

# WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

## *Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship*

# *MAPS: Solstice Canyon*

by Walter H. Sakai

**M**APS is an acronym for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship. The MAPS bird banding program was established in 1989 by the Institute of Bird Populations based at Point Reyes Station in California. The IBP's goal was to provide conservation and management information on land birds through the monitoring of bird populations. With now over 500 bird banding stations across the United States, the idea is to maintain long term, constant effort mist netting and banding of birds. This nationwide effort will aid in conserving avian diversity in North America, as long term data on productivity, survivorship, and population size of these land birds are generated. Comparisons between stations as well as long term trends at single stations could be assessed by those managing our land resources to identify declining bird populations, to begin implementing mechanisms to reverse these declines, and to assess the effectiveness of the management actions.

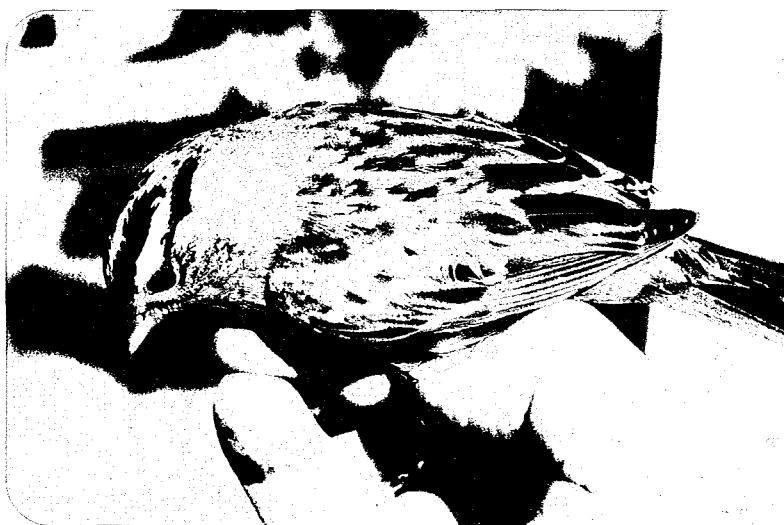
### MAPS PROTOCOL

The constant effort MAPS protocol involves using 10 mist nets. Each mist net is 12 meters long and 2.6 meters high with a 30 mm mesh. Each net is held up by two 3 meter poles and ropes. The mist nets are almost transparent, and birds flying into the nets are caught. These nets are strategically placed in permanent net lanes in the

A very rigorous habitat assessment is also conducted using a standardized national vegetation classification system. Besides a simple list of dominant species of plants, I was asked to evaluate vegetative layers, percent cover, and myriad other details.

Each banding effort or cycle is held constant. Banding is conducted from sunrise for six hours, once every 10 days beginning May 1 until August 8 (later at high latitudes and in higher elevations) for a total of 10 cycles. The reason for the particular starting and ending dates is generally to avoid the spring migrants and to wait until breeding has occurred and the chicks have fledged (productivity). Thus, the effort is to capture and band adult resident passerine birds and their young, although we do catch woodpeckers, hummingbirds, game birds (quail), birds of prey, and doves. We do not band game birds, and I do not have a permit to band hummingbirds.

In succeeding years of this program, I hope to recapture these same birds, hence survivorship. We are told that MAPS stations should be operated for a



Photos by Walter H. Sakai

White-crowned Sparrow

surrounding area with consideration to selecting likely locations to maximize captures as well as picking various habitats. Since density of mist nets affects the results, ideally the 10 nets are placed in about 8 hectares of a 20 hectare study site.

minimum of five years, but 10 or 20 years is better. In this way, resource managers can assess the health of Solstice Canyon and possibly extrapolate to the entire Santa Monica Mountains.

#### AGEING AND SEXING BIRDS

Once a bird is captured, we first identify the bird. To a bird watcher, this might seem a simple task . . . to identify a bird in hand rather than some fleeting glimpse through a pair of binoculars. But



*Band on bird*

even in hand, the *Empidonax* flycatchers and female *Selasphorus* hummingbirds are challenges. It is not as easy as it seems.

I remember the first bird I took out of the net and banded was a California Towhee. I remember standing out in the chaparral, bird in hand, and hesitating to go back to the banding station, because I did not want to go to my bird banding mentor, Norm Hogg, not knowing what I had.

We also do not have the luxury of behavior . . . songs, calls, foraging behavior, and such. Does the tail flick up (Willow Flycatcher) or does it flick down (Gray Flycatcher)?

We then age and sex the bird. This is primarily done by using the monumental work of Peter Pyle, *Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part I*, which includes passerines and "near-passerines," pigeons and doves through woodpeckers. For some birds, ageing is easy as in the juvenal Black Phoebe illustrated in the *National Geographic Field Guide*, and sexing is easy in the Vermilion Flycatcher on the same page. But for many of our local birds, once the bird has completed the first pre-basic molt, there are

very few obvious clues to identify young (Hatching and Second Year) from adult birds (After Hatching Year and After Second Year) or the sex of the bird, e.g. Wrentit, Song Sparrow, California Towhee.

#### SOLSTICE CANYON

Solstice Canyon is one of many canyons that dissect the Santa Monica Mountains in a north-south direction and drain into the Pacific Ocean. Solstice Canyon is located about four km west of Malibu. I selected Solstice Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains for a variety of reasons. First, it was relatively close to my home base, Santa Monica College. Second, this was part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (NRA) where I already had a good working relationship. Third, Solstice Canyon was a relatively secure site. The canyon is closed, essentially from sunset to sunrise,

which would allow me to leave portions of the equipment and hardware in place. Fourth, the year round flowing stream would attract a large number of birds.

#### RESULTS

Since this is the first year of the station, there is still much to be learned, but I was pleasantly surprised with the results from the first year (2001). The results are presented in the table. The birds are listed by their AOU#'s. The "alpha code" is an unique four letter code for each species (and sub-species) of birds used by the Bird Banding Laboratory to ease data entry and manipulation. We encountered 510 birds. "Encounter" means birds that we banded, released unbanded (hummingbirds), escaped (oops), and recaptured. We banded 386 birds, 66 birds were unbanded

(escaped or released unbanded), and 58 birds were recaptures. We conducted nine cycles. The average number of encounters per cycle was 56.7 birds with a range of 27 to 87 birds. Song Sparrows ranked number one (77) with Wrentits a close second (73). Common Yellowthroats (44), Black-headed Grosbeaks (30), and Spotted Towhees (28) round out the top five.

We encountered a total of 38 species. The great majority of these birds were expected chaparral birds for the Santa Monica Mountains, but in spite of my pronouncements about starting and ending dates, we captured several late migrants, such as a Willow Flycatcher, a Swainson's Thrush, an American Robin, a Townsend's Warbler, and a Wilson's Warbler.

#### THE FUTURE

Earlier, I mentioned that the IBP hopes that stations will remain in operation a minimum of five years and longer if possible. This is a function of the enthusiasm of my banders and myself and continued support of the local Audubon societies and the community. It is extremely difficult to operate and maintain a MAPS station. There are very few at present in southern California. Barbara Carlson operates the Motte



*Wilson's Warbler*

Reserve and the San Bernardino Mountains stations. Pete Bloom operates a station, Dana Kamada has a station at Starr Ranch, and the Nature Conservancy operates six in Orange County. And this Solstice MAPS station is the first in the Santa Monica Mountains.

			Cycle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Totals
	Species name	alpha	AOU											
1	Red-shouldered Hawk	RSHA	359						1					1
2	Downy Woodpecker	DOWO	394					1						1
3	Nuttall's Woodpecker	NUWO	397								2			2
4	Black-chinned Hummingbird	BCHU	429					2		1			1	4
5	Costa's Hummingbird	COHU	430.0		3	3	1	1	1					9
6	Anna's Hummingbird	ANHU	431.0		4	10	2	2				2		20
7	Rufous Hummingbird	RUHU	433.0						3	4	1			8
8	Allen's Hummingbird	ALHU	434.0		6	2	1	1			1			11
	Unknown Hummingbird	UNHU	440.9			1		2	2	2	1	1		9
9	Black Phoebe	BLPH	458.0			4	1	3	1	1	2		1	13
10	Olive-sided Flycatcher	OSFL	459.0						1					1
11	Western Wood Pewee	WEWP	462.0				1		1					2
12	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	PSFL	464.1		5	4	1	2			3			15
13	Willow Flycatcher	WIFL	466.0				1							1
14	Western Scrub-Jay	WESJ	481.0								2	1		3
15	Brown-headed Cowbird	BHCO	485.0			1								1
16	Hooded Oriole	HOOR	505.0				2	1	5		1			9
17	Purple Finch	PUFI	517.0					1						1
18	House Finch	HOFI	519.0					3	8	1	3		1	16
19	Lesser Goldfinch	LEGO	530.0		3	2	6		3	1		3		18
20	Song Sparrow	SOSP	581.0		16	18	12	11	7	5	3	3	2	77
21	Spotted Towhee	SPTO	588.0		4	4	3	3	6	1	3	2	2	28
22	California Towhee	CALT	591.1		4	3	1	1		2	3	3	4	21
23	Black-headed Grosbeak	BHGR	596.0					3	8	5	12	1	1	30
24	Tree Swallow	TRES	614.0		1	1								2
25	Warbling Vireo	WAVI	627.0				1	2						3
26	Orange-crowned Warbler	OCWA	646.0		3		3	4					1	11
27	Yellow Warbler	YWAR	652.0		1									1
28	Townsend's Warbler	TOWA	668.0			1								1
29	Common Yellowthroat	COYE	681.0		4	5	4	6	7	5	3	4	6	44
30	Wilson's Warbler	WIWA	685.0		3									3
31	California Thrasher	CATH	710.0								1		1	2
32	Bewick's Wren	BEWR	719.0		2	1	2	9	2	1		4	1	22
33	House Wren	HOWR	721.0		2		2	1	2	3	2	2		14
34	Oak Titmouse	OATI	733.0				3	1		2				6
35	Wrentit	WREN	742.0		11	14	14	7	6	3	4	8	6	73
36	Bushtit	BUSH	743.0		3	12		1	6	3				25
37	Swainson's Thrush	SWTH	758.0			1								1
38	American Robin	AMRO	761.0		1									1
				0	76	87	61	68	70	40	47	34	27	510

A few years back, the National Park Service was mandated to create a Servicewide Inventory and Monitoring program to help park managers with comprehensive, scientifically-based information on the nature and status of their biological resources. The inventory part for birds is in place with information coming from museums, field notes of birders, and most recently the Breeding Bird Atlas. The monitoring has yet to begin in earnest, but one of the suggestions was to set up as many as four MAPS stations around the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

#### VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Perhaps one deficiency in our bird banding effort is the "area search," where we are suppose to keep an eye and an ear open for birds that we see and hear but do not capture in our nets (birds of prey, canopy birds, aerial foragers, etc). I often do not have the time to "bird watch"


while banding birds, and I am not an accomplished birder. And while most of my help are excellent banders, they are not birders either. I suspect an hour or so of birding by someone from Audubon will double the list of "seen/heard" birds.

Although people are welcome to visit and volunteer in the MAPS station, there are certain difficulties. One is that we start at sunrise, which is before 6:00 A.M. through most of the MAPS season. Second is that we enter through a locked gate, so if you do not arrive by 5:30 A.M., you will not be able to get in. Third, although the gate is normally opened at 8:00 A.M., beginning this spring the gate will remain locked to vehicular traffic as restoration

work will commence in the canyon. You can, however, walk in later in the morning. The area searches are probably best done mid-morning anyway.

It might be best to start by visiting my year round constant effort bird banding station in Zuma Canyon. Here we band once every three to four weeks throughout the year. The cycle consists of Friday afternoon until sunset, and Saturday morning from sunrise until noonish. There are no locked gates, and the banding station is in the parking lot. Further information on this site and banding dates can be found on my homepage [http://homepage.smc.edu/sakai\\_walter](http://homepage.smc.edu/sakai_walter).

#### SUPPORT

Support for the MAPS station has come from the generous contributions made by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, the Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society, and AVINET, Inc. The MAPS station would not have been possible without my two banders, Jim Serikawa and Marty Reedy. 

*Walter Sakai has been a Professor of Biology at Santa Monica College for 25 years. He has been banding birds for over ten years and a Master Bird Bander since 1997. His other research interest is monarch butterflies, as a Research Associate in the Entomology Section of the Natural History Museum.*



*Bewick's Wren*



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Audubon's 500 chapters have always been involved in conserving the environment and the life forms that it supports in this spacious nation. Not only the mammals, the birds, the fish, the invertebrates, but the native plants – from a common clover to a majestic redwood – all must be our concern. Local chapters get involved with local problems: a lush canyon is threatened with development, a declining species must have a protected habitat to survive, a golf course may destroy a treasured stream.

But there are problems that need a greater force than a single group can provide. The determined drive by the Bush Administration to drill in the irreplaceable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a case in point. All the powerful environmental organizations exploded with horror and anger at this display of chutzpah. Their members and the general public were asked to write to the President and to the Congress expressing their strong opposition to the drilling project. With a few senators filibustering against the project bill and the phone calls, letters and e-mail piling up, the Arctic refuge was saved – for the moment. If another attempt is made to please the oil lobby, the response may be even more devastating.

For years, Los Angeles Audubon has been supporting the Natural Resources Defense Council with our donations. This is a nationwide organization with 500,000 members that has a potent staff of scientists, lawyers and activists ready to appear wherever they are needed to oppose powerful individuals and corporations bent on environmental destruction. Other similar non-profits on our list are The Wilderness Society, The Southwest Center for Biological Diversity, The

American Bird Conservancy, and The Endangered Habitats League. The Earth-justice Legal Defense Fund has an impressive list of victories in the courts.

In California we help the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Save the Redwoods League, California Wilderness Coalition, North Coast Environmental Center, and SCOPE, the vigorous folks in Santa Clarita trying to save the Santa Clara River as they fight the horrendous Newhall Ranch development. North Coast Center is a small but very determined group in Arcata that is on the front lines opposing *Big Lumber* in their efforts to clearcut what remains of old growth forests.

Beyond our borders, LAAS supports the RARE Center which works to preserve the rain forests and their exotic birds and mammals in our hemisphere. In Mexico this year we made a donation to Pro Peninsular, which works to monitor and protect the fabled estuaries. And after the field trip last October to Baja California (see the March/April *Tanager*) our board of directors voted to contribute to the Pronghorn Recovery Project to ensure the survival of this beautiful endangered antelope.

## NOTES:

**ROADLESS AREA VIOLATION:** One of the last important environmental efforts of the Clinton administration was to declare 58 million acres of forest in the nation to remain roadless for logging. One thousand acres of Six Rivers National Forest in northern California were to be logged where a watershed restoration project was planned to protect endangered steelhead trout and salmon. Habitat destruction would severely affect

the Northern Goshawk and the Pacific fisher. The Center for Biodiversity took the issue to court and a federal judge struck down the logging.

## JAPAN CONDEMNED FOR INCREASED WHALING PROPOSAL:

At a recent meeting of the International Wildlife Coalition (IWC) 15 nations, including the U.S., issued a joint communiqué condemning the Japanese plan to double its take of whales in the northern Pacific. It accused Japan of operating its "research" program as a cover for commercial whaling, saying that most of the whale meat ended up in restaurants.

**RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER GETS A BREAK:** Efforts to save the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker took a turn for the better when the North Carolina Nature Conservancy struck a deal with the Army's Fort Bragg. A joint venture will build a buffer zone around Bragg with land purchased by both parties that will keep development from encroaching on the post, give it more land for its exercises, and greatly improve survival of the woodpecker. The agreement may set the scene for further such intelligent plans for other Army installations.

**THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE JUDGES:** The federal judiciary is frequently involved with important environmental problems when there is a clash between harmful actions of private interests and citizens concerned about those activities. When no reasonable solution to such a controversy is reached the case frequently ends in court. And often in federal court. The opinions of a judge who is appointed for life are crucial for

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the outcome of a case and, we hope, for fairness. The Bush administration, unfortunately, has chosen people for these positions whose bias in environmental cases has been far less than fair. The Senate reviews the candidates and makes the decision to approve or not.

Earthjustice, a vigorous environmental legal non-profit asks us to write to our senators urging them to carefully investigate the environmental records of judicial nominees before they vote for or against them. To those who would like to do so, here are the addresses.

Barbara Boxer  
senator@boxer.senate.gov  
Dianne Feinstein  
senator@feinstein.senate.gov

Both: The Honorable (full name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Dear Senator (last name)



From—

## *BirdLife South Africa*

“The funds for the development of the Crane Feeding Area have finally arrived and work on this development can now continue. One of the local farmers will be approached to plant winter crops during the first quarter of 2002 and dry feeding will continue throughout the summer to habituate the resident cranes to this activity. Improvements to the Crane Hide can now also be undertaken.

The **Los Angeles Audubon Society** is once again thanked for the funding which makes this development possible”

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### *National Audubon Society Guide to Marine Mammals of the World*

Comprehensive, detailed guide contains 418 color photographs, 320 color illustrations, text and range maps for all the world's marine mammals.

Randall Reeves, Brent Stewart, Phillip Clapham, James Powell, 2002

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### *A Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*

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Paul Lehman, Editor, 2001,

\$28.95

### *Peterson Field Guides: Birds of Eastern and Central North America*

Completely revised with updated range maps throughout, revised plates and images, expanded area coverage to include the lower Rio Grande Valley.

(Soft cover) (Fifth Edition) Roger Tory Peterson, 2002,

\$22.00

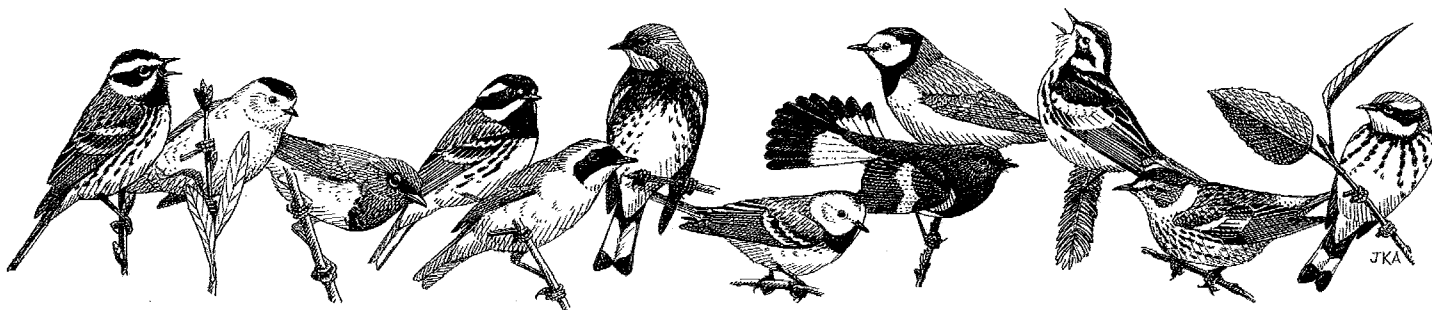
### *Voices of New World Parrots*

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's audio guide features the sounds of virtually all New World parrots – some 140 species.

Includes illustrated booklet with to field identification. Three CDs.

Bret M. Whitney, Theodore A. Parker III, Gregory F. Budney, Charles A. Munn, and Jack W. Bradley. 2002,

\$39.95



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Daniel S. Cooper, Audubon California

**D**ry, dry, dry! As I write this, we are coming out of the record driest rainy season in downtown Los Angeles since records have been kept – just over three inches fell, well short of the five inches that characterizes “classic” desert environments. I don’t know about you, but it sort of feels like getting out of bed in the morning after not sleeping all night. Though wild extremes actually typify our climate more than stability, they always leave birders speculating wildly on their effects on local bird populations.

But strange things are afoot. Most notable has been the veritable invasion of **Calliope Hummingbirds** through the Los Angeles area (and elsewhere in California). Typically, this species all but passes us over en route from west Mexico to the Sierra Nevada and north. Anyone who keeps a hummingbird feeder no doubt checks every small-looking bird in hopes of seeing a Calliope, but is invariably disappointed. Bob Pann kicked off our “Calliope Spring” with a single male feeding with “swarms” of other hummers at Walker Ranch (near Santa Clarita) on 23 March. Pasadena’s Eaton Canyon had its first record ever (in decades of record keeping) on 6 April, when Jon Feenstra found a lone male. By 11 April, there were four (two males and two females) here, with two females continuing at least to 11 May. Other records included first records for the well-worked Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base on 15 April (Kimball Garrett), two at O’Melveny Park in the north San Fernando Valley on 14 April, and a single male at Temescal Gateway Park in Pacific Palisades on 7 May (Richard Barth). Interestingly most records were from “natural” habitats and not from urban feeders.

Otherwise, migration is proceeding pretty much as expected, with waves of western migrants in the mid-April to early May period. Mitch Heindel’s observation of over 75 **Lazuli Buntings** at Friendship Park on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on 12 April, and 60 **Black-headed Grosbeaks** at Hahamongna Park in Pasadena on 27 April (Mike San Miguel) gives one an idea of numbers. The “rare-but-regular” category includes a **Red-necked Phalarope** at Madrona Marsh 20 April and a **Solitary Sandpiper** at Hansen

Dam the next day (both Tom Miko); three **Black Terns** at Lake Balboa in the Sepulveda Basin on 9 May (Jim Hardesty, Steve Sosensky); a **Black Swift** at DeForest Park, Long Beach on 11 May (Kevin Larson); **Bank Swallows** at Hansen Dam on 5 April (KG) and along the Los Angeles River in north Long Beach 3 May (TM); and a **Purple Martin** over Debs Park in northeast Los Angeles on 25 March (Dan Cooper). Two **Least Terns** over the small lake in Inglewood Park Cemetery (in Inglewood) on 6 May might have been foraging from a coastal breeding site at Marina del Rey several miles away, but were likely migrants – most of the interior records in the state are from May. A **Swainson’s Thrush** at Temescal Gateway Park on 8 April (RB) was a couple weeks early.

Migrant **Swainson’s Hawks** aren’t really rare – they’re just rarely noticed. Continuing from the early March reports were groups of 50 over La Cañada on 24 March (Barry Lyon) and 20-25 over Pasadena two days later (Bob Newirth).

**Brewer’s Sparrows**, historically much more common when our area supported sagebrush-covered flats, jackrabbits, and river rocks, turned up this spring as migrants along the San Gabriel River in Duarte (6 birds on 22 April, Jon Fisher); at O’Melveny Park on 14 April (KL), and at Hahamongna Park on 19 April (MSM) – all areas that preserve remnants of this habitat. Other species barely hanging on in our region include a pair of **Golden Eagles** seen as late as 26 March at Bonelli Park in San Dimas (Nick and Mary Freeman); a **Peregrine Falcon** nest with two young on 4 April near the USC Medical Center (Yvonne Tsai); a **Burrowing Owl** was at a burrow at 120 Ave. West in the Antelope Valley

**R**ecords 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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## *North American Birds*, Los Angeles County

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

## *California Bird Records Committee*

Guy McCaskie  
P.O. Box 275  
Imperial Beach, CA 91933-0275  
e-mail: guymcc@pacbell.net

## **To report birds for the tape, call:**

Jon Fisher: (818) -544-5009 (work)  
e-mail: Jon.L.Fisher@disney.com

(TM); 9 singing **Least Bell's Vireos** and a single **Cactus Wren** along Big Tujunga Wash at Hansen Dam on 26 April (Dustin Alcalá); another Bell's Vireo along the San Gabriel River in Duarte on 22 April; a **LeConte's Thrasher** at Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base on 4 May (Ron Cyger); and a group of presumably nesting **Grasshopper Sparrows** and a singing **Horned Lark** in the San Jose Hills of Walnut near Amar Rd. on 2 April (MSM).

More unusual spring sightings included a **Common Ground-Dove** at Santa Fe Dam on 24 March (Andrew Lee) and a **Black-throated Sparrow** at Hahamongna Park on 19 April (MSM). Both breed 50 miles away, but almost never occur in the San Gabriel Valley. Farther south, a **Varied Thrush** and a remarkably early **Tennessee Warbler** were reported from a flock of migrants in Banning Park, Wilmington 13 April (MH). Astounding were two waterthrushes briefly together at this park on 7 May, identified by TM as a Northern and a Louisiana. An adult **Brown Pelican** surprised Kimball Garrett as it flew up several times from the lake at Hansen Dam on 29 April – most records of this coastal (and Salton Sea) species are of juveniles in summer and fall, and a “human-assisted arrival” shouldn't be ruled out. Most surprising was a photo of two **California Condors** soaring with a hang-glider over Kagel Canyon in Sylmar that ran in the *Los Angeles Times* on 27 March. One of the last known condor nests in the world was actually in the San Gabriels, in a cliff face above Eaton Canyon, and with more condors being released in neighboring Ventura County, let's hope such sightings become more regular!

The virtual lack of spring rain has left the lower Los Angeles River in fall-like conditions (low), and the cement and mud left exposed has proven attractive for nesting shorebirds typical of the alkali flat habitat that the river simulates. Kevin Larson counted six **American Avocet** nests (34 adults) and 116 **Black-necked Stilt** nests on 11 May. Add this to the annual **Killdeer** broods and a pair of displaying **Spotted Sandpipers** seen at Del Amo Blvd. on 3 May (TM), and we have four species of shorebirds now breeding in


our unassuming concrete channel. Kevin's 11 May walk also yielded important data on spring use of the channel by late-spring-migrating shorebirds, which included 31 **Long-billed Dowitchers**, 25 **Western Sandpipers**, four **Greater Yellowlegs**, two **Sanderlings**, and one **Semipalmated Plover**.

Several unusual wintering birds were found quite late in the season, as usually happens (L.A.'s a big place, and birds are small and mobile), with the most surprising being a **Philadelphia Vireo** at El Dorado Recreation Center in Long Beach on 24 March (Karen Gilbert). A bit more mundane were a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a La Habra Heights feeder on 23 March (Larry Schmah); a **MacGillivray's Warbler** at the L.A. Arboretum on 16 March (Martin Byhower); and a **White-throated Sparrow** in northeast Pasadena from 30 March to 14 April (BN).

Lingering winterers included the **Lewis' Woodpecker** at Sycamore Canyon in Whittier to 23 March (LS) and another at Grassy Hollow west of Wrightwood along Angeles Crest Hwy on 4 May (RC); the **Eastern Phoebe** at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area to 21 March (BP); Eaton Canyon's **Brown Thrasher** (27 April, Andy Lazere) and **White-throated Sparrow** (to 14 April, JF); Peck Pit's **Palm Warbler** to 21 March (AL); **Chestnut-sided Warblers** (RB) in El Segundo (to 7 April) and Atwater Village (to 21 April); Kenneth Hahn Park's **Green-tailed Towhee** and **White-throated Sparrow** (to 25 March, Ann Brooks); the Bonelli Park **Harris' Sparrow** to 9 April (Rod Higby); and one of the two “**Large-billed**” **Savannah Sparrows** at Playa del Rey to 14 March (RB).

Birders fed up with the oppressive urban landscape of the basin would do well to spend a few hours “sea-watching” in spring as scoters, loons, and seabirds stream north from southerly wintering areas. Both Kevin Larson and Kimball Garrett set 'scopes to sea on 23 March, and KL observed over 15,000 **Surf Scoters** (not a single White-winged or Black!) moving north past Pt. Vicente (Palos Verdes Peninsula), along with 537 **Brant**. At least 10,000 of these scoters passed by before 8 A.M. KG noted

many of these birds later in the morning along with 3 **Rhinoceros Auklets** off Leo Carrillo State Beach. A month later (27 April), KL attempted a similar sea-watch from Pt. Vicente, and had three **Franklin's Gulls** and a **Xantus' Murrelet** pass by, as well as 3670 **Pacific Loons** (<100 **Red-throated** and **Commons**), 3000 **Sooty Shearwaters**, and just 366 **Surf Scoters**. In with these were two **White-winged Scoters**, if only to prove that this species is still wintering this far south.

Several readers have asked me to give some pointers for finding some of these interesting birds in the months *after* this column runs, rather than before. To this end, I would spend August birding the lower Los Angeles River in north Long Beach for uncommon shorebirds (Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope) and maybe do a trip up to the high San Gabriels for post-breeding montane species accompanied by young (Mountain Quail, woodpeckers). Many songbirds like Wilson's Warblers and Willow Flycatchers will start moving south during the first week of August, so check streams and willow thickets in early mornings even during the hottest days of summer. 

## Bird Tape (323) 874-1318

Please note that Jon Fisher is recording the Bird Tape again. Report birds to him at:

Jon Fisher  
(818) 544-5009 (work)  
Jon.L.Fisher@disney.com



# Two New Hummingbird Guides

## *Hummingbirds of North America – The Photographic Guide*

Steve N. G. Howell  
Academic Press, San Diego, CA 2002  
219 + ix pp.  
Paper \$29.95

## *A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America*

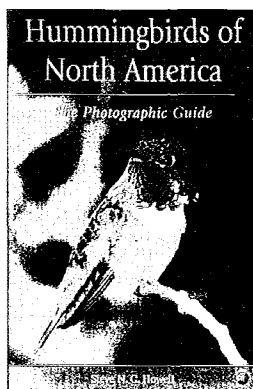
Sheri L. Williamson  
Peterson Field Guide Series  
Houghton Mifflin Co., New York 2001  
263 + x pp.  
Paper \$22.00

Is there anyone who doesn't like hummingbirds? The interest in these feathered jewels is high if based just on the phone calls and visitor requests for information we field at County Nature Centers. "What kind do I have? Where did they go? What solution do I feed them?" These are the common questions that pour in throughout the year.

Two new, detailed field guides to hummingbirds have appeared within months of each other, both claiming to be "the first ever, comprehensive" or "most comprehensive" photographic guide to hummingbird identification. While the titles are slightly different, the geographic coverage is the same and both books are entirely photographic (with the exception of a very few drawings or paintings, by Sophie Webb, in Howell's guide). Williamson is more liberal in treating 31 species, 26 north of Mexico plus five known to occur no closer to the U.S. than northern Mexico. She gives the "benefit of the doubt" to some undocumented records. Howell treats 24 species. He dismisses two U.S. species occurrences as invalid or unlikely and does not cover any strictly Mexican species.

The authors' experiences are reflected in the focus of each book. Howell is a field biologist and emphasizes identification "in the field" with photos and text following that concept. Williamson, a well-known bird bander with many hours of experience handling hummingbirds, especially in southeastern Arizona, utilizes more close-up tail, head, and wing photos in the hand to illustrate key identification characters. The photographs number over 200 in Howell's guide and over

220 in Williamson's and are generally high quality images. Photos are separated from the text section in Williamson's book while they are integrated within the species accounts in Howell. In format, the Williamson guide is smallish, standard Peterson Field Guide sized (7.5 x 4.75") while Howell's book is larger at 8.5 x 5.5". This small difference becomes noticeable inside with smaller photos in Williamson (ca. 1 1/4 x 2") while those in Howell are nearly twice the size or more (2 1/4 or 3 1/2" x 2 1/2 or 3"; a few even at



4 1/2 x 3") and easier on the eyes. Williamson does support these photos with good discussion of the features in the plates. Both books provide thorough discussion and illustration of age and sex differences within the species.

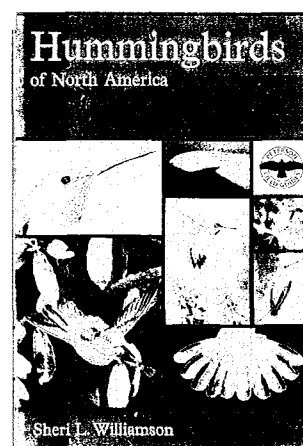
Both books include range maps, with Williamson providing at least one for each species, 34 maps in all, with seasonal ranges detailed and extralimital records plotted. Howell provides maps only for regularly occurring U.S. species and they are more generalized or simplified, with extralimital records treated in the text but not mapped.

Only Williamson (not Howell) covers the derivation of common names, Hot Spots for viewing, a List of Common and Scientific names of Nectar Plants, a List of Resources for Hummingbird Watchers, a section on Attracting and Feeding, and even illustrates some hummingbird-like sphinx moths. Both authors discuss and illustrate hybrids and hybridization. Each book contains a Glossary and Terminology section and both have a short index with Howell covering only common and scientific names of hummingbirds while Williamson indexes some other subject matters. The bibliographies in both books are rather extensive. I count 129 references in Williamson, 115 in Howell. Williamson includes many references in the newer date range, 1999-2001 while Howell's are a bit older, few through 2001. Typographical errors appear to be rare. In

Howell I noted "hybrid" misspelled (pg. 9) and reference to "Pic. 1.12" in text is really Pic. 1.21 (pg. 21).

How will these guides work in the field, when a hummingbird screams in to hover for 6.5 seconds at a blooming black sage and then jets off at a 45-degree angle to disappear into the sky? The stated purpose in Williamson is to "fill the void" of identification inadequacies in existing specialty books on hummingbirds; to take some of the mystery out of hummingbird I.D. for enthusiasts at all levels of skill and interest. Howell says his guide "aims to provide identification criteria that, given good views of a bird, should allow you to identify the majority of individuals." Neither book has plates illustrating more than two to three species at a time and often only one per page. In our quest for detail (and many of us are clamoring for detail) are we losing the "field guide" as a guide to field identification? Both these texts will be of great value back at the car, lab or living room when there's time for study. If you're lucky enough to be in a lawn chair at one of the banks of feeders in southeast Arizona, there should be time to pour through the illustrations and read key points. Much good information can be learned before or after our encounter with a puzzling hummingbird. I suspect, however, we will all still use our National Geographic or Sibley guides to

PETERSON FIELD GUIDES quickly nar-



row down an identification; and I'll always remember hearing Roger Tory Peterson explain that "in producing a field guide I seek to simplify, while others

seek to amplify." For this, one needs an array of species portrayed together.

I checked carefully the treatments in both books of the notorious Rufous and Allen's hummingbirds since "probably no other species-pair of North American birds poses greater field identification



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problems . . ." (Howell). While both provide illustrations and text to guide us through this difficult species pair, Howell better illustrates and treats the range of green-backed adult male Rufous, which make us defer to "Selasphorus sp." or "Rufous/Allen's" calls more than ever.

Overall, Howell's guide is more systematically arranged; i.e. it "flows" nicely through the I.D. sequence, while Williamson's book is a bit more "choppy". There are no page breaks between species account treatments and the plates are at the front of the book with the main species accounts at the back, up to 100 pages away. Williamson does provide I.D. discussion across from each plate. Howell has a very helpful section on our southern California "Small Gorgeted

Hummingbirds" with detail on "Green and Gray" and "Green and Rufous Species". Clearly, both authors know their subjects well, are dedicated to teaching us the details of hummingbird identification and have put a great deal of work into each book. Both books are full of detail and should improve the status of hummingbird identification throughout North America. While I lean toward Howell's book as the most useful as a field reference, students of these fantastic feathered jewels will want both books.

Review by Mickey Long  
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## LAAS CO-SPONSORS WFO MEETING

Sea and Sage Audubon Society will host, and Los Angeles Audubon Society will co-sponsor, the 27th annual meeting of the Western Field Ornithologists October 10-13, 2002 at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary and Country Inn by Ayres in Costa Mesa. WFO uses the proceeds from their annual meeting and associated activities to publish *Western Birds*, a journal devoted to field ornithology in and around western North America. Those attending the meeting will have the opportunity to participate in field trips led by Western Field Ornithologists and local experts to locations that many of us normally have no access to. Two pelagic trips are planned, as are two post-meeting birding trips: a three-day trip (led by Jon Dunn and Guy McCaskie) to the Salton Sea and another for migrants in northwestern Baja California.

Wildlife artist and field biologist John Schmitt will lead an indoor field trip on bird topography and there will be two workshops on documenting bird sightings. The mornings of the meeting will be devoted to field trips, the afternoons to scientific presentations and expert panels on sight and sound identification. Social activities and field trips are planned each evening; LAAS is sponsoring a Saturday evening barbecue at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary's Duck Club.

Our chapter is also bringing Robert Pitman in as the featured banquet speaker. Bob has just returned from his usual winter "haunt" – a U.S. research vessel plying the southeastern Pacific and Antarctic during the austral summer. He will be speaking on "The Pelagic Frontier".

Meeting registration, events, and field trips are discounted for Western Field Ornithologists members. The prices have not been set for the birding trips to Salton Sea and Baja. For WFO membership information, contact [www.wfo-cbrc.org](http://www.wfo-cbrc.org)

Go to [www.seaandsageaudubon.org](http://www.seaandsageaudubon.org) for updated meeting information (also linked through the WFO web site) or Catherine Waters (562) 869-6718 or [robcatwaters@earthlink.net](mailto:robcatwaters@earthlink.net) with any questions, suggestions, or offers to help.

continued from page 12

## Sunday, August 11 –

**Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson.** 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. Meet at 8:15 A.M.

## Sunday, August 18 –

**Ballona Wetlands.** **Bob Shanman** will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland. Adult shorebirds will be numerous. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90 W) to Culver Blvd. and turn left for a mile, turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually available. Three-hour walk, 'scopes helpful. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

## Sunday, August 25 –

**Point Mugu.** **Irwin Woldman** and a base biologist will lead in this limited access area. Shorebirds, waterfowl. Must be 16 years old. Bring a lunch and bird Ventura for songbirds later. Mail a SASE by August 7 for required, limited sign-up, including citizenship status, phone number, e-mail, social security number and a \$5 deposit check for each person in your party, refunded at the gate. Take the 101 Fwy west to Las Posas Rd. going south, to PCH north onto Wood Rd. going west, then head south on the frontage road to the lot at the main (#2) gate. Meet at 7:45 A.M. Official LAAS access pending.

## Saturday-Sunday, September 7-8 –

**Salton Sea.** Leader **Howard King.** Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the Wister Headquarters, at Hwy 111 and Davis Rd. This is prime time for migrant landbirds and stray seabirds. Saturday night will be spent in Brawley. Reserve a hotel. Areas we may visit include Wister, NWR, Hot Springs Road, Brawley and beyond. Be prepared for extreme birding in extreme heat. Your car must be reliable with good AC! Send SASE with \$12. 12 max.

## Saturday, September 14 –

**Piute Ponds** and beyond. Local leader **Alan Brown.** A good mix of shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds will be migrating through at this time. Official LAAS access pending. Bring lunch. Meet at 7:30 A.M., finish 3:00 P.M. or so. To reserve with LAAS and learn Rosamond meeting place, mail a SASE for required, limited sign-up by September 6, including citizenship status, phone number, e-mail, and social security number. No drop-ins.

## Sunday, September 15 –

### California City and Galileo Hills.

Leader: **Nick Freeman.** This location is a migrant magnet and vagrant vortex. Songbirds, flycatchers, etc. Take Hwy 14 about 4 miles past Mojave, then turn right on California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops and turn left on 20 Mule Team Rd. just past the Central Park Golf Course. Turn left at the Galileo Hills sign before the hill, take your first paved right, your first right again, into the Silver Saddle Country Club, followed by two paved lefts into the lot. Park by the pond. About two hours driving time from Los Angeles. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunch, sun block. Meet at 7:30 A.M., finish up by late afternoon.

## Saturday, September 21 –

### Hansen Dam. Leader **Dustin Alcalá.**

We'll search for migrant songbirds, early waterbirds, and lingering residents in the willow forest and other habitats that make the dam one of the best birding locales in L.A. County. Take the 210 east from Sylmar, exit Osborne Street going south, then turn left to stay on Osborne Street. Turn left at Dronefield St. into parking lot with Hansen Dam Recreation Center sign. Long walk, bring water! Bird 7:00 A.M. until noon.

## RESERVATION

### AND

### FEE EVENTS

(Limited Participation)

### Policy and Procedure

Reservations will be accepted ONLY if ALL the following information is supplied:

- 1) Trip desired
- 2) Names of people in your party
- 3) Phone numbers:
  - (a) usual and
  - (b) evening before event, in case of cancellation
- 4) Separate check (no cash please) to LAAS for exact amount for each trip
- 5) Self-addressed stamped envelope for confirmation and associated trip information

Send to:

LAAS Reservations  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date (four weeks for pelagics). You will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation after that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement. Millie Newton is available at Audubon House on Wednesdays from noon to 4:00 P.M. to answer questions about field trips. Our office staff is also available Tuesday through Saturday for most reservation services.

## 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.*

# PELAGIC TRIPS

**Saturday, August 3 –**

**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. Birds seen on prior trips: Red-billed Tropicbird; Black, Least and Leach's storm-petrels; Long-tailed Jaeger; South Polar Skua; Sabine's Gull. Rarities: Black-footed Albatross, Buller's shearwater; Arctic Tern; Craveri's Murrelet. Blue Whales and several species of dolphins have been seen on this trip.

Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, Kimball Garrett, David Pereksta, and Kevin Larson.**

\$140 – price includes three meals.

**Saturday, September 7 –**

**Northern Channel Islands Monument Trip: Anacapa, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz Islands, toward San Miguel Island.**

12-hour trip departs from the Oxnard Marina at 7:30 A.M. on the M/V Vanguard. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed, Sooty, and Black-vented shearwaters; Black, Least, and Ashy storm-petrels; cormorants (three); Sabine's Gull; Arctic Tern; rocky shorebirds (up to five); Common Murre; Craveri's and Xantus's murrelets; Cassin's Auklet. Rarities: Buller's and Flesh-footed shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger. Blue, Finback, and Humpback whales have been seen on this trip.

Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, David Pereksta**

\$79 – Galley on board.

**Saturday, October 12 –**

**From Marina del Rey out to sea toward the Channel Islands National Monument.**

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; 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 five); Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Rarities: South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger; Common Murre; Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel.

Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, Kevin Larson and Bernardo Alps.**

\$50 – tea and coffee, no galley.

**Saturday, October 26 –**

**San Pedro Channel past the east end of Santa Catalina Island toward San Clemente Island.**

Twelve-hour trip departs from San Pedro at 6:00 A.M. on the R/V Vantuna. Birds seen on prior trips: North-

ern Fulmar; Buller's and Pink-footed shearwaters; Black and

Ashy storm-petrels;

Pomarine and Para-

sitic jaegers;

Sabine's Gull;

rocky shorebirds

(up to five); Com-

mon Murre;

Cassin's and Rhi-

noceros auklets; Xan-

tus's Murrelet. Rarities:

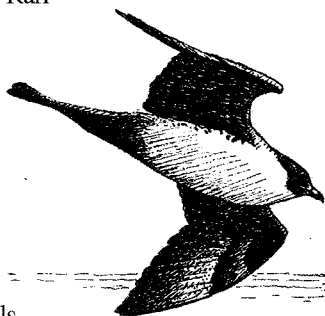
Long-tailed Jaeger; South

Polar Skua; and perhaps Red-billed Tropicbird. Several species of dolphins as well as Elephant Seals are seen on this trip.

Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, Kimball**

**Garrett, and Kevin Larson.**

\$59 – tea and coffee, no galley.



**Saturday, November 9 –**

**Ventura Marina toward San Miguel**

**Island** on the new fast Catamaran M/V Islander. Nine-hour trip departs from Ventura at 8:00 A.M. and returns by 5:00 P.M.

After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island, we have the boat to ourselves, and head toward the 1000 fathom water about 10 miles from San Miguel Island. Expected birds: Northern Fulmar; Black-vented, Sooty, and Pink-footed shearwaters; Black Storm-Petrel; South Polar Skua; Pomarine Jaeger; rocky shorebirds (up to five); Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Occasionally: Craveri's Murrelet; Rarities: Leach's Storm-Petrel; Flesh-footed and Buller's shearwaters; Black-footed Albatross, perhaps Laysan Albatross.

Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, Kevin Larson, David Pereksta and Bernardo Alps.**

\$79 – full galley on board.

## LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

**South Africa – October 21-November 7, 2002**

**Namibia Extension – November 4-17, 2002**

Only a few spaces remain on this incredible trip to South Africa, from Table Mountain to the Little Karoo, bird along the Hluhluwe River, Ndumo, several nature reserves, then travel on to Namibia where lush game parks like Etosha, will absolutely astound you. Birds too numerous to mention here and big game as well, will be our targets on this superb journey. Don't miss out!

**Costa Rica – A Birder's Paradise!**

**February 23-March 5, 2003**

Join us as we explore Costa Rica, covering four different regions in this small, modern, friendly country where magnificent, brilliantly colored birds and exotic orchids add vivid hues to the dense rainforests. Here in Costa Rica, there are more species of birds than in all of North America, many found only in the specific habitats that we will be visiting. Designed to highlight Costa Rica's marvelous system of national parks, this trip enables you to see permanent residents and migratory species at large. Whether you are a first time traveler to the neotropics, or a several times visitor, you will be entranced by the wonders Costa Rica has to offer.

**FOR ITINERARIES and MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Olga Clarke, Travel Director

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

2027 El Arbolita Drive

Glendale, CA 91208-1805 USA

phone/fax: (818) 249-9511

e-mail: oclarketravel@earthlink.net

# EVENING MEETINGS

No Meetings are scheduled in July or August.

The LAAS Bookstore and Library will be open regular hours during the summer.

Check the LAAS Website 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.*

**Friday-Monday, June 28-July 1 – Southern Sierras Weekend with Bob Barnes.** Northern Goshawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Pileated Woodpecker, and owls likely. 125-175 species seen each year. Participation limited. For information flyer, reserve with SASE. Fee: \$15 for each day attended (\$60 for four days). Reserve rooms early. Your name and phone number will be available to car-poolers, unless you request otherwise.

**Sunday, July 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 south, turn east uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. From PCH, take Topanga Cyn. Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking \$2. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

**Sunday, July 14 – Big Bear Lake Vicinity.** Leaders Nick and Mary Freeman. Meet in the Aspen Glen Picnic Area parking lot in Big Bear at 8:00 A.M. Take Hwy 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy 18 and turn south on Tulip Lane. The lot will be on the southwest side of this short street. Target birds include Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope and Rufous humming-

birds, mountain finches and White-headed Woodpecker. It should be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Bring lunch.

**Saturday, July 20 – Bolsa Chica.** Leader Ray Schep. Bird 8:00 A.M. until noon, looking at migrating shorebirds, and breeding terns and skimmers. Park in free lot on east side of PCH, or in pay parking along the beach. From the 405 Fwy, take Golden West Street south to PCH, north for about 2 miles. The lot is on the right. 'Scopes helpful.

**Sunday, August 4 – Topanga State Park.** Leader Gerry Haigh. See July 7 listing for details. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

**Thursday-Sunday, August 15-18 – Southeast Arizona.** Leaders Nick and Mary Freeman. We will meet early Thursday near Nogales, and bird the areas of Ruby Road, the Huachuca Mtns., and French Joe Canyon. High clearance vehicles only. Fee: \$40. Motels. Send a SASE with check and e-mail address to LAAS to reserve a spot and be sent more details. Need a ride or take a rider? Cancellations refundable until August 5. Max. 10, min. 6.

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