

# WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 69 Number 4 March/April 2003

Los Angeles Audubon Society

## *Back to Ecuador (Part I)*

**A**bout 25 years ago, I was invited to be the naturalist on a tour to the Galapagos. The tour included a few days in mainland Ecuador. The Galapagos were interesting, though miserably hot. My only duty was to keep the tourists from trampling the booby nests. The mainland was the real surprise, unexpectedly beautiful, full of life. I knew I must return someday.

In December, 2001, I realized the time had finally arrived. I searched the internet for lodges, guides, and air fares. Jane Lyons of Mindo Bird Tours understood what I wanted, and suggested an itinerary. I could explore both slopes of the Andes and even spend a few days in Amazonia! Talking my friend Richard Hoover into joining this expedition was easy. We had enough experience in Costa Rica to feel comfortable on the eco-tourism circuit, and the idea of escaping southern California's freeways and air pollution was enticing. Assured that the weather in Ecuador was always unpredictable, with a combination of good and bad at any time of year, we cheerfully seized the first available date.

Our adventure began July 1, 2002, with a flight from Los Angeles to Bogotá, Colombia via Mexico City, then on to Quito. This route has two advantages: lower fares, and shorter layovers. The winds over Quito that night were fierce. I turned green and held on for dear life, while a business traveler exclaimed with every heart-stopping jolt, "*Muy bonito!*"

In 25 years, the country had changed! Quito is full of wonderful sights, and the famous pickpockets in the old city ignored us. The standard of living has improved. The revolution of computers and cell phones is in full swing. The official currency is the U.S. dollar. Prices are reasonable. The Ecuadorians are touchingly modest. Responding to our wide-eyed enthusiasm after every adventure, they would say, "But our country is the smallest in South America. You should see the rest of South America!" They had to be reminded of their own spectacular scenery and wildlife.

Our base of operations was a small hotel, La Cartuja, near the American Embassy. The staff was friendly and accommodating. After a couple days of sightseeing, we were ready for our first expedition, down the eastern slope of the Andes.

Our guide was Edison Buenaño, who proved his worth at our first stop. While pouring coffee from a thermos this cold morning, he spotted the day's first bird, the Andean Condor, now quite rare. Edison, a former resident manager at Bellavista Lodge, is experienced with foreign birders. He kept us cheerful even in the worst rain



*Birding near Guango Lodge: the mountains, the rain, the guide, the pipeline construction.*

and mud. He pointed out the field marks and behaviors of each species as we encountered them. This experience proved important later on, when we had to share a guide with other birders.

We quickly realized the entire country is "becoming". Quito has new bus lanes for mass transit (though not enough money was left to buy the buses). Throughout the city, buildings are going up or coming down. In the countryside, an oil pipeline is being built, and with it, new roads and power lines. This construction project will define Ecuador for years to come. Will it succeed, or will it destroy "the environment"?

In Ecuador, there are few places where a major road or a pipeline can be built over the mountains. The pipeline mainly follows the major road from the Amazonian forests through Quito, then west to the ports. This is the same route taken by most local traffic, including bird-watchers. The birds themselves do not necessarily prefer these locations; rather, these are the areas most explored by birders. Huge tracts on either side of the road seem completely inaccessible due to the steepness of the terrain. If the pipeline project can stay within the 30m strip called for in the plans, actual damage may be minimal. But there are ruffled feathers on both sides of the pipeline debate. The country needs revenue, and even if some habitat is destroyed, the improved roads will benefit natives and tourists alike.

We soon reached Papallacta, the highest Andean pass most travelers will visit, at an elevation of about 4,000m. On a clear day, many volcanoes can be seen, but it is more often cold, windy, and very

wet. The pass is the gateway to the east side of the Andes and the jungle beyond. We stopped at a reserve north of the highway to explore the paramo habitat. While the guidebooks say paramo is grasslands, a closer look reveals a diverse but miniature plant community. There are birds, too, though sometimes hard to see. While waiting for the birds, we explored the beauty of the paramo with a close-up lens. Entire realms of colorful foliage, flowers, and fruits thrive within a couple inches of the ground. Not far below Papallacta Pass, barely at the treeline, are the famous Papallacta Hot Springs. The pastures above the thermal resort were full of hummingbirds, tanagers, and tyrannulets, as well as exotic flowers and fruits.

The eastern slope of the Andes, at least the section we saw, is remarkable for the role played by erosion. The geology is chaotic. There are large, convoluted seams of mica that decay into unstable soils, and then into slippery mud. There are unimaginable colors of mud: black, white, red, green, even pale purple and aqua, depending on the minerals in the soil. We hiked through mud of all colors, up to our ankles.

The mountain forests are gashed by countless large and small landslides. Every one of these patches undergoes a rapid ecological succession. There is so much slippage and regeneration going on it is hard to find a mature patch of gallery forest, except in the few flat areas. Instead, the forest contains a baffling array of plant and animal communities. While it can be hard to see the birds in these unruly thickets, the botanical spectacle is overwhelming, like a terrarium gone mad. And butterflies were everywhere!

I soon understood that ecological succession will begin the day the pipeline crews leave. This is not to say everything will be as it was; there are still many things that can go wrong. But the profusion of life that springs up almost overnight on any patch of bare earth will assert itself.

By late afternoon, we reached

Guango Lodge, among the forests and mud of the eastern slope at about 2,600m. The lodge is bordered by the new road on one side, and the Guango River on the other. The pipeline under construction is across the river. The road shakes under heavy truck traffic. Nevertheless, bird parties visit the grounds of the lodge, and trails lead up to the hillsides above the road. One trail about a mile west of the lodge follows a rocky stream through a rare section of undisturbed gallery forest. The forest had a familiar, Californian look: the dominant tree was an alder, *Alnus acuminatus*, and the residents included Band-tailed Pigeon and Black Phoebe!

Farther down slope, at about 2,000m, Mitch and Carmen Lysinger have turned their lodge at San Isidro into a rustic paradise. The food was sensational, especially given the remoteness of the lodge. A particularly fine soup flavored with peanut and banana sent the guests into raptures. At dinner, a guest exclaimed that we were eating one of the "lost tubers of the Incas". I believe he was mistaken: we still have the tuber; it was the Incas who were lost! We had one afternoon of fine weather before the rains closed in. Even so, we watched bird parties from a covered lookout, and saw all the resident hummingbirds, as well as tanagers in all colors. This is one place I want to see again in a drier season!

After the mountain rains, the ride down to the lowlands was glorious. The weather improved mile by mile, and the pace of life in the villages increased, too. By the time we reached the bustling frontier town of Tena, gateway to Amazonia, it was as if we were in a different country. We shed our rain gear and sweaters for a roadside lunch, then followed the Napo River toward our next stop. Along the road east of Tena, where life is still very primitive, the biggest development apart from the pipeline seemed to be a *Letrínización Familiar* project; i.e., every family should have its own outhouse! New outhouses, brightly painted, are displayed along the road, but the project still has a long way to go. In such circumstances, a new paved road will have tremendous impact. Produce will move to market faster. Vehicles will last longer. It will be feasible to reach more distant markets, and to obtain supplies with less difficulty.



Stumped by austral migrants, lowlands near Rio Napo



Rio Napo near Cabañas Aliñahui

Locals are counting on the road to attract visitors, too. The price of land along the Napo River has jumped in anticipation of a tourist bonanza.

The Cabañas Aliñahui had seen better days. At some time in the past, they had hot water, reliable lights, beautiful gardens, and finer dining. The gardens are still beautiful, but overgrown. Huge fruit trees stand neglected. We stumbled around in complete darkness for two nights before someone figured out how to connect the solar-powered batteries to our cabin. By now we had figured out how to cope with the rain, and besides, the weather was definitely better. While we reviewed our bird list on our covered veranda, the afternoon rain abated, and we added five new species from a nearby tree, including a picture-perfect pair of Swallow Tanagers just as we reached that page in the field guide. In the few days we were there, some very odd species turned up, such as Brownish Twistwing, Guira Tanager, and Yellow-throated Spadebill.

Aliñahui has resident guides who plan daily adventures. The first one seemed to be a simulated conquest of the Inca Empire. The famous expedition of Gonzalo Pizarro and Francisco Orellana passed nearby in 1541, so perhaps this was a commemorative march! The guide wanted to show us the forest from a hilltop, blazing a trail with his machete. We shoved and pushed each other up and down slippery and spiny hillsides, and somehow reached our goal, rewarded by close views of Paradise Tanagers. But we were almost too exhausted to appreciate the landscape. As it was, we had barely enough energy to make it back to our van. The next day, the guide wanted to show

us the river. We could already see it was extremely high and muddy after last night's storm. Could we make a short canoe trip and then spend the afternoon at the lodge? No, that would inconvenience the cook, who wanted to send everyone out with a packed lunch and then have the rest of the day off! We compromised: we took our packed

lunch and spent the day in Edison's SUV, birding along the road east of Aliñahui. It was the best day yet. We stayed dry and comfortable, and we turned up one fine bird after another.

A Dark-billed Cuckoo, an austral migrant, posed by the road to show off its field marks. A tall snag produced an interesting woodpecker, but as we argued whether its back was spotted or not, we discovered we were looking at two different species in the same tree. A pasture gave us at least 20 new species, and then a new spinetail virtually underfoot. Even the swifts flew close enough for identification.

Our week on the eastern slope passed too quickly. We were tired and muddy, but sad to leave the Napo River behind, not to mention our guide and companion. Edison drove us back over the Andes, stopping for lunch and a couple more duck species below Papallacta. We were all too soon back in Quito. The staff at La Cartuja welcomed us warmly. We had been well prepared and luckier than many birders: all our plans had worked out perfectly, with only one short delay. Now we turned our attention to preparing for our next adventure, a morning flight to a lodge deep in the Amazon jungle.

*John McCoy received his Doctorate in Zoology from the University of Illinois and is currently a software engineer in the L.A. area. His idea of a perfect hike is one with lots of birds, and modern plumbing at the end.*

*Back to Ecuador continues in the May/June Western Tanager.*

## The Power of Citizen Science

Dr. Frank Gill of National Audubon Society will present a program in Newport Beach, on Friday, March 21, 2003.

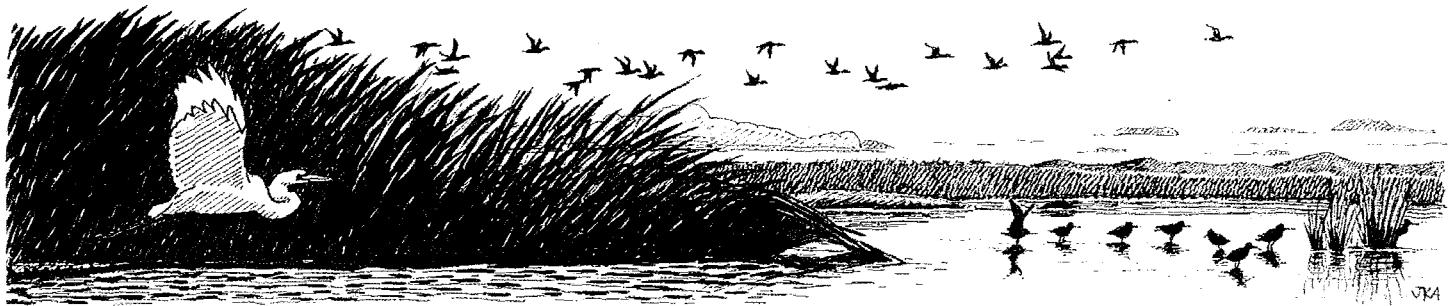
Dr. Gill is one of the most broadly-skilled and widely-respected ornithologists in the world today. His path from avid youthful birder to writing the definitive text, *Ornithology*, to the halls of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science, to editing the multi-volume opus *The Birds of North America*, to Director of Science for the National Audubon Society. He has found the time to serve as president of the American Ornithologists' Union and further his interest in promoting birding and science with various board and committee appointments and commitments. Dr. Gill's position with the NAS encompasses many of the citizen science projects that are familiar to most of us.

Dr. Gill is noted for being a wonderful and entertaining public speaker. He will take us on a tour of his career as he explains the many long-term ornithology studies and science projects originating from the National Audubon Society that depend on birders like him and us. Projects that need birders from all walks of life, all professions, all levels of interest and, all levels of birding skills to make them happen.

Please join us for this exceptional opportunity to welcome Dr. Frank Gill of the National Audubon Society to southern California as he speaks on some of the topics he loves most: ornithology, birds, birders, and birding. Mark the date on your calendar now – Friday, March 21, 2003 at 6 P.M. at the Radisson Hotel, Newport Beach.

Please call Sea and Sage Audubon for dinner and program – \$40.50 – reservations and information, at (949) 261-7963.

Reservations are necessary.



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

## Seeking New Traffic Study, L.A. May Sue Over Ahmanson Ranch

(Los Angeles Times, 12-12-02)

**T**his headline will indicate the state of the controversy over protection or development of the remaining open space in America. The Ahmanson Ranch, a 2800-acre unspoiled parcel is owned by the Washington Mutual Bank that has been trying to build a \$2 billion golf course city there since the early 1990s. The plans include 3050 expensive homes, a hotel, TWO golf courses, and 400,000 square feet of retail space and offices.

The ranch is north of the Ventura Freeway and is near Las Virgenes Road and the city of Calabasas. Surveys predict an additional 45,000 vehicles per day on the already crowded freeway and will impact travel deep into the west valley. Development will threaten several sensitive habitats including walnut and valley oak woodlands, coast live oak riparian forest, and a rare native needlegrass grassland.

Two federally endangered species have been found here: the San Fernando valley spineflower and the red-legged frog. The source of the Malibu Creek watershed is in the ranch where construction of homes and businesses seems certain to pollute the creek all the way to Malibu Lagoon. A recent discovery that a well and the underlying aquifer contain seven times the safe concentration of perchlorate for drinking water set by the state. Toxic perchlorate was used in testing nuclear reactors at the Rocketdyne facility where there are still radiation problems.

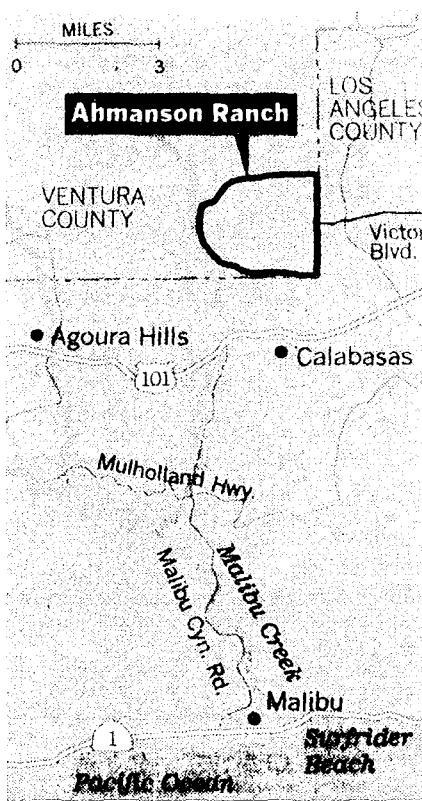
Government officials believe there is a strong possibility that perchlorate has migrated to the nearby ranch.

When fully developed the new city will eliminate vital wildlife corridors going north from the Santa Monica mountains to the Santa Susanna mountains, so preventing native animals from finding food and mates. The project is complicated by the fact that the entire area lies within Ventura County where it sits cheek by jowl with Los Angeles County. The Ventura County people have strongly encouraged the development because both property and sales taxes will come their way. Los Angeles County will be burdened with the inconvenience and cost of maintaining the burgeoning freeway as the trapped

Angeleno commuters scream for help. Ignoring the cries of the opposition, on December 19th the Ventura Board of Supervisors voted to give Washington Mutual permission to get state and federal permits to turn the first shovelful of soil. Almost immediately the L.A. City Council voted unanimously to sue Ventura County. Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn has been opposed all along to the Ahmanson project and agrees that legal action will be necessary if Ventura does not listen to the city. The City of Calabasas said they would sue and the L.A. County Supervisors joined the chorus. California Attorney-General Bill Lockyer has said all along that the environmental threat of the project was too much and he may bring the state into the picture.

The public has not been unmindful of this threat to the beautiful green hills at the junction of Las Virgenes Road and the freeway. Washington Mutual's argument that it is serving the needs of the community by providing sorely needed housing creates a skeptical response: "Yeah, 3050 million-dollar homes!" And there have been a number of big meetings where people hear prominent scientists, political luminaries, and plain folks who want to have their say. The 1992 Environmental Impact Report on traffic is considered pitifully out of date by L.A. transportation officials with the huge increase in population and automobiles. A new study must be made, yet the Ventura supervisors ignored the obvious and approved a \$2 billion project that guarantees freeway gridlock.

Commenting on the 1992 EIR, the California Native Plant Society said, at the time, "Direct loss of 1800 acres of plant communities and wildlife habitat;



fragmentation of adjacent, maintained, native communities within the site; mid-term to long-term loss of riparian woodland, and specific loss of coastal sage scrub."

This is a just fight in our own back yard. No one is asking for money – our environmental friends in the entertainment industry are putting their own

money and energy into the struggle. Let's hope that the lawyers know their stuff and we win the battle.

*The media's description of this story changed almost weekly and the writer's attempt to cover it meant changing the message frequently as it spilled out. By the time you read it, it all might be settled and hist*



## NEWS FROM THE BOARD

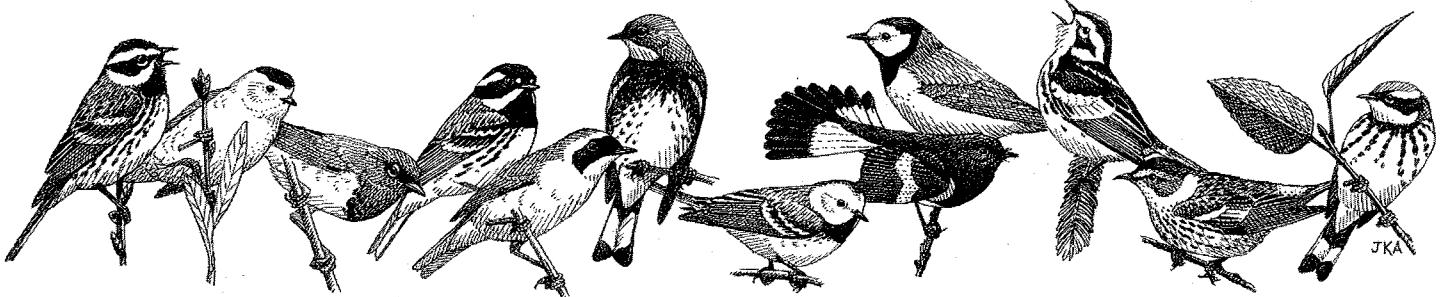
### ELECTIONS —

Along with spring migration comes the annual election of the Executive Board of Los Angeles Audubon Society, Inc. In the January 2, 2003 Board meeting the Executive Committee appointed 2nd VP Garry George Chairman of the Nominations Committee and in the January 14, 2003 general meeting the Members elected Mary Freeman and Margo de Grosse to join Garry on the Nominating Committee. This three person Nominations Committee will meet and propose a slate of officers at the April 8 meeting. At that meeting members may nominate additional candidates or by written notice before April 8 to the Executive Board, LAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd, West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694 and supported by written petition signed by at least fifteen (15) members of the Society. Members will vote on the slate presented by the Nominating Committee and additional candidates if there are any in the May 13 meeting. PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND IF YOU CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF LAAS. Elected candidates will take office July 1, 2003 at the Board Meeting.

### CONSERVATION —

The Board voted unanimously to support Friends of Piute Ponds and L.A. birders Mike San Miguel and Todd McGrath in their attempts to create a wetlands at Piute Ponds as part of the planned expansion of the water sanitation facilities in the city of Lancaster. L.A. Sanitation District 14 predicts the addition of 70,000 new homes in the Antelope Valley by 2005 and the facility must double in capacity to handle that much waste water. Mike, Todd, and LAAS' 2nd VP Garry George spoke publicly in support of the wetlands citing other projects such as Arcata marsh in northern California: [www.humboldt.edu/~ere\\_dept/marsh/](http://www.humboldt.edu/~ere_dept/marsh/) and also southern Florida's Wakodahatchee wetlands: [www.pbcwater.com/wakodahatchee/](http://www.pbcwater.com/wakodahatchee/) both of which are successful created wetlands for use as drying ponds which have brought economic prosperity to their regions. Environmental Sciences, a private corporation, will begin their \$600,000 Environmental Impact Report in the next few months exploring the proposed options for expansion of the facilities, and the hope is that January 9th testimony will put the wetlands alternative

back in the report as a viable alternative to concrete drying vats on property purchased by the Water District. Local politicians and businessmen spoke in opposition to the use of Piute Ponds or any other property on Edwards AFB by the sanitation facility even though the AFB has indicated its willingness to lease some of the base to the Sanitation District and supports the use of the Ponds as an educational and public wetlands. The businesses and politicians fear that the precedent of leasing will be the beginning of a flood of law-suits and requests to lease land from the base that will eventually cause the the Air Force to abandon the base and the aerospace military economy that the Antelope Valley depends on. Their campaign is entitled *NO ENCROACHMENT* and asks the EIR to only limit the evaluation and the project to the purchase of private properties adjacent to the current sanitation facilities. They also cited the fear of "bird strikes" on test aircraft but no past such incidents were cited. No AFB officials spoke at the scoping meeting.



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

This *Birds of the Season* column is a compilation of bird reports from Los Angeles County taken from the RBA tape that is recorded weekly by Jon Fisher. The birds mentioned were seen during the week indicated. We expect to resume the regular column in the near future.

## October 31, 2002 —

A female **Surf Scoter**, a **Eurasian Wigeon**, and a **Plumbeous Vireo** were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas. A **Baird's Sandpiper** and a **Tropical Kingbird** were reported from Malibu Lagoon.

**Lewis' Woodpeckers** were reported in Claremont, and Malibu Creek State Park. A **Least Flycatcher** was at Sand Dune Park. A **Black-and-white Warbler** and a **White-throated Sparrow** were also seen. A **Palm Warbler** was at Harbor Regional Park in Wilmington.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** were reported at the Pomona Cemetery.

A **Clay-Colored Sparrow**, an **Indigo Bunting**, and a **Bobolink** were found along the San Gabriel River in Pico Rivera. Two **Large-billed Savannah Sparrows** were at the south jetty at Marina del Rey.

## November 7, 2002 —

A **Greater Scaup** was reported along the Los Angeles River just southwest of the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area in Van Nuys. Several **Brown Creepers** were reported away from their usual haunts. Locations include the Baldwin Hills, Santa Fe Dam and near Dodger Stadium.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Rancho Park in Simi Valley.

A **Vesper Sparrow** was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale.

## November 14, 2002 —

A **Hooded Merganser** and a **Clay-colored Sparrow** were along the San Gabriel River between Dunlap Crossing and Whittier Blvd.

A **Summer Tanager** was at the Pomona Cemetery.

A **White-Throated Sparrow** was at Eaton Canyon.

## November 21, 2002 —

A nearly pure albino **Red-tailed Hawk** was seen at Brackett Field on the east side of Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas. Two **Black Oystercatchers** were on the jetty at Marina del Rey. The **Large-billed Savannah Sparrow** continued in this area as well.

The **Tropical Kingbird** continued to be reported from Malibu Lagoon.

Reports of **Varied Thrushes** this past week have come from Towsley Canyon near Santa Clarita, from Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont, and from Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach.

An **Orchard Oriole** and a **Summer Tanager** female were also seen at Sand Dune Park.

A **Rusty Blackbird** was found last weekend at Harbor Park in Wilmington.

## December 5, 2002 —

Three **Lewis' Woodpeckers** continued to be reported along Malibu Canyon Road near the entrance to Malibu Creek State Park.

A male **Vermilion Flycatcher** and a **Baltimore Oriole** were at El Dorado Park in Long Beach.

A **Varied Thrush** and a very late **Yellow-breasted Chat** were reported from Sand Dune Park.

## December 5, 2002 —

A **Long-tailed Duck** was at the L.A. River mouth.

A **Common Goldeneye**, a **Greater Scaup**, and a **Red-throated Loon** were seen at Quail Lake.

A flock of 80 **Mountain Plover** was seen just south of Avenue L between 40th and 50th Street East. This location is east of Palmdale in the Antelope Valley.

Two **Varied Thrush** and a female **Summer Tanager** were still at Sand Dune Park.

## December 19, 2002 —

The **Long-tailed Duck** at the L.A. River mouth continued to be seen.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** was seen at Ladera Park.

The **Pasadena/San Gabriel Valley CBC** was held on Saturday, December 14. The current species total stands at 153. Highlights follow . . . There were three **Ross' Geese** (one at Lincoln Park, two at Legg Lake). A **Peregrine Falcon** was near Peck Pit in Monrovia. Several **Western Gulls** and two **Glaucous-winged Gulls** were also found. One **Rufous Hummingbird** was reported at Scholl Canyon. A **Gray Flycatcher** was at Oak Grove Park (aka Hahamonga Watershed Park) in Pasadena. Six **Barn Swallows** (Legg Lake and Peck Pit) and one **Violet-green Swallow** (Peck) were found. The **Brown Thrasher** that has wintered for three years at Eaton Canyon was finally recorded on the count. One **Hermit Warbler** was found at Legg Lake in the Whittier Narrows area. A **Baltimore Oriole** was at the Arcadia Arboretum.

December 26, 2002 —

**A Yellow-breasted Chat**, a **Summer Tanager** female and, two **Varied Thrushes** continued at Sand Dune Park. A **Palm Warbler** was at Peck Pit in Monrovia. A **Large-billed Savannah Sparrow** was on the south jetty at Playa del Rey. The **Palos Verdes Christmas Bird Count** was head on December 21. A **Nazca Booby** was seen flying by. Also on the count was a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** on private property, an **Eastern Phoebe** in Peck Canyon, a **Nashville Warbler** at Banning Park, and a continuing **Long-tailed Duck** at the mouth of the L.A. River. Seabirds seen from Point Vincente on the count included **Black Scoter**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Rhinoceros Auklet** and both **Pomarine** and **Parasitic jaegers**.

January 9, 2003 —

**A Glaucous Gull** was reported where Sunset Boulevard meets the Pacific Coast Highway. A **Marbled Murrelet** was at the Marina del Rey channel. A female **Black Scoter** was at the Ballona Creek mouth. The **Brown Thrasher** continued at Eaton Canyon in Pasadena. **Mountain Bluebirds** were seen at Balboa Lake in the San Fernando Valley and a female **Vermilion Flycatcher** continued northwest of the lake as well. At the L.A. National Cemetery in Westwood, a **Summer Tanager** continued. Several **Common Grackles** were seen repeatedly the Earvin "Magic" Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook.

January 16, 2003 —

A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at Malibu Lagoon. The **Marbled Murrelet** at the Marina del Rey channel continued through Sunday, January 12. Three **White-winged Scoters** were also seen. A single **Large-billed Savannah Sparrow** was also seen on the middle jetty. A female **Williamson's Sapsucker** was at Veteran's Park at the north end of Sayre Street in Sylmar. 

SALE

SALE

SALE

**R**ecords of rare and unusual birds reported for *Birds of the Season* 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:

**North American Birds**, L.A. Co.  
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

## NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

### Toll Free Phone Number

### Sales and Inquiries

(888) LAAS428 or (888) 522-7428

#### *A Birder's Guide to Alaska, ABA Birdfinding Guide*

Covers more than sixty locations, including the entire road system, ferry system, Alaskan Highway. Annotated species list, checklists by location, 120 detailed route maps. Popular destinations and off-the-track birding sites are detailed. Over forty expert birders are contributors to the guide.

586 pages, spiral bound, soft cover. 2002

George C. West

\$28.95

#### *Birds-Eye Guide to 101 Birding Sites—Phoenix*

Colored coded to four quadrants in Phoenix and surrounding areas. Unlike other guides, it presents an aerial photo of each birding site, along with a ground or bird photos, and vertical photos or maps, all in full color. Exact driving instructions and specific site data.

Pocket sized, spiral bound, soft cover. 2002

Michael J. Rupp

\$23.95

## SALE BOOKS — OPTICS

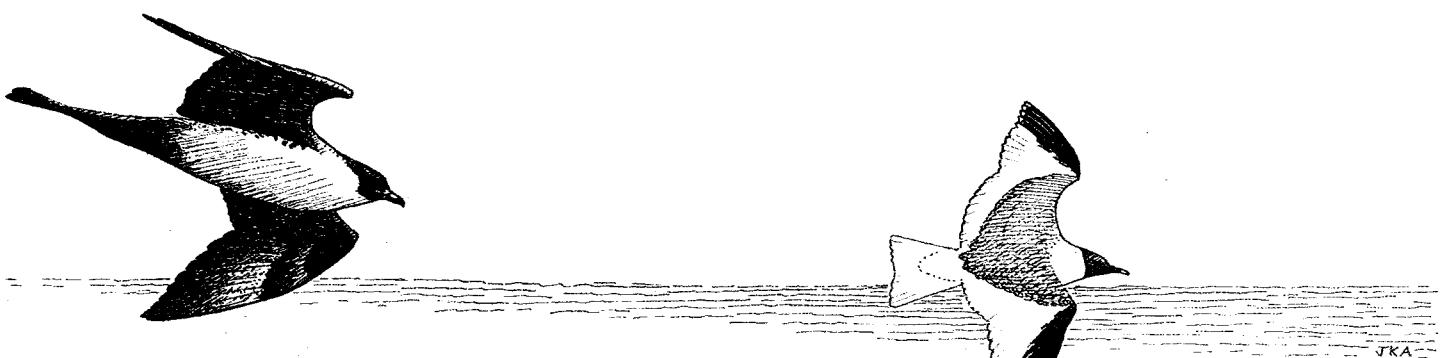
Many, many titles now on sale at **great reductions**.

Special reduced prices on —

Swarovski SLC 8x30 and SLC 10x42 binoculars

Ziess Victory binoculars

Swarovski AT 80 'scopes



# PELAGIC TRIPS

## Sunday, May 4 —

### Marina del Rey 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; Black-vented, Sooty, and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to five); Common Murre; Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets.

Leaders: **Michael J. San Miguel, Bernardo Alps** (Cetacean Society).

\$65 — Coffee, no galley

## Saturday, June 7 —

Landing on **Santa Cruz Island** at Prisoner's Cove for about one hour and then pelagic birding south toward Anacapa Island. A ten hour trip departs from Island Packers dock in Ventura at 8:00 A.M. on the M/V Sunfish.

The endemic **Island Scrub-Jay** is easily seen here. Then we will cruise south of the island toward Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to five); Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet. Rarities: Flesh-footed Shearwater; South Polar Skua; Tufted Puffin seen in 2002.

Leaders: **Michael J. San Miguel, Jonathan Feenstra, Bernardo Alps**  
\$75 — No galley

## Saturday, September 6 —

A deep water trip toward **Cherry, Tanner, and Cortez banks**. This twelve hour trip departs from Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:00 A.M. on the fast catamaran the Condor Express.

This is our Red-billed Tropicbird Trip.

We go far offshore in three counties, Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara.

Birds to be expected: Black, Least, Ashy, and Leach's storm-petrels; Pomarine and Long-tailed jaegers; South Polar Skua; Sabine's Gull. Rarities: Black-footed Albatross; Buller's Shearwater; Arctic Tern; Craveri's Murrelet. Blue, Fin, and Minke whales as well as several species of dolphins have been seen on this trip. Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, Kimball Garrett, David Pereksta, Todd McGrath**.

\$150 — There is a full galley on board which seats 60 people in comfort. There are large windows that allow you to observe the ocean while seated.

## Saturday, October 4 —

A deep water trip south of **San Miguel Island** to **Richardson's Rock** and cruise out to 1000 Fathoms. This eight hour trip departs from Santa Barbara Harbor at 8:00 A.M. on the fast catamaran the Condor Express.

Birds to be expected: Black-vented, Pink-footed, Buller's, and Sooty shearwaters; Black, Ashy, Leach's, and Least storm-petrels; Pomarine Jaeger; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; Xantus's Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets; perhaps Common Murre and Pigeon Guillemot. Rarities: Flesh-footed shearwaters.

Leaders: **Mitch Heindel, David Pereksta, Barney Schlinger, Peter Cantle, Bernardo Alps** (Cetacean Society).

\$110 — There is a full galley on board which seats 60 people in comfort, with large windows which allow you to observe the ocean while seated.

## Saturday, October 25 —

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

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; Leach's, 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: Flesh-footed, and Buller's shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger. Blue, Finback, and Humpback whales have been seen on this trip. In 2002 a Streaked Shearwater was seen. Leaders: **David Pereksta, Michael J. San Miguel, Jonathan Feenstra, Bernardo Alps** (Cetacean Society).

\$90 — Limited galley on board. Box lunches can be ordered from a nearby deli.

## Saturday, November 8 —

**Ventura Marina** toward and past **San Miguel Island** on the 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. Birds seen this time of year: Northern Fulmar; Black-vented, Sooty, and Pink-footed shearwaters; Leach's Storm-Petrel; South Polar Skua; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; rocky shorebirds (up to five); Common Murre; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Occasionally: Craveri's Murrelet; Rarities: Flesh-footed and Buller's shearwaters; Black-footed Albatross.

Leaders: **Kimball Garrett, David Pereksta, Michael J. San Miguel, Bernardo Alps** (Cetacean Society).

\$95 — Limited snack type galley on board.

# 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  
herein do not necessarily express the  
position of this publication or of LAAS.

PRESIDENT:

Raymond Schep

1st VICE PRESIDENT:

Dexter Kelly

2nd VICE PRESIDENT:

Garry George

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:

Mildred Newton

RECORDING SECRETARY:

Johanna Dawes

TREASURER:

Elizabeth Prigge

Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year and \$20 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon* magazine, a national publication. Renewals of membership are computerized by National Audubon and should not be sent to LAAS; however, new memberships may be sent directly to LAAS. Make check payable to the National Audubon Society.

*Western Tanager* subscription rates for non-members are \$9 per year for third class delivery or \$15 per year for first class delivery. LAAS members may receive first class delivery by paying an additional \$5. Make check payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Los Angeles Audubon Society  
Headquarters, Library  
and Bookstore are open to the public  
Tuesday - Saturday  
10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

(323) 876-0202 - office  
(323) 876-7609 - fax  
(323) 874-1318 - bird tape

WesternTanager@LAAudubon.org - e-mail  
LAAudubon.org - e-mail  
www.LAAudubon.org - website

Printed on Recycled Paper



## In passing . . .

### Ruth Lohr and Glenn Cunningham

Ruth Lohr volunteered at Audubon House for many years before she was elected Registrar, a position she filled with great charm and enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, "enthusiasm" was her second name. She was a graduate of Hollywood High School and UCLA and became a school nurse in the schools of rural Los Angeles, driving the dirt roads of the Angeles Forest alone and with many adventures. She was a Girl Scout leader and a life-long camper. She was a charter member of the ABA and attended many of their annual conferences. Ruth was the ultimate "lister" who birded all 50 states and all 58 California counties, keeping her hand-written life-lists in her safety deposit box at the bank. She not only kept bird lists but recorded (and could recite) statistics for the Los Angeles Dodgers and attended many games at Chavez Ravine when she was not on a birding trip. Ruth passed away last March after a long fight with Alzheimer's. She is survived by her son, Lewis, and his family. Ruth was 87 years old.

Glenn Cunningham was a volunteer and served as Librarian and Historian for LAAS for over 15 years. He wrote many pieces for *Western Tanager*. Glenn grew up in Glendale and lived in the same home for 80 years. He attended the Glendale Public Schools, UCLA, and then the University of Pennsylvania where he took his PhD in geography. He taught geography at Penn, UCLA, California State University at Los Angeles, and finally at Los Angeles City College. During World War II, as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Intelligence Service, he managed the development of topographic analyses that supported the Allied invasion in Europe. His passion was "collecting" countries, and he attained the goal of a lifetime when he tallied over 250 countries - a remarkable feat. After retirement from LACC, Glenn became interested in birds and wandered into Audubon House where he was welcomed and promptly put to work. His sense of humor was a joy to those of us who worked with him. He had been in a declining condition since a fall in early November and he passed away on Christmas Day. He is survived by his nephew, Glenn E. Cunningham, and his family. Glenn was 94 years old.

LAAS recently lost two long time friends and volunteers and we shall miss them greatly.

# FIELD TRIPS

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, March 2 —

**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. 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 Canyon Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking \$2. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

## Sunday, March 9 —

**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 (right) and turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. \$2 donation. Meet at 8:15 A.M.

## Saturday, March 15 —

**Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.** Leaders: **Nick and Mary Freeman**. 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 entry fee), turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

## Sunday, March 16 —

**Private Duck Club.** Leader: **Irwin Woldman**. This duck club is an excellent spot to observe wintering birds, and migrating shorebirds. We have seen Sora and Virginia rails here, as well as bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark Red-tails, Golden Eagles and Snow Geese – all due to the sheer numbers of birds on the property. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 W to

Las Posas Rd. S, then take Hueneme Rd. W to Casper Rd. Take Casper Rd. past the turn, park and meet by the barn. Free. Limited phone sign-up with LAAS.

## Sunday, March 16 —

**Ballona Wetlands.** **Bob Shanman** will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland and adjacent rocky jetty. Loons and scoters moving through. 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 not a problem. Three-hour walk, spotting 'scopes helpful. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

## Saturday and Sunday, March 22-23 —

**Anza Borrego** with **Fred Heath**. The spring explosion of desert flora and fauna should be well under way in the Colorado Desert, including butterflies and early birds in the throes of breeding activity. Suggested accomodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground (reserve through Destinet (800) 444-7275), or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (619) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend, and reserve camping January 22, or motels earlier. Limit 20 people. Send SASE with \$5 fee to LAAS to learn 7:00 A.M. meeting place and more details. Pleasant days, cool to cold nights.

## Saturday and Sunday, April 5-6 —

**Owens Valley Grouse Trip.** Leader: **Mary Freeman**. Limited to 20. Meet early in Big Pine Saturday. Blue Grouse, Sage Grouse and raptors featured. Just the scenery is worth it! Lots of driving. To sign up, and for accomodation suggestions, send \$10 and a SASE to LAAS.

## Sunday, April 6 —

**Topanga State Park.** Leaders: **Ken Wheeland** and **Chris Tosdevin**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See March 2 listing for details.

## Sunday, April 13 —

**Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:15 A.M. See March 9 trip for info.

## Saturday, April 19 —

**Sierra Vista.** Biologist, birder and, ex-docent **Scott Harris** will be traipsing through the tussocks in search of the

elusive Grasshopper Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting as well as other foothill and grassland species. This is one of the few spots in the southland that reports the sparrow on an annual basis. A visit to the Satwiwa Indian Cultural Center will follow, if it is open. Take the 101 west to Ventura county, exit at Wendy Avenue in Thousand Oaks, and continue S to the end. Turn right onto Potrero Rd., left at the first stop sign (still called Potrero Rd.), and left at the next stop sign onto Pinehill Rd., which dead-ends into the parking lot. Meet here at 7:30 A.M., and bird until noon.

## Saturday, April 19 —

**Bonelli Regional Park.** Leader **Rod Higbie**. Meet at 7:30 A.M. 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 and 200 other species including many migrating songbirds are also possible. From L.A., take 10 or 210 fwy E 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 right off the ramp onto Via Verde to the "Park and Ride" lot. We will meet here at 7:30 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. No limit, but please call your name and phone number in to LAAS if possible.

## Saturday, April 19 —

**Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.** Leaders: **Ann and Eric Brooks**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. \$3 entry fee. See March 15 listing for details.

## Sunday, April 20 —

**Ballona Wetlands.** **Bob Shanman** leads. See March 16 listing for details. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

## Saturday, April 26 —

**Malibu Creek State Park.** Leader: **Roger Cobb.** Look for Hutton's Vireo in oak woodland, California Thrasher in chaparral, and migrating warblers and flycatchers in the riparian habitat. Take 101 Fwy west to Las Virgenes Rd. Take Las Virgenes Rd. 3 miles S to the park entrance on your right. The parking fee may be raised as high as \$10 by then, or use your annual State Park pass. Consider carpooling with a friend. Meet in the upper parking lot of MCSP near the restrooms at 8:30 A.M. Rain cancels. No dogs or small children, please. Finish at Pepperdine Ponds shortly after 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 \$4 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 aid 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.*

**Sunday, April 27 —**

**Jawbone Canyon Birds and Herps.** Led by LAAS member **Harvey Fischer**, L.A. Zoo Curator Emeritus. We will look for birds and reptiles in Butterbredit Springs and lower Jawbone Canyon. Meet at at 8:30 A.M. at the Jawbone Ranger Station on Hwy 14, 20 minutes north of Mojave and about 2 hours north of L.A. Anticipate heat, hunger, thirst, rock-hopping and, sandy desert. Bring lunch, drinks and plenty of water. High-clearance vehicles suggested.

**Sunday, May 4 —**

**Topanga State Park.** Leaders: **Ken Wheeland** and **Chris Tosdevin**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See March 2 listing for details.

**Sunday, May 11 —**

**Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson**. See March 9 listing for details. Meet at 8:15 A.M.

**Sunday, May 11 —**

**California City and Galileo Hill.**  
Leader: **Nick Freeman**. Take Hwy 14 past Mojave, continue N on Hwy 14 about 10 miles, then turn right on

California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops and turn left on Randsberg-Mojave (20 Mule Team) Rd. just past the Central Park Golf Course. Follow the signs to Silver Saddle. Turn left before the hill, take your first right, your first right again, into the Silver Saddle Country Club, followed by two lefts into the lot. Park by the pond. About 2 hrs driving time from L.A. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunch, sunblock. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

**Saturday, May 17 —**

**Santa Anita Canyon.** Leader: **Mary Freeman**. Take the 210 Fwy toward Arcadia, and take Santa Anita Avenue N to the parking lot at the very end of the road. Meet at the trailhead at the bottom of the lot. 4 mile RT moderately strenuous walk through oak and chaparral canyons. Good selection of breeding and migrating birds. Meeting time 7:30 A.M.

## LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

### AMAZON VOYAGE – PERU – June 14-22, 2003

#### Machu Picchu Extension – June 22-27

Cruise the upper Amazon aboard a graceful 19th century style expedition ship. Excursions up streams in small boats into seasonally flooded forests, and walks in dry forests offer specialized birding and wildlife. A perfect combination of comfort and adventure. Continue your journey to Machu Picchu the Heart of the Inca Empire.

### SOUTH AFRICA – BOTSWANA – November 13-23, 2003

#### ZAMBIA Extension – November 23-29

Travel with renowned Derek Solom 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 in Africa can be found.

### FOR ITINERARIES and MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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

# EVENING MEETINGS

**Tuesday, March 11      Sarah Fangman –  
The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary**

Sarah Fangman will speak on seabird research and some of the management efforts undertaken to better protect the seabirds at the islands supported over the last few years by the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Specifically, they have been involved in studies of Ashy Storm Petrels, Xantus's

Murrelets, and Cassin's Auklets. Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary has worked with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Channel Islands National Park, and the Department of Fish and Game to resolve issues related to squid fishermen impacting nesting pelicans.



**Tuesday, April 8      Herb and Olga Clarke –  
Birding in Papua New Guinea**

Papua New Guinea may well be the last frontier of birding with its spectacular Birds of Paradise and other species of birds, butterflies, and flowers found nowhere else in the world. This evening, view highlights of the Clarke's recent private trip to this remote primitive corner of the Earth.



**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](http://www.laaudubon.org/general/plmprk.html)

## **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!**



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

*DATED MATERIAL  
Please Expedite*

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Glendale, CA  
PERMIT NO. 276

**Bird Tape**  
**(323) 874-1318**

Jon Fisher records the Bird Tape.  
Please report interesting bird sightings  
to him at:

Jon Fisher  
(818) 544-5009 (work)  
JonF60@hotmail.com