

WESTERN TANAGER



Volume ~~72~~ Number ~~7~~ September/October 2006

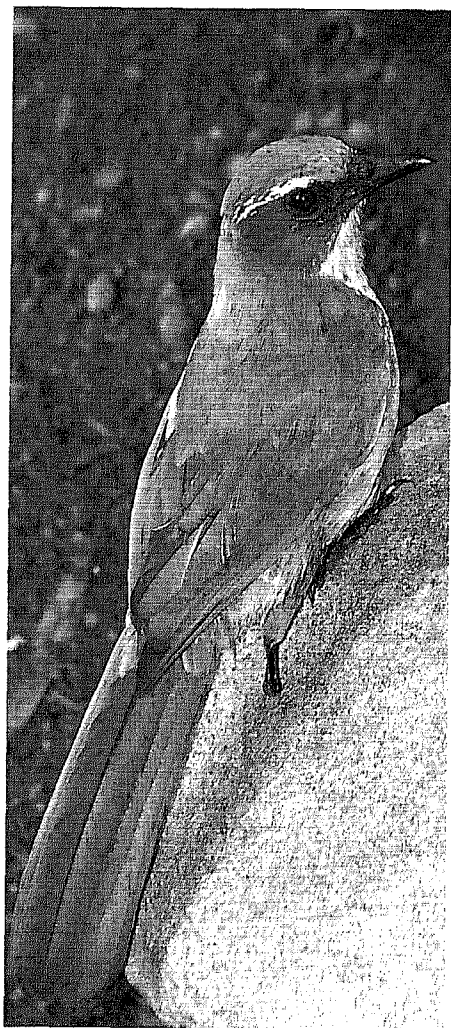
Los Angeles Audubon Society

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Hail to the Birds of Westwood

by Jason R. Finley



Western Scrub Jay in UCLA Mildred E Mathias Botanical Garden

All photos by Jason R. Finley

Pigeons, sparrows, and crows. That's it, right? Oh, and those little black birds with the green eyes, and that noisy grey bird... and I think I saw a hawk once. There couldn't be many more than those; this is Los Angeles...

It was 2003 at UCLA. After graduating, I began work as a cognitive psychology researcher. Without classes to take, I had some time for a new project: Birds of Westwood. (www.birdsofwestwood.com)

It began from a mild curiosity in birds, and the idea to make a website. I could roam the campus and document the handful of bird species I saw to help other students learn about them too. It would be fun and interesting, but an easily completed task.

I had no clue how far off I was on that last point.

My initial list consisted of 13 birds altogether, some lacking proper names (e.g., the "Half-and-Half Bird"). But how could I find out what that bird was *really* called? And how could I tell what kind of hummingbirds those were hanging out by the red flowers? And where could I say were good places on campus to see birds? Where do birds go? What do they do? What are all the different types?

I think now that the *idea* of birds never fully occurred to me until I started asking myself these questions.

I began to learn new ways to pay attention, to listen, to look (and to photograph). I soon discovered an entire secret world, a new layer of perception, hidden in plain sight. I had actually been surrounded by many more birds than I'd ever imagined, pretty much the whole time; I had just never noticed them.

The UCLA campus turns out to be something of an oasis in the city's desert of grey.

There is, of course, UCLA's Mildred E Mathias Botanical Garden: a lush panoply of habitats where I first met the California Towhee and the Northern Mockingbird. And, as I stayed longer and improved my bird-stalking skills, I found the Town-send's Warbler high in a tree, the Bewick's Wren singing and hiding in the desert section, the Cooper's Hawk rushing through branches overhead, and a lone Hermit Thrush near the stream who seemed embarrassed at being seen. And during migrations, a ragtag convoy of migrants have passed through to surprise and challenge me further: Lincoln's Sparrow, Rufous Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Mac-Gillivray's Warbler, and others.

There is the little-known Stone Canyon Creek behind the Anderson School of Management, where I found a cleverly hidden Black Phoebe nest (the "Half-and-Half Bird," identified at last), an anxious flock of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a vocal pair of Song Sparrows, and a Warbling Vireo diving into the creek for a quick dip.

There is the grassy intramural field, where Killdeer are known to forage, along with the occasional Western Meadowlarks and Savannah Sparrows.

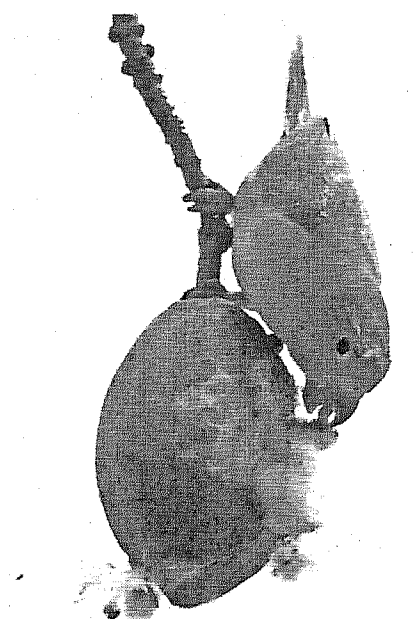
There is the Sunset Canyon Recreation Center, where Dark-eyed Juncos hop up hillsides and Spotted Towhees go berserk in the leaves.

There are the silk-floss trees, where small flocks of Yellow-Chevroned Parakeets chatter and eat.

There is the "Native Fragment," revealed to me by Bobby Walsh, a student leader with the Environmental Bruins and a fellow birder (as I found out we're called). This is a sizable chunk of undeveloped land tucked behind the dorms and consisting mostly of coastal sage scrub. Here you can find Western Scrub Jays swooping and calling, a Red-Shouldered Hawk perching in the pines, a Downy Woodpecker creeping up a tree, or even the strange and elusive Wrentit.

And almost everywhere on campus there are hummingbirds, Allen's and Anna's (and at times, Rufous or even Costa's). And Bushtits, Lesser Goldfinches, House Finches, Mourning Doves, Common Ravens. And of course: Pigeons, Sparrows, and Crows. (Oh my.)

Every new bird I have met—each with its own personality—has fueled my motivation to share knowledge of these feathered ambassadors of nature with the rest of the UCLA community.



YC Parakeet just outside the UCLA Mildred E Mathias Botanical Garden

The list on the website is now up to 60 birds, and counting.

This project has proven both more fascinating and more ambitious than I estimated some three years ago. It has also taken unexpected new directions as I myself have transformed from curious novice to citizen scientist and ecological activist. We now have observational records—collected with the help of many new friends from whom I have learned much—that wouldn't have existed otherwise, and can be compared to the historical data recorded by UCLA Professor Loye Miller from 1929 to

1947 (another wonderful discovery that I have worked into the website).

A campus bird count conducted by eight birders from UCLA and L.A. Audubon on February 12, 2006 tallied 36 species and 498 individual birds. Compare this to the results, reported by Miller, of one Miss Dorothy Groner's day-long observation, in the rain, on January 30, 1944: 43 species and 1,571 individual birds.

Human development of the campus and the surrounding area has taken its toll, with the disappearance of riparian birds like the California Thrasher, Bell's Vireo, Blue Grosbeak, and Belted Kingfisher when both of the two streams that flowed through campus were filled and channeled underground in the late 1930s and 1940s. Grassland birds, such as the Horned Lark and Loggerhead Shrike, have also been lost as our open spaces have diminished, although a few species still pass through to stop at the athletic fields (Longcore & Rich, 1998; B. Walsh, personal communication, July 16, 2006).

A good number of species can still be found on campus, though in apparently smaller numbers. For example, the Black-headed Grosbeak is a rare and fleeting sight today, despite Miller's statement about them: "I see no reason why they should not some day be a common nesting bird within our limits" (Miller, 1947).

Some things have stayed the same, like the abundance of House Finches (known



Sunset Canyon Recreation Center (including a native plant garden maintained by the Environmental Bruins)



Bewick's Wren in UCLA Mildred E Mathias Botanical Garden

to Miller as California Linnets), and Lesser Goldfinches. And there have been a handful of new additions since 1947 too: non-native species that have thrived in co-habitation with humans, like the House Sparrow, European Starling, and Yellow-Chevroned Parakeet.

Despite the loss of habitat, the campus has become perhaps even *more* of an oasis as the city has developed more around it. This means that those birds passing through, although fewer now, might be found in high concentration in places like the botanical garden (hence the Lincoln's, the MacGillivray's, etc.).

In addition to helping record and interpret data, I've used the website to facilitate ongoing efforts to restore the remnants of Stone Canyon Creek with native vegetation, initiated by Rafe Sagarin of the UCLA Institute of the Environment. Across two weeks in October, 2005—before work on the creek began—twenty-one volunteers observed 19 bird species at the creek. These data can be compared to future surveys, done by the Environmental Bruins and others on campus, to assess the impact of the restoration of native habitats on bird life. We hope to continue work on the creek, and elsewhere too (e.g., a new native plant garden at Sunset Canyon Recreation Center).

Throughout this surprising and fulfilling odyssey, I have not lost sight of my goal to assist and inspire those who, like I once did, know next to nothing about birds. So I've done my best to hold onto the wonder and even the naïveté of that initial beginner's outlook, the excitement of noticing, for the first time, a lively little bird with a bright yellow butt who I've come to know as the Yellow-rumped Warbler.

I hope this perspective will serve me well as I begin graduate study at the University of Illinois, where I look forward to new marvels (Cardinals! Blue Jays!). And rest assured, the Birds of Westwood aren't going anywhere, and neither is their website. 🐦



Coopers Hawk- just off campus, at Hilgard Ave. & Le Conte

Jason Finley is a member of Environmental Bruins at UCLA. Visit his website at <http://www.birdsofwestwood.com>

References:

Travis Longcore & Catherine Rich (1998). "419 Acres: UCLA's Natural History." Presented at California's Biodiversity Crisis: The Loss of Nature in an Urbanizing World, UCLA Institute of the Environment, October 24-25, 1998.

Loye Miller (1947). "Birds of the campus: University of California, Los Angeles." Los Angeles: University of California Press

In Their Own Words

Schreiber Grant 2006 Progress Reports

Recipient: Stephanie Craig, Cal State Fullerton

Research: Female Costa's Hummingbird



Stephanie Craig

Female Costa's Hummingbird Research: The focus of the study is the Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), a desert species primarily found in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. Little is known about Costa's hummingbirds aside from morphology and basic behavior. Along with characterizing behavior of this species, we are proposing a method of monitoring birds based on their vocalizations. Due to hummingbirds' small size and fragility, methods for monitoring birds would be most effective if they did not have to be captured or handled. Vocal communication in male songbirds has been extensively studied, however little is known about vocalizations in non-songbirds (such as hummingbirds) or in female birds. Costa's vocal-

izations have been characterized as calls rather than songs due to their relative simplicity. However, some songbirds have "simple" songs (e.g. the black-capped chickadee) and it is possible that Costa's vocalizations are songs. We hope to be able to characterize the structure of female calls, focusing on the variation between individuals. The primary objective of this project is to characterize the behavior of female Costa's hummingbirds during breeding and nesting season. In addition, we will collect and analyze female vocalizations in an attempt to detect individual variations. **-Stephanie Craig**



Recipient: Loren Merrill, UC Santa Barbara

Research: Brown-headed Cowbirds and Brewer's Blackbirds



Loren Merrill

This summer I am examining the relationship between hormones, song (in males), aggression, and immune response in Brown-headed Cowbirds and Brewer's Blackbirds as the first part of a multi-species comparison involving both males and females. I am working at the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Lab (SNARL) outside Mammoth Lakes, CA. I have been capturing male and female cowbirds and male and female blackbirds during the breeding season and

recording the males' songs using a handheld microphone connected to a digital recorder or computer. I have also been recording the visual displays the males use while singing to see if

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

LA Audubon Society and Bookstore will host an open house at Audubon House in Plummer Park on Sunday, December 3, from 2 pm to 4 pm. Come by for free refreshments, live raptors and owls from South Bay Rehab, and shop for Christmas presents at the Bookstore.

CHECKLIST OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY FREE TO NEW MEMBERS

Available online www.laaudubon.org, click Birdwatching in LA in 8.5 x 14 (legal) side 1 and side 2, or by sending SASE to LA Audubon (members only). Printed checklists are on sale in the Bookstore.

Thanks to Kimball Garrett and Mike San Miguel for updating the checklist.

TEACHERS NEEDED

Do you enjoy teaching adults? Would you like to teach BIRDING 101 in communities around Los Angeles? If so, please contact us at laas@laaudubon.org.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

SEARCH FOR NEW EDITOR

LA Audubon is searching for a new editor of WESTERN TANAGER. Please contact Audubon House or laas@laaudubon.org if you are interested.

BALDWIN HILLS GARDEN

Monthly volunteer events are held on the third Saturday of the month at the Native Plant & Wildlife Garden at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area in Baldwin Hills Park from 10 am to 2 pm. To sign up email volunteercoordinator@hotmail.com

BOOKSTORE

The busy Christmas season means volunteers are needed. Contact Martha 323-876-0202.

NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

Open: Monday through Thursday 9:30 AM - 4:00 PM or by appointment.

The Bookstore will be closed Tuesday October 31, 2006

Closed: Saturdays

NEW TITLES



Voices of North American Owls

\$29.95

Audio CD by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 200 recordings of North America's 19 regularly occurring species plus two rarities. Includes a booklet containing detailed text and color photographs.



Hooked on Galapagos Birds

\$22.95

Video DVD by the same author "Hooked on Hummingbirds", Tom Kaminski. Video shows the daily lives of Galapagos Birds, heedless of the presence of human beings.



Arctic Wings: Birds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

\$27.95

Book plus Audio CD. Great book for a gift. Through 200 color photographs the reader experiences the drama of birth and renewal of this special place.
Editor Stephen Brown, 2006

SPECIAL OFFER



National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America

\$24.00

Fifth Edition. Covers 960 species including a new section on accidental birds.

Editors Jon Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer

Due Nov. 2006

ALL ORDERS PLACED BEFORE NOVEMBER 2, 2006 WILL RECEIVE THE PREPUB PRICE OF \$ 18.99. CALL 888-522-7428 TO RESERVE YOUR COPY.

song complexity is matched by a component of visual complexity. The songs are analyzed using acoustic software (Syrinx) that was developed to study avian songs. The number of different songs a male sings, the rate of change between songs, and total number of singing bouts are indicators of male quality that females can use to gauge overall condition because they may convey important information about the quality of the male's immune system.

To determine immune response in the birds I have been injecting an antigen (PHA) under the skin in the wing web of the birds and measuring the degree of swelling after 48 hours. I have also been drawing blood from the birds within 3 minutes of capture and at the time of wing-web measurement. These samples are then spun down in a centrifuge and the plasma or serum drawn off into a plastic microcentrifuge caps and frozen at -20. The plasma will be used to look at a suite of hormones including testosterone, corticosterone, and estrogen, and the serum will be used for immunoassays.

I have also been making blood smears from each bird at time of capture and at time of release to examine the white blood cell counts as another measure of the immune system. Data from this study will shed light on the complicated and poorly understood connection between sexual signaling and immune function.

-Loren Merrill

Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology
University of California, Santa Barbara

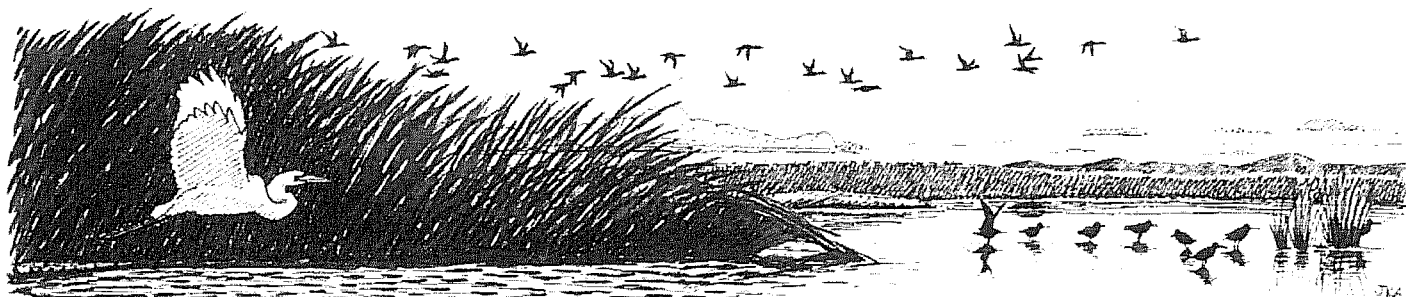
Schreiber grants are awarded yearly in May to college students for research on birds. The grants are in memory of Dr. Ralph Schreiber. Application deadline is December 1, 2006 for 2007 grants.

By mail: Grant Committee,
Los Angeles Audubon,
PO Box 931057
LA, CA 90093

To support the Ralph Schreiber grant fund donate online at www.laaudubon.org or by mail to:
LA Audubon
PO Box 931057
Los Angeles, CA 90093

LA Audubon thanks Grant Committee Chairman
Walt Sakai.

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CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Garry George

TERNGATE

The story broke in late June that Elegant and Caspian terns were breeding on two barges anchored in the Port of Long Beach, and tourist cruises of the harbor included a look at the terns on their itinerary. On June 30, 300 dead terns were found washed up on shore, and on July 1 an additional 100 terns washed up on shore. 23 terns, mostly young, were rescued and taken to International Bird Rescue Research Center in San Pedro. California Fish & Game is investigating the crime against these birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 as well as state and local laws protecting nesting birds and animal cruelty laws. It is possible that the owner of the barges removed the terns by using a hose spray attachment. Problem is, the young terns can't fly. Meanwhile, Kimball Garrett and Kathy Molina wrote an editorial which appeared in July 12 LA TIMES entitled "Seabird Slaughter in a Safe Harbor." In response to the tragedy, LA Audubon has formed the Urban Wildlife Task Force in partnership with other Audubon chapters in Southern California and other non-profit wildlife groups to make sure that the investigation is completed, the perpetrator or perpetrators are fully prosecuted under the law, and to insure that the terns have safe breeding and nesting habitat next year since their historic habitat has been lost to development, especially the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. We'll also take on other issues like tree trimming during nesting season, coastal heron roosts, and any other urban wildlife issues that need our attention and advocacy including Snowy Plovers and Least Terns. Complete information on Terngate and the Urban Wildlife Task Force including news coverage, photos and updates are on

www.laaudubon.org under MAIN MENU, Urban Wildlife Task Force.

PROP 84


The November ballot contains an important bond issue. The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 is a citizens initiative containing \$5.4 billion for water and natural resources protection (PROP 84). The initiative was enacted by a Committee formed by Audubon California, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, California State Parks Foundation, and others. Specifically earmarked in the Bond is funding of \$72 million for Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers, \$215 million for LA Integrated Regional Water Management, and \$45 million for Santa Monica Bay Watersheds (Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Baldwin Hills Conservancy, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy), \$90 million for urban greening (school yards and local parks) \$90 million for storm water cleanup, \$90 million for urban infill incentives, \$400 million for local parks, \$400 million for state parks, \$135 million to the State Coastal Conservancy, \$90 million for Natural Community Conservation Plans, and \$100 million dedicated to museums, aquariums and other nature education centers. LA Audubon recommends that members support this Bond by voting for PROP84 on the November ballot and telling their friends to do so as well.

CEC GUIDELINES ON WIND

LA Audubon has participated in two rounds of workshops in Sacramento as the California Energy Commission creates statewide guidelines for wind farms.

Our focus is migratory songbirds, and surprisingly we are the only ones advocating for migratory songbirds. We've presented evidence that the only nocturnal assessment of migratory songbirds on

a wind project site was a study in the San Geronio Pass near Palm Springs using radar conducted in 1981, 25 years ago. That study makes some startling conclusions including an estimate of 75 million birds per year using the San Geronio pass with 12.9% of them flying under 120m in altitude, that migratory songbirds are the most vulnerable 2-3 hours after sunset, that birds gain altitude slowly after taking off so that even if they are not seen on a site in the afternoon they can fly through the site after dark. The study makes recommendations such as not building wind turbines over 100m tall and not installing them on ridges.

As the only scientific study in the state of California assessing nocturnal migration, we think it is the prevailing science and is unchallenged until new studies reveal new evidence. Those new studies must include nocturnal surveys, and we think that any wind energy company that wants to build a project on a migratory pathway in California (arguably all of California is a migratory pathway) should be required to conduct nocturnal surveys to assess the risk to migratory songbirds, and take measures to mitigate against that risk like seasonal shutdowns or turbine removal. 

Support LA Audubon's conservation endowment or the Sandy Wohlgenuth Conservation Fund by donating by mail or telephone (323-876-0202) or online at www.laaudubon.org

PROGRAMS & EVENING MEETINGS

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Kimball Garrett presents:

Birding on \$4.00 a Gallon

Whether gas is \$2 a gallon or \$5, long birding road trips in four-wheel-drive "Birding Assault Vehicles" are hardly defensible environmentally or economically these days. The allure of traveling to distant birding sites will always remain, but this talk emphasizes the benefits of birding on the county level, and especially of local "patch" birding around Los Angeles. We'll discuss how to keep good records about the birds of your "patch", and how such data can reveal fascinating things about our local birds.

Kimball Garrett is a longtime local birder and has the advantage of being able to see 5,000 bird species within 100 feet of his desk at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.



Kimball Garrett

Photo by Mary Freeman



Photo by Murrelet Halterman

Tuesday, October 10, 2006

Graham Chisholm, Conservation Director of Audubon California presents:

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

It has been over twenty-five years since Audubon and The Nature Conservancy started working to conserve a fifteen mile segment of high quality cottonwood-willow riparian habitat on the South Fork Kern River just upstream of Lake Isabella in Kern County. This area was targeted for conservation because it is a stronghold for Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and numerous other riparian bird species.

Graham will discuss: long-term conservation applying a range of strategies, and funding long-term monitoring to protect this area located in the southern Sierra Nevadas.

LA Audubon members meet and share enjoyment of birds and nature, talk about recent and future field trips, discuss LA Audubon conservation programs, and hear interesting speakers. Social hour with free refreshments follows at the Bookstore.

Non-members and first timers are welcome.

Meet at 7:30 pm at Plummer Park
7377 Santa Monica Blvd at Martel between
La Brea and Fairfax
323-876-0202

FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

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

Sunday, September 3 Topanga State Park.

Ken Wheeland & 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, 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 8:00AM, 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 Cyn. Ave., make a 90-degree right turn onto Franklin Cyn. 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 walk 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 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 4ish. Motel 6 in Mojave is convenient.

Sunday, September 17 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, September 23 Piute Ponds and Lancaster environs.

Local leader **Alan Brown**. A good mix of shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds, with a chance at 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 sunblock. 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!

Saturday, September 23 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. Meet at 8:15 AM.

Saturday, September 30 Malibu to McGrath.

Leader **Dexter Kelly**. Late passerines and shorebirds should be moving through coastal migration spots, mixed with early wintering birds. Possibly 100 species. Take PCH N over the bridge in Malibu, and turn right on Cross Creek Road. Cross PCH, and meet at the kiosk by the lagoon at 7:30 AM for a full day of birding. There may be one or two access fees at McGrath State Beach, elsewhere. No sign-up or fee.

Sunday, October 1 Topanga State Park.

Leaders:
Ken Wheeland & Chris Tosdevin. Meet at 8:00 AM. See September 3 listing for details.

**October 6-10
American Birding Association
convention** in Ventura. If you've been itching to try a birding convention, here's one right next door! Check the ABA website for details at www.americanbirding.org.

Sunday, October 15 Ballona Wetlands.

Leader **Bob Shanman**. Meet at 8:00 AM. See September 17 listing for details.

**Saturday, October 21
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation
Area.** Leader: **Ann & Eric Brooks**. Meet at 8:00 AM. \$3 entry fee. See September 16 listing for details.

Sunday, October 22

Santa Barbara Area.

Local talent **Wes Fritz** leads.

Late migration, with a focus on eastern vagrants. Take the 101 Hwy N through Santa Barbara to the Los Cameros offramp, turn right (N), then right again just before the fire station into the free parking lot. Meet here at 8:00 AM. Possible \$2 state park fee elsewhere. 1.5 hour drive from LA. Bring a lunch, and bird 'till you drop! If motelling, Super 8 and Ramada in Goleta are reasonable. No limit. Sign-up with LAAS by phone, providing phone # and e-mail address.

Saturday, October 28

Oxnard Plains.

Leaders **Nick & Mary Freeman**.

Meet at the Hueneme sod fields at 8:00 AM to look over the American Pipits for the Red-throated variety, as well as longspurs. Golden-Plovers are also possible. There may be eastern vagrants to chase. Mugu estuary, Sycamore Canyon, and Saticoy settling ponds are also possibilities. From the 101 N, drive S on Las Posas Rd., then turn Rt. onto Hueneme Rd. Meet on the N side of Hueneme Rd. about 1 mile W of PCH, and just before Casper Rd. Scopes helpful. Bird 'till we drop. Local restaurant at dusk, anyone?

Saturday, October 28

Whittier Narrows.

Leader: **Ray Jillson**.

Meet at 8:15 AM. See September 23 listing for details.

Sunday, November 5

Newport Back Bay.

Leader: **Mary Freeman**.

Meet on the boardwalk along the NW bay at the "Sharp-tailed Sparrow Spot" accessible from the end of University. Drive (small street) at 8:00 AM for the 6.9' high tide, and a full day of birding in the area. High tide at the mouth is 8:04, but may not peak in the back bay until 9:00AM. Rails, Swamp Sparrow, California Gnatcatcher, and Bittern will be target birds. Eurasian Wigeon and Blue-

winged Teal expected. Take the 405 Fwy S to the 73 Toll Road (free this far) to the Campus Dr. exit, which becomes Bristol St. Turn right on Irvine Ave., drive 1.4 miles, then turn left on a small street called University Drive. Park at the end, walk down the hill, over the bridge, and to the end of the boardwalk. Bring lunch. 'Scopes helpful.

Sunday, November 5

Topanga State Park.

Leaders: **Ken Wheeland & Chris Tosdevin**.

Meet at 8:00 AM. See September 3 listing for details.

Sunday, November 19

Lake Perris area.

Leader: **Howard King**. The Little Gulls, Ruddy Ground Dove, and Least and Vermilion flycatchers of past years may not be back, but surely something will take their places! Take the 10 or 60 Fwy E to the 215 Fwy S, exit E onto Ramona Expressway, continue E just past Perris Blvd., and meet at the Farmer Boys Restaurant on the S side of the road. Leave from here at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch, warm clothing and footwear for possible mud. No fee for the trip, but possible entrance fee.

Saturday, December 16

Lancaster Christmas Count.

Contact compiler Nick Freeman at: (818) 247-6172 or mnfreeman@earthlink.net to be placed on a team or be given an area.

Sunday, December 17

Malibu Christmas Count.

Contact compiler Larry Allen at: (626)288-2701 or larry.w.allen@dslex-treme.com to participate.

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

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

Birds of the Season,

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. Millic 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.

Recipient: Bethany Denney

Research: Can Male Costa's Hummingbirds be Individually Identified through Vocalizations?



Bethany Denney

Through my research I aim to determine if the vocalizations of individual male Costa's Hummingbirds vary enough to allow differentiation between individuals. Multiple songs will be recorded from multiple Costa's males in Anza Borrego Desert State Park, and song features will be measured using song spectrographs. Characterization of the structure and elucidation of the function of Costa's Hummingbird song, which is structurally very different from the song of its sister species, the Anna's Hummingbird, will lend insight into the evolution of hummingbird song. Vocal identification may also prove to be a non-intrusive method for conducting population and breeding studies on this species, which is listed on the Audubon Watch list because of the threatened state of its preferred desert scrub habitat.

-Bethany Denney

Recipient: Jim Rivers

Research: Assessing Nestling Behavioral Adaptations in a Recently Evolved, Generalist Brood Parasite



Jim Rivers

Because obligate brood parasites depend on other species to raise their young, natural selection should favor adaptations that facilitate brood parasitism. Morphological adaptations of nestlings are found in many brood parasites that have a long coevolutionary history with their hosts, yet cowbirds (*Molothrus* spp.) lack any such adaptations because they have evolved brood parasitism only recently. Although cowbirds are known to beg more intensively than host nestlings, it is unclear whether their begging is a behavioral adaptation for brood parasitism or whether it is simply due to common ancestry. I am conducting three experiments to assess the extent and consequences of begging in nestling Brown-headed Cowbirds

(*Molothrus ater*). Cowbird nestlings and those of a closely related, non-parasitic species, the Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), will be raised in an identical nest environment. The first experiment will assay begging intensity of both species under standardized laboratory conditions, and a second experiment will assess how begging intensity influences host provisioning behavior in a natural setting. The final experiment will quantify how nestling condition is influenced by begging intensity and parental provisioning. In addition to providing a comprehensive view of cowbird nestling adaptations, this research should also provide insights into the early stages of brood parasitism in lineages of more highly evolved brood parasites.

-Jim Rivers



Cowbird Pair



Marion Pickett
1926-2006

Marion Pickett, passed away on July 6, 2006, at the age of 82. She was a long time volunteer for the Los Angeles Audubon Society Bookstore, since the days of the old Audubon House in Plummer Park of over 30 years. She was our first volunteer in the handling of the Bookstore customer's mail order requests. In more recent times, Marion volunteered every Saturday helping to keep Audubon House open when volunteers became more and more difficult to find. She and Pic, her husband, joined our LAAS Birding Tour to Costa Rica some years ago, which they thoroughly enjoyed, and spoke of frequently.

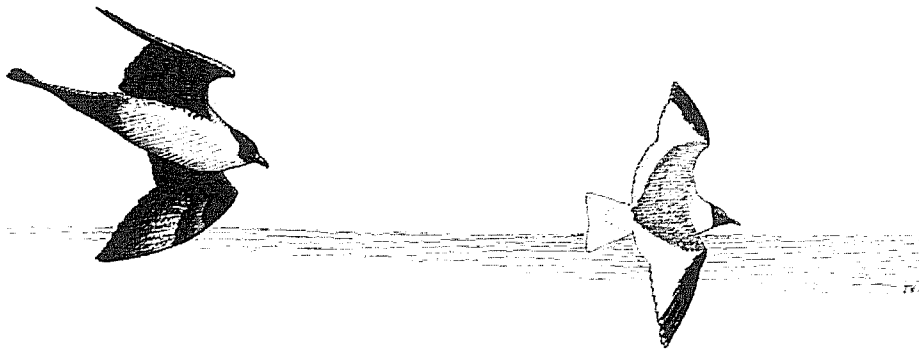
We wish her Godspeed, from the old life into the new.

-Olga Clarke

PLANNED GIVING

Los Angeles Audubon Society is able to accommodate all forms of planned giving including wills and trusts, annuities, and property donations. If you are thinking of leaving a legacy of local conservation of birds and their habitat, you might be able to reap the benefits now of planning for later.

Contact garrygeorge@laaudubon.org with any questions regarding planned giving to LA Audubon.



PELAGIC TRIPS

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 9

A Deep Water Trip Toward Cherry, Tanner, and Cortez Banks.

This trip departs from Sea Landing in the **Santa Barbara Harbor** at 7 a.m. on the Condor Express and returns approximately at 8 p.m. This is the **Red-billed Tropicbird** trip. We will be offshore in 3 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 and Craveri's Murrelet. Blue, Fin and Minke whales as well as several species of dolphins may be seen.

\$198 - or you can save \$5 with an early sign-up 60 days prior to departure.

Leaders:

Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, Jon Feenstra, and David Pereksta.

There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

SATURDAY OCT 14

Northern Channel Islands Monument.

This 9 hour trip around Anacapa, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands departs from the Island Packer's dock in the **Ventura Harbor** at 8 a.m. on the fast catamaran the Islander. After dropping off campers on Santa Cruz Island, we will have the boat to ourselves. We will take the Anacapa Passage to Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands, cruise along the Santa Rosa Flats to the deep Santa Cruz Basin then 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; 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 Streaked Shearwater was seen and in 2003 Brown Booby and Manx Shearwater.

\$110 - or you can save \$5 with an early

signup 60 days prior to departure.

Leaders:

Todd McGrath and David Pereksta.

Snack type galley.

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

PELAGIC RESERVATION 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:

Los Angeles Audubon Society - Reservations
PO Box 931057
Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled four weeks prior to the scheduled date. 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.

REFUND POLICY FOR PELAGIC TRIPS

If a participant cancels 31 days or more prior to departure, a \$5 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.

Millie Newton is available at Audubon House 323-876-0202 on Wednesdays from noon to 4:00 PM to answer questions about field trips. Our office staff is also available Tuesday through Saturday for most reservation services.

WESTERN Tanager

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

EDITOR:

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(IndustriousBird.com)

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PELAGIC TRIPS:

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PROGRAMS:

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ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT:

Kimball Garrett

PRINTING:

G2 Graphics Services, Inc.

Opinions expressed in articles or letters herein do not necessarily express the position of this publication or of LAAS.

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LAAS INTERNATIONAL TOURS

THAILAND BIRDING ADVENTURE

January 11-28, 2007

Our tour takes us from Bangkok to Kaeng Krachan National Park in the east, Khao Yai National Park in the west, and Chiang Mai in the north, all hosting unusual and diverse oriental avifauna. Several species of the massive hornbills, colorful malkohas, trogons, barbets, broadbills, minivets, leafbirds, laughingthrushes, sunbirds, and numerous others are likely to be seen. This is an ideal introduction to Southeast Asia's biological riches.

Thai Peninsula Extension (7 days)

Immediately following the main program, with a short flight to Phuket, we'll visit some of the unique birding areas straddling the mountain ridges separating the Thai Peninsula's east and west coast, where we expect to see unusual species, such as the rare Gurney's Pitta, Hooded, Banded and Giant Pittas, Green Broadbill, spiderhunters, and several other Hornbills. In the nearby coastal mangroves, Mangrove Pitta and Ruddy Kingfisher are possibilities, while the mudflats should produce many migrant waders and shorebirds. Space is limited.

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

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

(continued from page 4)

BIRDS OF THE SEASON is on hiatus for the summer but will return in the next issue with compilers including Todd McGrath and Jon Fisher on a rotating basis.

LA COUNTY IS BIRDIEST COUNTY IN THE U.S. WITH 265 SPECIES!

In a nationwide competition to see the most species of birds in a three-day count period April 28-30, 2006, LA County's total of 265 species beat out Nueces County Texas (264) and San Diego County (261) as the birdiest county in the U.S. for 2006!

Thanks to Kimball Garrett, Richard Norton, compilers and all the birders who worked hard and fast to bring in this impressive total.

This is the second record claimed by LA County birders in 2006. Todd McGrath broke the record for a County big year with 357 species in 2005. (see *TANAGER*, vol. 72, number 6 July/August 2006 for full story and list of species).

LA Audubon is proud to have long time members who are breaking records and adding to the local data on status and distribution of birds of LA County.

LA COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS NEARING COMPLETION

Larry Allen and Kimball Garrett are finalizing and analyzing data for the upcoming **BREEDING BIRD ATLAS** to be published by LA Audubon. This has been a decade long project funded by donations and LA Audubon. It is not too late to adopt a species in the Atlas, or to contribute to the considerable cost of pre-production and printing of the Atlas. LA Audubon needs around \$30,000 to complete the project. To sponsor a species or make a contribution please contact LA AUDUBON at laas@laaudubon.org or 323-876-0202