISH LIST

This month's wish list consists of a single item:

Our old FAX machine is dying! Donations of a FAX machine or money
to purchase a new one would be greatly appreciated.
Send donations to LAAS FAX Fund.

LAAS PELAGIC TRIPS

Friday, January 31 —

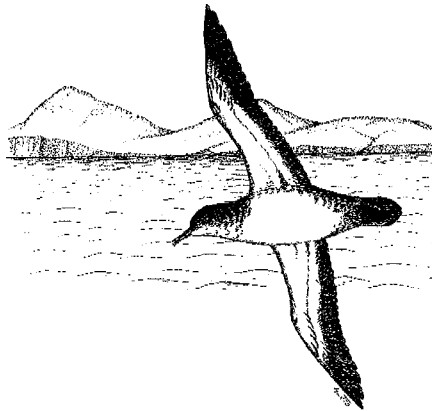
Continental Shelf. Leaders will be **Kimball Garrett and Mitch Heindel.** This 24-hour trip to the outer continental shelf in the vicinity of Arguello canyon and the Rodriquez Seamount will depart 11 P.M. on Friday and return 11 P.M. Saturday. Among the birds found this far out are usually some fairly rare species. The February 1996 trip, for example had Laysan Albatross. Also many sea mammals such as: Blue, Northern Right and Finback Whales; Pacific Bottlenosed, Common and Risso's Dolphins. Rarities include: Sperm, Baird's Beaked and Killer Whales. Cost is \$150 which includes a bunk and three meals.

The boat, the Condor, is a 90-foot Coast Guard-inspected passenger vessel with berths for 49. She is powered by twin computer-controlled diesel engines that produce 65% less pollution than other similar-sized power plants. She is a very comfortable, stable and seaworthy craft that, in the hands of her owner/skipper, Fred Benko, has developed an international reputation for whale watching and marine natural history.

See page 11 for reservation policy and procedure.

Special refund policy for 24 hour Condor trips: If participants cancel at least 31 days prior to departure there will be a five dollar service charge for their refund. There is no participant refund after that time (30 days) unless there is a paid replacement available. Call LAAS for a possible replacement.

Please do not offer the trip to a friend. It would not be fair to those on the waiting list.



The following trips have their share of pelagic species. Often seen are Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed, Sooty, Short-tailed and Black-vented Shearwaters, Red Phalarope, Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Surfbird, Pomarine Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Arctic Tern, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Xantus' Murrelet, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets. Rarities include: Black legged Kittiwake, South Polar Skua, Tufted or Horned Puffins. Mammals include: Gray Whale, Dall's Porpoise, Pacific Bottlenosed, Common and Risso's Dolphins. Marine mammal expert Linda Lewis will be one of our leaders when her schedule permits.

Sunday March 9, — Palos

Verdes Escarpment to Redondo Canyon 7:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. Leaders to be announced. The cost for this 8-hour trip is \$28; departs from San Pedro. (no galley on board).

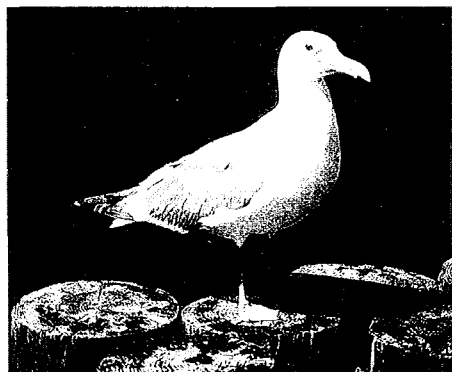
Sunday April 20, — Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Leaders to be announced. Cost for this 12 hour trip departing from San Pedro is \$44 (no galley on board).

LAAS 1997 PELAGIC TRIPS

PORT	HRS	DATE	DESTINATION	COST
Santa Barbara	24	May 2	Continental Shelf	TBA
San Pedro	20	May 17	Albatross Knoll via San Nicolas Island	\$123 (3 meals)
Ventura	10	June 14	Santa Cruz Island with landing	\$59 (no galley)
Ventura	17	Sept. 13	San Miguel Island with wet landing	\$95 (dinner)
San Pedro	8	Sept. 27	Redondo Canyon	\$28 (no galley)
Ventura	12	Oct. 19	Channel Islands	\$65 (galley)
Santa Barbara	24	Oct. 24	Continental Shelf	TBA
San Pedro	12	Nov. 16	Santa Barbara Island	\$44 (no galley)

Sunday, January 12 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join ranger **Ray Jillson** at 8:00 A.M. to view colorful resident and wintering birds including Northern Cardinal. Meet at the Nature Center at 1000 Durfee Ave. Take the 60 Fwy to South El Monte, just west of the 605 Fwy, take the Peck Drive exit south. Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading west (right), and turn left into the nature center. \$2 voluntary donation suggested by the park.

Friday, January 17 — Gull Study Workshop. **Larry Allen** will take us beyond the standard plumage reviews of this oft-confusing collection of birds. The important skills of aging and describing a gull by feather groupings will be addressed. Slides, skins and hand-outs will be used to demonstrate I.D. marks of many common and uncommon gulls of the west coast in their various plumages. Emphasis will differ somewhat from lecture of November general meeting. Meet at Audubon House in West Hollywood at 7:30 P.M. Fee: \$5 for lecture and field trip. Reservation with Audubon House by check required, limit 22 participants. See field trip listing below.



Sunday, January 19 — Gull Study Field Trip. **Larry Allen** will be making stops from Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach

looking for gulls to demonstrate points made during the Friday lecture (see above). Thayer's Gull likely. We will meet at the Malibu Lagoon parking lot kiosk at 8:00 A.M. Free parking on Cross Creek Rd. located just west of the lagoon bridge. Trip will finish at McGrath State Park in Oxnard. Walk-ons O.K. for field trip only. Fee: \$5 for both, \$3 for field trip only. Bring lunch, a NGS field guide and scopes for a full day.

Saturday, January 25 — Point Mugu. **Irwin Woldman, Bart Lane** and a base biologist will lead in this limited access area. **Note revised date.** Peregrine Falcon and White-winged Scoter frequently seen. Rare birds like Tropical Kingbird, Oldsquaw, Black Scoter in recent years. Must be 16 years old. No cameras. Mail a SASE to LAAS by January 7, for required early, limited sign up; include citizenship status, phone number, social security number and a \$5 deposit for each person in your party, to be refunded at the gate. Take the 101 Fwy west to Las Posas Rd. going south, to PCH north onto Wood Rd. going west, then head south on the frontage road to the lot at the main (#2) gate. Meet at 7:45 A.M.

Sunday, January 26 — Van Norman Reservoir. Leader **Gerrard Phillips**. The reservoir and small ponds dot the riparian and grassland habitat of the grounds. Hooded Merganser is probable, and raptors should be good. Take the 405 Fwy north to the Rinaldi offramp just south of the 5 Fwy interchange. Go west on Rinaldi about a mile to the front gate on the right (north) side. Meet in the lot inside the gate on the left. We will carpool from here at 7:30 A.M., and bird here and elsewhere until enthusiasm wanes.

Bring a lunch if you like. Restrooms on-site.

February Trips

Saturday and Sunday, February 1 and 2 — Salton Sea. Leader **Nick Freeman**. For Sandhill Cranes and White-faced Ibis, meet at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley at 3:30 P.M. Saturday. Take Hwy 111 south to Brawley, head west thru town on Main Street, then south on Hwy 86 to a fairly quick right on Cattle Call Drive, continuing down and around the bend to the fenced grassy area by the arena. Sunday morning we will regroup (and welcome late-comers) at Carl's Jr. at Main and First Streets in Brawley, leaving at 7:00 A.M. A good trip for Canada, Snow and Ross' Geese, Burrowing Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Great-tailed Grackle and Yellow-footed Gull. Anticipate mud. Bring lunch, scopes, warm clothes. Registration fee \$5. No limit.



Sunday, February 2 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 5 write-up for details.

Sunday, February 9 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 12 write-up for details.

Sunday, February 9 — Antelope Valley. The enthusiastic **Gerrard Phillips** will be our leader as we blaze a path from Piute Ponds (permission pending) to Quail Lake.

Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawks in various morphs, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier and Mountain Bluebird all likely. Rough-legged Hawk and Merlin possible. Bring lunch and very warm clothes. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the Lamont-Odett Overlook. Take the 14 Fwy north past Pearblossom Hwy. The stop is on the right in about 1/2 mile, overlooking Lake Palmdale.

Saturday, February 15 — Private Duck Club. Leader **Doug Martin**. This duck club is an excellent spot to observe wintering birds. We have seen Sora and Virginia Rail here, as well as American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark Red-tailed Hawks and Snow Geese. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy west to Las Posas Rd. south, then take Hueneme Rd. west to Casper Rd. We will meet at the corner of Casper and Hueneme roads at 8:00 A.M. Limited; phone sign up with LAAS.

Sunday, February 16 — Ballona Wetlands. Leader **Bob Shanman**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 12 write-up for details.

Sunday, February 23 — Franklin Canyon. This morning walk will be led by **Steven Saffier**. Franklin Canyon is located between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Chaparral, lakeside and oak/pine woodland habitat. Wood Ducks usually winter here. Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 A.M. From the 101 Fwy, take Coldwater Canyon Ave. south. Immediately



after Mulholland Dr. merges from the west with Coldwater Canyon Ave., make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon. Dr. and continue to the nature center. The lot is past a gated drive on the left.

March and beyond...

Sunday, March 2 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 5 write-up for details.



Saturday, March 8 — Lakeview Area. Leader **Howard King** will show us around the many corners of this excellent winter birding area in search of buteos, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, early migrants and myriad waterfowl. Itinerary depends on recent rains and reports. Take the 10 Fwy or 60 Fwy to the 215 Fwy south, exit east onto Ramona Expressway. Continue to the Lakeview Market at the corner of Davis Rd. Meet at 8:00 A.M. Bring lunch, warm clothing and footwear for possible mud. Possible entrance fee of \$2 (bring ones and quarters).

Sunday, March 9 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 12 write-up for details.

Saturday and Sunday, March 15 and 16 — Anza Borrego with **Fred Heath**. Experience the spring explosion of desert flowers, butterflies, and birds in the throes of breeding activity. Suggested accommodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground (reserve through Mistix (800) 444-7275 on or shortly after January 19) or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (619) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend and



reserve motels or campsites early. Limited to 20 participants. Send SASE with \$5 fee to LAAS for 8:00 A.M. meeting place. Pleasant days, cool nights.

Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6 — Owens Valley Grouse Trip. **Mary Freeman** leads. Limited to 20. Meet in Big Pine Saturday. To sign up, send \$10 and a SASE to LAAS. More details next month or in the mailer.

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.

EVENING MEETINGS

Meet at 8:00 P.M. in Plummer Park.
Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

Tuesday, January 14, 1997

Bruce Bartrug of the Maine Audubon Society will present **"The Decline of Neotropical Migrants"**

This slide illustrated talk with birds from Ecuador, Costa Rica and elsewhere will cover the causes, consequences and counter measures for this decline.

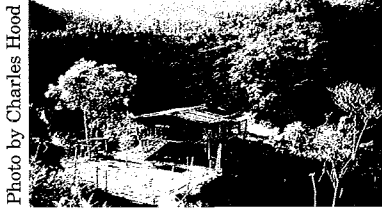


Photo by Charles Hood

Finca for sale!

Tuesday, February 11, 1997 **Members' Photo Contest** See page 7 for details.

Tuesday, March 11, 1997 **Mark Wimer** — Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas

F I E L D T R I P S

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

Saturday and Sunday, January 4 and 5 — Carrizo Plain.

Leader **Roy Van de Hoek**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in Maricopa. Great raptors, and Mountain Plover for sure! Sandhill Crane, elk and pronghorn hopeful. \$15 per person, \$5 surcharge for 1-person vehicles. 10 car

limit. Sign up with Audubon House for directions and information. Reserve Saturday night accommodations near Buttonwillow.

PELAGIC TRIPS are on PAGE 9

Sunday, January 5 — 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 Ventura Blvd., take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles south, then turn east uphill on Entrada Rd. (1 mile north of Topanga Village). Follow the signs and turn left into the park. Meet in the Trippet Ranch parking lot at 8:00 A.M. \$5 parking fee.

Saturday, January 11 — Point Mugu. Rescheduled for January 25.

Sunday, January 12 — Ballona Wetlands. **Bob Shanman** will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland. Wintering shorebirds, sea ducks and gulls are among the expected fare. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90) west to Culver Blvd., turn left to Pacific Ave., then right to the lot on the right. Lot or street parking is usually available. Three hour walk. Scopes helpful.

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

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Continued on page 10