

# WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 64 Number 4 March/April 1998

Los Angeles Audubon Society

## Is it too late to change my bet?

by Larry Allen



*Red-tailed Hawk at nest.*

*Photo by Herb Clarke*

One day in early 1995, at the beginning of our county's Breeding Bird Atlas Project, I found myself alone in the presence of two of the "wheels" of the effort. ("Wheel" is a scientific term meaning approximately: "In charge of everything you can see, hear, or think about, except that someone else gets the blame for anything going wrong").

One of these august personages (both of whom shall remain anony-

mous to protect them from possible embarrassment should atlasing data prove them wrong—see above definition) asked me point blank: "What, in your estimation, will the atlas show to be the bird species with the widest distribution in the county? In other words, what species will be documented as either Possible, Probable, or Confirmed in the most atlas blocks?"

I did the only sensible thing and waffled: "I want to say Mourn-

ing Dove, but I'm afraid it might be starling." "I think it will be House Finch," the other wheel responded confidently. Our interrogator also said "I think it might be House Finch," continuing with words about the wide habitat tolerances of this species. "In any event, it is probably one of these three." Thus it was that Mourning Dove, European Starling, and House Finch became the official candidates for most widespread species to be

found during the Atlas Project (see April, 1995 *Western Tanager*, pages 4-5).

We are now three years into the atlas period, and data are arriving at Atlas Central in abundance. Reports submitted by over 200 contributors have included the county's first breeding records for Bufflehead, Gray Flycatcher, Mountain Bluebird, and other species, and some distributional surprises as well.

A personal surprise (I hesitate to reveal the depths of my former ignorance here) is just how widespread Red-tailed Hawks are. We of course expect them in montane and foothill habitats, but I have also found them nesting in south-central Los Angeles (where they forage along the powerline rights-of-way) and in the most sparse quarters of the Antelope Valley (where even a lone joshua tree can provide a nesting substrate).

Is it just possible, I wondered, that Red-tailed Hawk will prove to be the most widespread species in the county? Admittedly, they are absent from many urban blocks, but both House Finch and European Starling were absent from two of the six Antelope Valley blocks that Mark Wimer and I atlased last year, and there are over a hundred blocks in this area.

To check this speculation, I

asked Mark (who happens to be the atlas' project coordinator) to provide me with a listing of the ten most widespread species found so far (Table 1), as well as a map showing atlas coverage.


Rank	Species	No. of Blocks
1	Mourning Dove	257
2	House Finch	255
3	Western Scrub-Jay	244
4	Common Raven	236
5	European Starling	222
5	Red-tailed Hawk	222
7	Bushtit	220
8	California Towhee	217
9	Black Phoebe	201
10	Spotted Towhee	193

Table 1. The ten most widespread species reported in all three categories (Possible, Probable, and Confirmed) during the first three years of the Atlas Project.

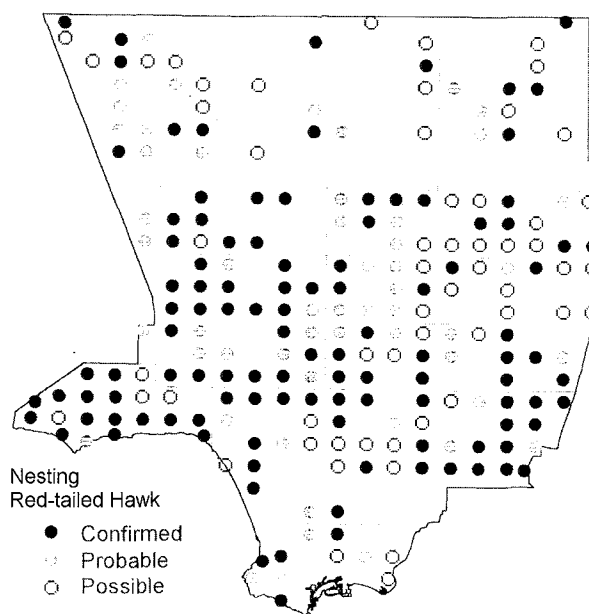
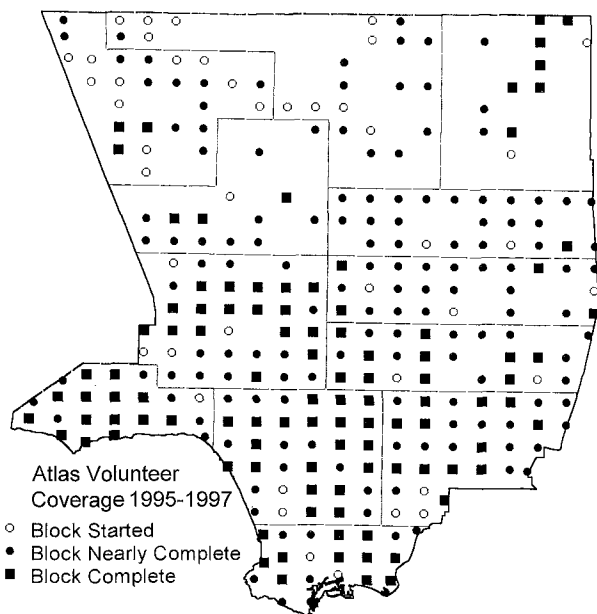
As you can see, Red-tailed Hawk is tied for fifth with European Starling in terms of number of blocks in which it has been found to date. However, urban and foothill blocks (each and every one of which contains Mourning Dove, Western Scrub-Jay, European Starling, and House Finch in numbers) have been well covered, whereas many desert blocks that may lack the dove and finch (and certainly lack

the jay and starling) remain untouched.

The remaining "competitor," Common Raven, is a strong contender for the title of most widespread bird. It has already been found in many of the urban, foothill, and montane blocks which have been atlased so far. However, it is easier for atlasers to document Common Raven than Red-tailed Hawk, since the raven has year-round safe dates. As the atlas becomes more complete, red-tails may catch up.

Thus it is still possible that red-tails may yet be found to be the most widespread bird in the county. Time, and the efforts of our many atlasers, will tell. 

*You can help prove Larry wrong by finding breeding evidence for Mourning Doves, House Finches, and other species in the Antelope Valley: call Fred Heath at (805) 389-3203 or Atlas Central at (213) 745-2473 to sign up for an atlas block. Larry urges you to send reports of breeding evidence for red-tails (and all species) to the Breeding Bird Atlas Project Office, Natural History Museum, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007. —ed.*



## Atlas Volunteer Progress

Volunteers for the LA County Breeding Bird Atlas have put in thousands of hours of effort and the hard work is shown on the coverage map. The bottom line is that we are roughly 60% complete with the field work and 60% of the way through our five years. So we are right on track! The map represents coverage through 1997, or three of our five field seasons. Substantial work has been done in every region, but the majority of the coastal slope is near completion. That means we need lots of help in the deserts and also in the mountain portions of the county in 1998 and 1999.

Block status on the map legend refers to percent completion based on a combination of birds confirmed as breeding and birds seen as possible or higher level of proof. "Block started" refers to an Atlas block that is up to 50% completed, while a "Block Nearly Complete" is above 50%, but is one or more species short of finished. "Blocks Complete" represent hard work from atlasers that have reached our goals for completion: 50% of the target list species confirmed, and 90% of the target species encountered during the breeding season, or better.

Congratulations to all who have submitted sightings. We hope you continue with the fun over the next two years. Experienced atlasers and new atlasers wanting to help with this important conservation project should contact their regional coordinators or contact me at Atlas Central at (213) 745-BIRD or [wimer@bcf.usc.edu](mailto:wimer@bcf.usc.edu) and I'll refer you to a coordinator who needs your help!

Mark Wimer  
Project Coordinator  
Los Angeles County  
Breeding Bird Atlas  
<http://www.lam.mus.ca.us/~lacbba>



## Current Events

If you check the masthead in this issue, you will notice that there have been a number of changes in personnel since the last issue of the *Western Tanager*.

First and foremost, due to differences in the vision for the future of the Los Angeles Audubon Society with the majority of the Board of Directors, Catherine Rich and Travis Longcore have both withdrawn from LAAS. This left us with a hole in the positions of President and First Vice President. Fortunately, Richard Epps, our long term Treasurer, has agreed to step into the position of President. Assuming the role of First Vice President is Ken Kendig, himself a LAAS President several times in the past. The vacancy left in the position of Treasurer with Richard's move to President, will be ably filled by Cheryl Ashe who has been handling the LAAS Bookstore bookkeeping chores for many years.

Aside from his First Vice President position, Travis was also the editor of the *Western Tanager*. I have agreed to fill this void with Tom Frillman assisting by putting the whole thing together via desktop publishing.

I want to personally thank Catherine and Travis for their dedication and the very strong contributions they have made to LAAS over the last few years. I am sure the Board of Directors, as well as the membership in general, joins me in thanking them for these efforts.

Fred Heath  
Editor

## WESTERN TANAGER

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

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PELAGIC TRIPS: Phil Sayre  
PRINTING: CP Graphics

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

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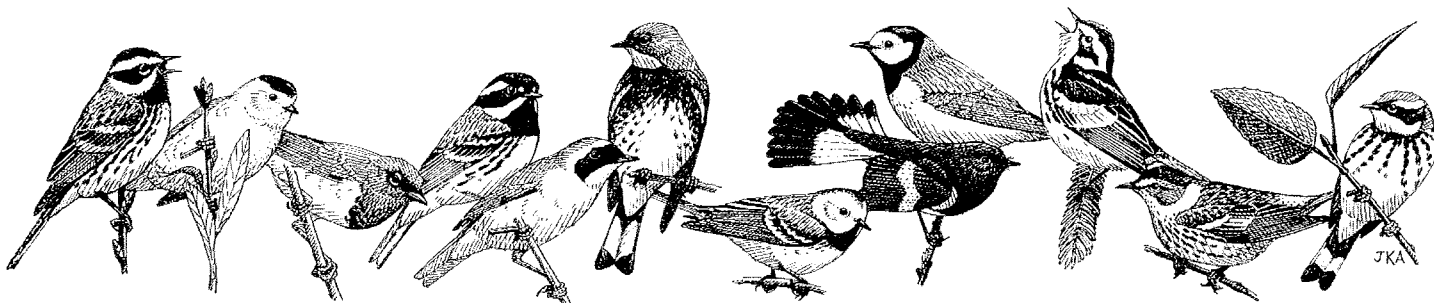
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# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Kimball L. Garrett

The highlight of the December-January period was the discovery of California's first definite **Couch's Kingbird** at Craig Regional Park in Fullerton, Orange County. It is enlightening to review the details of the discovery of this bird, since it is illustrative of the skills certain southern California birders have attained as well as confirmation of the old adage that one must know the "common" species thoroughly in order to pick out the unusual ones.

The kingbird was first reported by a local Orange County birder on 31 December as a Tropical Kingbird, an understandable conclusion given the more-or-less regular occurrence of that species in southern California in winter and the absence of records of Couch's. On 2 January Brian Daniels, Jim Pike, and Mike San Miguel checked out the kingbird and were astounded to hear it give a series of sharp "kip" or "bik" calls and other vocalizations which didn't come close to fitting the high liquid trills of Tropical Kingbirds. In appearance, the bird's strongly green back and noticeably thick bill (appearing shorter than that of a Tropical) were additional clues to its identity.

Many Questar views, full-frame photos, and clear tape-recordings later, over the ensuing three weeks, led to the inescapable conclusion that this was indeed California's first Couch's. The calls exactly match those given by Couch's in south Texas. For those willing to put in the time, it was possible to compare the bird's appearance and calls to two wintering **Tropical**

**Kingbirds** in El Dorado Park, Long Beach (found by Karen Gilbert and Tom Wurster). The key to the identification of the Couch's by Daniels et al. was their familiarity with Tropical; how many birders see a Tropical Kingbird every fall or two in California and just give it a glance ("just another Tropical") without committing to a thorough study of its characters? With precedent for Couch's in the state, I'm guessing that future "Tropicals" will receive more thorough scrutiny! The Craig Regional Park Couch's was certainly a fair-weather bird, failing to put in an appearance on most rainy days in Janu-

ary; when it did appear it fed mostly on bees.

There is a previous "possible" record of Couch's Kingbird in California — a specimen taken by Gene Cardiff at Harper Dry Lake several falls ago. Experts examining the specimen are unable to agree whether it is Couch's or Tropical, testimony to the close similarity of the two species. Perhaps genetic analysis of tissues saved from the specimen will ultimately provide the answer.

Perhaps more interesting than the Couch's Kingbird was the abundance of **Cassin's Kingbirds** in southeastern Los Angeles County and adjacent Orange County. At least two large groups, perhaps totaling 100 birds, were in the Long Beach area (Karen Gilbert, Tom Wurster), and a flock roosting in a park not far from Fullerton's Craig Regional Park consisted of some 70 birds (Brian Daniels). A few of these latter birds raised the ire of the Couch's Kingbird whenever they tried to settle into Craig Park! Cassin's isn't rare in southern California in winter, but virtually nothing is known of its winter ecology in the region. Many of the Long Beach birds were seen feeding on berries, and it seems logical that they are subsisting largely on fruits through the winter here, supplementing that diet with insects (especially bees?) during warmer periods. Our rudimentary knowledge of how so "familiar" a bird makes it through the winter here points to our larger lack of understanding of the winter ecology of a great many of our bird species.

**R**ecords 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 L. Garrett  
Ornithology Collections Manager  
Natural History Museum of  
Los Angeles County  
900 Exposition Blvd.,  
Los Angeles CA 90007 USA  
e-mail: kgarrett@nhm.org

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

The address for submissions to the California Bird Records Committee is:

Michael M. Rogers, Secretary  
California Bird Records Committee  
P.O. Box 340  
Moffett Field, CA 94035-0340  
or  
mrogers@nas.nasa.gov

To round out the tyrannical aspect of this report, the **Pomona Thick-billed Kingbird** was once again present this winter (as noted in the last *Tanager*), and a **Western Kingbird** was with the roosting flock of Cassin's Kingbirds in Fullerton in January (Brian Daniels). A five kingbird January in southern California isn't too shabby!

An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Salton Sea State Recreation Area along the northeast shore of the Sea 21-24+ January (Dharm Pellegrini), another (perhaps the same individual?) at the south end of the Sea on 19 January (Guy McCaskie), and the returning adult at Doheny State Beach in Orange Co. provided interesting fodder for gull-watchers and perhaps stimulated dreams of California's long-overdue first Slaty-backed and Ross's gulls. Once again an admonition: only after putting in hundreds of hours studying every detail of every plumage of our "normal" gull species and their hybrids should one even entertain notions of Slaty-backed Gulls, "yellow-legged Asiatic Herring Gulls", and the like!

Locally, the mid-winter period was highlighted by the utter lack of invasive montane or boreal species — a not unexpected opposite of last year's phenomenal invasion winter. Many observers commented, after beating the streets and woodlands on Christmas Counts, on the relative scarcity of our typical winter "eucalyptus forest" denizens, from Yellow-rumped Warblers to orioles and tanagers. However, results were too mixed and too sketchy to draw any conclusions. A few overwintering species of note were found in and near Los Angeles County. **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were found in Lakewood (Karen Gilbert) and West Los Angeles (Tom Wurster). The El Dorado Park **Pine Warbler** mentioned in the last column was present into January, and the "Couch Potatoes" chasing Craig Park's kingbird were treated to another wintering Pine Warbler, along with a female **Black-and-**

**white Warbler**. Nick Lethaby, visiting from the Bay Area, found a **MacGillivray's Warbler** near the Century Plaza Hotel in Century City on 21 January, one of the very few winter records of this species for the county.

Good coverage of the Sepulveda Wildlife Area in the San Fernando Valley led to a series of interesting mid-winter sightings. A juvenile **Bald Eagle** was found on 11 December by Dave Surtees and was still present at the end of January. One can only suspect that fish populations which have allowed the Double-crested Cormorant populations here to explode have also sustained this eagle and the frequently-seen Ospreys in the area. Also present was a **Swamp Sparrow** and a **Eurasian Wigeon**.

There were several noteworthy seabird sightings, some perhaps "El Niño-related" and others undoubtedly not. A well-described **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** was observed off Pt. Dume on 21 December (Mike San Miguel); there are only two accepted records of this tropical shearwater for California (and one of those was from the Salton Sea!) An adult **Brown Pelican** at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on 8 January (Ray Jillson) was certainly at an unusual locality, though there are previous records for Puddingstone Reservoir, Whittier Narrows, and Hansen Dam. Because this species is now abundant year-round at the Salton Sea, and even nests there in small numbers, a scattering of records for the interior of southern California is perhaps not unexpected. Small numbers of **Black** and **White-winged scoters** were found along our coast this winter (Dick Barth et

al.); the latter species was formerly not uncommon coastally in winter, but in the last 10-15 years has become alarmingly scarce. An **Elegant Tern** at the mouth of Zuma Creek on 1 January (Dharm Pellegrini) was unusual for mid-winter, but not surprising during an El Niño period when exceptional numbers of these terns lingered far to the north of us through the late fall. The **Marbled Murrelet** reported in the last *Tanager* from Marina del Rey was still present in January; also in the Marina, in mid-January, was the winter's only **Red-necked Grebe** for the county (Kevin Larson).



*Couch's Kingbird*

*Photo by Brian Small*

In March and April, field work will be in full swing for the fourth year of the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas. This is crunch time, folks! If you haven't already volunteered to cover at least one Atlas block during 1998, call Atlas Central immediately at (213) 745-BIRD. Atlasing forces you into the field, so don't worry about missing spring migration — you'll see it in all its glory as you sort out the local breeders from the transients! 🐦

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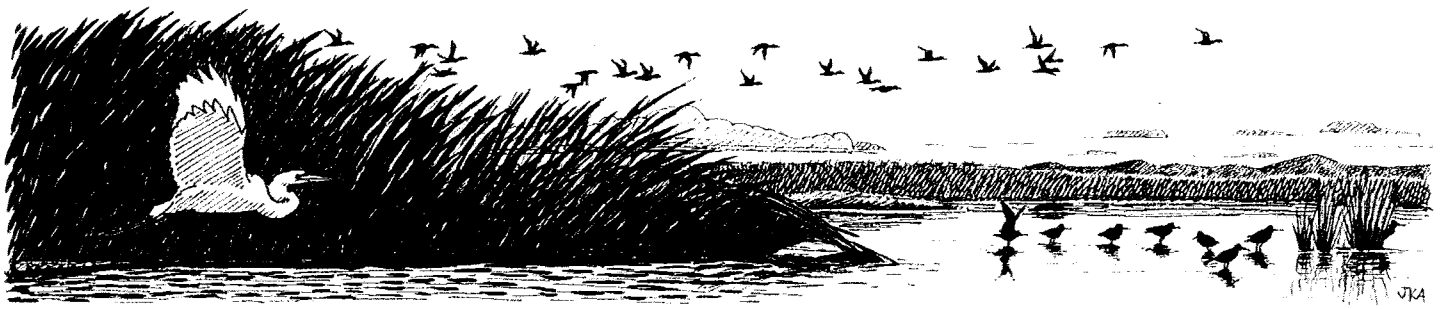
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# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Wallace Stegner has written, "...the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society, all of them the product of a growing alarm among intelligent people sensitive to the American threats against what American experience has taught us to love." For us – here – in this place – it is Ballona Wetlands, Lake Sherwood, Malibu Lagoon, Bolsa Chica, Madrona Marsh, the Santa Monica Mountains, the Sepulveda Basin. The same kind of people in every part of the country have their own endangered eco-systems, unspoiled woodlots, unpolluted streams to defend.

Who are these people, how did they get that way, and why do they care? It's impossible to generalize about this; we can only guess. Many are the products of small towns or farms and ranches; they grew up with dirt between their toes. They split the firewood, drove the tractor, milked the cows, fished in the creek, dipped in the old swimming hole. They got a .22 single-shot rifle for their tenth birthday and popped away at woodchucks and squirrels before they were old enough to go after deer. They breathed clean air and took it for granted. They sucked in a love for the woods and the wild freedom of aloneness, of elbow room.

Some were city-bred with an intimate knowledge of asphalt and concrete, of stick-ball in the streets, of auto traffic and neon lights, of

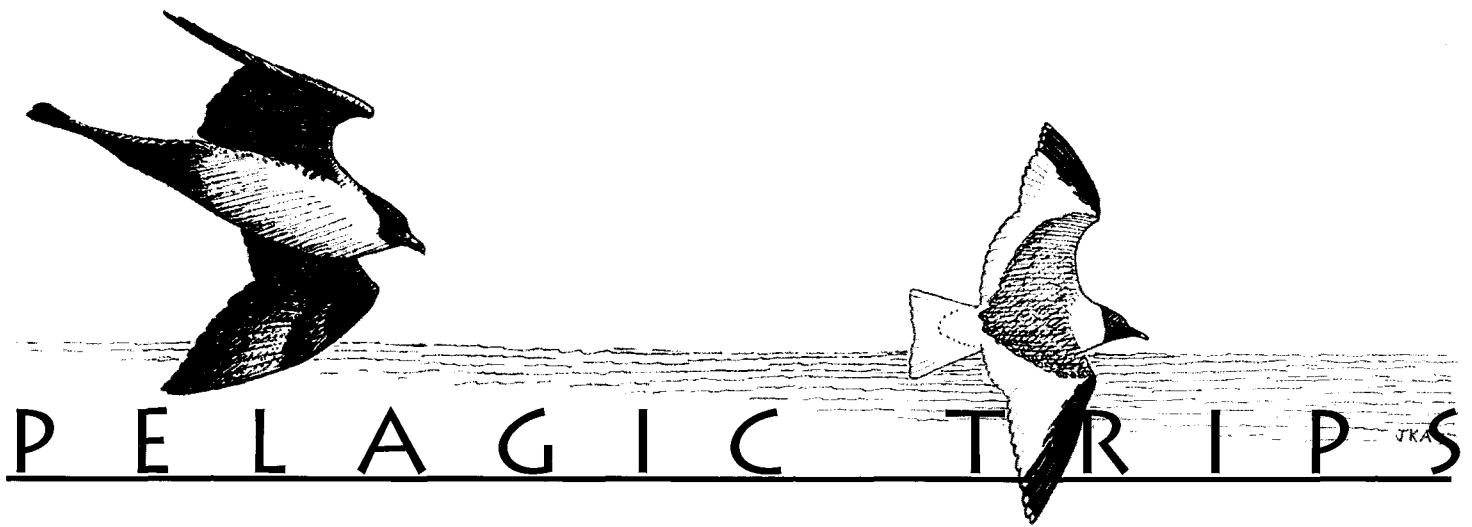
over-crowded schools, of six-story walk-up apartment houses. They may have discovered a city park or even gone to a summer camp for a couple of weeks and become enamored of the outdoors: trees, flowers, snakes, gophers, crappies, spiders, birds. A teacher or a camp counselor may have planted a seed. Later, perhaps, Wordsworth's golden daffodils or Shelley's West Wind introduced the Romantic view of nature. A visit to the Big Trees, a glimpse of New England in the fall, a flight of Canada Geese, the spouting of a migrating whale – these can all be triggers for a lifetime attachment to the natural world.

The step from the larger pattern of true wildness to a small, living canyon surrounded by condominiums is a natural progression. This canyon or this miniscule remnant of marshland is close to home. It is a taste of the great awe-inspiring wonders of Yosemite or the Everglades. This sample of wilderness, despite the trash and the rumble of traffic, is still something to preserve and defend against oblivion. Miraculously, it is still habitat for small things: birds, flowers, mammals, insects, reptiles. So the nature lover takes his vacation once a year (if he can) to the spectacular places and spends his free time enjoying the local scene. If he has a place to see purple nightshade blooming after the winter rain, see a Townsend's Warbler flashing through the new leaves of

a cottonwood, he is a lucky man. His urban retreat is to him what John Muir's mountains were to the bearded prophet of the Sierra: a refuge from the clatter of the modern world, a therapeutic balm to soothe the fraying spirit.

The inexorable pressure of population and the exquisite seduction of profits have put all open space in jeopardy. Those who truly prize what is left rise to its defense. They burden themselves with committees, petitions, letters, hearings, MONEY: all the unwieldy tiresome paraphernalia of the conservation struggle. They know that if they stand idly by, "Progress" will win the day. They look ahead and see the dangers of zoning changes and short-sighted land-use policy that will leave us with mighty little greenery and a great deal of unlovely architecture. Most of us are busy making a living and filling up our free time with personal concerns. Most of us would "rather not get involved." But those of us who take pleasure in the outdoors can no longer ignore the accelerated disappearance of our birding places, our hiking trails, our elbow room. We can no longer leave the solutions to our grandchildren. The Silent Spring is almost with us already.

*Reprinted from June 1981 –  
...as fresh as today!*



**P**elagic 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 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. Return 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 Scrub-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. \$80 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.

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**Adventures in Bird Conservation:  
A Century of Audubon Accomplishments**

Make plans to join hundreds of other bird lovers, nature enthusiasts and environmental activists at the National Audubon Society's 1998 Western Regional Conference, April 4-7 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds on the beautiful Monterey Peninsula in Pacific Grove, California. Interactive workshops, inspiring speakers, exciting field trips, and stimulating discussions will focus on this year's theme, "Adventures in Bird Conservation: A Century of Audubon Accomplishments."

Confirmed speakers include celebrated wildlife artist and conservationist **Robert Bateman**; renowned birder and author of *The Peterson Guide to Advanced Birding*, **Kenn Kaufman**; and distinguished photographer and naturalist, **Arnold Small**; and biologist and researcher, **Dee Boersma**.

Other scheduled highlights include a special retrospective of Audubon's accomplishments during this century, and a 100th birthday party celebrating a century of the life and work of Hazel Wolf.

The conference also offers field trips to some of the most beautiful landscapes

and bird-rich habitats in North America. Highlights this year include a pontoon boat ride through Elkhorn Slough, the ever-popular pelagic trip, and a special field trip featuring Kenn Kaufman.

You will enjoy a wide variety of workshops on topics including Backyard Habitat Enhancement, Birding Trails, Important Bird Areas, Growth Management, Habitat Restoration, and Sparrow Identification. We will also feature workshops which highlight Audubon's conservation efforts on behalf of forests, wetlands, national wildlife refuges, the Endangered Species Act, and the Salton Sea.

It is important that you register early to reserve a spot on the more popular field trips.

If you have not yet received your registration form in the mail or from your chapter, or need more information, please contact the Audubon-California office at: (916) 481-5332 or by e-mail:

**[jjacobs@audubon.org](mailto:jjacobs@audubon.org)**  
**Audubon California**  
**555 Audubon Place**  
**Sacramento, CA 95825**

**Sunday, March 15 — 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 not a problem. Three hour walk. Scopes helpful.

**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 Lily 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** will lead this road-intensive weekend. Rosy Finch, Blue and Sage grouse, and raptors are expected. Limited to 20 participants. Send \$10 and SASE to LAAS for reservation and where to meet in Big Pine early Saturday.

**Saturday, April 4 — Joshua Tree.** Leader **Kathy Ellsworth** will show us around the Joshua Tree area, Cottonwood Springs, Desert Center and possibly Corn Springs. This trip will feature resident desert birds, spring migrants and desert wildflowers. Group will meet at 8:00 A.M. just off 10 Fwy. at the Cottonwood Springs/Joshua Tree exit. This exit is past Indio,

approximately 3 hrs. from L.A. Sign up with Audubon House. Let them know if you don't want your name given for carpooling. Bring lunch and snacks for a long day.

**Sunday, April 5 — Topanga State Park** with **Gerry Haigh**. See March 1 write-up for details.

**Saturday, April 11 — Lake Hughes** area with **John Fitch**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. This trip will cover several small lakes, riparian areas and chaparral. We will be looking for warblers, kingbirds, migrant flycatchers, and resident riparian and chaparral birds. Take 5 Fwy. NE to Elizabeth Lake Rd. Turn right and look for the Forest Service sign for the Elizabeth Lake parking lot on the right. Allow 1fi hrs. from L.A. (Thomas Guide, pg. 4102, D3). Bring lunch for all day birding or leave when you need to.

**Saturday, April 18 — Placerita Canyon,** 7:30 A.M. **Irwin Woldman** will lead us on a morning of birding through oak woodland and chaparral in search of the colorful migrants and singing residents that abound here in the spring. Take Hwy. 14 N from 5 Fwy. to Placerita Canyon Rd. Drive E about fi mile to Placerita State Park and continue another 2 miles to the pull-out with the locked gate on the right.

**Sunday, April 19 — 1998 Season Breeding Bird Atlas Kickoff.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. Come learn about atlasing and meet others involved in this great activity. Events include atlasing walks. Bring lunch. Site to be announced. Call Mark Wimer at Atlas Central at (213) 745-2473.

**Saturday, April 25 — Malibu Creek State Park** with **John Willis and Mari Johnson**. Join us for a morning of birding to look for warblers, migrants, bluebirds, kites, hawks, and a possible Golden Eagle. Meet at 8:00 A.M. Take 101 N to Las Virgenes Rd. Go south 3-4 miles to the lower State Park parking lot.

**Sunday, April 26 — Franklin Canyon.** This morning walk will be led by **Steven Saffier**. Franklin Canyon is located between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Wood Ducks have bred at the lake the last 2 years. Chaparral, lakeside, and oak/pine woodland habitat. Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 A.M. From 101 Fwy., take Coldwater Canyon Ave. S into the hills. Immediately after Mulholland Dr. merges from the W with Coldwater Canyon Ave., make a 90 degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Dr. and continue on to the Nature Center. The lot is past a gated drive on the left.

**Sunday, May 3 — Topanga State Park.** with **Gerry Haigh**. See March 1 write-up for details.

**Sunday, May 3 — Morongo Valley: Birds and Herps.** LA Zoo herpetologist and LAAS member **Harvey Fischer** will lead as we bird the renowned desert oasis in Morongo. When it warms up, we will proceed to sites selected by Harvey to look for lizards. Meet in Big Morongo Canyon Preserve parking lot at 8:00 A.M. Take 10 Fwy. E past Beaumont, turn N on State Rt. 62 to Morongo Valley. Turn right on East Drive across from Rocky's Pizza. Take the first driveway left into the lot. About a 2 hr. drive from L.A. Anticipate heat, hunger, thirst, and rock-hopping.

**Saturday, May 9 — Galileo Hills.** Leader **Nick Freeman**. We will ogle brightly colored warblers and probably Chukar but will give particular scrutiny to tyrant flycatchers, which peak at this time. Take Hwy. 14, continue N past Mojave about 10 miles, then turn right on California City Blvd. Go under the bridge past Conklin and park in the golf course lot on the left side of the street. About two hours driving time from L.A. Limited sign-up of 15 participants. Call LAAS to register. Bring lunch and sunblock. Your name and phone number will be available to carpool unless you request otherwise.

**Sunday, May 10 — Green Valley.** Leader **Robert Weissler.** New to LAAS field trips, last year the surrounding area yielded nesting Mountain Bluebirds and Tricolored Blackbirds. This area has Coast Liveoak, chaparral, and cottonwood riparian habitats. From L.A. take Hwy. 14, exit at San Fernando Rd. Go N, turn left on Seco Canyon Rd., go to San Francisquito Canyon Rd. and turn left. Continue on this road 1fi miles past Spunky Canyon Rd. to Green Valley Ranger station on the left (Thomas Guide 4192, F1). Meet in parking lot at 8:00 A.M. Bring lunch and hiking shoes for moderate climbing.

**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.

**Sunday, May 10 — Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. to view colorful resident and migrating birds including Northern Cardinal. Take Peck Dr. exit S off the 60 Fwy. in South El Monte (just W of the 605 Fwy.) Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. \$2 voluntary donation suggested by the park.

**Saturday, May 16 — Soledad Canyon.** **Kimball Garrett** will lead us to an area which last year had breeding Willow Flycatchers and Summer Tanagers. This area is mostly riparian woodland and can be birded close to the road. Meet at 7:00 A.M. Take Hwy. 14 to Soledad Canyon Rd. (the exit after Sand Canyon). Go 3fi miles E to the junction of Soledad Canyon Rd. and Agua Dulce Canyon Rd. For those who are late, we will continue birding along Soledad Canyon Rd.

**UPCOMING TRIPS:**

**Friday through Monday, June 26-29 — Southern Sierra Weekend with Bob Barnes.**

Likely: Northern Goshawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and owls. Last year, approximately 150 species were seen. Limited participation. For information flyer, reserve with SASE to LAAS. Fee is \$11 for each day attended (\$44 for 4 days). Reserve rooms early.

**Saturday through Monday, July 18-20 — Yosemite and Mono Lake.** Leader **David Yee.** Blue Grouse, Great Grey Owl, Black-backed Woodpecker, Pine Grosbeak, and Pinyon Jay are likely. Fee of \$22 for Saturday and Sunday, \$11 for optional day Monday to Owens Valley and Mono Lake. Have reservations in Oakhurst for Friday, July 17 and Saturday, July 18. Limited to 14 participants. Reserve with SASE and reservation fee to LAAS to receive info/motel flyer. Your name and phone number will be available to carpoolers unless you request otherwise. Reserve your motel rooms early.



**NATURAL HISTORY DAY  
AT STARR RANCH  
SANCTUARY**

On Saturday, May 9, 1998, from 8 A.M.—3 P.M., Starr Ranch Sanctuary will host a day of natural history workshops exclusively for southern California Chapter members. Starr Ranch is a 4000 acre National Audubon Society preserve in southeast Orange County. Experienced biologists will offer workshops on such subjects as bird banding, natural history of raptors, mammal tracking, native plant identification, natural history of mountain lions, insect identification, biology of bats, and much more. This will be a unique opportunity for our southern California Audubon Chapter members to broaden their natural history knowledge in a beautiful outdoor setting. We are gathering some of the best biologists in southern California for our first Natural History Day.

Workshops are intended for adults and older children with natural history interests. If the event is a success, we will expand to include activities for younger children next year. Attendance is by reservation only and space is limited. We ask for a \$10 donation per person to cover costs. Space is limited and reservations will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. For reservations or questions about the event call us at (714) 858-0309. If there's still space, we will ask you to send your name, address, e-mail address, phone number, number in your party, and a check made out to Starr Ranch Sanctuary for the amount due for your party, to:

Sandy DeSimone  
Starr Ranch Sanctuary  
100 Bell Canyon Road  
Trabuco Canyon, CA  
92679

We will confirm your reservation and send directions via post card or e-mail.

# EVENING MEETINGS

Meet at 7:30 P.M. in Plummer Park.  
Los Angeles Audubon Society  
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard  
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

**Tuesday, March 10, 1998 Olga Clarke**  
**"Ecuador and the Galapagos"**

Because the January/February *Western Tanager* was received late, there have been many requests to repeat her January talk, so LAAS Travel Director, Olga Clarke will preview the exciting upcoming birding and natural history tour to Ecuador and the Galapagos. Take advantage of a second chance to see her excellent slide presentation on this fascinating area.

**Tuesday, April 14, 1998 Kimball Garrett**  
**"Field Identification at the Start of the 21st Century"**

Kimball will explore some of the "new" approaches to field identification used by serious birders, emphasizing the importance of understanding the sources of variation within species as well as developing a close familiarity with the common, expected species. He'll talk about the characters that form the structural basis for what is confusingly referred to as "jizz", as well as behavioral and vocal characters. Examples will come from gulls, warblers, sparrows, and a few other groups.

## 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.

**Sunday, March 1 — Topanga State Park.** Leader **Gerry Haigh** will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new to the area. A botanist is often present. From Ventura Blvd.,

take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles S, turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. (1 mi. N of Topanga Village). Follow the signs and turn left into the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$6 parking fee. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

**Sunday, March 8 — 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 W of the 605 Fwy., taking the Peck Drive exit S. Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right), and turn left into the nature center. \$2 voluntary donation suggested by the park.

**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 or Stanlund, Oasis, or Fiesta del Sol Motels in Borrego Springs. Anticipate a busy weekend and reserve ASAP. 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.

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

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