

WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 67 Number 3 January/February 2001

Los Angeles Audubon Society

BIRDS OF THE SEASON A FAREWELL RETROSPECTIVE

Kimball L. Garrett

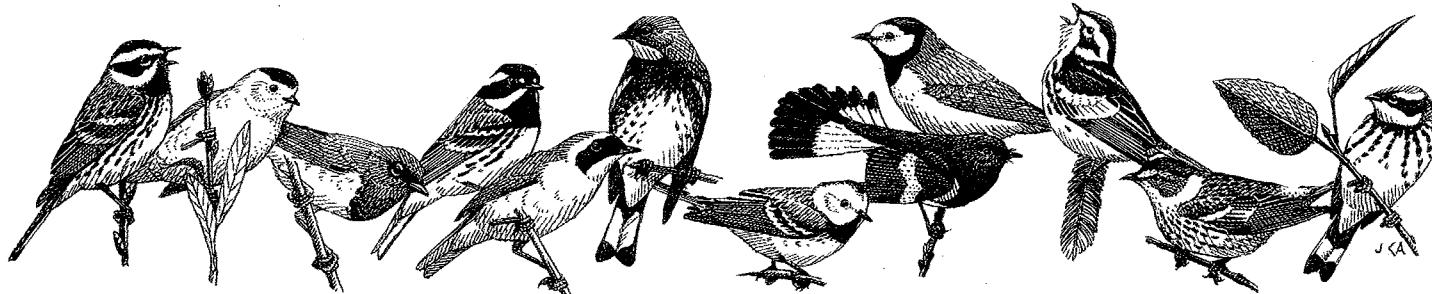
This column marks the end of my second stint as *Birds of the Season* author and a review of the history of the column might be in order. David Gaines was the author of *Birds of the Season* for a period in the mid-1960s but the column as we know it really took shape under the wing of Shum Suffel from October 1967 to the July/August 1983 issue. During that period there was a four tiered system of disseminating information about birds in a timely fashion. Megararities and other important finds were usually communicated through a primitive "telephone-tree" system, with the news relayed through a clumsy chain of telephone calls (and in a day when even answering machines were rare). In 1971 one of the earliest Bird Tapes in North America was started by LAAS. On a scale of weeks, information about bird sightings was delivered by this *Birds of the Season* column, published ten times a year in the *Tanager*. Finally, a summary and analysis of important information appeared regularly (with a time lag of about six months) in the journal *Audubon Field Notes*.

After Shum's passing, Hal Baxter and I took over authorship in September 1983, sharing this endeavor until the October 1987 *Tanager*, when I became the sole author. Like a breath of fresh air, Hank Brodkin stepped in to anchor the column in September of 1988. Hank held forth as the second longest-serving author (after Shum Suffel) until the March/April 1997 issue, after which the birds (and butterflies) of southeastern Arizona called him away. So I stepped back in for the May/June 1997 issue, beginning a string of 23 columns that now comes to a close.

The "information technology" of birding has changed a great deal since Shum's tenure. Sightings are now widely publicized through automated "Bird Box" voice mail systems and this happens almost immediately (indeed some are called in on cellular phones while the bird in question is being observed!). Internet listserves and web sites also allow the rapid spread of such information (and misinformation). Over the years *Audubon Field Notes* (now *North*

American Birds) has remained the primary venue for publishing significant information about bird status and distribution in the region but subscriptions have dropped off [please consider supporting this important journal, now published by the American Birding Association]. And through it all *Birds of the Season* still appears in every *Western Tanager* (now six times per year). Because of the Bird Box, the Internet and other technological advances, readers are already aware of most sightings before they are highlighted in *Birds of the Season*. During my tenure as the column's author, therefore, I have viewed its niche as being more interpretive: just what do recent observations mean and what has been the "flavor" of the migrations, breeding and wintering of our birds? I've used the column as a soapbox on occasion, delivering harangues against those who despoil our bird habitats and even the occasional chiding of birders who don't do enough exploring and don't keep good records so that we may share in their knowledge.

I am delighted that this column will



continue under the authorship of Daniel Cooper. Dan is an avid birder, a trained ornithologist and ecologist, and an educator who is comfortable teaching both novices and hard-core birders of all ages. I look forward to his perspective and I plan to have a few sightings to throw into the mix from time to time.

Below I want to share some of the observations and trends that I consider the most significant over my tenure as the column's author the past four years. It's almost impossible to pick out the avian highlights over the last four years but certainly some important rarities come to mind. Roughly in chronological sequence these include the Masked Booby at Point Mugu from January to March 1997 (and another in San Pedro on an LAAS pelagic trip 13 November 1999); the Band-tailed (or "Belcher's") Gull in Imperial Beach beginning in August 1997; the Purple Gallinule at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley, in September and October 1997; the Dusky Warbler in eastern Kern County in October 1997; the widely-seen Couch's Kingbird at Craig Regional Park in Fullerton first identified in January 1998; the Slaty-backed Gull at Salton City in February 1998; the Bristle-thighed Curlew "invasion" of May 1998; the Bridled Tern at Bolsa Chica July 1998 (with another – or the same – Bridled Tern there on 10 July 1999, along with a Red-tailed Tropicbird); the American Woodcock in eastern San Bernardino County in November 1998; the (escaped?) Gray Silky-Flycatcher in Santa Ana Mountains in February and March of 1999; the Glossy Ibis at Twentynine Palms in August 1999 and again in the Imperial Valley from May to July 2000; the (escaped?) Blue Mockingbird at the El Dorado Nature Center from December of 1999 to March 2000, and the Black-backed Oriole (also an escapee?) in

Imperial Beach in the spring of 2000.

Among the noteworthy avian happenings over the last few years have been irruptions of montane-breeding species. In the winter of 1996-1997 Cassin's Finches erupted into the coastal lowlands and other irruptive species (e.g. Red Crossbill and Red-breasted Nuthatch) were widely encountered. Crossbills even remained to nest in places such as Redondo Beach and the Kern desert and a Lewis's Woodpecker remained as late as 19 July 1997 in La Cañada. The fall of 2000 has brought strong indications of an irruption of corvids, with Pinyon Jays found in several areas of the desert lowlands and on the coastal slope, "Woodhouse's" (interior) scrub-jays on the Kern deserts, and Clark's Nutcrackers mirroring the Pinyon Jay's movements. Like the winter of 1996-7, this winter has also seen an influx of Lewis's Woodpeckers.

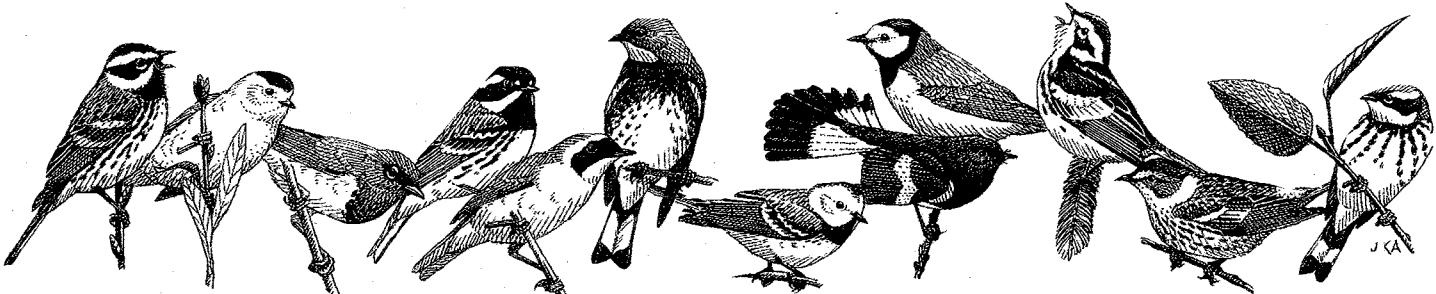
Reports on migration periods have highlighted a number of vagrants, but sometimes we have marvelled at the passage of our "common western migrants" at places like Butterbreyt Spring in Kern County. Shorebirds are among our most popular and visible migrants and this column has reported on promisingly high counts of shorebirds from the two best sites in Los Angeles County: the lower Los Angeles River in Long Beach and the Piute Ponds/Rosamond Lake wetland system in the Antelope Valley.

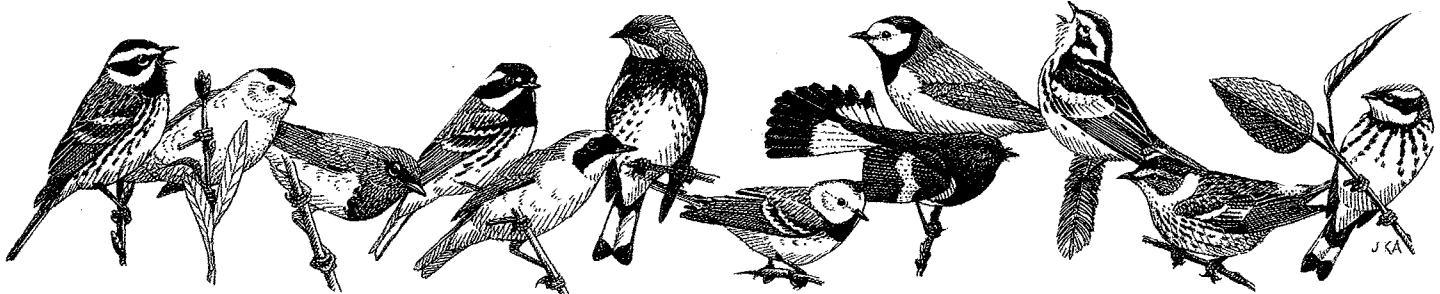
The phenomenal diversity of bird species wintering in the Los Angeles County coastal lowlands has often been featured in this column. Among flycatchers we have often mentioned the "perennial" Thick-billed Kingbird at Cal Poly Pomona which incidentally returned this October for its 9th winter. The fascinating ecology of Cassin's Kingbirds wintering in flocks in southern LA County has also been of interest. Our county's first

Common Grackle was found in March 1997 in Torrance (and up to five were at El Dorado Park in January of 2000), and Pine Warblers wintered in El Dorado Park annually since winter 1997-8. The winter of 1998-1999 saw a surprising number of other warbler species, including Blackburnian Warblers on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and in Elysian Park, as well as Lucy's (Elysian Park), Magnolia (Covina), and Prairie (Phillips Ranch) warblers. On its way to being perennial, a Large-billed (Savannah) Sparrow first found on the Ballona Creek jetty in December 1998 has also appeared the next two winters.

Of great interest have been recent developments in the breeding avifauna of Los Angeles County. The Breeding Bird Atlas has been discussed in most of the columns I've written in recent years, and through atlasing efforts we've learned, for example, of breeding Willow Flycatchers (of the endangered subspecies *extimus*) in Soledad Canyon in June 1997. We've also witnessed the development of an important seabird colony on the new earth fill in Los Angeles Harbor, with Caspian Terns colonizing in 1996 (along with Least Terns) and Elegant and Royal Terns and Black Skimmers joining the colony in the summer of 1998. For spice, a Sandwich Tern appeared within the colony in June 2000. Atlasers were sometimes rewarded with oddities, especially in the mountains where late May and June of 1997 included a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a Yellow-throated Warbler, and two Blue-winged Warblers.

The El Nino/Southern Oscillation event of 1997 manifested itself in part by large numbers of beach-washed corpses of seabirds (especially Cassin's Auklets) in June and July of that year; interestingly, it was not until the following summer (1998) that we had our only good incursion of Magnificent Frigatebirds in the region.





It is incumbent upon the author of this column to report on the birds of our urban areas. The past several years have seen an ongoing expansion of Great-tailed Grackles throughout the Los Angeles region, and increasing populations of Eurasian Collared-Doves to the northwest of us seem poised to come our way. The phenomenal growth in numbers of Western Gulls feeding in inland urban areas continues. But not all "urban" birds are faring well: Spotted Dove populations have seemingly crashed in the inland valleys and in Ventura County. In this column I've tried to report on "exotic" species which are becoming increasingly established (such as the Orange Bishop, Nutmeg Mannikin and various parrots). It's difficult to predict when or if today's escapees (such as recent Black-throated Magpie-Jays and European Goldfinches) will become part of our avifauna. Another fascinating development in urban ornithology is the recent spread of the Red Gum Lerp Psyllid, an insect pest which infests certain eucalyptus species and provides an abundant food source for a variety of birds.

Certain recurring themes have marked my tenure as author of this column; some of them might even be nauseatingly familiar to the reader by now. One can be summed up as "Document, Document, Document": I can't emphasize enough the need for birders to keep good and accurate records of what they

see. Time and time again we see these records being put to use to show the importance of various habitats and threatened sites in our area. I've also tried to point out that many aspects of the status and distribution of our "regular" birds are still poorly known; birders have placed too much emphasis on vagrants and accidentals, often ignoring more important issues about the status of our "common" birds. I've also repeatedly argued that thorough coverage of one's "patch" is far more interesting than going to well-worked localities to see vagrants that others have already found. A wealth of data can arise from such coverage – witness the excellent data coming from Matt Heindel's saturation coverage of eastern Kern County.

Birding is, in part, a celebration of nature's predictability. There's a certain sense of satisfaction that Hooded Orioles come back each year in the third week of March, that one or two Scarlet Tanagers will show up each late fall at Banning Park, that an April day will see hundreds of Pacific Loons streaming west-northwest past Pt. Dume, or that some poor Sabine's Gull will drop in on some body of water in the Antelope Valley every September. But birding is also exploration, and the highlights of this column come when a birder stumbles into something that wasn't predicted. How do we do this? We maximize our time in the field, we sharpen our senses

and we document, document, document.

My sincerest thanks go to all the birders who have contributed sightings to this column. And to Jean Brandt, Tom Frillman and Fred Heath, my gratitude for putting up with all my missed deadlines!

Finally, just to keep things current . . . Important sightings in October and November included as many as four **Scarlet Tanagers** at Banning Park in Wilmington (Mitch Heindel), a **Rusty Blackbird** at South Coast Botanical Gardens on 28 October (Kevin Larson), a **Flammulated Owl** found dead in Debs Park on 5 November (Dan Cooper) and an **Eastern Phoebe** at Hansen Dam on 5 November (Richard Barth).

As for birding in January and February of 2001? Wintering birds will all still be present, so scouring well-landscaped parks and residential areas should continue to turn up interesting wintering species. With corvids and some other species on the move (at least in the fall and early winter), there is still time to find that elusive first Woodhouse's ("interior") scrub-jay for Los Angeles County – try parks and ranchyards in the northern and eastern Antelope Valley. The winter is shaping up as a very good one for Rough-legged Hawks and other raptors, so coverage of open agricultural lands and grasslands will be well-rewarded; again try alfalfa farming areas northwest of Lancaster and east of Lancaster. ■

And now . . . Dan Cooper takes over *Birds of the Season* in the March/April issue. Dan is a native of the San Gabriel Valley and has been an avid birder and nature enthusiast for most of his life. Some of you may have attended his birdwalks at the Huntington Library in

San Marino, which he led monthly during the late 1980s. He holds a degree in biology from Harvard and a Master's in Biogeography from UC Riverside, where he studied bird distribution of the Puente-Chino Hills. He has also traveled widely doing field work and leading nature tours for Victor Emanuel

Nature Tours.

Dan is currently working full-time as a biologist for the National Audubon Society on a new nature center along the Arroyo Seco in northeast Los Angeles.

Please see page 9 for more information about Dan's commitment to nature, education and birding.



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Most of us are aware of the environmental horror stories the world is exposed to day after day, year after year: the destruction of rainforests, the decline of treasured wildlife, Chernobyl, global warming, overpopulation, pollution of air and water. Meet the ultimate polluter right here in our midst – Unocal, the Union Oil Company of California.

Remember the Santa Barbara oil spill back in 1969? That was the blowout that made America sit up for the first time and look into the ugly face of environmental degradation. That was Unocal's oil. Unocal's president told a U.S. Senate committee that he was "amazed at the publicity for the loss of a few birds."

In 1998 the California Attorney General, representing three state agencies, sued Unocal for leaking millions of gallons of a petroleum dilettante *for years* from its operation in the Guadalupe oil field in San Luis Obispo County. The suit accused Unocal of unlawful discharges into the ocean and local drinking water sources, of failure to report the discharge, destruction of natural resources, failure to notify authorities of public exposure to known carcinogens and unauthorized disposal of hazardous wastes. Unocal settled for \$43.8 million.

During World War II, Avila Beach was a busy oil town helping to win the war in the Pacific. The town was small with about 400 permanent residents and a downtown that boasted a few restaurants, a couple of sundry shops and one grocery store. In 1989 a construction company, checking on soil quality, found oil two and a half feet below the surface. Later it was discovered that the entire town was sitting on a huge pool of the stuff. Unocal had built a pipeline from

storage tanks inland to their oil pier, tunneling under the main street. After regional authorities decided that the pipe had been leaking for many years they ordered the company to clean up the site. Unocal's answer was to appeal the order, fight the cleanup and sue the authorities. San Luis Obispo County, the Attorney General, businesses and affected individuals sued the company for major losses and Unocal finally gave in. At its own expense Unocal tore up the town and put it back together, perhaps the largest cleanup in the state's history. Avila Beach lives again eleven years later and Unocal is out millions of dollars. (LA Times, July 5, 2000).

San Francisco Bay was victimized twice in recent years. In 1994 Unocal's refinery in Rodeo leaked catacarb, a hazardous chemical that sickened many residents as well as their own employees. The company insisted it was harmless. Unocal paid the EPA a \$375,000 penalty and settled private lawsuits for \$80 million. Three years later they were found guilty of dumping selenium, a substance that can cause birth defects, deformities and death, into the bay. The public was warned not to eat shellfish or bay fish. The court found that Unocal had violated federal laws almost daily.

Unocal's outrages never seem to end. In San Bernardino County its Mountain Pass mine polluted ground water to the tune of 350,000 gallons of toxic effluent in 1996. The public was not notified. The federal Bureau of Land Management, the County and the Regional Water Quality Control Board fined them \$550,000. Unocal is appealing.

In Los Angeles, Unocal and two other oil companies have refused to install vapor recovery equipment at their

harbor terminal where they load their tankers. The unhealthy vapor flows to low-income homes in the vicinity and the companies are being sued under the Clean Air Act. Instead of buying available equipment to handle the problem the companies are trying to convince the Air Quality District that buying and destroying polluting old cars will clean up the same amount of air that the oil vapor degrades. Even if it were true that smashing decrepit jalopies cleaned the air elsewhere, the community would still be breathing the same poisonous vapor. Unocal is fighting the case in court.

Pertinent facts: Unocal has been identified as potentially responsible for 82 Superfund sites. In the last 14 years Unocal has committed hundreds of violations of OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

In 1997 Unocal sold its gas stations and refineries, announced itself "a global energy company" and headed for the enticing fields of Asia.

Unocal's entrance into Burma and Afghanistan in the late nineties is an international version of its California depredations. Rather than dealing with our state and federal regulatory agencies that might keep it honest, Unocal preferred joining forces with sinister regimes that have no concern with the environment or human rights.

Burma was an outright military dictatorship after World War II and in response to domestic cries for democracy, in 1988 declared martial law, bloodily eliminated its opponents and changed the country's name to Myanmar. In Afghanistan, a rebel extremist faction overthrew the government in 1996 and now controls 85% of the country. This is the Taliban, a fanatical Muslim group

whose harsh rule dictates that "Women may not work, girls may not learn, men may not shave. Violators are flogged, mutilated and killed in public ceremonies animated by readings from the Koran." (LA Times, August 14, 2000). Oh yes, homosexuals are routinely executed. The Taliban's treatment of their own women may be the worst manifestation of gender apartheid in human history.

In both countries Unocal formed partnerships with the ruling powers to search for oil and natural gas and to build pipelines to neighboring states. Unocal, the majority partner, poured in money to finance the operations: In Burma peasant property was taken without compensation; villages were arbitrarily relocated, rainforests were destroyed. Men, women and children were forced to work without pay for years in virtual slavery. A 1997 US State Department report speaks of "... severe repression of human rights . . . including killings and rape . . ."

The Taliban eagerly welcomed the rich Americans. They learned about oil and gas development and would make millions when the pipeline was completed. As with Burma's elite, Unocal's presence gives the Taliban tyranny a show of legitimacy.

What can be said about Unocal's liability in Asia? Is it reasonable to accuse this "global energy company" of sharing responsibility for the suffering of the ordinary citizens of Burma and Afghanistan? Unocal says it is not implicated in the domestic acts of foreign nations and even denies that its associates are guilty of many of the charges made against them. But its role as principal partner and investor in pipeline projects in both countries makes it impossible to believe it was ignorant of the crimes

committed by its business colleagues. (Unocal's investment in the Burma pipeline alone is \$1.3 billion.)

In the last few years there has been a growing concern in the United States about the shameless treatment of people in the third world by powerful American corporations. Massachusetts passed a law that required its state procurement departments to boycott American firms doing business in Burma. A few other states have similar legislation as well as cities like Oakland, Santa Monica, San Francisco and New York.

In California the sordid tale of Unocal's illegal assault on the environment and the effect of that destruction on the health of our people must be taken seriously. From Los Angeles to San Francisco, the company's disregard for the law and for its neighbors shows it is willing to accept the environmental fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business. Unocal is not alone.

The uneasiness about the negative activities of Unocal in Asia and here at home brings to question the place of corporations in our society. If they are good citizens and do no harm they are an asset to our economy. If they cavalierly violate the law of the land as a matter of undeclared policy they should be treated as criminals. But does that happen? Very rarely. Fines are not enough, as we have seen. Those that show a repetitive pattern of wrongdoing ought to be forced to change their ways or close their doors.

How can that be done? Most of us are unaware that all corporations are chartered by the states and may lose their charter if the state finds that they have broken the law.

In the late 19th century it was not uncommon for corporations to have their

charter revoked for cause. As corporations grew in size and wealth they developed immense power. Today their "soft money" elects compliant politicians to high office. They own the newspapers and the public's airwaves. Multi-billion dollar mergers tighten the strings of monopoly. The anti-trust acts are dead. Transnational corporations send American jobs overseas and exploit the natural resources of weaker nations.

For the most part, government has given up serious control of offending companies and falls back upon regulations that are poorly enforced. Yet, the power to revoke a charter still rests with the states and can be used to keep corporations honest. California's conservative Republican Attorney General, Evelle Younger, in 1976, brought suit against a water company for distributing polluted water. The company went out of business and sold its assets to a public water district.

The small but growing citizens' effort to revoke Unocal's charter has a long way to go. If successful, it will surely send a critical message to other corporate bodies.

In 1938, Franklin Roosevelt said, "The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their Democratic State itself." 

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Since *Western Tanager* is only published six times a year, there are frequently time-sensitive events that are important to our members and, other than the Bird Tape, we have no method of reaching you, so . . . now we ask that you reach us!

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and check *Updates*. This is a good way to see what our Chapter is doing.

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Western Tanager now has its own e-mail address. We welcome your Letters to the Editor with input, questions and opinions.

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Book Review: National Audubon Society The Sibley Guide to Birds

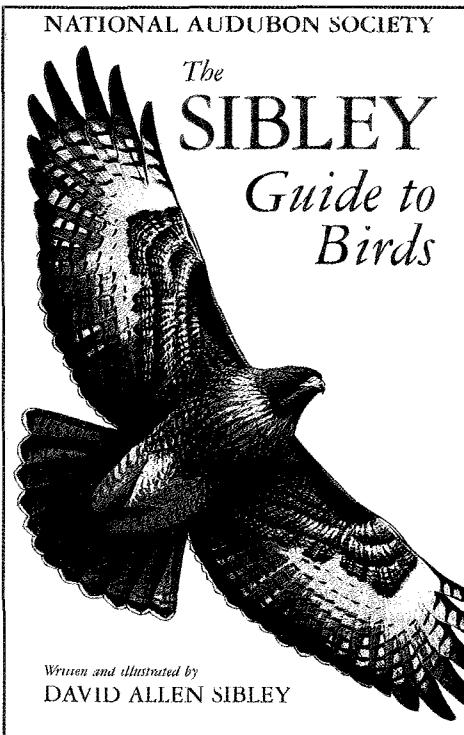
Written and illustrated by
David Allen Sibley – Alfred A. Knopf,
New York, 2000, 544 pp. Softbound.
Over 500 color plates, color end map.
\$35.00 through the LAAS Bookstore.

Reviewing this book is akin to reviewing the local White Pages. Both are indispensable and crammed full of important information; everybody will want to own both. There is an incredible amount of accurately-presented information in each, and only long periods of thorough analysis might reveal significant errors. I suppose the similarity ends there, because the Sibley guide is also a visual delight. Few *Western Tanager* readers who are remotely serious about birding will not already have a copy, so this review might serve little function other than to assure you that you've invested wisely. For those of you who don't own a copy, just skip the rest of this review and go out and get one (best accomplished by calling Audubon House or visiting the LAAS web site!). Since Roger Peterson made field guides popular and palatable in the 1930s, the escalating war to produce a better product has resulted in a number of variations. Guides with plates and text on facing pages became so popular by the 1970s that few subsequent guides dared depart from this format. Gimmicky arrangements of birds by color or habitat didn't farewell, but the use of photographs (altered or unaltered) rather than painted plates has proven popular in some circles. The obvious question in considering "Sibley" (as it is already popularly known) is how it stacks up in this evolution of field guides. But I think that's the wrong question because, in most ways, this isn't a field guide at all. Nowhere in the book is there a claim that it is a *field* guide,

and the dimensions (nearly 10" tall and about 6" wide), bulk (about" thicker than the National Geographic Society field guide and about the same as a certain warbler guide), and weight (about 2.6 pounds) bear that out. In other words, information and thoroughness was not sacrificed to make certain the end product would fit in a standard pocket. This "guide" is a reference that many will want to carry in the field and nearly all will want to have handy in the car or tent, or beside the kitchen window. The author correctly urges birders to concentrate on observing and taking notes in the

various avifaunas throughout the continent for most of his life has paid incredible dividends for the author. The artwork and the economical text can only have come from somebody with this experience. A number of brilliant decisions were made in developing the book's format. Each "group" (family or subfamily) gets a 1-2 page spread comparing all species at the same scale. Most pages are two-species spreads (some species, e.g. most gulls, require a full page) with the common characteristics of the component species given at the top, then individual statements about structure (and other salient characters) of each species. Painted figures are logically organized to facilitate comparisons, and these include two (to several) flight illustrations for every species. Distinguishing characteristics are discussed within the plates; a section on voice and a map augment the layout. Many species get an additional paragraph treating geographical variation or other important identification information. Some difficult groups (including scaup, gulls and certain hawk genera) are afforded lengthy comparative discussions which suggest to the reader how to approach field identification. The introductory sections on bird topography are the best yet included in an identification guide.

The guide is full of good ideas, and the execution of these ideas is also top-rate. Sibley's painting style is surpassed by some of the best artists of the National Geographic Society field guide, but is nevertheless excellent and provides the guide with consistency lacking in NGS. There is no author/artist communication gap here! For many groups, such as some tubenoses, pelicans and herons, the painting style is almost "minimalist"; other groups, including raptors, shorebirds, owls, nightjars, and many songbirds, show more detail; even these minor style variations may well be calcu-



field – the identification guide can be consulted later.

David Sibley has not just watched birds, but *studied* birds since he was a child (father Fred Sibley, a well-known ornithologist, was not about to discourage his son from doing so!). Sketching, painting, writing copious notes, analyzing museum collections and living with

lated (after all, who sees fine feather detail on shearwaters?). But in every case the shapes and postures are mind-bogglingly perfect – a testimonial to the author's keen powers of observation.

If every review needs a section for quibbles, with some effort I can come up with the following. The author made a conscious decision not to use trinomials for the geographical variants portrayed. This simplifies geographical variation, but I would have preferred at least an appendix that indicate what, exactly, was painted (such information does reside on the author's web site). For example, "Western" Marsh Wren is treated as an entity, though there is significant subspecific variation within that species in the West. With most guides we would be lamenting the failure to show important geographical variation, so I guess this quibble is indeed minor. A more important problem is the failure to show relative size accurately within some plates. Within *Accipiter* species males and

females are shown the same size, though the text accurately notes that females are larger. "Interior West" Hermit Thrushes are shown the same size as "Pacific" birds, which is incorrect (though again the text is fine). I suspect the use of digital technology in rearranging plate figures caused these minor problems.

Not only is this the best guide available for intermediate and advanced birders, it properly teaches us that keen observation is the hallmark of a good birder, and that an identification guide is a reference to be consulted when one's powers of observation have been exhausted. I'll go so far as to say that this is the best regional identification guide ever published. Only those who need a more basic treatment ("how do you tell a hawk from a nighthawk?") or excruciating detail ("just what shape is the notch on the fourth primary of the . . . ?") will not salivate over it.

Review by Kimball L. Garrett

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

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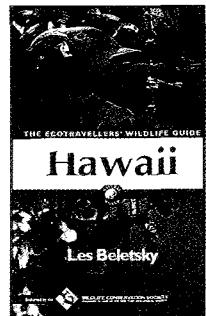
BOOKSTORE NEWS

The Ecotraveller's Wildlife Guide – Hawaii

by Les Beletsky, 2000

Illustrated by H. Douglas Pratt and Colin Newman

This book has the information you need to find, identify and learn about Hawaii's unique animals, plants and magnificent sealife. Included in this beautifully illustrated book are field-guide color illustrations of about 475 of Hawaii's most common fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and plants – essentially every bird species that occurs in the main Hawaiian Islands. There is also information on underwater animals most snorkelers and divers actually see, the region's whales and dolphins, Hawaiian habitats and the most common plants you will encounter. LAAS Price \$27.95

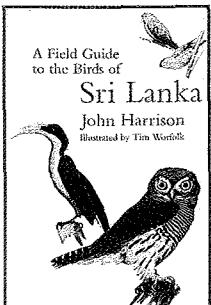


A Field Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka

by John Harrison, 1999

Illustrated by Tim Worfolk

The first comprehensive field guide to this ornithologically fascinating country. Sri Lanka's 426 official avian species are described and depicted with 48 stunning new color plates painted by Tim Worfolk. An introduction to the guide describes briefly some of the best sites for watching Sri Lanka's abundant avifauna and provides useful contact addresses for the prospective traveler. LAAS Price \$60.00



Where to Watch Birds in Europe and Russia

by Nigel Wheatley, 2000

Information of health, safety, climate, habitats, conservation and access to birding sites throughout Europe and Russia. Lists of endemics and specialties for each country and birding site. Over 100 range maps; 50 line drawings of the most spectacular species. Site and species indexes. Plastic reinforced binding for field use.

LAAS Price \$19.95



Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba

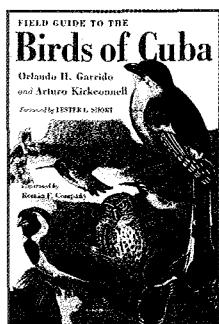
by Orlando H. Garrido and Arturo Kirkconnell, 2000

Foreword by Lester L. Short

Illustrated by Roman F. Company

The first book entirely devoted to Cuba's birds to appear in eighty years with vast amounts of new information, range maps, and admirable illustrations, it is at once a summation of Cuban ornithology and an excellent field guide. This compact field reference contains 51 color plates and 662 images that illustrate male, female and juvenile plumages of the 354 recorded species representing 20 orders and 60 families. The 21 living endemic species include the Cuban Tody, the Cuban Tropicbird (the national bird), the Cuban Green Woodpecker and the smallest of all birds, the Bee Hummingbird.

LAAS Price \$29.95



A Field Guide to the Birds of China

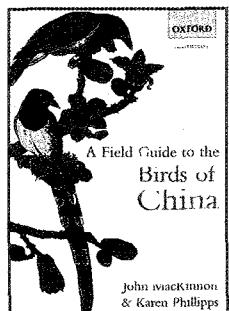
by John MacKinnon and Karen Phillipps in collaboration with He Fen-qi, 2000

Illustrations by Karen Phillipps with 20 plates by David Showler

Distribution Maps prepared by David MacKinnon

The first comprehensive modern field guide to the birds of China. Over 1300 species fully described and illustrated on 128 stunning color plates. Full color distribution maps. Species accounts describe plumage, voice, range, distribution, status and behavior. Includes vital information on the ecology of China, Chinese ornithology and practical hints on birdwatching in China.

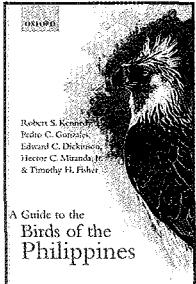
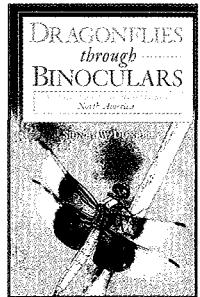
LAAS Price \$34.95



Dragonflies Through Binoculars: A Field Guide to Dragonflies of North America
by Sidney W. Dunkle, 2000

The best-ever collection of photographs of living dragonflies, with 47 plates in full color. Information on all 307 species found in North America, including Petaltails, Darners, Clubtails, Spiketails, Cruisers, Emeralds and Skimmers. Highly useful supplementary materials, such as bibliography, a checklist for sightings, and an index. Vividly and abundantly illustrated pages.

LAAS Price \$29.95



A Guide to the Birds of the Philippines
by Robert S. Kennedy, Pedro C. Gonzales, Edward Dickinson,
Hector C. Miranda, Jr., and Timothy H. Fisher, 2000

The first comprehensive, modern guide to the birds of the Philippines. This is the only guide to cover all 572 species of birds known to occur within the 7,100 islands of the Philippines, including nearly 172 endemic species – many of which are endangered as the result of habitat destruction in the Philippine forest. This guide is beautifully illustrated with 72 color plates, showing all species recorded from the Philippines except for accidental species. Not only will it appeal to ornithologists and avid birders, but it will fascinate conservationists and all nature lovers.

LAAS Price \$39.95

Open Letter to Chapters

This letter is to introduce myself and to inform you of recent developments within Audubon–California's Important Bird Areas (IBA) program. I'm Dan Cooper, a biologist with the National Audubon Society, working in Los Angeles. Recently, I have been asked to take over the IBA program in California from Bob Barnes, who will devote more time to issues in the Kern River Valley. A native of the Los Angeles area, I came to Audubon with over a decade of birding experience in the state, and have conducted fieldwork on birds throughout southern California.

Since California's IBA program began in 1996, over 60 IBA nominations have been received, which have resulted in nearly 50 sites being designated Global, Continental or National IBAs. Chapter members spent long hours on the phone gathering information from local experts and filling out nomination forms. Many of the sites are familiar to you since they are also famous birding and bird research areas, including Big Morongo Canyon Preserve in Riverside County, the Farallon Islands off San Francisco and Tule Lake/Lower Klamath

National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern California. All are well-defined, defensible properties with an active constituency of conservationists working together to ensure these areas stay attractive and vital to birds.

A network of IBAs can become a cornerstone of Audubon's conservation activities throughout California. Aside from showcasing bird-friendly land use decisions, their identification will help guide conservation activities, at the chapter and national levels of Audubon, as well as those of other groups and agencies. Over the next few months I will expand our IBA program to eventually include 150-200 sites that are representative of the diverse habitats in the state. This process will culminate in a website similar to one launched in 1998 by New York State Audubon:

(www.audubon.org/chapter/ny/ny/iba/index.html).

The certification of IBAs had been overseen by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), the U.S. arm of Birdlife International, which, until recently worked closely with several states to identify IBAs. Since the ABC is no longer devoting attention to the program, Audubon–California will assume sole responsibility for the identification of new IBAs and will devote more attention

to coordinating conservation activities among them where possible. Future IBAs will be identified using criteria already developed by the New York State IBA Program, nearly identical to those developed by Bob Barnes and a team of advisors a couple years ago.

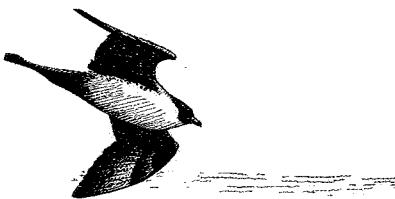
Over the next year I will be meeting with experts on California bird distribution to plot the locations of future California IBAs, including David Fix, Don Robertson and Mike San Miguel. The next step will be connecting sites with interested individuals – monitors and defenders of the IBAs. Please feel free to contact me directly for more information on nominating IBAs anywhere in California, or if you are involved in groups already working as stewards of particular sites.

I would like to thank Bob Barnes and Kathy Gilbert of Audubon–California and the Audubon members and others who have already contributed their energy to this effort. I look forward to developing a first-rate IBA program in California.

Sincerely,

Dan Cooper
Audubon–California, Los Angeles
(323) 254-0252
email at: dcooper1@pacbell.com

PELAGIC TRIPS



Saturday, February 17 – Palos Verdes Escarpment to the Redondo Canyon.

Eight-hour trip departs from San Pedro at 7:30 A.M. on the R/V Vantuna. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Short-tailed, Black-vented, Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Xantus's Murrelet, Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Gray whales are usually seen. Leaders: Mitch Heindel and Michael J. San Miguel.

\$35 – tea and coffee, no galley.

Sunday, May 6 – Marina del Rey and out to sea.

Twelve-hour trip departs from Marina del Rey at 6:00 A.M. on the R/V UCLA Seaworld. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar, Black-vented, Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Leaders: Barney Schlinger and Michael J. San Miguel.

\$50 – no galley.

Saturday, June 9 – Santa Cruz Island, landing at Prisoner's Cove.

Ten-hour trip departs from Island Packers dock in Ventura at 8:00 A.M. on the M/V Jeffrey Arvid. The endemic Island Scrub-Jay is easily seen here. We will then cruise off the island for pelagic species. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar, Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet.

Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Mitch Heindel.

\$60 – no galley.

**Saturday, August 18 –
San Nicolas Island toward Cherry
banks – a deep water trip.**
Twenty-hour trip departs from San Pedro at 4:00 A.M. on the R/V Yellowfin. You may want to bring a waterproof sleeping bag. Birds seen on prior trips: Red-billed Tropicbird, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Long-tailed Jaeger, South Polar Skua. Blue Whales are often seen on this trip. Leaders: Kimball Garrett, Mitch Heindel and Michael J. San Miguel.
\$135 – (price includes 3 meals).

**Saturday, September 8 –
Anacapa Island to Santa Rosa Island
through the Santa Rosa Passage to
Santa Cruz Island.** Twelve-hour trip departs from the Ventura Marina at 7:00 A.M. on the M/V Jeffrey Arvid. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed, Sooty and Black-vented shearwaters; Black, Least and Ashy storm-petrels; cormorants (3); Sabine's Gull; Arctic Tern; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Craveri's and Xantus's murrelets; Cassin's Auklet. Rarities: Buller's Shearwater, South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger. Blue, Finback and Humpback whales have been seen on this trip. Leaders: Mitch Heindel and Michael J. San Miguel.
\$70 – galley on board.

Saturday, October 13 – East end of Santa Catalina Island and out toward San Clemente Island.

Twelve-hour trip departs from San Pedro at 6:30 A.M. on the R/V Yellowfin. This is a new trip, past Santa Catalina Island toward San Clemente Island, which is in the new alignment of the Los Angeles County pelagic boundaries. (WT, Vol. 58 No. 10). Birds seen this time of year: Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed, Sooty and Buller's (rare) shearwaters; Black, Ashy and Least storm-petrels; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Rarities: Red-billed Tropicbird; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger; boobies (three in the past).

Leaders: Mitch Heindel and Michael J. San Miguel.
\$50 – tea and coffee, no galley.

**Sunday, October 21 –
San Pedro Channel and out to sea
toward Santa Barbara Island. (Final
destination to be determined by the
leaders).**

Twelve-hour trip departs from San Pedro at 6:00 A.M. on the R/V Vantuna. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Buller's and Pink-footed shearwaters; Black and Ashy storm-petrels; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets; Xantus's Murrelet. Leaders: Michael J. San Miguel and another to be announced.
\$45 – tea and coffee, no galley.

Saturday, November 17 – San Pedro Channel along the coastal escarpment.

Eight-hour trip departs from San Pedro at 7:30 A.M. on the R/V Vantuna. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Black-vented, Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Black Storm-Petrel; Pomarine Jaeger; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Occasionally: Common Murre; Xantus's Murrelet; Flesh-footed and Buller's shearwaters.

Leaders: Kimball Garrett and Mitch Heindel.
\$35 – tea and coffee, no galley.

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.

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

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 7 –

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 14 –

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.

Saturday, January 20 –

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. **Kimball Garrett** will lead the first of what will become regular field trips to this park in the Baldwin Hills. We will cover landscaped parklands and natural coastal scrub habitats. Meet at 8:00 A.M. The park entrance is off La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. [Thomas Bros. p.673 A-2]. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$3.00 parking fee on weekends), take the first left turn (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces.

Saturday – Sunday, January 20-21 – **Salton Sea.** Leader **Nick Freeman.**

To see Sandhill Cranes and White-faced Ibis come in to roost, meet Saturday at Cattle Call Park south of Brawley, leaving there at 3:30 P.M. Take Hwy. 111 S to Brawley, head W through town on Main St., then continue S on Hwy 86 to a fairly quick right on Cattle Call Dr., continuing down the hill to the bend. Sunday morn-

ing, we will regroup (and welcome late-comers) at Carl's Jr. at Main and First Streets in Brawley, leaving there at 7:00 A.M. A good trip for Canada, Snow and Ross' Geese, raptors, Burrowing Owl, Gila Woodpecker and Yellow-footed Gull. Some rarity chasing likely. Anticipate mud. Bring lunch, scopes and warm clothes. Registration fee \$8 pre-paid to LAAS. No limit.

warm clothes, bring lunch and have a full tank of gas. Meet at Denny's at 6:45 A.M. Take the 405 Fwy N to Roxford in Sylmar. Turn right, then right again into Denny's parking lot. Trip leaves at 7:00 A.M.

Friday, February 2 –

Gull Study Workshop. **Larry Allen** will take us beyond the standard plumage reviews of this oft-confusing collection of birds. The important skills of aging and describing a gull by feather groupings will be addressed. Slides, skins and hand-outs will be used to demonstrate I.D. marks of many common and uncommon gulls of the West Coast in their various plumages. Meet at 7:30 P.M. at Audubon House in West Hollywood. Fee: \$10 for lecture or \$15 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 4 –

Gull Field Trip. Leader **Larry Allen.** Meet at Doheny State Beach in Dana Point (Orange County) at 8:00 A.M. From I-5 in Dana Point, exit on westbound Pacific Coast Highway. Turn left on Harbor Dr. (signal) and left again into the park entrance (\$5 fee). We will meet in the large parking lot to the west of the San Juan Creek estuary. Wear warm clothes, bring lunch and scopes and have a full tank of gas. Fee: \$10 field trip, \$15 for lecture and field trip.

Sunday, February 4 –

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

Sunday, February 11 –

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

Sunday, February 18 – **Ballona Wetlands.**

Leader **Bob Shanman.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See January 21 write-up for details.

Saturday, February 17 –

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. **Jean Brandt** will lead. See January 20 for write-up.

EVENING MEETINGS

MEETING LOCATION

The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens
570 W. Avenue 26
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Just off the 110 Freeway on Avenue 26. It is very accessible with lots of free parking. (This was formerly Lawry's California Center Restaurant.)

7:00 P.M. – Refreshments begin
7:30 P.M. – Program

Meeting Raffle:

Many of you have enjoyed the raffle prizes at the monthly meetings. To increase your chances of winning, visit the LAAS Bookstore and Headquarters either on meeting day or the Saturday immediately preceding the monthly meeting and receive an extra raffle ticket to submit at the meeting. Good luck!

Tuesday, January 9, 2001

Herbert Clarke

“Gorilla Odyssey”

This program will focus on the close-up photographs of the magnificent mountain gorillas taken during Herb's trip to Uganda in November 1998 with the LAAS tour. Views of the other abundant wildlife in the “Pearl of Africa” will also be featured. Herb has generously shared his excellent photographs of many exciting places with us over the years, and claims that going to see the mountain gorillas “was one of the greatest experiences of my life”. Come share his experience!

Tuesday, February 13, 2001

John Fitch

“The Birds of Venezuela”

John Fitch, from El Dorado Audubon Society, will join us and share his knowledge and photographs of the sensational birds of Venezuela.

Birding 101

with Larry Allen

Not sure if you are looking at a Mourning Dove or a Spotted Dove? Don't know a Blue Jay from a Scrub Jay? Unsure if it is a swallow or a swift? Then you need to attend Los Angeles Audubon Society's new Birding 101 class!

Birding 101 is a series of four beginning birdwatching classes, followed by a class field trip. You will get

to practice what you have learned and hone those new-found bird watching skills.

Expert birder Larry Allen will be your instructor on March 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2001 from 7:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M. The four Thursday evening classes will be held at Audubon House in Plummer Park. Date and location of the field trip on the final weekend will be announced closer to the date to maximize bird-viewing opportunities.

Cost for the series: \$20.00 for members of Los Angeles Audubon Society, \$30.00 for non-members. (Not a member? Join while enrolling in the class, \$40.00 will cover class series and a one year membership.)

To enroll, send your name, address, phone number and check to:

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90046
Attn: Birding 101
Enroll now, class size is limited!

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

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