

WESTERN TANAGER



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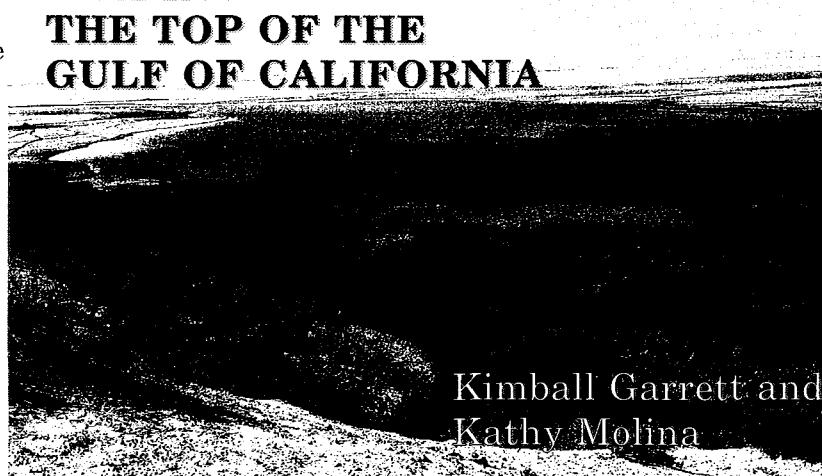
Los Angeles Audubon Society

Southern California birders have long recognized the Salton Sea as, among other things, a northerly outpost for many breeding and post-breeding subtropical waterbirds more typical of the Gulf of California, as well as a key wintering area and migrant stopover. Most of us are aware of the geographical connection between the Gulf of California and the Salton Sea, but many only vaguely realize how intimate this connection really is. The Salton Sink is an integral part of the lower Colorado River Delta region and our present-day Salton Sea was, of course, borne from the waters of the Colorado River (and is still fed by diverted waters from the Colorado River today).

Our interest in the connection between the Salton Sea and the top of the Gulf of California grew out of Kathy's long-term study of the reproductive biology of Gull-billed Terns and Black Skimmers at the Sea. With hundreds of young birds banded through the years (many with unique individual alphanumeric bands or band combinations), the stage was set to begin to answer a simple question: where do Salton Sea terns and skimmers go when they leave the Salton Sea? There is much more than this that one can learn from banding studies, but the basic question of the non-breeding range of Salton Sea terns and skimmers is what led us to visit the head of the Gulf at El Golfo de Santa Clara, Sonora, as

well as the wetlands of the Mexicali Valley. As a by-product of this coverage, we realized that birding from the Mexicali Valley south into extreme northwestern Sonora is easy and interesting. The roads and

BIRDING THE TOP OF THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA



The "Pozos" just south of El Doctor, Sonora; the marshes and trees are a magnet for migratory birds.

Photos by Kimball L. Garrett

Kimball Garrett and
Kathy Molina

amenities are generally good, and these areas are accessible by a long one-day or easy two-day trip from the border. In this article we give some brief hints and directions for birding the top of the Gulf.

CROSSING THE BORDER

There are four convenient border crossings: two between Calexico and Mexicali, one in San Luis (near Yuma, Arizona), and one west of Winterhaven at Andrade/Algodones. Only the main (west) crossing at Calexico/Mexicali and the San Luis crossing are open 24 hours. We usually take the new crossing a few miles east of Calexico; take Hwy 98 east out of Calexico, then go a short distance south

on Hwy 7 to the border. The return crossing into the U. S. may take just a couple of minutes or (on busy weekend afternoons) up to a couple of hours; we have found that the eastern crossing (Garita Oriente or Garita II) in Calexico/Mexicali usually has the shortest wait. No tourist cards or vehicle permits have been needed however, a new fee for tourists entering Mexico is scheduled to be implemented in summer 1999 and it is unclear whether it will affect those travelling only as far as the Mexicali Valley and El Golfo de Santa Clara.

If you tank up in El Centro, Calexico, or Yuma, a full tank of gas will easily get you to El Golfo de Santa Clara and back. In any case there are numerous Pemex stations along the route, including one in El Golfo.

Remember to buy Mexican auto insurance before you cross the border; minimal liability coverage for a day is about \$9.00 (about \$13.00 for two days). Insurance is easily available in Calexico, but availability is surprisingly limited in San Luis (the border crossing near Yuma).

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

There are two or three clean air-conditioned motels in El Golfo de Santa Clara; we generally stay at Nuevo Motel El Golfo (about 250 pesos per night, or roughly \$25-\$30 US); it is

one block inland from the highway, about two blocks before the stop sign. There are trailer parks on the beach and camping outside of town should not be a problem.

FINDING YOUR WAY

The AAA map of Baja California covers the entire route, but beware of occasional detours, changes in highway numbers, and even changes in town names.

GETTING THERE FROM MEXICALI

From the main (old) border crossing, follow the signs through Mexicali and head south on Hwy 5 toward San Felipe. At El Faro you then turn east on Baja California Norte (BCN) Hwy 4 through "Ledon" (which is actually now signed in town as "Carranza") and eventually to Coahuila. Between Murguia and Coahuila the highway crosses the Colorado River bed. After upstream releases, this crossing may be full of water, in which case the highway traffic is diverted over the old railroad bridge — hair-raising but survivable. When you get into Coahuila, make a left turn on the paved road at the main intersection. This takes you to Sonora Hwy 003 (some maps call it Hwy 40), where you turn right (south-southeast) toward Riito and El Golfo.



Champion Long-billed Curlew,
Colorado River Mouth, June 1998.

Use your AAA map and some ingenuity for side trips to the Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds, the Río Colorado crossing south of Ledon (Carranza), and the Río Hardy (along Hwy 5 around Km 50). The Cerro Prieto geothermal facility is an extensive series of diked ponds some 30 km south of the border;

the ponds may be scoped from the northwest corner (walk from the paved highway west along the dirt access road that has a locked cable). Franklin's (spring, fall) and Laughing gulls (spring through fall) are regular here, and some terns and skimmers nest; Parasitic Jaegers have been recorded in fall. Do not drive around the dike roads without permission, and always avoid these roads when they are wet (they become extremely

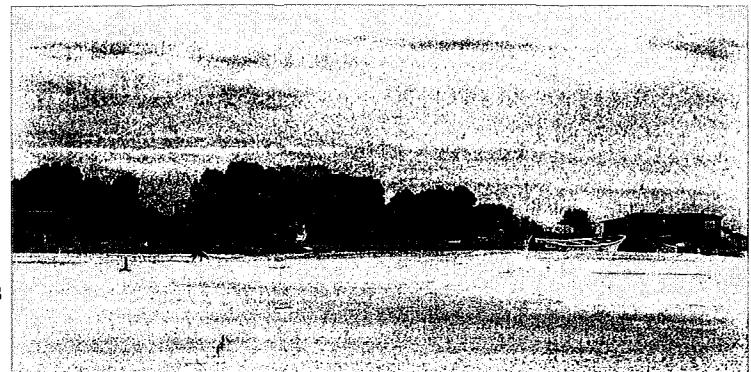
slick!). A nice stretch of willow/cottonwood/mesquite riparian (unfortunately dominated by salt cedar) may be found along the Río Colorado by taking the paved road a few kilometers south from the town of Ledon; Yellow-breasted Chats breed here, and Yellow-billed Cuckoos have been found. Finally, the channel of the Río Hardy is adjacent to Hwy 5 (the main highway to San Felipe) at a point about 15 km south of El Faro. This is always worth a check for waterbirds. Continuing beyond the Río Hardy to Laguna Salada and San Felipe is well worthwhile, but beyond the scope of this article.

GETTING THERE FROM YUMA

Alternatively, you can cross the border at San Luis (the border crossing southwest of Yuma). From there it's quite easy to follow the signs to El Golfo down Hwy 003. It's an extra hour and a half to get to San Luis (as opposed to Calexico) from Los Angeles, but it's all good U. S. highway and cuts travel time within Mexico down by almost the same amount. If you cross at Andrade/Algodones, just use your map to navigate to San Luis and the highway to El Golfo.

THE ROUTE TO EL GOLFO

The highway to El Golfo is paved and excellent. About 40 km south of San Luis (or just beyond Coahuila if you've come through Mexicali) you pass through the town of Riito (be SURE to stop at



The town of El Golfo de Santa Clara is an "oasis" of trees along a desert coast, and serves as an excellent migrant trap.

Riito's stop signs — the police spend much of the day looking for "altos malos"!). The road makes a short jog here and crosses the railroad tracks. About 0.5 km after crossing the tracks, there is a sign for the Biosphere Reserve, with a paved road leading to the right. This can be a good side trip, as it goes for a few kilometers through brushy ditches, weedy fields, etc. This is a great spot to add Abert's Towhee to your Sonora list. If you take this side trip, you will then need to return to the main highway.

Another side trip involves following the northwest levee of the Wellton-Mohawk drain as it terminates in the extensive marshes of the Ciénega de Santa Clara; this is the paved drain a few kilometers south of Riito (and the one that supplies the Ciénega with most of its water). Near the end of the levee you can drive across a bridge over to the southeast side where there are some flooded flats.

Yet another side trip is at the settlement named Flor del Desierto; as you come into "town" turn right just before the large green water tank atop a small hill. Continue west on the dirt roads, eventually passing a small abandoned farm house with palm trees; continue to the road's end (it can get slick and

muddy toward the end) to a small parking area and sign about the Biosphere Reserve. Walk the trail out through the flats and marsh; shorebirds and herons can be abundant at times.

Continue on the highway toward El Golfo. There is a military police checkpoint at El Doctor, at Km 75. After passing this, you will see a series of dirt tracks that lead about 0.5 km. west to "pozos" (wells) at the edge of the Cienega de Santa Clara. Any of these tracks (all on good hard desert soil) between Km 77 and Km 82 take you to some great marsh/mesquite/tamarisk areas at the base of the bluffs. There is usually some fresh water here (unfortunately, well-trodden by cattle). This area is great for migrants. Spring passage along the bluffs is often phenomenal, providing an excellent opportunity to practice the identification of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, tanagers, and buntings by flight appearance and flight call! We've had Red-eyed Vireo and Chestnut-collared Longspur here in fall and calling Black Rails in summer. There is even a record of Sedge Wren near here.



First-winter Glaucous Gull, El Golfo de Santa Clara, January 1997.

Continue to El Golfo. After crossing many miles of extremely dry desert the highway drops down to gulf level at about Km 100. The structures you see near Km 104 are a research station. Between Km 105 and Km 109 there are a few dirt tracks leading to the flats at the edge of the gulf. Km 109 (where the highway curves slightly left) can be especially good — just walk down the little draw (or walk up over the dunes) and scope the flats. Check for Black Skimmers

here (and please pay attention to bands — including color combinations and any numbers/letters). You may also find Wilson's Plover, Reddish Egret, American Oystercatcher, hundreds of shorebirds, and sometimes seabirds offshore. There's a huge tidal range, so be prepared for a long walk to the edge of the water. Watch for Black-tailed Gnatcatchers and Le Conte's Thrashers in the arid scrub in from the dunes.

In the town of El Golfo de Santa Clara (Km 113) you can access the beach flats by taking any of the streets to the right and parking close to the end. The locals drive on the beach all the time, but we don't recommend it. If you do, the AAA suggests that you release some of the air pressure in your tires to allow for greater traction on the sand. You can re-inflate at the Pemex station or at a local entrepreneur across the street. One block inland from the beach, one of the town's sand streets leads northwest (up the coast) to the edge of town; park on the packed sand just beyond the last houses (you will pass the only real restaurant in town, El Delfin). Walk up the beach. There are usually large flocks of gulls on the beach side and numerous shorebirds (always Wilson's Plover and often Reddish Egret. Also check for "Large-billed" Savannah Sparrows) on the shallow estuary just inland from the beach. Check for Gull-billed Terns here (and watch for bands!). You will also want to check the beach at the south end of town.

Seabirds are quite erratic offshore. Sometimes there are fair numbers of Brown and Blue-footed boobies, but we've missed them on most trips. We have seen Black and Least storm-petrels a few times. You can scope for seabirds anywhere along the beach in town. You might even inquire about hiring a panga and guide to head out into the Gulf to check for storm-petrels, boobies, and other seabirds. Gull-watching is great on the beach in El Golfo: Ring-billed, Heermann's, and Herring gulls are abundant in

season, and there are numerous Yellow-footed and California gulls, and smaller numbers of Laughing, Thayer's, Glaucous-winged, and Western gulls. We found a Black-tailed Gull here in early June, and we've had Glaucous Gull in January. For the real larophiles among you, there is a garbage dump about two kilometers inland from town — reached by turning northeast at the main intersection in town.

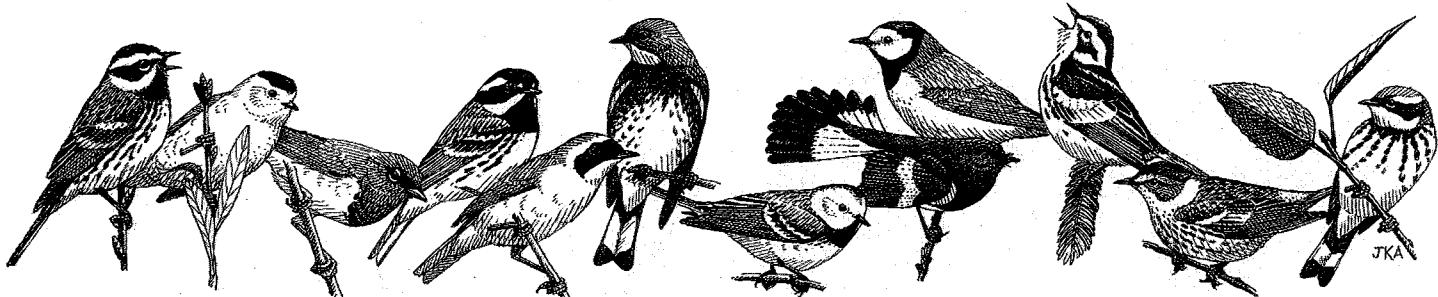
In migration any of the trees in town can have birds; we recommend taking several hours in the morning to walk most of the town's streets. In fall the tamarisks and *Ficus* trees can be especially good, so head for the areas with the tallest and densest trees. In town we've seen White-eyed and Red-eyed vireos, Red-breasted Sapsucker (no specimen records for Sonora), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Painted Redstart, Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Crow and a host of other interesting landbirds. We highly recommend Steve Russell and Gale Monson's book *Birds of Sonora* (University of Arizona Press) for an overview of the status of birds in the region, but it is clear that the portion of Sonora at the head of the Gulf is relatively poorly known.

Without hardy off-road vehicles it isn't practical to continue down the gulf from El Golfo. The next easily accessible places, such as Puerto Penasco (Rocky Point) and Kino Bay, are reached via different highways farther east.

Birding down through the Mexicali Valley and lower Colorado River to the head of the Gulf of California is a great way to become imprinted on the geography that links the Salton Sea to the ocean, not to mention a pleasant way to study a variety of birds. We highly recommend it!

Please report band observations of Gull-billed Tern and Black Skimmer to:

kmolina@bcf.usc.edu



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

Kimball L. Garrett

The latter part of the winter was highlighted by discoveries of additional unusual wintering birds. Some of these were found late enough in the season to raise the question of when birds can be assumed to have been wintering as opposed to being early spring migrants. We know that spring vagrants, including a variety of warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Eastern Kingbirds, etc., are generally found here near the end of spring migration (mid-May to mid-June), which may be a month or even two after these species have arrived at our latitude in their normal migration routes in eastern North America. So just because the earliest migrant Prairie Warblers, for example, might arrive in the Southeast in late March, the chances seem virtually nil that one discovered in California in mid-March is anything but a locally wintering bird. We can't be everywhere in mid-winter, so inevitably some places are not checked until February or March.

Among the most significant late winter discoveries was that of a male **Blackburnian Warbler** in Elysian Park on 24 February (Richard Barth) and still present as of at least 10 March. There is only one previous record of this species in Los Angeles County so late into winter. An earlier Blackburnian in Palos Verdes Estates this winter (John Ivanov, Palos Verdes Peninsula CBC) didn't stick around long. The Blackburnian occasionally shared an oak tree with a **Lucy's Warbler** that was first found on 15 February (Kimball Garrett). The

Magnolia Warbler, first found in Covina by Michael J. San Miguel on 15 January, was still present in early March. A female **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was discovered along the Los Angeles River near Los Feliz Blvd. by Richard Barth on 16 February. A **Prairie Warbler** along a small willow-lined stream in the Phillips Ranch section of Pomona on 13 March (KG) was, as suggested in the opening paragraph, almost certainly a wintering bird. Even the female **Nashville Warbler** with it was likely wintering, since migrants don't normally appear until a week or so later

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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e-mail: drschep@colonial-dames.com

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
e-mail: mrogers@nas.nasa.gov

(and those would be males — the females normally follow in another week). A **Northern Waterthrush** netted near the mouth of Zuma Creek on 29 January was definitely wintering — it bore the band first placed on its leg the previous September 12th! (Walt Sakai).

The blur between wintering birds and early spring migrants was evident in non-warblers as well. A **Warbling Vireo** in Santa Clarita on 6 March (KG) was more likely a spring migrant than a local winterer, because this species is extremely rare in winter and because we know from years of data that migrants can appear in early March (or exceptionally even the end of February). Likewise, a flock of eleven **Swainson's Hawks** in the Imperial Valley on 14 February (Gary and Ken Rosenberg) fits (though exaggerates!) the pattern of early spring influxes into the region in a species that is accidental in winter here. On the other hand, a flock of 75 **Vaux's Swifts** over the Los Angeles River near Glendale on 12 March (KG) were probably from a locally wintering flock — spring migrants show up like clockwork late in the second week of April.

Among the most interesting local winter birds was a **Brown Thrasher** in Larry Sansone's Hollywood Hills yard from 25 January through at least 18 March. A female **Lark Bunting** was off Bouquet Canyon Rd. in Santa Clarita on 6 March (KG). This is only about two miles from the site where Brian Daniels found a Lark Bunting last October. A

male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in Exposition Park, Los Angeles, 11–18 March (KG) could well have been the same bird that was seen last 19 October.

As is often the case, gulls grabbed an inordinate amount of birder attention during the winter. At least one first-winter gull showing most of the characteristics of **"Kumlien's" Iceland Gull** was at Doheny Beach, Orange County, in February (Don Roberson et al.). There is a growing body of data (and an overwhelming dose of sentiment from frustrated birders) that Iceland Gulls, Kumlien's Gulls and Thayer's Gulls simply represent segments of a cline, and that variation within populations is so great that it makes little biological sense to consider these forms anything other than a single species. An odd dark-mantled, yellowish-legged gull wintering at Obsidian Butte at the south end of the Salton Sea sparked a lively debate as to its identity and even its age (it showed elements of both second and third winter plumage). Possibilities included Lesser Black-backed Gull, "Heuglin's" Gull (a dark-mantled, yellow-legged conglomeration of Herring Gull-like populations breeding in Arctic north-central Russia), or some hybrid combination. A bird showing most of the characteristics of a first-winter **Glaucous Gull**, but with an atypical bill pattern, was in Paramount 17–18 March (Eleanor Osgood, Mike San Miguel). A more typical Glaucous Gull was in Port Hueneme (Don DesJardin). Finally, an apparent **Glaucous X Herring Gull** was near the north end of the Salton Sea on 14 March (KG, Kathy Molina, Brennan Mulrooney). Lost in all the swirling controversy of these large gulls this winter was the fact that **Bonaparte's Gulls** seemed to be far scarcer than in normal winters.

Exotics and escapes always enliven the birding picture in southern California. A small flock of **Helmeted Guineafowl** is making its home along the Los Angeles

River below Los Feliz Ave. A **Black-billed Magpie** in Big Tujunga Wash near Lakeview Terrace (Scott Harris) had a badly worn tail and was clearly an escapee. More problematic were the widely-seen **Gray Silky-Flycatcher** near Blue Jay Campground in the Santa Ana Mountains of Orange County in February and the **Pyrrhuloxia** found in early March in coastal Orange County. At least the last named bird might well have been a natural vagrant (there is a previous record for San Miguel Island!), and many felt that the silky-flycatcher could also have reached the area on its own.

May and June are peak atlasing months, and this is your last chance to contribute. Remember that spring vagrant season has been canceled, so get out to your atlas blocks and look for nesting evidence! 

FRED FLIES AWAY

Shortly, I will be heading abroad for a yearlong assignment in Switzerland. Although we live in an electronic age and I will only be a few keystrokes away from southern California, it will not be possible for me to continue in my position as editor of the *Western Tanager*. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the Los Angeles Audubon Society will have my replacement. However, if you long for the glamour that being the editor of the *Western Tanager* can bring to your life please call our President, Richard Epps at Audubon House to see if there is still an opening.

If the editor position is not available, never fear. Los Angeles Audubon is always looking for eager (and even not so eager) volunteers. At present a key position which needs filling is the Programs Chair.

Fred Heath

WESTERN TANAGER

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CIBOLA REFUGE: PLAINS OF CRANES AND OTHER SURPRISES

By Henry A. Forgione

We saw the Vermilion Flycatcher while racing up Route 78, desperately looking for a gas station. "Stop the car!" Stephen shouted. I slammed on the brakes and we got out opposite a farmhouse surrounded by a towering wall of hay bales. And there it was — a Vermilion Flycatcher, in splendid color, darting about a small tree near the house. We watched for several minutes as he snatched insects in the yard and eventually flew to a line of trees beyond the hay bales. We couldn't help grinning at each other. We had made two unsuccessful trips to Morongo Valley in the past year to see this bird.

It made sense that we spotted the flycatcher while driving in the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge because this unique reservation, carved out of the Arizona side of the Colorado River, seventeen miles south of Blythe, California, is set up for birding from your vehicle. Several dirt tracks built on mounds of stone cut through the wetland provide a sweeping view of the lake and the network of channels and streams that feed it. There is little pedestrian access to the water from the road.

Just behind the modern visitor's center is the Goose Loop, a dirt road that advertises a twenty-five minute drive for good sightings of Canada Geese and Sandhill Cranes. We spent two and a half hours on the loop and saw several dozen of the elegant cranes feeding in a recently harvested cornfield. Also on the road were a pair of Mountain Bluebirds in fine irides-

cent hue and a couple of noisy sparrows which, after much page turning in our field guides, we decided were Lincoln's Sparrows. Say's Phoebe flitted from every fence post and Western Meadowlarks sang in the tall grass. A large Greater Roadrunner dashed across a nearby clearing. Our observation of a Loggerhead Shrike was interrupted when a tour bus, with a Forest Service person at the microphone, came rumbling by us on the track.

Of course, there were plenty of Canada Geese on the ground and in the air. We drove a little farther on the road to a marshy area where we saw Snowy Egrets and a Great Blue Heron. By the time we finished the loop and gassed up at Palo Verde, we were ready to look for a campsite on the river. As we stood in the twilight by the Colorado — actually, a channel that contains the Colorado since the water in the area has been diverted over many decades for agriculture — great billows of blackbirds rolled through the sky above. A look through our binoculars revealed European Starlings, Red-winged Blackbirds and Yellow-headed Blackbirds all flying sociably together. At dusk half a dozen large dark feathered birds cruising over the water in tight formation startled us. We could only guess, but their distinctive pink decurved beaks indicated White-faced Ibis.

The next morning an Abert's Towhee was hopping around our tent while White-crowned Sparrows scratched in the sand for breakfast tidbits. A tree full of Turkey Vultures stood watch over the road as we crunched along toward the lake. A Killdeer flew up from the marshy flats nearby, breaking the morning calm with his persistent cry. Phainopeplas roosted on a high snag while across the road a group of Gambel's Quail sat puffed up and

waiting for the sun. At one point I pulled over at a clearing near the water and through the windshield we saw a Belted Kingfisher sitting on a branch over the river.

We parked at a rocky promontory at the south edge of the lake and took in the view of the basin and surrounding peaks. A small gray bird darting about in the nearby bushes soon distracted us. It turned out to be a Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, common in the refuge. We also saw a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and an Orange-crowned Warbler, the latter close enough to observe without binoculars as he hopped along a branch nipping at some nourishment that was invisible to us.

As we drove back to the visitor's center Stephen pointed out a large shadow in the branches. It was a Great Horned Owl taking an afternoon nap. He turned a yellow eye on us as we stared back through our binoculars. The owl soon lost interest and resumed his snooze. Just as we were leaving, a chattering Ladder-backed Woodpecker flew into the tree and began to peck away at the trunk. The owl ignored him, too.

Finally we headed up to Blythe to have dinner before returning to Los Angeles. American Kestrels and young Red-tailed Hawks topped every telephone pole, scanning the surrounding fields for prey. We left Cibola talking about when we would find the time for a return visit. This lake and its environs are definitely worth another look. ■

Cibola National Wildlife Refuge is located 17 miles south of Blythe, CA and can be reached by exiting the 10 Freeway at Route 78 (Neighbours Blvd.). The visitor's center is open Mon.-Fri. 8-4:30 (520) 857-3253.

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Three 1999 sessions are offered: June 27-July 3; July 4-10; July 11-17, including a special photography session the second week.

Enrollment is limited. This is California's most unique outdoor workshop! To receive a brochure, write to: Golden Trout Natural History Workshop, Inc., Attn: Cindi McKernan, 1498 Brookside Ave., #El 65, Redlands, CA 92373 (909) 798-3060. See us on the World Wide Web: www.1startists.com/gtc/index.htm



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Big Tujunga Wash! For those who came in late, let's review the story. The scene is the northeast San Fernando Valley. For unknown ages the Big Tujunga River has been beating its rocky path down the San Gabriel Mountains to the flatland of the valley where it becomes a creek that flows to what is now Hansen Dam. In summer the creek — Big Tujunga Wash — is a pussycat, purring along and minding its own business. In winter, heavy rains churn up the flood plain and the Wash becomes a raging tiger. One would think that the enormous influx of water would bring down boulders and scour out the bottom and sides of the Wash, leaving it a sterile watercourse. Not so. Some plants and small creatures survive to form a Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub habitat, so rare that the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has called the Tujunga Wash "the last viable alluvial fan in the Los Angeles Basin."

The steep land adjacent to Big Tujunga Wash is privately owned. For many years the owners have attempted to get permission to build a 6000-yard golf course there and it has been denied each time. For the last two years a new and stronger effort has been made. The developer cultivated neighbors of

the project, bussing them to hearings at City Hall, feeding them during recesses, and encouraging them to speak for the project. Neighbors hoped for economic growth and a rise in their property values. They were opposed by environmentalists arguing that another piece of scarce open space would be lost to a golf course. The greens fees were to be so high that the neighbors could not afford to play. Endangered species and a rare habitat would disappear.

The matter of issuing permits for the golf course came to the Los Angeles City Council and after a nail-biting hearing, the golf course was voted down. The cheers were short-lived when the developer sued the city for 215 million dollars and the Council fearfully reversed its vote.

Months have gone by but nothing seems to be happening: no indication of the date for a lawsuit in the offing, nothing in the press. But something has been going on in the DFG. On January 4, 1999, The Foothill Golf Development Group of Florida notified the DFG that they intend to divert or obstruct the natural flow of water or change the bed, channel, or bank of, or use material from the streambed of waters from Big Tujunga Wash... On February 2, 1999, the DFG

answered the applicant with a Draft Agreement (a tentative agreement) on the proposed stream alteration and asked for the applicant's signature.

Let's pause at this point for important information. The developer also *owns* the flood plain of the Wash, but the Wash is part of the Department's *jurisdictional areas*. The developer can only enter it or change it in any way if he has a permit from the Department.

What follows are a few excerpts from the Draft Agreement.

"The Department," after two site visits "has determined that such construction may substantially adversely affect those existing fish and wildlife resources within Big Tujunga Wash..."

"The project area has three state-designated sensitive plant communities, riversidian alluvial fan sage scrub, coastal sage scrub, and southern sycamore-alder riparian woodland."

"No grading, fill, excavation, or grubbing activities shall occur within the Department's jurisdictional areas."

"The Operator [shorthand for Foothill Golf, etc.] shall not construct any buildings or any other structures within the Department's jurisdictional areas."

"No vehicles or equipment shall

be operated within the Department's jurisdictional areas.

"No pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers shall be used within the Department's jurisdictional areas or shall be used in areas that may enter into the Department's jurisdictional areas or State waters."

"The Operator shall comply with all litter and pollution laws"

"The Department reserves the right to enter the project site at any time to ensure compliance with terms/conditions of this Agreement."

"The Department reserves the right to suspend or cancel this Agreement...if the Department determines that the Operator has breached any of the terms or conditions of this Agreement..."

Well, this is pretty heady stuff. One wonders how the Operator is going to build his project without "breaching the...conditions of the Agreement." Or how his golf course will succeed without pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers that inevitably will run downhill to the Wash, the *Department's jurisdictional areas*. Even the irrigation water must be nitrate-free, must be analyzed and approved by the DFG.

This is the most encouraging news we've had in a long time. A fish and game person has testified eloquently against the golf course at all the hearings before the City Council. We can see how vigorously they are defending their turf—the Department's jurisdictional areas—an irreplaceable habitat that belongs to all of us. Can we dare to hope that this powerful document will defeat Foothill Golf? They may scream about the state "taking" their property unconstitutionally. They may sue DFG. They may appeal to the politicians. Whatever their response may be, we will have to be ready to fight back. ■

MAKE PLANS NOW . . .

For either of the Los Angeles Audubon Society's outstanding birding and natural history trips to Africa, conducted by Olga Clarke and local leaders.

SOUTH AFRICA —

(pre-extension)

October 19–28, 1999 visiting Kwazulu Natal's Dolphin Coast, Hiuhluwe and Ndumo Game Reserves.

KENYA — (main tour)

October 27–November 10, 1999 Savoring incredible Samburu, Lakes Bogoria and Barinjo, Kakamega Forest, and the Maasai Mara.

BOTSWANA — (post extension)

November 9–21, 1999 highlighting the natural wonders of this little known country.

BOTSWANA — (main tour)

November 9–21, 1999 including the Okavanga Delta, Moremi Game Reserve. Kasane, and Victoria Falls, one of the worlds greatest natural wonders.

ZIMBABWE — (post-extension)

November 21–27, 1999 with game viewing right at your doorstep, exploring Hwange National Park Makalolo Plains, Lake Kariba, and Matusadona National Park.

For more information, contact Olga Clarke, Travel Director, 2027 El Arbola Drive, Glendale, CA 91208. ph/fax; (818) 249-9511 e-mail: laas@ix.netcom.com <http://www.netcom/laas>

Audubon 1999 Programs for Schools, Adults and Families in Northeast and East Los Angeles

Birds of the Arroyo: Beginning Bird Walks in Debs Park

Audubon naturalists will lead a series of bird walks in Ernest Debs Park in Highland Park. Walnut woodland, coastal sage scrub, and grasslands provide habitat for a variety of resident and migratory birds including warblers, woodpeckers, and raptors.

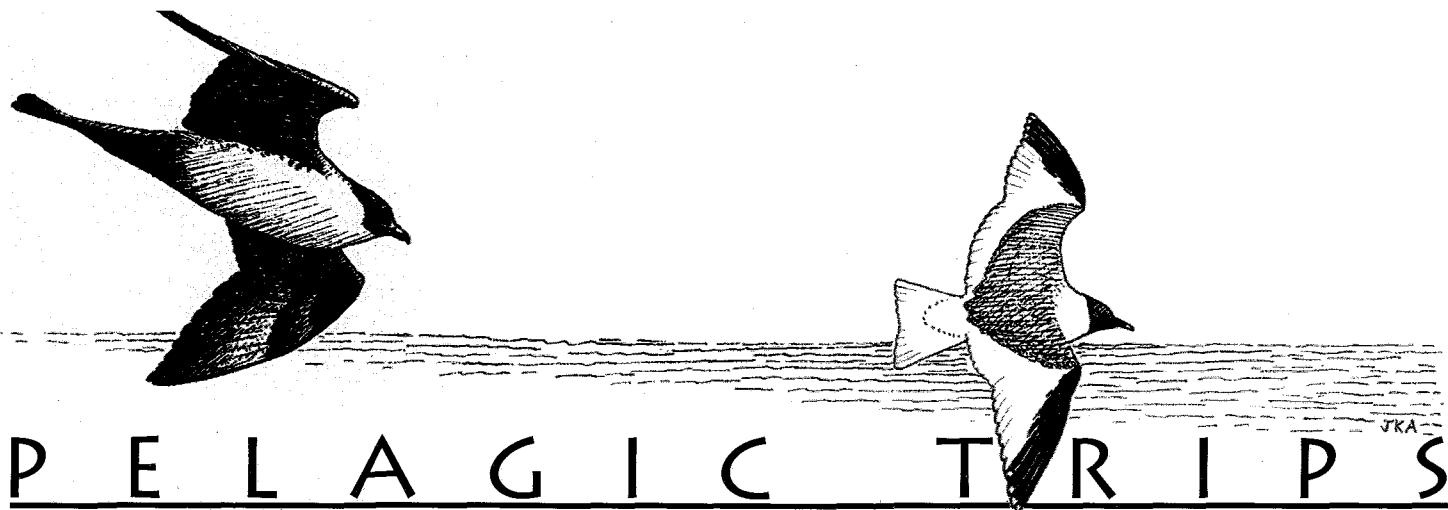
Children, 10 and over, are welcome. Bring binoculars and bird guide, if you have one. Attendance is limited to 25. Free! For reservations and directions call (323) 254-0252.

Each walk is offered from 8–11 A.M. on Saturdays. Scheduled dates are April 10, May 22, and June 5, 1999.

Spring Nature Hikes for Families

The 195 acre Debs Park is a beautiful place for a spring nature hike. Audubon naturalists will lead a series of discovery tours scouting for signs of spring—birds, flowers, bugs, and butterflies. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy afterward! Children must be accompanied by an adult. Free! For reservations and directions call (323) 254-0252.

Each walk is offered from 9–11 A.M. on Saturdays. Scheduled dates are April 17, May 8, and June 12, 1999.



PELAGIC TRIPS

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, 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 Na-

ture 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. 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.

FIELD TRIPS

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Sunday, May 9 —

Whittier Narrows. Leader: **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. to view colorful resident and migrant birds, including 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.

Saturday, May 15 —

Santa Anita Canyon. Leader **Mary Freeman.** Take the 210 Fwy toward Arcadia, and take the Santa Anita Ave. N to the parking lot at the very end of the road. Meet at the trailhead at the bottom of the lot. Four mile moderately strenuous walk through oak and chaparral canyons. Good selection of breeding and migrating birds, including warblers. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Band-tailed Pigeon, three hummers and Dipper are possible. Pack a lunch. Meeting time 7:30 A.M.

Sunday, May 16 —

Atlas with Kimball Garrett in the Antelope Valley. Meet at 7 A.M. at the park and ride off Ave S. Take Hwy 14 from L.A. Exit Ave S (in Palmdale) and turn right. Then make a quick right into the park and ride. We will caravan from there.

Sunday, May 16 —

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, May 22 —

Birds of the Arroyo — Debs Park. Join leader **Pat Nelson** to explore this regional park that includes walnut woodland, coastal sage scrub and grasslands. Good beginning bird walk and children are welcome. Take 110 N to Pasadena and exit Via Marisol. Turn right, go 1/8 mile to Monterey Rd and turn right. Go 3/4 mi. and turn into the Ernest Debs (Montecito Regional) Park. Follow the road to the far end of the parking lot and park. Meet at 8 A.M.

Monday, May 31 — Mt. Gleason.

Robert Weissler will lead us on an atlasing trip looking for breeding White-headed Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadee, Western Tanager and other montane species. Take the 210 Fwy to Hwy 2, the Angeles Crest Highway, and head into the mountains approximately 9 miles. Turn left onto the Angeles Forest Highway. Go to Millcreek Summit and park in the lot at the Ranger Station. Adventure Pass required. 8 A.M.

Sunday June 6 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See May 2 for write-up.

Sunday June 13 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M.

See May 9 for write-up.

Friday through Monday, June 25-28 —

Southern Sierra Weekend with Bob Barnes. Likely: Goshawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Pileated Woodpecker and owls. Approximately 150 species seen in a typical year. Participation limited. For information flyer, reserve with SASE. Fee: \$11 for each day attended (\$44 for four days). Reserve rooms early.

Tickler: Yosemite Area. Yosemite Valley and mountains on Saturday and Sunday and Owens Valley on Monday. Dates will be either July 10-12 or July 17-19. Call LAAS for date then send SASE for information flyer. Reserve rooms early. Fee: \$15 for each day attended. Leader **David Yee.**

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.

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, May 11, 1999

Herb Clarke, bird and wildlife photographer extraordinaire will present "The Antarctic". This beautifully slide illustrated talk will focus on the birds (but will show some of the other interesting creatures) of the Antarctic Peninsula, Antarctic islands, as well as Falkland Islands and South Georgia Island. This is but a small sampling of the over 3000 pictures Herb took on a recent trip to this unique corner of the world.

Tuesday, June 8, 1999

Dr. Ray Sauvajot, Ecologist and Science Advisor for the National Park Service, **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area** will present an overview of the natural resource values of Santa Monica Mountains, our "back-yard" mountains, and discuss the criteria used to prioritize land protection in the area. He will also highlight several ongoing data collection projects that are helping to make these decisions and suggest ways in which we might help.

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.

Saturday, May 1 — Morongo Valley. Join **Irwin Woldman** to look for migrant and resident species in this desert oasis. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve parking lot for the morning field trip. Those interested can meet early at 6:30 A.M. for some birding in Covington Park

across the street. Take the 10 Fwy past Beaumont, turn N on State Rt. 62 to Morongo Valley, and turn right on East Drive across from Rocky's Pizza. Take the first driveway left into the lot. About a two hour drive from L.A. Anticipate heat, hunger and thirst.

Sunday, May 2 — 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.

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