

# WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 72 Number 6 July/August 2006

Los Angeles Audubon Society

## *The Big Year*

by Todd McGrath

**H**ow many species of birds can one observer record in Los Angeles County during a single calendar year? In 1993 Kevin Larson answered that question by recording 345 species. Jon Feenstra broke that record in 2003 with a total of 347. This is the story of my attempt to set a new record in 2005.

An attempt by a single observer to record as many species as possible in a particular geographic area (in this case L.A. County) is called a "Big Year". I'll be the first to admit that such a game is no more sensible than smacking little white balls across vast green lawns with a club. Still, it is a game that requires strategy, a good knowledge of the status and distribution of birds in the county, luck, and that Kevin Larson have you on speed dial (more on that later).

Some big years start in earnest on January 1st, others are started later in the year, after a good winter or a great spring migration. In my case it was a little of both. Early in January 2004 I started teasing Jon Feenstra that I might try to break the record. The ensuing nervous laughter from Jon was its own reward, but in the back of my mind, I was starting to think about how to go about it. As 2004 ended, I was considering the idea somewhat seriously. My birding year began on January 1st with an all day trip to the Antelope Valley. Red Crossbill, Long-eared Owl, and Tundra Swan

were all birds I added on day one, plus a host of ducks. The winter strategy is straightforward; get any lingering vagrants, and any species that might be difficult later in the year. It is not about trying to see as many species as possible. A few days later I was at El Dorado Park in Long Beach to see Pine Warbler,

Tropical Kingbird, and Eurasian Wigeon. As the winter wore on, additional good birds turned up including Orchard and Baltimore orioles in Culver City, and a return to El Dorado Park for Least Flycatcher. My local patch in Marina del Rey produced all three scoters, Long-tailed Duck, and Thayer's Gull. As spring migration approached, I was still on the fence as to whether or not this would be the right year. But I was still hopeful.

One of the key groups of birds for any big year in a coastal county is seabirds, and I was sure I would have a substantial edge over any competitor in that area. In 2005 I would co-lead two multi-day pelagic trips that would spend at least some time in Los Angeles County along the continental shelf. During the April trip I added Black-footed and Laysan albatrosses, Murphy's Petrel, Red-billed Tropicbird, and Xantus's Murrelet, as well as more regular species like Black and Leach's storm-petrels. My big year aspirations were given a huge boost when Jon Feenstra, Mike and Michael San Miguel, and I decided to do an L.A. County Big Day. Scouting the coast was my responsibility and I was able to add Pigeon Guillemot at Zuma Beach, and a fly-by Common Murre at Leo Carrillo. The Big Day was a spectacular success (you can read all about that



All photos by Todd McGrath

*Red-naped Sapsucker*

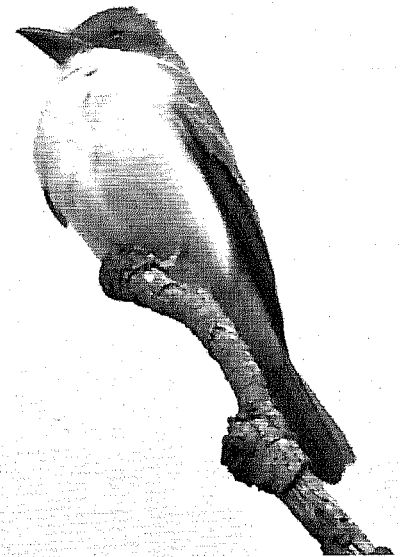
day in *Western Tanager*, July/August 2005). In one 24 hour period I eliminated the need to go owling (we recorded eight species of owls) and saw a huge variety of resident birds.

At the end of the day, Big Years are made or broken with vagrants, and I would still need a good spring to have a shot at the record. In mid-May I was able to see Black-throated Green and Grace's warbler. Late May is always a peak time for vagrants, but each year I spend the week of Memorial Day in North Carolina, doing pelagic trips. I had a feeling I would pay a price for my absence, and I did. Kevin Larson found a stunning Golden-winged Warbler at DeForest Park in Long Beach while I was away. By early June, I was convinced that I would not be able to compete for the record, as the spring vagrant totals were low, and I had missed several of them, but June sightings of Ovenbird and a Red-eyed Vireo gave me a glimmer of hope. I was also able to add Inca Doves after Jon Feenstra located several at the eastern end of the Antelope Valley at Lake Los Angeles. By the end of June, I was over 300 species, with all of the late-summer shorebirds, fall pelagics, and vagrant landbirding still ahead. I could

still pull it off with a little luck.

A rather lackluster shorebird season (with the exception of Curlew and Stilt sandpipers on the L.A. River) didn't add to my enthusiasm, but it would all still ride on the fall migration, and whether or not I could mop up on the few remaining resident birds I had not yet seen. An early September multi-day pelagic trip was a huge success, I added Cook's Petrel, Buller's Shearwater, Least Storm-Petrel, Long-tailed Jaeger, Arctic Tern, and Craver's Murrelet to the list. After my return from the boat trip, I started putting out the word that I was doing a big year. That turned out to be a wise move, because Kevin Larson rang my cell every time he found a good bird. In addition, he put the word out to other birders such as Dave Moody, who was tremendously helpful in calling me when something good showed up at Madrona Marsh. I owe Painted Redstart and Clay-colored Sparrow to Dave.

The fall was a good one, and the vagrants fell one by one. Northern Waterthrush at Madrona Marsh, Lucy's and Black-throated Blue warblers at Sand Dune Park. By late October I had seen 27 species of warbler. On October 25th, I was shopping at Costco. My cart was full, and I was heading to the checkout. My phone rang, it was Kevin once again. "Todd, I'm at Sand Dune, I'm pretty sure I just saw a Mourning Warbler." I raced to the checkout, cutting at large swath through the slow-moving Costco shoppers. In a few minutes my grocery



*Thick-billed Kingbird*

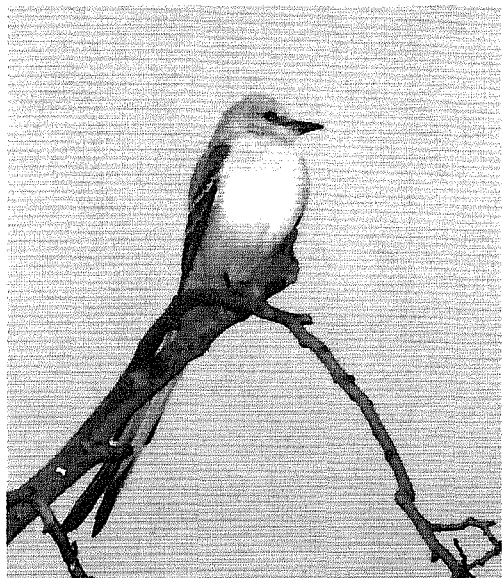
laden Volvo was streaking down Lincoln Blvd. towards Manhattan Beach. Kevin and I spent the next hour or so playing hide and seek with a first fall Mourning Warbler.

On November 1st, I did a quick check of the list to see what was left. I needed a few mountain species such as Clark's Nutcracker and Townsend's Solitaire. I hadn't found dipper yet, and I was hoping to find Red-naped and Yellow-bellied sapsuckers along the north slope of the San Gabriels, or out in the desert. November 6th I headed up to the San Gabriels from La Cañada. Once I was in the higher elevations Clark's Nutcrackers and Townsend's Solitaires were relatively easy. Highway 2 was still closed at Islip saddle, so I did the long drive around to the North Slope. St. Andrews Abbey turned up Red-naped Sapsucker, but no Yellow-bellied. It was early afternoon, and I had no cell service at the Abbey. I was trying to decide whether or not to head up the north slope or down to the desert. I decided to pump a handful of change into the pay phone at the Abbey, and I was surprised to learn that the Scheel's had discovered a Golden Plover at Quail Lake, and that there was a Blackburnian Warbler at Sepulveda Basin. I wondered if I had enough time to see both, but I decided to give it a try. It took me over an hour to get good looks at the plover, and I then raced



*Dusky-capped Flycatcher*

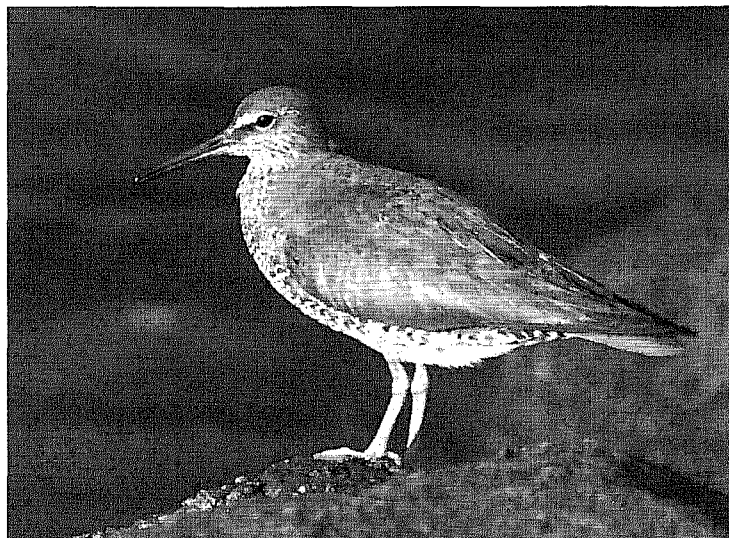
down to Sepulveda. I arrived just a little while before sunset, and L.A. birders Jim Abernathy and Steve Sosensky were



*Scissor-tailed Flycatcher*

photographing the bird. I finished the day with a net gain of five, and now I was now tied with Kevin Larson with 345.

Things were quiet until the 10th of November. I was driving to LAX to pick up a birding friend from Delaware who was visiting for a few days, when once again Kevin Larson called. "Todd, I've got a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Banning Park." I was sure my friend wouldn't mind a little detour, so I thanked Kevin and told him I would be there in about an hour. About a half hour later, Kevin called again. "Todd, you might want to speed it up a bit, I just found a Thick-billed Kingbird." I thought about leaving



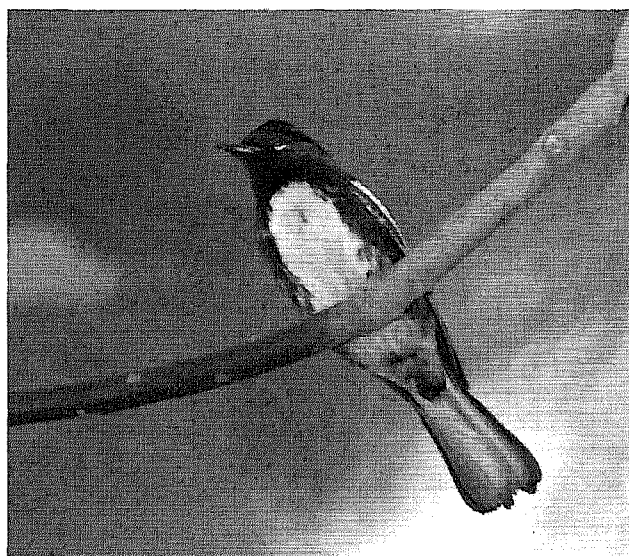
*Wandering Tattler*

my friend a voicemail, and detailed directions for the SuperShuttle, but in the end friendship won out, and I waited for his flight. The kingbird (and Kevin) was still there when we arrived, but the sapsucker had disappeared. The next day was spent in the mountains and the Antelope Valley looking for dipper (dipped on it), Varied Thrush (conspicuous in its absence), and longspurs in the western Antelope Valley. We were able to see and hear two Chestnut-collared, but a bird that sounded like a Lapland was too distant for me to be certain. I was now tied with Jon at 347.

On November 13th Jon's record fell. Jon and I were at Banning Park trying to track down a Scarlet Tanager, when he yelled "Todd, the tanager is over here!" I quickly circled the trees between us and saw the Scarlet Tanager in the treetop. After a few seconds, the bird flew and was never refound. I surely would have missed the bird without Jon's quick alert. Kevin Larson was just a few yards away. The highlight of my big year was breaking the record with Jon and Kevin there. There were handshakes, and high fives, and some discussion about how many more I could record. Was 360 possible? 349 followed a few moments later when the elusive Yellow-bellied Sapsucker I had missed days earlier put in an appearance. Over the next several weeks a few more goodies showed up (like Fulvous-Whistling Duck and Dusky-capped Flycatcher), and a lovely couple from Santa Monica invited me into their backyard to see a male Hood-

ed Warbler that was using the birdbath in the evening. Kevin would call me one more time, to tell me about a Northern Parula he had found in Gardena. I rushed out in the light rain to see it. That was number 356.

The last bird I recorded was a Manx Shearwater (357) flying past Pt. Vicente with a large group of Black-vented Shearwaters. I had decided to do a sea-watch to try and relocate a Black-legged Kittiwake seen by Mike San Miguel earlier in the week. It rained most of the 31st, but I spent some time at El Dorado Park looking in vain for a Brown Thrasher that would be regularly seen in January. Oh well.



*Painted Redstart*

To put my number in perspective, there are only two California counties with higher Big Year totals: San Diego with 358 seen by Guy McCaskie (of course) and Marin County with 362 seen by Rich Stallcup. All in all a pretty satisfying effort.

When I look back on 2005, it is with great fondness, not only because I was successful in setting a new record, but because I had a tremendous amount of fun birding places I had never been, and getting to know a host of Los Angeles birders better than I had before. I hope that when my record is broken, (and it surely will be) I am there to shake the hand of the new champ. My guess is it will be a bird we both found out about from Kevin. 🐦

Please see page 4 to review "The List".

## The List

Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Green Heron	Sabine's Gull	Dusky-capped Flycatcher	Black-throated Gray Warbler
Greater White-fronted Goose	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Caspian Tern	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Black-throated Green Warbler
Snow Goose	White-faced Ibis	Royal Tern	Tropical Kingbird	Townsend's Warbler
Ross's Goose	Turkey Vulture	Elegant Tern	Cassin's Kingbird	Hermit Warbler
Canada Goose	Osprey	Common Tern	Thick-billed Kingbird	Blackburnian Warbler
Cackling Goose	White-tailed Kite	Arctic Tern	Western Kingbird	Grace's Warbler
Brant	Northern Harrier	Forster's Tern	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Pine Warbler
Tundra Swan	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Least Tern	Loggerhead Shrike	Palm Warbler
Wood Duck	Cooper's Hawk	Black Tern	Bell's Vireo	Blackpoll Warbler
Gadwall	Red-shouldered Hawk	Black Skimmer	Plumbeous Vireo	Black-and-white Warbler
Eurasian Wigeon	Swainson's Hawk	Common Murre	Cassin's Vireo	American Redstart
American Wigeon	Red-tailed Hawk	Pigeon Guillemot	Hutton's Vireo	Ovenbird
Mallard	Ferruginous Hawk	Xantus's Murrelet	Warbling Vireo	Northern Waterthrush
Blue-winged Teal	Golden Eagle	Craveri's Murrelet	Red-eyed Vireo	Mourning Warbler
Cinnamon Teal	American Kestrel	Ancient Murrelet	Steller's Jay	MacGillivray's Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Merlin	Cassin's Auklet	Western Scrub-Jay	Common Yellowthroat
Northern Pintail	Peregrine Falcon	Rhinoceros Auklet	Clark's Nutcracker	Hooded Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Prairie Falcon	Rock Pigeon	American Crow	Wilson's Warbler
Canvasback	Virginia Rail	Band-tailed Pigeon	Common Raven	Painted Redstart
Redhead	Sora	Spotted Dove	Horned Lark	Yellow-breasted Chat
Ring-necked Duck	Common Moorhen	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Tree Swallow	Summer Tanager
Greater Scaup	American Coot	White-winged Dove	Violet-green Swallow	Scarlet Tanager
Lesser Scaup	Black-bellied Plover	Mourning Dove	Northern Rough-winged	Western Tanager
Surf Scoter	American Golden-Plover	Inca Dove	Swallow	Green-tailed Towhee
White-winged Scoter	Snowy Plover	Common Ground-Dove	Bank Swallow	Spotted Towhee
Black Scoter	Semipalmated Plover	Red-crowned Parrot	Cliff Swallow	California Towhee
Long-tailed Duck	Killdeer	Greater Roadrunner	Barn Swallow	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Bufflehead	Mountain Plover	Barn Owl	Mountain Chickadee	Chipping Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	Black Oystercatcher	Flammulated Owl	Oak Titmouse	Clay-colored Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Black-necked Stilt	Western Screech-Owl	Verdin	Brewer's Sparrow
Common Merganser	American Avocet	Great Horned Owl	Bushtit	Black-chinned Sparrow
Red-breasted Merganser	Greater Yellowlegs	Northern Pygmy-Owl	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Vesper Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Lesser Yellowlegs	Burrowing Owl	White-breasted Nuthatch	Lark Sparrow
Mountain Quail	Solitary Sandpiper	Spotted Owl	Pygmy Nuthatch	Black-throated Sparrow
California Quail	Willet	Long-eared Owl	Brown Creeper	Sage Sparrow
Red-throated Loon	Wandering Tattler	Northern Saw-whet Owl	Cactus Wren	Savannah Sparrow
Pacific Loon	Spotted Sandpiper	Lesser Nighthawk	Rock Wren	Fox Sparrow
Common Loon	Whimbrel	Common Poorwill	Canyon Wren	Song Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	Long-billed Curlew	Black Swift	Bewick's Wren	Lincoln's Sparrow
Horned Grebe	Marbled Godwit	Vaux's Swift	House Wren	Swamp Sparrow
Eared Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone	White-throated Swift	Winter Wren	White-throated Sparrow
Western Grebe	Black Turnstone	Black-chinned Hummingbird	Marsh Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Clark's Grebe	Surfbird	Anna's Hummingbird	American Dipper	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Laysan Albatross	Red Knot	Costa's Hummingbird	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed Junco
Black-footed Albatross	Sanderling	Calliope Hummingbird	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Lapland Longspur
Northern Fulmar	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Rufous Hummingbird	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Murphy's Petrel	Western Sandpiper	Allen's Hummingbird	California Gnatcatcher	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Cook's Petrel	Least Sandpiper	Belted Kingfisher	Western Bluebird	Black-headed Grosbeak
Pink-footed Shearwater	Baird's Sandpiper	Lewis's Woodpecker	Mountain Bluebird	Blue Grosbeak
Buller's Shearwater	Pectoral Sandpiper	Acorn Woodpecker	Townsend's Solitaire	Lazuli Bunting
Sooty Shearwater	Dunlin	Williamson's Sapsucker	Swainson's Thrush	Bobolink
Short-tailed Shearwater	Curlew Sandpiper	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Hermit Thrush	Red-winged Blackbird
Manx Shearwater	Stilt Sandpiper	Red-naped Sapsucker	American Robin	Tricolored Blackbird
Black-vented Shearwater	Short-billed Dowitcher	Red-breasted Sapsucker	Wrentit	Western Meadowlark
Leach's Storm-Petrel	Long-billed Dowitcher	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Northern Mockingbird	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Ashy Storm-Petrel	Wilson's Snipe	Nuttall's Woodpecker	Sage Thrasher	Brewer's Blackbird
Black Storm-Petrel	Wilson's Phalarope	Downy Woodpecker	California Thrasher	Great-tailed Grackle
Least Storm-Petrel	Red-necked Phalarope	Hairy Woodpecker	Le Conte's Thrasher	Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-billed Tropicbird	Red Phalarope	White-headed Woodpecker	European Starling	Orchard Oriole
American White Pelican	Pomarine Jaeger	Northern Flicker	American Pipit	Hooded Oriole
Brown Pelican	Parasitic Jaeger	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Cedar Waxwing	Baltimore Oriole
Brandt's Cormorant	Long-tailed Jaeger	Western Wood-Pewee	Phainopepla	Bullock's Oriole
Double-crested Cormorant	Franklin's Gull	Willow Flycatcher	Tennessee Warbler	Scott's Oriole
Pelagic Cormorant	Bonaparte's Gull	Least Flycatcher	Orange-crowned Warbler	Purple Finch
American Bittern	Heermann's Gull	Hammond's Flycatcher	Nashville Warbler	Cassin's Finch
Least Bittern	Mew Gull	Gray Flycatcher	Virginia's Warbler	House Finch
Great Blue Heron	Ring-billed Gull	Dusky Flycatcher	Lucy's Warbler	Red Crossbill
Great Egret	California Gull	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Northern Parula	Pine Siskin
Snowy Egret	Herring Gull	Black Phoebe	Yellow Warbler	Lesser Goldfinch
Cattle Egret	Thayer's Gull	Eastern Phoebe	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Lawrence's Goldfinch
	Western Gull	Say's Phoebe	Black-throated Blue Warbler	American Goldfinch
	Glaucous-winged Gull	Vermilion Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Warbler	House Sparrow



## Opening New Trails

On Saturday May 6, Los Angeles Audubon broke with its custom of recent years, and held the annual picnic not in the mountains, but in a city park right in the middle of our inner-city geographic service area. There was a free barbecue and a mellow jazz/blues combo providing ambient sound. And a lot of curious strangers from the neighborhood showed up to find out about birds, plants, and our society and its activities.

The occasion was the opening of the Native Plant Trail in the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, which is on the east side of the Baldwin Hills. This whole area is being transformed from a heavily scarred and degraded oil field into a major multiple-use park that includes extensive natural areas. The trail was envisioned by our own Garry George and plant restoration expert Margot Griswold, and created by a team of local youth and adult volunteers from the community. A grove of eucalyptus trees was cut back from a hillside, and native flowering plants and shrubs were planted. Further up the hill, coastal sage scrub is being restored by removal of alien plants like castor bean, fennel, and pampas grass.

On that opening day, the hillside

was blazing with color. Early in the morning Eleanor Osgood led a beginner's bird walk, which is regularly given on the third Thursday of each month. This time we had sent a mailing to neighborhood residents alerting them to this special event. A few respondents who had never visited the park before were very interested to learn how many birds could be found even in this urban setting. After the bird walk, Steve Hartman of the California Native Plant Society, guided us along the native plant walk. While pointing out and identifying the plants, he gave us extensive information on how they could be planted and maintained on our own yards and neighborhoods.

On hand also were some project interns, formerly at-risk youths whose lives had been turned around by involvement in building the trail and restoring the scrub habitat that still covers much of the park's steeper hillsides and canyons. They had not only learned how natural systems work, but had discovered a new career "trail". As LAAS develops its educational programs in the park, more such young people will be served.

Our picnic was held at the top of the hill. The authentic southern barbecue

was provided by a local church group, and the music was cool jazz and blues, unobtrusive but very polished. An eminent past president of our society, Bob Van Meter, was able to join us. (Thanks, Bob Pann, for bringing him!) We schmoozed with the neighbors, talking about birds that they had seen, and how they could take part in our activities. Each guest got a bag full of favors and information about the Baldwin Hills, the Native Plant Society, and Los Angeles Audubon. Before the day was out, an anonymous donor present offered a matching grant of \$30,000 for educational programs in the Baldwin Hills. We made many new friends, and expect to hear from them in the near future.

This event, (very well "produced" by Garry), marks an early step on a new trail for Los Angeles Audubon; reaching out to our urban communities to help them enhance their own environment. It dovetails with the *Audubon at Home* program, in which we will help our neighbors convert their yards and neighborhoods into wildlife habitat by landscaping with native plants. As gas gets more expensive, and free time gets harder to come by, it becomes more difficult to drive long



Los Angeles Audubon Picnic, May 6, 2006

distances to get to natural areas. It's easier for most Angelinos to bring nature closer to home. To help accomplish this, we will be developing educational materials tailored to our southern California climate that help L.A. residents plant and maintain natural yards and gardens. And we will stage more events like the picnic in Kenneth Hahn Park.

These kinds of activities accomplish two goals. They increase natural habitat within the city and recruit new active members for Los Angeles Audubon, to build up our volunteer base. And there will be a lot for volunteers to do.

Beginning this summer, we will be developing a docent training program to prepare LAAS members to lead nature walks in various city parks, such as Baldwin Hills and, eventually, the restored Los Angeles River. Volunteers will also be needed to visit classrooms to present slide shows and information about local plants and birds. As we design our elementary education programs, we draw on the expertise of you, our members. No voice is more passionate than that of a true nature enthusiast.

Photo by Lisa Fimiani



*Past President Bob Van Meter, Ingrid Castillo (standing), Lisa Fimiani, and Bob Pann*

Our education programs will extend beyond the classroom and into summer camps as we develop lessons that can be utilized by inner-city youth programs. For teenagers, we will build on Margot Griswold's "Weeds to Wonder" project for at-risk youth in the Baldwin Hills, while our elementary school programs will emulate those that work so well in

the Ballona Wetlands and Sepulveda Basin. In August, we will be taking busloads of kids from Plummer Park out to natural areas. Instilling respect for the natural world today will provide for more informed and environmentally-sensitive decisions to be made in the future.

For all these activities and more, we need to gain more human and financial resources. If we stay on the trail and keep up the pace, I think we will succeed.

Meanwhile, back at Audubon House, our store is taking the path into the 21st century – it's going online!

The catalog, now out-of-date as soon as it's printed, will be online only, revisable as soon as new items come in. You will not have to go to Plummer Park to see what is available. And there will be a shopping cart for instant online purchases. This change will make our bookstore more accessible and useful to thousands of potential customers who find it hard to get to its physical location. Store operations will become far more efficient, and the electronic automation of sales will free

Photo by Lisa Fimiani

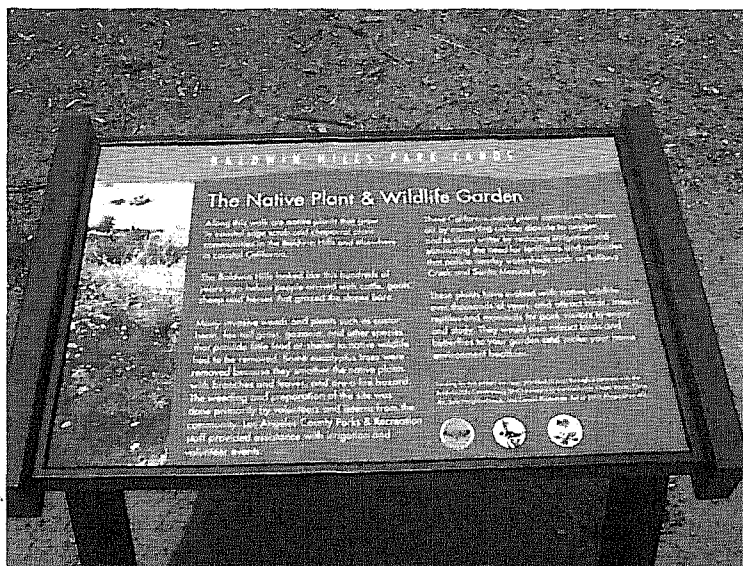


*Executive Director Garry George, local intern Winter Williams, and Project Manager Margot Griswold*

up our paid staff to spend more time on activities that further the mission of the LAAS, like supporting educational and public information programs, and keeping track of our membership.

We should remember that all profits from the store go to support the programs and activities of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. As we reach out to our Los Angeles community, we should support our own community of birders and conservationists, and make sure that the money we spend on bird and other nature books and optics goes back into efforts to protect the natural world we need and love.

Dexter Kelly, President



Dedication plaque

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**Closed: Saturdays**

### *Native Treasures: Gardening with the Plants of California*

Describes the use of plants in varying landscapes and gardens and state-of-the-art propagation techniques, with beautiful illustrations.

M. Nevin Smith 2006

\$24.95

### *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion*

A comprehensive resource for identifying North American Birds. The author gives equal or more weight to a bird's structure and shape and the observer's overall impression than to specific field marks.

Pete Dunne 2006

\$29.95

### *Tanagers, Cardinals, and Finches of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide*

200 photos illustrate age, seasonal, and sexual variation in all of these species found north of Mexico.

The text introduces the biology, identification, molts, vocalization, and distribution of the 46 species covered.

David Beadle and J.D. Rising 2006

\$29.95

### *The Shorebird Guide*

Includes 870 photos, starting with a general impression of the species and progressing to more detailed images of the bird throughout its life cycle.

Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson 2006

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### *Birding Babylon*

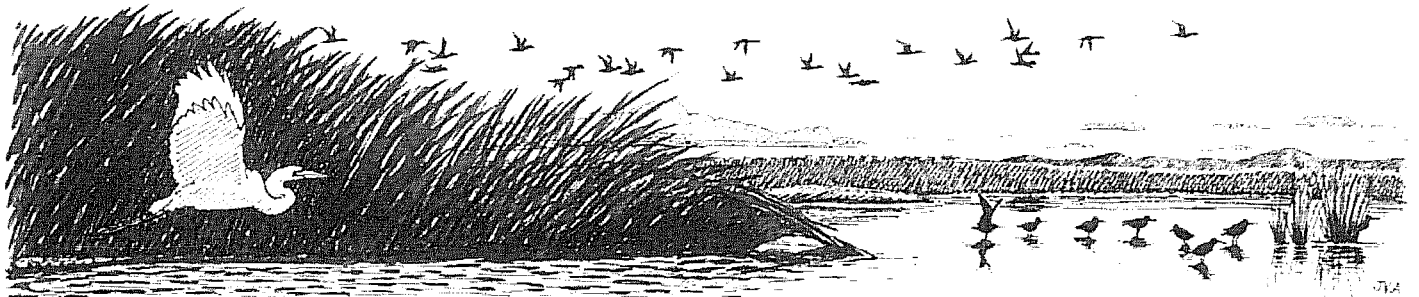
The journal of a soldier who has been a birder for 24 years and is deployed to Iraq. He writes of the birds he has seen there.

Jonathan Trouern-Trend 2006

\$9.95

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**Bookstore catalog is now available online at: [www.laaudubon.org/](http://www.laaudubon.org/)**



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Garry George

## Kern County judge rules against L.A. and Kerncrest Audubons

Kern County Superior Court judge Kenneth Twisselman announced his ruling on Friday, April 14 to a courtroom of spectators including Dexter Kelly, Garry George, Kerncrest Auduboners Brenda and Dan Burnett, Lee Sutton, Santa Monica Bay Audubon's Mary Prismon and Kern County resident and Butterbredt pioneer Keith Axelson.

From court transcript:

"The first issue the Court will address is the Petitioners' contention that there is no substantial evidence to support the EIR's conclusion that the project will have no significant avian impacts. The Petitioners contend that the EIR's conclusion with regard to this issue is deficient because the spring migration of songbirds through the project area was not adequately investigated. And they also contend that no study of such migration through the area at night was made. And the Court finds that this argument is not persuasive within the meaning of CEQA.

"Respondents' expert, Dr. Morrison, did consider the question and concluded that nighttime surveys of migrating songbirds in the project area would not be helpful. The doctor explained that nocturnal radar surveys would be of little use because radar cannot differentiate between species. He also indicated that where there was little evidence of early morning or late evening use nighttime surveys were not normally conducted. And in this case visits to the project area including during the spring of 2003 noted only a low level of songbird activity.

"Respondents' expert also suggested another reason why nighttime surveys of migrating songbirds in the project area were not needed. And they would be of

limited use because the project area is west of the songbirds' spring migratory routes.

"To the extent that the Petitioners also contend that the EIR conclusion that the project will not have a significant avian impact is not supported by substantial evidence, the court finds that that contention also fails. The gist of Petitioners' arguments is that the EIR's conclusion is wrong because it is based on the conclusions of Respondents' expert, Dr. Morrison, and he did not follow the methodology recommended by Petitioners' expert, Robert Hamilton.

"However, it is not for the Court to select among conflicting expert opinion and substitute the Court's judgment for that of the agency."

The judge ignored the evidence in the EIR that the visits to the site in spring 2003 were raptor surveys on April 6-7, Tehacapi Slender Salamander Surveys on April 7, rare plant surveys on April 19-20, and Desert Tortoise surveys on May 13-15, all in the late morning, early afternoon. Correct me if I'm wrong but aren't salamander hunters, rare plant hunters, and tortoise hunters in the late morning/early afternoon looking in the wrong direction at the wrong time? This is only one of the errors in the judge's ruling that prompted the Board of Los Angeles Audubon to vote unanimously on May 4 to appeal the decision, and ask for an injunction against the beginning of construction on the wind farm at Pine Tree until the outcome of the appeal.

Meanwhile, NPR carried the story of the biggest offshore wind farm in the nation. The project is 150 turbines planned for the Gulf of Mexico near Padre Island right in the path of migratory songbirds. Senator Ted Kennedy, former

Audubon Board Chair Donal O'Brian and others defeated an offshore project planned for Nantucket. At the same time, NY investment giant Goldman Sachs and corporate mammoth GE continue to consolidate the wind energy sector by buying up wind developers, including Horizon which is developing Pine Tree for DWP. Wind has become green with profit perhaps more than with environmental good. In locations including migratory pathways and at Altamont in Alameda County, it is red.

On the statewide policy front, L.A. Audubon has been invited to speak at a hearing on June 9, 2006 at the California Energy Commission in Sacramento. The hearing is the first step in the CEC and California Fish & Game creation of guidelines for the siting of windfarms in California. We'll be the only advocate asking to include proper pre-construction and post-construction studies including radar on migratory songbirds for future wind farm sites. The room will be filled with wind industry spokespersons. These small birds do not have lobbyists or elected representatives, and are already assaulted by so many other pressures created by humans including domestic and feral cats, communications towers, and buildings that one more is unconscionable. The cumulative effect is outrageous.

## The Good News: Western Snowy Plover To Retain Threatened Status

April 6, 2006. The US Fish and Wildlife Service announced today a finding that the Pacific Coast population of the western Snowy Plover remains at risk from habitat loss, human disturbances and other perils and should retain its status as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).



After reviewing the best scientific evidence, the Service finds that delisting the species from the federal list of threatened and endangered species is not warranted. The Service concluded that the Pacific Coast western Snowy Plover population is markedly separate from other populations and that it meets the requirements for protection as a distinct population segment (DPS) under the ESA.

The western population of the tiny shorebird that breeds in coastal areas in California, Oregon, and Washington has been listed as threatened since 1993. The current population estimate for the US portion of the Pacific Coast population is approximately 2,300, based on a 2005 survey. The largest number of breeding birds occurs south of San Francisco Bay to southern Baja. It is classified as a "distinct population segment" under the ESA, separate from populations that nest in inland areas from Nevada and Utah to Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Today's action was triggered by two petitions filed in 2002 and 2003, respectively, by the Surf-Ocean Beach Commission of Lompoc, CA, and the City of Morro Bay, CA, seeking to delist the Pacific coast population of the western

Snowy Plover. The petitions contended that the Pacific Coast population of the western Snowy Plover does not qualify either as a distinct population or as a threatened species.


The Service found that the Pacific Coast population of the western Snowy Plover is markedly separate from other populations of plover due to behavioral differences. With only very isolated exceptions, the birds of the Pacific Coast breed and stay on the coast their entire lives. The discreteness of this population meets the legal requirements to qualify as a distinct population segment (DPS) under the ESA. Threats to the bird remain essentially the same since the time of listing under the ESA in 1993.

#### **L.A. Audubon & Audubon California Host Resource Bond Workshop June 10, 2006**

L.A. Audubon partnered with Audubon California in hosting a workshop to encourage support of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006, a \$5.4 billion water and natural resources protection initiative that was developed by a coali-

tion of conservation groups including Audubon California. Funding from Propositions 40 and 50 is almost gone and our water quality, habitat restoration, and coastal protection efforts will be jeopardized without passage of a resources bond this year. This workshop was attended by Audubon chapters and environmental groups throughout southern California. Keynote speaker was Mary Nichols, Board Chair of DWP and former Secretary of Resources for California. Full language of the Natural Resources Bond is available at:  
[www.ca.audubon.org/2006\\_Bond\\_Funding.htm](http://www.ca.audubon.org/2006_Bond_Funding.htm)

#### **L.A. Audubon Responds To Great Blue Heron Drama At Silverlake Reservoir**

Councilmember Tom LaBonge's office asked L.A. Audubon for help with public outcry over a Great Blue Heron chick that was seen on the ground under a nest at the Silverlake Reservoir. The public was demanding that the City of Los Angeles protect the chick from coyotes and other predators. Garry George, Dexter Kelly, and Kimball Garrett quickly responded by creating an educational sign that the city erected onsite. See the text of that sign below. 

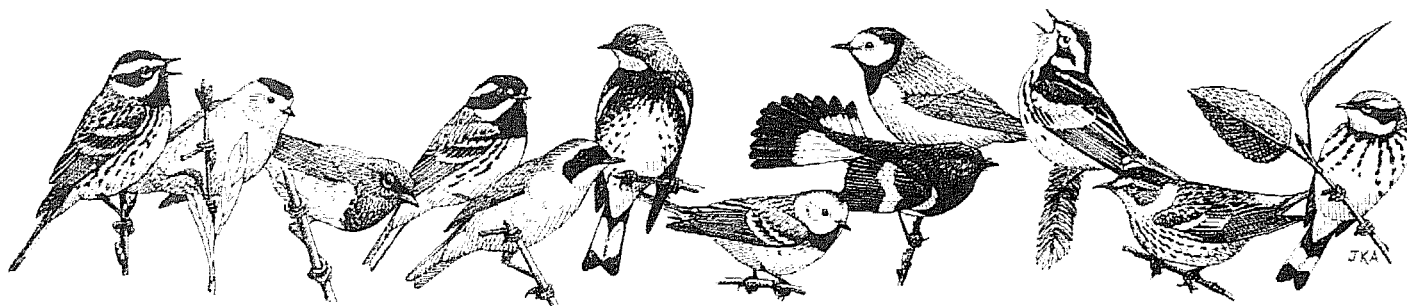
### **Some facts about Great Blue Herons at the Silver Lake Reservoir:**

Great Blue Herons are migratory birds and may be absent from the reservoir for long periods of time.

Great Blue Herons and their nests are protected from human interference by federal, state, and city laws.

Heron nestlings hatch over a period of many days – the youngest, latest-hatching young very often do not survive. Great Blue Herons lay 3-4 eggs, and on average only about two young fledge per nest.

All heron chicks leave the nest to face the world. Whether the chick has been pushed out of the nest by another chick, fallen from a branch while trying its wings, or has left the nest from natural impulses, this is a natural stage of the process of growing up. An important part of this process is learning to survive on its own and avoid natural predators. Human interference will only complicate this process unless the bird is injured and needs rehabilitation.



# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Jon Feenstra

**G**reetings birders, and happy spring. Our non-summer weather in southern California is typically atypical, and again this spring climatological aberration occurred. After worries that the drier than average winter would wither the plant-life and set us up for destructive fires in the fall, late spring rains in April nearly made up for the winter deficit. The rains also put water in streams and flood basins and greenery on the hillsides that is usually gone by this time of year. Its effects on spring bird migration cannot be precisely characterized, but many birders have noted a "late" feeling to the number of migrating birds this year. The author himself did not spend enough time in the field this season to comment on this directly, but the reports below seem to reflect many of the features that we see every year – some species are early, some are late, and some are in different numbers than we expect. This season also was host to an interesting phenomenon, a serious effort in the America's Birdiest County (ABC) competition. This three day period, April 28 – 30, had Los Angeles birders spending time in patches that are not normally covered thoroughly outside of the Christmas Bird Count season. Needless to say this concerted effort turned up a few interesting birds and very possibly made L.A. the birdiest county in the country. Here's what was around:

**Greater White-fronted Geese**, an uncommon to rare winter visitor, are now likely permanent bread-eating residents at both Santa Fe Dam (three birds seen on April 28) [TW] and Apollo Park (April 29) [JFe]. Their decision to forsake the migratory nature of their majestic species and remain here is unfortunate,

but at least they're spring Big Day-accessible. Of similar status, a few **Cackling Geese** have also made the switch to sedentary swill-scavengers with individuals at Zuma Creek from April 2 to May 6 [RB], continuing at Santa Fe Dam on April 28 [TW], and at Bonelli Park also on April 28 [AL]. This was definitely a season for **Long-tailed Ducks**. Although one seems to pop up every year on the south coast, there were as many as four this winter remaining into April. The wintering female was last seen on April 2 in Ballona Creek [RB], and a breeding plumage female was there on April 24 [RB]. An immature male was at Dockweiler State Beach on April 6 [RB]. An injured male in the Ballona Creek channel last appeared on April 23 [LG], several days before it could be ticked for the ABC competition. **Hooded Mergansers** are regular visitors to L.A. in the winter but birds remaining in the county well into April are rather noteworthy. A female was on a pond in Gorman until at least April 14 [FO] and another was at Castaic Lake until the very late date of April 30 [BW, JaF, AK]. Well offshore in late April a few **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** were seen in what's considered L.A. County waters [TMc]. This spring a number of these irruptive wandering birds were seen far off southern California. Although an abundant bird on the coast, sightings of **Brown Pelicans** over inland fresh water are very rare. One was at Harbor Park on March 12 and four were seen over the San Gabriel River on March 14. Another at Castaic Lake on April 11 was even further from its usual nearshore ocean haunts. Not an annually occurring vagrant, a **Little Blue Heron** was an excellent find in the

Ballona Lagoon on March 23 remaining for nearly a month [DB]. A contender for the best bird of the season, a possibly pure-blooded **American Oystercatcher** was found at Malibu Lagoon on May 2 [JHo, PH]. American x Black Oystercatcher hybrids are more common here than pure American Oystercatchers and close study is needed to rule out such mixed lineage. Unfortunately, it was not seen again. Although more common as fall migrants (but still quite uncommon), the season's only **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Bonelli Park on April 28 [AL]. A fantastic rarity, and likely the first record for the Antelope Valley, a **Black Turnstone** was found at Piute Ponds on April 26 [DN]. Still in basic plumage at its last reported observation on May 6, a **Red Knot** spent much of the spring at Del Rey Lagoon [KL]. A nice find, especially due to its presence during the ABC competition, was a **Laughing Gull** photographed at Malibu Lagoon on April 30 [BW, JaF, AK]. **Franklin's Gulls** typically appear in small numbers in April and early May in L.A. County, particularly in the Antelope Valley. This year they were more scarce than usual with one in Ballona Creek April 6 – 8 [RB] and only two at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds (normally ground-zero for this species), both on April 20 [RB, JM, JHa]. The second one in L.A. County this year, a first-year **Glaucous Gull** was a reliable fixture at Malibu Lagoon from April 9 to May 6 [CT]. An extremely rare spring vagrant inland (rare but regular in September) was an adult **Sabine's Gull** at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds April 14 – 15 [TMc, MSM, TMi].

For terrestrial birds, **Eurasian Collared-Doves** seemingly have receded

slightly in abundance in the Antelope Valley as noted last year. However, coastal reports appear to be increasing with two or three at Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area on April 8 [RB] and one near the San Gabriel River on April 28 [LS]. An early **Black Swift** was reported over Evey Canyon on April 29 [LC, MC] and a more seasonal one (although infrequently seen in migration) was over Hazard Park on May 9 [Tmi]. **Calliope Hummingbirds** were more numerous than usual in the lowlands this spring with a female at Hansen Dam on March 19 [KGa] and up to six frequenting a feeder in Arcadia from March 25 to April 28 [MSM]. A late **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found at Rosedale Cemetery on March 31 [RB].

This was a very exciting time for rare flycatchers in L.A. County with great finds complementing the rarities that continued from the winter season. One of those great finds was a one-day-wonder **Greater Pewee** at Griffith Park on April 17 [RB]. Greater Pewee has wintered in the area in the past, and one can't help but wonder if that bird had been hanging out nearby for a few months previous to the sighting. A presumably wintering **Hammond's Flycatcher** was found in the Claremont Colleges complex on March 19 [CM]. The few continuing wintering **Gray Flycatchers** that peppered the L.A. Basin this winter were met with a small push of migrants in late April. It seems that a handful are reported every year from the San Gabriel Valley at this time, this year's were: April 20 at Eaton Canyon [TW, LA], April 21 one each at Peck Pit and Sycamore Canyon in Whittier [AL], and April 28 at Bonelli Park [AL]. A female **Vermilion Flycatcher** was at El Dorado Park on April 27 [KGi]. Possibly furnishing the third county record, a likely **Brown-crested Flycatcher** was found in Placerita Canyon on May 13 [RB]. A vocalization was the only missed field mark, but visibly the bird fit the necessary field marks. A **Tropical Kingbird** continued at El Dorado Park from March 15 until April 27 [RB, KGi]. The **Thick-billed Kingbird** at Banning Park, one of the highlights from the winter was

reported last on April 28 [KL]. We're all hoping that it returns next year.

The **Bell's Vireo** that wintered at DeForest Park (last year, too) remained at least until March 17 when it was last reported [KL]. More unusual still is **Bell's Vireo** in migration – one was found at West L.A. College on April 12 [RB]. A wintering **Plumbeous Vireo** continued at Hansen Dam until the late date of April 28 [KGa]. Migrant **Purple Martins** (presumably the only capacity in which these birds still occur in L.A. County) were reported from the Piute

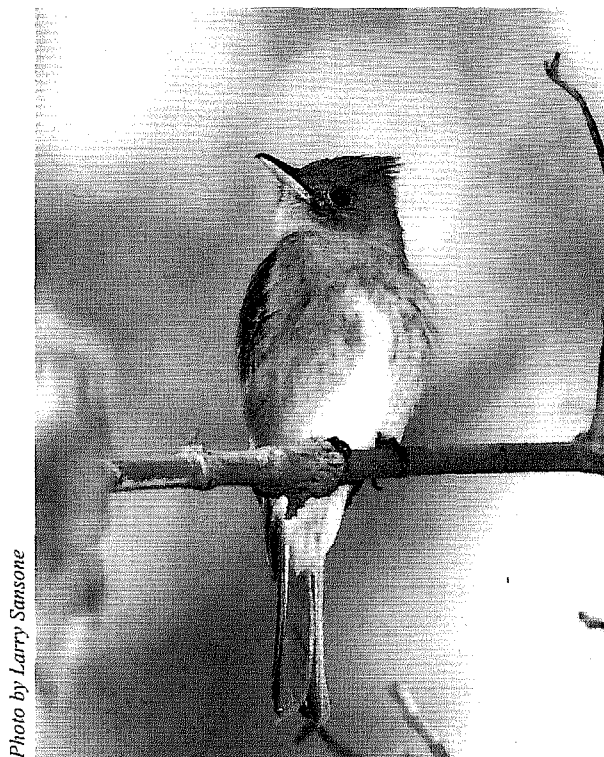


Photo by Larry Sansone

Greater Pewee  
Griffith Park, April 17, 2006

Ponds on April 7 [MSc, JSc], Soledad Canyon on April 10 (two birds) [MSM], the lower San Gabriel River on April 27 [KGi, JBo], and Hazard Park on May 9 [Tmi]. Although usually fairly common as migrants in the Antelope Valley, **Bank Swallows** are tough to find here in the L.A. Basin, making the three found this spring notable – one at DeForest Park on March 17 [KL], and two over Castaic Lake on April 11 [MSM]. The **Winter Wren** that wintered at DeForest Park was last seen on March 17 [KL].

In many "Birds of the Season" columns an actual *Bird of the Season* isn't explicitly declared, either because nothing in particular stands out at the

pinnacle of unexpected weirdness or because of the author's forgetfulness. This season, the author remembered, and a bird was reported that transcended weird into the realm of otherworldly bizarrit. That would be, of course, the **Wrentit** that was observed in the Baldwin Hills of Los Angeles from March 18 to April 2 [WL]. Simply imagining this ultra-sedentary, stumpy-winged denizen of foothill chaparral in flight over the Santa Monica Freeway makes many birders erupt in maniacal laughter or collapse in lobotomized stupor. We thank Walter Lamb for reporting this bird rather than having himself committed.

**Palm Warblers** were reported from DeForest Park on March 17 [KL] and two birds continued from the winter season at Madrona Marsh, last seen on April 28 [DM]. The **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at Polliwog Park until March 17 [DS] and our other regular eastern warbler, **American Redstart**, was represented by the continuing bird at El Dorado Park reported until April 27 [KGi]. After last winter's veritable attack of **Painted Redstarts** birders kept track of these showy vagrants until their departure in late March. The one at Bonelli Park was last reported on March 21 [RH] and the Elysian Park bird was last reported on March 25 [RB]. At this same time, though, new Painted Redstarts appeared. One was at a residence in Altadena March 13 – 16 [PS] and another was in Eaton Canyon on March 20 [SW, MC]. It will be interesting to see if any show up in the San Gabriels during the


breeding season this summer. The **Clay-colored Sparrow** that wintered at Madrona Marsh was last reported (singing) on April 28 [DM]. Two more were found at Sepulveda Basin the same day [JBr]. A singing **Brewer's Sparrow** was on the Palos Verdes Peninsula on April 29 [KL]. Six Brewer's Sparrows were singing and territorial in Grasshopper Canyon in the upper San Fernando Valley on April 30 [MSM, JFe]. They did historically nest in such scrubby areas of L.A. County so the incident would not be unprecedented. A very rare and local breeding bird in the county, a migrant **Grasshopper Sparrow** is nearly off the chart, but one was nevertheless

found in Eaton Canyon on April 20 [TW, LA]. A **Swamp Sparrow**, perhaps left over from winter, was on the lower San Gabriel River on April 23 [JBo]. **White-throated Sparrows** wintered in several places and their numbers were bolstered slightly by spring migrants. One at Eaton Canyon was joined by a second briefly in late April [MSc, JSc, TW]. Two were present in Big Tujunga Canyon on March 27 [NF, MF]. The bird at the Village Green since January was last seen on April 18 [DS]. A migrant was in Westlake Village in far western L.A. County on April 17 [MSM]. A wintering bird at a Mt. Washington feeder was joined by another April 16 – 18 before both birds departed [JD].

We're now several months into the approximately ten month period of migration that occurs here in southern California. Spring actually lasts until the middle of June when the last of the north-bound migrants (Willow Flycatchers) are overlapping with the first of the south-

bound fall migrants (Wilson's Phalaropes). A visit to the Antelope Valley then could furnish both in one birding trip. However, with gas at \$3.50 a gallon we may see a surge of great bird reports from obscure local parks at the expense of reports from the deserts, but perhaps our trustworthy politicians and consumer-minded oil companies will have it all worked out by then. Good luck out there.

On a side note, this will be my last *Birds of the Season* column (at least for a while). The job that I moved here from New Jersey to do is now complete and although I plan to eventually return to L.A. to find a job, I'll be on the road for a while and am going to miss some of the most exciting birding this place has to offer (like August shorebirds). Thanks to all of you who helped me learn the area and reported your birds. And try not to find anything too good while I'm gone.

Cheers, Jon Feenstra. 

## Observers:

[AK]	Alex Kirschel
[AL]	Andrew Lee
[BW]	Bobby Walsh
[CT]	Chris Tosdevin
[DB]	David Bell
[DM]	Dave Moody
[DN]	Dick Norton
[DS]	Don Sterba
[FO]	Francis Oliver
[JaF]	Jason Finley
[JBo]	Jeff Boyd
[JBr]	Jean Brandt
[JD]	Julian Donahue
[JFe]	Jon Feenstra
[JHa]	Jim Hardesty
[JHo]	Judy Howell
[JM]	Jim Moore
[JSc]	Janet Scheel
[KGa]	Kimball Garrett
[KGi]	Karen Gilbert
[KL]	Kevin Larson
[LA]	Liga Auzin
[LC]	Lori Conrad
[LG]	Lucio Gomes
[LS]	Larry Schmahl
[MC]	Mark Conrad
[MC]	Megan Cahill
[MF]	Mary Freeman
[MSc]	Mark Scheel
[MSM]	Mike San Miguel
[NF]	Nick Freeman
[PH]	Pat Heirs
[PS]	Phil Skonieczki
[RB]	Richard Barth
[RH]	Rod Higbie
[SW]	Steve Wack
[TMc]	Todd McGrath
[TMi]	Tom Miko
[TW]	Tom Wurster
[WL]	Walter Lamb

## Farewell.

*After more than a decade as Editor and Assistant Editor, we are retiring from the positions we have very much enjoyed. We want to thank our good friends and acquaintances (too numerous to list here) who have so graciously provided such wonderful articles, photographs, and other assistance; they have made this endeavor easy and pleasurable.*

*We have been proud of our contribution to Los Angeles Audubon Society for these many years but think it's time for a change. We are confident your board will pass the torch to a new editorial staff who will produce a high quality Western Tanager with renewed energy and vision.*

*We wish you all good birding and hope to see you in the field soon.*

*Jean and Tom*





## WESTERN TANAGER

Published by  
Los Angeles Audubon Society,  
a chapter of  
National Audubon Society.

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ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:  
Kimball Garrett  
PRINTING: G2 Graphics Services, Inc.

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position of this publication or of LAAS.

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

**Saturday, September 9 –  
Deep water trip toward Cherry, Tanner,  
and Cortez Banks.**

This trip departs from Sea Landing in the Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:00 AM on the Condor Express and returns approximately at 8:00 PM. This is the **Red-billed Tropicbird** trip. We will be offshore in three counties, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles. Birds expected: Black, Least, Ashy, and Leach's storm-petrels, South Polar Skua, Parasitic, Pomarine, and Long-tailed jaegers, Sabine's Gull, and Arctic Tern. Rarities: Black-footed Albatross, Buller's Shearwater, Craveri's Murrelet. Blue, Fin, and Minke whales as well as several species of dolphin can be seen.

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

\$198 – There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

**Saturday, October 14 –  
Northern Channel Islands Monument.**

This 9 hour trip departs from the Island Packer's dock in the Ventura Harbor at 8:00 AM on the fast catamaran Islander. After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island, we will have the boat to ourselves and cruise around Santa Cruz Island to the Santa Cruz Passage by Santa Rosa

Island and along the Santa Rosa Flats to the deeper water near San Nicolas Island. Then we will 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), Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers, Sabine's Gull, rocky shorebirds (up to 5), Common Murre, Craveri's and Xantus's murrelets, and Cassin's Auklet. Rarities: Buller's and Flesh-footed shearwaters, South Polar Skua, and Long-tailed Jaeger. Blue, Fin, and Humpback whales have been seen on this trip. In 2002 a Streaked Shearwater was seen and in 2003 a Brown Booby and two Manx Shearwaters were seen. Leaders: **Todd McGrath and David Pereksta.**

\$110 – There is a snack type galley with beverages.

### 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.*

**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 \$5 to \$10 energy surcharge per person.

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Annual membership in both societies is \$35 per year and \$20 for new members for their first year. Members receive the *Western Tanager* newsletter and *Audubon* magazine, a national publication. LAAS Chapter memberships do not include *Audubon* magazine and are \$25, \$35, \$50, \$100, and \$250. Donations and memberships can be made online at [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org)

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

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# 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.*

**July 1 through 4 –**

**Quaking Aspen Camping Trip for Owls.**

Leaders: **Mary and Nick Freeman.**

Campground is between Springville and Ponderosa in the southwest Sierras. A group campsite is reserved. Owling by night, bird walks by day! Meet Saturday 8 AM or noon. Meal logistics and other details in flyer. Send SASE, phone, e-mail and \$45 to reserve. 10 sign-ups max., no children or pets, please. Call LAAS; trip may be full.

**Sunday, July 2 –**

**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.

**Saturday, July 22 –**

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

View colorful resident and migrating birds, possibly 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.

**Sunday, July 23 –**

**Big Bear Lake Vicinity.** Leaders: **Nick and Mary Freeman.** Meet in the Aspen Glen Picnic Area parking lot in Big Bear at 7:30 AM. Take Hwy 18 or 38 to Big Bear Lake, then proceed about half way along the south side of the lake on Hwy 18 and turn south on Tulip Lane. The lot will be on the south side of this short street. Target birds include

Williamson's Sapsucker, Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds, Hermit Warbler, and White-headed Woodpecker. We may go to Arrastre Creek later. It will be warm and there may be bugs, so come prepared. Bring lunch for a full day, and a **Forest Service Adventure Pass.**

**Saturday, August 5 –**

**Mount Abel area.** Leader: **Jean Brandt.**

We are going to start the morning with a "seep sit". Bring a chair, snax, thermos of hot drinks and be prepared for possible cold. Take Hwy 5 N past Tejon Pass to the Frazier Park offramp, turn left, and follow Frazier Mountain Park Rd. bearing right onto Cuddy Valley Rd. Meet at the obvious Y-shaped dirt clearing formed by the junction of Cuddy Valley Rd. and Mil Potrero Hwy. Depart from the "Y" at 7:30 AM. After we have exhausted the birds and mammals (a gray fox was seen here in 2004) that come to the seep, we will bird our way up to Mount Abel. Picnic lunch somewhere around Mt. Abel. Rain cancels. Anticipate the elements, and bring a **Forest Service Adventure Pass.**

**Sunday, August 6 –**

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

**Saturday, August 12 –**

**Shorebird Workshop** (lecture). Our speaker will be the amiable yet authoritative **Jon Dunn**, who leads field trips to far-flung locations including Alaska, Thailand, and California; presently sits on the California Bird Records Committee; is the primary consultant for the *National Geographic Society's Field Guide to the Birds of North America*; and has co-written two top-notch books on bird ID and distribution with our own Kimball Garrett. As such, he is extraordinarily qualified to speak on aspects of shorebirds and many other North American bird families. Jon will cover species routinely encountered in California, as well as west coast rarities; emphasizing aging, distribution and timing of occurrence by species and age, as well as how to approach

shorebird identification. Binoculars are always a good idea for slide programs. Cookies and coffee. Meet at Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Pasadena, from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. Limit: 80 signups. Send \$25 and a SASE with phone number to Audubon House to reserve, and for directions. See listing for Jon's shorebird field trip below.

**Sunday, August 13 –**

**Shorebird Workshop** (field trip). **Jon Dunn** will provide direction on shorebird identification in the field, applying information from the lecture. Some collateral identification of other families may also occur. Limited to prepaid lecture participants. Send a separate check for \$20 (\$45 total) in your SASE to LAAS to sign-up. The field trip location will be semi-spontaneous depending upon reports and conditions; directions will be handed out at the lecture. The site where we can view shorebirds (hopefully up close) will be 75 minutes or closer from L.A., and may involve a fair amount of walking. Finish up around 1:00 PM. Limit: 17. Bring 'scopes if you can, sun block, a snack, and your favorite field guide.

**Sunday, August 20 –**

**Sweltering Salton Sea.** **Nick Freeman** is too nice to dump this trip on another leader. Anticipate 95-115°F, sewer stench and dust-a-plenty. Don't show up without lots of water (1 gallon each), good health, and a reliable car with AC. This is the gauntlet of SoCal car birding. So why come? We should see Yellow-footed and Laughing gulls, Wood Stork, Black Tern, Lesser Nighthawk, Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker, and possible Least Bittern, Fulvous Whistling-Duck and Stilt Sandpiper. Perhaps most exciting is the slim but real possibility for real rarities such as Brown and Blue-footed boobies, Magnificent Frigatebird and even stranger stuff that has popped up in August. Limit 8 paid cars with two or more each. Singles will be wait-listed until they can carpool. Send \$10 per person with a SASE per vehicle to Audubon

House to reserve, and for the mailer with general, lodging, and meeting details. Camping is risky; it may not drop to 90°F. Meet near Brawley at 5:30 AM. and bird until noon or so. 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful.

**Sunday, August 20 –**

**Ballona Wetlands.** Bob Shanman will be leading this trip to our nearest wetland and adjacent rocky jetty. Shorebirds should be moving in. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90 W) to Culver Blvd. and turn left for a mile, turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three-hour walk. 'Scopes helpful. Meet at 8:00 AM.

**Saturday, August 26 –**

**Whittier Narrows.** Leader: **Ray Jillson.** Meet at 8:15 AM. See July 22 listing for details.

**Sunday, August 27 –**

**L.A. River Shorebird Migration.** Larry Allen will help us identify and age the small sandpipers of the genus *Calidris*. A great opportunity to get more practice after Jon Dunn's Shorebird Workshop, and those who could not attend the workshop fieldtrip. This is prime time for Baird's and Semipalmated sandpipers, although identifying the latter from the concrete river bank is a challenge. Take the 710 Fwy S to the Willow Street offramp, head E over the L.A. River, and take the first left on Golden Ave, the first left on 26th, and follow this around onto DeForest Ave. Park near the river access by the bridge, meet along the river at 7:30 AM. and bird until noon. No fee, no sign-up. Spotting 'scopes very helpful, although we will share.

**Sunday, September 10 –**

**Upper Franklin Canyon Birdwalk.** Docent **Steve Botts** will be escorting us around this local bird haven, with Wood Ducks, migrating songbirds, and resident chaparral species expected. Franklin Canyon is located between Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills. Meet in the parking lot at 8:00 AM, and bird for a few

hours. From the 101 Fwy, take Coldwater Cyn. Ave. S into the hills. Immediately after Mulholland Dr. merges from the W with Coldwater Canyon Ave., make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Dr. and continue west to the Sooky Goldberg Nature Center. The lot is through a gated drive on the left.

**Saturday, September 16 –**

**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, September 17 –**

**Galileo Hills.** Leader: **Nick Freeman.** One of the best migrant traps in the state. Reptiles may be encountered! 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 past the golf course on Randsburg-Mojave Rd., and follow the signs to the Silver Saddle Country Club. Park in lot by the first pond. About 2 hrs driving time from L.A. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory; no drop-ins! 12 max. Bring lunch, sun block. Meet at 7:00 AM, finish up 4-ish. Motel 6 in Mojave is convenient.

**Saturday, September 23 –**

**Piute Ponds and Lancaster environs.** Local leader **Alan Brown.** A good mix of shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds, with a chance for LeConte's Thrasher and Pectoral Sandpiper. Meeting place is the Wayside Café at 2835 Sierra Hwy in Rosamond. We want to LEAVE the café around 8:00 AM, and finish up 3:00 PM or so. Bring lunch, water, and sun block. To reserve with LAAS, call Audubon House by September 19 with name, phone number, and e-mail address (optional). Limited sign-up of 15. No drop-ins. High clearance vehicles may be a plus. No cameras on base!

**R**ecords 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,*

*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

**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  
P.O. Box 931057  
Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057

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

# **EVENING MEETINGS**

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

**NO MEETINGS IN SUMMER**

**WATCH FOR UPCOMING EVENTS**

Tuesday, September 12

Kimball Garrett

*Birding On \$4.00 A Gallon*

Tuesday, October 10

Graham Chisholm of California Audubon

*Conserving the Sierra Nevada's Kern River: Cuckoos, Cottonwoods, and Ranchers*

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## **LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS**

We are pleased to announce that in 2007 we plan some very exciting birding and wildlife tours -

THAILAND in January

MOROCCO in April

KENYA in October

Watch for upcoming details and check out our web page at [laaudubon.org](http://laaudubon.org).

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](mailto:oclarketravel@earthlink.net)

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Los Angeles Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 931057  
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