

# WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 69 Number 6 July/August 2003

Los Angeles Audubon Society

## *Watching Birds: Why We Do It*

by Nick Freeman

**M**ost of us have varied interests, so you may ask "why do so many of us focus on birds when there are so many other aspects of nature to be enjoyed?" Excellent question.

The obvious answer is that L.A. Audubon members, as a group, subjectively prefer looking at birds to other forms of nature. We like birds because we think they're pretty cool – if you will. I would like to delve a little deeper into what it is about us and about bird watching that binds us to the feathered order.

Most of our members are interested in many facets of nature. It's great when we have multidisciplinary field trips, and different people share their knowledge about the birds, flowers, butterflies, reptiles, and geology (for instance) that we are seeing. And sometimes we even run trips specifically designed to include reptiles and butterflies. As I see it, this is not at all in conflict with our usual focus on birds.

So – once again – why birds? Certainly, a cactus can be interesting. For a while. Flowers are half the attraction of most plants, and some plants are nearly impossible for lay-botanists to figure out without their fleeting flowers. This is not to say that we don't run trips that are most memorable for the wildflowers we encountered, but luxurious mats of southern California wildflowers can be as fickle and fleeting as Swainson's Hawks in the spring! To their credit, plants are fun to learn about when birds are being uncooperative and help us understand better what is going on higher

up the food chain. Plants define the habitat and determine what animals might be found in an area.

On a basic level, I think animals are pretty cool too because they're animated! I figure that this and the elusive nature of many animals stimulates a restrained version of our primordial hunting instinct. Furthermore, I think it is birds that we tend to concentrate on above all other creatures primarily because they are the most easily observed, studied, appreciated, and enjoyed of the taxonomic classes of the animals.

Birds are exceedingly cool in many respects, even as animals go. As masters of the skies, birds are quite visible, and often pleasingly audible. Most are large and trusting enough to be seen well with the use of visual aids at a fair distance. The success of the class is attested to by the great variability of form and behavior which makes them all the more interesting as a group. Being highly visible and usually diurnal, birds are visual creatures. As such, many have adopted an assortment of colors and patterns seldom approached in nature. While some colorful birds are hard to find, many fairly common birds are strikingly beautiful when seen well, but mere mortals usually require a decent pair of binoculars to appreciate what they've been missing. It is worth noting that an amazing number of people are not aware of the beauty around us that is usually overlooked without decent optics. Many others – some who have birded for years – are startled when they learn of the differ-

ences between opera glasses, stadium binoculars, and high-grade birding optics.

Other major attractions of birds are our ability to identify so many to the species or even subspecies level and our great understanding of their often-fascinating natural histories. Both of these points are directly due to the vast amount of research that has been conducted on the class *Aves*, which is the most well understood class of animals on the planet. This immense body of literature, distilled and melded with color plates ranging from diagnostic quality to true art, has availed bird appreciation to the masses in the form of the incredible field guides we have – compliments to Roger Tory Peterson and those before and after him. There also exist a large number of more focused works treating families of birds, or birds of individual countries or regions. With so much known about birds, bird watching is definitely a pastime for the curious, because many of the questions you are likely to ask actually have answers available! "Armchair birding" can be as absorbing as the real thing, but there is no substitute for getting out in the field!

The actual process of identifying birds in the field can be filled with so many exciting emotions. Seeing and identifying a bird that is new to you, and finding out a bit of information about what makes it different from every other kind of bird, is truly exciting, and makes that bird and all of its kin *yours*, in a very basic sense. I think that everyone with even a drop of birding in their blood

experiences this rush to some degree, and many find it quite consuming; requiring more and more adventurous and far-flung forays for their next fix. Apart from the adventure and the birds themselves, the best incentive to get out in the field is probably the many acquaintances and friendships that are struck between like-minded birders.

Seeing new species is not the only novel experience to be had in birdwatching. Individual species show diversity in plumage ranging from subtle to extreme. For some birds, such as the locally common Black Phoebe, developing a familiarity and understanding of plumage characteristics may not take long. For others, like the widespread Red-tailed Hawk, it takes a little longer; with obvious juvenile and adult plumages, and a number of distinctive races to sort out. Our western or *calurus* subspecies is the only one with dark and rufous flavors and every color in between, in addition to the typical light morph!

Even after you've pretty much run out of new species and subspecies of birds to see, birds will never stop surprising you. After seeing a plumage a many times, there are often still secrets to be revealed; first time getting a really close look at a Gadwall's exquisitely intricate markings; or finally being treated to the Orange-crowned Warbler's namesake orange, after pretty much giving up. The first time seeing a cloud of 20,000 Sooty Shearwaters off the coast; or the first time viewing a bright male Ruddy Duck slapping his bill in courtship display; or the 15th time you see 200 Sage Grouse strutting on the lek in the frosty air north of Lake Crowley – that one never loses its novelty for me! Each time you experience another unique behavior of a particular bird, it becomes a little more yours.

It is also exciting to watch your own identification skills, as well as your understanding of species status, distribution, and biology evolve. Examples include developing an ear for telling the more familiar birds apart by call; or finding yourself familiar enough with a species' preferred habitat to comfortably say where a target bird is likely – or not likely – to be found; or learning stuff from books that opens your eyes to completely new aspects of nature, like the

shared mechanical ability of all icterids (blackbirds) to "gape" or pry by inserting and opening their bills, giving their family an evolutionary edge.

Also, birds have most other groups in the animal kingdom beat hands-down in sheer variety of forms accessible to us if we go out looking for them. For those with patience, birding fairly close to home can be unexpectedly productive. Unlike snakes, mammals, and most other life forms, many traditionally East Coast and Eurasian bird species have demonstrated a real (if tiny) potential to eventually show up within a few hours' drive of L.A! It is also not unusual to see 100 species of birds in a day by canvassing a few productive habitats. Try doing that with mammals, reptiles, fish, or crustaceans, for example. Okay, you might be able to eke out 100 insects; I'm really not sure on this point. Please note that I consider butterflies to be in a group by themselves, because their fans do not show a lot of crossover to the rest of the insects. I have to say that most "insects" are a pretty hard sell, in spite of some stunning exceptions in morphology, coloration, and behavior.

Butterflies deserve a special mention here. They are growing in popularity due to many of the same qualities I have just attributed to birds. They are visible, colorful, and the field guides have recently gotten quite useful and user friendly. Many birdwatchers cannot help but dabble in butterfly study from time to time, and we've even lost a few from our ranks to this fast-growing pastime. Dragonflies are harder to observe, but close-focus butterfly binocular technology and a recent spate of good reference books may make dragonflies the next hot item on the watchable wildlife menu!

So, while all aspects of flora, fauna, and geology catch our eyes and minds along the way, pursuing birds makes a certain amount of sense for someone wishing to observe as much of the vibrant and beautiful mosaic of nature as possible. There is no need to exclude other facets of nature, but a point of focus is often useful; preferably directed toward a subject that is often easily observed, studied, appreciated, and enjoyed. And that's why we watch birds. I think. 

## 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  
LAAS@LAAudubon.org – e-mail  
www.LAAudubon.org – website

Printed on Recycled Paper



# LAAS Annual Picnic: *Charlton Flats Picnic Ground*

**Saturday, July 12      7:30 A.M. – whenever**

Last year's LAAS picnic was such a success, we have decided to do it again.

We will escape July's heat to frolic in the cool groves of Charlton Flats Picnic Area in the Angeles National Forest.

We'll start off with a bird walk at 7:30 A.M. led by Kimball Garrett – White-headed-Woodpecker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, and other mountain specialties are probable.

A beginners bird walk is scheduled at 8:30 and an introduction to butterflies at 10:00 with Fred Heath.

Bring your picnic lunch, a hat, sunscreen, binoculars, walking shoes, chairs, and your attentive eyes and ears. We'll supply a cooler of non-alcoholic drinks.

To get to Charlton Flats, take the Angeles Crest Highway north from La Cañada (off the 210 Fwy and/or Foothill Blvd.) and proceed about 24 miles, past Mt. Wilson, to the Charlton Flats sign on the left. Follow the driveway down to the lowest part of the picnic area.

Drive carefully and give yourself plenty of time; the highway is very twisty and turny.

Each car needs an *Angeles National Forest Adventure Pass*!

For information, call the Angeles National Forest information desk at (626) 574-5200, or look on their website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/angeles/passes/pass-adventure.shtml>.

Bring a friend and have a wonderful summer day in the mountains with your L.A. Audubon friends!

---

## Salton Sea Report

Catherine Waters

On May 23, Audubon California sponsored a program at the Buena Vista Audubon Center in Oceanside, presented by the Salton Sea Authority to discuss three major plans for the Sea. The facilitator, Julia Levin, the new legislative representative for Audubon California, followed the SSA presentation with an update on current legislation and bills affecting the Sea.

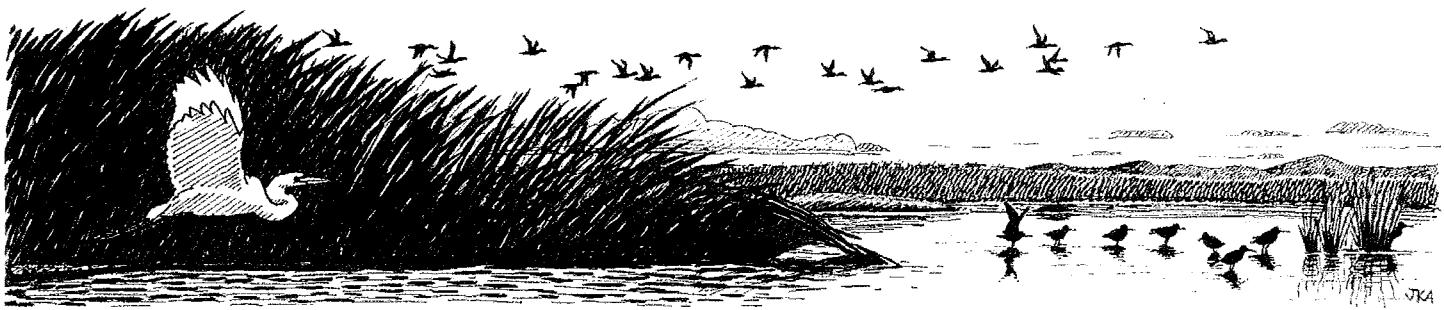
None of the three presented plans were perfect for birds or people. All of them require major concessions on the part of the stakeholders, who include, Native American interests, water districts and authorities, four-plus counties, agri-businesses, energy producers, a water reclamation company (desalination and filtration), two states, and two countries.

The plan to reduce the size of the Sea but increase areas of wading bird habitat shallow water (that will be shared with a geothermal plant and evaporation ponds) at the southern end of the Sea seemed to be the most palatable. A study by Point Reyes Bird Observatory of this plan projected an increase in wading birds and a decrease in fish dependent bird populations because of a reduction in the fishery. California Department of Fish and Game has recently begun conducting studies to better understand this delicate resource. Keep in mind that legal protection is in place for the Brown Pelican but not for wading or migratory birds.

Ms. Levin was gently emphatic about the reality of where conservationists and environmentalists now stand legislatively on the issue of the Sea. The cost of the overall plan is estimated at two billion dollars divided between a bill currently in committee and business interests. The monies to do a working plan for the Salton Sea may be available through legislation soon but the window for such a large, sweeping bill to pass is closing. Our State's financial standing is such that when this window closes, it will be many years, if ever, before such monies will become available again. The current time available for large water projects that provide clean water for cities, while making water available for agriculture and fragile avian populations, is short. There are consequences to each of the current three plans and the legislative bills – some harder to swallow than others.

Audubon is apolitical but we need birds – that is what defines us. The Salton Sea is an unparalleled resource for birds. What to do with the Sea is not a problem we want to leave for others to solve. It is time to educate ourselves about the plans and legislation. If you find something admirable about them you must take the time to offer your individual support. Audubon can be a voice in the planning for Salton Sea – so become part of the solution. The alternative is not pretty.

For further information see the SSA website. Ms. Levin can be contacted at [jlevin@audubon.org](mailto:jlevin@audubon.org); Dan Cooper, Director of Bird Conservation at [dcooper@audubon.org](mailto:dcooper@audubon.org); Jerry Secundy, Director of Audubon California at [gsecundy@audubon.org](mailto:gsecundy@audubon.org); L.A. Times at [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com).



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

## UPDATES:

### STATE LISTING SOUGHT FOR OWL:

In a measure of last resort, conservationists have petitioned to have the western Burrowing Owl listed under the California Endangered Species Act. The once-common bird has been declining for half a century as development has taken much of its grassland habitat and voluntary conservation measures have largely failed to stem population losses. Developers have been successful in blocking local and state preservation plans and are expected to hotly oppose listing which they see as an obstacle to construction projects on what remains of the Burrowing Owl's habitat.

### NO MONEY FOR CRITICAL HABITAT:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is running out of money to meet court-ordered deadlines to develop habitat for endangered species. The agency plans to ask the courts for extensions in about two dozen cases, while concentrating on completing critical habitat designations for high-profile species such as the bull trout, Rio Grande silvery minnow, California Gnatcatcher, and San Diego Furry shrimp. Although the USFWS has told Congress it needs \$20 million a year for the next six years to clear the backlog, the Bush administration continues to ask for a fraction of that amount.

**ROADLESS RULE UPHELD:** A federal appeals court has denied Idaho's request to have the full court review last December's decision by a three-judge panel to uphold the Clinton administration's landmark rule that protected about one-third of federal forests from logging, road-building, and other destructive practices.

To no one's surprise, the Bush regime has already begun drafting new regulations to replace the roadless area protections and is also moving to streamline environmental reviews for "forest thinning" under the guise of preventing forest fires.

**DOLPHIN-DEADLY LABEL BLOCKED:** A federal judge, questioning the "integrity of government research," has stopped the Bush administration from loosening label standards for "dolphin-safe tuna." Unless overturned on appeal, the injunction against declaring imported tuna caught by the trap and encirclement method "dolphin-safe" will remain in effect until a lawsuit by conservation groups is resolved. The decision affirmed that the administration's so-called scientific research was incomplete, flawed, and "politically driven." Can it be that much of the Bush regime's regard for the environment is politically driven?

**APES CRITICALLY ENDANGERED:** A survey of the forests of west equatorial Africa, long considered the last stronghold of gorillas and chimpanzees, reveal that ape populations have "shrunk by more than half since 1983" due to logging, a spreading Ebola virus epidemic, and hunting for bush meat. Scientists are "unclear" about what it would take to slow or halt the decline and recommend that gorillas and chimpanzees be immediately reclassified as "critically endangered to justify greater conservation measures." The new study documents a 53% decline since 1953 and "predicts that ape populations will decline another 80% in the next 33 years – less than two ape generations."

### LANDSLIDE LOGGING INJUNCTION

**REFUSED:** A federal judge has denied a request for a preliminary injunction to stop state-approved logging on landslide-prone slopes in northwest Oregon. Pacific Rivers Council, the Coast Range Association, Pacific Coast Range Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Audubon Society of Portland, and Native Fish Society charged in a February 2002 lawsuit that "the state forester illegally approved logging on steep slopes that could lead to landslides and harm coho salmon protected by the Endangered Species Act." A hearing is expected soon to determine a date for the case to go to full trial.

**CONDOR UPDATE:** AC-8, one of the last California Condors born in the wild, was shot and killed in February, 2003 during a sanctioned pig hunt on the Tejon Ranch near Bakersfield. Britton Cole Lewis, 29, of Tehachapi, is charged with violating the federal law protecting migratory birds. To file charges under the more stringent U.S. Endangered Species Act, the defendant must know what species he was shooting. Tejon Ranch officials claim that they give pamphlets to all hunters on their property which, in big, bold print, tells them not to shoot any big bird as all raptors are protected. Apparently, Lewis is unable to distinguish between pigs and birds. His random act of stupidity and red-necked zeal sealed the fate of an individual of one of our most endangered species. 

# NEWS FROM THE BOARD

Elections were held at the Members' Meeting on May 13, 2003. The slate of Executive Officers prepared by the Nominating Committee was approved unanimously by the Members.

Taking office in July will be:

Ray Schep, President  
Dexter Kelly, 1st VP  
Pat Heirs, 2nd VP  
Johanna Dawes, Recording Secretary  
Garry George, Executive Secretary  
Elizabeth Prigge, Treasurer.

Our thanks to the Nominating Committee who prepared the roster: Garry George, Mary Freeman and Margo de Grosse'.

AND very special thanks to Millie Newton who has served on the Board of L.A. Audubon for almost 20 years as Executive Secretary, through thick and through thin. Her term expires at the end of June.

Also approved at the Members' Meeting May 13 was an addition to our by-laws regarding National and Chapter relations presented by former Treasurer, Cheryl Epps. The amendment passed and will be included in our by-laws. A copy of the amendment can be obtained from [garrygeorge@pacbell.net](mailto:garrygeorge@pacbell.net).

LAAS celebrated EARTH DAY in April with two booths distributing information about our work: LAAS member Irwin Woldman headed the Baldwin Hills Park clean-up and celebration on April 12, and 1st VP Dexter Kelly, Recording Secretary Johanna Dawes with member Eleanor Osgood worked the KRTH Earth Day at the L.A. Zoo on April 26-27. Many thanks to all involved!

The 2003 RALPH W. SCHREIBER ORNITHOLOGICAL RESEARCH AWARDS candidates were presented at the May Board meeting by Grants Committee Chair Chas Cowell and voted by the Board. Recipients are:

"Phylogeography of the Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*) in Southern California" proposed by Tom Benson, CSU - San Bernardino. \$2,500

"Analysis of Intraspecific Variation Within the Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) Including a Population-level Study of *P.r.cooperi*", proposed by Tiffany M. Woznicki San Diego State University. \$1,812.50

"Assessing the Proximate Factors that Influence Begging Intensity in a Generalist Brood Parasite", proposed by James W. Rivers, UC, Santa Barbara. \$2,500

Visit <http://www.laaudubon.org> for 2004 grant information.

The Board voted in April to donate a \$300 spotting 'scope and tripod to Prek Toal Sanctuary on Tonle Sap lake near Siem Reap in Cambodia. The important sanctuary is managed by Wildlife Conservation Society (formerly New York Zoological Society) and is the last refuge and breeding location in Southeast Asia for several species of endangered and threatened birds including Spot-billed Pelican, Lesser Adjutant, Greater Adjutant, Painted Stork, Milky Stork, Gray-headed Fish Eagle, and Black-headed Ibis, among others. The telescope will allow sanctuary rangers to keep an eye on nests for egg predators, mostly human. 2nd VP Garry George delivered the 'scope while on a birdwatching trip to southeast Asia in April and May. Shown in the photo are:



Cambodian ranger, Cambodian Managing Director, and WCS project director Frederic Goes (wearing LA Audubon cap) at headquarters of Prek Toal Sanctuary near Siem Reap, Cambodia. 

## LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

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

### ZAMBIA Extension – November 23-29

Johannesburg to the Magliesburg Mountains. See Mocking Chat, Southern Bou-Bou, Tinker Barbets, Tawny-flanked Prinias, and Bar-throated Apalis to name only a few. From Maun to the Okavango Delta and the Moremi Game Reserve, birdlife is prolific – over 550 species in the region. Seasonally-flooded marshes and lagoons, dry woodlands, and grassy savannas support incredible free-roaming herds of animals and the predators that follow them. Journey to Zambia with views of magnificent Victoria Falls and one of Africa's richest concentrations of birds and animals in the Luangwa National Park. See Southern Africa in comfort on the Safari of your dreams.

### THE BEST OF COSTA RICA – March 2004 – Call Olga!

### FOR ITINERARIES and MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Olga Clarke, Travel Director, Los Angeles Audubon Society  
Ph/Fax: (818) 249-9511 e-mail: [oclarketravel@earthlink.net](mailto:oclarketravel@earthlink.net)

# Birds of the Season

is a compilation of Los Angeles County bird reports taken from the LAAS Rare Bird Alert that is recorded weekly by Jon Fisher. The birds mentioned were seen during the week indicated.

## April 3 –

An Eastern Phoebe was found on March 30 at the Madrona Marsh Preserve in Torrance. This spot is located near the corner of Sepulveda and Madrona.

The Brown Thrasher and White-throated Sparrow both continue at Eaton Canyon in Pasadena as of March 30. The thrasher was just south of the Nature Center and the sparrow is usually on the hillside west of the Nature Center. Flowering sage near the Nature Center attracts a variety of hummingbirds again this year, the most interesting being a female Calliope Hummingbird reported on March 30.

Another White-throated Sparrow was at Pomona College on April 2. It was seen just north of the organic farm at the southwest corner of the campus. A Lewis' Woodpecker was seen here as well.

The Black-throated Green Warbler along the L.A. River continues and was last reported on April 3 near Atwater Village. Exit the 5 Freeway at Colorado and head east, exiting at Edenhurst. Park and walk back up to the east side bike path and walk south. The bird was near the fourth electrical tower.

## April 10 –

A first winter Glaucous Gull, reported previously at Malibu Lagoon, was seen again on Saturday, April 7.

An immature male American Redstart was found at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on April 6. The bird was in Area 2 of the park in pine trees west of the lake.

## April 17 –

A Solitary Sandpiper was at Harbor Park in Wilmington on Sunday, April 13 in the lower wetland area. Harbor Park is west of the 110 Freeway on the Pacific Coast Highway.

A first year Laughing Gull was found on April 11 and seen through April 24 in Playa del Rey. The bird was at Del Rey Lagoon which is just off Pacific Ave. south of Marina del Rey.

The first winter Glaucous Gull at Malibu Lagoon was seen again on Sunday, April 13. The bird was with the gull flock near the lagoon's outflow.

The Brown Thrasher continued at Eaton Canyon through April 12.

A Palm Warbler was found at Alondra Park in the elm area north of the lake on April 15. Alondra Park is on Redondo Beach Blvd. just east of the 405 Freeway in Torrance.

## April 25 –

A Solitary Sandpiper was seen at Harbor Regional Park in Wilmington on Friday, April 25. The bird was south of the dam and lake, but was last seen flying away from this location.

A Vermilion Flycatcher was reported from the Antelope Valley on April 19 on 300th Street West, north of Highway 138.

A Palm Warbler was at DeForest Park in Long Beach on Friday, April 25. The bird was at the north end of the park near the tennis courts. DeForest Park is along the 710 Freeway, just north of Long Beach Boulevard.

## May 15 –

At Piute Ponds on the Edwards Air Force Base, an American Golden-Plover was found on Saturday, May 10. Note that this is a restricted area and requires a letter of permission for entry.

Two Acorn Woodpeckers in the desert on Saturday, one at Apollo Park in Lancaster and another about 7 miles west of California City, were away from their usual areas of occurrence.

A Plumbeous Vireo was reported at Apollo Park in Lancaster on May 10. Take Avenue G west from the 14 Fwy, then go north on 40th Street West to the park.

A Purple Martin was seen over the lake at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook on Sunday, May 11. The Recreation Area is south of the 105 Freeway and East of Avalon.

The last report of the Common Grackle at Balboa Lake in Van Nuys was on May 6. The bird was usually seen near the boat launch and restrooms on the east side of the lake. Take Balboa Avenue north from the 101 Freeway and watch for the entrance to Balboa Lake on your right. 

**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

## Birding 101

### Fall 2003

Karen Johnson, well-known expert local birder, will be our instructor for Birding 101 a very popular hands-on, learn-while-doing, series of bird-watching classes and field trips, geared for new birders.

One introductory lecture covering birding basics, tools, and techniques of bird identification will be held at Audubon House, in Plummer Park on Thursday evening, September 25.

Three field classes will be to prime, nearby diverse habitats, on Saturday mornings, September 27, October 4, and October 11.

Cost: \$45.00 for members of Los Angeles Audubon, \$55.00 for non-members.

Not a member? Join while enrolling in the class, \$65.00 will cover the class and a one-year membership.

To enroll or for further information, please call Audubon House, (323) 876-0202.

Enroll soon, class size is limited to 15 participants!

**Saturday, August 30 – Private Duck Club.**

Leader: **Irwin Woldman.** This duck club is an excellent spot to observe migrating shorebirds. We have seen Sora and Virginia rails here. We will also visit the tamarisk stands on Laguna Road, and perhaps the nearby beaches. 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, and park and meet at 8:00 A.M. by the barn. Free. Limited phone sign-up with LAAS.

**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.

**Sunday, September 7 – Topanga State Park.**

Leaders: **Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin.** Meet at 8:00 A.M. See July 6 listing for details.

**Saturday, September 13 – Galileo Hills.**

Leader: **Nick Freeman.** This location is a migrant magnet and vagrant vortex. Driving directions in next issue's listing. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunch, sun block. Meet at 7:30 A.M., finish up 4-ish (or later).

**Sunday, September 14 – Piute Ponds and Beyond.** Local leader **Alan Brown.**

A good mix of shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds will be migrating through at this time. Official access pending to inner base ponds. Bring lunch. Meet at 7:30 A.M., finish 3:00 P.M. or so. To reserve with LAAS

and learn Rosamond meeting place, mail a SASE for required, limited sign-up of 12 by September 2, including citizenship status, phone number, e-mail, and social security number. No drop-ins.

**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, 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. Rare: Flesh-footed Shearwater. 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.** Anacapa, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz islands toward San Miguel Island. Eleven or twelve 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.** \$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.** \$95 – Limited snack type galley on board.

**RESERVATION**

**AND**

**FEES 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 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.*

# EVENING MEETINGS

There are No Evening Meetings in July and August – Go Birding!

Tuesday, September 9      **Herb Clarke and Fred Heath – An introduction to Southern California Butterflies**

Tuesday, October 14      **Nancy Conney – Sky Hunters Raptor Rehabilitation**

## 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, July 6 – 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 Cyn. Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking \$2. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

**Friday through Sunday, July 4-6 – Camp Nelson, Southwest Sierras.** Relaxed Weekend with leaders: **Nick Freeman, Irwin Woldman, and Margo De Grosse'**. An hour east of Porterville, Camp Nelson boasts some of the best Giant Sequoias anywhere! Excellent bird watching, fishing, and relaxation to be had. Send \$44 each with SASE to LAAS. Meet there at 8:00 A.M. Friday, or

Thursday P.M.; details in itinerary (some on LAAS web site). Designate arrival day and time, phone number, and e-mail when signing up. Info will be shared for carpooling, unless requested otherwise.

**Sunday, July 13 – Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson**. View colorful resident and migrating birds, including the introduced Northern Cardinal. Take Peck Dr. off the 60 Fwy in South El Monte (just west of the 605 Fwy). Take the off ramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. \$2 donation. Meet at 8:15 A.M.

**Sunday, July 20 – Big Bear Lake Vicinity.** Leaders: **Nick and Mary Freeman**. Meet in the Aspen Glen Picnic Area parking lot in Big Bear at 7:30 A.M. Take Hwy 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, then proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy 18 and turn south on Tulip Lane. The lot will be on the SW side of this short street. Target birds include Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope and Rufous hummingbirds, White-headed Woodpecker. It should be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Bring lunch for a full day.

**Sunday, August 3 – Topanga State Park.** Leaders: **Ken Wheeland** and **Chris Tosdevin**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See July 6 listing for details.

**Saturday, August 9 – Mt. Pinos Vicinity.** Leader: **Jean Brandt**. Numerous mountain specialties possible. Anticipate the elements, and bring a lunch. Take 5 Fwy N past Tejon Pass to the Frazier Park off ramp, turn left, and follow Frazier Mountain Park Rd. bearing right onto Cuddy Valley Rd. Meet promptly at 8:00 A.M. at the "Y" formed by the junction of Cuddy Valley Rd. and Mil Potrero Hwy, and park in the obvious dirt clearing. Rain cancels.

**Sunday, August 10 – Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:15 A.M. See July 13 for details.

**Sunday, August 17 – Ballona Wetlands.** **Bob Shanman** will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland. Adult shorebirds will be numerous. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90 W) to Culver Blvd. and turn left for a mile, turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three-hour walk; 'scopes helpful. Meet at 8:00 A.M.

**Saturday, August 23 – Bolsa Chica / L.A. River.** **Larry Allen** will leave no peep or tern unturned in these two areas known for shorebirds and terns. Second stop flexible, depending on reports. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the Bolsa Chica estuary parking lot off PCH. Take the 405 Fwy to Seal Beach Blvd. to PCH, past Edinger. The lot is on the left. You will have to pass the lot and make a u-turn if driving south on PCH. Bring a lunch; 'scopes helpful.

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

Field Trips continued on page 7