

# WESTERN TANAGER



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Los Angeles Audubon Society

## Your Breeding Bird Atlas: Where Are We Now?

by Larry Allen

### What is a Breeding Bird Atlas?

As the name conveys, a breeding bird atlas is a set of maps. Each map depicts the breeding range of a particular species within the geographic area covered. The area being mapped is typically divided into a set of rectangular grids; grids approximating 25 km square are common.

The species map usually depicts breeding status in each grid at one of three levels of confidence (confirmed, probable, or possible breeding). Abundance estimates for each grid may be depicted as well. Separate map overlays often include information on topography and landforms, habitats, roads, political boundaries, and so forth.

Breeding bird atlases can be of immense value in revealing previously unknown populations, suggesting overlooked bird/habitat correlations, indicating diversity hotspots that might be deserving of protection, educating members of the public about avian diversity, and may I suggest, providing hints of where to go for a pleasant day's birding.

A well-conducted atlas will also provide a baseline, a "snapshot in time", of an area's birdlife as of the completion of fieldwork. In these times of increasing urbanization and climatological change, a documented picture of the current avifaunal status is absolutely essential if we are to adequately measure the now-unforeseen impacts of our own actions.

With announcements by Fred Heath in the April and June 1994 issues of this journal (Heath 1994a, 1994b), the Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas project was publicly underway. Of course, this unveiling had been preceded by a significant amount of work by Heath and others: information on other atlas projects had been collected, data collection forms had been designed, extent of coverage (the entire county) and the time period for fieldwork (1995 to 1999) had been decided, 414 survey blocks (median size about 10.4 miles square, or 27.0 kilometers square) had been delineated, test areas were being surveyed, and most importantly, a financial commitment by the Board of Los Angeles Audubon Society to fund the five-year atlas effort had been secured. In addition, an arrangement to house the Atlas Project Office (Atlas Central) was negotiated with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Data submission commenced as soon as the Atlas period opened (the earliest record, a Casual Observation Form documenting a nesting Red-tailed Hawk, was submitted with a date of 5 January 1995). During 1995 and the succeeding four years, 131 Atlas volunteers visited atlas blocks the length and breadth of the county, collected

breeding evidence for the birds present, and submitted their observations on Field Cards (FCs) to Atlas Central. Additionally, 211 individuals submitted breeding evidence they observed in a less formal

manner, via Casual Observation Forms (COFs). Many block volunteers also submitted COFs for evidence they observed outside of their assigned blocks. (Ultimately, these COF submittals accounted for almost 20% of our breeding records.) Atlas volunteers documented on their FCs a collective total of 10,302 hours

atlasing, of which 184 hours (1.8%) were devoted to owling. The nature of casual observations makes a measurement of associated time impractical, so effort associated with COFs could not be included in the above. Additionally, significant effort by volunteers at Atlas Central, by Regional Coordinators, and by the Atlas Steering Committee has not been tallied.

At the end of the process, the Atlas Project had accepted 28,161 records of breeding evidence, of which 13,584 confirmed breeding, 8,614 indicated that breeding was probable, and 5,963 noted that breeding was possible. (The Atlas database contains an additional 769 records of birds present during the breeding season, but for which breeding evidence was not obtained.) Problems with physical access mandated that five border blocks be subsumed into their



neighboring blocks, leaving 409 blocks covering the county. At least some data had been received from each block, and 241 blocks (59%) were deemed "complete" according to the criteria in the Atlas Handbook (Allen and Garrett 1995), with the balance ranging from 99.6% to 30.9% complete. For the county as a whole, we calculate a weighted-average completion of 95.1%.

### So, How Many Species?

Atlas volunteers found breeding evidence for a total of 230 species during the Atlas period. Included among these were six that are federal or state endangered or threatened (Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon [now delisted], Least Tern, Willow Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, and California Gnatcatcher). A comparison with the most recent pre-atlas information (Garrett 1995, Garrett and Dunn 1981, Garrett and Dunn 1989) reveals that atlasers added 25 birds to the list of breeders in the county, of which 11 are introduced or naturalized species (Table 1). Four additional species previously suspected of breeding in the county (Ring-necked Duck, Chukar, Inca Dove, Whip-poor-will) were found by Atlas volunteers, but still remain unconfirmed. Atlasers found no trace of four former breeders known to have been extirpated in the county for some time: California Condor, coastally breeding Snowy Plover, Clapper Rail, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. A few other formerly widespread breeders were documented in a mere handful of blocks: Least Bittern (four), Turkey Vulture (six), Swainson's Hawk (four), Swainson's Thrush (11), and Wilson's Warbler (nine).

Absolute, or even relative, population numbers are impossible to calculate from the Atlas data set. Breeding-pair estimates proved very difficult for atlasers, and the open-ended nature of the estimates at the highest level (code "Z," indicating 1000 or more breeding pairs), makes total population estimates, and even ordinal rankings, impossible. Judging from the distribution of "Z" codes, however, European Starling, House Finch, and House Sparrow seem to rank about equally as the most abundant breeding birds in the county, with Rock Pigeon, Anna's Hummingbird, and California Towhee clustering in a lower tier.

### And Where Are They?

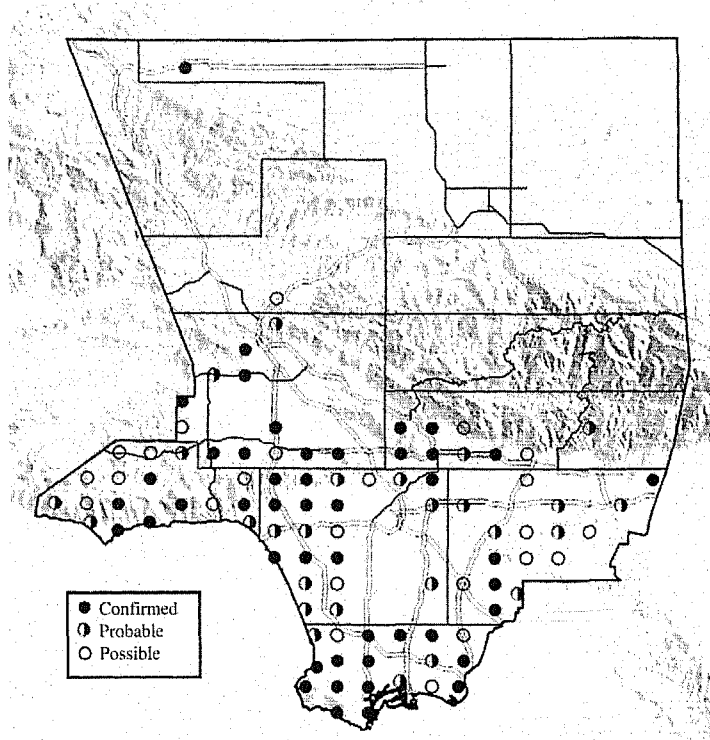
The Atlas Project demonstrated that our county's habitats vary widely in their ability to support breeding birds, both in terms of numbers and species diversity. As noted above, we

cannot rank blocks as to breeding populations, but we certainly have the data to rank them in terms of diversity. Breeding bird diversity varied by an order of magnitude among Atlas blocks: ranging from a high of 97 species to a low of nine. The more fecund blocks (in this sense) include ones at the foot of Santa Anita Canyon (Atlas block code MTW4) with 97 species, in the Santa Susana Mountains (SAF1) with 81, surrounding Malibu Lagoon (MAL4) with 79, in the vicinity of upper Big Rock Creek (VAL6) also with 79, and around the upper end of Mescal Creek (MES5) with 78. Three blocks in the Rogers Lake drainage in the far northeast (JAC5, ROG 4 and ROG5) supported the fewest with nine each.

Some suspected distributional patterns were confirmed, and some surprises revealed themselves. The two most widespread species in the county (i.e., found in the most blocks at one of

the three breeding-evidence levels) were Mourning Dove (400 blocks) and House Finch (391 blocks) (Table 2). This had been foreseen by knowledgeable observers at the inception (see account in Allen 1998). No one, however, had an inkling that the next two most widespread species would be Red-tailed Hawk (371 blocks) and Common Raven (370 blocks)! European Starling, predicted by this author to be in the top two, was in fifth place (355 blocks), and American Crow, which many birders might consider to be a contender (pers. obsv.) did not make the top twenty five (it is in fact number 38, found in 201 blocks).

The Atlas, of course, was far more than a contest for the most widespread species. A bird's current



Los Angeles Breeding Bird Atlas map showing breeding distribution of Allen's Hummingbird. The areas delineated inside the County are Atlas "regions".

distribution, when placed in context, can provide both answers to some questions and provoke a host of additional inquiries. As one can see from the map for Allen's Hummingbird (Figure 1), the breeding distribution seems to favor suburban areas in the Los Angeles Basin, adjacent valleys, and developed foothill areas. Context is important, however. When first known, our locally breeding subspecies, *Selasphorus sasin sedentarius* was confined to the Channel Islands (Grinnell and Miller 1944). Somewhere around mid-century it colonized the Palos Verdes Peninsula, and it was thought to be restricted to that location as late as the 1980s (Garrett and Dunn 1981). By the mid 1990s its range included the county's northern coast, the Los Angeles basin, and possibly the valleys (Garrett 1995).


What a different picture is painted by Atlas results! We now have a good answer to the question: where are they? More questions arise, however. Clearly some factors associated with suburban development have facilitated the ballooning of this bird's range, but what are they? How far into the interior will this species eventually spread? Will it expand far enough up the coast (northern Ventura County) to overlap with the migratory subspecies, *S. s. sasin*? Given this bird's range expansion and clear tolerance for human-altered habitats, does it make sense for it to be on a "WatchList" (NAS 2002)? And what of that lone confirmation in the northwest county? Were they individuals from our local population? Were they out-of-place individuals from the migratory race? (The habitat is all wrong; Mitchell 2000.) Was there a misidentification? (The report was from a very experienced observer.) All these questions are deserving of further inquiry.

Almost any species map you look at can raise a variety of thoughts. It may be surprising to find Green Heron breeding so widely (60 blocks, in almost every region), comforting to notice that Western Screech-Owl is still present in most blocks in the Santa Monica Mountains (20 of 22 blocks), interesting to learn that Bushtit is present in virtually every block outside the Antelope Valley (309 blocks total), but disheartening to find so few blocks providing evidence for Purple Martin (nine, with the highest level of evidence only "probable" in two).

Other information may be gleaned from a comparison of distributions among species. Considering the woodpeckers as a guild (a group of organisms exploiting their habitat in much the same ways), the data demonstrate that a group of blocks in the high San Gabriels (centered around topo sheets Waterman Mountain and Crystal Lake) support six to seven species, whereas blocks on the coastal slope support from zero to four, and Antelope Valley blocks generally contain only one. Fortunately our montane hotspot of woodpecker diversity is in (mostly protected) National Forest. But should it receive more resource management attention?

### What Next?

At the inception of the Atlas effort, it was assumed that data collection would be completed in 1999, and the Atlas itself would be written and published in 2000 (Allen and Garrett 1995, p.1). You may guess, if you did not already know, that the published schedule was laughably optimistic. In fact, the first post-Atlas year was spent quality assuring the data on a block-by-block basis (with the assistance of the Regional Coordinators) as well as acquiring large amounts of published and unpublished data to give context to the Atlas results.

Three part-time, volunteer Atlas authors are now working as diligently as their time and personal lives permit to complete a peer-reviewable draft of the Atlas publication. Maps have been generated, statistics have been calculated, several appendices have been compiled, and significant sections of the text have been written. Kimball Garrett (in litt.) has calculated that for a group of atlases available to him, an average of almost ten years elapsed between completion of field work and publication of the results. This has given us additional impetus to complete our task, as you may be assured that none of us wishes to be still working on the project six years hence! 

Double-crested Cormorant*	Eurasian-Collared Dove
Cattle Egret	Blue-crowned Parakeet
Canada Goose	Mitred Parakeet
Egyptian Goose	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet
Mute Swan	White-fronted Parrot
Muscovy Duck	Red-lore Parrot
Northern Pintail	Blue-fronted Parrot
Bufflehead	Gray Flycatcher
Osprey*	Plumbeous Vireo
Caspian Tern	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Royal Tern	Mountain Bluebird
Elegant Tern	European Goldfinch
Black Skimmer	

\* First breeding records on county's mainland.

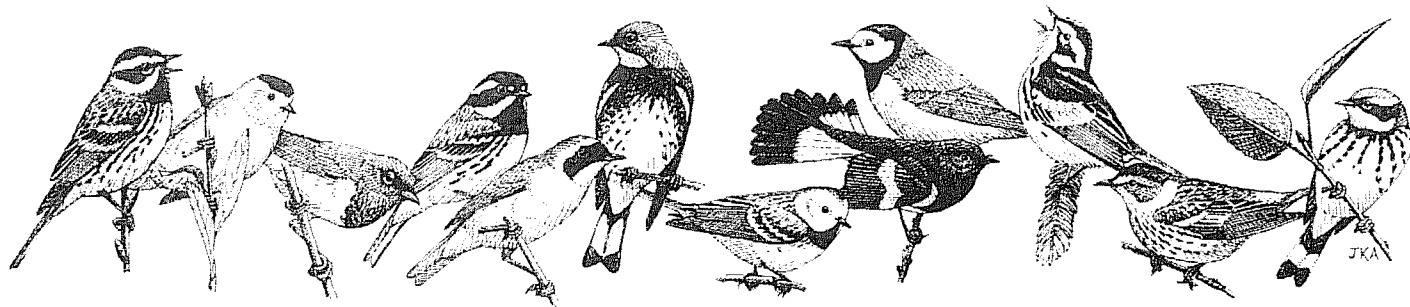
**Table 1** New county breeding birds documented during the Breeding Bird Atlas Project.

Rank	Species	No. of Blocks
1	Mourning Dove	400
2	House Finch	391
3	Red-tailed Hawk	371
4	Common Raven	370
5	European Starling	355
6	Western Scrub-Jay	318
7	California Quail	310
8	Bushtit	309
9	Ash-throated Flycatcher	306
10	House Sparrow	297
11	Northern Mockingbird	297
12	Black Phoebe	294
13	California Towhee	292
14	Bullock's Oriole	289
15	Brewer's Blackbird	286
16	Bewick's Wren	284
17	Brown-headed Cowbird	279
18	Lesser Goldfinch	274
19	Spotted Towhee	261
20	Rock Pigeon	245
21	California Thrasher	244
22	Cliff Swallow	243
23	Nuttall's Woodpecker	241
24	Song Sparrow	239
25	American Kestrel	235

**Table 2** The 25 most widespread species reported in all three breeding-evidence categories.

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# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

This 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.

## September 25

A **Reddish Egret** was still at Mugu Lagoon in southeastern Ventura County.

A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Ormond Beach near Oxnard the previous week.

On September 20, a **Black-and-white Warbler** was seen at the Laguna Road tamarisks. And, at the Ballona Wetlands there was a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**.

A **Ruff** was seen through September 21 north of the Willow Street crossing along the L.A. River.

On September 22, a **Magnolia Warbler** was at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach and a **white/Black-backed Wagtail** was seen along the L.A. River just south of Alondra.

## October 2

Two **Reddish Egrets** were reported at Mugu Lagoon in southeastern Ventura County.

A bird now believed to be a **Black-backed Wagtail** was seen repeatedly along the L.A. River at the Alondra crossing through October 1. The bird was often absent for long periods, but patience and persistence paid off for many observers.

On September 30, two **Red-throated Pipits** were in the Antelope Valley and five more were seen October 1 on the Oxnard Plain, when a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was found there.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at the north end of Ladera Park in Baldwin Hills on September 27.

A **Blackpoll Warbler** was at the Laguna Road tamarisks on September 27.

The **Chestnut-sided Warbler** continued at the Ballona Wetlands through September 26.

A **Blackburnian Warbler** was found at Pomona College in Claremont on September 27.

## October 9

A **Broad-winged Hawk** was seen in Claremont near the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden on October 5.

The **Black-backed Wagtail** along the Los Angeles River was last reported on October 3.

A number of good birds were seen on the Oxnard Plain on Casper Road. The location is about one-half mile south of Hueneme Road on the right hand side of Casper. The short grass field here had **Lapland, McCown's, and Chestnut-collared longspurs** and **Red-throated Pipits** reported through October 7. The **Buff-Breasted Sandpiper** seen here was last reported October 4. Remember that these fields are private property. Bird from the road and immediate shoulder only.

Two **Red-throated Pipits** were found October 4 at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh. The birds were along the Lincoln Blvd. side and were seen from the bark covered path. The marsh is near Playa del Rey.

An **American Redstart** was at the Laguna Road tamarisk trees on October 7.

A **Baltimore Oriole** was at Charles Wilson Park in Torrance on October 9.

## October 16

On October 13, a **Swainson's Hawk** was seen over the Chilao Visitor's Center in the San Gabriel Mountains. Further east, at Jackson Lake near Wrightwood, 13 **Lewis' Woodpeckers** were present.

Migrating **Swainson's Hawks** were also reported elsewhere in the area this past week with sightings from Claremont, Manhattan Beach, and Highland Park.

A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Marina del Rey on October 11.

Another **Tropical Kingbird** and a **Blackburnian Warbler** were at Big Sycamore Canyon in southeastern Ventura County on October 13.

A **Yellow-green Vireo** was found at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on October 13 and seen again the following day. The **American Redstart** and **Black-and-white Warbler** continued in Area 2 of El Dorado Park.

Six **Red-throated Pipits** were reported on the sod fields at the end of Arnold Road on the Oxnard Plain on October 16. A "japonicus" type **American Pipit** was also seen there.

A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was seen at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on October 13. The **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach. It was last reported on October 11.

## 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

Another **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at Ladera Park.

A single **McCown's Longspur** continued through October 13 on the Oxnard Plain in Ventura County.

#### October 23

A **Ringed Teal**, obviously an escapee, was seen repeatedly at Malibu Lagoon. The most recent report was on October 20.

A **Tropical Kingbird** continued in Area 3 of El Dorado Park in Long Beach along with a **Vermilion Flycatcher**.

Another **Tropical Kingbird** was still at Ormond Beach near Port Heuneme through October 20.

**Plumbeous Vireos** were reported from a number of locations including El Dorado Park and at DeForest Park in Long Beach and at Rosedale Cemetery in Los Angeles.

On October 18 a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was at DeForest Park in Long Beach.

Four **Red-throated Pipits** were still on the Oxnard Plain through October 20. The "*japonicus*" type **American Pipit** was also still being seen here. Nearby, along Casper Road, a **Common Grackle** was reported.

**Black-and-white Warblers** were reported from Banning Park in Wilmington and from Harbor Regional Park.

A **Northern Parula** was at the Village Green condominium park in Los Angeles through October 21. These condominiums are on Rodeo Road between La Cienega and La Brea. Birders are welcome on the property, but please be thoughtful of the residents.

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Eaton Canyon in Pasadena on October 23.

#### October 30

A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at Ballona Creek on October 25.

**Tropical Kingbirds** were reported at Woodlawn Cemetery in Santa Monica on October 26 and another continued through October 27 at El Dorado Park.

An **Eastern Phoebe** was at the Sepulveda Basin. Park in the dirt parking area and walk south toward the Wildlife Area and cross over the stream. Bird the area just south of the fence for the phoebe.

On October 29, a **Summer Tanager** and a **Red-eyed Vireo** were at El Dorado Park in Long Beach.

**Red-throated Pipits** were still being reported on the Oxnard Plain through October 27.

A **Blackpoll Warbler** was at Malibu Lagoon near the parking lot on October 26.

A **Palm Warbler** was found at the end of Arnold Road on the Oxnard Plain on October 28.

The **Black-and-white Warbler** continued through October 25 at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach.

A **Scarlet Tanager** was in Banning Park on October 24.

#### November 6

A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was found at Brackett Airfield in San Dimas on November 2. From the 10 Fwy take Fairplex Drive north then turn left at McKinley to the airport parking lot. The bird was seen, through November 5, near the parking lot.

One, and possibly two **Eastern Phoebes** were reported at the Sepulveda Basin.

A **Palm Warbler** was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh in the Playa Vista on October 31. These wetlands are at the corner of Jefferson and Lincoln Blvd.

A **Magnolia Warbler** was reported from Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on November 3.

A **Blackburnian Warbler** was at Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on November 5 and 6.

An **American Redstart** was found at El Dorado Park on November 11.

An **Orchard Oriole** continued at the South Coast Botanic Garden.

#### November 13

The **Reddish Egret** continued at Mugu Lagoon in southeastern Ventura County. Look for this bird from the dirt pullout along the south side of Highway 1 north of Mugu Rock. A **Eurasian Wigeon** was also seen in the area on November 7.

The **Eastern Phoebe** continued at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area through November 10.

A **Red-throated Pipit** was still present on the Oxnard Plain through November 11.

The **American Redstart** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach continued through November 9. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was reported in Area 2.

The **Magnolia Warbler** previously reported at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach continued through November 9. The **Black-and-white Warbler** was still being reported here as well.

The **Blackburnian Warbler** also continued, at Wilderness Park, in Redondo Beach through November 9.

An **American Tree Sparrow** was at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh near Playa del Rey on November 8 and 9. The bird proved difficult to observe but was seen along the Lincoln side of the marsh and near the corner of Jefferson and Lincoln.

A **Swamp Sparrow** was at Harbor Regional Park on November 9. This bird was at the eastern corner of the lake near the bike path. A **Plumbeous Vireo** and a **Nashville Warbler** were reported along the Wilmington Drain just north of Harbor Park the same day.



Records 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:

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*California Bird Records Committee*

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To report birds for the tape, call:

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

# NEWS FROM THE BOARD

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## BY-LAWS REDUX

The vote on the By-laws updates has been postponed to the January 13, 2004 meeting. A vote in October was ruled ineligible since there was not a quorum of 30 members present, possibly due to the MTA strike. In the interim, the By-laws Committee has added a few additional updates which are incorporated in the printed copies of the by-laws marked with updates available at the Chapter Headquarters or on the website [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org) under the MAIN MENU, ABOUT US, OUR BYLAWS.

## MEMBERS AND REHAB

Members who attended the October 14 meeting were spellbound by Nancy Conney's presentation of Sky Hunters, (email: [skyhunters@juno.com](mailto:skyhunters@juno.com)) a raptor rehabilitation facility and educational service that also focuses on informing the public about raptor ecology, preservation, and rehabilitation issues. Sky Hunters is located in Lakeside, California. Nancy brought a cast of characters including a Western Screech-Owl, a Barn Owl, an American Kestrel, and a female Red-tailed Hawk that will never return to the wild. Observing these fantastic creatures up close and personal was an educational experience even for Board members who were so taken with Nancy and her program that they voted for a \$1,000 donation to the facility and its education program. Since the fires, other wildlife refuges have applied to L.A. Audubon for grant support. 1st VP Dexter Kelly and Education Program head Robin Gose will be evaluating these refuges for inclusion in LAAS Education program. Thanks to Program Committee Chair Mary Freeman for another great evening.

## DEBS PARK AT LAST!

The entire volunteer Board of LAAS was invited but only Executive Secretary Garry George had the work flexibility to

be able to attend the opening ceremonies of the nation's first Audubon center at L.A. City Regional Debs Park on Thursday, November 6 at 10:30 in the morning. The event was attended by Mayor James Hahn, Councilmen Ed Reyes and Antonio Villaraigosa, California Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg, major donors Toyota, the Lucile and David Packard Foundation, city and county Parks and Recreation and DWP staff, school-children in bird masks, and mariachis. Cutting the ribbon was National Audubon President John Flicker and California Audubon Executive Director Jerry Secundy with NAS Development's Melanie Ingalls, a former member of the Board of Los Angeles Audubon. Melanie was credited by all at the event as the one person having the vision to make the Center happen over the eight years of development. The facility is solar powered and uses recycled water so it is not hooked up to the L.A. power or sewer grid. This shows what you can do with \$10 million dollars and 282 acres of undeveloped property (with oaks!) in the center of Los Angeles. Also spotted at the festivities were revelers in L.A. Audubon sweat-shirts and baseball caps. L.A. Audubon will be included on a plaque of supporters who made Debs Park possible.

Details: [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

## LIBRARY

2nd VP Pat Heirs has jumped into the fray and volunteered to Chair the Library Committee. She was promptly appointed by President Ray Schep, who just returned from South Africa having seen three species of albatross on one pelagic. Pat has recruited member Joseph Brooks, a frequent visitor to the Library, and with L.A. Audubon staff member Karen Johnson, the Committee will begin assessing the state of the Library including an inventory, and will consider additions or deletions to our collection of bird books.

## FIRES

California's Cedar wildfire, which raged out of control through the San Diego area, burned all of the Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, owned and operated by San Diego Audubon Society. The Silverwood Sanctuary extends over 728 acres and is the largest privately owned nature refuge in San Diego County. San Diego Audubon is accepting donations to assist the personnel who lost their belongings in the fire. San Diego Audubon will monitor the post-fire ecology on the Sanctuary, to see how various species of flora and fauna respond and recover. The Sanctuary is closed to public visitation until further notice. For further information contact Phil Pryde at (619) 465-9492 or (619) 594-5525, or Wayne Harmon at (858) 488-2250.

## UPGRADE

*Western Tanager* Assistant Editor and twenty year member of L.A. Audubon Tom Frillman volunteered to lead the upgrade of hardware and software in the Chapter Headquarters at Audubon House. From the looks on Martha, Karen, and Susan's faces they are already enjoying the DSL. Thank you Tom!

## RETREAT

The Southern California Audubon Chapters retreat has been re-scheduled to January 30 through February 1, 2004 in Irvine due to the fires. All members and chapter leaders are invited to attend to talk about issues affecting local chapters including Education, Development, Communications, and relationship with National as well as do some birding at San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary. Details are on the Sea & Sage Audubon website [shell.exo.com/~kenyon/](http://shell.exo.com/~kenyon/) or Google—"Sea & Sage Audubon".

Garry George  
Executive Secretary

# NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

## *A Birder's Guide to Whitefish Point*

Pocket guide to Michigan's Upper Peninsula birding area noted for great concentrations of migrants. Includes month-by-month summary of species activity, directions to locations at and near the Point, section on the 27 Most Wanted Birds, and Hawk and Waterbird Count averages.

Lovitch/Whitefish Point Bird Observatory \$5.00

## *A Birder's Guide to Washington*

ABA Birdfinding Guide details hundreds of birding routes and sites in the state and adjacent areas in British Columbia, together with year-round access instructions and birding advice. Over 220 maps, annotated checklist of 478 species with information about status and habitat. Bar graphs cover seasonal/regional abundance. Also includes lists of Washington's mammals, herps, butterflies, and dragonflies.

Opperman/ABA, 2003 \$29.95

## *Raptors of Western North America*

Detailed descriptions of each species and sub-species, 630 newly published raptor images, extensive range maps, and migration data are included. The plumage section discusses more plumage variations than any previously published guide. Up-to-date information on status and distribution. Essential for anyone seeking to identify these tricky-to-identify birds.

Wheeler, 2003 \$49.50

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[www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org)

## "PRICELESS"

Did you know that we have a Library? Our Library Committee Chair Pat Heirs, Karen Johnson, and Joseph Brooks recently called in book expert, Nat de Marias from Heritage Book Shop.

They estimated that we have about 2000 books in the Library and most of them can be checked out. There are volumes on species – some long out of print; old field guides; just about anything imaginable on birds – plus some great nature books too. Obviously some books are for reference only, but the big surprise came just before Nat left. "You know", he said, "those bound volumes of the *Western Tanager* going back to 1934 – now, those are truly priceless".

## WESTERN TANAGER

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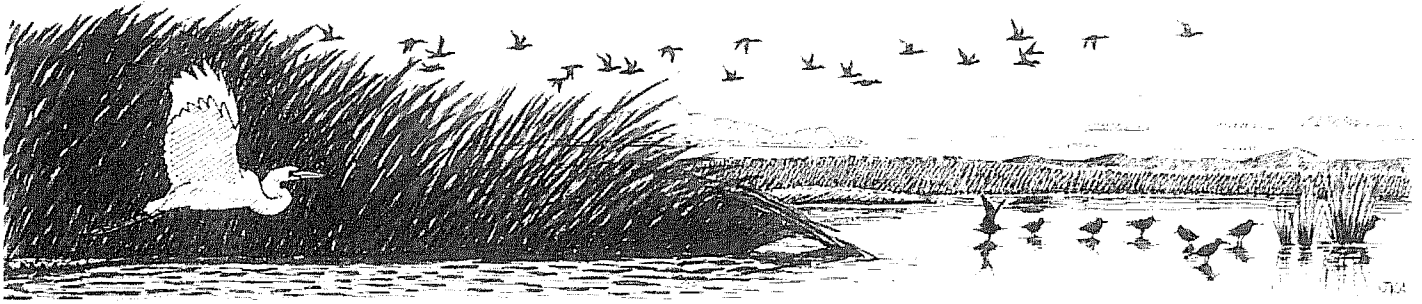
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# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

## NOTES:

### From – DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE:

**Alaska Game Board Approves Aerial Killing of Wolves** Despite the fact that Alaskans have twice voted to ban the practice of aerial killing of wolves. The Alaska Board of Game, appointed by Governor Frank Murkowski, last week approved permits that will allow people to shoot wolves from aircraft. Under the plan, hunters and trappers can shoot wolves either directly from planes or helicopters, or after chasing the animals to the point of exhaustion and then landing the aircraft to kill them on the ground. The areas approved for aerial wolf control include almost two thousand square miles in interior Alaska where all the wolves in that area will be eliminated. To learn more and sign a petition stating your opposition to this plan go to: [www.denlines.org/111303/R001.html](http://www.denlines.org/111303/R001.html)

### WOLVES BOOST BIODIVERSITY:

Despite the efforts of environmentalists to reintroduce wolves to several north-western states, militant opposition has developed from hunters and state governments to that movement. Recent research indicates that reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park seems to be boosting biodiversity around streams and helping nearly extinct stands of cotton-woods to flourish. Elk feed on the leaves of cottonwood and willow sprouts but the wolves keep the elk away from the streambeds, giving the trees a chance to grow. The trees decrease erosion and produce cooling shade over the streams improving habitat for birds and fish.

### EMERGENCY UNITED NATIONS MEETING ON GREAT APES:

The UN is convening an emergency meeting aimed at drafting a strategy to rescue the great apes from imminent extinction. According to UN experts, "the clock is standing at one minute to midnight for the great apes" and estimates that African gorillas are losing 2.1% of their habitat each year and orangutans 5%, while the three subspecies of mountain gorillas "face a very high risk of extinction in the immediate future." Conservationists maintain that the apes' survival has "great symbiotic importance to mankind's ability to develop a more sustainable future."

### COPING WITH THE GRIZZLY:


According to a leading grizzly-bear expert, the number of human-bear conflicts in the Rocky Mountains is not increasing and ranchers and others living there are learning to coexist with grizzlies. As the bears expand their range, wildlife agencies and environmental groups are also expanding efforts to prevent conflict and in most cases are seeing success. Electric fences are about 100% effective in keeping grizzlies away from sheep and Defenders of Wildlife has spent nearly \$16,000 on projects to prevent conflicts and to compensate ranchers for wildlife losses.

### WHAT'S NEW? ENVIRONMENT 2004:

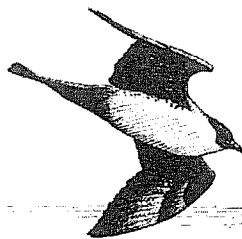
A number of former government officials have formed a new organization to inform swing states about the poor Bush environmental record. They're beginning with four states where the outcome of the

2000 election was extremely close: Oregon, New Mexico, Florida, and New Hampshire. They will zero in on what the League of Conservation Voters calls Bush's failing grade for consistently putting "corporate interests ahead of America's interests when it comes to protecting the environment. In particular, the administration has attacked, weakened or undermined laws providing clean air, clean water, and toxic waste cleanups." Republican pollsters admit that their party and their President are most vulnerable on environmental issues. Ex-head of the EPA Carol Browner, a founder of ENVIRONMENT 2004, says, "this is simply the worst environmental administration ever, and the American public needs to know this so they can make a choice in the upcoming election."

### CALLING ALL BUTTERFLIERS!

The Center For Biological Diversity is going to court to force the US Fish and Wildlife Service to stop dragging its feet and extend Endangered Species Act protection to New Mexico's checkerspot butterfly. The checkerspot was proposed for listing in 2001 but still languishes without protection, prompting the Center to question USFWS intentions. The Bush Administration, listening to its real estate, oil, and mining friends, is manufacturing a budget crisis to cover up its opposition to endangered species protection and poor implementation of this important environmental law. Compared to the Clinton Administration, which listed 211 species in its first two years, the Bush regime has listed only 24 species so far. 





# PELAGIC TRIPS

**Saturday, February 28 –**

**Palos Verdes Escarpment and Redondo Canyon.** Eight-hour trip departs from Marina del Rey at 7:30 AM on the R/V UCLA Seaworld. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Short-tailed, Black-vented, Sooty, and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Xantus's Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Rarity: Ancient Murrelet. Gray Whales and dolphins are often seen.

Leaders: **Todd McGrath, Kimball Garrett, and Michael San Miguel, Jr.**  
\$50 – No galley; coffee and hot water available.

**Saturday, May 8 –**

To **Anacapa Island**, out past **Santa Cruz Island**, and around **San Miguel Island**. Nine-hour trip departs from Island Packers dock in Ventura at 8:00 AM on the fast catamaran the *Islander*. After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island we will have the boat to ourselves, and we will head for deep water off San Miguel Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Black-vented, Sooty, and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Rarities: puffins (twice in 25 years).

Leaders: **Todd McGrath, Jonathan Feenstra, David Pereksta, and Mike San Miguel.**

\$95 – Snack type galley with sandwiches, hot dogs, pizza, and drinks.

**Sunday, June 6 –**

Landing at Prisoner's Cove on **Santa Cruz Island** for the **Island Scrub-Jay**, then out to sea for pelagic birding; return by Anacapa Island. This nine-hour trip departs from Island Packers dock in Oxnard at 8:00 AM on the M/V Vanguard. We will land on Santa Cruz Island where the endemic **Island Scrub-Jay** is easily

seen. We will then go out to sea for pelagic birding, returning by Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Pomarine Jaeger; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet. Rarities: Flesh-footed Shearwater; South Polar Skua. Tufted Puffin seen in 2002.

Leaders: **Todd McGrath, Jonathan Feenstra, and Mike San Miguel, Jr.**

\$85 – Limited Galley – box lunches may be ordered from a nearby delicatessen.

SAVE \$5  
WITH AN  
EARLY SIGN-UP  
60 DAYS PRIOR  
TO ANY TRIP

**Saturday, September 11 –**

A deep water trip toward **Cherry, Tanner, and Cortez Banks**. This 13-14 hour trip departs from Sea Landing in Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:00 AM on the fast catamaran *Condor Express*. It returns between 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM. This is the **Red-billed Tropicbird** trip. We will be far offshore in three counties, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles. Birds to be expected: Black, Least, Ashy, and Leach's storm-petrels; Pomarine and Long-tailed jaegers; South Polar Skua; Sabine's Gull; Arctic Tern. Rarities: Black-footed Albatross; Buller's Shearwater; Craveri's Murrelet. Blue, Fin, and Minke whales as well as several species of dolphins are usually seen on this trip. Leaders: **Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, Mike San Miguel, and David Pereksta.**

\$165 – There is a full galley which serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A full bar is available.

**Sunday, October 17 –**

Northern Channel Islands Monument. **Anacapa, Santa Rosa, and Santa Cruz** islands toward **San Miguel Island**. This 10-hour trip departs from the Oxnard Harbor at 7:30 AM 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 (3); Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Craveri's and Xantus's murrelets; Cassin's Auklet. Rarities: Buller's and Flesh-footed shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger. In 2002, a Streaked Shearwater and in 2003, a Brown Booby and two Manx Shearwaters were seen.

Leaders: **Todd McGrath, Jonathan Feenstra, David Pereksta, and Michael San Miguel, Jr.**

\$95 – Limited galley. Box lunches may be ordered from a nearby delicatessen.

**Saturday, November 20 –**

**Ventura Harbor** toward and past **San Miguel Island** on the fast catamaran M/V *Islander*. Nine-hour trip departs from the Island Packers dock in the Ventura Harbor at 8:00 AM and returns around 5:00 PM. After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island we will have the boat to ourselves and head toward 1000 fathom water about 10 miles from San Miguel Island. Birds seen this time of year: Northern Fulmar; Black-vented, Pink-footed, and Sooty shearwaters; Leach's Storm-Petrel; South Polar Skua; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Common Murre; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Occasionally: Craveri's Murrelet. Rarities: Flesh-footed and Buller's shearwaters; Black-footed Albatross. Leaders: **Todd McGrath, David Pereksta, Michael San Miguel, Jr., and Jonathan Feenstra.**

\$95 – Snack type galley with hot dogs, sandwiches, pizza and drinks available.

*Note: Destinations may be changed in order to maximize bird sightings, or to minimize very rough seas.*

# F I E L D T R I P S

*Before setting out on any field trip, please call the LAAS bird tape at (323) 874-1318 for special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.*

**Sunday, January 4 – Topanga State Park.** Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin will lead participants through this beautiful and diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new in the area. From Ventura Blvd., take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 1 mile 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 AM.

**Saturday, January 10 – East Antelope Valley.** Leaders: Jerry Dunn and Scott Harris. Beyond 50th Street East is uncharted territory for all but a few birders. However, Scott has DFG oversight of the area, and Jerry calls it home, so they know that Mountain Plover, raptors, LeConte's Thrasher, and other specialties are often easier to find in the far eastern reaches of the Valley. Take Hwy 14 N to Avenue S (next to Lake Palmdale). Drive into the Park-and-Ride just to the east. Meet at 8:00 AM at the W end of the lot. Bring lunch for a full day of fun in the field. No fee, no reservation. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful.

**Sunday, January 11 – Whittier Narrows.** Leader: Ray Jillson. View colorful resident and migrating birds, including the introduced Northern Cardinal. Take Peck Dr. off the 60 Fwy in South El Monte (just west of the 605 Fwy). Take the off ramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. \$2 suggested donation. Meet at 8:15 AM.

**Saturday, January 17 – Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.** Leader: Karen Johnson. This trip covers landscaped parkland and natural coastal scrub habitats, and is paced for beginning birders and members of the Baldwin Hills community. The park entrance is off of

La Cienega Blvd. Between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$3 parking fee), turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces. Meet at 8:00 AM.

**Sunday, January 18 – Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area.** Leader: Kris Ohlenkamp. "Freeway close" morning of birding. Kris has led this walk on-and-off for 20 years, noting 200 species, and averaging 60-65 per walk. American Bittern sometimes seen. Take the 405 Fwy N into the San Fernando

Valley, turn W on Burbank Blvd. and N on Woodley Ave. to the second right, which is marked "Wildlife Area". Turn here and park in the lot at the end. Meet at 8:00 AM, and bird until about 11:30 AM.

**Sunday, January 18 – Ballona Wetlands.** Bob Shanman will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland and adjacent rocky jetty. Good spot for Surfbird, Black Oystercatcher, gulls, and possible Large-billed Savannah Sparrow. 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 AM.

**Saturday-Sunday, January 24-25 – Salton Sea.** Leader: Nick Freeman. Yellow-footed Gull, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Snow and Ross' geese, Sandhill Cranes, Stilt Sandpiper, and Gila Woodpecker all possible to certain. Fee: \$5. No limit, but sign up with SASE for more details. Meet there at 9:30 AM. Saturday. Calipatria Inn (800) 830-1113 and Brawley Inn (760) 344-1199 are recommended. Radios and 'scopes helpful.

**Sunday, February 1 – Topanga State Park.** Leaders: Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin. Meet at 8:00 AM. See January 4 listing for details.

**Friday, February 6 – Gull Study Workshop Lecture.** Speaker Larry Allen will discuss gulls that have appeared in North America – most of which have made it to California. Larry will specifically address general aspects of gull topography, the confusing logic of molt sequences, and the finer aspects of identification to age and species. Slides, study skins, and handouts will be used. Meet at Audubon House, 7-10 PM. with one break. 20 maximum. \$10 fee mailed to LAAS covers lecture and field trip.

**Sunday, February 8 – Whittier Narrows.** Leader: Ray Jillson. Meet at 8:15 AM. See January 11 listing for details.

## 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 PM. 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.*

**Sunday, February 8 –**

**Gull Study Workshop Field Trip.**

Leader: **Larry Allen**. Put your new knowledge to use in the field, perhaps even identifying California and Ring-billed gulls as they fly overhead! Meet at the Malibu Lagoon kiosk at 8:00 AM.

Driving north to Malibu on PCH, either turn right on Cross Creek Road after the bridge over the creek and park here; or park on PCH, preferably on the north (right) side. Walk across PCH at the signal, and meet at the kiosk by the lagoon. If not attending the lecture, call Audubon House to confirm the meeting site, which could change. 20 maximum. \$10 fee mailed to LAAS covers lecture and field trip. Possible parking fee. Bring a lunch.

**Sunday, February 15 –**

**Ballona Wetlands.** Leader: **Bob Shanman**.

Meet at 8:00 AM. See January 18 listing for details.

**Saturday-Sunday, February 21-22 –**

**Carrizo Plain.** Leaders: **Nick & Mary Freeman**. Meet at 8:00 AM in Maricopa.

Great scenery. Good for hawks, falcons, eagles, and often Mountain Plover! Hopefully, Sandhill Cranes, elk, and pronghorn. Nick guarantees we will not see the record 17 Golden Eagles seen last year! If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others when you reserve. \$5 per person. Limit: 14. Your phone number will be released for carpooling unless you request otherwise. Sign-up with Audubon House for exact directions and information. Reserve your own room in Buttonwillow for Saturday night (Motel 6). Radios and 'scopes helpful.

**Saturday, February 21 –**

**Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.**

Leader: **Eleanor Osgood**. Meet at 8:00 AM. \$3 entry fee. See January 17 listing for details.

**Saturday, February 28 –**

**Lakeview / Lake Perris.** Leader:

**Howard King**. We will visit San Jacinto State Wildlife Refuge, unless there are reports of bad mud here or great birds elsewhere. Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Bell's Sage Sparrow, and Prairie Falcon all real possibilities. Last year's Least Flycatcher and Ruddy Ground-Dove were exceptional. Take the 10 or

60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E onto Ramona Expressway. Continue to the Lakeview Market at the corner of Davis Road. Meet here at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch, warm clothing, and footwear for possible mud. No fee for the trip, but possible entrance fee.

**February 28, 2004 –**

**Adobe Photoshop Workshop for Photographers** by Tom Stephenson.

Tom, the featured speaker for "Digiscoping" in June, will present an overview of Photoshop, which is used to enhance photographs, with emphasis on digiscoping. He will review numerous methods of cleaning up and manipulating photos as well as changing features in digital and digitized photos. 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM at Pasadena's Eaton Canyon Nature Center with a break in the afternoon. Attendees are encouraged to take their laptops for use in class during the workshop. Send a SASE to LAAS for details for a list of materials and directions to the site. No charge, no limit.

**Sunday, March 7 –**

**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 American 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 tak-

ing 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 7:30 AM by the barn. Free. No sign-up required.

**Sunday, March 7 –**

**Topanga State Park.** Leaders: **Ken**

**Wheeland** and **Chris Tosdevin**. Meet at 8:00 AM. See January 4 listing for details.

**Saturday-Sunday, March 20-21 –**

**Anza Borrego** with **Fred Heath**. The spring explosion of desert flora and fauna should be well under way in the Colorado Desert, including butterflies, Desert Bighorn, herps, and early birds in the throes of breeding activity. Suggested accommodations: 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 20, or motels earlier. Limit 20 people. Send SASE with \$5 fee to LAAS to learn 7:00 AM meeting place and more details. Pleasant days, cool to cold nights.

**Saturday-Sunday, April 3-4 –**

**Owens Valley Grouse Trip.**

**Mary Freeman** leads. Sage Grouse on the lek, breathtaking scenery, raptor-rich valleys. Meet early in Big Pine Saturday. Limited to 20. To sign up, send \$15 and a SASE to LAAS. More details in mailer. Reserve rooms early.

## LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

**THE BEST OF COSTA RICA – March 2-14, 2004**

**TORTUGUERO / BRAULIO CARRILLO – Extension March 14-18**

Enjoy excellent birding and wildlife viewing in Central America's richest biodiversity. Includes areas from mountains to tropical lowlands. 20 years experience, combined with expert local guides.

**AMAZON VOYAGE / PERU – July 3-11, 2004**

**MACHU PICCHU/ABRA MALAGA – Pre-trip June 27-July 4**

Explore and observe exotic wildlife and abundant birdlife on the upper Amazon River in comfort on board La Turquesa, a small vessel, and from motor launches.

For information and itinerary, contact:

Olga Clarke, Travel Director, Los Angeles Audubon Society

Ph/Fax: (818) 249-9511 e-mail: oclarketravel@earthlink.net

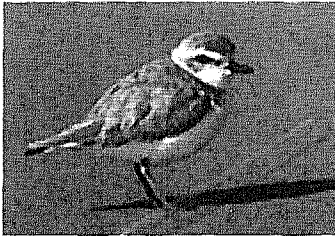
# EVENING MEETINGS

Meet at 7:30 PM in Plummer Park  
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

**Tuesday, January 13**

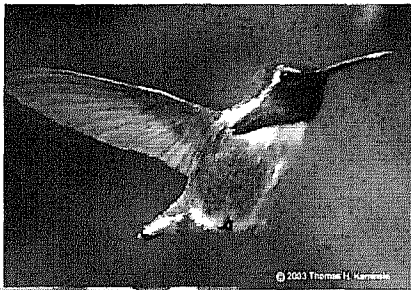
**Mike Prather**

**Owens Valley – Reversing Water History or Empty Promise?**



Long under land and water domination by the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), the Owens Valley has experienced decades of environmental damage. From the manipulation of surface waters to the extraction of groundwater, severe impacts have occurred to vegetation, wildlife, and air quality.

Come and listen to Mike discuss the efforts and attempts of the Owens Lake and the Lower Owens River Project that so far has restored 15 square miles of long-lost habitat for thousands of migrating shorebirds.

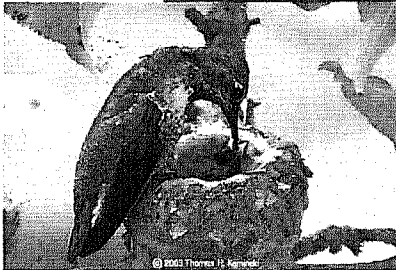


**Tuesday, February 10**

**Tom Kaminski**

**Hooked on Hummingbirds**

Avian Video Center producer Tom Kaminski will present his latest and highly acclaimed video revealing hummingbird behaviors that the naked eye never sees. Spectacular slow motion, freeze-frame, and real time footage shows them flying upside down, catching insects, fighting, nesting, and brooding. And, some of scenes show them engaged in generally unreported behaviors, including male threats aimed at nesting females and other threat displays that can only be described as hummingbirds ballet. Shot in the U.S. and Costa Rica.



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