

WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

What is the rarest nesting bird in Los Angeles County? Of course the answer depends on how one defines rare. Think of birds with a limited range. Red-tailed Hawk and Mourning Dove are not candidates, being among the county's most widespread birds, as you may know from reading Larry Allen's article in the March/April 1998 *Western Tanager*. So what birds are the opposites of red-tails and doves? What local birds have limited breeding ranges?

Black Skimmer and Elegant Tern might qualify as rare, each nesting in only one place in the county, on a new fill at the Port of Los Angeles (for the first time in 1998). Restricted as their ranges might be in the county, however, there were nine skimmer nests and roughly 3000 Elegant Tern nests, hardly what one would consider rare. Bufflehead, Snowy Plover, and Cattle Egret are also species that currently nest in one location in the county, in this case all on Edwards Air Force Base near Lancaster. Nesting sightings of these three birds, unlike the Elegant Terns in Los Angeles Harbor, represent only one or several pairs of birds each.

Photo by K. L. Garrett



Mount Baden-Powell, whose slopes may contain the best sites in the county for confirming (finding breeding proof) Pine Siskin or Hermit Thrush.

Los Angeles County's Rarest Nesters

By Mark Wimer

This sounds more like rarity: limited range *and* limited numbers. An even rarer nesting bird might be one that is not only scarce here in our backyards, but is scarce throughout most or all of its range. Peregrine Falcon, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and Least Bell's Vireo are good examples: all are listed as endangered species. Fewer than ten (known) pairs of each nest

here in our county. Table 1 shows all of the birds for which nesting *proof* has been found in only one limited area of the county in the last four years.

Table 1. Birds confirmed by atlasers in only one block*

Belted Kingfisher
Black Oystercatcher
Black Skimmer
Black Swift
Bufflehead
Calliope Hummingbird
Caspian Tern
Cattle Egret
Double-crested Cormorant
Elegant Tern
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Gray Flycatcher
Least Tern
Osprey
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Royal Tern
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Savannah Sparrow
Snowy Plover
Spotted Owl
Swainson's Hawk
Vermilion Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Yellow-breasted Chat

*This list represents only birds and locations with nesting proof (confirmed nesting). It also omits non-native species like Eurasian Collared Dove and White-fronted Parrot.

I am not an expert on rare nesting birds or endangered species. The scarcity of nesting Snowy Plover in Los Angeles Coun-

ty is not normally information I have at my fingertips, except when browsing through the Breeding Bird Atlas database. This nesting information is precisely the kind of data being collected by field volunteers for the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas. If you are not familiar with this project, you can get a full introduction to it at the atlas website listed below. The Atlas Project is Los Angeles Audubon's major bird conservation project, involving hundreds of volunteers helping map the nesting distribution of all of the county's nesting bird species. One or more volunteers cover one of 400+ atlas blocks (just under ten square miles) during a breeding season, noting which birds are carrying twigs or food, copulating, or showing other evidence of breeding. Surveying one atlas block does not give the countywide perspective on nesting distribution, but with many atlas field volunteers (atlasers) covering atlas blocks all over the county, a larger picture is coming into view.

To get a feel for that larger picture, take out your Thomas Guide or AAA map of Los Angeles County. Now, trace what you think is the breeding range of Wrentits (or another familiar species of your choice) in Los Angeles County. If it is difficult to be confident of your map, I think I know why: you have not specifically gone out to look for nesting evidence in all areas of the county for every single species. No one could do this single-handedly! That's why the Atlas Project needs the support of as many local birders as possible. This year is the last of five years of field effort for the Atlas Project. Whether or not you have helped with the Atlas Project, I hope you will plan on doing so this Spring — I'll tell you how shortly.

With four years of atlasing completed, atlas project volunteers have a lot to boast about. Atlasers have finished about 75% of the data collection, and have confirmed over 190 rare and common species. (There are more species for which

we still hope to find nesting proof, but which have in the last four years eluded being caught in the act: see Table 2). The Atlas database contains 21,000 sightings of birds doing something related to breeding. Now we can get an idea not only of where birds breed locally, but also an estimate of how many and when. This is valuable information and biologists know it: we have sent data and maps to over 15 biologists working on conservation projects such as the Bird Species of Special Concern list for California, the Least Bell's Vireo Recovery Plan, and several Partners in Flight projects.



Photo by K. L. Garrett

Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base in Lancaster. The base contains the only current nesting areas in the county for Bufflehead, White-faced Ibis, and Snowy Plover.

Table 2. Species which have eluded confirmation (breeding proof) during four years of Atlas work.

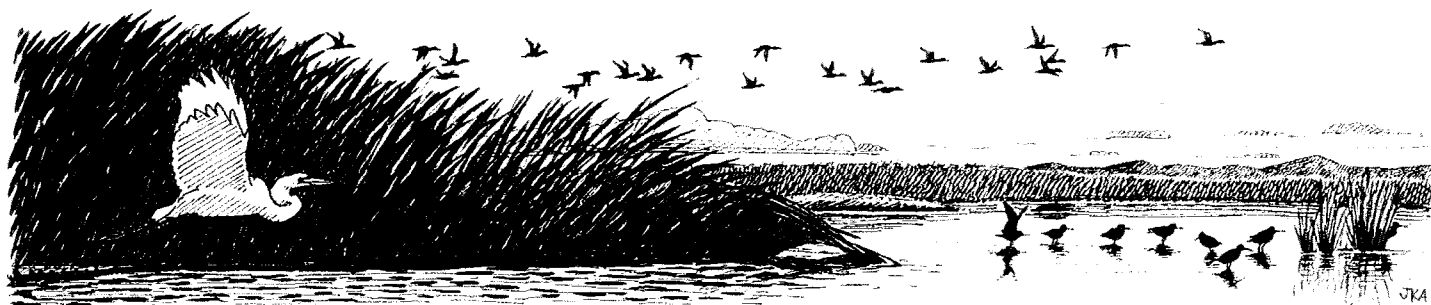
- Chimney Swift
- Common Poorwill
- Common Snipe
- Flammulated Owl
- Golden Eagle
- Gray Vireo
- Hermit Thrush
- Hermit Warbler
- Inca Dove
- Indigo Bunting
- Nashville Warbler
- Northern Saw-whet Owl
- Northern Shoveler
- Pine Siskin
- Prairie Falcon
- Purple Martin
- Sora
- Turkey Vulture
- Whip-poor-will
- Wilson's Warbler

To make the Atlas as valuable a conservation tool as it can be, we need your help in our final year.

Most of the remaining work lies in scattered parts of the northern half of the county. You can help us finish the project by (a) completing a block that has already been started, or (b) taking on a new block and finishing it, or (c) sending in sightings of breeding birds from single trips anywhere in the county. If you decide to help finish an atlas block, you will receive a target list of expected and possible species, and some suggestions on dates and effort needed to complete your task. You can round up friends to help as well. Please contact me at Atlas Central to commit some of your time next spring and summer. 🐦

Please contact Mark Wimer at Atlas Central to make your contribution to the Atlas.

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 Breeding Bird Atlas
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 Los Angeles, CA 90007
 www.lam.mus.ca.us/~lacbba
 Submit single sightings on-line at:
 www.lam.mus.ca.us/~lacbba/cof.htm



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Let's talk about scandals behind the Beltway in the city of noble monuments. There's nothing more to be said about the White House dirty linen of the last twelve months that the media and the pundits haven't already wrung dry. We're interested in the white dome of Congress where the scandal of the last thirty years hardly made the august columns of the New York Times.

In the mid-60s an enlightened Congress passed the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It also established the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) that received money from offshore oil and gas leases on federal land and was earmarked for the purchase and maintenance of land for parks and outdoor recreation. The income, which has averaged three billion dollars a year since 1965, would seem to be more than enough to buy, save and preserve all the wetlands, redwoods, prairie potholes, eastern forests and their wildlife — for all time. Unfortunately there's a hitch. Congress must authorize the money and in all the time since the LWCF was established — under the control of both parties — the largest contribution to the fund was \$805 million in 1979. When Reagan took office the

next year the money took a precipitous drop and for the next ten years it averaged \$250 million until 1994. That year of the "Contract With America" the new Congress considered a five-year moratorium before it grudgingly conceded an LWCF budget of \$134 million!

Now one might ask, "What happens to the rest of the three billion?" The answer should be no mystery. The balance went to the Treasury Department with most of the money turned into military hardware. When Congress appropriates money for The Land and Water Conservation Fund it is given to four federal agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and the Forestry Service. The agencies have achieved some splendid results over the years, creating National Seashores, the National Wildlife Refuge system, and National Recreation Areas, expanding the National Park System from 203 sites to 375. Since 1965, the LWCF has contributed \$5.5 billion and protected 3.4 million acres.

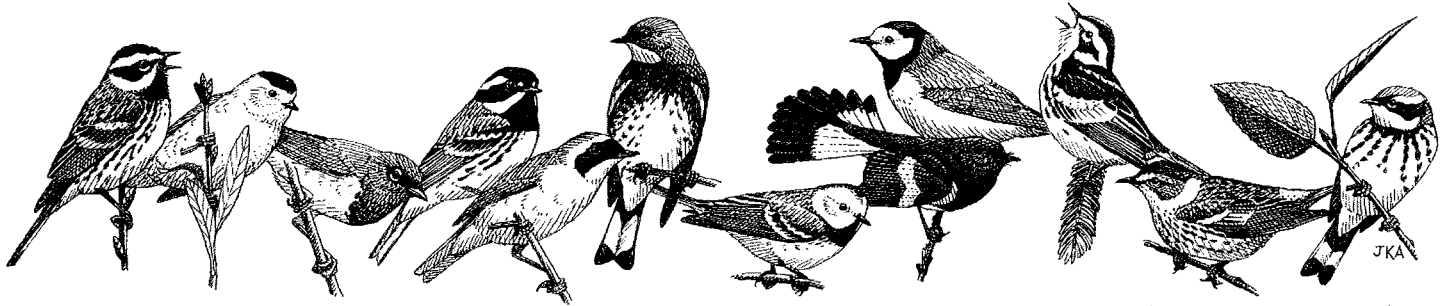
This sounds wonderful, and it is. But the big parks and recreation areas are far away from population centers in the big cities and most people couldn't afford the long

vacations or the transportation cost. Through the National Park Service the LWCF makes matching grants to the states for state and local parks, nature centers and recreation areas. Though Yosemite might be overcrowded in summer, state, county and city parks and playing fields serve far more people in California. Congressman Tony Beilenson secured LWCF grants for the wildlife area and Lake Balboa in the Sepulveda Basin.

In the decade before 1994, Congress authorized only an average \$30 million a year for the state-grants program. Since 1995 — zero! Look at the figures for 1997: \$4.7 billion from offshore leases, \$4.5 billion to the Treasury, \$159 million to LWCF, \$0 to state-grants.

Did someone say Scandal? With our national treasures wearing out and in dire need of maintenance, with a burgeoning population crying for more local open space and parkland, it is scandalous that the law that established the LWCF exclusively for buying and maintaining land for parks and recreation is being deliberately ignored.

Reference: *The Amicus Journal*, Spring, 1998. (Natural Resources Defense Council) 🐾



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

Kimball L. Garrett

Not many places in North America can boast that mid-winter is an exciting time of high bird diversity, but southern California certainly belongs in that category. It is mainly in winter that we see a small silver lining to the dark, ugly cloud of habitat destruction in California: the rapidly expanding urban and suburban areas throughout the region offer a growing wealth of exotic (and sometimes re-planted native) plant species that form productive habitat for a great variety of migrant and wintering birds. This lush "urban woodland" is not without its perils — not the least of which are the thousands of feral cats that deplete populations of ground-inhabiting birds. And city planners and agencies, bent on carrying out their "war on vegetation", are constantly pruning, cutting and bulldozing for fear that our parks might actually come to contain habitat for vagrant birds and humans. But urban birding is a fact of life, and intensive coverage of well-planted parks, golf courses, nature centers, and other islands of vegetation will always pay off during the colder months. Many of the reports of wintering birds and late fall migrants listed below come from such urban open spaces.

A moderate winter invasion of montane/boreal birds continued to shape up in October and November. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widespread in small numbers, and **Mountain Chickadees** were more

widespread in the lowlands than usual. **Cedar Waxwings** were common through the fall. In most years waxwing numbers peak in spring (and they are routinely seen through May), so it will be interesting to see if numbers continue to rise. **Varied Thrush** reports included one in Little Lake Park, Santa Fe Springs, on 26 October (John Schmitt). John also had a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** in nearby Norwalk on 26 October. Perhaps the most astonishing record of the

entire fall was a flock of six **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** flying past Galileo Hill in Kern County on 12 November (Matt Heindel); Matt noted, for L. A. County aficionados, that the birds were continuing south toward our county!

An **American Woodcock** at a small private oasis in southeastern San Bernardino County from the end of October to 9 November (Michael Patten) was the first record of a likely natural vagrant in California. The California Department of Fish and Game released hundreds of woodcocks in northern California in 1972-1973, but this "game bird introduction" never took hold (and one hopes this agency has since found better ways to utilize its limited resources!).

Franklin's Gulls moving through the region included a juvenile at Zuma Creek mouth in Malibu on 12 October (Kimball Garrett). A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was at Quail Lake on 18 October (KLG). **Black Skimmers** nest commonly on the Salton Sea and winter commonly along the southern California coast, but the extent and routes of movement between these areas is poorly known. There are a handful of fall skimmer records for our inland areas from western Riverside County to Twenty-nine Palms, and another piece to the puzzle was added by Michael Patten, who found four skimmers at Mystic Lake in the San Jacinto Valley east of Riverside on 25 October; one or more remained for a week or two.

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

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

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or call:
Raymond Schep (310) 278-6244
e-mail: drschep@colonial-dames.com

The address for submissions to the California Bird Records Committee is:
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At least one of these birds was banded, almost certainly at the Salton Sea. Also unusual at Mystic Lake was an immature **Black-legged Kittiwake** on 8 November (KLG, Kathy Molina) and an adult **Little Gull** on 15 November (MP).

A **California Quail** in a yard in northeast Long Beach in mid-September (Brian Daniels) was in an odd spot between populations in the Whittier Hills and San Gabriel River and the remnant population on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in Quartz Hill on 18 October and Exposition Park on 19 Oct (KLG).

A female **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** was found at the South Coast Botanic Garden on 18 October and lingered for a couple of weeks (Kevin Larson). A possible second Broad-tailed was in Bee Canyon, Granada Hills, on 8 October (Jean Brandt, Phil Sayre).

A **Great Crested Flycatcher** was in Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on 18 October (Kevin Larson); that city's "war on vegetation" has now rendered this productive park much poorer for birds but the flycatcher shows that it is still worth covering. Cal Poly Pomona's **Thick-billed Kingbird** returned for its 7th winter on 14 October (Chris Brady). Perhaps also in the category of a returning winter bird was the female **Hepatic Tanager** found by Mike San Miguel at Veterans Park in Sylmar on 15 November, though this bird was not found most of the past several winters.

The **Philadelphia Vireo** along Los Angeles River in the Glendale Narrows was still present on 11 October (KLG). A Brown Thrasher was well-described from Chilao on 5 November (Jane Stavert).

A lingering **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Big Sycamore Canyon, Pt. Mugu State Park was still present on 15 November (Duane Nelson et al.). Unusual warblers in southern Los Angeles County in early November included a **Black-throated Green Warbler**

at Madrona Marsh (David Moody) and a **Bay-breasted Warbler** in Banning Park (Mitch Heindel). An **American Redstart** was spotted on the 13th Annual Dick Davenport Memorial Bird Walk in Exposition Park on 5 November (KLG). A **Pine Warbler** was found in Mile Square Park, Fountain Valley, on 17 November (Jim Pike). A mixed flock of 12+ **Western Tanagers**, 7+ **Bullock's Orioles** and a **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Elysian Park, Los Angeles, on 11 November (KLG) seemed very much like a flock one would encounter in the subtropical mountains of Mexico in winter! A **Lark Bunting** was in lower Bouquet Canyon, Santa Clarita, on 19 October (Brian Daniels). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was in the Rio Hondo flood control basin behind Whittier Narrows Dam on 7 November (KLG), and another was at Madrona Marsh around the same time (MiH).

Christmas Bird Counts are over, and all attention should be turned to the final field season of the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas. Atlasing starts with the New Year, and nesting activity will soon be evident in many of our resident species. To the active birders who have no trouble finding time to search for vagrants in the fall and winter, here's a plea to expend your energy and talents on this worthwhile Atlas project over the next few months! Call Atlas Central today and claim your blocks! 🐦

NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

- FIELD LIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE A.O.U. AREA*
A.B.A., 1998 4.95
- COSTA RICA ECOTRAVELLERS' WILDLIFE GUIDE*
Color illustrations of habitats, birds, mammals, reptiles, with black-and-white illustrations of flora. Includes information on natural history, geology, conservation.
Beletsky, 1998 27.95
- ILLUSTRATED FIELD GUIDE OF THE BIRDS OF SINGAPORE*
350 species, illustrated in color; includes birding areas.
Seng/Gardner, 1997 26.95
- NIGHTJARS, A Guide to the Nightjars, Nighthawks, and Their Relatives*
Every species of the nightjar order. Color plates, text, range maps.
Cleere, 1998 40.00
- A.O.U. CHECKLIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS*
Birds of North America from the Arctic through Panama. A.O.U., 1998 7th ed. 49.95
- ENDEMIC BIRD AREAS OF THE WORLD: PRIORITIES FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION*
Birdlife Conservation Series No. 7.
Stattersfield, 1998 60.00
- POCKET GUIDE TO HAWAII'S FLOWERS*
Color photographs of spectacular native species and introduced varieties.
Peebles, 1998 8.95
- GUIDE TO THE BIRDS AND MAMMALS OF COASTAL PATAGONIA*
185 birds, 61 mammals on 33 color plates, 243 maps. Hard cover.
Harris, 1998 60.00
- ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BIRDS*
Comprehensive illustrated guide with 200 magnificent color photographs, 150 original paintings; maps and natural history; world species.
Forshaw, 1998 2nd Ed 34.95
- THE NUTHATCHES*
Comparative information on West Palearctic and World species provides perspectives on biological species separation problems.
Matthysen, 1998 39.95
- RAILS, A Guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World*
145 species illustrated and described; distribution, status, habitat, conservation.
Taylor/van Perlo, 1998 49.95
- BIRDS OF MADAGASCAR; A Photographic Guide -*
260 species, includes 108 endemics and 25 Malagasy region endemics.
Morris, 1998 35.00
- BIRDFINDING GUIDE TO MEXICO*
100 top sites where birders can see over 950 species and virtually all endemics.
Howell, 1998 29.95
- DROLL YANKEE RECORDINGS*
One side with interesting comments, sounds alone on other side.
THE FROG POND: spring peepers, wood, bull and tree frogs, Wood Duck and Barred Owl.
THE SWAMP IN JUNE: beavers splashing, birds singing, pickerel frogs groaning, tree frogs plunking.
SONGS OF THE FOREST: woods ringing with calls of the Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Veery and others.
BIRDS ON A MAY MORNING: 36 bird calls just as you would hear them on a walk through woods and fields.
(cassettes) each 6.95
- BACKYARD BIRDWALK*
12 backyard birds calling and singing; Side One, narrated; Side Two, songs and calls.
CD 15.95
cassette 12.95

A Plea

The following column is blank because we had no material to put in it. Hopefully, we can entice some of our readers to become writers and supply us with an article or two to grace the pages of *Western Tanager*. If there are no articles forthcoming, you may find that the next issue of the *Western Tanager* has a lot more white space than this single column.

Bird Festivals

Bird festivals are springing up all over the country, making local communities aware of the economic value of birds. These in turn can aid in the preservation of habitats which are vital for birds and other wildlife. The following is a listing of some of the upcoming festivals in southern California.

January 15 – 18, Morro Bay's Third Annual Winter Bird Festival

Includes: Bird Walks and Field Trips, Kayak/Canoe Trips, Workshops, Bird Photography, Field Sketching, Gardening for Birds, Pelagic Bird/Whale Watching. Contact: Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce, (800) 231-0592.

January 29 – 31, San Diego Bay Bird Festival

Includes: Field Trips, Classes, Birding Loops in Chula Vista and Imperial Beach, an Exhibit Fair and a Keynote Speaker, John Acorn, "The Nature Nut." Supported by the Port of San Diego and in partnership with the San Diego Natural History Museum. Contact: Nature Festivals of San Diego County, (619) 282-8687 or birdfest@flite-tours.com.

February 12 – 15, Salton Sea International Bird Festival

Includes: Guided Tours- General, Sunset, Target Species, Parent/Child, and Specialty Tours, Seminars (including one by our very own Kimball Garrett), Live Bird Show, Nature and Crafts Fair, Post-Festival Tour to the Sea of Cortez. Contact: Salton Sea International Bird Festival (760) 344-5FLY.

April 20 – 25, Kern Valley Bioregions Festival

Field Trips, Cooperative Big Day, Field Workshops, Children's Activities, Evening events- Owling, Bats, and Astronomy, Exhibits, Banquet with Guest Speaker. 195 bird species seen during 1998 festival. Sponsored by Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve. Contacts: Kernville Chamber of Commerce (800) 350-7393 or Audubon-California (760) 378-3044 or bbarnes@lightspeed.net.

Unseen Deaths and Polluted Futures

Gene Anderson

Tii had spent the day feeding with several other dowitchers. Now it was night, and time to go.

She had made the long trip once before. She didn't understand her compulsion to fly south when the days grew shorter, and to return when they lengthened again. She loved the journey, however: the flocks of birds, and the chance to use her long, pointed wings. She took off gladly and flew strongly as the stars rose. Aloft, she settled into a steady, powerful stroke.

After a couple of hours, she began to feel sick. Those last worms had tasted strange. They had tasted, somehow, wrong. She wouldn't have eaten them if she hadn't been so terribly hungry. Well, nothing for it but to fly on. She was over open ocean; no way to stop now.

She felt sicker. Suddenly, she was scared. She wished she were back with the huge flock of dowitchers she had found, days before, on the great river delta near her home in the tundra. She had felt so safe with them. Small flocks just weren't the same.

Her head hurt. She saw she was losing altitude. She drove her wings harder. Now her whole body felt the pain. She tried desperately to regain speed. Broken images flashed through her mind: happy days with her family on the tundra, with the flock on the river flats. They dissolved in the terrible effort to keep flying.

She faltered in a spasm of nausea. Then came a last struggle against cold water, and her lifeless body drifted with the waves. Tii's is one of literally tens of millions of unseen deaths among shore birds.

Her need to put on fat for migration led her to eat prey animals that had concentrated pollutants from the water. Some of the toxins accumulated in her body fat. As she rapidly metabolized the fat, while flying, the poisons were mobilized, and she died in agony.

Dowitchers are long-distance migrants that feed in estuaries and other high-energy, high-input environments. They are also highly social, finding protection from predators in their (once) huge flocks. They are among the most vulnerable of birds to this tragedy. Their numbers have declined around 80% in the eastern United States, and, by my observation, more than that in the west. Sanderlings, Golden Plovers, and other long-distance migrants show similar rates of decline. Short-distance migrants, such as Willets and Long-billed Curlews, seem much less severely affected; they don't fly far, and many of them stay in the United States, where water pollution is controlled better than it is in Latin America.

I believe that the decline in shore birds is due to contamination and extermination by pollution of the food animals. Habitat loss has also been serious - but even the few scraps of marshland that we still have in southern California host a tiny fraction of the shore birds they hosted when I first birded them some 40 years ago. If habitat loss were the problem one would expect concentration of more and more shorebirds in what remains.

I wonder, also, how many of the migrant songbirds that have disappeared in recent years have succumbed to accumulated pollutants.


There are some questions that one may ask about these millions of tragedies that are so hard to see, so easy to infer.

First, most pollutants are chemicals we need and use. Why are we allowing them to go to waste - to show up where they do

nothing but harm, rather than doing what they are supposed to be doing?

Second, by what right do we make birds like Tii pay for our wastefulness and carelessness? This isn't a question of birds versus jobs. It's a question of human irresponsibility.

Third, what is our own future? We are not very successful at isolating ourselves from the problems we are inflicting on nature. Human problems with water pollution are already appearing in many areas. The water table in the Yucatan Peninsula, where I work, is becoming seriously and irrevocably contaminated. Water pollution, and the buildup of pollutant chemicals in the human body, are both slow and insidious processes. By the time one finds out that the worst has happened, nothing can be done.

Miners used to take canaries into the mines with them; when the canaries keeled over from mine gas, the miners knew it was time to get out of there. Our own watchbirds are keeling over now, by the tens of millions. 

Kenn Kaufmann speaks at Newport Beach

Famous birder and author, Kenn Kaufman will be the featured speaker at Sea and Sage Audubon's Annual Dinner which is open to all, on Friday night, March 19 in Newport Beach. Contact Nancy Kenyon (949) 768-3160 or kenyon@exo.com

“Exploring the Landscapes of California”
Audubon - California
1999 Conservation Leadership
Conference



Sacramento, California
January 29-February 1

Make plans to attend Audubon-California's 1999 Conservation Leadership Conference, January 29-February 1 at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento.

Exploring the Landscapes of California reflects an exciting new conservation strategy for Audubon in California. Audubon intends to become the premiere nature education organization in the state in order to build conservation awareness, membership and activism by focusing on three symbolic landscapes that promote Audubon's bird and wildlife conservation agenda, reflect California's diverse population, and provide opportunities for hands-on nature experiences. Those three symbolic landscapes are the City, the Farm, and Wild California.

Workshops and speakers will share programs that inform and inspire you. Workshops will be followed by field trips that illustrate the beauty of the landscapes and the challenges we face in protecting them. "The City" will emphasize education, development of Audubon Nature Centers and land use planning efforts within the urban landscape. "The Farm" will focus on strategies for building relationships with farmers and habitat enhancement on farmland. "Wild Cali-

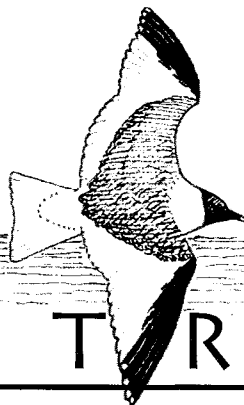
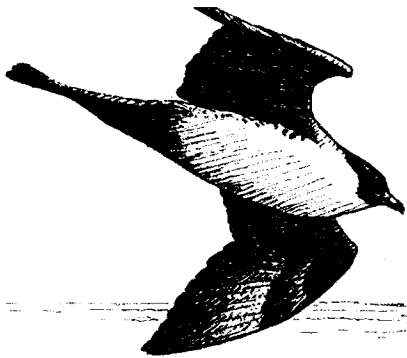
fornia" will include major conservation agenda items including restoration of the Salton Sea, conserving and restoring Bay Area wetlands, and restoration of riparian habitat in the Kern River Valley.

A core component of the Conference will be Sunday morning when we devote time for chapter feedback on how best to accomplish our agenda at the local and regional level. This symbolic landscape summit will leave Audubon with the tools and strategy for conserving essential wildlife habitats in California.

Culminating the weekend will be a lobby day at the state capitol on Monday morning. We'll have a new administration in Sacramento come January, let's make sure they hear a unified Audubon voice!

Registration for the Conference is \$35.00 per person. Housing costs start at \$89.00 for a single or double per night. Alternative off-ground housing is also available nearby.

If you need a registration form or more information, please contact the Audubon-California office at (916) 481-5332 or by e-mail jjacobs@audubon.org.



PELAGIC TRIPS^{JKA}

Pelagic species often seen are Pink-footed, Sooty, Short-tailed, and Black-vented shearwaters, Red Phalarope, Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Surf-bird, 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 20 — 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 may be seen. Leaders: TBA. \$30, no galley.

Saturday, May 8 — 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: TBA. \$45. Bring your own food. Coffee and tea supplied.

Saturday, June 12 — 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 21 — 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: TBA. \$130 includes 3 meals.

Sunday, September 19 — 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: TBA. \$70, full galley.

Sunday, October 10 — Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Banks. 12-hour trip departs from Marina del Rey. We will head out to the open ocean toward Santa Barbara Island as we search for pelagic birds and marine life. \$45, microwave only.

Saturday, November 13 — 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: TBA. \$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.

Saturday and Sunday, January 16-17 — Carrizo Plain. Leader **Roy Van de Hoek** has done considerable field research on the Plain. Good hawks falcons eagles, Mountain Plovers always! Sandhill Cranes, elk and pronghorn hopefully. 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 accomodations in Buttonwillow for Saturday night (Motel 6 is there).

Sunday, January 17 — Ballona Wetlands. This trip will be led by **Bob Shanman** 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, January 23 — Antelope Valley Raptors and Other Wintering Birds. Leader **Jean Brandt**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. In parking lot at the west end of Quail Lake to look for ducks. We will continue to look for ducks, other wintering birds, and raptors as we work our way east. Wear warm clothing, bring lunch, and have a full tank of gas. Take I-5 N, turn east at Quail Lake / Hwy 138 exit. (One mile south of Gorman.) Go one and a half miles to Quail Lake.

Sunday, February 7 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 3 for write-up.

Sunday, February 14 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 10 for write-up.

Sunday, February 21 — Ballona Wetlands. leader **Bob Shanman**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 17 for write-up.

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), 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.

Friday, February 26 — 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 handouts will be used to demonstrate I.D. marks of many common and uncommon gulls of the west coast in their various plumages. 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 28 — Gull Study Field Trip. **Larry Allen** will make stops from Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach looking for gulls to demonstrate points made during the Friday lecture (see above). Thayer's Gull likely. We will meet at 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, March 7 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 3 for write-up.

Sunday, March 14 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 10 for write-up.

Saturday and Sunday, March 13-14 — 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 accomodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground (reserve through Destinet at (800) 444-7275) or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (760) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend, and reserve camping by January 15 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.

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, January 12, 1999 Fledgling Flickers and Brooding Bushtits:
Four Years of Atlas Progress.**

The Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas is starting its fifth and final year of field work! Come hear about the county's rare, common, endangered and exotic birds in this presentation by Atlas Project Coordinator **Mark Wimer**. Discover how the Atlas Project is being used to save birds now, and see how you can help in the project's final year.

**Tuesday, February 9, 1999 The Colorado River Delta:
Birding from the Border to the Top of the Gulf**

The transformation of the Colorado River delta from the lush jungles and marshes described by famed conservation pioneer Aldo Leopold to its present state of endless salt flats has been one of the environmental tragedies of the twentieth century. However, a number of interesting areas for birds remain, from the Mexicali Valley to the Cienega de Santa Clara and the desert beaches and islands of the uppermost Gulf of California. **Kimball Garrett** and **Kathy Molina** have been covering these areas for the past three years, as an extension of Kathy's research interests in the waterbirds of the Salton Sea/Gulf of California system. During this period they've stumbled into some interesting birds and birding areas that they will share. From nesting terns and skimmers to tropical seabirds and passerine vagrants, learn about the fascinating bird life of this nearby but poorly explored region.

F I E L D T R I P S

Before setting out on any field trip, please call the LAAS bird tape at (323) 874-1318 for special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

Sunday, January 3 — 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 biologist is often present. From Ventura Blvd., take Topanga Canyon Blvd.

7 miles S, turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. \$6 parking fee or park on the road outside the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

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

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

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