

WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

In Search of Cosmopolitan Birds

by Hartmut S. Walter

The richness of bird diversity around the world is amazing, wonderful, and a gold mine for the scientifically curious. In this first article in an occasional series on "ornithic" geography (the venerable British ornithologist P. L. Sclater used this term in his famous treatise on *The general geographical distribution of the members of the class Aves*, published in 1858), I want to investigate a question that is closely linked to bird diversity: How many birds have a worldwide distribution? We have well over 9,600 bird species on the planet, most birds can fly long distances, and there are bird-rich habitats on all continents except Antarctica. So, we would expect quite a few birds to have a worldwide or cosmopolitan distribution. The fact is, however, that the percentage of cosmopolitan species is minuscule, 0.07% to be exact. Now, in my opinion, that is interesting! Evidently there are powerful

factors which have prevented birds from being cosmopolitan. In the following pages I will try to shed some light on the reworded question: Why are there so few cosmopolitan birds? Before reading on, can you think of any cosmopolitan birds?

In order to research this biogeographical topic, we must agree on at least three items: (1) a clear definition of "cosmopolitan," (2) bird taxonomy (is this a species or just a subspecies?), and (3) the difference between natural and naturalized distribution.

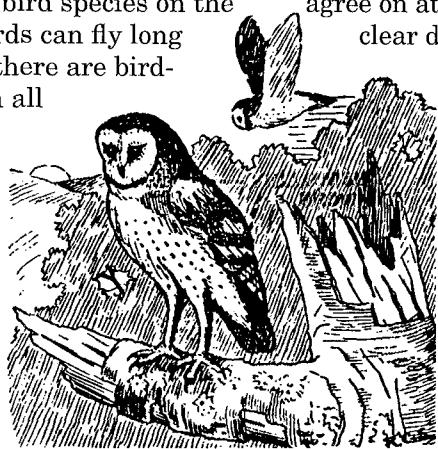
1. The term *cosmopolitan* is widely used in ornithology as well as in everyday language; it is generally synonymous with *worldwide* and perhaps also with *everywhere*. As intrepid biogeographers we have to be much more specific, however. In fact, I would like to establish here

the first geographical standards for a cosmopolitan distribution. Antarctica will not be a required area for any cosmopolitan bird species. It is mostly covered by ice and rather inhospitable to the vast majority of birds on earth. The species must, however, breed on all other continents, in all of the seven biogeographic realms (Nearctic, Palearctic, Africotropical, Indomalaysian, Australian, Neotropical, and Oceanian), and on some islands.

The total breeding distribution area on continents must include the tropical as well as the extratropical regions to the north and south of the north-south axis in the Americas, the African-European landmass, and the Asian-Australian terrestrial portion of the globe.

Seabirds must breed in all major oceans; their range should include the tropical regions as well as large areas to the north and south of tropical latitudes. Occurrence during migration and at other times does not enter into this geographic definition.

2. Bird taxonomy is rather critical for this investigation. There are splitters and lumpers among taxonomists, as you know, and extreme splitters might be able to deny any species the cosmopolitan status by splitting off one geographic subspecies occupying a key region and declaring it a separate species.

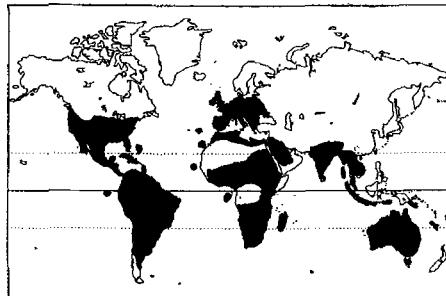


Illustrations by Robert Stebbins from Birds of the Campus: UCLA (1947).

Extreme lumpers, on the other hand, might be able to add a couple of additional species to the cosmopolitan pool by lumping several species of a superspecies complex into just one species meeting all of the geographic criteria. I will go with currently accepted and generally shared understandings of species delimitations such as those treated in the new *Handbook of the Birds of the World*.

3. We should focus first on bird distributions that are natural, i.e., have developed over time as a result of the dynamics of range expansions and contractions without any direct human assistance. Birds that have achieved a natural cosmopolitan distribution will be termed *primary cosmopolitan* birds. We can then scrutinize the current distribution patterns of the many wild bird species that have been introduced to other continents and islands by direct human agency. These species have a natural and an additional exotic or *naturalized* distribution area. If their total distribution qualifies them as cosmopolitan we will call them a *secondary cosmopolitan* species. Finally, there are birds flying in the outdoors which have escaped from domestication and captivity, reverted to the wild state, and hybridized often or irregularly with their wild ancestors and with each other. These feral birds may also qualify as cosmopolitan if we add the natural range of the still existing wild species to that of the feral population. Birds with this distribution will be referred to as *tertiary cosmopolitan* species.

Which is the easiest way to scan through the vast database of over 9,600 bird species? If you are a cos-



Barn Owl

mopolitan birder yourself (do you meet the geographic criteria?), you may recall the few bird species encountered in all the required locations. Most of us have not achieved this status, however. We have to fall back on the knowledge of just a few regional avifaunas. For instance, a cosmopolitan species must breed in North America (including Mexico). When I first became curious about this topic (always going against the trend, mind you, since everybody was so hyped up on rare species), I picked up one of the wonderful field guides of Australian birds and looked for familiar species. I reasoned that no Australian species would deserve the cosmopolitan designation that I hadn't also seen in Europe, Africa, and the U.S. This turned out to be an excellent move because most Australian birds are strictly Australian endemics. With a bit of additional library study, I ended up with a very short list of *cosmopolitan* birds. They will be ranked in order of distribution area as well as overall *areographic* complexity (a somewhat subjective assessment referring to a species' occurrence in different parts of major continents and/or on remote islands).

groups. It is a strong and superb long distance flyer and migrant; no other cosmopolitan bird breeds as far north and south as this raptor.

Barn Owl

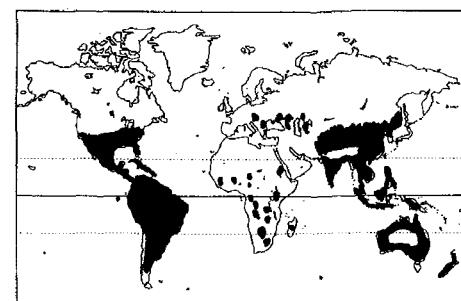
(*Tyto alba*)

The only cosmopolitan owl has the most complex distribution due to its many island subspecies. At least 34 subspecies have been recognized. A great colonizer and trans-oceanic flyer. Its Achilles heel is its inability to live in cold winter climates where there is ice on the surface. Thus it is absent from a large section of the northern hemisphere.

Great White Egret

(*Egretta alba* [=*Ardea alba*])

This beautiful and elegant bird is well adapted for long distance flight; it has very large wings and a comparatively light body. Only four subspecies are recognized indicating frequent gene flow and/or dispersal between neighboring populations.

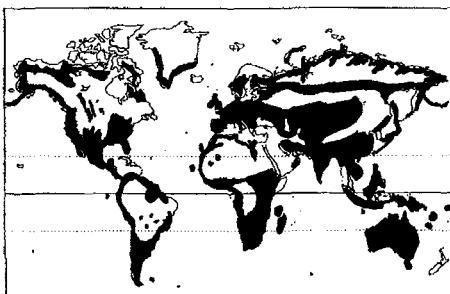


Great White Egret

Cattle Egret

(*Bubulcus ibis*)

A highly adaptive species in the modern world. This egret is known for extensive post-breeding dispersal and has colonized parts of Africa and the Americas in this century. There are only three recognized subspecies. The species has greatly benefited from extensive rice cultivation and other forms of modern agriculture. It is definitely a follower of human modification, but it is impossible to prove that it would not have been able to expand its range without its successful use of human landscapes. Therefore it must be included in the primary cosmopolitan category.



Peregrine Falcon

Peregrine Falcon

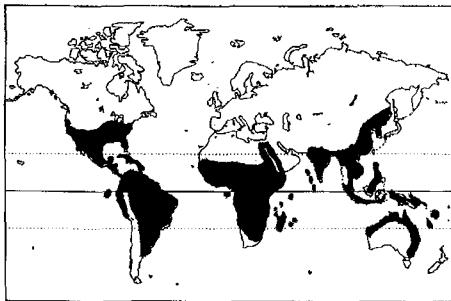
(*Falco peregrinus*)

This is the cosmopolitan bird *par excellence*. The newest distribution map in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is tiny but shows a much larger breeding distribution in South America than previous maps such as those found in Tom J. Cade's *Falcons of the World*. This astounding falcon species occurs in 19 recognized subspecies on all continents and several major island

Green-backed Heron

(*Butorides striatus*)

This is one of the most interesting birds in terms of its general distribution. Some 30 subspecies are commonly recognized, but some races are often raised to full species status, like the Green Heron (*B. virescens*). Even with all of these geographically and often morphologically distinct populations, the Green-backed Heron barely qualifies for our list because of its absence in Europe and most of the remaining Palearctic realm. It passes only because of the race *brevipes*, breeding in the Red Sea.

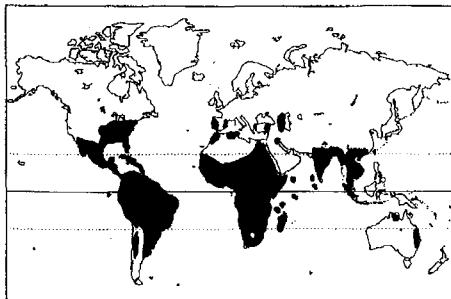


Green-backed Heron

House Sparrow

(*Passer domesticus*)

This ubiquitous urban bird is the first and only *secondary cosmopolitan* species. It received much human help as thousands of birds were released in the Americas, in Australia, and on many islands beginning in 1850. The species has also expanded its natural range in Eurasia in the last 200 years. Its current distribution is still sparse and discontinuous in all tropical regions. Increasing urbanization and landscape modification will facilitate further colonization of the tropics.



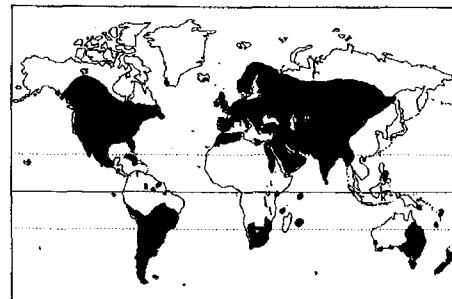
Cattle Egret

Rock Dove

(*Columba livia*)

Many birders don't even feel comfortable listing this species as a bird! But it competes in the wild with the other creatures of our urban and rural landscapes, and there are truly wild Rock Doves in some magnificent rocky cliffs of Europe and North Africa. This *tertiary cosmopolitan* species has escaped from human confinement in the New World as well as in Australia and most of the interior of Eurasia and Africa; it conquered a large exotic distribution area where it appears to be naturalized in many locations. Its occurrence is scattered in the tropical latitudes.

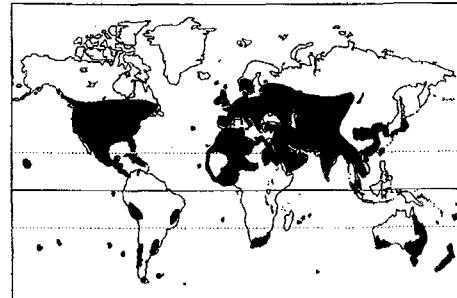
A number of near-cosmopolitan species failed to make the list because of absence from one of the continents (examples: Gull-billed Tern, Roseate Tern, Glossy Ibis) or because of a narrow tropical distribution (Sooty Tern). None of the seabirds made the list, usually because of absence from required breeding grounds



House Sparrow

both north and south of the tropics. Other species lost out because their nearest taxonomic relatives in Australia or elsewhere have achieved full species status or are part of a superspecies group. The European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) may become the next secondary cosmopolitan species if it can successfully adapt to equatorial environments. Some additional dove or pigeon may also make the list in the distant future.

What can we learn from this exploration in ornithic geography? It is surprising that not a single passerine bird has achieved a primary

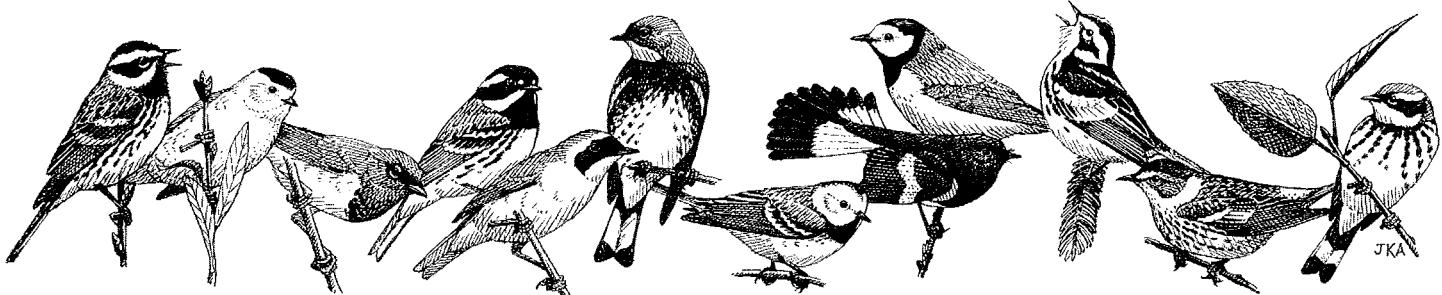


Rock Dove

cosmopolitan status. Also worth mentioning is the fact that three of the seven birds listed above are wetland species and belong to the heron family (Ardeidae). The ability to fly and to disperse across ocean barriers has enabled the five primary cosmopolitan bird species to attain their worldwide distribution; no other vertebrate group has any primary cosmopolitan species.

Only seven of more than 9,600 bird species made the list. How can we explain this phenomenon? It's all related to one factor: connectivity. If you disperse to a new place, succeed, and lose your link to your folks at home, so to speak, you are destined to evolve slowly but surely into a new species. Geographic isolation is a mighty factor leading to speciation. The more barriers exist isolating populations from each other the more species are likely to evolve over time. If a species, however, disperses often and maintains its gene flow — the genetic connection between populations — the various geographic populations may not diverge enough to achieve full speciation. This latter case carries with it the potential for a cosmopolitan distribution if the ecological niche permits it and if there is sufficient population growth to support worldwide colonization efforts. Natural selection on earth does not favor this model; physical and biotic conditions are so different for most species that they can only maintain their specific identity over a relatively small range. That's one important reason why we have this amazing bird diversity around the world. Would birding be so much fun if it were otherwise?

Dr. Walter is Professor of Geography at UCLA.



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Kimball L. Garrett

As you read this you'll have an idea whether the meteorological prognosticators were correct in predicting high rainfall totals in southern California as a result of the current El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO). There is no doubt that El Niño is a real and important phenomenon with profound effects on birds over much of the globe. Such effects were demonstrated sixteen years ago by Ralph and Betty Anne Schreiber, then researchers here at the Natural History Museum. The current ENSO has been implicated in large scale seabird die-offs in the Gulf of Alaska, smaller die-offs along the California coast, forest fires in southeastern Australia (and their attendant successional effects which in turn will affect forest bird life), and many other avian events. If the rainfall predictions for our area pan out, then we should see a verdant spring (perhaps resulting in less of a tendency for spring migrants to congregate at "oases"). We will also see impacts on our riparian corridors with the scouring of winter's rains. Added to these impacts is the large-scale vegetation removal along soft-bottom stream and river channels implemented late in 1997 by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. In a running battle with the conservation community, the Department has insisted that engineered stream channels are solely for flood control purposes and "roughness" (we call it riparian habitat) must be removed. Tempered somewhat by activists, a few refreshing politicians, and watchful wildlife agencies, Public Works' bulldozers and chain saws have

nevertheless caused a significant impact on our riparian habitats. Birders who regularly cover areas such as the Los Angeles River near Glendale, Bull Creek in the Sepulveda Basin, the San Gabriel River, lower Walnut Creek, and similar impacted areas should be alert over this coming spring, summer and fall to changes in the bird life of those habitats. Especially valuable will be comparisons from your "pre-cleansing" field notes to those of the post-vegicide era. You all keep good notes, right? One prediction I will make is that the regular clearing of riparian vegetation in these channels (and, therefore, the constant early successional stage of this vegetation) will favor exotic, naturalized species such as mannikins and bishops over native riparian species. Numbers of some of these exotic species are already alarmingly high — witness Scott Smithson's estimates this October of 100+ **Nutmeg Mannikins** and 150+ **Orange (=Northern Red) Bishops** in the Rio Hondo area behind Whittier Narrows Dam alone!

Speaking of naturalized species (then I'll mercifully leave the subject alone), considerable data on the populations and ecology of parrots in southern California have been summarized in a series of papers in the latest (v. 28, no. 4, 1997) issue of *Western Birds*. No one interested in the birds of western North America should fail to subscribe to this excellent journal available for \$20 per year from, and payable to:

Western Field Ornithologists
6011 Saddletree Lane
Yorba Linda, CA 92886
Student, family, and multi-year
rates available.

Any connection to El Niño is remote, at best, but this has shaped up to be an excellent winter for raptors in the Antelope Valley. Ned and Linda Harris found the first couple of **Rough-legged Hawks** in mid-November, and several have been found since. Daily counts of 25 **Ferruginous Hawks** were not unusual in the Antelope Valley in November. The presence of three **Short-eared Owls** together west of Lancaster on 22 November (Tom Wurster and Karen Gilbert) was another indication that food was plentiful in that area. Through much of my birding career **Merlins** were red-letter events — one was lucky to see more than a handful each winter. Population increases (presumably) have been reflected here on the wintering grounds, and it is now hard to spend a day birding in the coastal lowlands or Antelope Valley between October and March without seeing at least a couple of these powerful small falcons. The county seemed full of Merlins this October and November.

Birders scoured Los Angeles County for the usual and the unusual through the late fall, with a diverse set of finds summarized here. A **Marbled Murrelet** (easily distinguished by its head and neck pattern from the recently split and potentially occurring Long-billed Murrelet) was found in Marina del Rey on 16 November by Alice Glasser and remained there through the end of the month. In Burton Chace Park within the Marina one could watch the murrelet while listening to the incessant chipping of a **Palm Warbler** foraging in the park's bottlebrush trees — a nice combination. A **Sabine's**

Gull at Quail Lake on 29 October (Richard Erickson) was late, and at an inland locality where rare but regular. A **Long-eared Owl** roosted cooperatively at Descanso Gardens in late November (Gayle Hightower); this species is rarely encountered nowadays on the coastal slope of the county.

The perennially wintering **Thick-billed Kingbird** returned to the campus of Cal Poly Pomona by early November (Chris Brady). **Tropical Kingbirds** were found in San Pedro (Mitch Heindel, 11–13 October) and Long Beach (Karen Gilbert, 30 November). At an unusual locality was an **American Dipper** just upstream from the Pacific Coast Highway at Malibu Lagoon on 22 October (Art Evans); dippers are seen occasionally farther up Malibu Creek and in other watercourses in the Santa Monica Mountains. A wagtail presumed to be either a **White** or **Black-backed** was seen in flight over lower Walnut Creek in Baldwin Park on 1 November (Brian Daniels). **Black-throated Blue Warblers** were in lower Zuma Canyon on 11 October (Kimball Garrett) and in David Richardson's Sylmar yard 16–20 November. A **Pine Warbler**, one of California's scarcer vagrant warblers, was found by Karen Gilbert in El Dorado Park, Long Beach, on 25 November and seemed to be settled in for the winter; interestingly, Jeff Boyd had found another Pine Warbler at this exact spot twelve years earlier! Another **Prothonotary Warbler** appeared in the county, this time in Dale Shafer's Malibu yard, 15–18 October. A **Canada Warbler** was along the Vista de Viscaino walkway in San Pedro 11–12 October (Mike San Miguel and Mitch Heindel).

A **Scarlet Tanager** in Banning Park on 17–19 October (Kevin Larson) was at least the tenth record for the county. A classic **"Pink-sided" Junco** was at Gayle Hightower's La Cañada feeder on 28 November. Unusual orioles in Exposition Park included both an **Orchard** on 21 October and a **Bal-**

timore on 30 October (Kimball Garrett). A count of 125+ **Great-tailed Grackles** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach (Tom Wurster, 23 October) was surely the highest yet for the county.

Birding outside of Los Angeles County was, perhaps not surprisingly, even more rewarding this fall. The previously mentioned **Purple Gallinule** at Furnace Creek Ranch (see photo) and **Belcher's Gull** in San Diego remained well into the winter and were widely seen. **Dusky Warblers** put in appearances in Kern, Santa Cruz, and Marin counties. The hard-working crew of vagrant-checkers in Orange County produced an amazing list of warblers (including **Golden-winged**), vireos (including **Philadelphia**), and other birds in October and November. There isn't room in this column to do justice to the wealth of birds found in our neighboring counties, and readers are urged to follow *National Audubon Society American Birding Association Audubon Field Notes* — or whatever it's called these days — for in-depth coverage.

Purple Gallinule at Furnace Creek Ranch on October 7, 1997



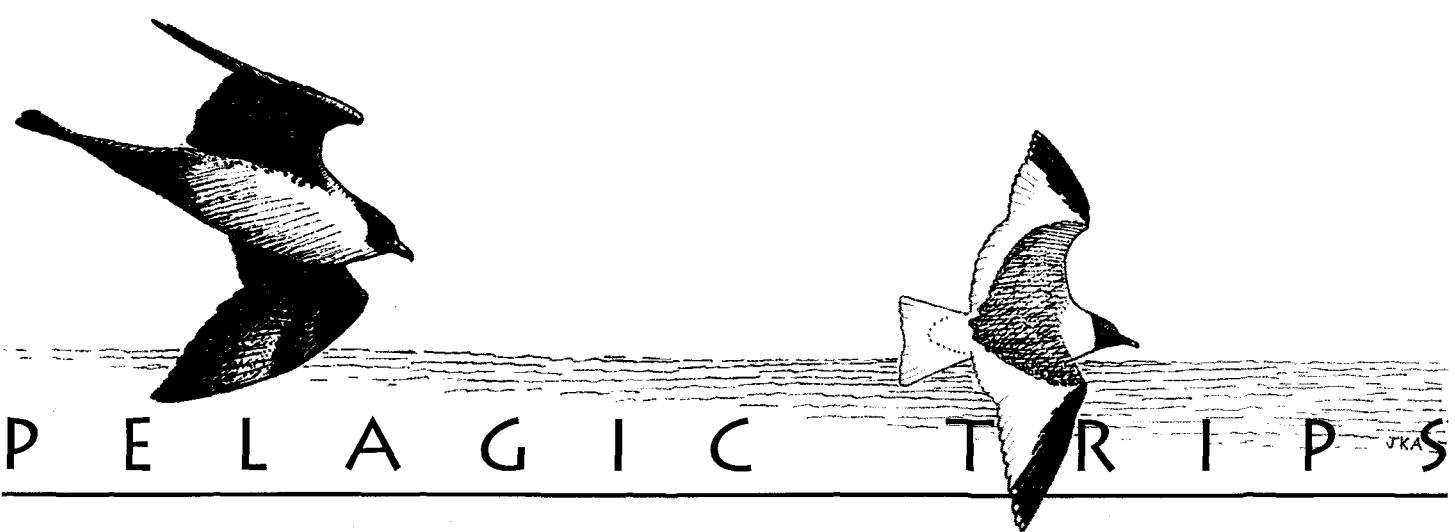
Kimball L. Garrett

Christmas Counts are now over, and January birding is in part a mop-up effort, looking for lingering birds found on counts as well as uncovering a few extra wintering species. Even in January and February it isn't too early to start scouting your new 1998 Breeding Bird Atlas blocks and checking out the resident species (including owls, which can be quite vocal in late winter). With only two years of field work left, we'll need help from each and every one of you to complete this worthwhile and exciting effort! Early atlasers afield will also detect the first signs of spring migration as swallows, Allen's Hummingbirds, Sage Thrashers, and other early northbound species appear. ■

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 Bird Records Committee. Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

Kimball Garrett
L.A. County Museum of Natural History
900 Exposition Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90007
E-mail: garrett@bcf.usc.edu
Or call **Jon Fisher** at 818-544-5009.

LAAS Bird Tape: 213-874-1318



Pelagic species often seen are Pink-footed, Sooty, Short-tailed and Black-vented shearwaters, Red Phalarope, Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Surfbird, Pomarine Jaeger, 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 Bottle-nosed, Common and Risso's dolphins.

Saturday, February 28 — Palos Verdes Escarpment to the Redondo Canyon. 8-hour trip departs from San Pedro. Tailored for both beginning and experienced birders. A very pleasant way to add to your bird lists. At this time of year alcids are in alternate plumage, and Short-tailed Shearwaters can be seen. Leaders: Mitch Heindel and Arnold Small. \$30, no galley.

Sunday, April 19 — Northwest toward Anacapa Island. 12-hour trip departs from Marina del Rey. Joint trip with UCLA Biology Department. Leaders: Arnold Small, Fritz Hertel and Barney Schlinger. \$45 (\$40 students), microwave only.

Saturday, May 9 — Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Banks. 12-hour trip departs from San Pedro. Spring cruise with birding to the island to search for nesting Xantus' Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, Brown Pelicans, cormorants (3) and west coast gulls. Re-

turn by Osborne Banks. Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Mike San Miguel. \$45, bring your own food. Coffee and tea supplied.

Sunday, June 14 — Santa Cruz Island with landing at Prisoners Cove. 10-hour trip departs from Ventura. This beautiful island is the largest and most varied of the Channel Islands. We will take a short walk with a Nature Conservancy naturalist to see the flora and fauna as we search for the Island Jay. We will then cruise off the island for pelagic species. Leaders: TBA. \$60, full galley.

Saturday, August 22 — Albatross Knoll via San Nicolas Island. 20-hour trip departs from San Pedro. Early A.M. departure past San Nicolas Island to Potato Banks and Albatross Knoll. Exciting birds and sea mammals seen on previous August trips. Many of the same birds and mammals as local trips, with a greater chance for rarities. Possible Red-billed Tropicbird, Long-tailed Jaeger, South Polar Skua and Blue Whales. Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Mike San Miguel. \$130 includes 3 meals.

Sunday, September 20 — Anacapa Island, Santa Rosa Island and Santa Cruz Island. 12-hour trip departs from Ventura. Birds all the way highlight this beautiful passage between the islands. Leaders: Mitch Heindel and Mike San Miguel. \$70, full galley.

Saturday, October 17 — Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Banks. 12-hour trip departs from Marina del Rey. Joint trip with the UCLA Biology Department. We will head out to the open ocean toward Santa Barbara Island as we search for pelagic birds and marine life. Leaders: Arnold Small, Fritz Hertel and Barney Schlinger. \$45 (\$40 students), microwave only.

Saturday, November 14 — Palos Verdes Escarpment to Redondo Canyon. 8-hour trip departs from San Pedro. This trip is tailored to novice pelagic birders and year-end listers. Leaders: Mitch Heindel, Kimball Garrett and Kathy Molina. \$30, no galley.

All pelagic trips must be filled 35 days prior to sailing, so please make your reservations early.

REFUND POLICY FOR PELAGIC TRIPS

If a participant cancels 31 days or more prior to departure, a \$5 service charge will be deducted from the refund. There is no participant refund if requested fewer than 30 days before departure, unless there is a paid replacement available. Call LAAS for a possible replacement. Please do not offer the trip to a friend as it would be unfair to those on the waiting list.

BOOKSTORE NEWS

Our own Herb Clarke is co-author of two new titles now out for beginning southern California birders. *Birds of Los Angeles: Including Santa Barbara, Ventura and Orange Counties* and *Birds of San Diego* (\$9.95 each), by Chris Fisher and Herbert Clarke, feature maps of local birding hotspots, overview and description of 125 species, with a straightforward layout geared toward the novice. Also for the casual birder is *The Birdwatcher's Guide to Hawai'i* (\$17.95), a site-specific guide to the islands. It covers more than 60 sites and includes information about plants and ecosystems, as well as icons that identify facilities such as camping, telephones, hiking trails and picnic tables.

Also new is *Southern African Snakes and Other Reptiles* (\$15.95). Reptiles are often overlooked or unjustifiably feared by the general public. This new guide has been compiled for the layman who wishes to gain insight into these creatures. Author Bill Branch has selected 244 species most likely to

be encountered in the field and highlights the characteristic features of each with succinct text and color photographs.

A new edition of *Wild Flowers of South Africa* (\$24.95) has been revised by Dr. J. P. Rourke covering more than 350 species with 406 color plates. A wealth of anecdote — medicinal and horticultural — gives added interest to a lavish work.

Back in print is Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher's *Wild America* (\$14). This legendary story of two great naturalists on the road chronicles a hundred-day field trip around the edge of the continent.

Birds of the desert adorn a delightful set of blank greeting cards now available (\$4.95 for 12 cards and envelopes). Proceeds support the Anza Borrego Foundation.

The 1998 Bookstore Catalogue will soon be available online at: <<http://www.netcom.com/~laas>>. Browse titles online then call or e-mail to place an order. Our friendly and competent staff are always ready to help you. ■

International Tours

In addition to the announcement of the Society's Galapagos Islands/Ecuador Tour enclosed with this *Western Tanager*, Olga Clarke will escort a Birding, Wildlife and Photo Safari to East Africa in October and November of this year. Full details will be announced shortly. Meanwhile, further information may be obtained by contacting Olga at:

2027 El Arbolita
Glendale, CA 91208
phone/fax: (818) 249-9511.

Letter to the Editor

Thank you for the great article on beetles and other invertebrates. I am a member of The Xerces Society and wish you had published their address for interested people. Perhaps you would consider doing so... And thank you, Dr. Evans.

The Xerces Society
4828 SE Hawthorne Boulevard
Portland, OR 97215

— Terri Middlemiss
Kerncrest Audubon Chapter

The Xerces Society is a membership nonprofit dedicated to invertebrate conservation.

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CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

For many years, California's environmentally friendly congressman, Tony Beilenson, managed to get federal money to buy land to create the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area. He also obtained the funding for the Sepulveda Wildlife Preserve and Lake Balboa Park. These were not your usual transparent pork barrel maneuvers to fatten up the voters for the next election. Nor was it lobbying congressional buddies to pass a bill for the pork — with the promise to do the same for them. This was ethically legitimate. Beilenson asked Congress to appropriate money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which had been established in 1964 to encourage the preservation of our national parks and forests, our wildlife refuges and endangered seashores. Money was also available to develop new parks and new recreation areas. And the states were eligible to receive funds for similar purposes.

From today's perspective, creation of the Fund was an extraordinary event. In this era of balanced budget amendments and threats to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts, the temper of this Congress would not likely countenance a 1998 LWCF. The initial authorization for the Fund was \$100 million, doubled in a few years, with the highest figure of \$900 million achieved at the close of the Carter Administration. However there was a catch. Congress could authorize the money, but the original bill decreed that money had to be approved every year. Which meant that it was subject to the whim of the moment, fluctuating with the

political character of the times. Also — and this is the cruncher — Congress could *authorize* the money, which went into the Fund, but it didn't have to be spent until Congress said so. Over time there were plenty of dollars in the kitty but fewer and fewer went to good works. And a goodly portion of those dollars went to other federal programs. In the last few years it was raided in the merciless campaign to balance the budget. When Ronald Reagan and his Interior hatchetman James Watt took over in 1981, the LWCF was a sitting target and the money that dribbled out of the Fund reached a new low. If they could have gotten away with it, they probably would have abolished the LWCF, but they had to deal with opposition from Congress (albeit one that was cowed by Reagan's folksy popularity).

So today the Fund is still alive though moribund. The annual authorization of \$900 million comes from offshore drilling royalties. This is only fair and proper. A natural resource owned by the people of the United States should rightfully pay for their parks and wildlife and recreation. The Clinton Administration has not been aggressively pressing for LWCF money, averaging only \$170 million a year, paying little attention to its own Interior Secretary. Bruce Babbitt has said, "It is a scandal what Congress has done to the Land and Water Conservation Fund over the years. Congress has set up what they call a trust fund, but it's a fake." The promise to protect our natural resources "has never been kept. This is an urgent issue."

Urgent is the word. Many of our state and national parks are being crowded by burgeoning development. Housing subdivisions appear on the fringes. The notorious mine enterprise planned next to Yellowstone (the land purchased at 1872 prices!) if not bought by the government for outrageous millions will be dug and leach acid into the park. Hundreds of parks and wildlife refuges need to add land to their acreage to forestall this kind of development. Private inholdings in 15 national wildlife refuges in northern California amount to about one-third of the acreage owned by willing sellers. Land prices in this state are higher than anywhere else in the country, and the longer the wait the higher the price. As the population zooms (30 million today, 60 million predicted in 2020), the demand for natural open space will go through the roof.

California epitomizes the environmental problems faced by the entire country. How will we extricate ourselves from this tangled predicament? One activist says there is no hope today for a LWCF solution in Washington; the push must come from local people talking to their elected delegates. Is that a longshot? Probably. The only encouraging development in sight is a couple of bills in the House that would take LWCF money "off budget" so that annual appropriations would be eliminated along with the political squabbles, and the money would be freed for its intended use. Then, when the bills move forward in the House, grassroots pressure could make a great difference. Stay tuned.

Looking Back: Christmas Bird Count 1964

With the new year upon us, a look back 30 years or so may give us a chance to reflect on how our city has changed and what the future holds. Reprinted below are portions of Bill Watson's *Western Tanager* account of the 1964 Christmas Bird Count, titled "Great Weather for Ducks." Every so often a look back can serve to bring the present into focus, to remind us what we have lost, and for some of us, show us what we never knew we had. I hope that *Western Tanager* readers find this retrospective both entertaining and enlightening.

— Travis Longcore

It certainly was good weather for the ducks, or rather, for duck counting. Our Circle produced one Canada Goose, two White-fronted Geese, ten Green-winged Teal, two Cinnamon Teal, twenty Redheads, 632 Lesser Scaup, three Buffleheads, 203 Ruddy Ducks, and even three, little, female Ring-necked Ducks among the Lesser Scaups in MacArthur Park Lake.

It was a good day for counting a lot of other birds, too. In fact, our total number of species came to 111, and we counted approximately 19,470 individuals. This was in the rain and shorthanded. Last year, with a Santanna condition prevailing, we had 124 species. But the year before, with good weather, we came up with 134 species. Both of those years, we had 100 Christmas Bird Counters working. This year we only had 56 Counters.

The twenty Redheads was the highest count we have ever had of this species on Count Day. In 1948 we had fourteen Redheads, with less than ten in any other year. We had a Wandering Tattler, too. This was the second time a Wandering Tattler has been counted. The first time was in 1961. Among the owl species, we did get three Great Horned Owls, but that was all the owls we counted. Six Steller's Jays were counted, which is good, too. This makes only the fourth year we have found Steller's Jays. The other years are 1949, 1951, and 1961.

If you had been with David Gaines, you would have partici-

pated in producing two species that we have never been able to count before. David counted the Hepatic Tanager and the White-throated Sparrow, both of which have been spending some time in Rancho Park, and which have been verified by others prior to the Count Day.

For the third year in a row, we have produced a single Slate-colored Junco. But our most noteworthy Junco was the lone Gray-headed Junco that was counted at the feeding station of Bob and Margaret Hawthorne at Silver Lake where it has been a regular visitor for some weeks.

Many of you have read Frank Donohue's article about Dr. John Hardy of Occidental, and the parrots, in the *Herald-Examiner*. Dr. Hardy did go out and find two Yellow-headed Parrots for us, and Dr. W. A. Davis found another one for us to bring our first report of parrots on a Christmas Bird Count to a total of three. It may seem strange to some of you, and maybe even Allan Cruickshank who edits the National Count will balk at accepting parrots. But then we have always counted Spotted Doves, Ringed Turtle Doves, and House Sparrows, even though these are not native birds. But they have established themselves, and so, apparently, the Yellow-headed Parrot and other parrot species are successfully establishing themselves.

So much for unusual observations. Conspicuously absent this year were Horned Grebes, Pintails, Shovelers, Greater Yellowlegs, Dun-

lins, Western Sandpipers, American Avocets, Mew Gulls, and Acorn Woodpeckers.

There was nothing unusual about finding Ring-billed Gulls in our Circle, but when Ring-billed Gulls outnumber even the House Finches, which they did, almost two to one, something unusual is happening. The storm at sea sent the Ring-billed Gulls and Bonaparte's Gulls to us, for we had unusually high counts of these gulls.

My records show that, as we all know and dread, the Starlings are on the increase. The first year we reported any on the Christmas Bird Count was 1960, when we had two of them. In 1961, there were 12; in 1962, there were 16; in 1963, there were 186; and this year, we counted 320 Starlings! Who wants them?

While the Starlings were steadily increasing, other species's numbers have gone down. With the marshes disappearing before "civilization," so are the Common Egrets, the Snowy Egrets, the Marsh Hawks, and the Yellowthroats in our Circle. We haven't had any of these for some years now, and we used to get them all in good numbers.

Other species that showed up in especially good numbers this year were Brown Pelicans, Green Herons, Redheads (already mentioned), Ruddy Ducks (more than we've had in eleven years), Least Sandpipers, Forster's Terns, White-throated Swifts, Western Meadowlarks, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and Lark Sparrows.

Although we did not count any this year, Roadrunners are still with us in the Baldwin Hills where they have been observed recently. No one counted in those hills this year. Both the Roadrunner and the Belted Kingfisher have been maintaining their numbers with astonishing regularity through all the years we have been counting in our Los Angeles Circle. We never get more than a handful of either of these species, but we have been getting that handful consistently year after year. That's kind of nice to know.

House Finches still outnumber the House Sparrows by two to one. The ten most numerous birds this year were, in order, Ring-billed Gulls, House Finches, House Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, Brewer's Blackbirds, Bonaparte's Gulls, Lesser Scaups, Mourning Doves, Willets, and White-throated Swifts.

All in all, I cannot find any fault with the results of our Christmas Bird Count this year. If we had had more people out that day, we would have had a few more species, Burrowing Owls, Roadrunners, Cactus Wrens, for example. But it was a poor weekend, even in the best of weather, with a number of our bird watchers understandably involved in Christmas affairs.

To all of those who did work, and in every case, they worked hard, I want to extend my personal thanks for helping me perform my duties as Christmas Bird Count Chairman for this Society. We turned in a report that did us nothing but honor, and I am proud of it. ➤

Reprinted from *Western Tanager*, Volume 31, Number 6, Feb. 1965.

FIELD TRIPS

Continued from page 12

Sunday, January 18 — Ballona Wetlands. **Bob Shanman** will lead this trip to our nearest wetland. Shorebird, loon and sea duck numbers will be up. The jetty is the best place in L.A. to see Surfbird. Take the Marina Fwy (90 West) to Culver Blvd., turn left for about a mile, then right on Pacific Ave. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot on the right. Three-hour walk. Scopes helpful.

Sunday, January 25 — Antelope Valley. **Bigger-than-life Louis Tucker** will be our leader as we tootle about the raptor-rich north-central portion of the valley. Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk in various morphs, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier and Mountain Bluebird all very likely. Rough-legged Hawk and Merlin possible. Take the 5 Fwy N just past the 405 Fwy junction, exit Roxford St., and make two quick rights into the Denny's lot. Be fed and ready to depart from Denny's

at 8:00 A.M. Bring lunch and very warm clothes. Please try to carpool.

Saturday and Sunday, January 31 and February 1 — Salton Sea. Leader **Nick Freeman**. For Sandhill Cranes and White-faced Ibis, meet up with Nick at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley to **depart at 3:30 P.M. Saturday**. Take Hwy 111 S to Brawley, head W through town on Main St., then continue S on Hwy 86 to a fairly quick right on Cattle Call Dr. Continue down around the bend to the fenced grassy area by the arena. Sunday morning we will regroup (and welcome latecomers) at Carl's Jr. at Main and First in Brawley, **leaving there at 7:00 A.M.** A good trip for Canada, Snow and Ross' geese, Burrowing Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Great-tailed Grackle and Yellow-footed Gull. Anticipate mud. Bring lunch, scopes and warm clothes. \$5 registration fee. No participant limit.

Sunday, February 1 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 4 write-up for details.

Friday, February 6 — 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 7:30 P.M. at Audubon House in West Hollywood. Fee: \$5 for lecture and field trip. Reservation with LAAS by check required, as we only have room for 22 chairs. See field trip listing below.

Sunday, February 8 — Gull Study Field Trip. **Larry Allen** will make stops from Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach looking for gulls to demonstrate points

LAAS Awardee Studies Whimbrels

In 1995, Winli Lin, then at the University of San Diego, received a research grant from LAAS. Our support helped her to complete her research on parental care in Whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*). During extensive field work at Whimbrel breeding grounds in Manitoba, she addressed the question of whether Whimbrels exhibit "brood division," as had been claimed in ornithological literature. Brood division is defined as splitting a brood into "two stable units in which one adult cares exclusively and permanently for one or more young until they become independent." Lin logged thousands of

hours of nest site observation (including half a dozen all-night sits), analyzed continuous time-lapse video of nesting pairs, and followed up on pairs using radio telemetry. Her observations of parental care showed that Whimbrels do not divide their broods, as had been claimed. She did discover that, like other shorebirds, females deserted chicks as early as three days old, leaving the male to assume parenting responsibilities. Lin also reviewed the literature on other putative examples of brood division and concluded that for many species sufficient quantitative observational data are lacking to prove the behavior. ➤

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

Sunday, February 8 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 11 write-up for details.

Saturday, February 14 — Point Mugu. **Bart Lane** and a base biologist will lead in this limited access area. Peregrine Falcon and White-winged Scoter frequently seen. Rare birds like Tropical Kingbird, Black Scoter and Masked Booby (once) in recent years. Must be at least 16 years old. No cameras, please. Mail SASE for required early, limited **sign-up by January 27**, including 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 W to Las Posas Rd. going S, to PCH N onto Wood Rd. going W, then head S on the frontage road to the lot at the main (#2) gate. Meet at 7:45 A.M. Call the LAAS tape before the trip.

Sunday, February 15 — Ballona Wetlands. Leader **Bob Shanman**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 18 write-up for details.

Saturday, February 21 — 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 or 60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E 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 or less. Bring ones and quarters.

Saturday, February 28 — Private Duck Club. Leader **Doug Martin**. This duck club is an excellent spot to observe wintering birds. We have seen Sora and Virginia rails here, as well as bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark Red-taileds and Snow Geese — all due to the sheer numbers of birds on the property. Take the 101 Fwy W to Las Posas Rd. S, then take Hueneme Rd. W to Casper Rd. We will meet at 8:00 A.M. at the corner of Casper and Hueneme. Limited phone sign-up with LAAS.

Sunday, March 1 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 4 write-up for details.

Sunday, March 8 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 11 write-up for details.

Saturday and Sunday, March 14 and 15 — Anza Borrego with Fred Heath. The spring explosion of desert flora and fauna should be well under way in the Colorado Desert, including butterflies and early birds in the throes of breeding activity. Suggested accommodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground [reserve through Destinet at (800) 444-7275] or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (619) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend, and reserve camping by January 16 or motels earlier. Limited to 20 participants. Send SASE with \$5 fee to LAAS to learn 7:00 A.M. meeting place and more details. Pleasant days, cold nights.

Sunday, March 15 — Ballona Wetlands. Leader **Bob Shanman**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 18 write-up for details.

Saturday, March 21 — Santa Rosa Plateau. **Bill Moramarco** is our leader for this day of birding.

Known for Grasshopper Sparrow and other grassland and oak woodland species. Wintering Lewis' Woodpecker and Merlin possible. Chocolate lilies and other wildflowers possible. Endangered California newt, vernal pools, and Engelmann oak all noteworthy. Take 10 or 60 Fwy E to 15 Fwy S past Lake Elsinore. Exit on Clinton Keith Rd. and head W (right) for four miles. Look for sign on the right directing to upcoming gate on the left for Santa Rosa Plateau. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the gate. Some mud likely — boots suggested. \$3 fee includes checklist.

Saturday and Sunday, March 28 and 29 — Owens Valley Grouse Trip. **Mary Freeman** leads. Limited to 20 participants. Meet early in Big Pine Saturday. Blue and Sage grouse, raptors. To sign up, send \$10 and SASE to LAAS. More details in next *Tanager* and in mailer.

Saturday, April 4 — Joshua Tree. Leader **Kathi Ellsworth**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. Details in next *Tanager*.

Insufficient response to reservations cancels trips two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date (four weeks for pelagics); you will be 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 provide information about field trips. Office staff is also available Tuesday through Saturday for most reservation services.

Reservation and Fee Events (Limited Participation) Policies and Procedures

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

EVENING MEETINGS

All members and guests from the general public are invited to enjoy LAAS' monthly presentations. Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. in the public meeting room of Plummer Park in West Hollywood. Access from Santa Monica Blvd. or Fountain Ave. west of La Brea Ave. Refreshments are served afterward at the LAAS Bookstore.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1998

LAAS Travel Director **Olga Clarke** will preview the upcoming birding and natural history tour to **Ecuador and the Galapagos**. Her slide presentation will preview the exciting South American birding adventure.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1998

Put your best shots to the test at the annual **Members' Photo Contest!** Entries collected at the door starting at 7:00 P.M. LAAS members only, but you can join on the spot. Top three photos win LAAS Bookstore gift certificates.

FIELD TRIPS

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.

Sunday, January 4 — 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. in the Valley, take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles further S, then turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. (1 mile N of Topanga Village). Fol-

low the signs and turn left into the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$5 parking fee.

Saturday and Sunday, January 10 and 11 — Carrizo Plain.

Leader **Roy Van de Hoek** has done considerable field research on the Plain. Good hawks, falcons, eagles. Mountain Plover always! Sandhill Cranes, elk and pronghorn hopeful. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in Maricopa. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others. \$10 per person, \$5 surcharge for 1-person vehicles. 10 car limit. Your phone number will be released for

carpooling unless you request otherwise. Sign up with Audubon House for exact directions and information. Reserve accommodations in Buttonwillow for Saturday night (Motel 6 is there).

Sunday, January 11 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join ranger **Ray Jillson** to view colorful resident and wintering birds including Northern Cardinal. Take Peck Dr. exit S off the 60 Fwy in South El Monte. Follow the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. Meet at 8:00 A.M. \$2 voluntary donation suggested by the park.

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

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Sunday, January 18 — Orange County Rarities. Leader **Roy Poucher** will plan to follow up Christmas Count leads on wintering vagrants. Least Flycatcher, Thick-billed Kingbird, Ancient Murrelet, etc. Take the 405 Fwy S, head S on Golden West, E on Slater, and take a quick right into the lot. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at Huntington Central Park by the bridge S of the lot. Bring lunch.

Continued on page 10