

WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 69 Number 1 November/December 2002

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Bolsa Chica's White Willet

By Charles T. Collins

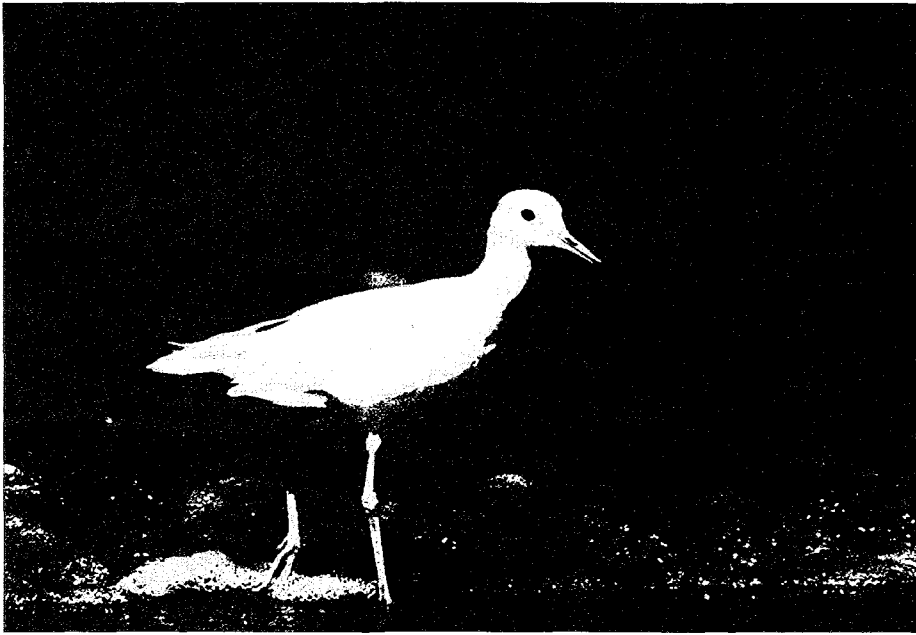
One of the most attractive qualities of birds is their bright and varied coloration. I doubt that there would be as many birdwatchers if birds were all drab "little brown jobs". The colorful appearance of birds is achieved by a variety of pigments being deposited in the skin and growing feathers.

The two commonest types of pigments are the melanins and carotenoids. The melanins include eumelanin which is responsible for the darker black and gray colors, while phaeomelanin is responsible for some of the lighter browns and tans and erythromelanin the richer chestnut-red colors. Melanins are synthesized by the birds and deposited as granules in the skin and feathers.

The carotenoid pigments include carotenes (red-orange), xanthophylls (yellow and orange), and carotenoid acids (reds). They are softer, non-granular, compounds which give birds their many shades of pink, red, orange, and yellow. They produce some of the most intense colors such as those found in Scarlet Ibises and tropical tanagers and also the faint rosy blushes of the breeding season Elegant Terns and Ross's Gulls. These pigments for the most part cannot be synthesized by birds and must be obtained from plant or animal material in their diet and then deposited, often chemically unaltered, in feathers and soft parts.

In addition to pigment colors the physical phenomenon of light scattering is responsible for blue in feathers and skin as well as white or albinistic feathers.





The highly metallic iridescent colors of many hummingbirds are caused by interference phenomena, as is also true in an oil film on water, but they also depend, in part, on underlying melanin pigment layers.

Many of us have at one time or another seen a bird with abnormal coloration, particularly albino or partially albino birds. However, it is often more complex than a simple presence or absence of pigments. In June and July 2002 what appeared to be a white or largely white Willet was seen and photographed at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. Analysis of this bird is a good starting point for categorizing the several types of plumage abnormalities which occur in birds. This bird, as shown in the accompanying photos, was not a true albino, which requires a complete loss of pigment in both feathers and soft parts. Where there is a loss of pigmentation in the feathers but not the soft parts it is considered leucism. The spectacular photo of a white hummingbird with dark eyes and bill featured in the July-August 1994 *Western Tanager* would thus be a prime example of complete leucism. The term partial leucism would be used when there is only a partial to nearly complete loss of pigments from the plumage with white feathers occurring symmetrically or non-symmetrically over various parts of the body. Most people would simply call these partial albinos.

Less commonly encountered is melanistic leucism where only the melanistic pigments are lost and carotenoid pigments

remain. An example of this is a specimen of a nearly all white Yellow-headed Blackbird in the Cal State University, Long Beach collection which lacks all of the black coloration but retains some of the yellow in the head region. It would certainly have been a spectacular bird to see in the field! Carotenoid leucism would be the opposite, where the carotenoid pigments are lacking but the melanins remain. A Yellow-rumped Warbler lacking the yellow throat, pectoral spots and rump but otherwise normally colored would be an example of this. Both of these cases refer to situations where these two types of pigments occur in different parts of the plumage.

Yet another category of abnormalities is called schizochroism. It involves situations where one pigment overlays another in the same feather. Melanistic schizochroism occurs when there is a loss of the phaeomelanins (the browns) resulting in a more uniformly gray bird, or the loss of the eumelanins (the dark browns or blacks) resulting in an all tan or "fawn" colored bird. Melano-carotenoid schizochroism would describe the loss of one or the other of these two types of pigments where they normally are present in the same area. I have seen a specimen of a Red-winged Blackbird where the absence of some of the black pigment showed the red (which should be confined to the epaulets) to be much more widespread but normally masked in other areas by the denser melanins.

Carotenism describes several abnormalities involving the carotenoid pigments. These include changes in the distribution or amount of these pigments present as well as the shift from red to yellow often seen in our local House Finches. Extreme cases of all yellow birds, probably due to melano-carotenoid schizochroism, is found in some cage birds, particularly parrots, which are referred to as 'leutinos' by aviculturists.

Melanism is due to an excess of the eumelanins resulting in abnormally dark plumage as is occasionally seen in "dark morph" Red-tailed Hawks and jaegers. An extreme case of this would be an all black bird which normally would have shown other colors as well.



White Willet photos by Mike Bowles/fale-feathers.com

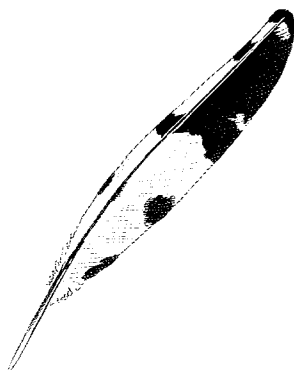
Now, back to the white Willet of Bolsa Chica. The presence of some melanin pigments on the tip of the bill and in the wing feathers (partially delimiting the characteristic wing stripe of Willets) rules out this being a true albino. Partial leucism would probably adequately describe the condition in this bird. However, examination of the color photographs of this bird show some yellowish color to the base of the bill and upper legs, which would normally be obscured by overlaying melanin pigments. Thus this bird also exhibits a degree of melano-carotenoid schizochroism as well.

All of these different categories of plumage abnormalities may seem like splitting hairs (splitting feathers?); we could just continue to call them partial albinos or dark phase birds and be done with it. However, being aware of the actual basis for the diverse colors and color patterns, as well as the several kinds of abnormalities we may encounter, should serve to sharpen our observational skills and our overall enjoyment of birds and birding.

In writing this I have relied heavily on the chapter on 'Genetics' by P. A. Buckley in the book '*Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds*' by M. L. Petrak. I am indebted to Mike Bowles for the use of his superb photos of Bolsa Chica's white Willet which prompted this whole article.



Dr. Collins is an emeritus professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at California State University, Long Beach, where he continues to teach classes in Ornithology and Behavioral Ecology. His primary research interests are the biology of swifts, Island Scrub-Jays and, coastal breeding terns and skimmers.



NOTES FROM THE BOARD

In June, the Board of LAAS voted to join other Chapters around the U.S. offering Chapter Only Memberships (COM) in addition to the current National/Chapter membership. This is due to policy changes by National Audubon that put local chapters at an increasing disadvantage financially and in matters of policy.

This means LAAS will be able to dedicate 100% of the membership dues to local education, conservation, field trips, meeting presentations, operation of the bookstore, and the *TANAGER*. We like to think of it as "think globally act locally". Chapter Only membership will not include a subscription to *AUDUBON* magazine (recently scaled back to four issues a year), a vote in National Audubon elections, and reduced admissions to National Audubon Centers.

The Membership Committee is launching a Membership Drive to sign new members and encourage current members to renew or join with a Chapter Only Membership. The first Chapter Only Membership was sold to Herb Clarke at the September meeting for his long-term advocacy of COM and because he was first in line!

Accordingly, the Committee has revised the levels of one year Chapter Only Membership to the following:

\$20/\$35 family	Sparrow (Ground Level)
\$50	Thrasher (Shrub Level)
\$100	Tanager (Tree Level)
\$250	Warbler (Canopy Level)

We encourage all members to renew early and bring in new members. Volunteers are welcome in a Membership Drive with the goal to double our membership.

Contact Membership Committee (Cheryl Epps cepps@flash.net or Garry George garrygeorge@pacbell.net) for information on current volunteer activities or for questions about your membership. Recent volunteer activities included; tables at the Bonnie Raitt concert at the Greek Theater and at the West Hollywood Book Fair, and cleanup and field trip activities at Kenneth Hahn Park in Baldwin Hills.

Other Announcements:

To get out alerts and announcements quickly we want to contact our members online. Check out our website (www.laaudubon.org) for a notice on where you can send us your e-mail address, if you want to be part of our "alert roster". We will also make the announcement at our membership meeting.

ALSO: The Bookstore catalog is now accessible on our web page, ready to browse for your holiday shopping!



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Updates:

Arizona pronghorn antelope are victims of this year's severe drought in the west. Their numbers are down from 250 a few years ago to 50 to 80 left today. Almost all the fawns of the year are dead. The pronghorn live on public land where cattle grazing and military activities are part of the problem. In February last year Defenders of Wildlife brought suit against Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior. The federal judge ordered Norton to "analyze the cumulative impacts" of federal activities and stop any that were harmful. To this day Norton has simply ignored the order as the pronghorn slip into extinction.

The Mexican government was able to set up the successful recovery plan seven years ago in Baja California for its own peninsular pronghorn, a relative of the American race in Arizona. Gale Norton, who says she enjoys nature and loves wildlife, was not interested in our antelope and apparently does not care about disobeying a court order. It is ironic that a third world nation could find the desire and the money to save an endangered species while we don't seem to give a damn.

Norton has repeated her defiance of federal judges in the case of imperiled manatees in Florida. Manatees prefer shallow water which brings them into contact with speeding small boats. The sharp propellers cut the slow-moving mammals which may be killed by extensive wounds. Defenders of Wildlife is pressing both judges to force Interior to do the right thing by the manatees and the antelope. We may see justice done soon.

NOTICE: Meet J. Steven Giles, deputy secretary of the Interior. Coming off a major career as lobbyist for the biggest oil, coal and gas companies, he's now found his ideal employment with Gale Norton devising industry-friendly plans to drill in our pristine public lands. He's got it both ways. In addition to his high level government salary he's still on the payroll of his former bosses to the tune of \$284,000 a year. Not too bad.

It's a living.

Jeb Bush is running for re-election as governor of Florida and his brother, George W., visited the state to ask the folks to vote for him again. As a parting gift the President bought back the leases for oil and gas off-shore drilling in Florida waters. Jeb is satisfied and hopes that voters concerned about oil spills are as happy as he is. However, when Gray Davis and many other Californians asked Bush to do the same for this state, the White House said NO. California voted for Gore – Bush has never forgiven us. But we have powerful memories of the 1969 Santa Barbara blowout that was the worst national spill ever at that time.

The Union Oil platform leaked 200,000 gallons of crude oil that spread to 800 square miles of ocean. Incoming tides drove thick oil over 35 miles of beach from Rincon to Goleta. Oil drifted to the Channel Islands off Ventura. Many porpoises died when oil clogged their blowholes, migrating gray whales were driven to deep water and 3700 seabirds died. The president of Union Oil said, "I don't like to call it a disaster – there was no loss of human life. I am amazed at the


publicity for the loss of a few birds." The environmental movement took a powerful leap forward nationwide after the disaster and Earth Day was born.

An e-mail to G.W. Bush would be appropriate: president@whitehouse.gov

John Balzar, a columnist for the L.A. Times, wrote an interesting and pertinent article recently. He quotes President Bush speaking of his feelings about the magic of his 1600-acre ranch in Texas. "I'm able to clear my mind, and it helps me to put it all in perspective. Problems don't go away when we're here, but you can see them in a different light." We all yearn to escape the routine of everyday life. Many of us find renewal in the natural world: the quiet of a forest, the grandeur of our mountains, the delight of an unspoiled brook. This need for renewal, says our writer, is "one of the essential arguments for conservation." Cheney (who has extensive holdings in Wyoming) and Bush are happy with their natural retreats but their administration has "simultaneously stepped up the war against conservation of our public lands and waters." Balzar mentions the government-approved oil exploration in the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado. This is the home of the prehistoric Anasazi Indians who built a remarkable culture in tiers of caves carved out of rugged canyons. It is so rich in artifacts that it has become a mecca for archaeologists.

One wonders about the effects of seismic exploration for oil on these fragile ruins and the usual mess of oil extraction in this irreplaceable national treasure.

It is appalling to open the morning paper and find still another assault on the environment. More national monuments, old-growth forests, roadless wildernesses to be drilled or logged. Ashcroft's Justice Department claims that our coastal oceans up to 200 miles offshore are not covered by the National Environmental Policy Act which has forced the government to consider the environmental effect of its actions since 1969. If this claim is accepted it would permit the use of intense Navy sonar vibrations in the oceans that could deafen and kill whales and harm other oceanic creatures.

So it's fine for Bush and Cheney to have their own private Edens to renew their physical and mental energies. But what about the rest of us? We need the forests, the beaches, the mountains for the same release from tensions of the world just as they do but we haven't the money to buy our own personal estates. Since Teddy Roosevelt declared Yellowstone a national park over a hundred years ago, government has continued to set aside our unique places for all citizens. Now, with present and future wars against terrorism on the Administration's menu, we are being told – not asked – to sacrifice our natural blessings for a dubious cause. 



Audubon California Endorses Proposition 51

Audubon California has endorsed the Traffic Congestion Relief and Safe School Bus Act, or **Proposition 51**, which will appear on the California statewide ballot, November 5, 2002.

Prop 51 would allocate 30% of the state share of sales tax on motor vehicles for transportation improvements; approximately \$910 million a year.

Prop 51 will include a significant, permanent, annual investment to mitigate the impact transportation systems have on air, water, and land resources.

Prop 51 promotes habitat, open space and environmental protection by doubling the existing \$10 million dollar Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program.

Prop 51 creates the Transportation Impacts Mitigation Trust Fund of more than \$90 million a year for the acquisition or enhancement of resource lands, wildlife corridors and habitat linkages; projects to protect wildlife; projects to protect open-space lands from transportation development; and many others.

Prop 51 provides \$18 million a year to reduce the impacts of transportation development on water quality, funding projects for acquisition and restoration of riparian buffers, wetlands and watersheds, these habitat areas are especially effective at filtering and eliminating pollutants.

Prop 51 recognizes the environmental damage that transportation development (specifically of bridges and roads) has on rivers, their watersheds, and patterns of flow.

Prop 51 funds may be used for the restoration of individual rivers, as well as bike and hiking paths along rivers to provide alternative means of transportation.

Prop 51 includes environmentally-oriented transportation programs, including expanded public transit service, safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and clean-fuel school buses, aimed at reducing traffic congestion, enhancing air quality, and promoting transportation-related safety.

Prop 51 has been endorsed by over 200 organizations in addition to Audubon, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, Planning and Conservation League, Trust for Public Land, California Public Interest Research Group (CalPIRG), Sierra Club California, Endangered Habitats League, National Wildlife Federation, Union of Concerned Scientists, American Lung Association of California, and a cross-section of transportation, business, labor, health, education, and children's safety advocacy organizations.

More information about **Prop 51**, including the full list of endorsers and complete text of the initiative, can be found at www.voteyesonprop51.org.

Please vote **YES** on **Prop 51** when it appears on the ballot this November!

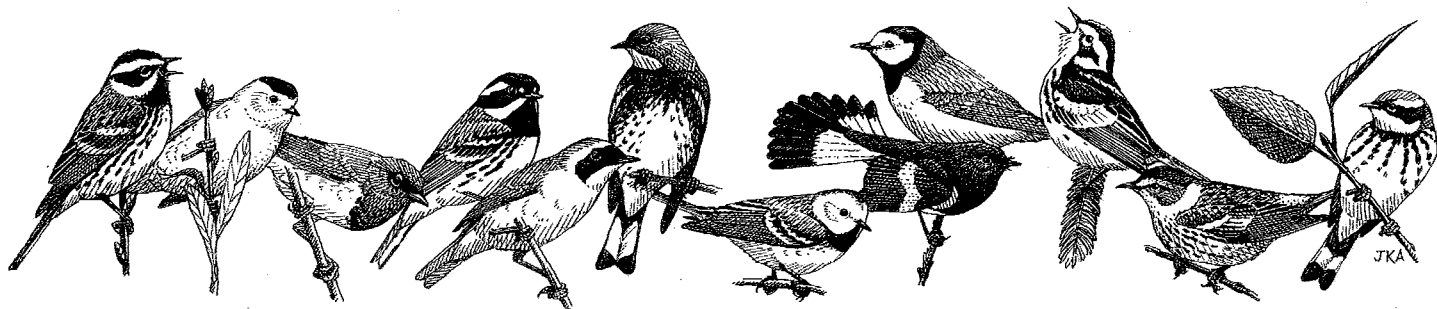
Many thanks, Evelyn!

In a volunteer organization such as Los Angeles Audubon Society there are many "behind the scenes" tasks that need to be done in order for our organization to operate. One of the most tedious and time-consuming jobs is the position of the Registrar. The Registrar is responsible for keeping track of the membership roster, entering the new members, deleting the old, and correcting the errors, as the information is received from National Audubon.

Recently Evelyn Weiskopf, our long time Registrar, announced her retirement. Evelyn has volunteered thousands of hours in the office for over twenty-two years, and she will be hard to replace. Hopefully she has her eye on a less demanding task and will still come in weekly to help out at Audubon House, as she has for so many years.

Thank you, Evelyn, for your many years of dedicated service.

Board of Directors
Los Angeles Audubon Society



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Daniel S. Cooper, Audubon California

Science depends on the accumulation of data over time, and the analysis of that data. The study of bird populations is no different, and one of the rewarding aspects of writing a column of sightings is the ability to look back over the years to track the changes or similarities.

The September *Birds of the Season* typically deals with late summer wanderings, often by young birds, and with the start of the pulse-quickenning fall migration through southern California, by far the most exciting time for area birders. Let's start with similarities. Last year, the "bird of the season" was a rare sandpiper (Curlew Sandpiper) found at a well-worked site (South Base Ponds, Edwards Air Force Base) by one of its most dedicated birders (Mike San Miguel). This year, that honor went to Kevin Larson and the remarkable **Little Stint** he discovered at the lower Los Angeles River on 25-26 August. This bird was carefully studied and documented by copious notes (thanks Todd McGrath and others!), which were broadcast to the world via



Little Stint - digital image

the Internet. Not only would this be the first Los Angeles County record, there are few records for the entire Western Hemisphere of this Siberian breeder.

Not quite as rare, but also exciting, was the immature **Reddish Egret** found by Dick Barth on 4 September along the same river, just upstream in Paramount, where it remained until 8 September. This is only the fourth record for the county, although this southern heron species is essentially annual in Orange and San Diego County, a pattern shared by Little Blue and Tricolored herons. Consistent coverage of the lower Los Angeles River continues to yield interesting records. Of major conservation importance is the

high number of shorebirds that stop here during the late summer and fall – up to 100 Semipalmated Plovers were tallied on 4 September (RB), among the thousands of peeps and other shorebirds.

Up to six **White-faced Ibis** were detected during the summer along the river (4 on 1 July, *fide* KL), which may reflect regional increases in their populations – typically just singles have been present in past years. A **Snowy Plover** was here on 31 August (KL) for the second fall in a row, during the period when shorebird species diversity peaks at the site. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, rare on the coastal slope, appeared from 18 August to at least 5 September (RB), and a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was at Rosecrans Blvd. on 19 August (Martin Byhower). With this species well established in residential areas of coastal Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, could this be a vanguard of things to come?

A "vagrant" **California Gnatcatcher** was detected for the second year in a row (last year's was at Angel's Gate Park in San Pedro on 24 August), with a bird at DeForest Park in Long Beach on 14 September (Kevin Larson). Rather than a fire-displaced refugee as speculated on the Internet, this bird was likely part of a regular dispersal pattern north from local breeding populations on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. As tiny patches of coastal sage scrub are restored around the basin, we may see more of these records, and more ambitious projects may just attract a pair or two to stick around, as they have recently at San Joaquin Marsh in Irvine.

Another waif that once had ample habitat in the Los Angeles area, a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was found dying on a lawn in Manhattan Beach on 20 July (*fide* Mitch Heindel). Scattered

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:

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Natural History Museum of L.A. County
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California Bird Records Committee

Guy McCaskie
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Imperial Beach, CA 91933-0275
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To report birds for the tape, call:

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

WESTERN Tanager

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

EDITOR: Jean Brandt
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Tom Frillman
CONSERVATION: Sandy Wohlgemuth
ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:
Kimball Garrett
FIELD TRIPS: Nick Freeman
PELAGIC TRIPS: Phil Sayre
PRINTING: Holden Color Inc.

Opinions expressed in articles or letters
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summer records from southern California suggest that despite having virtually no habitat left, birds continue to track along historic migration pathways.

Fall migration got off to an early start, with a big fallout in the south county on 20 August that included 30 Western Tanagers among a good assortment of flycatchers, vireos, and warblers (MH). Vagrants had already begun to show up in July, with a **Black-and-white Warbler** among the first of the fall at Peck Pit Park in El Monte/Arcadia from 29 July to 1 August, and a **Painted Bunting** (with a metal leg band!) in the same spot on 1-2 August (Andrew Lee). Also from the east, an



Painted Bunting - digital image

Ovenbird at Eaton Canyon Nature Center in Pasadena was a treat on 1-2 September (Jon Feenstra). Two **Tropical Kingbirds** were reported, unfortunately without details, on the remarkably early dates of 1 and 2 September at Sepulveda Basin and Palos Verdes, respectively (the latter moving with Westerns and Cassin's).

Less out-of-range migrants included a **Pectoral Sandpiper** reported from Sepulveda Basin on 1 September (Jim Hardesty) and a remarkable 7 adult **Common Terns** at Hansen Dam 18 August (Kimball Garrett), the first record for this well-worked site. Two **Common Ground-Doves** were along the San Gabriel River at Downey/Bellflower on 20 July (Matthew Schmah), and at least one was found by an observant Marion Hack as she played the "Vista Valencia Golf Course" in Valencia on 15 September. These two areas, the lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel rivers and the Santa Clara River Valley, represent the only two regions of the county where this species occurs.

Sea-watching from Pt. Vicente (Palos Verdes) rewarded MH with a view

of a distant (unidentified) **booby** on 1 September, as well as a **South Polar Skua**, both generally tough to see from shore. Building on last season's records of 2-3 adults west of Malibu, a juvenile **Pigeon Guillemot** was seen at Marina del Rey on 2 September (KL). Much remains to be learned about the occurrence of this species in southern California; it seems clear that small numbers of adults and juveniles disperse south along the coast in summer and fall, in numbers possibly tied to local population fluctuations. Another emerging pattern to watch is the mysteriously early arrival of some waterfowl in our area – yet another very early **Hooded Merganser** turned up (last year's was in the Santa Monica Mountains), this time along the Los Angeles River in Atwater Village from 11 August to at least 31 August.

Some fall "vagrants", such as Semipalmated Sandpiper, Virginia's Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow, and Bobolink, are now seen in appropriate habitat in the basin with enough frequency to not merit special attention, but **Clay-colored Sparrow** is difficult enough to identify that observers should still submit good details when they find one. One was reported from Hansen Dam 6-7 September (MSM). Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont came through again with a **Broad-billed Hummingbird** 8-10 September (Michael J. San Miguel, Jr.). This southwestern vagrant is rare anywhere in the state, and has only been found a handful of times in Los Angeles County. Compared to last summer, fall records have been sparse for the other southwestern wanderers (White-winged Dove, Sage Thrasher, Black-throated Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, Summer Tanager). Will these birds turn up this winter, or will they take a year (or two) off? 

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

Book Review:

A Birdfinding Guide to Del Norte County, California

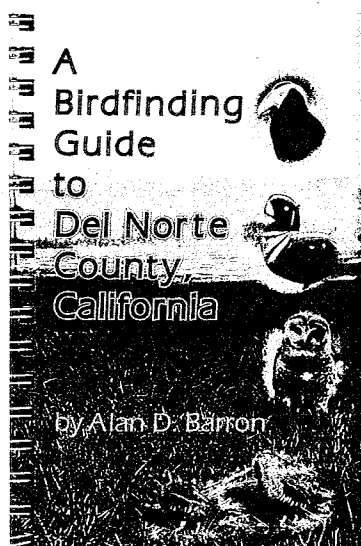
by Alan D. Barron

Illustrations by Alan Barron and
Cindie Brunner

Redwood Economic Development Institute
2001

212 pgs. soft cover
\$19.95

What we ask of a good field guide is: where to go, when to go, how to go, and what birds are expected, with comprehensive descriptions of all of the above. This guide more than satisfies that criterion. It contains all of the information any birder might need to thoroughly bird the northwest corner of California.



Del Norte County has an imposing list of 407 bird species recorded and is called "the Galapagos of North America" by the World Wildlife fund – very good reasons to explore this part of the state.

The introduction is just that. And you couldn't ask for a better one! It contains a list, by month, of birds and the best places to look for them. Next is a list of habitats. History, travel hints, and weather are also covered here. Read this, and you will have a very good idea of what Del Norte County has to offer.

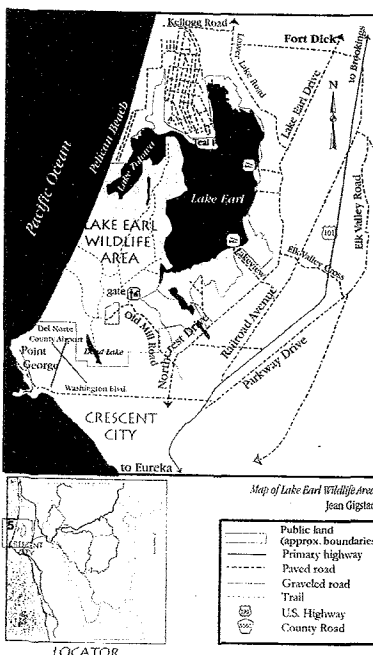
Chapters 1–13 give descriptions of birding areas. The details are extremely well researched and presented in a reader-friendly layout. Maps are excellent and many fine line drawings and photos are included. Directions, to the hundredth (.01) of a mile, are explicit and helpful. Butterflies are also covered and good places to

look for them are mentioned within each chapter. The author writes in a manner that entices one to spend a lot more time than the usual quick-and-dirty birding trip, chasing some rarity. One wishes to have the luxury of time to see and experience everything mentioned.

Useful References, a Checklist of Butterflies, and one of Amphibians and Reptiles, follows. I would have liked to have seen a similar list of mammals. However, perhaps the most important section of the book is at the end, where you will find the Bird Checklist with excellent seasonal bar-graphs for every species recorded in Del Norte County.

Alan Barron has lived in Del Norte County for 18 years, where he is employed conducting biosurveys of birds, butterflies, reptiles, and amphibians for many agencies. His experience and dedication makes this book a valuable addition to the many local field guides that have been published in recent years. I heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in birds, butterflies, photography, or nature. It makes good reading and will whet your appetite for an excursion to the beautiful and rewarding northwest corner of our state.

Review by: Jean Brandt



Typical map which accompanies each chapter.

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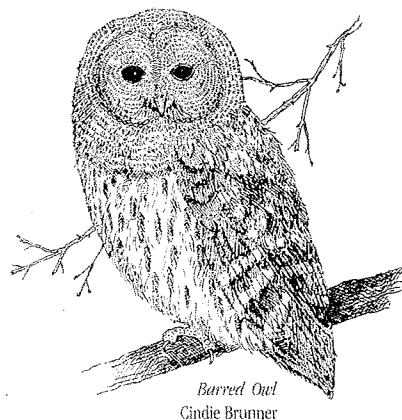
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from the Bookstore Staff



GOD and ST. FRANCIS – LAWN CARE DISCUSSION

Anonymous, from the Internet.

GOD: Francis, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle, and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it – sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No Sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: Where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough. I don't want to think about this anymore. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have they scheduled for us tonight?"

ST. CATHERINE: "Dumb and Dumber", Lord. It's a really stupid movie about . . .

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from Francis.

Omission:

We printed an article –*Orphan Birds*– in the last issue without giving you an address where you can mail your donation. We regret the omission. Here is the address and we hope that you will consider sponsoring one of the birds on the list.

Los Angeles Audubon Society
c/o Breeding Bird Atlas
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

Thanksgiving Bird Count

Thanksgiving Bird Counts are to take place on Thanksgiving Day. The counter chooses the time that best fits his/her holiday schedule. It might even provide a welcome, but short, break on the holiday, since the count is to take only ONE HOUR. It is made in a circle only 15 FEET in diameter, the location of which is determined by the participant. Count Circles are usually located around whatever attracts birds – feeders, baths, cover, etc. Most participants select a count area visible from a comfortable spot near a window. The same circles should be used each year.

The Count Circle can be considered a cylinder, since only birds passing through or over the area can be counted (as long as they pass through the upward circle cylinder). Individual birds are to be counted only once during the hour, even if they pay repeated visits to the count circle. Flocks should be counted when you determine their largest numbers in the circle at one time.

Last year 448 individuals in the eleven Western States and Alaska made 452 counts. Most numerous species, as usual, was House Sparrow, with 3,013 tallied. Second was House Finch (2,352), followed by Pine Siskin (2,318), then Dark-eyed Junco (2,063), and Mourning Dove (908). Counters should send in reports even if no birds were seen during the count hour.

Although not as well known as Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, the Thanksgiving Counts were begun in 1966 by Dr. Ernest Edwards and the Lynchburg Bird Club in Virginia. Dr. John Hewston took over coordinating and compiling this count for the western states, Alaska, and Hawaii in 1992, so this year marks the beginning of our second decade of 'western' Thanksgiving Counts.

For more information contact:

Dr. John Hewston
Natural Resources Building
Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA 95521
(202) 822-5288

FIELD TRIPS

continued from page 12

From L.A., take 10 or 210 fwy east towards San Dimas onto the stretch of the 210 that curves south. Proceed N from the 10, or S along the 210 to the Via Verde exit just N of the 10/57/210 interchange (at the bottom of Kellogg Hill). If coming from the S, be alert that it comes up fast. Proceed Rt. off the ramp onto Via Verde to the "Park and Ride" lot. We will meet here at 8:00 A.M. to carpool since there is a \$6.00/car park entrance fee. Rod will continue after lunch, if there is interest. There are picnic tables and facilities. Bring lunch, if you plan to bird into the afternoon.

Sunday, December 1 —

Topanga State Park. Leaders: **Ken Wheeland** and **Chris Tosdevin**.

See November 3 listing for details.

Meet at 8:00 A.M.

Sunday, December 8 —

Whittier Narrows. Leader: **Ray Jillson**.

See November 10 listing for details.

Meet at 8:15 A.M.

Saturday, December 14 —

Lancaster Christmas Count. Contact compiler **Nick Freeman** (818) 247-6172 or mnfreeman@earthlink.net if you want a chance to see Rough-legged Hawk, longspurs, Mountain Plover, Common Raven (somewhat more likely) in this fairly agricultural corner of the county. Network and reacquaint at lunch, and chase or visit Piute Ponds afterwards, as time permits.

Sunday, December 15 —

Malibu Christmas Count. Contact compiler **Larry Allen** (323) 221-2022 or larry.allen@genesis1st.com to participate in this well-attended and impressively productive count. Included in count blocks are oak and sycamore-lined canyons and shoreline.

Saturday, December 21 —

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

Leader: **Eric** and **Ann Brooks**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See Nov. 16 listing for details.

Saturday, January 11 —

West Antelope Valley. Leader: **Scott Harris**. Always popular, with winter raptors like Ferruginous, Rough-legged and multi-flavored Red-tailed hawks, Prairie Falcon and Merlin, as well as Mountain Bluebird and Mt. Plover are all possible. Take Hwy 14 N to Avenue S (next to Lake Palmdale). Drive into the Park-and-Ride just to the east. Bring lunch (and a chair?) for a full day of fun in the field. Meet at 8:00 A.M. near the E end of the lot.

Saturday, January 18 —

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area.

Leader: **Kris Olenkamp**. "Freeway close" morning of birding. Kris has led this walk on-and-off for 20 years, noting 200 species, and averaging 60-65 per walk. Take the 405 Fwy N into the San Fernando Valley, turn W on Burbank Blvd. and N (Rt.) on Woodley Ave. to the second Rt., which is marked "Wildlife Area". Turn here and park in the lot at the end. Meet at 8:00 A.M. and bird until about 11:30 A.M.

Saturday, January 25 —

Lakeview / San Jacinto Wildlife

Refuge. Leader: **Howard King**. Meet at Ramona Expressway and Davis Road at 8:00 A.M. More details in the January *Western Tanager*.

Saturday-Sunday, February 1-2 —

Salton Sea. Leader: **Nick Freeman**.

Tentatively meeting Saturday afternoon at SESS. More details in the January *Western Tanager*.

Friday and Sunday, February 7 and 9 —

Gull Workshop. Host: **Larry Allen**. Lecture at Eaton Canyon on February 7 (free). Field trip at Doheny Beach on February 9, fee: \$10. More details in the January *Western Tanager*.

Our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Gerry Haigh who is stepping down as the primary leader of the Topanga State Park walks co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. He has led this walk nearly every month since 1972 – 30 years! – Thanks.

Christmas Counts!

The Los Angeles Audubon Society sponsors three annual Christmas Bird Counts. Everyone is urged to participate. You will be assigned an area to cover with other birders and will have a very rewarding experience. The get-together at lunch is always a fun happening – good birds bragged about, misery shared (cold, hot, wind, traffic, etc), Cathy's famous brownies (Malibu Count only), old and new friends to greet. New and/or inexperienced birders are welcome. Please contact the compiler of any count you may want to join.

Lancaster Christmas Count

Saturday, December 14

Compiler – **Nick Freeman**

(818) 247-6172

mnfreeman@earthlink.net

Malibu Christmas Count

Sunday, December 15

Compiler – **Larry Allen**

(323) 221-2022

4791 Huntington Drive North

Los Angeles, CA 90032.

larryallen@earlymusicla.org

Los Angeles Christmas Count

Date and compiler to be announced on the **Bird Tape: (323) 874-1318**

Sixth Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

November 21-24, 2002

Hosted by the Central Valley Bird Club at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton, CA. Speakers include Kevin Karlson, Shawneen Finnegan, Ed Harper, Jon Dunn, Kimball Garrett, and Joe Morlan. We will have field trips, workshops, and a "Birder's Market" with vendors and artists selling birding related items. Activities and classes will be for beginners as well as more advanced birders. More info is at www.cvbs.org.

PELAGIC TRIPS

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.**

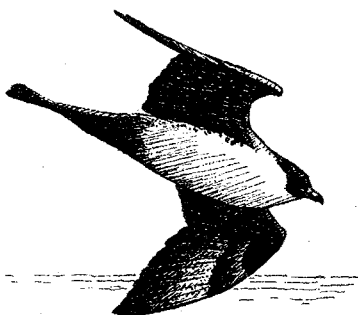
\$79 — full galley on board.

Saturday, February 22 —

Palos Verdes Escarpment to the Redondo Channel. This eight-hour trip departs from Marina del Rey at 7:30 A.M. on the R/V UCLA Seaworld. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Short-tailed, Black-vented, Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Xantus's Murrelet, Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Gray Whales are usually seen.

Leaders: TBA.

\$50 — coffee only, 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.*

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.

LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

THE BEST OF COSTA RICA — February 23-March 5

Only a few spaces remain on this exciting trip that highlights Costa Rica's incredible system of national parks. Enjoy superb neotropical birding and wildlife viewing.

AMAZON VOYAGE — PERU — June 14-22

Machu Picchu, Extension — June 22-27

Cruise the Amazon aboard La Amatista, a graceful 19th century style expedition ship with excursions up streams in small boats into seasonally flooded forests, and walks in terra firma forests, offering specialized birding and wildlife.

SOUTH AFRICA — BOTSWANA — November 13-23

ZAMBIA Extension — November 23-29

Travel through this magnificent land of untamed beauty by way of a modern safari. Wildlife is prolific. Then continue your adventure to ZAMBIA, with views of Victoria Falls, and the Luangwa National Park, where one of the richest concentrations of mammals and birds can be found in Africa.

FOR ITINERARIES and MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Olga Clarke, Travel Director
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
Ph/Fax: (818) 249-9511
e-mail: oclarketravel@earthlink.net

EVENING MEETINGS

Meet at 7:30 P.M.

in
Plummer Park

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

www.laaudubon.org/general/plmprk.html

Tuesday, November 12 Reed Tollefson –

Kern River Preserve

Reed will speak on stewardship, land acquisition, protection, and research at the Kern River Preserve.

Tuesday, December 10 Joe Furhman, Photographer –

"Birds of the Southern California Deserts"

Come and enjoy Joe's wonderful photographs of resident, migrant and unexpected rare vagrant species photographed at Joshua Tree National Park over the past 15 springs.

Meeting Raffle:

To increase your chances of winning, visit the LAAS Bookstore and Headquarters either on meeting day or the Saturday immediately preceding the monthly meeting and receive an extra raffle ticket to submit at the meeting.

Good luck!

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, November 3 –

Topanga State Park. Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new in the area. Ken and Chris will be taking over for Gerry Haigh, who has been leading this walk for 30 years! From Ventura Blvd., take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles S, turn E 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, November 10 –

Whittier Narrows. Leader: Ray Jillson. View colorful resident and wintering 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 (Rt.), turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. \$2 donation. Meet at 8:15 A.M.

Saturday, November 16 –

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. Leader: Eleanor Osgood. This trip covers landscaped parkland and natural coastal scrub habitats, and is paced for beginning birders and members of the Baldwin Hills community. The park entrance is off of 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, November 16 –

Newport Back Bay. Leader Mary Freeman. We will look for rails flushed out by the 6.2ft. high tide, as well as Royal Tern and California Gnatcatcher. Take the 405 Fwy S to Jamboree Blvd. going SW toward the ocean. Turn right on Bristol St., then take a left on Irvine Ave. Turn left on a small street called University Dr. Park at the end, walk down the hill, over the bridge, and to the end of the boardwalk. Plan for a full day in the area. Bring lunch. Meet at 7:32 A.M. (high tide).

Sunday, November 17 –

Ballona Wetlands. Bob Shanman will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland and adjacent rocky jetty. Large-billed Savannah Sparrows possible. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90 W) to Culver Blvd., turn left for a mile, turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three-hour walk. 'scopes helpful. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

Saturday, November 23 –

Bonelli Regional Park. Leader Rod Higbie. Bonelli Regional Park has lake, coastal sage, mixed woodland, and riparian habitats. Birds regularly seen include California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. Golden Eagle, Hooded Merganser, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and 200 other species are also possible.

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

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