

WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 67 Number 6 July/August 2001

Los Angeles Audubon Society

NOTICES

INDEX ENCLOSED

10-Year Index
1990 – 2000

Copies of the previous two 10-year indices may be ordered from the LAAS Bookstore for \$3.00 each or \$5.00 for both. This covers the cost of copying and mailing.

BOOKSTORE

The Bookstore will be **closed** Saturday, June 30 for inventory, and Wednesday, July 4 for the holiday.

GULL WORKSHOP

Given by Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett, with additional trips by Nick and Mary Freeman and Larry Allen. See page 11 for details and sign-up information.

SPECIES ACCOUNT

Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas: See page 2-5 for the Spotted Sandpiper draft account.

Dear *Western Tanager* Readers:

Have you read of the massive Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas project? The Los Angeles Audubon Society has spearheaded it with the cooperation of The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and other Audubon chapters around the county. A great many of you have already contributed to the Atlas through your field work, paperwork, and financial support.

A team of writers, headed by Atlas Coordinators Larry Allen and Mark Wimer, along with Kimball Garrett, is putting your good work into a format that can be published. To show some of this work in progress, in this issue of the *Western Tanager* we preview the draft account for Spotted Sandpiper. As this is a draft account the wording and even format may change before the final version. With more than 200 other species accounts in various stages of completion, we don't anticipate finishing the job of writing up the Atlas for at least a year. We hope to see the published volume some time late in 2002. Stay tuned for progress reports!

Can you still help this project? By all means. Your help is needed with bibliographic referencing, summarizing CBC data, proofreading, and photography; and ultimately with graphic design and page layout. We already have volunteers for a couple of these tasks, but additional help will make life easier for everyone. Also, significant breeding observations from 2001 can be incorporated into species accounts, so please provide Larry Allen with exact localities and all relevant details.

You can also assist your Audubon chapter with the substantial funding required for a publication of this magnitude by sponsoring a species in the Atlas. A contribution of at least \$100 will make you (or a loved one) a sponsor of one of the remaining 100 species.

To sponsor, volunteer, or give your sighting report call:
Larry Allen at (323) 221-2022, or
e-mail him at: larryallen@earlymusicla.org

Spotted Sandpiper

Actitis macularia

Species Sponsor: [Your Name Here]

OVERVIEW This tringine sandpiper has a wide breeding distribution in temperate and sub-Arctic zones of Canada and Alaska south to the southern states, though it is generally absent from the southern tier of states, particularly in the Southeast. It is the sister-species to the Common Sandpiper (*A. hypoleucus*) which is similarly widespread in the Palearctic. Spotted Sandpipers are moderately to highly migratory, wintering from the southern United States (and north on the Pacific Coast to southwest British Columbia) south to the northern two-thirds of South America. No subspecies are recognized.

This is the familiar “teetering” sandpiper of the edges of streams, ponds, lakes and reservoirs; in winter they also use estuaries, beaches, and rocky shores. While common in the Los Angeles region in migration and winter, it is a very localized breeder, apparently established only within the past twenty years or so. Spotted Sandpipers are found singly, in pairs, or (in migration) in loose aggregations, but in our area do not form the large tight flocks encountered in many other migratory shorebirds. This is a classic polyandrous species, with females acquiring multiple mates and laying multiple clutches; as such, we use the term “pair” in the discussion below for convenience. Atlasers did not encounter cases of multiple nests on the territory of a single female because scrutiny of the breeding area usually ceased after a nest was confirmed; however, such situations might well have been uncovered with more intensive work.

SEASONAL

OCCURRENCE Spotted Sandpipers are present year round in the county, though in different seasonal roles. They are wide-

spread in winter on the coastal slope, both around freshwater lakes and reservoirs and in tidal habitats along the coast. Christmas Bird Counts often record as many as 10-20 individuals. Few birds winter on the desert portion of the county (e.g., generally not recorded on Lancaster CBC, with high count of only two in recent years).

Spring migrants are usually detected on the deserts by late March, with the peak movement occurring from mid-April to late May. There is often an impressive movement of these sandpipers at desert sites such as Piute Ponds during May, well past the peak of the northbound movement of most other small sandpipers; a few may even still be passing through after Memorial Day. Fall migrants first appear in July, with the peak southbound passage in August. Because of the rather late passage in spring and early arrival of fall migrants, atlasers used “Safe Dates” spanning only from 1 June to 15 July.

SOURCES: Garrett and Dunn 1981.

HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Breeding and Nesting Within its range, the Spotted Sandpiper utilizes a great variety of habitats, with the con-

straint that they be near open water. The literature documents use of lake and stream shorelines, sagebrush, grassland, fields, lawns, parks, desert, and forest, at elevations from sea level to 4700 m. In Los Angeles County, habitats utilized include major watercourses on the coastal slope (e.g., Los Angeles River, San Gabriel River), smaller streams in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains and northwest county, and artificial ponds and drainage basins in the Antelope Valley. This species was not found at higher elevations (above c. 1200 m) of the county, however. Natural cobble along river bottoms that are not constrained by channelization probably represent ideal breeding habitat; such situations were found along portions of the San Gabriel River [e.g. AZU6, BAL1], in Big Tujunga Wash [SAF6, SUN5], along the Santa Clara River [e.g. NEW3], and along Big Rock Creek Wash near Valyermo [VAL3] on the desert slope of the San Gabriel Mountains. Breeding was also documented within flood control basins where gravel/cobble substrate has accumulated, as near the mouth of Big Santa Anita Canyon [MTW4] and behind Devil's Gate Dam on the Arroyo Seco [PAS4]. Surprisingly, this species also nested

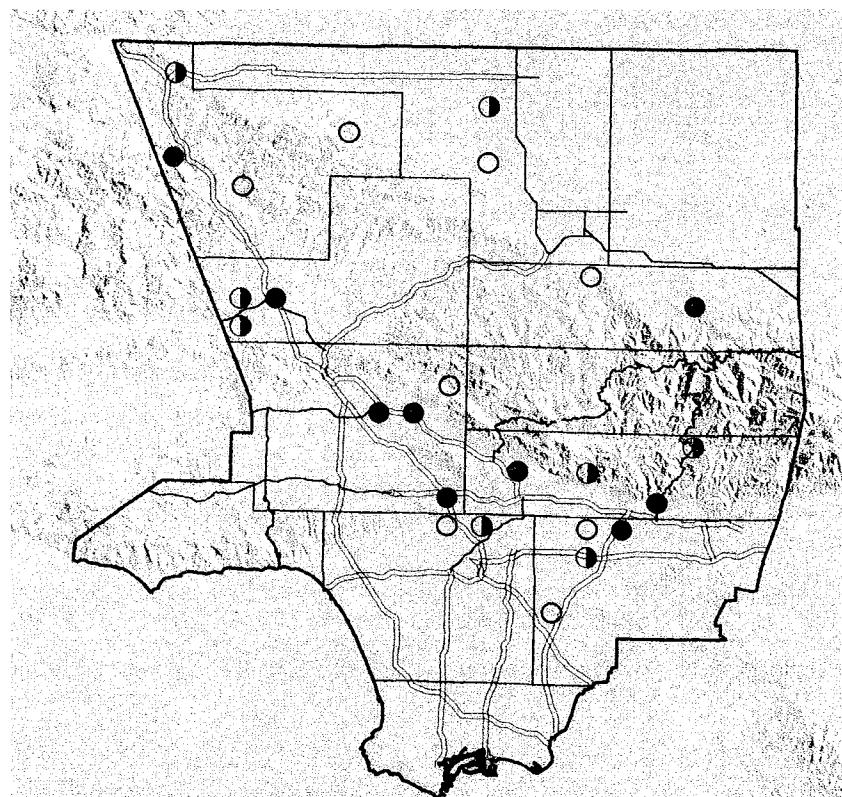
Distribution

Breeding evidence

- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible

Regions

- region border
- county border
- Hwys



Spotted Sandpiper breeding distribution in Los Angeles County.

along the channelized Los Angeles River in the Glendale Narrows [BUR6, LOS1] just north of downtown Los Angeles.

Nest Placement Spotted Sandpipers place their nests on the ground, generally concealed by vegetation, and usually within 100 m of open water (often much closer). Favored sites include vegetated sand and gravel bars along streams and lakes, and grassy or marshy meadows near water. The only nests in the county for which we have descriptive details are: (1) placed on concrete at the water's edge of the Los Angeles River, under a 0.5 m willow growing from a crack; (2) on gravel under low willows and herbaceous growth 2 m from a seasonal pond within the Devils Gate dam basin; and (3) on cobble among low herbaceous growth 1.5 m from flowing water along Big Rock Creek.

Non-breeding Season In the winter this species forages along water's edge wherever open water may be present, including rocky seashores, estuaries, reservoirs, and river channels.

SOURCES: Garrett and Dunn 1981, Grinnell and Miller 1944, Oring *et al.* 1997, KLG and LWA field notes.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Spotted Sandpipers nested at scattered locations away from the coast, following their habitat requirements fairly strictly. They were concentrated on the middle reaches of the major coastal drainages (well away from the immediate coast, but below about 750 m); a few possible nestings (and one confirmation) were along watercourses or artificial wetlands on the desert slope. In neighboring Orange County, breeding has been documented since 1985 along the Santa Ana River. This species nests around wet montane meadows and lakeshores high in the San Bernardino Mountains, but such habitat is extremely limited in the San Gabriel Mountains; the few appropriate high mountain sites (e.g. Jackson Lake in MES5) receive intensive human recreational activity during the late spring and summer. This said, many areas of suitable habitat in the county seem to have been unused during the Atlas period, perhaps reflecting the fact that the county is near the extreme southern limit of this species' breeding range.

SOURCES: Gallagher 1997, Garrett and Dunn 1981.

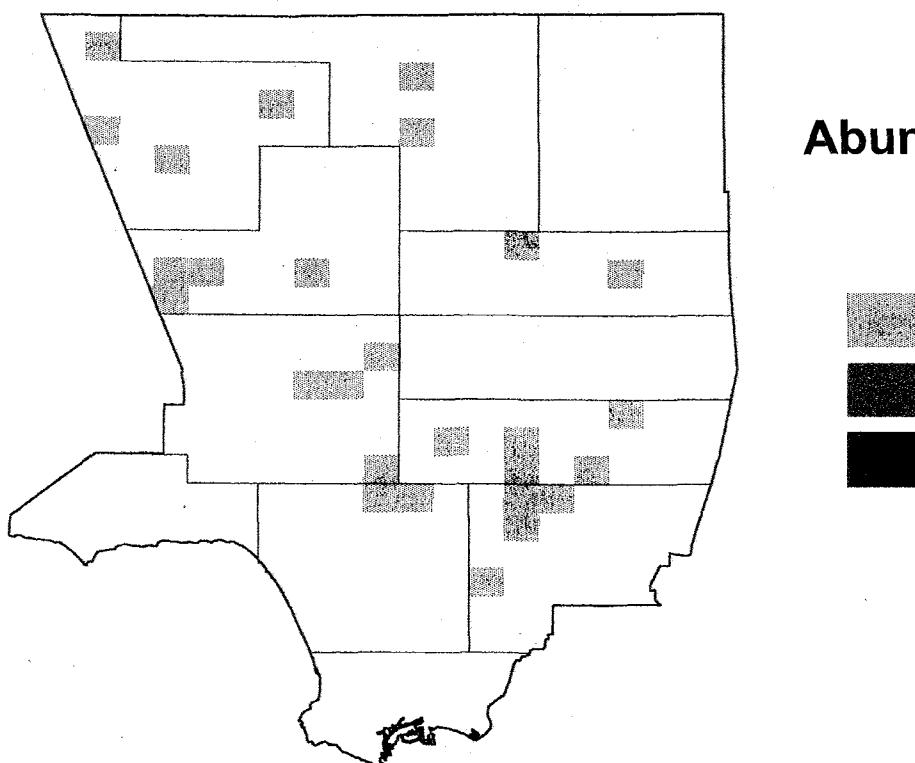
DATA SUMMARY This species was confirmed in only one third of the blocks in which it was seen, and the relatively even division of sightings among the three categories of breeding evidence illustrates the difficulty in confirming this scarce nester. As with our other shorebirds, the distraction display is well-defined and made up some of the nesting confirmations. The distraction display (code "DD") is underreported slightly here because this code was replaced by "NE" and "FL" when observers backed off from displaying birds, and watched in hiding as birds returned to nest or young.

ABUNDANCE The Spotted Sandpiper is very uncommon as a nesting bird in the county, both because of its limited distribution and its low numbers where it does nest. No block was estimated to contain more than nine breeding pairs (see OVERVIEW for meaning of "pair" in this context). Because most sightings pertain to individuals or single pairs, we judge that it is unlikely that any block supported more than two or three pairs, and that the bird's nesting population in the county likely numbers fewer than 100 pairs. In winter, this species is easy to find, but not abundant.

Total CBC reports for this species in seven count circles on the coastal slope averaged 50 birds per year from 1995-1999.

SOURCES: American Birds, Garrett and Dunn 1981, Oring *et al.* 1997.

Abundance



Estimated abundance of breeding Spotted Sandpipers in Los Angeles County, in number of pairs per block. Pale gray indicates one to nine pairs; no block was thought to contain more.

1-9
10-99
100+

PHENOLOGY All breeding confirmations, although few in number, took place between mid-June and mid-July. The sightings of pairs and courtship behavior were mainly sprinkled from early May through mid-June. The timing of these sightings suggest that the Spotted Sandpiper is a strict mid-summer nester in the county. These results are unlikely to be an artifact of observer effort, as substantial atlas-



Photo by Brian Small

Breeding plumage Spotted Sandpiper, Bear River Refuge, Utah, June, 1997.

ing activity commenced in April, and the dates are consistent with the bird's phenology in other parts of its range.

SOURCES: Oring *et al.* 1997

SAMPLING BIASES FOR SPECIES

This sandpiper may have been undercounted in low to mid-elevation mountain areas with some large, open canyon bottoms containing the streamside habitats they prefer. In some places where they were encountered (e.g. Azusa Canyon (San Gabriel River), Black Mountain area (Piru Creek), and Valyermo (Big Rock Creek), only small portions of the available habitat were covered, as poor accessibility generally kept atlasers from following streams for a significant portion of their length within a block. However, this bird's diurnal activity pattern, distinctive teetering walk and stiff-winged flight, and habit of foraging at the water's edge, combine to make it easy to identify when found. Its ground nest placement, typically concealed by vegetation, accounted for the low proportion of sightings (10%) involving nests.

The late spring migration resulted in some problematic late May reports. In some cases, these late May birds were

highly vocal and in "expected" breeding habitat, they were thus recorded as "Possible" breeders.

POPULATION TRENDS

History of Breeding in the County

This bird was thought to be only a migrant and winter visitor to the county as late as 1944. The authors are unaware of any egg sets of this species collected from the county. Breeding in the county

was first confirmed in 1976 along the San Gabriel River in Azusa. Prior to the Atlas field work, breeding was also confirmed in 1992 at Hansen Dam and in 1993 at the mouth of Big Santa Anita Canyon.

Trends Breeding in the coastal counties south of Ventura County was unknown until nesting was documented in the Azusa area in 1976 (see above), at Lake Hodges, San Diego County, in 1981, and in Orange County in 1985. It is thus possible that the nine confirmations documented here are not an artifact of increased observer effort during the Atlas period, but actually reflect a real increase in breeding (and breeding range) by this species. Unfortunately, this may be due to an increase in available habitat attributable to widespread eradication of riparian growth along watercourses in the county. A single Spotted Sandpiper was recorded on each of two Breeding Bird Survey routes in the 1970s; no conclusions can be drawn from these sightings.

Threats This species is somewhat tolerant of human-altered riparian landscapes, having nested, for example, along the concrete channel of the Los Angeles River. However, the increasing flood control engineering concomitant with urban sprawl on the coastal slope and in the Antelope Valley is likely to impact nesting habitat and success for this species. Large-scale alteration of stream beds in the Santa Clarita watershed (which



Photo by Kimball L. Garrett

Breeding habitat along Big Rock Creek near Valyermo, in Atlas Block VAL3.

Breeding Categories and Codes				Abundance
block summary				
CO: 9 (36%)	DD: 2 (7%)	PR: C: 5 (17%)	PO: E: 8 (27%)	W: 25
PR: 8 (32%)	FL: 5 (17%)	M: 2 (7%)		Ab. range: 30-200
PO: 8 (32%)	NE: 3 (10%)	P: 5 (17%)		
[OB: 5]				
Fnd in: 25 blks out of 411 (6%)				
				<i>The Abundance chart shows the number of blocks for which each abundance estimate code was used. Here 25 blocks had one to nine breeding pairs (code W). The abundance range is an extrapolation of the minimum (25 blocks times one) and maximum (25 blocks times nine) number of pairs estimated to breed in the county (rounded to one significant digit).</i>
<i>Spotted Sandpiper was observed in 30 blocks with evidence of breeding in 25 blocks.</i>				

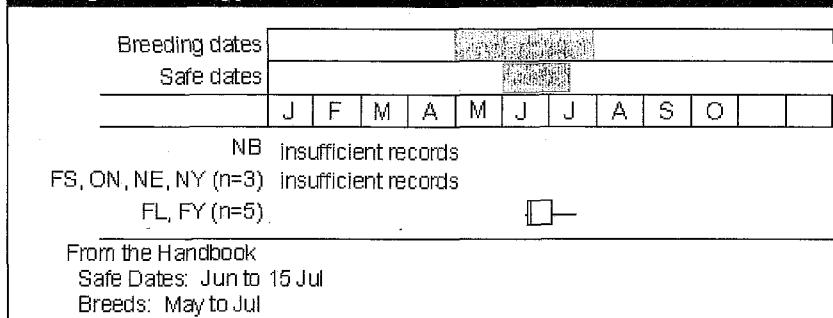
Confirmed date statistics

CODE: (min - max) [n / mean / sd]

DD: (21 Jun - 10 Jul) [2 / 30 Jun / 13d]
 FL: (16 Jun - 20 Jul) [5 / 27 Jun / 14d]
 NE: (14 Jun - 19 Jul) [3 / 06 Jul / 19d]

The Confirmed date statistics show the dispersal of dates for each of the three breeding codes used by atlasers for this species.

Nesting Chronology



Nesting Chronology of Spotted Sandpiper in Los Angeles County. Shaded bars indicate breeding dates and safe dates from the Atlas Handbook. The histogram following the breeding codes is the distribution, by quartile, of dates for which the codes were used. (Histograms will be more useful for species with larger data sets.)

encompasses 12% of the observations) is anticipated and is cause for concern. Even where suitable nesting habitat remains, increasing disturbance from humans and from non-native and human-subsidized predators (e.g. cats, dogs, corvids) might limit nesting success.

Formal Listings None.

Conservation Actions Natural hydrological regimes along gravel and cobble watercourses should be preserved or reinstated where possible; removal of nonnative *Arundo donax* should be a priority, and streambed alterations such as gravel extraction and confinement of streams to narrow concrete channels should be critically reviewed for impacts on this and other species and kept to a minimum. As with all ground-nesting bird species, Spotted Sandpipers would benefit from the control of feral predators and off-road vehicles.

SOURCES: American Birds 1976, Gallagher et al. 1997, Garrett and Dunn 1981, Grinnell and Miller 1944, L.A. County Files at LACM, Unitt 1984, USGS.

WHERE TO VIEW THIS SPECIES

In the winter, look for Spotted Sandpipers along the margins of streams, ponds, lakes, and estuaries anywhere on the coastal slope. Migrants are widespread and numerous in April and May, and again in August. In the breeding season, search along the gravel riverbed of the San Gabriel River upstream of Santa Fe Dam, or along gravelly stretches of permanent streams in the foothills.

LITERATURE CITED

American Birds "Christmas Bird Count" and "Breeding Season" issues. Various dates. National Audubon Society, New York.

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Unitt, P. 1984. The birds of San Diego County. Memoir 13, San Diego Society of Natural History.

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— Exhibit Scheduled — Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan Draft

Please join community members, state and local elected officials and the Baldwin Hills Park planning team in viewing the plan for one of the largest urban parks to be designed in the United States in over 100 years.

The planning and design team will give a presentation on the bold new vision for this two-square mile natural park, open space and recreation area in one of the most park-poor regions in Los Angeles County on Wednesday, July 18. This reception, hosted by Community Conservancy International, will be held at the University of Southern California's Verle Annis Architecture Gallery in Harris Hall from 5-8 P.M.

The final draft of the Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan is the result of nearly three years of extensive technical and site analysis, community outreach, and biological studies conducted

in the Baldwin Hills area. It represents the first large-scale consensus building effort in this part of Los Angeles. Suggestions for the Baldwin Hills Park Plan were compiled from public workshops with over 700 attendees. Participation from members of the area's diverse communities, local conservationists, and public agencies from Los Angeles County, the cities of Los Angeles, Culver City, and Inglewood helped to create a plan that balances the recreational needs of the community with key habitat preservation and restoration objectives.

Please join us, Wednesday, July 18, 5-8 P.M. at Harris Hall, located on Exposition Boulevard near Watt Way. Park in lot H at the Gate 1 entrance. For further information or to RSVP please contact Silissa at CCI at (310) 475-0797 ext. 4.

NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

**Bookstore Toll Free Phone Number for Sales and Inquiries
(888) LAAS428 OR (888) 522-7428**

Bird Songs of Southeastern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico
by Geoffrey A. Keller. Covers more than 200 bird species of southeastern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico. This audio guide includes virtually all of the region's specialties, with a selection of birds from Sonora, Mexico.
Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds / Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. 2-CD Set \$24.95

The Ecotravellers' Wildlife Guide – Perú
by David L. Pearson and Les Beletsky. All the information you need to find, identify, and learn about Perú's magnificent animal, bird and plant life. Color illustrations of more than 500 species. Soft cover, 2001 \$29.95

Galápagos Diary – A Complete Guide to the Archipelago's Birdlife
by Hermann Heinzel and Barnaby Hall. This book captures in words and images the stunning birds and other wildlife of the Galápagos Islands archipelago, a bird watchers' paradise. Includes sketches, paintings, photographs, maps, and notes on all the birds. Checklist included. Soft cover, 2000 \$24.95

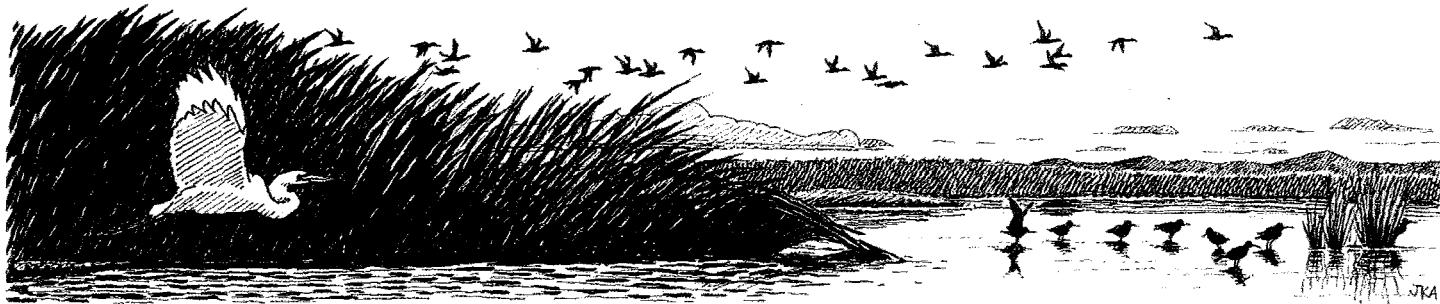
Princeton Field Guides – Birds of the Seychelles
by Adrian Skerrett and Ian Bullock; illustrated by Tony Disley. Comprehensive field guide to over 250 bird species found in the Seychelles, detailed text covering identification and distribution. 53 color plates, 250 maps. Soft cover, 2001 \$39.50

The Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand
by Hugh Robertson and Barrie Heather; illustrated by Derek Onley. Re-published in 2001 in field guide format, this popular guide covers every bird species with 74 original, full-page, color paintings; included are rare and recently extinct birds. Comprehensive text, easy-to-use format. Ideal for use in the field, plastic-covered. Soft cover, 1996 \$34.95

Pocket Guide to the Birds of Britain and North-West Europe
by Chris Kightley, Steve Madge, and Dave Nurney. Clearly laid out field guide with integrated illustrations and maps. Full descriptions of 380 species, 288 color plates. Soft cover, 1998 \$20.00

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Indonesia
by Morten Strange. Comprehensive photographic guide to the birds of Indonesia. Covers 686 species, almost 700 color photographs. Concise text for accurate identification of species. Distribution maps. Soft cover, 2001 \$24.95

The New York City Audubon Society Guide to Finding Birds in the Metropolitan Area
by Marcia T. Fowle and Paul Kerlinger. New York City and surrounding areas offer some of the finest birding opportunities in North America. This guide includes a checklist of 355 bird species, and up-to-date descriptions of 40 birding sites with tips on when to go and what you will find. Soft cover, 2001 \$17.95



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

FLORIDA PANTHER NEEDS MORE PROTECTION:

The southeastern version of our Mountain Lion is perilously close to extinction with only 30 to 80 left in the wild. Environmental groups claim that the National Park Service is violating the Endangered Species Act by allowing off-road vehicles to drive pretty much as they please in the Big Cypress National Preserve. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to build a strictly designated trail system to protect the animals. The NPS wants to permit the ORVs to continue the current system for up to the 10 years it might take to finish the new trails. Environmentalists say the panthers can't wait.

PREDATORY MOSQUITO FISH?

According to the Boston Globe, research in New Jersey seems to indicate that gambusia, a tiny widely introduced fish that consumes mosquito larvae, is "an alien scourge to the environment." It also eats salamander eggs, tadpoles, and plankton that keep algae from choking ponds. It is accused of attacking fish 100 times its size! Australia banned gambusia in 1999. India complains that it is destroying big lakes by victimizing larger food fish. What are we to make of this incredible story? Gambusia has been used in this country for decades, maybe generations, and nothing like this has been reported. Perhaps we ought to wait for additional scientific confirmation before we give up on our charming little friends.

GLOBAL WARMING IS FOR REAL:

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently

delivered a 1000-page report indicating that there is no doubt that the world is getting warmer. A temperature rise of 2.5 to 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit in the next hundred years will indeed produce the environmental and human tragedies that have been predicted for many years. Melting polar ice caps will raise sea levels to flood coastal lowlands and uproot millions of people worldwide. The floods and droughts that the planet has recently experienced will continue with greater frequency. The IPCC report, written by international climate experts, was issued ironically as President Bush repudiated the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and reversed his campaign promise to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Foreign governments were appalled, pointing out that with 4% of the world's population, the U.S. produces 25% of the world's greenhouse gases.

COLD DRINK, ANYONE?

Years ago on a hot day if a wise guy wanted a glass of ice water he asked for an artesian highball. Today you wonder if you're getting an arsenic cocktail. In 1999, the National Academy of Sciences reported that arsenic causes bladder, lung and skin cancer and may cause kidney and liver cancer. It said that the current arsenic standard could easily result in a cancer risk of one in a 100. The standard was changed by Clinton who reduced it by 80% from 50 parts to 10 parts per billion. This is the standard adopted by the World Health Organization and the European Union. George Bush, in his first 100 days rescinded the new standard. Critics say he did so to please the mining industry, the predominant source

of arsenic.

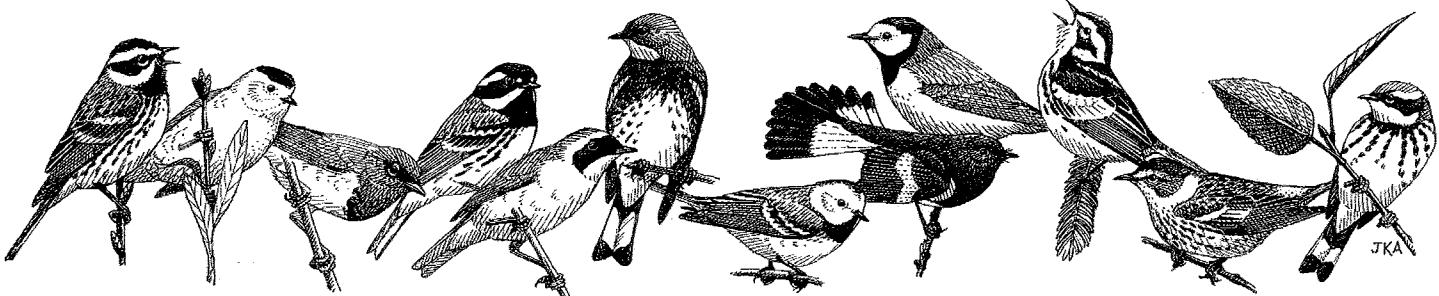
WHAT PRICE BIODIVERSITY?

One of the most respected and admired biologists in the business is E.O. Wilson. His research in many aspects of his field has brought him to the conclusion that the growing rate of extinction of species, the result of excessive habitat destruction, will eventually lead to an impoverished and unlivable world. The idea of Biodiversity was formulated some 25 years ago. When Wilson and others spread the word it caught on with great speed and is accepted today as incontrovertible by most scientists and environmentalists. Recently, Wilson said that "\$28 billion (U.S.) would protect, well into the future, 70% of the known plant and animal species in the world." For just \$4 billion, most of the remaining tropical forest wilderness could be secured. and another \$24 billion could protect 2.4 million square kilometers of biodiversity "hot spots."

Now if we can convince Congress and the President to deduct the \$56 billion from the tax refund for millionaires that will leave \$1.29 billion for the suffering 1%. Not too bad a deal.

PRESERVATION STILL A WINNER:

Answering a nationwide poll on April 30, 58% said "Yes" to the question, "Should protecting endangered species take priority over personal property rights?" When asked about the 58 million acres of federal forest land that Clinton had declared to be free of roads for logging, mining, and drilling, 65% to 24% approved. The Administration may have a stiff fight on their hands overcoming this popular opinion.



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Daniel S. Cooper

Many birders can identify with the thrill of seeing "rarities" — birds that have migrated or dispersed far outside their usual range — and much of the birding news around the world involves the discovery and documentation of these birds. But some of the most exciting moments in birding come not from glimpsing a stray at some desert oasis, but by discovering (or re-discovering) the nesting grounds of a localized or poorly-known species, doing exactly what it's supposed to do, but in a previously-unknown area.

The possibilities abound, and one of the most exciting areas for discovering interesting breeding birds lies about an hour from downtown L.A. along the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains at the interface between the mountains and the desert. This is the home of the Gray Vireo, one of our rarest breeding species. Only a small subset of California birders have seen it, typically by searching known nesting areas in spring when the birds are the most vocal. Gray Vireos summer in several widely-scattered areas of the state, including within dry pinyon-juniper woodland in the mountains near the Nevada border (e.g. New York Mtns.) and along the northeastern fringes of the Transverse Ranges (San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains). They are also known from dense chaparral dominated by Chamise or Red Shanks (*Adenostoma* spp.) on the eastern slopes of the Peninsular Ranges of Riverside and San Diego Counties. Most recently, the species has been discovered in dense tracts of Chamise chaparral north of Castaic Reservoir (northwestern San Gabriel Mtns.) by volunteers working on the Los Angeles County Breeding

Bird Atlas, and has been documented wintering in the state for the first time by their counterparts in San Diego County (Anza-Borrego State Park).

For several years in the 1970s and 80s, the place to see **Gray Vireo** in Los Angeles County was in the hills just north of the community of Valyermo, at the northeastern base of the San Gabriel Mountains. A couple more breeding

Records of rare and unusual birds reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the regional editors of *North American Birds* or, if appropriate, by the California Birds Records Committee.

Send observations with details to:

Birds of the Season

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To report birds for the tape, call:

Raymond Schep (323) 874-1318
e-mail: yoohooray@cs.com

spots have since been discovered in this area (e.g. Pinyon Hills), but vast areas of seemingly appropriate habitat goes unoccupied each year. During most of the 1990s, the vireos had apparently vanished from their Valyermo site, driven out, many felt, by the scores of birders who went to see the single pair, often playing tapes of its song to lure it into view. So, it was heartening to learn that the species had returned to Valyermo this year, and was observed carrying nesting material on 28 April (R. Cyger). Let's hope we can be more sensitive, so these birds stick around.

Another rare nesting vireo, the Bell's Vireo, is here represented by a race found only in southern California and adjacent Baja, the Least Bell's Vireo — only a handful of bird taxa in the county have such a tiny range. Our vireo has been slowly reclaiming historic nesting areas in the state as conservation measures (e.g. cowbird trapping) are introduced in the core of its range (esp. San Diego County). The dense willow thickets that have developed within flood control basins in the Los Angeles area have proven adequate substitutes for the original riparian scrub of the area, and three or four territorial **Bell's Vireo** were found along Big Tujunga Wash at Hansen Dam in mid-April (S. Sosensky), rising to eight males by early May (K. Garrett), and another male delivering its scratchy, rollicking song was encountered behind Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale on 20 April (A. Lee), continuing to give us hope for this species' persistence in the region.

Along with Bell's Vireo, the willow thickets of the Los Angeles basin once supported large numbers of breeding

riparian obligates – species that require often extensive riparian vegetation for nesting, including populations of Long-eared Owl, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Willow Flycatcher. Though these flood control basins haven't been found to support these species yet, another sensitive riparian obligate, **Yellow-breasted Chat**, has found them acceptable for nesting. A. Lee recorded five at Santa Fe Dam on 20 April and by early May, K. Garrett found at least 12 singing at Hansen Dam (along with 15-20 singing Yellow Warblers!). As the habitat in both these areas is allowed to mature, will cuckoos also find their way back here?

Other exciting breeding discoveries this spring have included a **Peregrine Falcon** attending a nest atop a skyscraper near the Los Angeles County Hospital just east of Downtown L.A. on 2 April (Y. Tsai).

A few interesting birds from the winter lingered into early spring, including a pair of **Long-tailed Ducks** and two **Black-legged Kittiwakes** at Ballona Creek on 22 April (K. Larson, C. Selvey), and another kittiwake at Will Rogers State Beach from 28 March until at least 5 May (R. Barth). A sea-watch from Pt. Vicente on 8 April turned up some interesting northbound migrants, including two **Ancient Murrelets** (D. Heindel, K. Larson, C. Selvey), very irregular winter visitors this far south. Single **Palm** and **Yellow** warblers at Peck Pit in El Monte (both regular at that location) were last reported on 28 March (A. Lee), and the **Chestnut-sided Warbler** that had wintered along the Los Angeles River in Glendale was last seen on 22 April (R. Barth). A **White-throated Sparrow**, regular in winter in the area, was last reported from Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on 29 March (R. Barth). "Winter wanderers" – birds that turn up in mid- or late winter before their usual migration period, included a **Summer Tanager** in Pacific Palisades 21-31 March (R. Barth), and two **Baltimore Orioles** in Banning Park on 24 March (K. Larson).

Several spring migrants were observed ahead of schedule this spring, including single **Ash-throated Flycatcher** and **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Debs Park along the Arroyo Seco in northeast

Los Angeles, among a wave of early spring migrants that also included several **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and five singing **Hermit Thrushes** on 15 March (D. Cooper). The flycatchers didn't arrive on territory to this site until a full month later. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** at DeForest Park in Long Beach on 24 March (K. Larson) was also a couple weeks early.

Overlooked by many birders, **Gray Flycatchers** were seemingly everywhere, vying with Hammond's as the next-most-common spring Empidonax flycatcher along the coastal slope after Pacific-slope and Willow. Birds were recorded in West Los Angeles on 13 April (R. Barth), at Hansen Dam on 15 April (S. Sosensky), at Eaton Canyon Nature Center in Pasadena 15-20 April (J. Feenstra, A. Lee), and 2 May at Sand Dune Park (R. Barth).

Reports of scarce migrants trickled in this spring, with a **Brown Thrasher** at Eaton Canyon Nature Center in Pasadena 31 March-20 April attracting many observers (J. Feenstra). Other easterners included a **Palm Warbler** at Temescal Gateway Park (Pacific Palisades) on 20 April (R. Barth) and a **Swamp Sparrow** at the L.A. County Arboretum in Arcadia on 23 March (B. Cohen, C. Hamilton). Each of these birds occurred outside their usual late fall/early winter pattern for the region but precisely within their usual spring migration period in the East.

Western U.S. migrants slightly out-of-range included a **Swainson's Hawk** sailing over Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park in Wilmington on 2 May (D. Heindel), a **Willet** at Hansen Dam on 21 April (K. Garrett), a **Franklin's Gull** over San Pedro on 2 May (E. Stonick), a **Brewer's Sparrow** at Malibu Lagoon on 15 April (K. Larson) and up to six **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** at Ballona Wetlands on 2 May (D. Cooper) – all coastward of their usual migration routes through the desert. Even less expected were a **Black Tern** on a pelagic trip to the northern Channel Island on 6 May (K. Larson, m. ob.) and a **White-winged Dove** in residential Pasadena, 18-24 April (T. Miko, R. Cyger), both of which are much more regular in fall. 

Adopt-a-Library Membership Recruitment Program

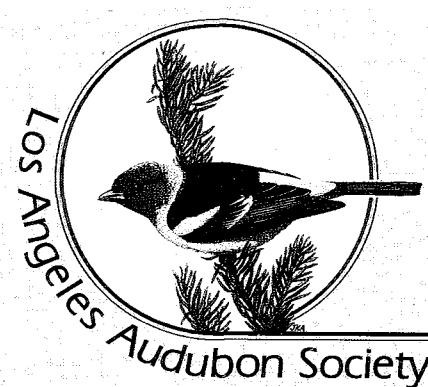
If you visit a library on a regular basis or have one near you, this is a great way to volunteer and help your Chapter without a rigid schedule or great expenditure of time.

As part of our continued membership outreach program LAAS has recently printed new brochures with membership applications.

We are currently looking for volunteers to keep our local libraries stocked with brochures. Most libraries have a rack or table for this kind of community information. All you need to do is make contact with the library and get permission to stock the brochures. Then, about once a week, refill the supply and notify the coordinator how many brochures had been taken.

Although we are starting with libraries, distribution to other places with community information displays is encouraged. If you have other places you would like to stock be sure to contact us. Sporting goods stores, for instance, would be good places to distribute the brochures.

"Get Involved" at www.LAAudubon.org has a list of the libraries. Then just click on "AVAILABLE" next to the library you want to adopt and a form will appear. Fill out the form and you will be contacted and brochures will be provided. If you have a place other than one of the listed libraries, e-mail cepps@flash.net. If you do not have web access, volunteer by leaving a message for Cheryl Epps at Audubon House (323) 876-0202.



WESTERN TANAGER

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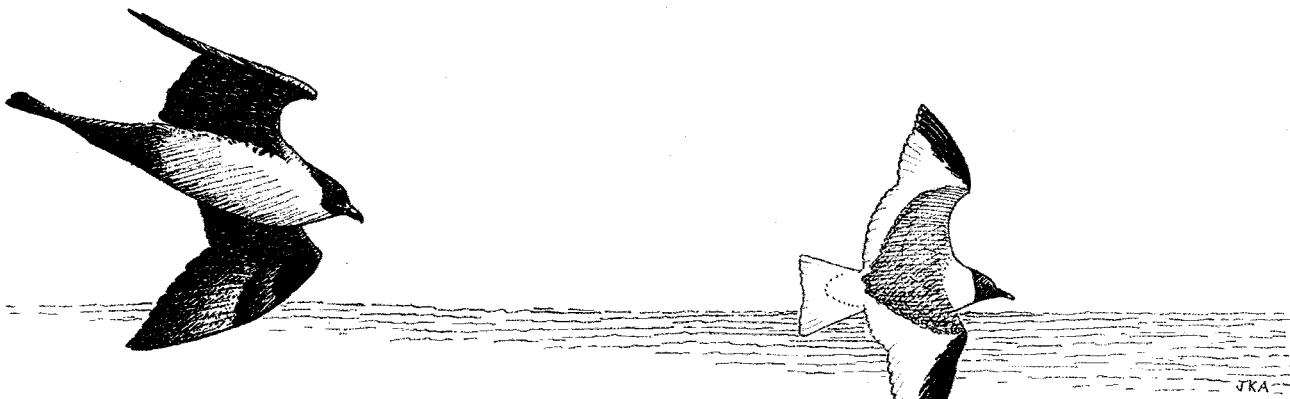
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If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date (four weeks for pelagics). You will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation after that time will bring a refund only if there is 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.



PELAGIC TRIPS

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. (See 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 species 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 **TBA**

\$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 L. 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 reserve early.

GULL WORKSHOP 2001

Saturday, November 10, 2001 –

Gull Workshop. With **Jon Dunn** and **Kimball Garrett** co-authors of *The Warblers of North America* and *Birds of Southern California—Status and Distribution*. Jon, a collaborator on the *Advanced Birding Video Series on North American Gulls* and chief consultant for *National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, and Kimball, Ornithology Collections Manager for the L.A. County Museum of Natural History, will present an illustrated workshop covering plumage, structure, behavior, distribution, and hybridization of North American gulls.

Send \$30 and a SASE to LAAS c/o Millie, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046; (323) 876-0202. Event location: Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Pasadena. Limit: 100 signups. 1:00-7:00 P.M., with a snack break.

Sunday, November 11, 2001 –

Gull Workshop Field Trip. **Jon Dunn** and **Kimball Garrett**. Doheny State Beach by Dana Point in Orange County. Meet at 8:00 A.M. Participation in the Saturday Workshop is a prerequisite to signing up for this trip. Limit: 25. Send \$35 each to LAAS with SASE as above.

Saturday, November 17, 2001 –

Budget Gull Field Trip.

Nick and Mary Freeman will lead at Doheny State Beach at 8:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. Send \$10 and a SASE to LAAS as above for directions. All welcome. Limits: max: 20, min: 5.

Sunday, November 18, 2001 –

Budget Gull Field Trip.

Larry Allen will lead at Doheny State Beach 8:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. Send \$10 and a SASE to LAAS as above for directions. All welcome. Limits: max: 20, min: 5.

EVENING MEETINGS

No Meetings in July or August.

The construction in Plummer Park is expected to be done in time for us to move our meetings back to the park in September. Watch the Tanager, check the LAAS web site or call the Bird Tape for information.

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, July 1 –

Topanga State Park. **Gerry Haigh** will lead us 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 signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot, \$6 parking fee or park on the road outside the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

Sunday, July 8 –

Whittier Narrows. Leader: **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. to view colorful resident and migrating birds, including the introduced 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, July 21 – **Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in Baldwin Hills.**

Leader to be announced. Trips covering landscaped parklands and natural coastal scrub habitats are designed for beginning birders and members of the community. The park entrance is off La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$3 parking fee), turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

Saturday-Monday, July 14, 15, 16 – Yosemite and Owens Valley with David Yee. Limited to 14 participants. \$15 per day. This is probably the last year to drive through Yosemite Valley without the mandated shuttles. Have reservations in the Valley or Oakhurst for July 13-14. Send SASE for flyer and motel list. Reserve rooms early.

Sunday, July 22 – Big Bear Vicinity. Leaders **Nick and Mary Freeman.** Meet at the Aspen Glen Picnic Area in Big Bear at 7:30 A.M. Take Hwy. 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, then

proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy. 18, turn south on Tulip Lane. The lot will be on the S side of this short street, near the N end of 2N10. Target birds include Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope and Rufous hummingbird, mountain finches and White-headed Woodpecker. It should be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Full day, bring lunch and water.

Sunday, August 5 –

Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See July 1 write-up.

Sunday, August 5 –

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

Saturday, August 18 –

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in Baldwin Hills. Leader: **Irwin Woldman.** See July 21 write-up. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

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Prepared for the Los Angeles Audubon Society by Kay Nakamura

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