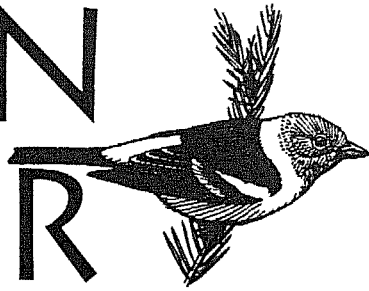


WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 71 Number 1 September/October 2004

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Remembering Alexander Skutch

by Dana Gardner

For many years I have made pilgrimages to Alexander Skutch's farm, Los Cusingos, to visit and make paintings in the peace and quiet of his little patch of tropical forest. This year I planned my trip to coincide with his 100th birthday. A couple of weeks before the event, however, I went down to stay with him for a few days. I am very, very glad that I did, as he passed away eight days short of his birthday. Because it was unseasonably rainy, I set up my painting table in the office where Skutch would sit and read each morning, and we kept each other company. Although Alexander had been deteriorating physically for the last couple of years, was confined to a wheel chair, and had become hard of hearing, he remained mentally alert and in very high spirits. Last year when I arrived for a visit I found him reading a book on planetary physics. (He asked me what I thought of the Big Bang Theory.) This year he was rereading many of his own books that he had written years earlier. He told me he was refreshing his memory. He still received occasional visitors and graciously welcomed them, apologizing for not being able to rise to greet them. He wished them a pleasant walk in his forest, something he had been unable to do for several years, but he enjoyed hearing about what birds they saw.

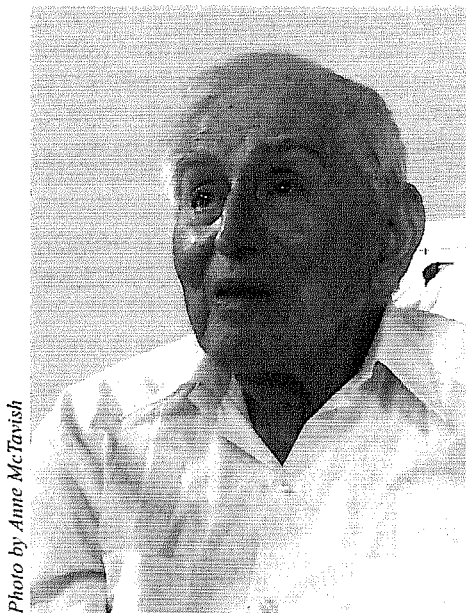


Photo by Anne McTavish

Alexander Skutch

Only on the next to the last day of my stay did a nagging cough rapidly escalate to the point where he could barely talk and his breathing became erratic and labored. I sat with him that night and held his hand; I was sure he was about to die. He half opened his eyes, saw me, and struggled to tell me something. I thought I was to hear the last words of this wise old naturalist, and they turned out to be a request to have a dentist appointment made for him the next week! His tired old decrepit body

was sending him a message, but he was having none of that – he was making plans for the future. I realized then that he wouldn't die quite yet. The next day was my planned departure day. He had quit coughing and had slept well, had eaten breakfast, and was once again reading. It was a beautiful sunny morning, the first sunny morning in more than a week of overcast weather. A gorgeous Turquoise Cotinga came out to sun itself in a bare tree at the edge of the yard. I left Los Cusingos in the early afternoon and planned to return for his 100th birthday party the next week, but I found out later that Alexander's health quickly deteriorated in the afternoon, and he died peacefully early that evening.

He was buried at Los Cusingos, as he wished, a few feet from the worn out, but still beautiful, old house that he built by hand some 62 years ago. Nearly 100 people showed up for the interment, including neighbors of many years, birdwatchers young and old, and a group of school children in their uniforms. His wife, Pamela Lankester, died in 2001.

Alexander Skutch's death is a great loss to neotropical ornithology and to birdwatchers and armchair travelers the world over. He considered his best work to be the detailed life histories of over 300 neotropical birds and the discovery of "helpers at the nest", now called

co-operative breeding, where several adult birds co-operate to raise one brood of nestlings. But his 30 books also include volumes on religion and philosophy, travel, nature stories for young people, and several books on specific bird families that are full of scientific information but written for the general bird enthusiast.


Though he led a few tours and taught the occasional ornithology class, he preferred to stay on his beloved farm. He disliked the bustling crowds and fast pace of the city. He told me during my last visit that he would have liked to have visited Australia and seen its interesting birdlife. But I remember that he was invited to Australia many years ago to attend an ornithological congress and chair the sessions on co-operative breeding. When he found out he would have to deal with the crowds at Los Angeles and other big airports in order to get there, he turned down the invitation. Over the years, however, he welcomed thousands of birdwatchers that came to visit Los Cusingos. Many will fondly remember sitting on the veranda with Alexander and Pamela, watching the colorful tanagers and honeycreepers coming in to the feeder to eat bananas.

Though recognized world wide as one of the greatest living ornithologists, Alexander Skutch was a very modest and humble man with a very simple personal philosophy: Don't do anything that hurts



Alexander Skutch named his farm "Los Cusingos" after the Fiery-billed Araçari. This black-and-white line drawing was done by the author, Dana Gardner.

other feeling creatures, and live simply and modestly so as not to tax the environment and its resources. He was a life-long vegetarian. Until recently he lived without electricity, and never had a telephone. He arranged to have his money put into a scholarship fund, administered by the American Field Ornithologists, for the study of neotropical birds. Los Cusingos is now owned by the Tropical Science Center, and is maintained as a bird sanctuary where tourists, birdwatchers, and researchers are

welcomed. His beautiful old house will be restored and turned into a museum. An anthology of his writings will soon be published by Axios Press. 

Dana Gardner first met Alexander Skutch in 1973 when he was a soldier (and birdwatcher) in the Panama Canal Zone. He has illustrated 18 of Alexander Skutch's books. Dana lives in Berkeley, California.

LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

THE BEST OF COSTA RICA

February 24 – March 8, 2005

This is a repeat of our highly successful 2004 trip to Costa Rica when we enjoyed spectacular scenery and recorded over 400 species of birds at a reasonable pace. Accommodations are first class with good food, while being accompanied by excellent, experienced guides and leaders.

Come join us for an unforgettable adventure in a remarkably diverse, small country.

For information and itinerary, contact:

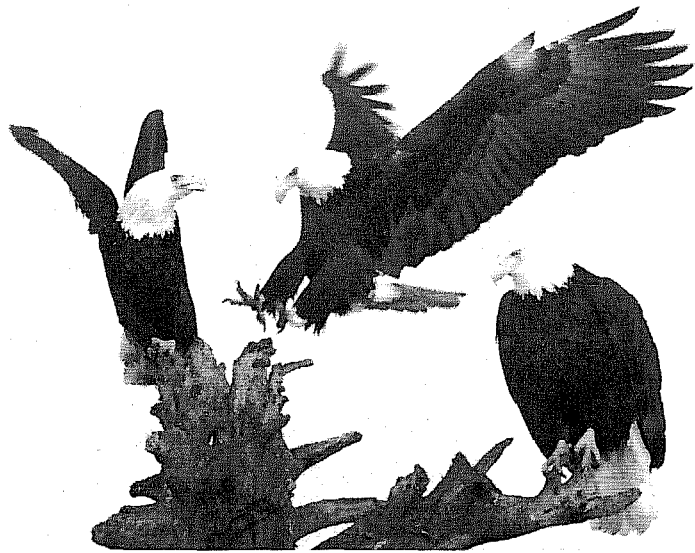
Olga Clarke, Travel Director, Los Angeles Audubon Society

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

NOTE: An opening is available (due to a cancellation) on our sold out Brazil's Pantanal and Iguazu Falls Tour, for a single lady only. October 23-31, 2004, with a 3-day post-tour extension to Rio de Janeiro and the Atlantic Rainforest. Please respond immediately if you want to go on this popular trip.

LAAS
2004
PHOTO
CONTEST
WINNER

LIVIA
TRAUBER



© Livia Trauber

It was cold and snowing when amateur photographer Livia Trauber took this winning picture of Bald Eagles in Homer, Alaska using a Canon EOS 3 camera with a 100-400 lens.

The 2004 Ralph W. Schreiber Research Awards

The Los Angeles Audubon Society is proud to announce that seven applicants have been presented almost \$14,000.00 as recipients of the 2004 Ralph W. Schreiber Research Awards.

These seven recipients will use their awards to research the following subjects:

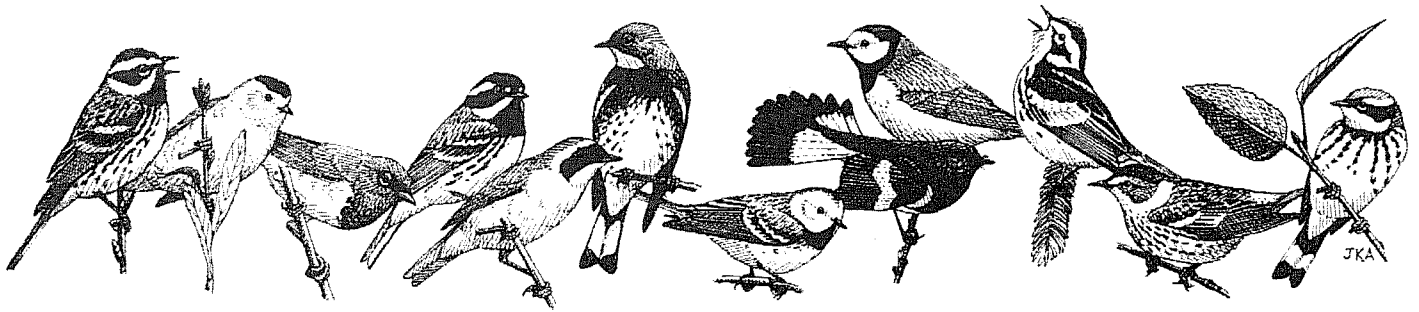
*Metapopulation dynamics of a panmictic species in a fragmented landscape;
Distribution of riparian bird species in an urbanizing landscape;
Dietary response of the Elegant Tern to changing ocean conditions and prey populations in southern California;
Subspecific differentiation of passerine birds in western Canada: a study of the role of migratory divides in speciation;
Phylogeography and population history of three related larids off the western coast of North America;
The Black Throated Magpie Jay as a non-native species in San Diego County;
Greater Roadrunner distribution assessment.*

We wish to thank Walt Sakai of Santa Monica College and his committee for their time and dedicated efforts in conducting the evaluation process and reviewing the numerous requests they received for research awards.

In future issues of *Western Tanager* we hope to disclose results from some of these studies.

Our Society had presented LAAS Research Awards for years, but in 1988 the name was changed to recognize and honor the recently deceased Curator of Ornithology at the Natural History Museum of L.A. County, Dr. Ralph Schreiber. As a dedicated ornithologist, he became involved with LAAS in 1976. He continued research on the Brown Pelican and did long term studies of seabirds, served as President of the Cooper Ornithological Society, and was active in finalizing plans for Bird Hall at the museum.

The Ralph W. Schreiber Research Awards are presented annually for research relevant to the biology of birds. Recipients are limited to students, amateurs, and others with limited or no access to major granting agencies. Applicants must reside in southern California or be currently enrolled in a southern California academic institution. Application information is posted on the LAAS website.



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Jon Feenstra

Summer in Los Angeles. Actually, we had it pretty good this season both with birds and the weather (at least until the middle of July when nature woke up and turned on the heat). Summer isn't typically thought of as an incredibly exciting time to be out birding but many of us stuck it out and showed that summer in Los Angeles is worth being outside for. In addition to all the regulars, this season managed its fair share of vagrant species as well as some interesting nesting records.

Very unusual in summer and inland were two **Brant** in the L.A. River in Long Beach on June 12 and 20 [KL]. Another Brant, perhaps one of the two, was on the L.A. River near Silver Lake on June 27 [RB]. A summering **Hooded Merganser** was at the same location on July 11 [RB]. Typically absent from our coastal waters in summer, **Black-vented Shearwaters** were seen from Point Vicente on May 15 and June 19 [KL] and from Point Dume on June 19 [KGa]. **Least Bitterns**, local residents of reedy lakes in the Los Angeles area, nested for the first time at Hansen Dam with two young observed flying around the lake [KGa]. Juvenile **White-faced Ibis** were on the L.A. River on June 6 and June 12 and may be the products of a local nesting [KL]. The Glossy Ibis reported from the Piute Ponds this spring was last seen on May 23 and believed now to be a **Glossy x White-faced Ibis** hybrid [KGa, MSM, TMc, LS]. The dark ibis are notoriously difficult to separate and the utmost care must be taken when considering the identity of a possible vagrant.

Good to know that **California Condors** are still hanging around in the

San Gabriel Mountains and providing quite a spectacle as they rest on the microwave towers by Bear Divide [DA].

Nesting of **Spotted Sandpipers** was indicated when an adult was seen with a juvenile on the L.A. River in Sepulveda Basin on July 1 [BP]. The last **Franklin's Gulls** of spring all blew through on May 15 with a whopping six at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds [SS] and two more at Point Vicente [KL]. Point Vicente also had a flyby **Pigeon Guillemot**

on June 19 [KL]. Highly unusual in the late spring, a **White-winged Dove** made an appearance in a yard in Hermosa Beach on June 22 [LC]. **Chimney Swifts**, reported only sparsely last summer, were at several locations this year: over the L.A. River in Long Beach on May 29 and June 20 [KL], at Edward Vincent Park in Inglewood on June 16 [RB], and whizzing around buildings in downtown L.A. on June 16 and June 28 [TMi]. The only verified nesting of **Loggerhead Shrikes** in the L.A. Basin was along the L.A. River at Del Amo Blvd. and on White Point in San Pedro [KL]. A **Bell's Vireo** was singing in the north end willows of Harbor Park between May 8 and 15 but apparently didn't find a mate and moved on [MB, KL]. A **Yellow-throated Vireo** made a May 31 appearance there as well [MB]. Past spring occurrences of Yellow-throated Vireo in the area have all been from the last half of May. Another vagrant vireo, a **Red-eyed Vireo**, showed up at the Village Green Condo Park in Los Angeles on June 5 and remained until June 12 [RB].

And where would we be without a peppering of eastern warbler species? Even summer did not disappoint. A **Tennessee Warbler** was seen at Banning Park on May 15 [AL]. An early fall vagrant **Lucy's Warbler**, three days earlier than the record set last year, was at Harbor Park on July 10 [KL]. **Northern Parulas** were around this season beginning with a single bird at the Piute Ponds on May 23 [KGa, MSM, TMc, LS]. Subsequently, singing males popped up at Eaton Canyon on June 6 [JW] and at Harbor Park on June 12 [KL]. The Eaton

Records of rare and unusual birds reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the regional editors of *North American Birds* or, if appropriate, by the California Birds Records Committee.

To report birds, send observations with as many details as possible to:

Birds of the Season,
Jon Feenstra at feenstra@its.caltech.edu

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

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

To report birds for the tape, call:

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

Canyon bird was joined by a female on June 10 and the pair remained until June 27 [JoF]. Despite all the singing and displaying, no nesting was detected. The Harbor Park bird was joined by a female on July 10 but the pair hasn't been reported since [KL]. **Black-and-white Warbler** made one appearance with a bird at El Nido Park in Torrance on May 14 [DM]. Two **Ovenbirds** were recorded in the area; a dead one found in Lancaster on June 13 [JaF] and a living one at Sand Dune Park on June 23 [RB]. A **Northern Waterthrush** was present at Ballona Freshwater Marsh on May 19 [RB]. A singing **Kentucky Warbler**, casual at best in the L.A. area, was found in Claremont on June 27 and remained for several days [JP]. Nesting of **Wilson's Warblers** in the north end willows at Harbor Park was confirmed when two were observed on June 26 [KL]. Wilson's Warblers historically bred in riparian thickets on the now mostly demolished coastal plain of southern California. They continue to nest in willow thickets along wet seeps in our mountains (e.g. Buckhorn Campground in the San Gabriels).

An immature male **Hepatic Tanager** was a good find at Chilao Campground on June 26 [AB]. A singing male **Indigo Bunting** showed up in the grassy flood basin of Eaton Canyon on June 5 [JoF, CM]. On June 12 a female joined him and was seen occasionally until June 27. No nesting was observed. On July 9 a second male Indigo arrived with the first southbound migrant lazulis [JoF]. Two **Red Crossbills** were reported at Blue Ridge on July 19 [DVP]. They follow the pine cone crops and have been absent from the San Gabriels for the past couple of years.

Reports from San Clemente Island this season included: **Hutton's Vireo**, **Ovenbird**, **Bobolink**, **Tricolored Blackbird**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, a returning **Masked Booby**, and probably a bunch of other things we wish had made it to the mainland [BS].

I know everyone out there reading this is considering all the great birds that have popped up in the Los Angeles area this summer – and now it's fall. We all know how exciting fall can be. Fall migration started in June for some birds,

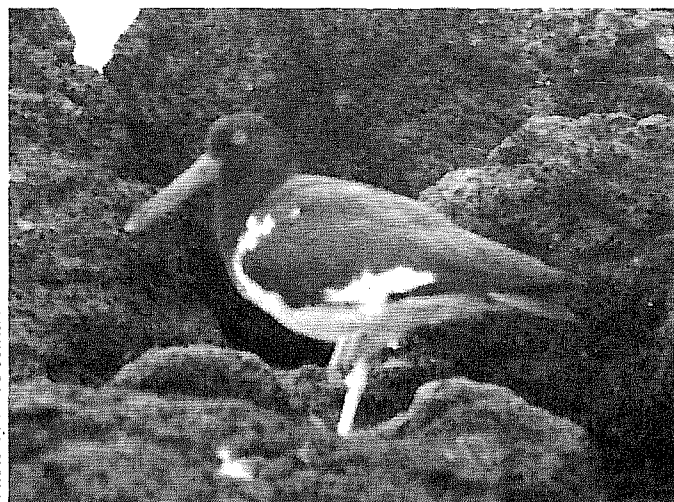


Photo by Jon Feenstra

Outside of L.A. County, but not outside of birders' jurisdiction was the fantastic sighting of an American Oystercatcher on the rocks on the east end of Anacapa Island seen on the June 7 L.A. Audubon Pelagic. The nearest breeding American Oystercatchers are in Mexico and very rarely do they make it to our shores. Occasionally, hybrids between Black and American Oystercatchers show up in southern California and show characteristics intermediate between the two species. The Anacapa oystercatcher (shown here) showed characteristics consistent with a pure American Oystercatcher lineage including a clear line of demarcation between the black head and white underparts. In addition, but difficult to see in this grayscale photo, is the contrast between the black head and brown upperparts feathers, another feature of American Oystercatcher.

and while you're reading this, migrating birds are zooming over you and touching down at the local parks. Many shorebirds move through in July and August – first the adult birds in plumage worn down from migrating and breeding and then the juveniles in their fresh apparel. In September the migration will be taken up a notch as it's forcefully joined by northern passerine species. By October we'll have Yellow-rumped Warblers back in every plant-like thing around. The weather will cool down and birds, both the usual and unusual, will be populating the migrant traps. It's the best time to be outside. 🐦

DA = Dave Anderberg
 RB = Richard Barth
 AB = Ann Brooks
 MB = Martin Byhower
 LC = Lori Conrad
 JaF = Jared Feiner
 JoF = Jon Feenstra
 KGa = Kimball Garrett
 KL = Kevin Larson
 AL = Andrew Lee
 TMc = Todd McGrath
 TMi = Tom Miko
 CM = Cathy Mires
 BP = Bob Pann
 JP = Jim Pike
 MSM = Mike San Miguel
 LS = Larry Sansone
 SS = Steve Sosensky
 BS = Brian Sullivan
 DVP = David Vander Pluym
 JW = Jeff Webster

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The new Board of Directors held their first meeting of the new term July 14, 2004 at Audubon House. President Dexter Kelly, 1st Vice President Garry George, Executive Secretary Pat Heirs, Recording Secretary Johanna Dawes and new to the Board 2nd Vice President Becky Schwiebert were joined by past Presidents Fred Heath, Jean Brandt, and Herb Clarke, Travel Chair Olga Clarke and Bookstore Manager Martha Balkan.

The meeting was chaired by President Dexter Kelly whose first order of business was to re-appoint most current Committee Chairs and to ask Jean Brandt to serve another term as *Western Tanager* Editor.

In an emotional moment for the entire Board, Conservation Chair Sandy Wohlgemuth resigned his position citing time and health restrictions. The Board was stunned as Sandy's has been the voice of conservation at LAAS for over thirty years. Sandy hand picked his successor when he put his hand on my shoulder and said "I think Garry should continue the work." This was a moment I'll never forget. I'm proud and honored to have stood in Sandy's long shadow these last few years and will hold his unflagging dedication to habitat and birds as a high standard for all my conservation work to come on behalf of LAAS.

Executive Secretary Pat Heirs then resigned her position, and the Board elected her Treasurer to

continue the fine work she has been doing as interim Treasurer the last year. We now search for an Executive Secretary candidate to fill that position. Please contact the Nominating Committee with any ideas at laas@laaudubon.org.


Garry George reported that SB1477 the California Clean Water bill sponsored by Audubon California was defeated in the Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee of the California Assembly. Chairman Dan Cancimilla of the Bay Area recommended a vote against the bill citing irresolvable conflicts between business and environmental issues and a majority of his Committee followed his lead. The streams and wetlands of California remain unpro-

tected as a result. Assembly member Dario Frommer of Glendale, Silver Lake, and Echo Park was a Committee member who did not vote, crucial to defeating the bill. If you are in his district, let his office know how you feel about his not voting on this important issue. Phone: (818) 240-6330, Fax: (818) 240-4632.

President Dexter Kelly reported on the ongoing Headquarters Search and vowed to continue efforts to re-locate LAAS to more suitable quarters. Best candidate so far is the River Center.

Garry George announced plans for a presentation by ornithologist Bob Ridgely as a cooperative effort between five southern California chapters of Audubon

– L.A., Santa Monica Bay, San Fernando Valley, Sea & Sage, and Pasadena – in late March, 2005. Exact date and location are to be determined. Ridgely wrote *Birds of South America, Vol. I and II*, and *Birds of Panama*, and recently released the two volume *Birds of Ecuador*. He discovered a new species, Jocotoco Antpitta (*Grallaria ridgelyi*) a few years back in southern Ecuador, and has established six reserves in that country. Stay turned for more details on this exciting event.

Publications Committee Chair Fred Heath reported on the progress of the *Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas* compiled by Larry Allen, Mark Wimer, and Kimball Garrett. We may be moving into publication of the atlas sometime within the next year. 

Committees:

Communications – Garry George, Chair
Conservation – Garry George, Chair
Education – Dexter Kelly, Chair
Finance – Raymond Schep, Chair
Field Trips – Nick Freeman, Chair
Grants – Walt Sakai, Chair
Headquarters – Dexter Kelly, Chair
Library – Pat Heirs, Chair
Membership – Pat Heirs, Chair
Pelagic Trips – Phil Sayre, Chair
Programs – Mary Freeman, Chair
Publishing – Fred Heath, Chair
Travel – Olga Clarke, Chair

Volunteers needed. Contact any Board Member and become an active participant in your Society.

NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

THE BIRDWATCHER'S COMPANION TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDLIFE –

This encyclopedic handbook, first published more than twenty years ago, is the quintessential guide and handy reference for amateur and seasoned birders alike. Fully updated and revised, it provides accounts of the basic elements of birdlife, bird physiology and anatomy, terms and jargon, name definitions, and etymology. There are sections on colloquial names of birds, collective nouns (for example “an exaltation of larks”), biographical sketches of important figures in ornithology, and appendices with checklists, phylogeny, exotic species, and birdwatcher's calendar. Exhaustive bibliography.

Christopher W. Leahy

\$39.50

CALIFORNIA DESERT WILDFLOWERS, an Introduction to Families, Genera, and Species –

This easy to use guide to the most visible families of California desert flowers includes identification keys, color photos of nearly 300 species, and a wealth of diagrams. Created as a primer on identification to family and genus, this volume will take readers to a new level of understanding and appreciation of wildflowers, their relationships, habitats, and adaptations.

Sia and Emi Morhardt

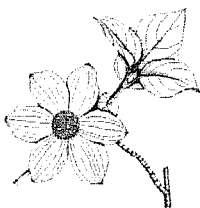
\$29.95

FLORIDA KEYS WILDFLOWERS –

The ultimate guide to wildflowers, trees, and shrubs of the ecoregion extending from Soldier Key, to the Marquesas Keys, to the Dry Tortugas. Vivid color photographs and informative text of more than 300 plants, it also includes an introduction to habitats and ecology of the Keys and a glossary of botanical terms. This book is color keyed, water-resistant, and has an extra durable flexible cover.

Roger L. Hamme

\$23.95



California Natural History Guides

These are fully updated and revised editions of the classic guides by Philip A. Munz (1892-1974) of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden and professor of botany at Pomona College. Easy-to-use, color coded; sturdy flexible covers.

INTRODUCTION TO CALIFORNIA SPRING WILDFLOWERS of the Foothills, Valleys, and Coast –

Describes more than 400 wildflowers, 244 new color photographs.

\$16.95

INTRODUCTION TO SHORE WILDFLOWERS of California, Oregon, and Washington –

268 species, described and illustrated with new color photographs.

\$16.95

INTRODUCTION TO CALIFORNIA DESERT WILDFLOWERS –

240 wildflower species, 220 new color photographs, covers Mojave and Colorado Deserts.

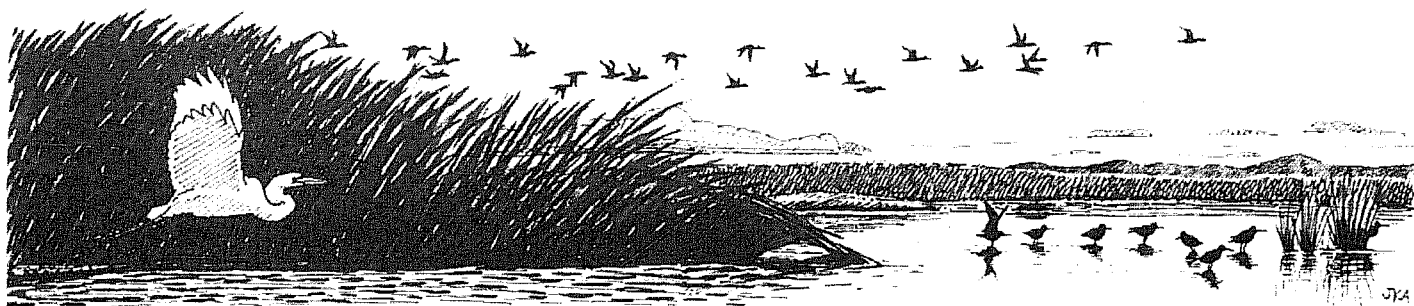
\$16.95

OPTICS FIRST AID KIT –

When you are on safari, tour, or in the field, make sure your irreplaceable photographs are clear and sharp. This kit is for digital and film cameras, camcorders, binoculars, and scopes, it contains an anti-static lens brush, anti-static microfiber cleaning cloth, lens cleaning solution, and a tool for cleaning dust spots from optics, lenses, and viewfinders.

Kinetronics©

\$11.95



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

NOTES:

SETTLEMENT PROMPTS REVIEW DECISION:

Under a court settlement, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to respond by October 31 to a citizen petition to list the white-tailed prairie dog as endangered. The white-tailed prairie dog has "vanished from at least 92% of its historic habitat in the "sagebrush sea" of western Wyoming, Colorado, and northeastern Utah". Prairie dog holes provide shelter for endangered black-footed ferrets, as well as food and crucial habitat for badgers, hawks, eagles, and many other native plants and animals. The remaining prairie dogs which live in small isolated populations are threatened by disease, oil and gas drilling, sprawl, and agricultural land conversion.

MEXICAN WOLVES CAN STAY IN ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO:

US District Judge M. Christina Armijo ruled in favor of the Mexican wolf reintroduction program over the objections of counties and ranchers, reports the Associated Press, (7/8). A group calling itself the Coalition of Arizona-New Mexico Counties for Stable Economic Growth, along with eight other groups, filed a motion for an injunction against the US Fish and Wildlife Service's reintroduction program last October saying that wolves have attacked cattle and could breed with dogs to create a hybrid species. Judge Armijo ruled that, "the animals' survival is more important than minor economic losses."

BUSH ADMINISTRATION CONSISTENTLY CUTS CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATIONS:

A study done by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) shows that the Bush administration is only approving one out of every two acres recommended by biologists to be designated as critical habitat for endangered and threatened species, reports the Associated Press (6/24). The administration also more often cited economic reasons to justify decisions to reduce acreage. In 2001, that rationale was used to trim about 1% of the acreage. By 2003, that had risen to 69%. NWF said not enough consideration is given to the benefits of protecting species which include their uses in recreation, science, water and soil quality, and climate.

SALVAGE LOGGING BLOCKED:

A federal judge has permanently stopped part of a Santa Fe salvage logging project that included "the largest trees and the best old-growth habitat in the entire sale" says the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. The ruling found that the "Forest Service violated four environmental laws by ignoring information from its own biologists that confirmed Spotted Owls had nested in the area and reproduced." The judge noted that the Spotted Owl recovery plan clearly says "timber practices were the primary reasons for the owl being listed as a threatened species, and that logging within the protected area should be an exception rather than the rule."

ORCA RESEARCH:

US and Canadian officials are holding informal talks to reduce stress on Puget Sound's southern resident orcas by improving education and enforcement of whale-watching. Research is continuing on "what kind of boat maneuvers disturb the whales the most and how various kinds of noise affects them." Officials want to come to an agreement on the "least intrusive method to observe orcas in the wild." Sometimes during the summer "dozens of commercial whale-watching boats and private craft will follow the whales from morning until night" and with declines in the population, officials remain concerned that intensive whale-watching could disturb feeding and social interaction and may be a contributing factor to the problem.

FEW PROTECTIONS FOR ENDANGERED BIRDS:

A new report by Birdlife International warns that "one-third of the 1200 species of birds around the globe threatened with extinction have yet to receive any significant protection." The report, "State of the World's Birds" is based on reviews by 100 top experts and finds the birds that do receive some protection, "for only 4% of species is the benefit judged to be significant." Of the world's known bird species, 1211 (one in eight) face extinction, with 64% threatened by "unsustainable forestry practices." Since 1500, 129 bird species have gone extinct.

CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE SQUABBLE OVER SALMON:

California State Senate has blocked Governor Schwarzenegger's first appointment to the California Fish and Game Commission after she voted to delay plans to protect the state's rare coho salmon as an endangered species. Marilyn Hendrickson, who owns a fishing tackle manufacturing company, is currently serving as an interim commissioner. She voted against the recommendations of state biologists to add Northern California coho to the state's list of threatened and endangered species. Her vote angered lawmakers on the Senate Environmental Quality Committee who stated that there "is no scientific basis for further delay on this matter." Wild coho salmon, which have dropped from 250,000 to 5,000 statewide, are threatened by habitat degradation on north coast streams, irrigation diversions, and logging.

RUSSIAN RIVER FLOWS ALTERED TO PROTECT IMPERILED FISH:


"Concerned about imperiled fish in the Russian River and water storage levels in Lake Mendocino, Sonoma County officials are seeking permission to reduce river flows this summer," according to the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, (7/2). State and federal environmental agencies say that cutting river flows this summer "would provide a cooler, more stable supply of water in the reservoir that could be released in the fall during chinook salmon spawning runs."

INVASIVE CORAL HARMING HAWAII'S REEFS:

Snowflake coral, "a voracious invader is spreading through Hawaii's deep reefs," is "crowding out native sea life", and "has stirred alarm among scientists." The invasive species is threatening "Hawaii's state gemstone, the rare and precious

black coral that accounts for an estimated \$25 million worth of jewelry sales from the islands each year." Snowflake coral, also known as carijoa, is native to the western Atlantic and Caribbean. Researchers say it is "choking out black coral colonies at an astonishing rate in depths below 245 feet, leaving only dead brittle skeletons."

BLM OPENS ROADS IN DESERT TORTOISE CRITICAL HABITAT:

The Bureau of Land Management "formally approved 1,500 miles of roads in the northern and eastern Mojave Desert, opening more than 90% of the region's trails to off-road use" which "crisscross a broad area designated as critical habitat for the endangered desert tortoise," said the *Los Angeles Times*, (4/3). BLM officials said that they "excluded roads in areas where resources could be damaged." Conservation organizations immediately appealed the ruling. 



Thanks Sandy,

Although you had been writing about Christmas Counts since December, 1971, your first official column as Conservation Editor for Western Tanager began in the May/June 1977 issue when Editor Barry Clark asked you to write a monthly article for us. You had always been an activist and letter writer, but Barry made it official. You joined an august Tanager staff that included Shum Suffel, Jon Dunn, Kimball Garrett, Terry Clark, and Dorothy Dimsdale. And I am happy to say that I was there too. Your first column was titled "Malibu Lagoon: A Bright Future?" It related plans for the restoration of marsh habitat and presented a very rosy future for the lagoon. Unfortunately for all of us, it turned out to be one of the very few positive articles you were to write. Even though conservation became a dirty word, you kept us up-to-date on all the nefarious doings of our many governmental agencies and let us know what was happening. You urged us to write letters and attend hearings.

Your dedication has been extraordinary. You sat on the board for all those years and you wrote thousands of letters and attended hundreds of hearings representing LAAS. You led the L.A. Christmas Count for many years. You were our president from July 1976 through June 1979.

Retire? Yes, you've earned it. But we won't let you forget us and we certainly won't forget you. You leave a legacy of honesty, dedication, and devotion to all that we hold important and I promise you that we will do our very best to maintain your values. You have been our friend, our mentor, our conscience. And so dear Sandy,

Thanks for the memories!

Jean

First Hand Account

by Pat Heirs

In the July/August issue of *Western Tanager* in "News from the Board" you can read the initial details about ChevronTexaco's plan to build an LNG platform (the size of three football fields) off Isla de Los Coronados just south of San Diego. At a LAAS Finance Committee meeting we voted to fund 50% of the cost of a research boat to take fellow conservationists, scientists, and a reporter from the *LA Times* out to the islands for a personal look. I was fortunate to represent the LAAS on this trip that took place July 1st.

Brad Keitt of Island Conservation and the Center for Ocean Health, Jim Peugh, Conservation Chair of the San Diego Audubon Society and a retired Navy Physicist, and Charles Moore, Captain of the *Alguita*, our research vessel, welcomed me aboard at 8 AM. Captain Moore introduced himself when everyone had assembled and explained that he had his motor-sailor catamaran custom built as a research vessel in Hobart, Tasmania and that it has been used for research worldwide. It certainly was comfortable and well-appointed for its purposes. He spoke about the grave situation in the Pacific Ocean about 1000 miles west of us and how the high pressure system creates a sub-tropical gyre (circular ocean currents) where the ratio of plastic to plankton is now six to one. Anything that floats will end up in this gyre for our seabirds and turtles to ingest and feed their young.

The weather was perfect. Our boat left from Shelter Island and the Coronados were always in view. If the LNG platform is built, the people of San Diego will always have night lights at sea to the south because the islands are less than 15 miles away and visible.

When we arrived at the largest and easternmost island, Brad and his colleague from Baja went ashore with our permits to present to Mexican officials. We watched the Western Gulls with their fledglings all over the hillsides and oystercatchers (including an American) on shore. A big

ship just to the east of us about a half mile away was drilling to collect samples for the placement of supports for the platform. I learned the platform would be built at this site in order to use the island as a wind break.

We cruised south along the face of South Island (which faces shore) and learned that fishing was pretty pathetic here having been depleted. We saw some nesting Double-crested Cormorants. A month ago there were huge colonies of them. Circling the island, we came upon a nursery for sea lions with a few elephant seals sprinkled in and an occasional harbor seal (they're the ones with gray and white streaking and spots). It was noisy and charming.

The next island going west, which was much smaller, is where we landed and went ashore. I was fascinated by seeing five Brown Boobies with good looks at four of them. One was a sub-adult, one a female, and the other two were the *brewsteri* ssp. At first glance, I was startled at seeing these two white-headed Brown Boobies. They're really quite unusual.

After playing mountain goat for awhile, we arrived at the top of this steep island and Brad showed us the many holes, caves, and burrows used by all the seabirds. Full credit must go to Deborah Schoch of the *L.A. Times* and her photographer for their fearlessness in going everywhere Brad went.

These islands are really maternity wards. In the beginning of each year, the Cassin's Auklets move in for a couple of months or thereabouts; they nest, fledge, and leave; then in come the Xantus's Murrelets to repeat the process in March/April; then come the Black Storm-Petrels in May/June all using the same burrows. In fact, we saw a Black Storm-Petrel nesting well hidden and from that same site Brad extracted a murrelet egg that hadn't hatched.

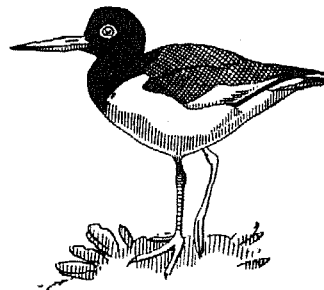
In addition to all the "underground" activity, the gulls, Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Brown Boobies, and

oystercatchers were all caught up in their nesting, feeding, and fledging activities. Someone said they didn't think boobies nested there, but it looked to me like they might be!

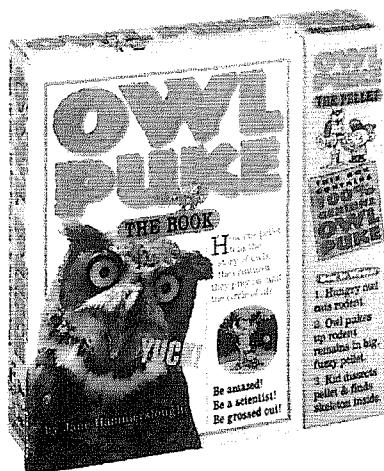
What we witnessed up close is repeated and magnified on each island. Representatives from the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, WILD-COAST, and one or two other groups were all on board to review this whole environmental issue and answer the reporter's questions. It was an honor to be part of this "study" group. Deborah's article should appear in the "California" section sometime soon.

According to the scientists on board, one of many cruel consequences of this LNG platform will be their use of sea water. It would be sucked up, heated for re-gasification, blasted with chemicals, and expelled back into the ocean. Also, the platform would have a heliport, a dock to handle four LNG tankers each week, and living and working space for a total of 1200 employees.

Unfortunately, the seabird maternity wards can't be relocated; the massive population growth in the San Diego/Ensenada corridor isn't diminishing; and the stockholders of ChevronTexaco demand growth and profit. Something is going to have to give in this situation. We'll keep you informed as this plays out.



BOOK REVIEW



Owl Puke, by Jane Hammerslough

Owl Puke is a well written and well crafted book about owls. Jane Hammerslough knows how kids feel about the subject. On the cover she says, "Owl Puke. Yuck! Be grossed out!" That's mostly how I felt when I opened the book. To my surprise this small book was fascinating. Along with the regular writing, there were trivia questions and funny pictures.

After I was done with the first part, I felt like I knew a lot. You don't even have to do the experiment to know all about an owl pellet. The book had charts and food webs and chains. The book was great and so were the experiments.

Reviewed by Michael Bernal, age 10.

The LAAS Bookstore recommends *Owl Puke*, \$13.95, as a gift for 8–12 year old budding naturalists.

FREE!

Did you know that most of the people who receive *Western Tanager* get it free? But, it is not free.

Your membership in National Audubon (NAS) includes chapter membership and all the benefits that the chapters afford. Among these are field trips, local activism, programs, and newsletters. Until three years ago, NAS shared a portion of the dues with the chapters to help defray these costs. They no longer do.

Chapters all over the country have initiated "Chapter Memberships" to support the costs of their many efforts. Please consider joining LAAS as a Chapter Member.

LAAS Membership Levels

\$25.00	Individual
\$35.00	Couple
\$50.00	Family
\$100.00	Thrasher
\$250.00	Warbler

Thrasher and Warbler members are recognized annually in *Western Tanager* and will receive a special LAAS memento.

Each membership category has one vote at General Elections.

If you do not wish to join LAAS, then please consider subscribing to the *Tanager*. Rates are \$9 per year for third class mailing or \$15 per year for first class mailing. Members may receive first class delivery by paying an additional \$5.

Send your check to:

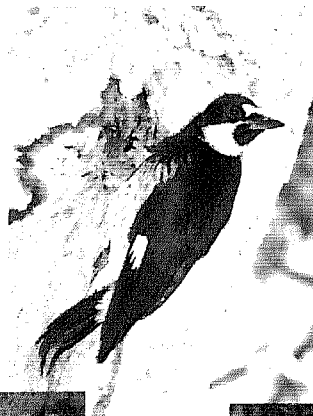
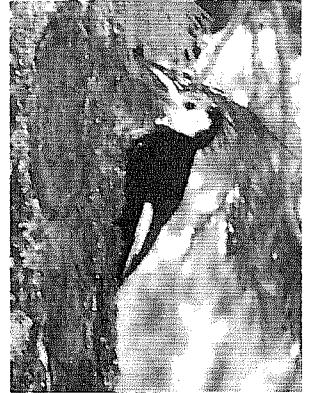
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Membership Chair
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West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694

Thank you. We need your help.

LAAS PICNIC AT CHILAO – 2004



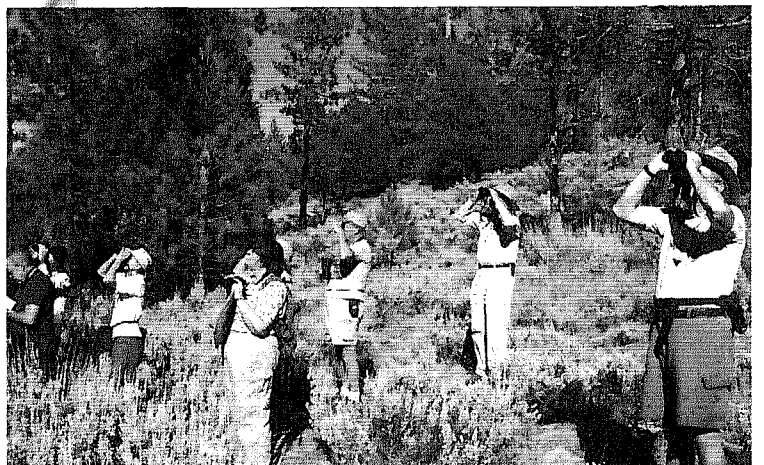
The happy group



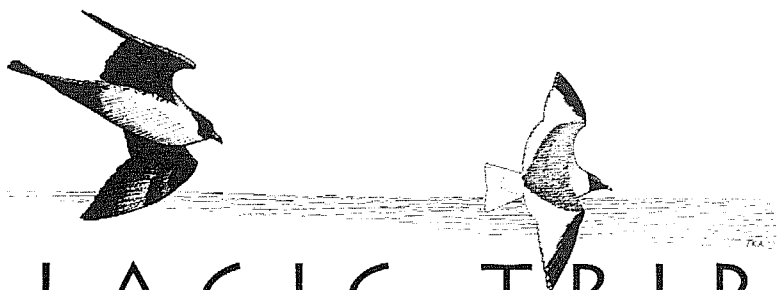
Dexter Kelly, Mary and Nick Freeman



Fred Heath and Larry Allen



Looking up



PELAGIC TRIPS

WESTERN TANAGER

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Angeles Audubon Society.

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Tuesday – Saturday
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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, Jon Feenstra, Michael San Miguel, Jr., 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.

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

Please Note:

*Destinations may be changed due to
very rough seas, or to maximize bird
sightings.*

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, September 5 –

Topanga State Park. Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new in the area. From Ventura Blvd., take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 7 miles S, turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. From PCH, take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking \$2. Meet at 8:00 AM.

Sunday, September 12 –

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 AM.

Saturday, September 18 –

Palos Verdes Peninsula. Jon Feenstra will be showing us some great birding spots in the western reaches of Los Angeles County. We'll start at Banning Park then head out onto the peninsula for a blend of local resident birds, and migrant seabirds and passerines. Meet in the parking lot on the south side of Banning Park at 7:30 AM, and finish up around 1:00 PM. Banning Park is located on the south side of Pacific Coast Highway one mile east of the 110 Freeway.

Saturday, September 18 –

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. Leader: Eleanor Osgood. This trip covers landscaped parkland and natural coastal scrub habitats, and is paced for beginning birders and members of the Baldwin Hills community. The park entrance is off of La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After

passing the entrance kiosk (\$3 parking fee), turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces. Meet at 8:00 AM.

RESERVATION

AND

FEE EVENTS

(Limited Participation)
Policy and Procedure

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

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

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

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

REFUND POLICY FOR PELAGIC TRIPS

If a participant cancels 31 days or more prior to departure, a \$4 service charge will be deducted from the refund. There is no participant refund if requested fewer than 30 days before departure, unless there is a 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, September 19 –

Ballona Wetlands. Connie Day will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland. Shorebirds will be numerous. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90 W) to Culver Blvd. and turn left one 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, September 25 –

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 to inner base ponds pending but likely. Bring lunch. Meet at 7:30 AM, finish 3:00 PM. or so. To reserve with LAAS and learn Rosamond meeting place, mail a SASE for required, limited sign-up of 12. Include citizenship status, phone number, and e-mail address; must be received at LAAS by September 14. No drop-ins.

Saturday, October 2 –

Malibu to McGrath. Leader Dexter Kelly. Passerines should be moving fast and furious through coastal migration spots. Late shorebirds as well. Probably over 100 species. Take PCH N over the bridge in Malibu, and turn right on Cross Creek Road. Meet at the Starbuck's coffee house on the right; depart to the lagoon at 7:30 AM. Full day of birding, if you wish. There may be access fees at Mugu, elsewhere. Consider heading up to Santa Barbara for the trip on Sunday!

Saturday, October 3 –

Santa Barbara Area. Local talent Wes Fritz leads. Coastal riparian migrant traps will be scoured for possible eastern vagrants among the western passerines. Take the 101 Hwy N through Santa Barbara to the Los Carneros offramp, turn right (N), then right again just before the fire station into the free parking lot. Meet here at 8:00 AM. Possible

\$2 state park fee elsewhere. 1.5 hour drive from L.A. Bring a lunch, and bird 'till you drop! If motelling, Super 8 and Ramada in Goleta are reasonable.

Sunday, October 3 –

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

See September 5 listing for details.

Meet at 8:00 AM.

Sunday, October 10 –

Galileo Hills. Leader: **Nick Freeman**.

This location is a migrant magnet and vagrant vortex. Songbirds, flycatchers, etc. Take Hwy 14 about 4 miles past Mojave, then turn right on California City Blvd. Drive through town about a mile past the shops, turn left on Randsburg-Mojave Rd. just past the Golf Course, and veer right on 20 Mule Team Rd. Turn left at the Galileo Hills sign before the hill, take your first paved right, your first right again, into the Silver Saddle Country Club, followed by two paved lefts into the lot. Park by the first pond. About 2 hrs driving time from L.A. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunch, sun block. Meet at 8:00 AM, finish up mid-afternoon.

Sunday, October 10 –

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

See September 12 listing for details.

Meet at 8:15 AM.

Saturday and Sunday,

October 16 and 17 –

Salton Sea. Leader **Howard King** will concentrate on the north end of the sea Saturday, working the west side to the south; then cover the south end and east side on Sunday. Early gulls, and late shorebirds and passerines should be center stage. Take the 10 Fwy E past Palm Springs to 86S to 66th Ave. (Hwy 195) in Mecca. Meet at 8:30 AM at the new Arco gas station to the left of the freeway. Do not stay at Motel 6 in Indio. The Motel 6 on Washington St. in Palm Desert is safer, but about 20 miles away. Reserve a room near Brawley for Saturday night. Send SASE to Audubon House to sign up, and for lodging. 12 max. No fee.

Saturday, October 16 –

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

Leader: **Eleanor Osgood**. \$3 entry fee.

See September 18 listing for details.

Meet at 8:00 AM.

Sunday, October 17 –

Ballona Wetlands. Leader **Bob Shanman**.

See September 19 listing for details.

Meet at 8:00 AM.

Saturday, October 30 –

Oxnard Plains. Leaders **Nick** and **Mary**

Freeman. Meet at the Hueneme sod fields at 8:00 AM to check the American Pipits for a possible Red-throated, as well as for longspurs. There may be vagrants to chase. Mugu Estuary,

Sycamore Canyon, and Saticoy settling ponds are also possibilities. From the 101 N, drive S on Las Posas Rd., then turn Rt. onto Hueneme Rd. Meet on the N side of Hueneme Rd. about one mile W of PCH, and just before Casper Rd. Bird until we see all the birds.

*Scopes helpful.

Sunday, November 7 –

Topanga State Park. Leaders: **Ken**

Wheeland and **Chris Tosdevin**.

See September 5 listing for details.

Meet at 8:00 AM.

Sunday, November 7 –

Special Event!

Back by popular demand, a full day of **Photoshop for Birders Workshop** by **Tom Stephenson**, 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM at Pasadena's Eaton Canyon Nature Center. More details in the November *Tanager*. For reservations: send SASE to Reservation Chair Millie Newton at Audubon House.

Saturday, November 13 –

Newport Back Bay. Leader **Mary Freeman**. Meet on the boardwalk along the NW bay at the "Sharp-tailed Spot" accessible from the end of University Drive (small street) at 8:00 AM for 6.6ft high tide. Rails, California Gnatcatcher, and sparrows will be target birds. More details next issue.

Proposed Amendment to the LAAS By-laws

This proposed amendment will be announced at the regular September meeting and voted on at the regular October meeting.

Article 9: Standing Committees

Current reading:

Bookstore Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to oversee the operation of the Society bookstore, including selection of merchandise for sale, policies, volunteer staff, and transaction of all related business, and report monthly to the Treasurer and quarterly to the Board of Directors.

Change to:

Bookstore Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to advise and assist the Bookstore Manager by recommending selection of merchandise for sale, policies, recruitment of volunteers, special events, and other activities that will enhance and promote the services of the bookstore to members and non-members.

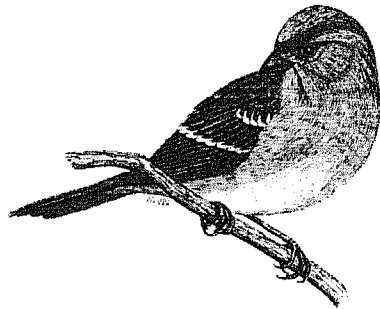
EVENING MEETINGS

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

Tuesday, September 14

Sylvia Gallagher
Birds' Songs and Sounds

Golden-crowned Sparrow by H. Lee Jones

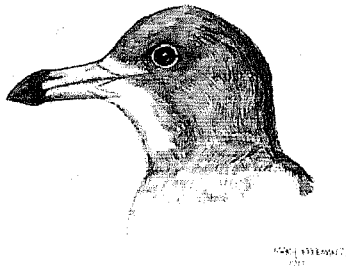


Ever wonder why a bird chirps, chips, whits, or cackles? Come and listen to Sylvia's talk as she discusses the meanings of birds' calls. She'll give an overview of how to ID some familiar bird sounds and calls. This will aid you in identifying birds from their sounds when you visit your favorite birding locations. You'll leave knowing why the Dark-eyed Junco gives its well-known "smack" call.

Tuesday, October 12

Todd McGrath
Overview of the California Bird Records Committee Process

Belcher's Gull by Mary Freeman



California has the nation's oldest and one of the most respected bird records committees. Current CBRC member Todd McGrath will take you through some of the history of the CBRC, noting the important contributions its members have made to the understanding of bird identification and distribution. He will also describe how the records review process works, provide tips on writing effective documentation, and show some photos of the special birds that have visited California.

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