

the LONE BIRDER

By Robert F. Connor

This is the account of a trip which started at Playa del Rey on August 1, 1966, and ended the same place 35 days and 9000 miles later. 271 species were seen, of which 34 were life birds.

We started at 6:30 p.m., and the first "trip bird" was the Mourning Dove seen from the freeway; 5:30 a.m. brought the shadowy forms of birds in the desert near Tucson--Phainopepla, Loggerhead Shrike, Sparrow Hawk, and Western Kingbird. The motel produced a Bullock's Oriole and, more important, a swimming pool and air-conditioned bedrooms --the temperature was 103 degrees, and humid. An afternoon trip to the Desert Museum gave us White-winged and Inca Doves, Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker, Cactus Wren, Purple Martin, and Curve-billed Thrasher. Evening in the park at Tucson turned up Ground Dove, Rivoli's Hummer, Gilded Flicker, and Boat-tailed Grackle.

The first bird of the next morning was the Common Nighthawk swooping on the road up to Santa Rita Lodge in famous Madera Canyon. Then--my first lifer of the trip--Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers, rather numerous. Soon there followed two more lifers, Wied's Crested and Olivaceous Flycatchers, along with Olive-sided and Vermilion Flycatchers and Cassin's Kingbird. Hummers were Broad-billed and Broad-tailed.

"What's new with birding?" I asked at 9 a.m. when the Santa Rita restaurant opened. "I hear the Trogon is not here this year."

"You heard wrong. There's a pair nesting just up beyond the end of the road. You'll probably find Mr. Steele up there right now."

"Oh.....photographing....." I dashed to my station wagon; I'd lost 2 1/2 hours already. I found Mr. Steele and another man with a camera mounted behind a scope aimed at a woodpecker hole in a dead sycamore tree.

"Are they here?" "They're gone now, but they'll be back soon." "How do you know?" "Because they have young in the nest. Did you read my article in the National Audubon Magazine about Trogons?" That identified Mr. Steele. "Allan Cruickshank left just a few days before the Trogons nested and missed

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photographing them for a lifetime first, with a little bit of professional pride. (The Cruickshanks are said to have identified 10 hummers in the area during their six-week stay.)

Then it happened while I was still trying to read about the calls of the Trogons. Colorfully, as pictured, and seemingly twice as large, the male Trogon swung through the branches and dropped quickly to a limb of a live sycamore, tail drooping. With a few quick jerks of the head and body he plopped through the hole and fed a large green bug to the young one. Then he was off again. This was done seven times over while Mr. Steele wondered whether the mother had met her fate at the talons of the Cooper's Hawks in the Canyon. After an hour and twenty-six minutes, with a soft "clerk, clerk, clerk," the female arrived, green bug and all, with tail more coppery than the male. Lifer #461 for me!

Lucy's Warbler and Rufous-winged Sparrows were among the birds that brought the trip list to 52. After supper I studied the calls of eight kinds of owls and four goatsuckers. This was cut short by a hairy mountain thunderstorm that ran into the night.

Next morning we stopped at Continental, Canoa Ranch, and Kinsley Lake. I reconfirmed a Tropical Kingbird there and was surprised to find a pair of Ring-necked Ducks. A long rough 50 miles towards Ruby Lake was almost a washout (the roads, too) with just Rock Wrens new. Outside Nogales the swamp was alive with birds, of which the best were Lark Sparrows and Varied Bunting.

Toward Patagonia, a soaring hawk proved to be a lifer, the Black Hawk. At the roadside picnic ground by Sonoita Creek I found the gruff-voiced Thick-billed Flycatcher as advertised; James A Lane, "A Birdwatcher's Guide to Southeastern Arizona." Farther on, I sat in the shade by the creek and let the birds come to me. It worked! Two lifers, the Beardless Flycatcher and the Bronzed Cowbird obliged; and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo fed its young in a nearby tree. Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, Indigo Bunting--these are only a few of the beautiful birds of Sonoita Creek. The grasslands rang out with the easily-identifiable song of Cassin's Sparrow; Grasshopper Sparrow buzzed in. The first Ferruginous Hawk appeared. At Sierra Vista we heard the thin song of Eastern Meadowlark. White-necked Ravens were about the mesquite.

A trip up Carr Canyon on a road that proved too washed-out to reach the top gave me a chance to sleep at the top of the falls and contemplate the

beauties of Nature--I, Adam, the only man on the mountain. I might add that all these birdy places were birded by me only.

At Tombstone, Mother Nature hit the mark with bolts of lightning, and thunder put to shame the pistol cracks of the O.K. Corral. This was the third night in a row that it rained where I was, and I felt like Shelley's "Cloud." I bring fresh showers that make the flowers grow.

Curses! Foiled again! No Tree Ducks at St. David. But don't despair, some birds were there. A Great Blue Heron took off a pond runway so short he had to circle back to get over the rushes. A Mexican Duck characteristically did his vanishing act by diving under the water to the moss on the side whereby he bellied over the bank and slithered out into the grass. After driving down a slippery mud road I met the farm owner.

"What's the matter? Are you lost?"

"No, I was just looking for some Tree Ducks. Have you seen any lately?"

"No, not recently. They're the ones with the orange legs?"

"Yes."

"Never knew ducks perched in trees until I saw them. If you find one, what are you going to do with him, catch him?"

"No."

"Gonna take his picture?"

"No, I leave that to others. I'm just going to look at him."

"You come all the way from L.A. for that? I had some people here last year come all the way from Michigan....."

The birder has come into his own.



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As I talked I watched a Yellow-headed Blackbird sharing the cattails with Redwings and a Western Bluebird to become trip bird #102.

The Chihuahuan Desert north of Douglas was flooded and the vapor arising cut out the horizon, giving an eerie feeling of instability. A torrent across the road washed out my Guadalupe Canyon trip. Entering the Chiricahuas, birding became serious again. The caved walls of Cave Creek Canyon began a startlingly beautiful trip enjoyed by but few tourists by California standards. The best bird was a scolding Painted Redstart. At beautiful, secluded Rustler Park, el. 9200', I learned how to identify a Coue's Flycatcher. Mexican Juncos and Pygmy Nuthatches were all around. I was scolded by Brown-throated Wren; Virginia Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets flew by. Broad-tailed Hummers darted across the flowered openings between the ponderosa pines. Next morning it was 7:30 before I got any action; Hermit Thrushes, Solitary Vireos, Red Crossbills were seen and a Grace's Warbler's song gave it away.

A stop at the Southwest Research Station for hummers produced Black-chinned and the monster, the Blue-throated. As I left the Station I saw Rufous-crowned Sparrows and that rang down the birding in Southeast Arizona --120 species, including 16 lifers for me.

Next objective: Cave Swallows. A Horned Lark dared the desert highway. White Sands was blowing like a blizzard. Approaching the Monument, the sandstorm appeared as a pinkish-blue cloud. -- Beyond Alamogordo in the Sacramento Mountains lies a village called Cloudcroft. If one leaves U.S. 80 here and takes State 24, he will be in a most beautiful unspoiled valley. In its rain-fresh greenery it sets a mark of serenity few places can attain. Gray-headed Juncos flew across the road. About 100 fat White-winged Doves landed in an inundated grain field.

Driving and birding is hazardous, so I'll mention the worst dust storm I've seen since the drouth in the thirties. A huge red cloud swooping up from the prairies west of Artesia engulfed me for 15 miles completely blinding me at times, and threatening to blow the car off the road. Add to this a few drops of water to make a muddy windshield, and one appreciates a nice clean motel room. Amazingly, a heavy rain completely cleared the air, and morning was a bright happy world again, as Lark Buntings put in their first appearance.

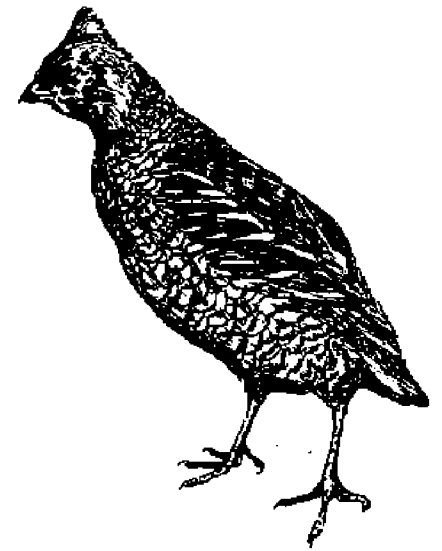
At Carlsbad Caverns we were advised to look for Cave Swallows at their watering place at Rattlesnake Springs, with the warning that there would be many other swallows there. At Rattlesnake I met the wife of the resident ranger in charge, Mrs. Robert

J. Heying. She gave me the checklist of the area and told me to identify the Cave Swallows by the brown above their beaks rather than the white (yellow) of the Cliffs. It turns out that the dark throat patch of the Cliffs is not so dominant on the immature. To confuse the issue further, Barn Swallows, Violet Greens, and Tree Swallows sat on the same telewire. Sitting there also, but not so confusing, was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. A large warbler made a short singing appearance; it had a bright yellow breast and dark back, with a very clear characteristic two-syllable call. No such bird in the western warblers.

"That's the way our area is," said Mrs. Heying. "Everything gets mixed up in our transition zone."

"It can't be Wilson's," I said. "That's not its call, and this bird is too large."

After considerable time I resorted to the Eastern Guide. Suddenly it became very clear when the picture and the call matched up. Here, unmistakably, was a Yellow-throated Vireo, also listed among the warblers. I had a "first in the area" to my credit at Rattlesnake Springs.



Next, Texas; the first new bird finally arrived near El Dorado. Surveying me from a post was a pale Scaled Quail. On the Edwards Plateau, the pure white front and dark back marked the Golden-cheeked Warbler. The Golden-fronted Woodpecker seems halfway between the Ladderback and the Flicker. The wild brown Turkey was in the tree areas. On the Guadalupe River area near Kerrville I found the Great Crested Flycatcher and the Veery. In the U.S. Agriculture areas northeast of Kerrville I made acquaintance with the Carolina Chickadee, and a Harlequin Quail hen with her brood walked quietly and unafraid away from the road. The last bird of the day was on the Perdernales along LBJ's ranch-- a Kingfisher.

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Continued...

All Texas waved at me. Perhaps it was because I used the less travelled roads so that I could stop at every hawk larger than a Kestrel.

A note about the stiles built over the fences at the roadside parks. I thought, "How considerate of them to think of us birders!" The next morning at breakfast at a roadside park I learned differently. Two large families had stopped also; soon, the little boys, two-by-two, the little girls later, and eventually the parents, strolled nonchalantly into the scrub oaks. There's no water, and no facilities of any kind! Beautification, yes, but sanitation, no.

Early morning in the foggy swamps and forests of Texas west of Shreveport brought Crows, an American Egret, a new Jay call--the Blue's--and the loud call of the Yellowhammer (Yellow-shafted Flicker). Entering the Cardinal State of Arkansas, the first trip bird was the Red-headed Woodpecker, or Pecker-wood if you will. Soon followed the Red-bellied Woodpecker, Bronze Grackle, and Bobwhite. At evening a Whip-poor-will sat by the roadside.

Between rain showers, a flycatcher safari in Fourche La Pave Valley (Ouachita Mts.) was successful--the Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Peewee, and the surprising green of the Acadian Flycatcher. Some Chimney Swifts sailed among the swallows and out of the hedge came the first Catbird I'd seen since boyhood in Iowa. Downy Woodpeckers chased each other through the trees, and I identified the Prothonotary Warbler for my first time. Each day in the Fourche La Pave Valley brought a few new birds along with the omnipresent Cardinal with his confusing voices and whistles. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker with his characteristic ladder back, and the larger Hairy appeared. The local wren, Carolina, acted as all wrens; the Titmouse was Tufted and the Sparrow was Field. Eastern Kingbird chased the larger Brown Thrasher. A real goody for me was the Worm-eating Warbler with his eyestripes and stubby tail, acting like an overgrown Chickadee, pecking at prickly ash berries from an upside-down position. Terminating another day, a Wood Thrush darted into the underbrush, a "Good Gawd Bird" (Pileated Woodpecker) exposed himself as little as possible as he swung low over distant pines. The brown of small flycatchers indicated Alder (Traill's).

A morning survey of the lowland woods, pines and deciduous, brought the furtive Pinewoods Sparrow's (Bachman's) dark brown back into play; the song of the Vesper Sparrow revealed the singer; and binoculars located the Pine Warbler. The huge red

oak in front of my father-in-law's farmhouse that proved a way station for so many birds had an evening visit by an Eastern Bluebird. A later day, it was visited by a pair of Parula Warblers, and Black-and-white Warblers. Ruby-throated Hummer was in the brush; a Broad-winged Hawk soared above some vultures.

Hot Springs, Ark., started as the first Starling town. The bayou around Camden presented a Little Blue Heron. Near Monroe, La., three Mississippi Kites circled over a water tower. South of the LSU campus, on the levee, was a Swallow-tailed Kite. The impatient chway of the Red-eyed Vireo was heard in Fort Jackson and became trip bird #200. Motoring north in the fertile Red River Valley south of Alexandria I discovered Laughing and Herring Gulls following the plow. In the swamps off Lake Cross the Green Heron's loud calls ended a lackluster Louisiana trip.

Leaving Arkansas and its billions of ticks, the Ozark Lake Taneycomo offered the unmistakable fluttering American Redstart and the Slate-colored Junco. The first Nebraska bird was appropriately the upland favorite, the Ring-necked Pheasant, enjoying the farms near where I was born. The mud flats north of Lincoln provided the Henslow's Sparrows and the Prairie Warbler. Mid-Nebraska produced the Baltimore Oriole and the Black-billed Cuckoo.

The Crescent Lake Refuge in the sandhills north of Oshkosh, Neb., is the breeding ground of a multitude of birds. Some of these are Franklin's Gulls, Canada Goose, Pied-billed, Eared, Horned, and Western Grebes; Shoveler, Ruddy, Canvasback, American Widgeon, Cinnamon Teal, and Pintail Ducks; Wilson's Phalarope, Black Tern, Marsh Hawk, and Avocet. Flying over the deserted ranch of my boyhood days was a flock of Long-billed Curlew. As I fished for bluegills in a prairie cattle pond, I saw a beautiful juvenile Golden Eagle. Later we saw as many as seven at one time, for this is hawk and eagle country. Black-billed Magpies made their appearance in the canyons of Wildcat Hills. A Prairie Falcon rose from a narrow strip of wind-erosion-project trees. A full moon on

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Are you being pushed out of house & home by old magazines? Been wondering what to do with them? Well, there are classrooms full of children all over town just waiting to devour the information contained in magazines such as Audubon, National Wildlife, and Natural History. If you have sets of any of these magazines that you would like to get rid of, I need them in my own classroom -- my copies have been read and reread so often that they are falling apart. Please give me a call if you have any of the above magazines. Laura Jenner -- 748-7510.

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CALENDAR

APRIL 1967

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April

- Apr. 6 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 7:30 p.m., Audubon House
- Apr. 8 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Chantry Flats - 8:00 a.m. Take the San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead, north to Foothill Blvd., east to Santa Anita Ave., then north to end of Santa Anita Canyon Road. Bring Lunch. Prepare for a mile hike to the canyon stream & falls. We had Dippers near the falls last year.

Leaders: Dorothy & Harold Baxter - 355-6300
- Apr. 11 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park. Herb Clarke with "Adventures in Birding". A series of vignettes of his shorter trips, including the birds and scenery of Louisiana and Minnesota.

Program Chairman: Laura Lou Jenner - 748-7510
- Apr. 22 SATURDAY-SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP- Morongo Valley. Meet between 7:00
23 and 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. About 10 miles north of U.S. 60-70-99 on Twenty-nine Palms Highway. Group will camp Saturday night at Finney Lake (about 3 miles south of Calipatria on Highway 111, turn left into Imperial State Waterfowl Management Area and follow signs to Finney Lake). This trip is designed for those who wish to study migrations in Salton Sea area. Bring campfire wood and water. Good motels in Brawley, about half hour south on Highway 111. 125 species recorded last year.

Leader: Jim Huffman FR2-7124
- Apr. 23 ALTERNATE - FIELD TRIP - SUNDAY - Arboretum, 8:30 a.m. Take San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd., north to Huntington Dr., east on Huntington to Baldwin Ave., then north to park entrance. Bring lunch. This trip has been planned for those who do not wish to go to Imperial Valley.

Leader: Bill Watson 661-8570
- Apr. 29 SATURDAY-SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Morongo Valley & High Desert.
30 Meet between 7:00 & 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. (Park is to right of highway as you enter town-one block). See April 22-23 instruction above for route. This trip is planned for those wishing to remain in the High Desert & Morongo Valley area. Motels available in Desert Hot Springs, Yucca Valley, & 29 Palms. Those camping may wish to stay at Indian Cove, Joshua Tree National Monument, about 5 miles east of Joshua Tree. Bring campfire wood and water. See Scott's Oriole here.

Leaders: George & Lillian Venatta 326-7530
- May 4 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 7:30 p.m., Audubon House
- May 9 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park.
- May 13 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Santa Clara River-Elizabeth Lake Road.

Audubon Activities

BY OTTO WIDMAN

Feb. 11-12; MORRO BAY - The day began clear and bright, but ended in fog with 100% non-visibility. Our leaders, Claire and Marian Jobe, met us at the Rock, and then conducted us to the Montana de Oro State Park. In our four hours we saw 96 species. At one stop, we saw an example of why there are fewer Black Brant now than we used to see; a boat came silently through the fog, and the hunter discharged his gun at the little geese resting on the water. The Dept. of Fish & Game tells us that waterfowl are supposed to be shot ON THE WING. Sixty White Pelicans circled for us; Black-crowned Night Herons preened themselves high in eucalyptus trees near the Museum. At Morro Bay State Park campground, I saw my first Chestnut-backed Chickadee; quail ran about camp, roosting in the cypress and pines. Great Horned Owls, R-c Kinglets, Anna's and Allen's Hummers, Cedar Waxwings, Audubon's Warblers, Juncos, and many more were abundant in camp.

Nine members of the Pasadena Audubon Society swelled our number to 37. We were glad to see Olive Alvey and Doug & Peggy Dick. New members Grace Fink and Harriet Swartz started their birding with us on this trip. We hope to see them more often.

The Jobes met us at the Museum in the evening and showed us their slides taken on their two trips to Alaska. Perhaps the most beautiful was one of Mt. McKinley at 3:30 a.m. This program was indeed a bonus on a most enjoyable field trip.

Feb. 14; TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - Pres. Bill Watson announced that he had chosen Arnold Small as chairman of the nominating committee; the Board members chose Eva Mill-sap to represent them; and Catherine Mangold was chosen by the members at large.

Two films were shown: "Valley of the Swans", photographed by the Canadian Wildlife Service; and Walt Disney's "Water Birds". It was good to renew acquaintance with the many indelible scenes all set to music, culminating in the "Hungarian Rhapsody" of bird life.

Feb. 26; CHATSWORTH RESERVOIR - It was a nice, fresh morning when 48 of us convoyed to the reservoir gate. Our first timers and guests were Frieda Bagner, Jean Brandt, Pat Bennett, Tom Condon (also on our Carrizo Plains trip), Pauline Hagen, Paul Kindis, Edward & Jean Rutowski, Sandra Simon, and Barbara & R. W. Westerfield. From San Fernando Audubon Society we had James McClelland as our guest. At one stop we watched the geese resting in the grass; in with the Canadians were about 5 White-fronted. Among the 7 different ducks were some Blue-winged Teal, and the usual Green-winged & Cinnamon. There were a half-dozen Buffleheads. It was a good hawk day with Sharp-shinned, Red-

shouldered, and Cooper's along with the usual Red-tailed & Sparrowhawks. Al Myers pointed out the Semipalmated Plovers. There were Least, Spotted, and Western Sandpipers. We had our first Black-chinned Hummer of the season. For the new birders we had Cassin's & Western Kingbirds to study, and at the same time, Tree and Violet-green Swallows came over. About a hundred Lawrence's Goldfinches were near the intake, feeding on the grasses. Tri-colored Blackbirds, Cowbirds, and Starlings flocked together; Water Pipits were flocking with Lark Sparrows & Horned Larks. The final count was 73 species for the day.

March 1; WILDLIFE FILM - The last glacial advance left a pocket of land in our present Wisconsin untouched; Howard L. Orians took his camera into and around this small area to show us the differences that exist in "The Land the Glaciers Forgot" and the moraine country surrounding it. He had brilliant studies of the wildflowers, and all the wildlife that abounds around the 8675 lakes of Wisconsin. Also, indiscriminate plowing and planting was unfavorably contrasted with superb strip farming. It was a pleasure to follow a man who loves Nature and with his camera has brought back for us his world as he knows it.

Good News for Conservationists

William Penn Mott, Jr., highly respected head of the East Bay Regional Park District, has been named by Governor Reagan as California's new director of park and recreation activities.

As a participant on a panel discussion entitled "Does Conservation Really Pay?" sponsored on Feb. 15 by The Committee for Green Foothills, which was composed of several eminent local conservationists, Mr. Mott made an impassioned plea for a "massive conservation education program" in the elementary schools.

"California is 70% urban, and by 1980 may be 90% urban," he said. "It is assumed now that these people, perhaps through osmosis, develop an understanding of the out-of-doors. This is not true. People need education to understand ecology (the study of man and his environment). If they don't get it, they not only will not understand ecology, they will vandalize our conservation projects." Mr. Mott gave his support to a bill introduced to the State Legislature by Assemblyman Willie Brown to levy a one-cent-per-gallon gas tax during the months of July, August, and September, the months when recreation travel is the highest, the funds of which would be apportioned as follows: 50% for state acquisition and maintenance of parks; 40% for county parks, 5% for regional parks, and 5% to schools for conservation education.

THE SEQUOIA - Sequoia Audubon Society

March, 1967

SNOWY OWLS

From the March, 1967 NOTES of the Seattle Audubon Society:

Snowy Owls too numerous to mention have been reported to the Audubon office. They are still around! They are still occasionally seen in the Seattle area. We are anxious to determine how long they stay.

This is an unusually good year in which to see Snowy Owls in our northern states. Recently Jim Huffman was on a trip to Portland, Ore., and contacted Roy Fiske about the possibility of seeing the owls; Roy directed him to the Tillamook area, and sure enough, there was the owl. While we are on the subject, those of you who like your editor have never seen this species, read this excerpt from SEATTLE AUDUBON NOTES and eat you heart out:

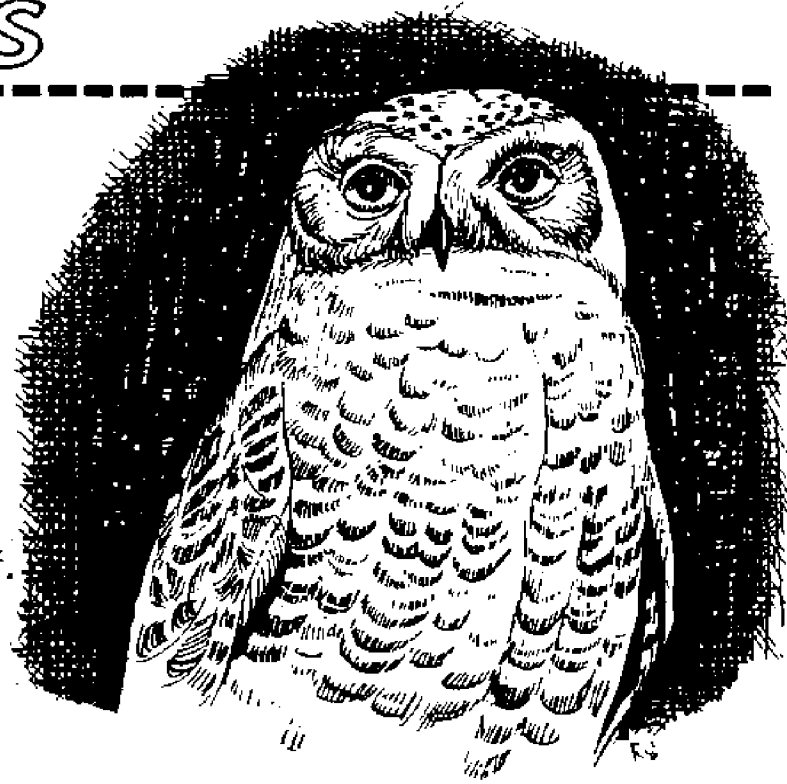
"More about sightings of the handsome Snowy Owls; the Portland, Ore. Journal reports they have been seen "as far south as the Finley Nat'l Wildlife Refuge near Corvallis, on dunelands between South Jetty and Fort Stevens, at the airport where one collided with a plane, near Hood River, in the Tillamook Burn at Camp Olsen, and more in Umatilla County -- and in Washington, at Centralia and Pasco. Dunelands and open farm fields are the places the Snowy Owl is most likely to be seen because he is, used to hunting in the unobstructed space on the Arctic tundra. He hunts in daylight and spends hours perching on hummocks of ground, swivelling his head about, with those great yellow eyes in search of movement in the grass.

"On Wednesday after Christmas we..... took a quick trip up to the shores near Bellingham, and we listed 56 species for the trip, including three species of loon, 75 snow buntings in a tight little flock that rose and circled, flashing their white markings; over 500 Bohemian Waxwings, all whistling loudly in the treetops; Two Harlequin Ducks, Six Whistling Swans, Barrow's Goldeneye, Varied Thrushes, and a total of 15 Snowy Owls -- some on low fence posts and a number on the ground in open meadows just perched there, watching all around.

"Mrs. Arthur R. Robinson, Pres.

This description from Robert Lemmon's book OUR AMAZING BIRDS seems appropriate at this time:

"About every four years, with impressive regularity, the United States as far south as the Carolinas and northern Texas are invaded by thousands of huge pale birds that move on utterly silent wings spreading as much as five feet from tip to tip. They are the famous Snowy Owls, fresh from the Arctic North -- some of them even from



as far as land is known to exist. Food shortage, largely among the lemmings which are subject to serious periodical epidemics, seems to be a factor. So great is the public interest that even the big city newspapers run stories about them.

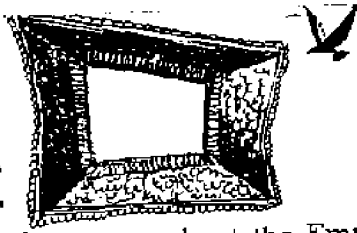
"Occasionally they will allow a person to approach within fifty yards before taking flight, and that will be a red-letter day indeed, especially if you have binoculars to bring vividly to you the beauty of the pencilled markings, the legs and feet feathered to the toe tips as protection against the cold, and the wild glare of those big yellow eyes staring straight at you.

"Back again in their Arctic homeland, which is circumpolar, the Snowies start nesting as early as the first of June. The sites are high points in the rolling tundra. Four to ten eggs are laid, and incubation begins with the laying of the first egg. The first young bird may be almost ready to fly by the time the last emerges from the shell.

"While with us, the Snowy Owl is a silent bird, despite its ability to sound a deep croak or shrill whistle. You are most likely to find one in open, treeless country, perched on a post or high point of ground as it watches for moving rabbits, rats, or mice, sometimes catching a duck on the wing or even snatching a fish from nearby waters. Seashore marshes and dunes are particularly favored haunts, and once a snowy has found a territory to his liking, he is apt to remain until the time comes to go north again."

Friends of Edith Eppler were saddened to learn of her death in February. Her warm personality and intense enjoyment of the out-of-doors will always be remembered by those who had the privilege of knowing her.

THE AUDUBON SCENE



Here are a few items about the Emperor Goose ... The Paso Robles Audubon "Thrasher" informs us that Eben McMillan and John Taft observed two of the birds for several days at Morro Bay - "the first scientifically recorded Emperor Geese ever to journey as far south as San Luis Obispo County" ... Marin Audubon's "Redwood Log" reports that an Emperor was sighted at Limantour Spit in early December ... They may be rare in California, but the February "Alaska Sportsman" devotes four color pages to the joys of Emperor Goose hunting in the Far North, where the bag limit is 12. Seventy-three hunters chartered a DC-6 to fly them into a remote area on the Alaska Peninsula, and, judging by the pictures, the hunters really needed a DC-8 to haul all the geese back home.

THE QUAIL, Feb., 1967
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

Let's see - 12x73 is you figure it.

John Ryder and Ross Geese

Jan. 20 was a wet and windy night; we plopped through an inch or two of water from car to door; it was worth it! John Ryder took us into the Arctic Circle to a snow-covered island in an ice-and-snow-covered lake, the last part of May, early enough to be ahead of the thaw and the arriving creatures. The private plane set him down in the midst of this white area and, as soon as the gear had been unloaded, left with the advice, "Hop to it."

The Ross Geese come in just before egg-laying begins, with hardly time enough to mound nesting materials around the eggs to protect them from the chill winds that blow constantly in June. The hen and the male stay inside their 15-yard territory during the 22-day incubation period, losing half their body weight. Once the goslings are hatched, the family walks to the water and begins a 3-week-long feast plucked from the surface waters. The young birds eat to develop to adult size in three weeks; their parents eat to regain weight lost during the incubation and territorial defense, and to replace flight feathers dropped in the molting process. Toward the end of this time, Eskimos herd the geese into pens and Mr. Ryder and his assistants band as efficiently as safety of the geese allows, for as many hours of the daylight as they can. The Eskimos have kept losses due to panic to an astonishing minimum.

At this stage Mr. Ryder reports most families consist of the adult pair and three goslings. While checking the Ross Geese families at Gray Lodge in the winter months, he finds most parents are accompanied by one gosling.

Population numbers of Ross Geese hold fairly steady at 35,000, nesting only on islands near the Arctic Circle in the Central Barrens, and wintering in our Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley. Early winter is spent in refuges north of the Sutter Buttes, late winter near the Merced Refuge.

Canada has three biologists doing research in Arctic regions; Mr. Ryder in the Central Barrens, one further west (on Lesser Snows), and one in Greenland studying the Greater Snow Geese. Canada screens personnel carefully to prevent exposing the local Eskimos to undesirable "intruders"; unnecessary personnel is discouraged.

Vacationing "intruders" find expense a potent control. After arranging for proper gear, required permits, and air travel as far as commercial planes can take you, arrangements must be made with the private plane to set you down where you are to stay for the "summer". "It costs \$400 just to put your foot in the plane, let alone ride in it. Count on \$800 for the final 150 miles."

Mr. Ryder's fifth summer of study comes this year and he hopes to have sufficient biological information on Ross Geese to earn his doctorate. His photography and his humorous and informative narratives made the time pass swiftly.

THE OBSERVER -Feb., 1967
Sacramento Audubon Society

The Case of the Falling Finches

On the afternoon of Feb. 8, 1967, in Sacramento, Calif., it was reported that about fifty finches had fallen dead as they fed in a plane tree. About 28 birds, American Goldfinches and male House Finches were taken to the F & G autopsy lab. The first six crops contained almond chunks and the fecal test confirmed the others had similar bits. The birds were well-fleshed and apparently in prime condition. Others feeding in the plane tree were as chipper as could be, but every so often one would let go and fall to the ground. This form of sudden death hits every year when someone fails to knock off and dispose of unwanted almonds on their property. Remember to dispose of your old almonds; do not let them stay into the winter rains when moisture sprouts them and provides a poisoned meal for hungry birds.

THE OBSERVER, Sacramento
Audubon Society
March, 1967

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR has published a reprint of its series, "The Call of the Vanishing Wild". Copies for \$1 each are available at the paper, 1 Norway St., Boston, Mass. 02115.

Lake Minatare evoked the whinny of the Eastern (!) Screech Owl.

Western Nebraska had a fantastic number of Franklin Gulls on the lakes, streams and sewage disposals, hundreds of thousands. Interspersed were to be found the Ring-billed and Bonaparte's. Among the shorebirds were Least and Stilt Sandpipers. Closing out the Pumpkin Creek Valley, a cattle and wheat ranch area, were the Clay-colored Sparrow, Roughlegged Hawk, and Green-wing Teal.

The next trip bird was a scraggly Bald Eagle slowly coursing above the pines on the Yellowstone River in the Park. Very impressive was the clean-cut colored Osprey as he dived into the cold river or rested on an overhanging branch. Common Merganser, American Goldeneye, Gray Jay, and Clark's Nutcracker ushered in the last trip lifer, #34, the Trumpeter Swan! Last bird of the river was the Spotted Sandpiper. 8700' up a mountainside produced an unusually tame Ruffed Grouse, Water Pipits and Williamson's Sapsuckers.

Jackson Lake of the Tetons gave us a beautiful Sandhill Crane. Lunch on the Nevada desert saw the Pinon Jay. And the trip rang down on the Eastern Phoebe at Scotty's Castle in Death Valley. Then-- Playa del Rey and Home Sweet Home!

About the author -- Robert Conner can remember being interested in birds since the age of five, when he had a pet pelican in Western Nebraska. During the War, he was a pilot and had the opportunity to roam the jungles of Australia and New Guinea, although he was not truly identifying birds as to species. After the War, while working as a seasonal ranger at Scotts Bluff National Monument (which commemorates the Oregon, Mormon, and Pony Express Trails) he was introduced to Peterson and has been noting different sightings ever since. He was been a member of L.A. Audubon for about six years. His four-year-old son received his Peterson and adult field glasses for Christmas! --The colloquial bird-names mentioned in this article may strike a chord of recognition among our members from the Middle West and the South. Mr. Conner has been a teacher and coach for thirteen years, in California, and before that, in Nebraska.

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Deadlines: Feature Article, by the 1st of the month; announcements, etc., by the 10th of the month; regular columns, by the 15th of the month

DON'T FORGET TO SEND THAT
CHECK TO THE CONDOR FUND!

By David Gaines

By the end of February, nesting of resident species in the lowlands was in progress. Wintering birds had begun to disperse, and the first spring migrants had appeared. Robins and Waxwings were still abundant. Western and Cassin's Kingbirds, Barn Swallows, and Costa's, Rufous, and Allen's Hummingbirds were reported. Less usual nesting species, found by Shirley Wells, included Grasshopper Sparrow and White-tailed Kite at Dana Point.

Along the Coast, waterfowl numbers were strong, perhaps due to the "concentration effect" of dwindling habitat. In Orange County, Pintails, Teal and Widgeon were particularly abundant. Several Blue-winged Teal and Hooded Mergansers were located. Off the coast, Scoters were in scattered flocks, loons generally common, grebes occasionally in large rafts. Among the more unusual birds were the following:

- 2 Common Scoters in Ventura County
- 3 Louisiana Herons at Huntington Harbor and one at Newport
- An Oldsquaw at Huntington Beach
- A Glaucous Gull at Malibu Lagoon

As most everyone has realized by now, the Cattle Egret has established itself as a fairly common wintering bird. Reports this winter have included almost all suitable farmland south of Ventura. Flocks of from a dozen to several dozen birds have been found in several areas. In the future, Cattle Egrets will probably increase their numbers, and eventually breed.

The Salton Sea has always proved an excellent birding area. This winter was no exception, with record numbers of Snow and Canadian Geese, many Ross', and even a Blue. Longspurs, primarily McCown's, continued to be seen into February. These are probably regular in winter. Another regular bird, often overlooked, is the Stilt Sandpiper. Sixteen were observed in February near Federal Refuge Headquarters. One must be careful not to overlook these inconspicuous shorebirds. The following points may be helpful to the uninitiated:

- 1) Associate with & act like dowitchers
- 2) Smaller than Dowitcher, paler, shorter down-curved bill
- 3) Flight pattern like Wilson's Phalarope or Yellowlegs

During April, numbers of migrants will be rapidly increasing. This is an exciting time to be afield. Numbers and variety of species is never better, and birds are in full spring plumage. Almost everywhere except the mountains can provide an enjoyable and rewarding day of

Nature Conservancy sponsors spring wildflower tours

April 15-16, 1967

Tours of four Los Angeles County Wildflower and Wildlife Sanctuaries will again be conducted by the Southern California chapter of the Nature Conservancy. Over two thousand people visited these sanctuaries on Nature Conservancy Wildflower tours last spring.

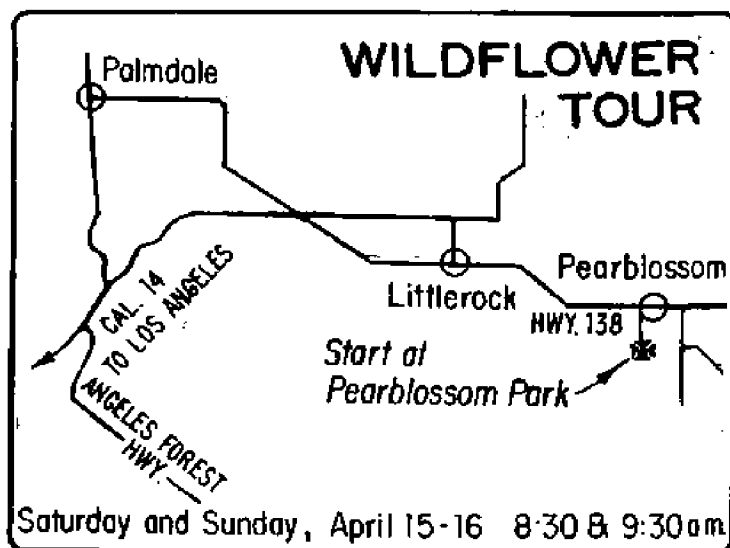
From the start, at Pearblossom Park, to the finish near Hi Vista, the tours cover about 52 miles. Experienced naturalists at each stop explain the flora, fauna, and ecology of the area. Near the lunch stop, at Joshua Tree State Park, are the optional attractions of the Hi Vista Wildflower Festival and Antelope Valley Indian Museum.

Individual tour maps are given out at the starting point to each driver. A donation of one dollar per car is asked to help defray expenses.

Those attending should bring water, lunch, a full gas tank, outdoor clothes, walking shoes, camera, binoculars, hand lens, and a field guide to the desert flowers.

Tours start at 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. at Pearblossom Park, but no tours will leave after 10 a.m. Pearblossom is located on Highway 138 about 15 mi. southwest of Palmdale; approximately an hour and a half drive from Los Angeles.

All who are interested in preserving our wildflowers are invited to support these tours. A Nature Conservancy membership or donation of one dollar per car entitles you to free maps and information.



birding. Be sure, however, not to trespass without permission. Doing so gives birders a bad image, and can cause the unnecessary closure of excellent birding areas.