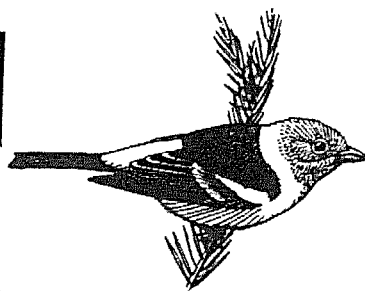


# WESTERN TANAGER



Volume 73 Number 5 May/June 2007

Los Angeles Audubon Society

## *The Desert Saw-whet of Palm Springs*

by Mary Freeman

**O**n February 13, 2007, I found a new report on the Inland County Birds list-serv of a Northern Saw-whet Owl at the Living Desert Museum in Palm Springs. The report was posted by Sandy Swan. As part of my study of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in our local mountains, I like to keep track of any winter records in the Southern California area whenever I come across them. Not much is known of their migratory movements in this region during the winter. Records are few, but Garrett and Dunn's *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* shows records ranging from the inland empire to the coastal slope during the fall and winter, and there is a record of a specimen found during the Lancaster Christmas Bird Count many years ago. Owls in general are considered by authorities to be less vocal in the early winter, so many owls all but "disappear" when they clam up, leaving only physical specimens and roosting individuals to be detected.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl breeds throughout most

cool, well-wooded areas of North America and into the mountains of northern and central Mexico. This owl is mainly a boreal species and is sensitive to high temperatures. In southern California Saw-whet owls are usually found in our mountains in mixed forests of conifers with oaks. There may be altitudinal migration, but this is not understood. I have found this owl in all months of the year, and there have been winter nights where I've found up

to seven montane owl sightings in one night, suggesting that our local breeders may not move much, and desert records may be of northerly origin. I would love to find out for sure!

I contacted Sandy, requesting that she contact me should she relocate the owl. She replied back two weeks after her initial report with some details on more recent observations. During the daytime, the owl was oblivious to boisterous school children visiting the museum on school field trips. This little owl became somewhat of a museum celebrity among the employees. She wrote me, saying the owl had been observed feeding on a mouse. An on-site naturalist reported it to be a desert pocket mouse. As the owl was feeding, Sandy said it was being mobbed by a Costa's Hummingbird and a Cactus Wren. It was also heard calling at 10:00 AM one morning! Northern Saw-whets—as with many raptors—will consume the head of their prey first and save the remains for later. Scott Weidensaul, a researcher of Saw-whet Owls based in Pennsylvania, has found the tail of a mouse sticking out from under



Photo by Chet McCaugh

*Northern Saw-whet Owl at Living Desert Museum*



roosting owls. I'm sure that's quite a sight! I communicated with Sandy that I would go out to meet her to see this owl, as I've never seen one in the daytime—much less one in the desert! My exposure to Saw-whet Owls during my project, and at banding stations, has all been at night, so this would be new and exciting for me.

Sandy had forwarded Chet McGaugh's photo of the owl taken on February 23, 2007, a lovely little owl, so on the morning of Friday, March 3, Ben Loehnen and I drove out to the Living Desert Museum in Palm Springs to follow up on the latest report. I was excited. Owls are difficult to photograph at night, especially with digital equipment. I had brought my photographic equipment with the hope of cap-

turing a decent likeness of a Saw-whet Owl during the daytime, but also to document this rare low-land winter visitor.

We arrived at the parking lot and finally met up with Sandy. After our introductions, she gave me the heartbreaking news that the Saw-whet had been found dead that morning. I was at a loss for words. She was upset as well. She felt a special closeness to this owl as she was the first to have located it and reported it to many in the birding community via the listserv. A docent had found the owl just after 6:00 AM at the parking lot entrance to the facility. Sandy then walked us over to show us its roosting site, the place where it had been seen feeding on the mouse. Parts of the mouse still remained on the branch. Then she took me to the tree where she

first found it and told me how she first found a round ball deep inside and close to the trunk in a thick tree. She was excited, describing how she happened upon it.

We then visited the education center, and she introduced me to the staff as the "owl researcher from Los Angeles," which surprised me, but I was willing to don the title if it allowed me to get a look at their wayward owl. The owl was then brought to us in a bowl and placed on a table.

I examined it as best I could. It had a decent amount of fat on the keel bone, the plumage was in decent condition, and its primaries were a bit worn on the edges. Its overall plumage was in good condition. The primaries were evenly colored—gray brown and uniform, and according to bander Dawn Garcia, upon seeing my photo, a second year bird (bird of the year, hatched last summer). The mystery, however, was its demise.

I detected some trauma to the left wing. After thinking it over and consulting other owlers, it appears the trauma was likely the result of a car strike. These owls often feed close to roads, dropping from perches to pick prey from the ground.

Although a sad ending to this beautiful owl, at the time of this writing I have recent news from Kurt Leuschner, a desert ecologist associated with the Living Desert Museum, and I am happy to relate that he has managed to procure this specimen for the ornithology collection at the Natural History

Museum of Los Angeles County.

Unfortunately, photos and measurements have so far divulged nothing of the origin of California Northern Saw-whet Owls. Museum specimens are available to trained researchers to study frozen tissue and feather samples. Studies on feather isotope profiles from Northern Saw-whet Owls may eventually point to origin of wintering owls, but so far results have not proven decisive.

The Palm Springs "desert owl" may help us better understand seasonal movements of western Northern Saw-whet Owl populations. A quick check of the literature turned up the following wintering Saw-whet records for lowland southern California. Only dates from November through February were included, in hopes of screening out migrants:

Los Angeles County  
10 Jan 1960 - Manhattan Beach (Garrett and Dunn, Birds of Southern California, 1981)  
12 Dec 1990 - Lancaster LACM 105614 (found recently dead on a CBC)

Orange County  
17 Dec 1972 - Huntington Beach ((Hamilton and Willick, The Birds of Orange County, California, 1996)

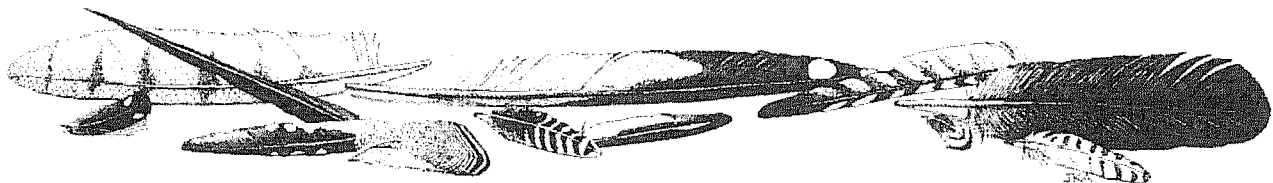
Kern County  
28 Nov 1990 - China Lake (Matt Heindel, Birds of Eastern Kern County, California, manuscript)  
4 Jan 1997 - China Lake (Matt Heindel, Birds of Eastern Kern County, California, manuscript)

Imperial County  
3 Feb 1950 - n. of Westmorland IMP (Patten, McCaskie and Unitt, Birds of the Salton Sea, 2003)  
4 Feb 1978 - Regina e. base of Imperial Dunes (Garrett and Dunn, Birds of Southern California, 1981)

Riverside County  
23 Jan 1971 (but present earlier) to 11 Mar 1971 - Mecca Beach (Garrett and Dunn, Birds of Southern California, 1981)  
19 Nov 2005 - Blythe (R. Higson pers. obs.)

Wintering Saw-whets in the flatlands appear to favor deserts to the coastal slope, perhaps due to either habitat preference or usual migration routes. This last record of some duration is particularly intriguing, as it is clearly a lengthy wintering record, and proves that at least some Saw-whets winter in the desert into March. Small points, but two of very few pieces of information, we have in the study of local movements and possible influxes of Northern Saw-whet Owls in Southern California.

Thanks to Sandy Swan for finding the bird, getting the word out, and providing me with her reports; and to Chet McGaugh for his beautiful photograph. Thanks also go to Nick Freeman for his comments and to Kimball Garrett for the citations.



# MY PATCH

## Ballona Creek and Watershed

by Lisa Fimiani

Ever since I moved to Culver City, I have ridden my bike along the Ballona Creek bike path as an excuse to get some exercise. I usually start at the Sepulveda bike path entrance and ride all the way to the Marina del Rey Jetty. Some days are easier than others; many times I am riding into a stiff headwind from the Northwest. If I can tough it out, it's worth the ride, over twelve miles roundtrip, because, besides feeling great, once I stop at Pacific Avenue Bridge, going back is a breeze. I've birded the Creek many times before, but it's been hard for me to get past all that grey. Being an East Coast transplant, I'm used to lush rivers and creeks with green plants lining the sides of

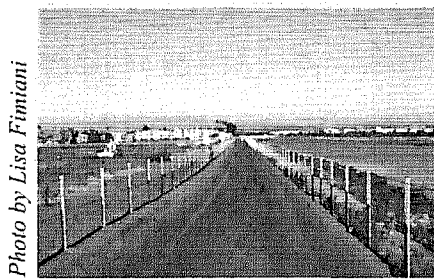


Photo by Lisa Fimiani

Bike Path

waterways, not concrete. Surprisingly, the number of bird species that can be found in Ballona Creek makes up for having to look at the cement lined shores.

As far inland on the bike path near Duquesne, riding west towards Overland, I have seen Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs in small flocks, Spotted Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts, and Willets. Someone told me that's a sign the water is getting healthier if we are finding these birds going East from Sepulveda. The majority of birds can be found between Centinela Avenue and Pacific Avenue Bridge. Any time of year is good birding on the Creek. In December and January, it is not uncommon to see large flocks of Black-bellied Plovers, American Coots, Mallards, and Willets along the Creek. I love seeing the Buffleheads; they are my signature duck of

winter. Come summer the flocks of plovers coming in may catch your eye with one or two plovers still in breeding plumage. It's the Black and Ruddy Turnstones that nearly make me fall off my bike when they are still in summer plumage. It's that jolt of adrenalin I love to experience, every time I see interesting behavior, an unusual bird, or a bird in spectacular plumage that I didn't expect to see. I'm never disappointed. One bird or another is always putting on a show.

On hot summer afternoons, Barn Swallows and Cliff Swallows dart along the water feeding on insects. They glimmer in the setting sun, and they are so much fun to watch as they swoop by. In May Caspian Terns, Brown Pelicans, and our resident Great Blue Herons can be found in large groups. Once I saw an American Avocet in summer plumage among some Black-necked Stilts in June. Many times you have to do a double take; you never know what you're going to miss. With the Least Tern Colony nearby, you may see Least Terns diving for fish, feeding chicks on the cement shoreline, barely visible from across the Creek. Huge flocks of Heermann's Gulls and Willets in mixed plumage can be seen. It's always exciting to be riding by just as a flock lands. The birds are all agitated, fluffing their feathers after having traveled many miles to rest here. Once I saw fifty Whimbrels along the shore; they must have just flown in. Usually I only see one or two at a time. Bonaparte's Gulls are also fun to watch. When the Ospreys are around, it's interesting to see the shorebirds take flight. They don't trust that raptor, even though it's not interested in them. There is a Belted Kingfisher that lives under a bridge and comes back every year. I love to look for him.

One of my favorite viewing sites is the Centinela Creek Convergence. It is here, on the sandbar that appears at low tide and disappears at high tide, that

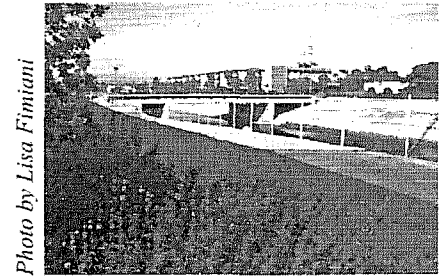


Photo by Lisa Fimiani

Cement Views

many species of birds come to rest throughout the day and at night. My favorite time of day here is sundown. At low tide, Brown Pelicans, weary from migrating, settle down for the night along the near shoreline and the resident flock of Caspian Terns congregate at the head of a huge gathering of Western and California Gulls on the sandbar in the middle of the Creek. Great and Snowy Egrets and Great Blue Herons can be seen on the grassy knoll across the way, and depending upon the time of year, some surprising ducks can be over there as well, such as Green-winged Teals, Cinnamon Teals, American Wigeons and Redheads. I've seen just about every species of duck on the Creek that one would expect to see, and the surprise species are really just the gravy. Blue-winged Teals, Ring-necked Ducks, Northern Pintails, and Northern Shovelers, just to mention a few more. We are so lucky here in Southern California to be in the Pacific Flyway.

Last summer I saw groups of Red-necked Phalaropes swim upstream, turn around, float downstream backwards and peck at the bugs on either side of them as they floated by. They were hysterical.



Photo by Lisa Fimiani

Brown Pelicans

Photo by Lisa Fimiani



Great Egrets

They did it again and again.

Over the holidays, I received the Southern California Coast Almanac engagement calendar for 2007, and that has proven to be invaluable with an accurate listing of the tides. When I'm in the mood for shorebirds, I check the tide schedule. I know where to find Least and Western Sandpipers, dowitchers, godwits and Whimbrels across the mud, and I know where to find grebes (Eared, Horned, Western) across the water. All three cormorant species can be found, depending on the time of the year.

What's great about bicycling along the Creek is you do a mental checklist of the birds you expect to see. When you don't see a certain species, you start thinking, "Where else could they be?" Many times they are either in the Ballona Freshwater Marsh, Ballona Lagoon, Del Rey Lagoon or Ballona Saltwater Marsh, if they are not along the Creek. If I feel up to it, I will ride over to those locations to check them out too. This is my patch. These are my birds. After all these years, I feel I know them, each flock, each group of birds that stay either a short while during spring or fall migration, or all summer or winter. I have gotten used to seeing them, expecting them. I have come to love my patch, cement-lined and all.



Photo by Lisa Fimiani



Ballona Creek

## BOOKSTORE NEWS

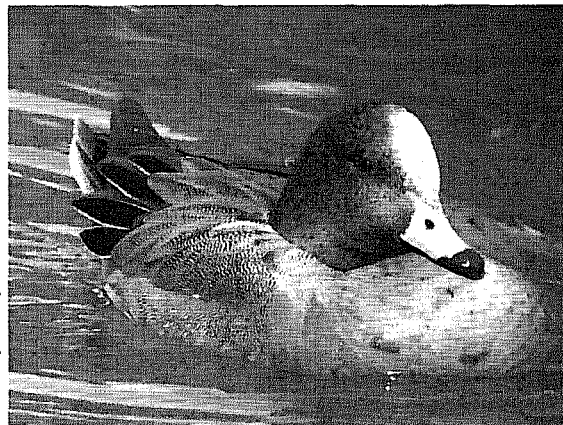
Starting Monday, June 4, 2007 you can now order your books and other items through our online Nature Store. Go to Los Angeles Audubon's web site [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org) and click on Nature Store to begin shopping.

As always you can still order by phone at 888-522-7428 or FAX 323-876-7609 or email [books@laaudubon.org](mailto:books@laaudubon.org). We are also here to answer your questions and advise you on the best book, audio, video, or equipment for your birding needs.

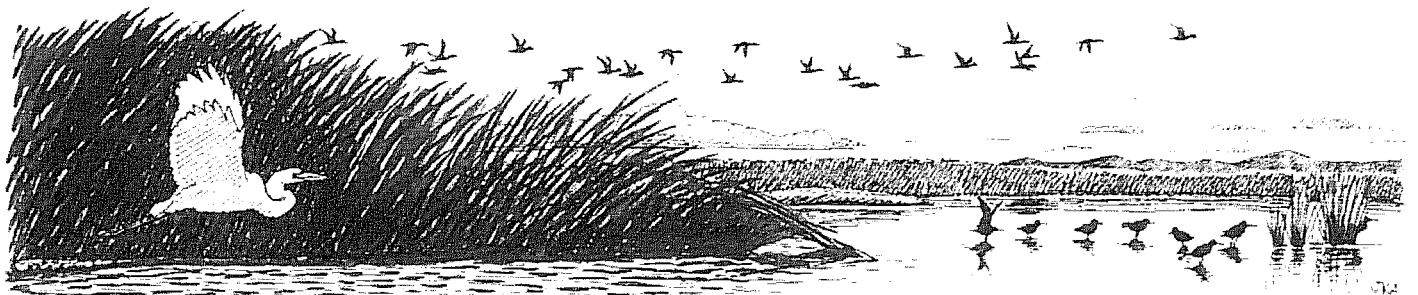
The Nature Store hours are Monday through Thursday from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM. We are normally closed on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. For your shopping convenience we will be open Saturday, May 5, 2007 and Saturday, June 2, 2007 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Susan and Martha invite you to browse our new online store. We hope you are pleased that there is yet another method of accessing the wonderful resources of our Nature Store.

Photo by Mary Freeman



Eurasian Wigeon



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

by Garry George

## THE MIRACLE OF MIGRATION

The Cedar Waxwing whistles have waned; there is White-throated Swift chatter raining down from the heavens; the goldfinch peeps are turning to song; Mr. Wilson has appeared in the lavatera; and where has my House Wren gone? Migration is on, pulling my attention from comment letters on wind farms, housing developments, river revitalizations—all large-scale human endeavors. A large-scale natural event is happening that also needs my attention—spring migration, the most impressive event in the natural world in scale and beauty.

It boggles my mind that our local population of birds swells by at least a hundred million birds each spring.

After three years as Conservation Chair for LA Audubon, I know too well the gauntlet these migrating gems have to run. Communication towers, wind farms, cars and trucks, electric transmission lines, buildings and feral and domestic outdoor cats endanger the biomass moving north, south, up, down, or sideways each spring. Estimates of the annual loss of migratory songbirds in North America each year put the number at over a billion birds. That is an extraordinary loss. Eventually some species may not make it through the gauntlet.

Climate change has thrown a curveball into spring migration that hasn't yet been calculated. The Christmas Bird Counts are starting to reveal some interesting data. Unusual sightings this winter included Tree Swallows in 22 states, twice as many states as a decade ago, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers in New

Brunswick, Canada. Carolina Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins, American Crows and Mourning Doves are all spending winters farther north according to Audubon. The American Bird Conservancy noted last month that seven warbler species have shifted more than 65 miles north in a quarter-century. Changes west of the Rockies are not as documented, but I hope they soon will be. What impact might climate change have in Los Angeles County? A one meter rise in sea level and a reduction in snow pack size (or the loss of snow pack altogether) will have serious implications for LA County's species and habitat. How will Snowy Plovers and Least Terns adapt? Audubon on the national level is now focused on climate change with Audubon California's lead. As a Board Member of Audubon California as Southern California chapter representative, I've had a preview of the direction of the planning from Audubon California Policy Director Julia Levin. Audubon has "borrowed" Julia to plan the climate change campaign. The chapter effort will include reports and projections on potential effects of climate change on our local environments in an effort to think globally and act locally. Our chapter's effort will be an interesting project for LA Audubon with our oceans, mountains, rivers and urban density.

As I think about spring migration, I am reminded of one of Eleanor Osgood's contributions to our Board. After a few meetings she raised her hand. "Can we add 'enjoyment' to our mission?" she asked. "I feel like we only talk about the emergencies."

She's right, of course. As a result of Eleanor's question, our mission has been changed to "promote the enjoyment and protection of birds and other wildlife through recreation, education, conservation and restoration."

And I've made a promise to myself. This spring, I'll lower my shoulders and go birding. I'll celebrate the survivors. I'll look at the ones that made it through the gauntlet. I'll spend more time on plumage, courtship, and nesting behaviors. I'll enjoy the sounds of nestlings and celebrate the new generation, and the resilience of these adaptive organisms. I'll look for hopeful studies that show that they are avoiding the obstacles. I'll remember I'm gathering data as well as birding and enter my sightings in e-bird, and document any unusual sightings with photographs and descriptions and send them to California Bird Records Committee. I'm rooting for migrating songbirds, I'm working for them, and as importantly, I'm enjoying them. Thanks, Eleanor.

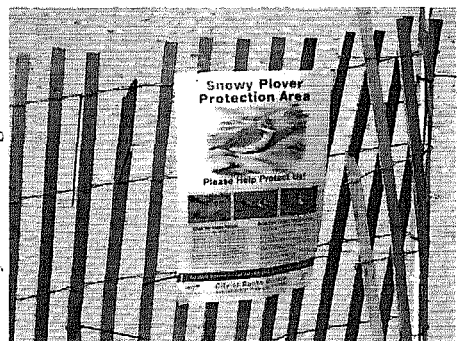


Photo by Eleanor Osgood



# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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by Dexter Kelly

## Old Conflicts, New Prospects

It's hard to report on what's been happening behind the scenes in Los Angeles Audubon, as events and issues have been piling on so fast that any news here will soon be obsolete. But you can always get the latest news from our website at [www.laaudubon.org](http://www.laaudubon.org). Visit the site frequently for the latest announcements of trips, meetings, volunteer opportunities, and other activities. The site also includes the latest conservation news.

Los Angeles Audubon has been reacting to challenges and threats on the conservation front. We are certainly the conservation leader among all Audubon chapters in the Los Angeles County area, due, in most part, to a lot of hard work by a few dedicated members.

Our environment is under attack. The heron roosts in Marina del Rey are still threatened, and both herons and endangered California Least Terns—along with other bird species—may be harmed if a monofilament line "eruv" is strung across their flight paths. David De Lange and Lisa Fimiani have been advocating for the birds in the Marina, with backup from Garry George, making up LAAS's Urban Wildlife Task Force. They have been indefatigable in attending meetings, writing letters, and getting in the face of those empowered to protect our coastal wildlife. Lisa and Garry have also kept up the heat on the "Temgate" issue. Partly in response to their prodding, the Long Beach District Attorney is prosecuting those who destroyed colonies of Caspian and Elegant Terns on barges in Long Beach Harbor.

Los Angeles Audubon took the lead role in a 15 page comment letter on the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Newhall Ranch project in Santa Clarita in partnership with Audubon California, San Fernando Audubon and Ventura Audubon, and Garry and Lisa made public statements at the February 28 hearing at the Los Angeles County Planning Commission. Garry and Lisa continue to advocate for thorough studies on thirteen bird species not adequately represented in the draft EIR.

But the biggest environmental fight for the last two years has been over the Department of Water and Power Pine Tree Wind Farm Project, and over wind farms in general. We're not trying to shut down the wind farms; we just want them to take migratory birds into account when planning them. LAAS sued the DWP under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to compel inclusion of migratory bird studies in their EIR for the Pine Tree project, which is located in the upper reaches of Jawbone Canyon, not far from Butterbrecht Springs, a migrant hotspot. After losing the first round to a judge who barely glanced at our brief, we appealed. In the current political and judicial climate, we have a good chance of success, provided that our brief is read and assessed by the court. By the time of this publication, the outcome may be known. In the meantime, we do have some good news: the wind turbines at Pine Tree will not be turning before the summer at the earliest, so the spring migration will be spared the threat of massacre by propellers. Meanwhile, thanks to Garry's participation in workshops and meetings with wind developers and wildlife agencies at the California Energy Commission in Sacramento, our advocacy for studies of migratory songbirds have paid off in the just released draft of California Energy Commission and California Fish & Game guidelines for siting of wind farms.

All this time-and-energy-consuming environmental combat has not kept us from other efforts in education and outreach. This year the greatest progress has been made on the adult front. Eleanor Osgood and Jenny Jones have offered beginning birding classes at local community colleges (LA City and West LA), and Pat Heirs and Lisa Fimiani led a series of birding walks in the parks of Beverly Hills during the Backyard Bird Count weekend. And we continue to offer monthly bird walks in Baldwin Hills and Debs parks, in addition to our great schedule of field and pelagic trips. In this way, we began to reach out to our neighbors in our area, especially those in the center of the LA Basin. We're turning grownups onto birds!

The situation with elementary schools is somewhat frustrating. We've had to turn down some requests for classroom visitations, because of the lack of available volunteers. Our few active members can't cover all bases! But we continue to support school programs at Ballona and Sepulveda Basin, and the program in the Baldwin Hills should be under way by the end of the year. And as we build our volunteer base, we hope to get into more classrooms on an ad-hoc basis.

In the meantime, the Snowy Plover monitoring project in partnership with Santa Monica Bay Audubon and with a grant from Audubon California has been launched to count and map birds on LA County beaches in the winter, and under the direction of volunteer coordinator Jenny Jones, we hope to find the first breeding record since 1947. Endangered species project intern Stacey Vigallon has been hired by LA Audubon, thanks to a grant from California Fish & Game Commission, to coordinate volunteers for the Least Tern colony at Venice Beach again in partnership with Santa Monica Bay. Stacey is also a superb artist, with a beautiful book on Sri Lankan wildlife to her credit. We hope to have her do our "Audubon at Home" guide, which will be in a graphic narrative format—an environmental comic book!

You might hear more from us in the future, through snail and e-mail. Jason Stuck, our membership chair, will be using new specialized software to manage our membership data and Susan Castor, our membership administrator, will let you know if your membership is about to expire or has expired. You may get more volunteer requests and conservation alerts from us. We have to reach our members more directly, to activate them and get them more engaged in Audubon activities, and to recruit more members, which we need for both moral and financial support. Eventually, we will develop a point system, to award members for such actions as field trip attendance, wildlife monitor-

Cont'd. on pg 18

# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## The Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee announced the slate of Board candidates for 2006-2007:

**Mary Freeman, President:** As a child in Los Angeles, Mary learned the Spanish nicknames her mother gave the neighborhood birds, and then learned their proper names after opening her first bird book in elementary school. Her passion for birding ignited, her father took her birdwatching in local areas such as Elysian Hills, the Los Angeles River and Ferndell Canyon in Griffith Park. Her high school teacher recommended she become a member of LA Audubon. Her first LAAS field trip in the mid-70s was led by Jean Brandt. Bob and Roberta Shanman recommended her for leading LAAS fieldtrips—her first being to Orcas Park near Tujunga Wash. She has a degree in art, preferring birds as her subject, and also designs jewelry. She continues to lead trips for LAAS as well as occasional bird festivals. She is currently working towards her banding permit to help further her knowledge of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in our local mountains.

**Jason Stuck, 1st VP:** Jason was raised in rural Nebraska where he learned to appreciate and respect the many things that Mother Nature had to offer. After graduating from high school, he traded in open space for big city lights and pavement and moved to Hollywood to pursue a career in film. Many years later, Jason now designs websites for a mutual fund company in Santa Monica to support his birding and photography habits. Understanding the many pressures that face the environment today, Jason is using photography and other means to help preserve and restore habitat, and to bring attention to wildlife and the other splendid wonders of nature.

**David De Lange, 2nd VP:** David De Lange has been an active birder with Los Angeles Audubon over the past 10 years and currently serves on its Urban Wildlife Taskforce. As executive director and former president of the Coalition to Save the Marina in Marina del Rey, he has worked to protect heron and other habitat in the Ballona Valley watershed. He makes most of his living as a psychotherapist in Marina del Rey and also works as a consultant in the media reform movement.

**Jenny Jones, Executive Secretary:** An environmental scientist, Jenny has worked to help clean up some of the most contaminated areas of Los Angeles. She would rather go birding, and has become active in LAAS as volunteer coordinator for the Snowy Plover and Least Tern conservation projects. She occasionally leads bird walks at Debs Park near her home in Los Angeles.

**Eleanor Osgood, Recording Secretary:** Eleanor has been a birder for 20 years and a member of LAAS for as long. During the five years of the *Los Angeles Breeding Bird Atlas*, she was the Regional Coordinator for the Los Angeles Basin and a "block leader." Recently retired from the public schools as a speech pathologist and special education teacher, she now has more time to commit to LAAS Audubon and conservation issues.

**Lisa Fimiani, Treasurer:** Lisa became an avid bird-watcher while growing up in Buffalo, New York. In 1986 she moved to Los Angeles, where she joined the Domestic Television Sales division of Paramount Pictures. In her last position at Paramount she served as vice president of sales administration and program lineups, and after 18 years with the company recently left to form her own consulting firm. She has been a member of the National Audubon Society since living in Buffalo. In addition to her role at LAAS, Lisa served six years on the Audubon California Board before joining the Board of LAAS. She serves as a Docent at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh and a member of the Friends of Ballona Wetlands.

The Membership will vote YES or NO on the slate in the May meeting. If any member wants to run in any office, there is a provision for that in the By-laws which are on the website under MAIN MENU "About Us" under ELECTIONS.

## 2007 Schreiber Grant Recipients

Grant committee chair Walt Sakai submitted his recommendations for recipients of the Ralph Schreiber grants for 2007 to the Board. The Board selected the following based on their local conservation importance. Three of the grant recipients received grants last year as well, and these grants will allow them to continue their research. Thank you to Walt and his committee for their fine work in soliciting and reviewing the grants. The Schreiber grants were initiated by LAAS in memory of ornithologist Ralph Schreiber who was the Curator of Birds of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and whose work on California Brown Pelican ultimately led to the conservation of that species. Contributions to LAAS with the memo "Schreiber grants" will keep this research funding program alive.

**Jessica Dooley (Biology, California State University, Northridge):** To study spatial and temporal variation in Bald Eagle diets and foraging habitat use on the California Channel Islands, using a combined approach of GPS, GIS and stable isotopes.

**Joelle Fournier (Biology, San Diego State University):** To perform a California Least Tern assessment: What factors control population trends?

**Loren Merrill (Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology, University of California at Santa Barbara):** To study the untold costs of brood parasitism: Is high egg production responsible for low immune response in female Brown-headed Cowbirds?

**James Rivers (Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology, University of California at Santa Barbara):** To determine the extent to which nestmate relatedness influences the begging intensity of a generalist food parasite.

**Bethany Williams (Biological Sciences, California State University, Fullerton):** To study the function of song in Costa's Hummingbirds.



# MEMBERSHIP

Welcome and thank you to new and renewed members and donors!

## NEW MEMBERS

Annabelle Aylmer  
Susan Bech  
Darren Bertonnean  
William D Bishop  
Nancy A Blaine  
Henry P Borenstein  
Ed Dewees  
Linda Dunn  
Audubon Center at Debs Park,  
Elva Yanez  
Lloyd Ely  
Mary Anne Ferguson  
Ernest F Flores  
Jerry & Jeanette Gadt  
Fischer Garfield  
Ellen Gelbard  
Elwood Hain  
Christopher Holabird  
Mrs Maurice M Hyman MD  
Camille Jones  
Joyce & Burt Kaiser  
Susan A Kaveggia  
Richard Kleinberg  
Janet & Timothy Lonsdale  
Anthony Maranville  
Allen & Tobey Moss  
Linda Oberholtzer  
May Ong  
A Kendell & Jorn Oulie  
Michael & Kristin Sant  
Jane & Robert Stavert  
Philip & Leona Sugar  
Wilson Vallet  
Mr G N Van Essen  
Geoffry White

## THANK YOU! DONORS

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Barbara Meyer  
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## Your Conservation Legacy

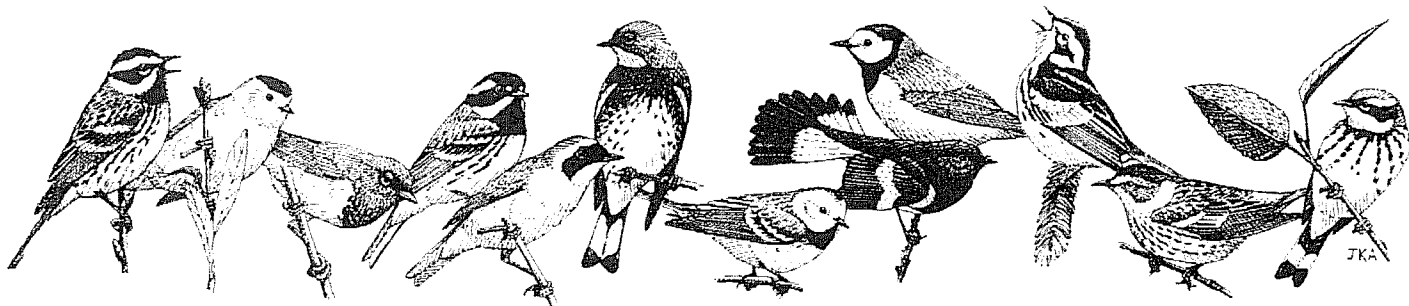
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## Annual Report

The 2006 Los Angeles Audubon Society Annual Report is now available. Please email Garry George at [Garrygeorge@laaudubon.org](mailto:Garrygeorge@laaudubon.org) if you would like to receive a PDF copy by email.

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# BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Jon Fisher

**T**he winter of 2006-2007 was an unusual one. In January, we had a cold spell that was record breaking both in duration and intensity. As is usual, a number of fronts passed through during the period, but none of these produced much rain. This left us with the driest "rainy season" ever recorded. Obviously these events will have significant effects on birds and other animals. For one, water levels on the lower Los Angeles River remained low leaving it suitable for a wide variety of waterbirds that would otherwise have been displaced. So much for any good news. Elsewhere the lack of rainfall was all too evident. Green vegetation and flowering plants were noticeably much reduced. Perennial and seasonal streams will also suffer the effects as we head into summer. The next few months will reveal the impact on migrants and breeding birds in the region.

By January most wintering vagrants have been discovered, so new reports were fewer in number. Even so, a few good rarities were found and a number of previously discovered birds continued through the period. Aside from the masses of swallows which arrive early, we've already had Western Kingbirds, Wilson's Warblers and Bullock's Orioles begin to show up as of this writing, the mid-point of March.

For now though, let's look at what happened over the last two months.

A **Snow Goose** was along the San Gabriel River near South El Monte below the Valley crossing on January 29 (Ron Cyger). This was the only one reported aside from the two continuing with a hybrid Snow x Ross's at Malibu Lagoon. Also at the San Gabriel River location was a '**Eurasian**' **Green-winged Teal** present from 27 January-10 March and a **Eurasian Wigeon** from January 27-February 25 (both Jon Feenstra).

Reports of **Common Goldeneye**, regular but scarce, included four at Quail Lake on January 24 (Bobby Walsh) and another four upstream from the Ballona Creek mouth on January 26 (Richard Barth). Unusual but not unexpected away from the coast was a **Surf Scoter** at Castaic Lagoon on February 21 (Jeff Davis).

Very unusual was a **Manx Shearwater** seen from Point Dume on March 3 (Kimball Garrett). Fewer than ten records exist for southern California, though sightings are increasing. The difficulty of finding them among many thousands of Black-vented Shearwaters is problematic and undoubtedly masks their true numbers.

There were several interesting reports of raptors. Two sub-adult

**Bald Eagles** were at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas on January 21 (Monte Taylor) with one of them still being reported through March 14. Another sub-adult Bald Eagle was seen flying past Malibu Lagoon on February 10 (Jon Fisher).

**White-tailed Kites** were on the verge of disappearing in California before the middle of the last century, but they have recovered fairly well. A concentration of roosting kites in Claremont eventually topped 100 birds on March 12 (Tom Miko). While such concentrations are not atypical for these kites, that's a pretty good number for urbanized LA County.

Very rare in winter was an adult **Broad-winged Hawk** reported near Valyermo on January 25 (Keith Condon). Another very unusual raptor was a **Swainson's Hawk** observed over South Pasadena on January 15 (Steve Mlodinow). It seems likely that this bird wintered in the area. Two more Swainson's Hawks at Santa Fe Dam on February 27 (Andrew Lee) were almost certainly early migrants.

**Prairie Falcons** are not often encountered in the greater LA Basin, but one briefly visited Peck Pit in Arcadia on January 15 (Jon Fisher) and the same bird or a second one was along the San Gabriel River near Valley Blvd. on January

29 (Ron Cyger). A **Crested Caracara** was a big surprise at Hansen Dam from January 29 through February 3 (Jim Hardesty). They are extremely rare in the county, though coastal reports in California have been on the rise. The possibility that this bird was an escapee should be mentioned, as it showed excessive primary wear which may point to a captive origin.

The only shorebird news of note was the **Rock Sandpiper**, first found in late November on the jetties at Marina del Rey, continuing through February 6.

An adult **Little Gull** was along Ballona Creek upstream from the Lincoln Ave. crossing on March 3 (Kevin Larson). The bird was present for a short time and was last seen flying toward the beach. Interesting is the fact that another Little Gull—or possibly the same bird—was seen briefly at the Ballona Creek mouth last winter. A gull that was probably a **Glaucous x Glaucous-winged Gull** hybrid was found at Echo Park on January 25-February 10 (Kimball Garrett). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was present on the jetty at Marina del Rey on February 23 (Barbara Johnson) for only the second report this winter.

**Spotted Doves**, while having declined greatly in many parts of the Los Angeles Basin and surrounding areas, apparently are still thriving in some areas. The presence of over two dozen at Salt Lake Park in Huntington Park on March 6 was evidence of this (Richard Barth).

A **Burrowing Owl** continued through at least January 11 at Playa del Rey and a **Short-eared Owl** nearby at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh continued through January 24 (Jonathan Coffin). Increased coverage of this area at dusk would likely turn up addi-

tional reports.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** continued to be found, with three new birds turning up after December. One was at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles from January 29-March 17 (Don Sterba), another was at Ed Vincent Park in Inglewood from February 6-25 and a third was found at Polliwog Park in Manhattan Beach on February 16 (both Richard Barth).

The **Williamson's Sapsucker** at Vina Vieja Park in Pasadena was reported through January 21 (Monte Taylor). A **Hairy Woodpecker**, rare in the lowlands, continued through the period at Bonelli Regional Park (Rod Higbie).

The **Thick-billed Kingbird** spending its second winter at Banning Park in Wilmington was reported through March 9. In addition, two previously discovered **Tropical Kingbirds** spent the winter locally; one at Lincoln Park in East Los Angeles and the other at El Dorado Park in Long Beach.

Other flycatchers of note included an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach on February 3 (Andrew Lee) and an **Eastern Phoebe** at Peck Park in San Pedro from January 7-13 (David Ellsworth). **Gray Flycatchers** continued to be scarce this winter with one seen from February 8-March 8 at Oak Park Cemetery Claremont (Tom Miko) and a continuing bird at Hansen Dam reported through January 29 (Sue Horton). The **Vermilion Flycatcher** back for its second winter in South El Monte was present through the period as expected (Jeff Webster).

First identified back in November, LA County's first '**Eastern**' **Bell's Vireo** remained in Pasadena through the end of February (John Garrett).

The only **Brown Thrasher** present this winter was at Harbor Park in Wilmington and it was reported through January 15 (Oscar Johnson). Very few **Winter Wrens** were in the region this winter, with just two birds reported. The most recent one was at Rose Hills in Whittier on January 17 (Jeff Webster).

It was already a decent year for **Varied Thrushes**, and they continued to turn up here and there. A single bird was in the Ferndell area of Griffith Park on January 12 (Richard Barth), several were at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach from January 15 to February 28 (Tom Miko) and another four were at Descanso Gardens on February 13 (Will & Lois Fulmer).

A **Nashville Warbler** was at the Claremont Colleges on February 17 (Cathy McFadden, Paul Clarke). The **Northern Parula** continued at Charles Wilson Park in Torrance through January 6 and a **Tennessee Warbler** was still at Heartwell Park Long Beach on the same date.

Just one **Palm Warbler** was reported, that a continuing bird on February 18 at King's Harbor Redondo Beach (Tom Miko). The female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** in Pasadena was seen through January 25 (Susan Frank). A **Hermit Warbler**, regular but scarce in winter, was at Loyola Marymount University in Westchester on March 1 (Richard Barth)

Several **Black-and-White Warblers** were found during the period with one at Peck Park in San Pedro on January 7 (Kevin Larson), another at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on January 6 (Ron Cyger), one at Ed Vincent Park Inglewood on February 6 (Richard Barth), and the last at Legg Lake in South El Monte on February 3 (Ed Stonick).

Three **Painted Redstarts** returning for their second winter continued through the period. These birds were at Elysian Park's Solano Canyon area, at Big Dalton Canyon above Glendora, and at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas.

Two new reports of **Summer Tanagers** followed multiples from earlier this winter. The new birds were in El Dorado Park's Nature Center area on January 27 (Brad Dawson) and at Ed Vincent Park in Inglewood on February 19 (Richard Barth).

Two **Green-tailed Towhees**, always scarce away from the deserts and higher San Gabriels, were found. One was at Malibu Creek State Park on March 1 (Bob Pann) and another was at Hansen Dam from February 10-25 (Kimball Garrett).

Reports of no fewer than five '**Red**' **Fox Sparrows** came in between January 7 and March 1. One was in Altadena on January 7 (Nick & Mary Freeman), another was at Descanso Gardens on February 12 (Pam Dong). Others were at Hahamongna Watershed Park in Pasadena on February 21 (Jon Feenstra), the Huntington Gardens in San Marino on March 1 (Will & Lois Fulmer) and at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on March 3 (Jo McKenzie).

A **Harris's Sparrow** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach, the only one reported this winter, was last seen on March 15 (Kimball Garrett). The returning **Swamp Sparrow** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas was seen through February 1 (Rod Higbie).

West LA College hosted a female type **Baltimore Oriole** from January 8-28 and up to three **Hooded**

**Orioles** between January 28-February 11 (Don Sterba). Rare away from the deserts was a **Scott's Oriole** at Bonelli Regional Park in San Dimas from February 1-19 (Rod Higbie). A female **Orchard Oriole** continued to be seen at the South Coast Botanic Gardens through March 18 (Oscar Johnson).

Spring migration will be in full swing by the time this issue of the *Western Tanager* comes out, with northbound birds moving across the region in large numbers. The desert hotspots hold a lot of appeal and are great fun to bird in both spring and fall. Oases typically host many birds in April and early May, followed by decreasing numbers and increasing chance for vagrants. But closer to home for most of us are dozens of local parks and other productive patches from the sea to the mountains. Coastal birding spots, exceptionally well covered from July through October, are well worth birding in spring for the potential oddity, the possibility of pelagics wandering close to shore, and shorebirds in alternate plumage. The oaks in our foothill canyons are often rife with migrating songbirds and more intense coverage would almost certainly turn up a handful of vagrants. Higher up in the San Gabriels many migrants can be found, as well as a variety of common to rare breeding birds. Aside from all the traditional birding localities, several areas of the county could benefit from more exploration. Many parts of the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains receive little to no coverage as do most areas in the northwest county. There's certainly no shortage of places to go birding and there's still plenty to be discovered.



## WESTERN Tanager

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

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PRINTING: G2 Graphics Services, Inc.

Opinions expressed in articles or letters herein do not necessarily express the position of this publication or of Los Angeles Audubon Society.

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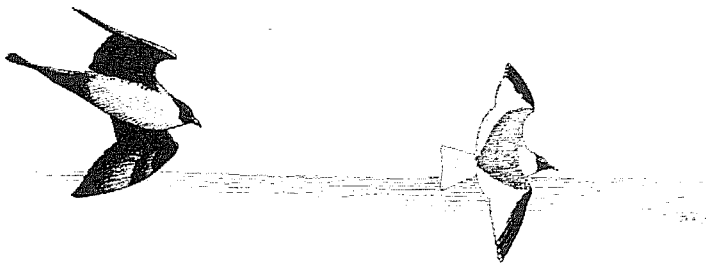
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# PELAGIC TRIPS 2007

## SATURDAY, JUNE 9

**Land on Santa Cruz Island for the Island Scrub Jay, and then out to sea.** This 8 hour trip departs from the Island Packer dock in the Oxnard Harbor at 8:00 a.m. on the m/v Vanguard. We will land at Prisoner's Cove where the endemic Island Scrub-Jay is easily seen. Then we will cruise out to sea for pelagic birding, returning by Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers; Sabine's Gull; rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus's Murrelet. Rarities: Flesh-footed Shearwater. A Tufted Puffin was seen in 2002.

**Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Todd McGrath and David Pereksta. \$96** A box lunch and breakfast can be ordered from the adjoining dock-side deli, or bring a picnic lunch and drinks.

## SATURDAY, JULY 21

**A deep water trip towards the San Juan Seamount.** This trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor on the fast catamaran Condor Express at 7:00 a.m. and will return approximately by 8:00 p.m. We will cruise along the deep water shelf by the San Juan Seamount. This time of year Cook's Petrels and Red-billed Tropicbirds are seen in this area, and this is an ideal time to look for mega-rarities such as Dark-rumped and Stejneger's petrels; as well as Wedge-rumped Storm-petrel. Birds expected: Pink-footed and Sooty shearwaters; Leach's, Ashy and Black storm-petrels; Cormorants (3); Red-necked and Red phalaropes; South Polar Skua; Pomarine Jaeger; Pigeon Guille-

mot; Common Murre; Xantus's and Craveri's murrelets; Cassin's Auklet. **Leaders: Dave Compton, Jon Feenstra, Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, David Pereksta and Wes Fritz. \$198** If there is insufficient response 35 days prior to the departure, the trip will be cancelled. There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

**A deep water trip to Cherry, Tanner and Cortez Banks.** This trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:00 a.m. on the fast catamaran Condor Express, and returns approximately at 8:00 p.m. This is our **Red-billed Tropicbird trip.** We are far 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; Arctic Tern. Rarities: Black-footed Albatross; Buller's Shearwater; Craveri's Murrelet. Blue, Fin and Minke whales as well as several species of dolphins are usually seen. **Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Kimball Garrett, Todd McGrath, David Pereksta and Wes Fritz. \$198** The trip will be cancelled if there is insufficient response 35 days prior to departure. There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20

**A trip around the Northern Channel Islands Monument.** This 8 hour trip departs from the Island Packer's dock in the Ventura Harbor at 8:00 a.m. 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. We will return by Arch Rock at Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty, Pink-footed 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, Xantus's Murrelet; Cassin's Auklet. Rarities: Buller's and Flesh-footed shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Long-tailed Jaeger. In 2002 a Streaked Shearwater, and in 2003 a Brown Booby and 2 Manx Shearwaters were seen. Blue, Fin and Humpback whales have been seen on this trip.

**Leaders: Jon Feenstra, Todd McGrath and David Pereksta. \$120** There is a snack galley with beverages, bring your own lunch.

**Save \$5.00 with an early sign-up  
60 days prior to the trip departure.**

### 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.**

# FIELD TRIP REPORTS

## Southeast Arizona in Winter on a Well-Seasoned Shoestring February 17-20, 2007

by Nick Freeman

On this field trip, Los Angeles Audubon's first to Arizona in winter, the weather was often breezy, but as the weatherman had hinted at two days of rain for our four days in the field, we could hardly complain. Lake Cochise (aka Willcox Playa) provided us with our first of many Brewer's Sparrows and Lark Buntings, and some distant, chortling Sandhill Cranes. The Kansas Settlement agricultural fields and surrounding mesquite scrub were more productive, with lots of Ferruginous Hawks and Mountain Bluebirds, and scope views of two cooperative Crissal Thrashers, three Sage Thrashers, six Pyrrhuloxias and a Green-tailed Towhee. Down the road a bit, we added our first Curve-billed Thrasher.

Further south at Whitewater Draw, the more notable birds were Long-eared, Barn and Great-horned Owls roosting (!!!), five Vermilion Flycatchers, our first *oriantha* race of White-crowned Sparrow, and a conservative estimate of 4,000 'Lesser' Sandhill Cranes! They were loafing and preening perhaps 30 yards away, across a thin finger of water. Amazing looks! On the way out, and down on Double Adobe Road, we saw another Sage Thrasher, and a couple of distant Crissal Thrashers. A large flock of blackbirds, with over 100 Yellow-headed Blackbirds among them, wrapped up the first day. Eurasian Collared-Doves were numerous not only here, but in a number of small towns we visited. At twilight we augmented the delicious food at Café Roca in Bisbee with ample helpings of reflection and anticipation. We headed off to sleep in Sierra Vista.

At the outset of day two, we found Chihuahuan Ravens dumpster diving in Sierra Vista. At the San Pedro House, near the river, we saw at least 20 White-winged Doves, which we also saw two other places. They should be rare and local at this time!?! Cardinals, Pyrrhuloxias, and *oriantha* and *gambelii* White-

crowned Sparrows were prevalent. Here we were also able to study a Gilded Flicker, and few could resist the allure of the birding gift shop.

The Patton's house in Patagonia produced little new for the trip, but the Gambell's Quail, and Lazuli Buntings both put on quite a show. On to the San Rafael Grasslands east of Patagonia, it was nothing but tromp, tromp, tromp! Lots of tromping through rolling hills of grass, with only Savannah and Vesper Sparrows to show for it. Bog Hole looked to have migrant potential, but only one White-tailed Kite showed for us.

Late in the day, after seeing only two small flocks of longspurs flying overhead all day, we happened across two cooperative Chestnut-collared Longspurs on a wire, allowing everyone scope views of a male and a female. That find added some momentum to a long, blustery afternoon. As evening set, we transected the grasslands much like our target, the Short-eared Owl. We drove around quite a bit, and just as we were preparing to turn around, a large bird flushed off of a fence pole, and two cars were close enough to confirm our target before it flew into the night. Shortly after we turned to head out of the valley, another (or the same) bird was standing in the middle of the road, allowing us to get out and scope it—a new bird for many! On to pizza at the Velvet Elvis in Patagonia, and off to bed in Nogales.

Day three. Lake Patagonia was pleasant, and netted a few excellent birds, including Red-naped Sapsucker, another Vermilion Flycatcher, Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants (both regular here), a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers that we all tried mightily to morph into Black-capped, and the hands-down best bird of the trip—a sedentary male Elegant Trogon! Truly one of the most beautiful and colorful birds of the United States. Kino Springs produced Hooded Mergansers in two ponds, and on our way back to Nogales, we saw Black Vultures, which are regular in Nogales in winter too.

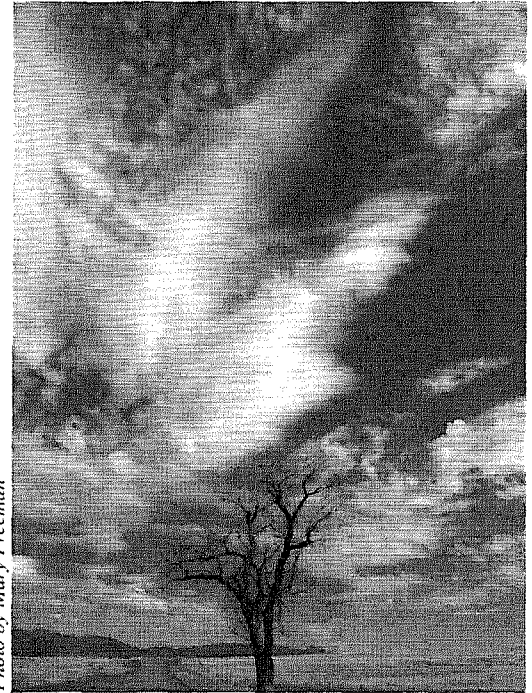


Photo by Mary Freeman

Southeast Arizona

On our last day, we visited a quiet Montosa Canyon, then found a few birds at de Anza Trail out of Tubac, including Lawrence's Goldfinch and Lark Sparrows, then cut our losses and had an upscale last meal in Tubac, a revitalized yuppie shopping haven. Here we had a pair of Greater Roadrunners so tame they were difficult to count! But we did anyway.

Some had early flights out; the rest continued on to Continental and Madera Canyon, where Rufous-winged and Black-throated sparrows were seen amongst gobs of Brewer's Sparrows. Santa Rita Lodge generated a few middle-elevation birds such as Townsend's Warbler and Mexican Jay. A third Green-tailed Towhee for the trip ushered us out of the canyon, as the last of us split up to keep a date with Southwest Airlines.

## The Carrizo Plain— Where Eagles Still Soar February 24 & 25, 2007 by Nick Freeman

Upon meeting the LAAS group in Maricopa on Hwy 133, Mary Freeman attempted to charm an unusually interested CHP officer into joining us on our



jolly jaunt. She and co-leader Larry Allen told of the many wonders that awaited those who made the trek. But, alas, our police escort across the Carrizo Plain was not to be.

One of our first stops on Saturday was on Hwy 166 around the agricultural fields of Cuyama Valley, to the west of Maricopa. We tallied perhaps a dozen Ferruginous Hawks here, with a number of Red-taileds, but only got a truly excellent look at a nice adult Fergie as we were just about to leave the area. The bold rust and white pattern and the large yellow gape of this powerful raptor make Fergies perennial crowd pleasers. Saturday was a beautiful, warm day as we drove up the Plain from Maricopa, but birds did not come easily. We had perhaps seven (wintering? early migrant?) Sage Thrashers in the atriplex scrub about half way up the Plain. We also had good views of a number of sky-blue Mountain Bluebirds hover-feeding at this location and others over the weekend.

In the afternoon, we pressed on to "Roughie Road"—our nickname for the westward extension of 7-Mile Road. We saw two herds of elk along this stretch of road, including a herd of stags at the road's end. Much to our chagrin, we were unable to turn up a Rough-legged Hawk, despite a number of past successes here. We did find a pair of Greater Roadrunners, some Tricolored Blackbirds mixed in with the Red-winged Blackbirds and ubiquitous Eurasian Starlings. And raptors did make a memorable showing, with many Red-tailed Hawks here, along with Northern Harriers, a couple of Prairie Falcons—including one circling lazily overhead—and two Golden Eagles flying at a distance. Little did we know . . .

The next morning, heading back on to the plain from Buttonwillow, our first stop was on Hwy 58 just west of the Hwy 33 split. This habitat was deemed appropriate for LeConte's Thrasher by Mary (as our primary and back-up spots had failed to produce), and we were rewarded with not one but four thrashers, two of which were extremely cooperative, showing off the darker coloration of the Temblor Range subspecies which is only slightly darker in the tail than on the back.

As we worked our way onto the

Carrizo Plain, mostly along Hwy 58, We started to see more Ferruginous Hawks and Prairie Falcons, and we saw a few more Golden Eagles—somewhat better than on Saturday. We also saw a large number of Long-billed Curlews. By this time, the wind was already blowing strong. As we approached our next stop, scanning open fields, trees and power poles for large raptors, we saw a massive, mottled mass of a bird come into view atop a telephone pole. It was clearly an eagle, but less obviously a subadult Bald Eagle—a much less common occurrence on the Plain. I have seen only two others in about 15 trips in as many years! It had secured a ground squirrel, and a pair of Common Ravens pestered it, tugging at the eagle's feathers and dodging its massive, yellow beak. As a young Fergie soon joined in and a raven eventually tugged the eagle off balance, it flew to the next field, where it decided to eat on the ground.

We also added a couple more Golden Eagles to our list here. As we headed over miles of rolling, grassy hills on Bitterwater Road, it soon became apparent as we added Golden Eagles 8, 9, 10 and 11 that we had a chance of passing our incredible weekend record of 17 Golden Eagles set four years ago. Three or four is much more typical. Surging on through the wind, we instead stumbled upon a second Bald Eagle, an adult this time! The striking brown and white plumage of these huge birds is stunning. Then, a couple more Golden Eagles!

And then, we looked up to ask, "What was that large raptor that just flew over the car sporting a tail band and big, dark carpal patches?? Rough-legged Hawk! Everyone out of the cars!" The bird sailed away, but not before everyone got a diagnostic view.


Once more common, but never reliable, Roughies are now a real gem on any southern California raptor trip. There was hardly room in our binoculars for Yellow-billed Magpie (one of only two endemics in the state), and a Phain-

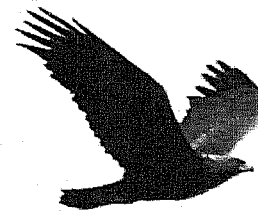
Photo by Jason Stuck

opepla, as we continued our eagle crusade. And there was another, number 14!

At this point, we took Hwy 46 east a mile to a diner that memorializes James Dean who died nearby. The restaurant pleased everyone, as it was still cold and breezy, and restrooms are sparse in these parts. After lunch, we drove east half of a mile, and headed south on Davis Road. After a few false alarms (Red-tails), we were elated to find two, then a third Golden Eagle soaring and calling over the ridge and overhead! 17! We had tied the record!

Eventually, Davis Road joined back up with Bitterwater Road, where we saw yet another eagle, but even though this eagle may have provided the best look we'd had all weekend, it was not to be a record-breaker, as we had already covered this ground (sigh). Perhaps as birding consolation, a dark-morph Ferruginous Hawk chose this bittersweet moment on Bitterwater Road to disrupt our combined fields of view, as we watched the eagle on the nearby hillside. This morph represents 3-5% of birds. The Fergie was almost as dark brown as the eagle, except for bright white tail and under-flight-feathers, and showed a rusty wash to the brown. It soared a bit, then dove over the road onto an open field, where it proceeded to mantle and feed. Quite a show!

Well, we never did break our record of 17 Golden Eagles, but we did set a record of 19 eagles, making up the difference with the much rarer Bald Eagle on the greater Carrizo Plain. 



Golden Eagle

# FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

Before setting out on any field trip, please call the **LAAS bird tape, (323) 874-1318 (Events & Announcements, #4)**. Special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip will be announced at that number.

**Bird walks** are geared for beginning and intermediate birders looking for an introduction or a less strenuous excursion. **Field trips** often require more time or effort, and leaders often delve more deeply into identification, natural histories and behavior observed in the field. That said, bird walks never require a sign up; some field trips do. All are welcome on either type of trip.

## Saturday, May 5

### Field Trip: Santa Anita Canyon

Leader: **Mary Freeman**

Meeting time: 7:30 AM.

Take the 210 Fwy toward Arcadia, and take Santa Anita Avenue N to the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet at the trailhead at the bottom of the lot. Four mile roundtrip moderately strenuous walk through oak and chaparral canyons. Good selection of breeding and migrating birds, including warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Band-tailed Pigeon, three hummers and Dipper possible. Pack in a lunch and water.

## Saturday, May 5

### Bird Walk: Debs Park Audubon Center

Leader: **Jenny Jones**

Meeting time: 9:00 AM.

A leisurely morning walk through the diverse natural areas that surround the Audubon Center at Debs Park. A wide variety of birds of riparian, walnut woodland, and chaparral habitats can be found, including raptors. The Center is located on Griffin Avenue on the west side of the park. From the south, take the Pasadena Fwy north to the Avenue 43 exit. Bear right on Ave. 43 up the hill to Griffin Ave. Turn left on Griffin Ave., and go about a quarter mile to the Center's driveway, which goes steeply uphill on the right. From the north, exit the Pasadena Freeway southbound at Avenue 52. Turn left on

Ave. 52, and follow it across the freeway to where it becomes Griffin Ave. The driveway is a quarter mile on the left.

## Sunday, May 6

### Field Trip: Big Morongo Wildlife Preserve

Leader: **Dexter Kelly**

Meeting time: 7:00 AM (Covington Park), moving next door to the Morongo preserve at 8:00 AM. Breeding desert and oasis birds such as Brown-crested and Vermilion Flycatchers, Summer Tanager, Scott's and Hooded Orioles, Yellow-breasted Chat and migrating Empidonax flycatchers. To get there, take the 10 Fwy E about 17 miles past Banning to Hwy 62 N. Pass through the town of Morongo Valley, take a right on East Dr., then a left into the preserve. Bring lunch, water and sun block. Desert Hot Springs offers the nearest accommodations, or camp at Joshua Tree NP. No sign up.

## Sunday, May 6

### Bird Walk: Topanga State Park

Leaders: **Ken Wheeland & Chris Tosdevin**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM

A walk through beautiful and diverse coastal mountain area, ideal 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 S5.

## Saturday, May 12

### Field Trip: Galileo Hills and Butterbred Springs

Leader: **Nick Freeman**

Meeting time: 7:00 AM (finish by 4ish)

These are two of the best spring migrant traps in the state. Western warblers and flycatchers should headline. 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 veer right on 20 Mule Team Rd. Turn left at the Galileo Hills sign before the hill, take your first paved right, your first right again, into the Silver Saddle Country Club, followed by two paved lefts into the lot. Park by the first pond. About 2 hrs driving time from Los Angeles. LAAS phone sign-up mandatory. 12 max. Bring lunch, sun block.

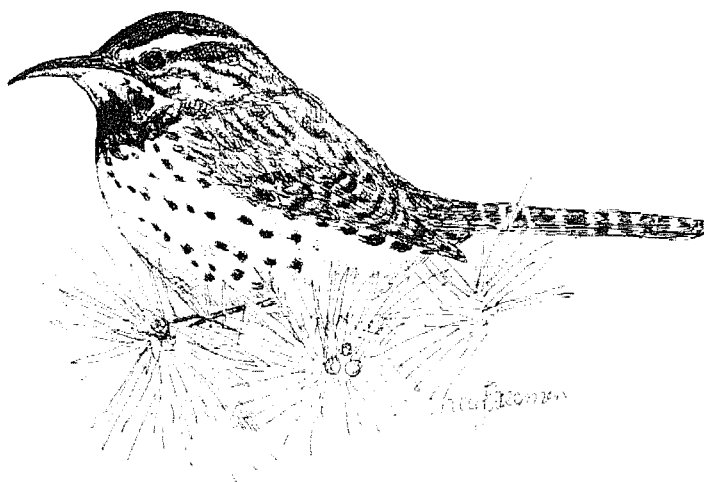
## Saturday, May 19

### Bird Walk: Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

Leader: **Eleanor Osgood**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM

This trip, covering landscaped parkland and natural coastal scrub habitats, is paced for beginning birders and members of the Baldwin Hills community.



Cactus Wren by Mary Freeman

# FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

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.

## **Sunday, May 20**

### **Bird Walk: Ballona Wetlands**

Leader: **Bob Shanman**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM (finish by 11:00 AM)

A walk to our nearest wetland and adjacent rocky jetty. Migrating shorebirds and terns should be coming through. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90W) 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. Scopes helpful.

## **Saturday, May 26**

### **Bird Walk: Whittier Narrows**

Leader: **Ray Jillson**

Meeting time: 8:15 AM

View 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 ramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave.

## **Saturday, June 2**

### **Bird Walk: Debs Park Audubon Center**

Leader: **Dexter Kelly**

Meeting time: 9:00 AM

A leisurely morning walk through the diverse natural areas that surround the Audubon Center at Debs Park. For details, see May 5 listing.

## **Sunday, June 3**

### **Field Trip: Eastern San Bernardinos** Leaders: **Sandra Remley and Mary Freeman**

Meeting time: 9:00 AM

Meet in the parking area outside of Hart Bar Campground, and bird all day. Local birder Sandy Remley will be guiding and hosting us on our first trip to Aspen Grove, Mission Springs, and the S. Fork of the Santa Ana River.

More details next newsletter. No sign-up, no fee.

## **Sunday, June 3**

### **Bird Walk: Topanga State Park**

Leaders: **Ken Wheeland & Chris Tosdevin**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM.

See May 6 listing for details.

## **Saturday, June 9**

### **LA Audubon Annual Picnic:**

#### **Chilao Campground**

Sodas, water, bird and butterfly walks, and tall tales of birding adventures provided. The first bird walk will start at 8:00 AM, and another will follow around 10:00 AM for late-comers.

Later, we will poke around for butterflies as well. Lunch around noon with possible birding options elsewhere later. Take the 210 Fwy to Angeles Crest Hwy (Hwy 2) in La Canada, and head up the hill for about 30 miles. It's on the left. The biker bar is too far. A Forest Service Adventure Pass is necessary.

## **Saturday, June 16**

### **Field Trip: Hopper Mountain NWR and Condor Sanctuary, Fillmore**

Leader: **Jesse Grantham**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM

Jesse Grantham, California Condor Coordinator and team leader for the Condor Field Program in southern California with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (and formerly a biologist with National Audubon for 24 years), will lead this trip to view the results of the California Condor reintroduction program. This program has multiple private and agency partners, including the Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park. Biologists will give us an overview of the program, show us how radio telemetry and GPS tracking units are helping to save the bird, and talk about future concerns. Take Interstate 5 North to the #126 West (in Castaic Junction) to Fillmore. Meet in the front parking lot of the Super A grocery store which will be on the right, immediately after the light at

"A" Street. We will carpool from the meeting site. High clearance vehicles are required; bring one if you have one, and check the spare. These roads are not for the timid! Five car limit. Some of us usually eat in town afterwards. Alternate viewing plans if the roads are inaccessible or the USFWS deems our presence a detriment to the birds on this day. Reserve your place with LAAS by phone, stating phone # and email address, whether you have a high clearance vehicle that can accommodate at least 4 people total (priority) or you plan to ride with someone else. Wait for confirmation. No fee, but donations encouraged to the Condor Survival Fund.

## **Saturday, June 16**

### **Bird Walk: Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area**

Leader: **Dick Barth**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM.

\$4 entry fee. See May 19 listing for details.

## **Sunday, June 17**

### **Bird Walk: Ballona Wetlands**

Leader: **Bob Shanman**

Meeting time: 8:00 AM.

See May 20 listing for details.

## **Saturday, June 23**

### **Bird Walk: Whittier Narrows**

Leader: **Ray Jillson**

Meeting time: 8:15 AM.

See May 26 listing for details.

## **Friday through Monday, June 22-25** **Field Trip: Southern Sierras Extended Weekend**

Leader: **Bob Barnes**

High deserts to High Sierra. The most diverse region in the state. Likely: Goshawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Pileated Woodpecker and owls. 150 species possible in 4 days. Numbers limited. To reserve, and receive trip information, send SASE with e-mail, phone number and \$15 for each day attended (\$60 for 4 days). Reserve rooms in Kernville early (listed in flyer). Lots of driving, so bring a

# FIELD TRIPS & BIRD WALKS

friend.

**Saturday, June 30**

**Field Trip: Night Owling**

Leader: **Raymond Schep**

Departure time: 5:30 PM (sharp)

Target birds include Northern Pygmy Owl, Flammulated Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Western Screech-owl (easier), and Common Poorwill (easy to hear). Until dark we will bird for mountain specialties such as Cassin's Finch and White-headed Woodpecker. We will take a gentle hike down into a canyon to try to hear and see Spotted Owl. Meet where the 210 Fwy and Angeles Crest Highway (Hwy 2) intersect in La Canada. Exit the 210 at Angeles Crest Highway heading north. About one block up is a frontage road on the right, where we will park and carpool. Finish around midnight. Bring a warm jacket, a full stomach, snacks, and a Forest Service Adventure Pass. To sign up, send \$5, phone number, e-mail address and a SASE. Limit 10.

**Saturday, July 14**

**Field Trip: Mount Abel Area**

Leader: **Jean Brandt**

Meeting time: 7:00 AM

We will start the morning near the "Shirley's Seep," watching as birds and mammals visit a nearby spring. Bring a chair, snacks, thermos of hot drinks. Possible birds include Calliope Hummingbird and White-headed Woodpecker. Later on, we will bird our way up to Mount Abel. Picnic lunch near the top of Mt. Abel. Cancelled, if rain. Anticipate inclement weather, and bring a lunch and a Forest Service Adventure Pass. Meet at Denny's parking lot off Roxford and I405 in Sylmar for carpooling.

**Sunday, August 5**

**Field Trip: Big Bear Lake Vicinity**

Leaders: **Nick and Mary Freeman**

Meeting time: 7:30 AM. Meet in the Aspen Glen Picnic Area parking lot in Big Bear to bird all day. More details next newsletter. No sign-up.

**Message from the President (Cont'd. from pg 7)**

ing, Christmas counting, classroom visits, and other activities. Your rewards will pay off at the bookstore, on paid trips, and other perks to be determined.

Speaking of the bookstore, it's about to go online, which will make shopping there much easier. Again, check the website to find it! But you should also visit Audubon House soon to update your birding gear for the spring season or to sign up for any of the great field and pelagic trips we continue to offer. Martha, the resident expert, is ready to help enhance your birding experience.

Ultimately, all of this growth and activity—the conservation, the outreach, the education—would not be possible without your support, so consider increasing the amount you give to LA Audubon to help us fund these important programs.

Finally, some great news about our new Board of Directors. As I retire from the presidency to pontificate from the sidelines as executive past president, some fresh talent is coming on board. David De Lange, veteran of the Marina heronry battles, is our new second vice president. Eleanor Osgood is staying on as recording secretary, while continuing to give birding classes and recruit volunteers. Jenny Jones will continue as executive secretary, while lending her scientific expertise to various projects. Lisa Fimiani will keep up her great hard work as treasurer, while continuing to fight on the beaches and estuaries, as a Friends of Ballona board member. Jason Stuck, our chief "techie," will expand and galvanize our membership as first vice president. And as for president... After recruiting most of our Board members over the years, and after having attracted dozens of new members through her great meeting programs and (with husband Nick) field trips, Mary Freeman has finally climbed on Board. I can't think of anyone better suited to the job, especially at this time, when we need so much expertise and energy on the Board. Mary has been an L.A. Audubon since she was in high school, giving her time and talent to us ever since. No one knows more about our mission and our members, if only because she has brought so many people into our society over the years. (And she's a great birder, a dedicated researcher, and a Spanish speaker!) Under her leadership, Los Angeles Audubon will grow and prosper, and reach our centennial birthday with our biggest and most active membership ever. I hope more of you will volunteer to work with Mary and her great team during the next three years. If you find working with Los Angeles Audubon as rewarding as I have, it will enrich your life considerably.

And in the meantime... if it's not too late when you read this article, I hope to see you at Morongo Valley on Sunday, May 6.

- Dexter

## 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)
    - (c) email address (if used)
  - 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.

# INTERNATIONAL BIRDING TOURS

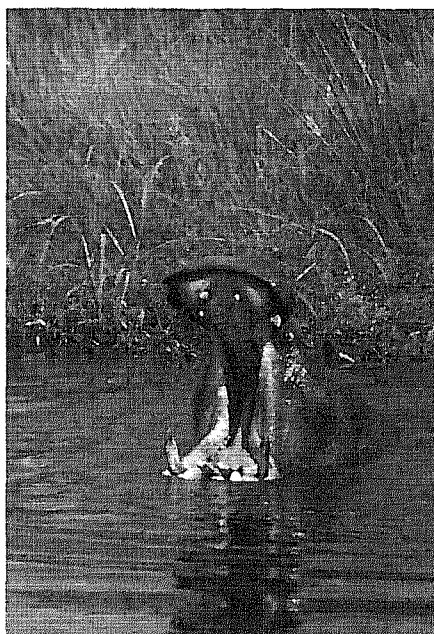
## KENYA BIRDING & WILDLIFE SAFARI

November 2-14, 2007

Post-Extension Eastern Kenya:

November 13-21, 2007

Photo by Herb Clarke



Hippo

Kenya, one of the great birding and wildlife destinations in the world, offers an opportunity for you to experience much of East Africa within a short period of time. Over 1,100 bird species have been recorded in Kenya, and many are easily seen. Besides its incredible birdlife, Kenya has become synonymous with the historic great wildlife of Africa, and Kenya may be the very best place to see large numbers of wildlife, namely the "Big Five", elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, lion and buffalo. In addition, the variety of wildlife, often at the same time you are viewing fascinating birds, is difficult to believe. From Nairobi to Samburu, the slopes of Mt. Kenya, Lake Nakuru, and the great plains of the Masai Mara, this is sure to be your African trip of a lifetime.

On the extension, we plan to travel from Nairobi to the Tsavo West National Park and Mzima Springs, with views of Mount Kilimanjaro. Then we are on to Shimba Hills National Reserve, just a short distance from the Indian Ocean, and the last remaining breeding population in Kenya of the indigenous Sable Antelope. Birding stops will be made along the way. Experience for yourself the wonders of East Africa on this Los Angeles Audubon Safari. Space is limited.

## THE BEST OF COSTA RICA

February 5-17, 2008

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

Costa Rica, with its well deserved reputation as a country sincerely interested in conserving its natural resources, is one that is invariably on all birder's lists to visit. Its tropical forests harbor howler monkeys, Resplendent Quetzals, poison-dart frogs, giant morpho butterflies, over 830 species of birds, and the beauty of thousands of plant species. We will visit six of the major locations that are distinctive, each offering a marvelous profusion of tropical birds.

Habitats encountered will range from semiarid ranch land, to misty cloud forest, the transition zone between the dry and moist forests of the Pacific lowlands, the treeless paramo, and what may well be the highlight of our trip, a visit to La Selva, a lowland rainforest where nearly 400 birds have been recorded. As part of a small group, enjoy some of the best tropical birding in Costa Rica., where you will be accompanied by outstanding leaders throughout. Space is limited.

Photo by Herb Clarke



Resplendent Quetzal

# PROGRAMS & EVENING MEETINGS

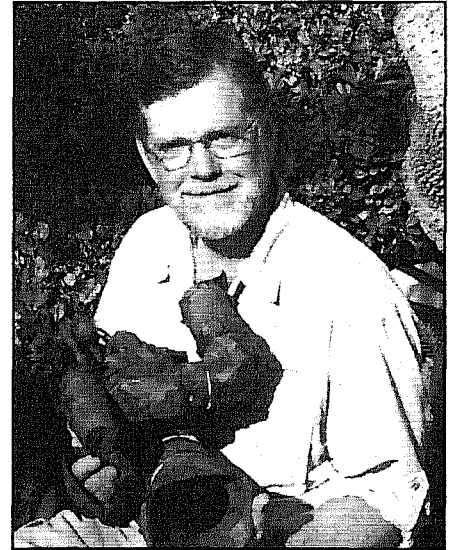
Meet at 7:30 at Audubon House in Plummer Park  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd (at Martel between La Brea and Fairfax)  
323-876-0202

**Wednesday, May 9, 2007**

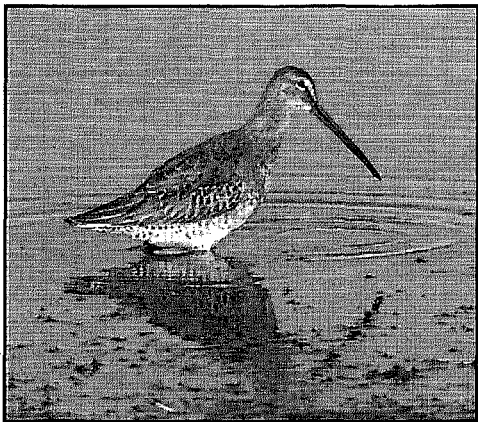
**Tom Kaminski presents:  
Hooked on Galapagos**

- \* Swim with Galapagos Penguins as they slice through their prey...
- \* See a Frigatebird drag a Blue-footed Booby through the air...
- \* Join a Lava Heron—unique to the Galapagos Islands—as it sneaks up on a Sally Light-foot Crab...
- \* Observe Storm Petrels walking on water...
- \* Watch a Galapagos Hawk devour its prey, then sneeze...
- \* Be introduced to the Flightless Cormorant, "Darwin's Finches," and many, many other bird species...

Come and see Tom's video magic at work.



*Tom Kaminski*



*Photo by Ted Eubanks*

*Long-billed Dowitcher*

**Wednesday, June 13, 2007**

**Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch present:**

**Dowitcher Identification -**

**A Review of New Advances and Potential Pitfalls**

All birders know that identifying silent dowitchers in the field can be an incredible challenge. In the first half of the talk, Lee and Birch will synthesize all of the known field marks of the two dowitcher species to generate an easy-to-use guide for field identification. In particular they will show how gestalt-based field marks can be quantified and used effectively in the field. In the second half of the presentation, a series of quiz photos will be presented and audience participation will be encouraged. The audience is also welcome to bring in a few of their own images of unknown (or known) dowitchers.

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

*DATED MATERIAL  
Please Expedite*

