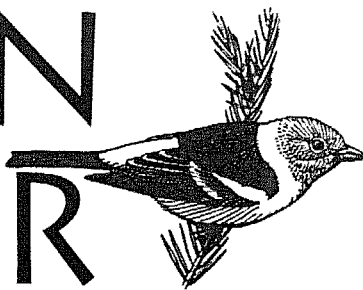


WESTERN TANAGER



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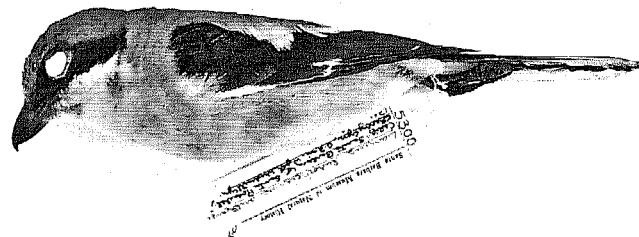
Extinction at Our Doorstep: What Happened to the Island Loggerhead Shrike?

by Hartmut S. Walter, Ph.D

Most certainly the readers of this publication care deeply about birds. Worldwide, the survival of an ever increasing number of bird taxa is threatened and many valid and often successful attempts have been made to stem this extinction tide. Conservation efforts have been aided by the fact that birds are—by far—the best known group of organisms on the globe, thanks to the dedication and talents of ornithologists and a multitude of birders around the world. It may therefore surprise you to learn that hardly anything is known about a unique but rapidly vanishing bird population that lives within a 100 mile radius off the coast of Los Angeles. In fact, the few knowledgeable experts of this population agree that there are at most only 50–100 birds left in 2005. Extinction appears imminent yet there is no species inventory and no recovery plan. How can this be when state and federal government agencies spend millions of dollars on well known, much beloved, and yet more abundant species? The answer to this question takes us back into the 19th century, to modern genetics, to island geography, as well as to current conservation policy issues affecting the Channel Islands.

The somewhat complicated story of an overlooked endemic subspecies concerns a small breeding population of the

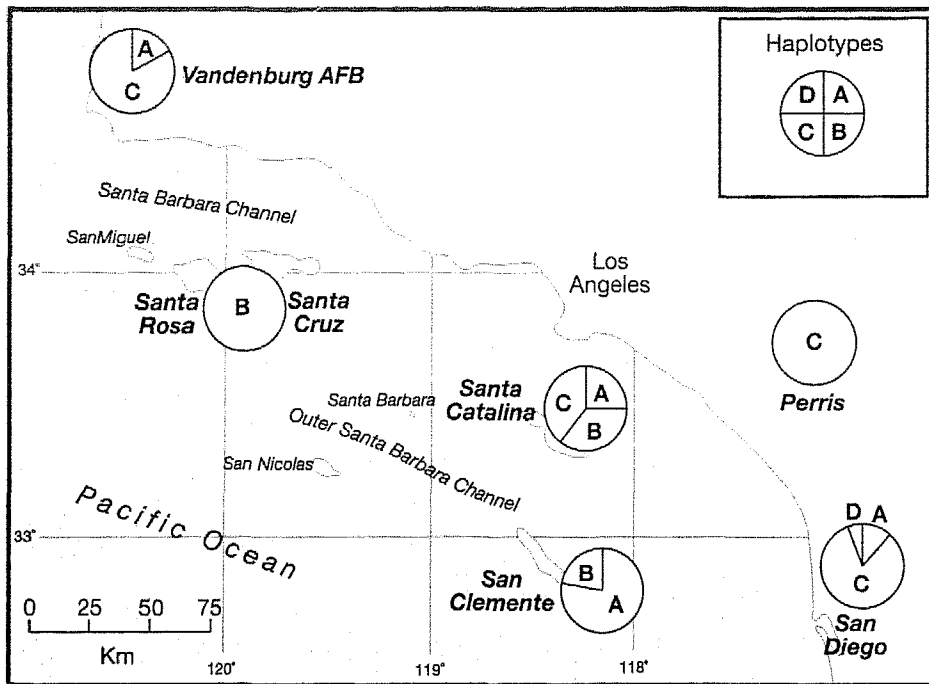
familiar Loggerhead Shrike on three of the northern Channel Islands, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and Santa Catalina. This population comprises the endemic Island Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi* that was described as distinct from California mainland shrikes in 1898 by Dr. Edgar Alexander Mearns (1856–1916), a surgeon and naturalist to the US and Mexican Boundary Commission. He named this subspecies (type specimen from Santa Cruz Island) after one of the great western naturalists at the turn of the century, Alfred Webster Anthony (1865–1939), a professional mining engineer and keen island naturalist in the eastern Pacific. Originally, the range of this new subspecies extended south to San Clemente Island but that island's population was later separated from *L. l. anthonyi* as *L. l. mearnsi* by Ridgway in 1903.



Museum specimen of *L. l. anthonyi* from Santa Rosa Island
(Courtesy: Santa Barbara Museum Natural History)

In general, the shrikes from the Channel Islands have a somewhat darker plumage than the nearest mainland subspecies *L. l. gambeli*. Recent measurements of morphological characters show, however, that we cannot clearly separate the San Clemente birds by their appearance alone from their conspecifics on Santa Catalina, Santa Cruz, and Santa Rosa. But a new and careful DNA analysis by UC San Diego scientists appears to confirm the presence of three isolated and well differentiated island populations and one mainland metapopulation stretching from San Diego to the Vandenberg Air Force Base in northern Santa Barbara County (see map). When mitochondrial DNA haplotypes of breeding birds are being compared, the birds from the two northern islands (Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz) possess only haplotype B and

show “significant differences from all other populations” (Eggert, L. S., N. I. Mundy & D. S. Woodruff. 2004. *Molecular Ecology* 13: 2121–2133). Birds from San Clemente and from Santa Catalina are also different from the mainland; they possess either haplotypes A and B or A, B, and C respectively, indicating a low level of gene flow from neighboring populations. A second analysis of seven polymorphic microsatellite loci by the same team offers additional evidence that the



Map of mtDNA haplotype distribution among breeding Loggerhead Shrike populations in southern California. Modified from Eggert et al. 2004.

anthonyi birds from the two northern islands constitute a distinct population that is unusually well differentiated genetically. In plain language, *anthonyi* is a well defined subspecies or evolutionary unit that meets all the prerequisites for protection and recovery efforts under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The San Clemente Island population *L. l. mearnsi* has been under strong extinction stress for many years due to severe habitat degradation and introduced mammalian predators, particularly cats. The wild population had declined to well below 50 adults by the mid 1990s. The U.S. Navy—which owns the island—is currently funding and supporting a costly, elaborate, and impressive state-of-the-art habitat restoration and shrike conservation and captive breeding project for this federally endangered subspecies (listed in 1977).

Until recently, Santa Catalina Island recorded more shrikes than the other northern islands. In 1996, the Institute for Wildlife Studies surveyed circa 30% of the island and observed eleven adult shrikes and located four nests. In 1998, a survey team of 15 observers spent some 196 hours (June 2-4) to locate a total of 27 shrikes (13 adults estimated). Earlier Christmas Bird Counts conducted between 1988 and 1997 yielded from 1-11 birds per count. Since then, casual observations have shown a critical decline to just a few adults. Although a single

individual had been seen once on Santa Barbara Island and a nest had been found on Anacapa, only Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz have additional breeding populations of the *L. l. anthonyi* subspecies today.

Population trends for Santa Rosa Island indicate a “fairly common” or even “abundant” bird between 1892 and 1968. But bird counts between 1994 and 1998 (Fancy, unpubl.) yielded only 1-3 birds/year. The current estimate is for not more than four probable pairs and a maximum of 10 potential pairs in suitable canyon habitats.

Santa Cruz Island has a slightly different history. The shrike was considered “fairly common” in 1897, “decidedly rare” in the vicinity of Prisoner’s Harbor by Howell in 1917, and still “fairly common” by Grinnell & Miller (1944). Nobody has yet completed a thorough or even casual study or survey of this island population. My own recollections go back to 1972. At that time a few shrikes were annually seen on fences in various parts of the island. Some of these locations do not have shrikes anymore. Over the last fifteen years, I have kept notes and never seen more than four adults during a 3-4 day visit. Other observers have conducted breeding bird surveys and point counts over some part of this island. The combined data (adults and juveniles are generally not distinguished) are alarming:

1991	2 birds
1992	3 birds
1994	6 birds
1995	3 birds
1998	5 birds
2000	8 birds
2001	4 birds
2003	3 adults, 3 fledglings
2004	3 birds

In my judgment, a maximum of ten breeding pairs may still survive on Santa Cruz Island; this estimate is based on the observation that the few known recent breeding territories were located near coastal estuaries, streams, or eroded canyons that hold freshwater pools even during the long summer drought. We may therefore conclude that additional breeding pairs may be found in unsurveyed remote habitats with similar characteristics.

Nobody could declare the island shrike to be even “fairly common” today. Clearly, the three populations on Santa Catalina, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa have been decimated. By whom and why in recent decades? Unfortunately, we do not have the answers. There are several reasons explaining our uncomfortable ignorance: (1) Most of the island birds are very hard to find and to observe because they are extremely shy; in fact, the museum collectors of the 19th century considered *anthonyi* extremely difficult to shoot, and M. R. Beck wrote in 1897 that “they were the wildest land birds I ever saw by far.” Even today, to follow an individual bird on foot or by car is nearly impossible as they usually take off at a distance of 80-120 meters, then fly several hundred meters between stops, and regularly dive into eroded canyons or skip over the nearest ridge. (2) There are few passable roads and trails on the three islands that can cover even 50% of the surface area. (3) Few naturalists and birders have access to the islands. (4) No uniform and comparable census of shrikes has taken place on the northern islands; the attempted land bird censuses were not designed to incorporate any potential remote shrike territories. (5) Importantly, there are no stakeholders supporting this taxon. The two northern islands are owned by public agencies (National Park Service and Nature Conservancy); Santa Catalina is 87% owned


and managed by the Catalina Conservancy. Professional staff personnel have their hands full with major conservation issues such as these: plague of feral pigs, invasions of alien weeds such as fennel, restoration of Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles, removal of pesky Golden Eagles from the northern islands, and preventing the extinction of endemic Island Fox populations. No wonder then that the shrike fell relatively unnoticed through the cracks.

It may be too late to rescue this taxon but we should try at least to lift the fog of ignorance about the causal factors of the dramatic decline of this isolated and uniquely differentiated loggerhead shrike. Some of the possible routes for further analysis are: (1) We lack basic natural history data. Remedy: study the breeding biology and ecology of a few pairs if still possible. (2) Investigate the possible role of competitors and predators on the island: Common Ravens have shown a dramatic increase, American Kestrels are possibly more abundant today

than in earlier decades. (3) Survey prey selection and prey density: are the islands drying up and do they possess fewer terricole invertebrates? (4) Has the removal of goats and sheep from the islands affected the shrikes negatively? (5) Has a possible decrease of standing or running water become a problem for shrikes [they feed on froglets, dragonflies, etc.]?

The reader can see that we know practically nothing about these strong and powerful small predators. In fact, the best we have are the bountiful data from other shrike populations across the continent. An open grassland or partially shrubby or arboreal habitat is required by all shrikes. There has been a significant decline in many parts of its range; this species was on the first Audubon Blue List of declining species in 1972. The BBS data show that from 1966-1989, 37 of 43 states and provinces of the US and Canada showed negative trends. Habitat loss and disturbance as well as pesticide applications appear to account for some or much of this trend. But the

northern Channel Islands have improved their habitats and do not need pesticides. They are practically free of human disturbance. So, why the decline?

This is an appeal for your interest, your voice, and your check to LAAS because I hope that LA Audubon will set up a special conservation fund on behalf of the shrikes! In my view, it is a clear Audubon Chapter responsibility to come to the rescue of such a beleaguered bird population. A group of scientists and engaged volunteers (UCLA has now a student-sponsored SHRIKE FORCE) will soon petition the State of California and the Federal government to issue an emergency endangered species declaration; this will expedite the long overdue research and monitoring tasks needed to solve the mysterious vanishing act of *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi* and to quickly develop the knowledge base for a recovery plan. 

Dr. Walter is a professor in the Department of Geography at UCLA; he specializes in biogeography and conservation geography.

Now is the Time to Re-enlist – in Los Angeles Audubon

The new year brings glimmers of hope to our Los Angeles Audubon Society. Our Young Naturalists Education Program will soon be ready for implementation. We will be leading more bird walks for schoolchildren in Baldwin Hills and Debs Park. Our field trips remain popular, and we may expand our travel program. And an excellent location for a new headquarters may become available in the future – if we can provide the programs that will make the best use of it.

But it all depends on you. To make all these activities keep going, and for Los Angeles Audubon to even survive, we've all got to pay our dues!

The strength and viability of any volunteer organization depends on the support of its members. We need your talents and energy to maintain our programs. But first we need your membership dues! For Los Angeles Audubon, that is.

Most of us joined LAAS through the National Audubon Society. And most of us have renewed our membership through NAS. But times have unpleasantly changed. National Audubon now takes *all* the dues money paid to it. We get not a cent of your National Audubon dues! So we have virtually no steady revenue source, aside from a small net income from the bookstore. To maintain our programs, we are spending more money than we are taking in, and that can't go on

much longer. So . . .

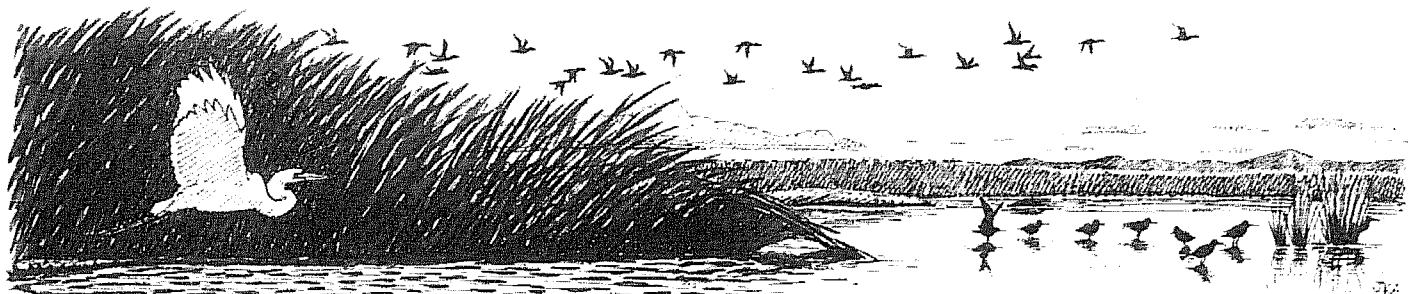
The only way we can get income from membership dues is through Chapter membership. Joining Los Angeles Audubon as a chapter member gets you the Tanager six times a year, and helps you keep up with our schedule of land and sea trips, general meetings, workshops, and other events. And it enables us to keep up our urgently needed programs in conservation, education, and research.

In these hard times for our environment, our efforts to preserve and protect our natural heritage in Southern California, and to reveal the beauty of the natural world to our fellow Angelenos, have never been so urgently needed. We need your help and support to keep these efforts going, and to expand them in the near future.

In the last issue of the Tanager you will find a membership form with a scale of dues. Please select a level of membership, fill out the form, and mail it to us in the enclosed envelope. Most of us have to either join our chapter, or renew our chapter membership. (*Even I have to send my dues in!*) And right away, please!

Thanks for joining us!

Dexter Kelly, President



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Garry George

Energy and Wildlife – Oil and Water?

California's rush to fulfill urgent energy needs is impacting wildlife adversely, and it's not the energy itself, it's the rush that seems to have the most immediate and unnecessary negative impact on wildlife.

Hot air at Butterbredd?

LAAS board members Garry George and Johanna Dawes attended the public meeting in Mojave, December 9, 2004, where LADWP presented a proposed wind farm in Pine Tree Canyon. The site includes Jawbone Canyon, the ridge above Butterbredd Springs, a migrant oasis on the Pacific Flyway, a traditional LAAS field trip site and one of the 500 US IBA's in the American Bird Conservancy book. LAAS submitted written comments to DWP as the lead CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) agency and to the BLM, the lead NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) agency on the biological assessment included in the Environmental Impact Report. LAAS objected to the conclusion that the farms "would have no substantial impact on avian wildlife" on the grounds that: the assessment underestimated the importance of the site for migratory songbirds and raptors that are protected under Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and we cited trip reports by leaders of field trips of over 1,000 birds seen in one day whereas the assessment reported few individuals of 30 species; the on site survey of only two days for raptors is inadequate; there was no survey of migratory song birds at night; the on site of survey of only five days for songbirds is inadequate; the study failed to consider the conclusions of the August 2004 report of the California Energy Commission entitled "Developing Methods to Reduce Bird Mortality in the Altamont

Pass Wind Resource Area" which found that assessment methodology on that site was inadequate, that avian mortality was underestimated (four Golden Eagles per year estimated, 40 Golden Eagles per year actual), and the Commission gives recommendations to reduce avian mortality for the future of wind energy. Instead the assessment cited a recent study in Tehachapi that found only four avian mortalities in one year.

LAAS worked closely with Santa Monica Bay Audubon's Conservation Chair Mary Prismon, who attended the BLM hearings at Ridgecrest the day before the Mojave hearings. Mary also submitted written comments to DWP and BLM, as did long-time Kern County birder/tour leader/environmental advocate Keith Axelson.

Bright lights for the murrelet?

The LA Times reported on January 7 that Mexico's Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT) has issued a second permit to Northern California based ChevronTexaco in their rush to build the first liquefied natural gas platform to service California's growing demand for clean energy. ChevronTexaco biologists concluded that the platform, located less than 600 meters from the leeward side of the island, would have no impact on wildlife. Of course the biological assessment was conducted in daylight and not during the breeding season when ten species of seabirds come to Islas Los Coronados to breed, most notably Xantus's Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*) with a global population of only 5,600. These birds feed nocturnally and are disturbed by light, even as far as six miles away according to researchers on the Channel Islands. ChevronTexaco needs local permits before they can proceed with construction of the platform,

and opposition to these permits by Baja politicians, fishermen, and citizens might be the only hope to slow down, move or stop this off-shore platform which will be visited by four to six tankers a week.

Conservation chat . . .

California endemic Tricolored Blackbird has moved up a notch on the conservation list due to loss of habitat in the Central Valley according to all recent reports from Audubon, ABC, and Cornell.

23,000 acres of prime coastal sage scrub and chaparral fell to developers as Orange County, in December, gave approval for the development of Rancho Mission Viejo over objections of environmentalists and the city of Mission Viejo which isn't able to handle the increased population. A lawsuit against the developers has been filed by Endangered Habitats League, Natural Resource Defense Council, the Sierra Club, Laguna Greenbelt, and Sea & Sage Audubon. LAAS contributes financially to most of these conservation organizations.

Recently, at least five released California Condors in California and Arizona were found dead due to lead poisoning. Eight other condors would have died but they were found and successfully treated and saved. Lead bullet consumption is so frequent that the condors are regularly trapped and brought in for blood tests. Join LA Audubon and SFV Audubon and send a letter to:

Fish and Game Commission
PO Box 944209,
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Let them know that you favor banning lead bullets. A sample letter provided by SFV Audubon is on www.laaudubon.org.

July 4th Butterfly Counts

Similar in format to the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, NABA (North American Butterfly Association) sponsors July 4th Butterfly Counts throughout North America. Unlike the CBC's, the July 4th counts are run over a much longer time period and some of the first counts for southern California are scheduled for the near future:

Count	Date	Contact
Borrego Springs	Monday March 21	Lynne Monroe lynnmon@juno.com
South Fork Kern River Valley	Saturday April 23	Bob Barnes krplfriends@lightspeed.net
Joshua Tree N.P.	Saturday April 30	Joe Zarki/Marilyn Lutz lutzarki@adelphia.net

For information on any southern California Butterfly Count please contact,
Fred Heath fred.heath@power-one.com

WESTERN TANAGER

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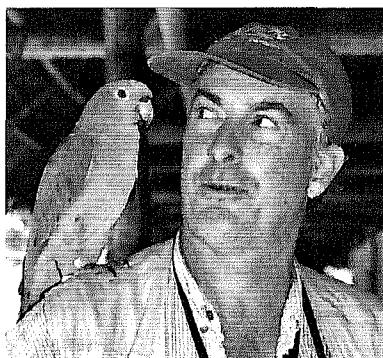
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Dr. Robert Ridgely To Speak

Saturday, March 19, 2005, 7 PM
Los Angeles County
Museum of Natural History Auditorium
900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles

Dr. Ridgely received his Ph.D from Yale University and is a leading ornithologist in the study of endemic and endangered species of birds in the Americas. He is the author of *Birds Of Panama* (first edition 1976, revised 1989), *Birds Of South America Vols I* (1989) & *II* (1994), and *Birds Of Ecuador* (2001). He discovered Jocotoco Antpitta (*Grallaria ridgelyi*) in 1997 which was named after him. In 1998, Dr. Ridgely founded the Jocotoco Foundation that has created and sustained six habitat reserves in Ecuador. Dr. Ridgely serves on many conservation boards and is currently International Vice-President of the American Bird Conservancy.



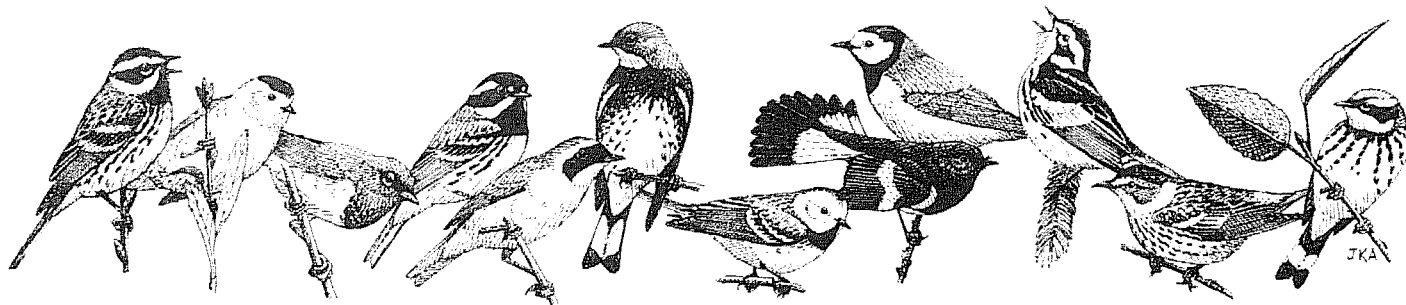
Following Dr. Ridgely's presentation there will be a reception (included in the cost of the ticket) catered by Wolfgang Puck in the Museum's Grand Foyer. Fruit, cheese, cookies, and coffee will be served with a cash bar serving wine, beer, and soft drinks (\$7).

Dr. Ridgely will sign books at this event. In advance of the presentation, his books will be available for sale at the Natural History Museum bookstore and Los Angeles Audubon bookstore (323) 876-0202.

Tickets are \$50, partly tax-deductible for most donors, and benefits participating Audubon Chapters and the Jocotoco Foundation.

Event Producers Garry George – garrygeorge@laaudubon.org and Cat Waters – robcatwaters@earthlink.net, are volunteering their time.

For more information visit www.laaudubon.org or contact the producers.



BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Jon Feenstra

After the relatively slow fall we had here in Los Angeles, we were all hoping for an interesting birding winter. We did alright there, and along with some interesting birds came even more interesting weather. The end of fall migration was characterized by an invasion of mountain birds into lower elevations. The wave passed pretty quickly with those species mostly (but certainly not entirely) departed by Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season. In the meantime we were having a wetter fall than usual, seemingly with a storm a week, finally culminating in late December or early January with nearly a week of non-stop rain. (I don't know if I've ever played video games for so many consecutive hours.) Caused by a low-pressure system crawling at us from the South Pacific, that one storm resulted in well over 20 inches of rain in some areas and broke many historical records. After drought conditions over the past several years, we needed it. A quick look into any of your local reservoirs or flood basins will surely provide a different sight. But, back to birds.

The **Cackling Goose** of Santa Fe Dam was back for another winter and reported most recently on January 6 [DN]. It was probably the only Cackling Goose present in the county this past year. Quite a treat was an immature **Trumpeter Swan** that dropped onto Lake Homer at Hansen Dam on December 23-24 [SS]. Its tags indicated it was part of a study of winter movements of Trumpeters from Idaho. It had been seen earlier in Utah with another banded Trumpeter that ended up (and subsequently died) in Santa Barbara. **Tundra Swans** made it

into southern California this fall including a few in LA County. One was present on Lake Hughes in northwestern LA County on December 18 and remained for a couple of weeks [TMcG; JFe; MSM] and another was at Madrona Marsh in late December [TD]. One of our usual "unusuals", **Eurasian Wigeons** were around in several locations in the LA Basin this winter. **White-winged Scoters** first showed up in the mouth of Ballona Creek in the late fall and persisted into the winter [RB]. Four were reported there on December 23 [LZ]. Two female **Black Scoters** were mixed with the large Surf Scoter flock at Dockweiler State Beach [RB] and were last reported on January 1 [TM]. The female **Long-tailed Duck** found in the fall in Marina del Rey remained until at least December 9 [DB]. **Hooded Mergansers** were widely reported this winter in LA County but a congregation of forty-two on Lake Hollywood on January 2 is certainly worth a mention [JB].

A fantastic find was a dark-morph **Swainson's Hawk** in the eastern Antelope Valley on January 8 [MH; NF]. There are only a handful of winter records of this bird for California. Interestingly enough, a pair of Swainson's Hawks built a nest near the same location last spring. **Ferruginous Hawks** were present along the coast in the marshes near Marina del Rey December 8-10 [RB; KL] and in San Pedro for the Palos Verdes CBC on December 26 [MB]. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was in the big grassy field at El Dorado Park December 4-10 [JI; MSM]. Great for winter anywhere in California, a first-year **Laughing Gull** was on the lower LA River on December 26 [KL].

A **Black Skimmer** was seen fishing by streetlamp in the Marina del Rey channel on December 1. Also there on the rocks along the channel was a **Burrowing Owl** found on November 27 and remaining for at least a couple of weeks [LB; DB]. Burrowing Owls, like so many other species of the LA Basin, are nearly (or totally) extirpated as breeders but winter here in small numbers. The returning adult male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was seen at St. Andrew's Abbey near Valyermo November 16 and December 4 [JFe]. A **Williamson's Sapsucker**, like many other high elevation birds this year, was below its usual haunts while on Mt. Wilson for the Pasadena CBC on December 18 [AW]. **White-headed Woodpeckers** were lower as well in several locations along the north slope of the San Gabriels. Just seeing a White-headed Woodpecker in a cottonwood is worth the trip!

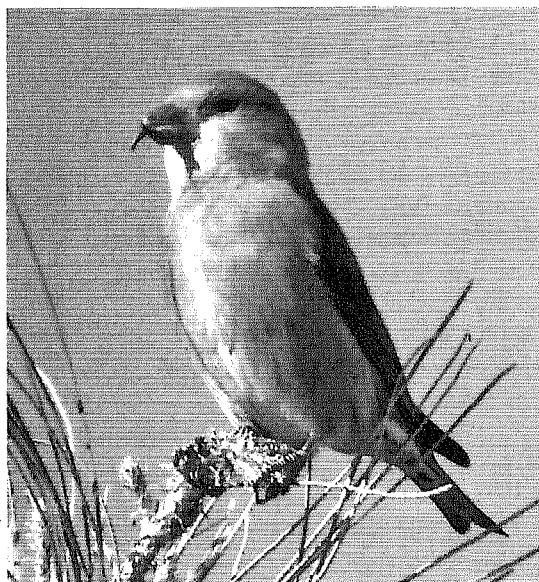
Wintering **Gray Flycatchers** were reported from two locations: a bird returning for its fourth winter at Hahamonga in La Cañada [MH] and another at Peck Pit [MSM]. A **Dusky** or **Hammond's Flycatcher** was seen on the Pasadena CBC in the Huntington Gardens on December 18 [JFi]. "Western"-type **Flycatchers** were seen at El Dorado Park on December 24 [RS] and at the LA Arboretum on December 30 [WF]. A calling **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was counted on the Pasadena CBC in the Huntington Gardens on December 18 [JD]. The wintering **Eastern Phoebe** at Sepulveda Basin was seen again on December 6 [MK]. **Vermilion Flycatchers**, rare but regular here in the winter, included a returning adult male at the Piute Ponds

seen on December 4 [JFe; MSM] that didn't stick around for the Christmas Count. Others included an immature female at Earvin "Magic" Johnson Recreation Area on December 13 [RB] and another at Columbia Park in Torrance for the Palos Verdes CBC on December 26 [DM]. Although it's probably there someplace, the **Tropical Kingbird** usually wintering at Malibu Lagoon has not been reported since October. However, another one was found at El Dorado Park on January 4 [KG]. The **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** returned for its third winter at Santa Fe Dam on November 23 [CA] and has been seen regularly since. As in most winters, **Plumbeous Vireos** were reported from several coastal locations but worth a special mention was the first one for the Lancaster Christmas Count seen in Palmdale on December 18 [MF].

As a testament to the invasion of montane species, the Lancaster Count also recorded several **Mountain Chickadees** and **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, hardly annual birds in the Antelope Valley. Only a single **Winter Wren** was reported this fall – on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on December 7 [MSM]. **Mountain Bluebirds** made a small influx to the LA Basin this winter with three birds on the Pasadena CBC at Santa Fe Dam on December 18 [AL]. Five more were picked up on the Palos Verdes Christmas Count: three in San Pedro [MB] and two at the Torrance Airport [A&EB]. A late **Red-throated Pipit** was the only representation in the county this year with a flyover at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on November 21 [DC]. It was great, but we all got pretty spoiled by the numbers around last year.

Wintering eastern warblers made a pretty poor showing this year with only two species. **Pine Warbler**, nearly an annual at El Dorado Park in winter, was found again there on January 2 [KG]. Two **Black-and-white Warblers** were seen there on December 17 [JG], as well. El Dorado Park is probably the most likely place in the county to find eastern warblers (and lots of other neat stuff, too) in the winter. Other Black-and-whites

were at the El Segundo Library Park on December 6 [RB] and Rolling Hills Estates on December 26 [JP]. A male **Summer Tanager** returned for another winter in the Whittier Hills this November [LS; JW]. Also back for more was the **Large-billed Savannah Sparrow** on the central jetty in Playa Del Rey, first seen on November 21 [JFe; FG]. After a couple showed up in the late fall, the only **Swamp Sparrow** on the radar into winter was in El Dorado Park on December 9 [DB]. **White-throated Sparrows** made a fairly good showing with six in the LA Basin this winter. After a couple years without any, a single **Harris's Sparrow** was found on the Palos Verdes CBC in Palos Verdes Estates on December 26 [JP]. The Palos Verdes count also produced this winter's only **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, also in Palos Verdes Estates [JP].

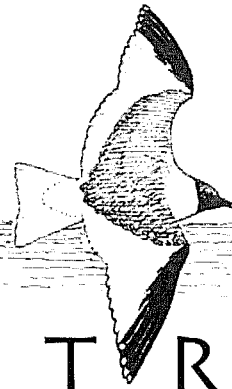


Red Crossbill at Apollo Park, December 4, 2004

With the scattered northern finch reports during the fall, it was only a matter of time before our crossbills showed up. Indeed, as the previous issue of the *Tanager* hit the press, the crossbills rolled in. The largest numbers of them have been in the Antelope Valley, particularly at Apollo Park where up to twenty-five have been present. Many were recorded on the Lancaster Christmas Count on December 18. Unfortunately, only a couple of reports touted their appearance here in the lowlands. Get out to Apollo Park soon and take a look before they follow the pine cone crop back out of the LA area.

So now we're in the "birding doldrums" of late winter/early spring when our wintering birds are leaving and the spring migrants haven't yet arrived. Although to be honest, it's all in the perception. Spring migration starts in January. Early migrating species like Sage Thrashers will be moving through the Antelope Valley before this issue arrives in your mailbox, and by the time it makes it to your coffee table or toilet tank our resident birds will be singing and preparing for the next generation. So instead of staying inside and watching reality shows, it's a perfect time to get out and appreciate those species that still are interested in calling Los Angeles their home. 🐦

[CA] = Chris Akiyoshi
 [RB] = Richard Barth
 [DB] = David Bell
 [JB] = Jean Brandt
 [A&EB] = Ann & Eric Brooks
 [LB] = Lorna Brown
 [MB] = Martin Byhower
 [DC] = Dan Cooper
 [JD] = John DeModena
 [TD] = Tracy Drake
 [JFe] = Jon Feenstra
 [JFi] = Jon Fisher
 [MF] = Mary Freeman
 [NF] = Nick Freeman
 [WF] = Will Fulmer
 [KG] = Karen Gilbert
 [FG] = Frank Gilliland
 [JG] = John Green
 [MH] = Mark Hunter
 [JI] = John Ivanov
 [MK] = Muriel Kotin
 [KL] = Kevin Larson
 [AL] = Andrew Lee
 [TMcG] = Todd McGrath
 [TM] = Tom Miko
 [DM] = David Moody
 [DN] = Dick Norton
 [JP] = Jim Pike
 [MSM] = Mike San Miguel
 [LS] = Larry Schmahl
 [SS] = Steve Sosensky
 [RS] = Russell Stone
 [AW] = Andrew Waltman
 [JW] = Jeff Webster
 [LZ] = Linda Zhang



PELAGIC TRIPS

Saturday, May 7 –

Oxnard Harbor to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Banks. This nine-hour trip departs the Island Packer's dock at 8:00 AM in the Oxnard Harbor on the M/V Vanguard. 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, David Pereksta and Jon Feenstra.**

\$85 - Snack type galley; bring food, or order a box lunch from a nearby deli.

Sunday, June 5 –

Santa Cruz Island landing for the **Island Scrub-Jay**. This nine-hour trip departs from Island Packer's 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. then out to sea for pelagic birding, with a return by Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers; 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: **Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, and Jon Feenstra.** \$85 - Limited Galley - box lunches may be ordered from a nearby deli.

Saturday, September 10 –

A deep water trip toward Cherry, Tanner, and Cortez banks. This 12-hour trip

departs from Sea Landing in Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:00 AM on the fast catamaran the Condor Express. It returns approximately at 7:00 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, Jon Feenstra, and David Pereksta.**

\$185 - There is a full galley which serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A full bar is available.

SAVE \$5 – SIGN-UP 60 DAYS PRIOR TO ANY TRIP

Sunday, October 16 –

Northern Channel Islands Monument. This 10-hour trip departs from the Island Packer's dock in the Oxnard Harbor at 7:30 AM on the M/V Vanguard. We will take the Anacapa passage to Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, cruise along the Santa Rosa Flats to the deep Santa Cruz Basin and return by Arch Rock at Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed, Sooty, and Black-vented shearwaters; Leach's, Least, and Ashy storm-petrels; cormorants (3); Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; 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, David Pereksta, and Jon Feenstra.**

\$95 - Limited galley. Box lunches may be ordered from a nearby deli.

Saturday, November 19 –

Ventura Harbor toward San Miguel Island. This nine-hour trip departs from the Island Packer's dock in the Ventura Harbor at 8:00 AM on the fast catamaran Island Adventure, and will return around 4:30 PM. After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island we will have the boat to ourselves and head along the Santa Rosa Flats toward the 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: Buller's Shearwaters; Black-footed Albatross. In 2004 we saw five *Flesh-footed Shearwaters*, two *Short-tailed Shearwaters*, a pod of Orcas, and four species of dolphins.

Leaders: **Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, David Pereksta, and Jon Feenstra.**

\$95 - Snack type galley with drinks available.

Note: Destinations may be changed in order to maximize bird sightings, or minimize rough seas. In order to meet unexpected increases in fuel costs, there can be a \$3 to \$10 energy surcharge per person.

LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

BRAZIL'S PANTANAL AND IGUAÇU FALLS

October 15-24, 2005

Plus a 4-day Extension to Rio de Janeiro
Poca das Antas Biological Reserve, Tijuca
Botanical Gardens and Itatiaia National Park

Wildlife viewing on the Pantanal is likened to that on the plains of Africa. See Rheas, Seriemas, Jabirus, Plumbeous Ibis, Hyacinth Macaws, hummingbirds, Toco Toucan, among an extraordinary concentration of birds and other wildlife. Even a jaguar was seen on our last trip. This tour is climaxed by visiting the incomparable Iguacu Falls, the largest waterfalls on earth.

Special price includes International Airfare from Miami and all internal flights within Brazil.

Space is limited!

THAILAND – March 2006

Planning is underway for a birding, natural history, and photography excursion to Thailand.

For information and itinerary, contact:
Olga Clarke, Travel Director, Los Angeles Audubon Society
2027 El Arbolita Dr., Glendale, CA 91208
Ph/Fax: (818) 249-9511 e-mail: oclarketravel@earthlink.net

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.*

NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

A Birder's Guide to Michigan – This ABA Birdfinding Guide describes over 200 sites, with details on birds, best seasons, and driving directions, with 200+ maps. Status and seasonality are given in well-researched bar graphs. Annotated listing of specialities. Appendices on amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, dragonflies, mammals, and orchids.
Allen T. Chartier and Jerry Ziarno \$28.95

Pale Male (DVD) – Affectionately dubbed "Pale Male" by New York City admirers, this Red-tailed Hawk's life history is traced in an award-winning documentary narrated by Joanne Woodward. A faithful crowd of birdwatchers gathered daily to watch Pale Male's courtship, nesting, his defense against marauding crows, and teaching his baby chicks to fly. Proclaimed "a classic" by National Audubon Society.
DVD, 60 minutes \$20.00

Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Chile – 438 species recorded in the country are listed in grid format. Life-zone codes for every species, latest taxonomics and systematics, analysis of 34 hypothetical species, details on rare, endemic, and introduced species.
Manuel Marin \$16.00

Birds & Mammals of the Antarctic, Subantarctic & Falkland Islands – Illustrated with full color, digitally enhanced photographs with accompanying text covering all bird and mammal species including most wintering birds and vagrants.
Frank S. Todd \$29.95

Field Guide to Australian Birds – This handy pocket-sized Complete Compact Edition follows Michael Morcombe's much-acclaimed full-sized Field Guide to Australian Birds. 300+ illustrations detail subspecies, males, females, and juveniles of 800 species from mainland Australia, Tasmania, and offshore islands. Pinpointed locations with color distribution maps. Color tabbed for easy reference to families and cross-referenced to a Quick Index. Large illustrated section on nests and eggs.
Michael Morcombe \$34.00

**THE BOOKSTORE WILL BE CLOSED
THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2005 FOR INVENTORY**

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.

Saturday, March 5 –

Bonelli Regional Park – Leader Rod Higbie. Bonelli Regional Park is a remarkable island of coastal sage scrub habitat with adjacent lake and parkland. Birds regularly seen include California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, Golden Eagle, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. 200 other species throughout the year. Take the 57 Fwy to San Dimas, take the Via Verde offramp, turn onto Via Verde toward the freeway from either side, and meet in the Park and Ride lot on the north side of the street at 7:30 AM to carpool, since there is a \$7 / car park entrance fee. Rod will continue after lunch, if there is interest. There are picnic tables and facilities. Bring lunch, if you plan to bird into the afternoon. No limit, but please call your name and phone number in to LAAS if possible.

Sunday, March 6 –

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. 7 miles S, turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. From PCH, take Topanga Cyn. Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking \$2. Meet at 8:00 AM.

Sunday, March 6 –

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 morph Red-tail Hawk, Golden Eagles, and Snow Geese – all due to the sheer numbers of birds on the property. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy W

to Las Posas Rd. S, then take Hueneme Rd. W past PCH to Casper Rd. Take Casper Rd. S past the turn, and park and meet at 7:30 AM by the barn. Free. No sign-up required.

Saturday and Sunday, March 12-13 –

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. Swainson's Hawk, Black-throated Sparrow, Scott's and Hooded orioles, Chuckwalla all likely. Suggested accommodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground [reserve through www.reserveamerica.com], or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (760) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend, and reserve or motels early. Limit 20 people. Send SASE with phone number and \$5 fee to LAAS to learn 7:00 AM meeting place and more details. Pleasant to warm days, cool to cold nights.

Sunday, March 13 –

Point Dume Seabird Watch with Kimball Garrett. We will concentrate on how to identify late gulls, early migrating seabirds, and possible tubenoses and alcids in flight and at a distance. Some may be near, and we will start with gulls on the beach by the meeting spot. Take PCH N to Westward Beach Road, turn left, and meet along the right side of the road before the restrooms to carpool. We will carpool up to the pay lot at the overlook. Spotting 'scope required. 8:00 AM until about noon.

Sunday, March 13 –

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

Saturday, March 19 –

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 (\$4 parking fee), turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces. Meet at 8:00 AM.

Sunday, March 19 –

Robert Ridgely Program –
See page 5 for details.

Sunday, March 20 –

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 early migrating shorebirds. 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.

Sunday, April 3 –

Topanga State Park – Leaders: Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin. Meet at 8:00 AM. See March 6 listing for details.

Saturday, April 9 –

Owens River Delta – Botanist and birder Mike Prather will be showing us the lower Owens River, which is another mitigation site for our DWP. Around the Lower Owens River proper, we will have chances at Le Conte's Thrasher and early songbird migration in this riparian corridor. In the river delta, there will be waterfowl, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and possible bitterns, falcons, and nesting harriers in the reeds and Swainson's Hawks nearby. At the outflow, we may see nesting Snowy Plovers and many migrating shorebirds. If staying in Lone Pine, Olancha is 22 miles south. If staying in Mojave (Motel 6?), the drive

will be more like 90 miles. Meet at the Ranch House Café in Olancho around 7:30 AM, and be ready to depart at 8:30 AM. It may be hot or cold. Bring sunscreen, a large hat, a full tank of gas, (mud shoes?) and lunch. Reserve by phone with LAAS. Maximum 20. A \$10 (or greater) donation to the Owens Valley Committee Foundation will get you a membership.

Sunday, April 10 –
Whittier Narrows – Leader: **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:15 AM. See March 13 listing for details.

Saturday and Sunday, April 16-17 –
Owens Valley Grouse Trip – **Mary Freeman** leads. Sage Grouse on the lek, Blue Grouse in the trees, breathtaking scenery, raptor-rich valleys. Meet early Saturday in **Bishop**, and stay in Big Pine Saturday night. **Meeting site changed from last posting**. Limited to 20. New itinerary this year! To sign up, send \$20 and a SASE to LAAS. We will watch the Sage Grouse strut later in the month. Surprise details in mailer. Reserve rooms early.

Saturday, April 16 –
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area – Leaders: **Ann** and **Eric Brooks**. Meet at 8:00 AM. \$4 entry fee. See March 19 listing for details.

Sunday, April 17 –
Ballona Wetlands – Leader: **Bob Shanman**. Meet at 8:00 AM. See March 20 listing for details.

Saturday, April 23 –
Rancho Sierra Vista – Biologist, birder, and ex-docent **Scott Harris** will be traipsing through the tussocks in search of the elusive Grasshopper Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, and Lazuli Bunting as well as other foothill and grassland species. This is one of the few spots in the southland that reports Grasshopper Sparrow on an annual basis. A visit to the Satwiwa Indian Cultural Center will follow, if it is open. Exit Lynn Road off the 101 Fwy, head south on Lynn Road for 5.2 miles, turn left on Via Goleta, and proceed to the last parking lot where the group will be meeting. Meet at 7:00 AM, and bird until noon. Bring sunscreen and water.

Sunday, May 1 –
Topanga State Park – Leaders: **Ken Wheeland** and **Chris Tosdevin**. Meet at 8:00 AM. See March 6 listing for details.

Sunday, May 8 –
Butterbrecht Springs and Galileo Hills – Leader: **Nick Freeman**. These are some of the best migrant traps in the state. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. ***This is a May Birdathon event!** Show your support for LA Audubon by drumming up patronage of 25 cents or more per bird seen for the day, as we try to crack the magical 100 mark. Take Hwy 14 past Mojave, continue N on Hwy 14 about 15 miles, then turn left on Jawbone Canyon Road. Meet at the ranger station by the highway. After Galileo, we will try Piute or Sewage Ponds. Allow over two hours driving time from LA, or stay at the Mojave Motel 6 or elsewhere. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunch, sun block. Meet at 7:30 AM. Birdathon officially finishes at 4:00 PM. Contact LAAS for Birdathon promotional information.

Saturday, May 14 –
Lompoc Vicinity – Leader: **Eleanor Osgood**. Varied habitats. Target birds include Purple Martin and Yellow-billed Magpie. Due to construction, we will meet at 8:00 AM in the Anderson's Split Pea restaurant parking lot in Buellton. Exit the 101 Fwy just past the Santa Ynez River, onto Hwy 246 heading west, and make a right turn into the restaurant lot. Two hour drive from LA. ***This is a May Birdathon event!** Show your support for LA Audubon by drumming up patronage of 25 cents or more per bird seen by the group for the day. Eleanor is hoping for 70 species, as she plans to bird at a relaxed pace. We will also bird Santa Inez River mouth, River Park, and elsewhere. Bring lunch and bird until three-ish. Carpooling encouraged. More directions in *May Tanager*.

Sunday, May 22 –
Big Morongo Wildlife Preserve – Leader **Dexter Kelly**. Meet at 8:00 AM. in the parking lot. ***This is a May Birdathon event!** Show your support for LA Audubon by drumming up patronage of 25 cents or more per bird seen for the

day. Dexter is hoping for 70 species, but with your help, who knows! No sign up. Birdathon officially finishes at 3:00 PM. More details in *May Tanager*.

Friday through Monday, June 17-20 –
Southern Sierras – Leader: **Bob Barnes**. High deserts to High Sierra. Reserve with SASE for flyer with hotels and itinerary. Fee: \$15 for each day attended. Reserve rooms in Kernville early. More information in *May/June Tanager*.

* Participants in **LA Audubon May Birdathon** events may contact Audubon House for Birdathon promotional information and sponsor forms; or bring names, phone numbers, addresses and level of support information to the event.

MAY IS BIRDATHON MONTH FOR LAAS

All Los Angeles
Audubon Society field trips
during May, including Dexter
Kelly's Morongo Valley trip,
will be Birdathons. We hope
each participant will donate
a chosen amount (may we
suggest a dollar per species?).

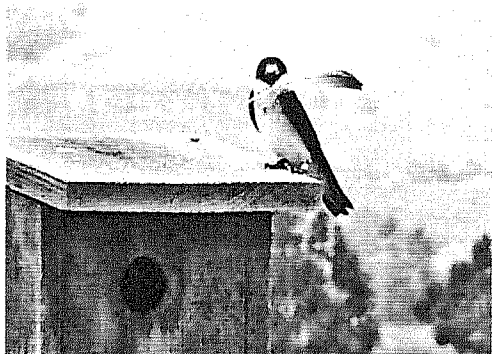
Proceeds will go to the
programs of the Los Angeles
Audubon Society.

EVENING MEETINGS

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

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Jan Wasserman
The Tree Swallow Project

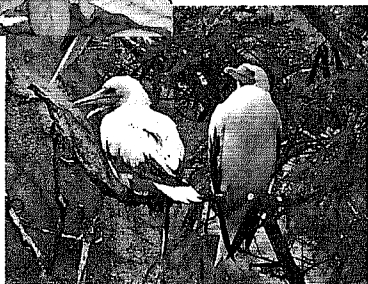


Jan became a birder in 1986 but after watching Elliott McClure mist net and band birds, she knew that she would have to do more than just look. She quit her job and studied with Elliott for a year, learned the techniques of banding, and by the end of the year, had her own banding permit. Then in 1991, she started monitoring a few nest boxes that Jesse Grantham from the Audubon Society had put up for Tree Swallows at the Ventura sewage ponds. Soon thereafter, Jan approached United Water Conservation District in Saticoy for permission to put up some boxes at the Freeman Diversion there. Thus was born Tree Swallow Nesting Projects, Inc., whose mission is to re-introduce the Tree Swallow as a breeding species in Ventura County and all of southern California.

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Sophie Webb
An Eastern Tropical Pacific Adventure

Illustration by Sophie Webb



Artist/biologist Sophie Webb has spent several months per year, in the past years, on research vessels censusing seabirds and marine mammals in the Pacific and more recently the Atlantic. Join her on a trip to the Eastern Tropical Pacific, and along the Hawaiian Island Chain, where she recently spent six months. Enjoy pictures of birds, marine mammals, and other critters found in that region of the ocean and learn a little about what life is like on a research vessel.

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

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**THE
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JUNE 30, 2005**