

A Frontier Naturalist: William Gambel

By Josephine Vaughn



PART 1

Flaunting its autumnal feathery yellow flowers, the rabbit brush (*chrysothamnus nauseosus*) had been with the mule train of goods and riders through the mountains since they had left Santa Fe, way back in September. A swath had been cleared between the brush and the trees of pinyon and juniper through which the mule train was descending into Cajon Pass, in the San Bernardino mountains, along the Spanish Trail, Los Angeles bound. Astride one of the mules rode young William Gambel of Philadelphia. Atop the bushes and trees would be his namesake White-crowned Sparrow singing its plaintive song. Undoubtedly the only one of the party to listen to the little birds, he was the first naturalist to come into California over the mountains, and the first ornithologist to do any serious work there.

The mule train looked like the typical traders' caravan; but these pack animals were laden as well with household goods and personal belongings of the "migrants" known as the Workman-Rowland party. When John Rowland arrived in Los Angeles in November, 1841, he submitted a list of twenty-five names to the government authorities. Included in the list was "William Gambel, naturalist." William Gambel - versatile, dedicated, and a good field man - had had his nineteenth birthday a month after leaving Independence, Missouri, for Santa Fe.

"At nineteen?" the reader might interrupt. Audubon folk know many young men so qualified; ¿verdad?

At fifteen he had met Thomas Nuttall, two years back from a journey into the Northwest collecting botanical and zoological specimens with the Nathaniel Wyeth party. How did young William become acquainted with the older man? Magnetic fate brings lads with an enthusiasm for natural history to the right person.

In November, 1839, Gambel had taken his first trip with Nuttall. The boy was enchanted with rocks, shells, minerals, plants, reptiles - but birds were his first love.

Where are the words to explain "birds were his first love?" Nuttall knew. In 1840 he gave the name "*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*" to the new sparrow that was brought back from "near Fort Wallah Wallah" by John Kirk Townsend, the young ornithologist companion of Nuttall on the Wyeth expedition.

The November trip with Nuttall was one of many Gambel took before he started on his own "expedition" in 1841 from Independence joining a party of traders.

Townsend had had his "Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains" published in 1839, which, of course, Gambel had read. If this "Narrative" is not in a paper back edition, it should be.

A soothsayer could have told Gambel that in April, 1849, he, too, would be taking the road from Independence to California as William Gambel, M. D. - but would leave no record of the trip. The young naturalist has been described as a meteor flashing across the sky - his light fading away in December of that year in the little gold-mining town of Rose's Bar on the Yuba River in California where he died of typhoid fever.

continued on next page .

Now with youth's "It can't happen to me," he would have agreed with Townsend's entry on April 28, 1834, "It was altogether so exciting. . . but not so much so that Gambel would forget his mother and sisters, Maggie and Eliza, in Philadelphia.

Independence, Missouri - May 4, 1841

My dear Mother,

I shall start here tomorrow for Santa Fe and this is the last chance I shall have for writing which. . . will be a year or more. I hope you will get along well (Gambel's father, William, Sr. had died when the boy was nine years old, and his mother had supported the family chiefly by teaching) and not be anxious about me for you know I am a careful fellow and would sooner run than fight. There will be a party of about sixty men all mounted on mules. . . . Tell my sisters not to be frightened. . . I came up the Mississippi to St. Louis staying awhile (Did he visit Nuttall's friend, Dr. George Engleman, M. D. of the Missouri Botanic Society - Nuttall had given him a letter - to make arrangements about sending the doctor plants that would be collected between Missouri and New Mexico?) I came up the Missouri to this place which is the last settlement. . .

Your affectionate son

William Gambel

Independence was a pleasant town set in rolling hill country with wild flowers coming into bloom - and it was the first week of May on the Mississippi Flyway!

Council Grove, one hundred and forty-five miles away, was the rendezvous for all the caravans - the take-off place into the prairies.

Along the Trail, hickory, elm, walnut, oak, were abundant. Pileated Woodpeckers thundered on the trunks. Clouds of wild pigeons soared above the plodding mules. In grassy openings the Golden Plovers covered the ground as far "as the eye could reach." Prairie Chickens rose from the grass to scatter in all directions away from the feet of the oxen and the mules. In a small rush-rimmed pool water could not be seen because of the feathered blanket of ducks. In a cottonwood beside the pool a warbler sang, "Just like along Schuylkill," Gambel would murmur.

It is certain he watched for and perhaps saw the Parakeets in the bottomlands like Townsend, who saw flocks of the little golden "gabby birds."

At noonings - The Lone Elm, 110 Mile Creek, Bluff Creek - there were ideal collecting spots for the plant press. Blue spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginica*) and light red phlox (*Phlox aristata*) bespeckled the ground. Yellow and white erythroni-

ums were everywhere. During the night, the owls and the whip-poor-wills were company.

Its devotees of Audubon field trips grimace at the announcement "We will meet at 5:30 a.m. at Soda Lake to see the Sandhill Cranes," and a dim view is taken of arising groggily while still dark with a long freeway ride ahead, consider problems of this young man who wanted to see new birds.

The party came to Glorieta Ridge about the second of July - a record trip. Below in the valley to the northeast lay the Royal City of the Holy Faith of St. Francisco de Asis. It is wondered if Gambel knew that this little village had been named after a man who loved birds, too?

On July 25, 1841 another letter was written to be sent to Mrs. Elizabeth Gamble (her son always spelled her name thusly but his own "Gambel").

My Dear Mother;

This is the first opportunity that I have had of writing. . . It has been so long since you have heard from me that you must have nearly forgotten me, but it is different with me when standing guard or in among Indians I would often think of home and the dangers I was in. We met about half way the whole body of Arapaho Indians consisting of about 500 warriors but we by giving them a great many presents got clear of them without fighting and when we approached the Rocky Mountains we met with Eutaw Indians about 400 which attacked us and we being only 90 men had a great deal of trouble to get clear of them, they fired on us nearly all the forenoon from the hills that were around us. We also suffered much from lack of water sometimes having to do without it for two days. I got through it safely without even a cold from laying on the ground with nothing but the sky above me and the earth below and perhaps Indians around us for nearly three months - but I am half way to where I am going - to California. I will write to you but it will take the letter five to six months to go to you. It is a very long trail. . . as I can but jog jog on a mule from morning until night. I am now in a different country having to speak Spanish altogether (He had had an aptitude for Latin and Greek in his Philadelphia school days.) I have studied it and now can speak it pretty well - manners and customs are also very different but anything suits me.

On the road here Buffalo were very abundant on the Arkansas River. I saw at least ten miles square black with them. It is the finest meat in the world and we

lived on it all the way out.
Give my love to my sisters,
Your affectionate son.

William Gambel

Nothing is more quickly forgotten than discomfort. The foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains would have been tinted with golden *Actinia* (*Hymenoxys argenta*) and growing nearby, the pink puffy balls of the seeds on the Apache Plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*) whose yellow flowers were hardly noticeable. The flowers and seeds of many plants would have been in his press, too, but only one is known for certain - a lovely daisy with a golden center (*Erigeron cinerum*).

Gambel must have had a bulging package of this collection he wished to send back to St. Louis, which he entrusted to a man returning to Independence. His bundle of specimens was never received!

In the United States National Museum in Washington D. C. there is a collection of seven reptiles made by Gambel which were labeled "California" But now it has been determined that they could only have come from this part of New Mexico - one the whip-tailed lizard (*Cnemidophorus perplexus*). This specimen - USNM 3060 - is a female like all other whip-tails collected - no male being found.

Collecting and keeping records may have taken all of Gambel's time so he paid little attention to the political talk in Santa Fe - Americanos doing it - New Mexicans didn't dare. Governor Manuel Armijo, with all the characteristics of a story-book villain, was about to reach the peak of his hate for the "gringo." He tried to hide it - his only income being the exorbitant custom duties collected from the traders. But incidents and rumors were multiplying to make him believe that the Texans would be taking over New Mexico.

William Workman and John Rowland had lucrative businesses near Santa Fe - and families. Nicolasa Workman and Maria Rowland were citizens of New Mexico, of little importance to Armijo if his suspicions were confirmed that their husbands were encouraging the Texans.

Benjamin Wilson, courageous as his famous grandson of the distant future - General George S. Patton - valued discretion. There were others, too, who thought it wise to leave for that other Mexican possession - California.

About September 1, 1841, the mule train left Abiquiu, the rendezvous fifty miles from Santa Fe. It was the first party of Americans to travel the Spanish Trail since William Wolfskill and his company had pioneered it in 1830. From lack of written records the exact route is vague but during October these folks pushed on through country that, well, did you ever travel from St. George, Utah, to Las Vegas, Nevada, trying to get over that desert stretch as quickly as possible?

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About the Author. . .

When someone asks me when I started birding, I tell them what Dr. Loye Miller said when asked the same question - "When my mother was born." Mother knew the birds around our yard in Boise, Idaho, where I spent a great deal of my childhood; but it was on a camping trip to the Arrowrock Dam, that was in the construction period, that that one bird occurred - The One Bird - that is the opening for most folds. It was a bird that mocked. Mother was intrigued and when we were home again with a bird book available she said that it was "the long tailed chat" (the name then). I have wondered since if THE Bird might have been a mocker, but it was the chat that started the classes and newspaper articles and new friends and the Proposed Sawtooth National Park campaign. I have said that I "cut my conservation teeth" when I was nine years old.

We left Idaho or I think the Sawtooths might be a National Park today. In South Dakota on the Missouri near Sioux City, Iowa, it was the Wood Thrush this time. With Florence Merriam Bailey's Handbook of Western Birds, we learned to recognize the Dickcissel, Brown Thrasher, Red-headed Woodpecker, and the birds that came to the bird bath and feeder. The County Superintendent of Schools asked me to write a "piece" about birds of the County when I was in the 8th grade which she sent around to the country schools.

We came to California and the birds looked different so I felt frustrated and wouldn't pay any attention until I took Dr. Joseph Grinnell's Vertebrate Zoology course at Berkeley.

It really became an obsession - this birding mania - when I had a cabin at Crestline in the late 1930's.

The Audubon Camp at Norden indoctrinated me into the whole ecology conception. That was in 1948. In 1949 we started our own Audubon Society in the San Bernardino Valley.

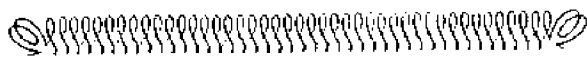
When anyone says "Are you still interested in birds?" I feel like quoting a man I heard of who was asked the same question. He said it was like asking if he were still breathing!

Jo Vaughn

THE DESERT PROTECTIVE COUNCIL...



---will hold its Annual Meeting on October 13 at 1:00 p.m. in the Lecture Hall of the College of the Desert in Palm Desert. Gordon Cologne will be the featured speaker.



AUDUBON ACTIVITIES



August 24 - BOLSA CHICA LAGOON & NEW-PORT BACKBAY What does one expect from Bolsa Chica? At first glance it is a mud flat with sulphurous scum in uneven patches. Beneath low-lying fog it is even more dismal, and the winter-plumaged shorebirds seem lost, - gray birds on gray sand beneath a gray sky. A Willet in flight seems dazzling. The terns drift by and those on the bank take identity: Caspian first, the easiest to identify, then the Elegant, Royal, Forster's, & dozens of Least Terns. Then a kingfisher splashes the scum near two Lesser Scaup, retrieving a small fish. Dowitchers and Godwits stand out as brown patches. Sandpipers fly by in small formations, and a Dunlin, still retaining some of his summer plumage, is almost a welcome relief. When the sun shows, the Snowy Egret flashes brightly. The list now grows: House Finches and Savannah Sparrows are in the salt bushes; Song Sparrows sing briefly. Bolsa Chica is alive at last. Ring-billed Gulls & Long-billed Curlews are in the air. Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers scrounge for crustaceans. A Great Blue Heron crosses the horizon. An Anna's Hummer and a Barn Swallow make appearances. The 27 of us line the bank, swinging our binocs from one species to another.

Newport Backbay - now in beautiful balmy weather, quite different from the 103 degrees of the day before, adds Sora Rail to our list. Ellen Stephenson points out a one-legged Knot. A noisy jet stirs an Osprey that feeds to the displeasure of Pintails, Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal, and terns - his enormous wingspread dwarfing the others. Our list of 53 species is rounded out with Wilson's and Northern Phalaropes, Golden Plover, and Ruddy Turnstone. --- Otto Widmann, Leader

September 10 - EVENING MEETING - Highlight of the evening was the presentation of the American Association for Conservation Information "AWARD OF MERIT, 1967" to Bill Watson. This was in recognition of Bill's efforts to establish Mt. Pinos as an official Condor Observation Point. Bill graciously accepted the award on behalf of all those who took part in this effort. The presentation was made by Mr. Lawrence H. Cloyd, Regional Manager for California's Department of Fish and Game. Mr. Cloyd also brought along films explaining the work of his Department. Social Chairman Caroline Adams set a lovely table for refreshments following the program while Olga Clarke busily sold items down at Audubon House.

September 14 - MALIBU LAGOON Although the weather was considerably overcast, the trip was attended by twenty-five birders. The lagoon pro-

Mr. John L. Angier
7550 Westlawn Avenue
Los Angeles 90046

Mr. & Mrs. Mark C. Bloome Jr.
550 So. Barrington #1122
Los Angeles 90049

Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Brodie
619 Resolano Drive
Pacific Palisades 90272

Mr. Louis Francis Doherty
802 No. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles 90029

Miss Irma Franklin
1421 Kelton Avenue
Los Angeles 90024

Mr. Paul M. Genge
6077 1/2 Selma Avenue
Los Angeles 90028

Mrs. Anne B. Kahle
21418 Entrada Road
Topanga 90290

Dr. & Mrs. Gerald Maisel
103 No. Anita Avenue
Los Angeles 90049

Mrs. Virginia W. Miller
6105 Barrons Drive
Los Angeles 90048

Miss Elizabeth B. Sawyer
234 So. Avenue 24
Los Angeles 90031

per was not very productive. Semipalmated Plover, Black Turnstone, three species of terns and two gulls were spotted. The tobacco plant upstream from the bridge was host to numerous hummingbirds most of which were Allen's and Anna's.

Continuing up the coast to the Santa Clara River we saw more terns, gulls, innumerable Northern Phalaropes, a Common Gallinule, Ruddy Ducks and Cinnamon Teal. The outstanding birds of the day, we thought, were the Parasitic Jaegers, which were very active quite close to our observation point. A total of sixty-seven species were spotted.

We were very pleased to have new birders on our trip: Morro and Florence Sheets, Helen Pellman, Bob and Bonnie Kennedy, Marny Martin and Joni Harris, all of whom proved to be enthusiastic companions. We hope to see them often on society trips. --- Les Wood, Leader



HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE
 PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 46. 876-0202

Miss Laura Jenner, President
 639 West 32nd Street
 Los Angeles 90007 748-7510

Mrs. Abigail King, Executive Secretary
 700 Halliday Avenue
 Los Angeles 90049 476-5121



October 1968

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OCTOBER

- Oct. 3 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p. m. , Audubon House
- Oct. 5 SATURDAY - SPECIAL FIELD TRIP - UPPER NEWPORT - The Friends of Newport Bay have sponsored this trip to acquaint people with the value and importance of preserving this estuarine area which is threatened by development. Leadership will include marine biologists and archaeologists. Meet at 9:00 a. m. on the road near the salt dikes.
- Oct. 8 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p. m. , Great Hall, Plummer Park. "Wild Heritage", presented by Loran E. Perry of the Desert Protective Council. This is a study of the ecology of the flora and fauna in our deserts and mountains. It depicts many desert animals and birds in their natural environment. Audubon House open before and after program for sales and library. Come to the meeting and bring an interested friend.
- Oct. 12 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Cabrillo Beach and Harbor Park. Meet at 8:00 a. m. at the Cabrillo Beach Museum, 3720 Stephen White Drive, San Pedro. Take Harbor Freeway to San Pedro, go south of Pacific Avenue to 36th Street, then turn left. Good for fall migration.
 Leader: Edward Anacker TE 3-3636
- Oct. 27 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - NEWPORT BACKBAY. Meet at 8:00 a. m. at Golden West Ponds near Huntington Beach. This is on Golden West Street at Talbert Avenue, 3 miles south of the San Diego Freeway, or 3 miles north of Pacific Coast Highway. Excellent for migrating and early wintering waterbirds.
 Leader: Dick Wilson 866-0088
- Nov. 9 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - SANTA BARBARA & GOLETA. We will be birding from Santa Barbara to the Goleta Slough.
 ALWAYS BRING lunch and binoculars on field trips
 PLEASE no pets, and no collecting of any kind
 EVERYONE WELCOME AT ALL ACTIVITIES

We are very pleased to be able to announce the addition of two volunteers to the Audubon House staff. Mrs. Georgia Walters, recently retired from a professional career, will help at the house one day a week and will also fill in during occasional brief absences of Olive Alvey and Louise White. She will also be a regular member of the Western Tanager Mailing detail.

Mr. Hans Hjorth, already known to many members through his attendance at evening meetings and field trips is helping Otto Widmann in the garden as well as doing many small jobs in the house. Perhaps his most important contribution to the society is his taking full responsibility for getting the Tanagers to the post office each month, as well as helping with the folding.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

BALANCE SHEET

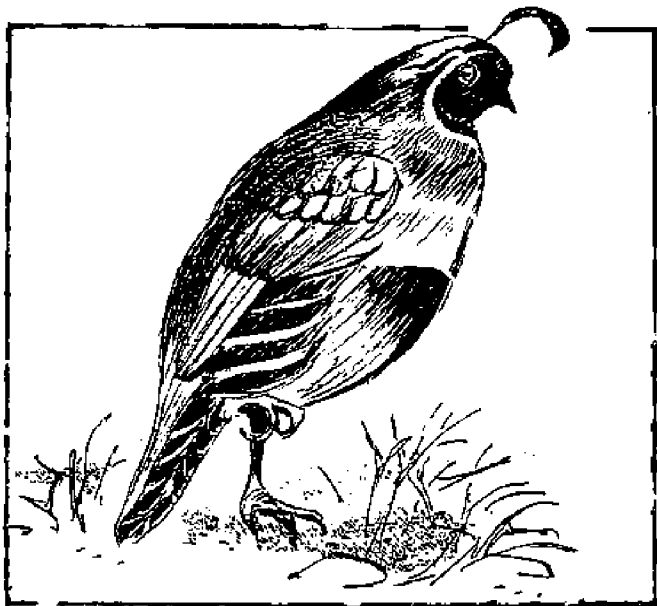
AS AT JUNE 30, 1968

<u>ASSETS</u>	
Total Cash and Marketable Securities	\$20,955.62
Inventory - Merchandise for Sale	2,591.85
Total Current Assets	\$23,547.47
Permanent Assets (Furniture, fixtures, etc)	10,498.82
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$34,046.29</u>
<u>LESS LIABILITIES</u>	
Condor Fund Contributions to be paid	\$ 961.50
<u>NET WORTH</u>	<u>\$33,084.79</u>

SOCIETY OFFICERS - 1968-69

Miss Laura Jenner, President 639 W. 32nd Street, Los Angeles 90007	748-7510
Herbert Clarke, First Vice President 2027 El Arbolita Drive, Glendale 91208	249-5537
Richard S. Wilson, Second Vice President & Sanctuary Chmn. 9853 Potter Street, Bellflower 90706	866-0088
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Miss Frances Kohn, Recording Secretary 5068 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles 90027	665-0171
Mrs. Richard S. Wilson, Registrar of Members 9853 Potter Street, Bellflower 90706	866-0088
William T. Watson, Junior Past President, Conservation Chmn. 1249 No. Edgemont Avenue, Apt. 12, Los Angeles 90029	661-8570
Bruce Broadbooks, Field Trips 7224 McCool Avenue, Los Angeles 90045	670-8210
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Mrs. Moulton K. Johnson, Membership 421 25th Street, Santa Monica 90402	395-0713
Mrs. Harry Hoffman, Librarian 4922 Rosewood Avenue, Los Angeles 90004	463-8650
Mrs. Donald L. Adams, Social 705 26th Street, Manhattan Beach 90266	372-5536

Gambel may have come later through Cajon Pass. A letter written by him differs in the arrival time of the rest of the party. J. H. Lyman, M. D., one of the twenty-five on Rowland's list, became adamant in his objections when he saw some New Mexicans of the party capture a man, woman and child as slaves. His opposition was so bitter that in a letter to a friend he wrote that he left the party. Gambel may have gone with him, for their accounts of thirst are similar. They may have been together when Gambel made the first collection of a desert quail "*Lophortyx gambelii gambelii*" (Gambel's crested quail).



Dr. Joseph Grinnell of the University of California at Berkeley examined the mounted specimen of the quail at the National Museum in Washington D. C. in October, 1929, reporting that it was a male and very little faded. Gambel himself noted "This beautiful species I discovered on the eastern range of the California mountains. Several spiral podded species of *Prosopsis* afforded them excellent covert and the seeds of the bushy mallows *chenopodiums* and *artemisias* probably served them as food."

At last El Pueblo de Nuestra la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula! The village looked like another Santa Fe- weather-worn houses, men leaning against walls with sombreros over their eyes, women washing clothes in the creek that flowed through the town. Along this creek Gambel may have collected the little woodpecker with the black and white ladder design on its back - "*Dendrocopos nuttallii*" (Nuttall's woodcutter). "This pretty species I shot in a willow thicket near the Pueblo of Los Angeles, Upper California, on December 10, 1841." (Grinnell said it would be near the center of the present city. It is USNM 3337)

Another letter to Mrs. Elizabeth R. (Richardson) Gambel:

Pueblo of Los Angeles, Upper California
January 14, 1842

Dear Mother,

You have perhaps given me up for lost but thank God I am safe. . . after a long and dangerous journey. I have got through safely without sickness or accident. We left on the first of September from Santa Fe and arrived here the last of November. . . three months traveling over Rocky Mts., barren deserts sometimes having to do without water for 2 or 3 days at a time, and toward the last almost starving for want of provisions . . . suffering other difficulties I have not time to mention (Others traveling over the Spanish Trail tell of the trouble with the Digger Indians that was worse than any encountered on the Santa Fe Trail) but I am glad that. . . I am now on the banks of the broad Pacific Ocean. I have not time to write you a long letter as a vessel has arrived in the port of San Pedro which is about thirty miles from here and sails in the morning so that I have just time to write to you and Mr. Nuttall.

California is a fine rich country and to which many people are coming to emigrate, and in a few years I expect it will be under the government of the British or Americans. They raise immense numbers of cattle and horses here which you can buy for about nothing. A good fat ox only costs three dollars and you can take the hide to the store and sell it for two dollars so that the meat only costs a dollar. The best horses can be bought for 5-10 dollars (There is in existence a receipt for a mule that he bought in Independence for sixty dollars "without recourse") Give my love to my sisters - Your affectionate son

William Gambel

In February he climbed the rocky cliffs of a canyon on Santa Catalina Island and found a brand new snapdragon - lovely shrub about five feet high with scarlet flowers and shiny leaves. Nuttall enthusiastically named it "*Gambelia speciosa*" (Gambel's beauty) but in botany books of today the plant is "*Galvezia speciosa*." He started north in April - on one of those "5-10 dollar horses"?

..... To Be Continued.....

SEA & SAGE PELAGIC TRIP PLANNED

Again this year the Sea & Sage Audubon Society will be having a pelagic trip out of the Ventura Marina. It will be Sunday, October 27, leaving at 7:00 a.m. The boat is expected to visit Santa Rosa and Anacapa Islands. Reservations, at \$8 per person, can be made by contacting: Margary Ernst, 1019 Riverine, Santa Ana 92701 (714) 543-4486.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

By G. SHUMWAY SUFFEL

With the coming of October the feel of Fall is in the air. The worst of the hot weather is past, and most of the summer birds are gone -- the vast majority of the orioles, grosbeaks and hummers (except for Anna's) have left for the south. The migrants are still moving through, and the winter birds are arriving; the shorebirds are here already; the divers, gulls, ducks and geese will increase until the first of the year; while our winter garden birds should arrive in numbers during October -- Audubon Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows come early in the month, with Robins and Cedar Waxwings arriving when the storms drive them down from the mountains.

Interesting "firsts" for the season were: a Baird's Sandpiper at Upper Newport Bay on August 10th by Jerry Johnson (others were seen at Malibu, Capistrano Beach, and the Salton Sea); a Solitary Sandpiper at the Hollister Ranch (west of Santa Barbara) on the 21st by Shirley Wells (others at the Capistrano Beach Sewage Plant and near the north end of the Salton Sea in a fresh water pond); Jerry Johnson also noted three Pectoral Sandpipers at the same sewer ponds on September 2nd; at least three Golden Plovers were found at Upper Newport Bay by the Pasadena A. S. on August 23rd (another was at Harbor Lake on September 11th found by Richard Bradley.) Early in the season they retain the golden glow on the upper parts and one bird even showed some black on the belly. Two Virginia's Warblers, in different plumages, were found by Russel Scalf and Richard Milne at Palos Verdes in early September; Jean Muller reported a small flock of Cedar Waxwings at her Rolling Hills home on September 7th (very early); while, just over the hill, in San Pedro Shirley Wells had a few Cedar Waxwings and a Swainson's Thrush on the tenth.

Arnold Small once wrote in this column, "Rare birds pop up like mushrooms after a rain." Aside from making this mushroom-lover hungry, this serves to introduce our reports of "rare birds". An Eastern Kingbird perched on a weedstem in the salicornia marsh at Sandyland (just southeast of Santa Barbara) and competed for insects with a Western Kingbird on an adjoining weedstem. Three days later, on September 6th, Sandy Wohlgermuth found another Eastern Kingbird (or the same one) at Tapia Park in Malibu Canyon. Jerry Johnson, who has been haunting the south coast birding spots on his vacation, discovered a Lark Bunting on the fence surrounding the often mentioned sewer ponds at Capistrano Beach. A Bendire's Thrasher found by Russel Scalf at Palos Verdes stayed long enough to be seen by several other eager birders. The Chimney Swifts, reported last month, stayed at Cardiff until at least early September (Harold Baxter and the Bradleys.) A female Orchard Oriole (almost identical with the female Hooded Oriole except for smaller size) was studied and compared sizewise with a Western Tanager by Guy McCaskie on September 8th at the headquarters of the Salton Sea Refuge near Westmoreland. Two

Reddish Egrets were found in the marsh at the foot of Torrey Pines grade (north of San Diego) in early September. Two Skuas, seen by Gene Cardiff, off Morro Bay on Labor Day give promise of further sightings on the upcoming pelagic trips. After a summer's absence, one Blue-footed Booby wandered north from the Gulf of California to the north end of the Salton Sea in late August to be seen by Guy McCaskie and Ralph Mancke.



It's usually more glamorous to observe and report rare birds than it is to make significant quantitative observations. Ralph Mancke took advantage of an extreme high tide at the Seal Beach marshes to count the Clapper Rails on September first. There were thirteen. This may seem a large number to those of us who treasure every sighting, but, compared with the more than 200 seen by Arnold Small at the same place and under similar tide conditions on January 10, 1959, it is disturbing. The Light-footed Rail (our So. California race of the Clapper Rail) is a resident of the tidal marshes, so that season of count is not a major factor, and we must also realize that these counts are not absolute, but the great divergence in numbers can not be questioned. The Light-footed Rail is much reduced and is in imminent danger of extinction because of loss of its tidal marsh habitat. I count only eight tidal marshes with habitat favorable for these rails (two of these are scheduled for development and others are marginal because of partial development.) These eight marshes (or six as they may soon be) contrast with more than twenty virgin salicornia marshes a hundred (or even fifty) years ago. The Fish & Wildlife Service is aware of this situation, but is helpless unless the Light-footed Rail is put on the "endangered species" list.

Ralph also counted eight Baird's Sandpipers at an alkaline pond in Panamint Valley (just west of Death Valley) in mid August. It is not only the large number of birds that is of interest, but the fact that they were east of the mountains, where they are seldom reported. This may not be too surprising as they migrate down the "backbone" of the continents -- through the high Rockies to the Andes of South America. Other observations from eastern California or along the Colorado River would be of great interest.

Again in October, the best localities for birding will be along the coast -- the canyons, peninsulas, marshes, and of course the Salton Sea.

Addenda: readers will notice that the same names appear in this column month after month. This is partially because these are the active birders, most of whom are known to me, but primarily because they write or telephone their observations to me. The deadline for this column is the tenth of the preceeding month, but reports should be in as early as possible. Please write directly to me at 1105 No. Holliston Avenue, Pasadena, 91104, or call 797-2965.

OPERATING STATEMENT
YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1968

ACTIVITY

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Net</u>
Sales of Merchandise	3,445.06	1,666.15	1,778.91
Western Tanager	149.75	1,629.50	1,479.75
Conservation (yearly dues - other organizations)		79.80	79.80
Annual Dinner	845.00	894.00	49.00
	<u>\$ 4,439.81</u>	<u>\$ 4,269.45</u>	<u>\$ 170.36</u>
Other Income			
National Dues	3,635.80		
Capital Gains	790.97		
Gifts to Society	407.00		
Miscellaneous	426.93		
Other Expense			
Salaries & Wages		1,910.92	
Audubon House & Office		638.33	
Insurance		115.00	
Audit		130.00	
Scholarships		105.41	
Sales Tax		108.14	
Miscellaneous		172.09	
	<u>\$ 5,260.70</u>	<u>\$ 3,179.89</u>	<u>\$ 2,080.81</u>

SUMMARY

Total Income	\$ 9,700.51
Total Expense	\$ 7,449.34

NET INCOME

\$ 2,251.17

*** MORE BIRDS ***

This interesting account was also sent along by Shum Suffel:

Two of our more adventurous members, Dennis Coskren and Jim Schlesinger, made a bird oriented safari through Northern and Central Mexico in Dennis' "character car", which is so familiar to many L. A. A. S. members. This is an old van which spent a little time upside down, and has had no body work (or paint) since -- the doors are tied shut with rope, small springs are replaced by rubber bands, larger ones by bailing wire. Jim puts it briefly, "What Dennis lacks in preparation he makes up for in ingenuity."

The trip was a great success. There were life birds by the score in Mexico, but these should await expanded treatment. The birds of interest to us are two birds so rare they are not even on the A. O. U. checklist. A night's stop at Guadalupe Canyon (in extreme S. E. Arizona) produced not only the calls, but also a brief view in the headlights, of a Ridgeway's Whip-poor-will (recorded only at this one place in the U. S. and then only a few times.) Later on they stopped at Falcon Dam in Texas, and a Ringed Kingfisher, a rare vagrant from the South, was seen by them. Knowing Dennis' proclivity for finding unusual birds, their full Mexican list adventures should make interesting reading.

This note was received from Dr. Thomas R. Howell of the UCLA Zoology Department:

While on a fishing trip, on August 25, 1968, the four undersigned UCLA zoology department graduate students sighted an adult female Frigate-bird (Fregata magnificens). It was seen at about 10 a. m. flying approximately 3 miles off the coast of Manhattan Beach, Los Angeles County, California. It was soaring in a direction which would have taken it to open sea, 50 to 75 feet above the ocean, when last seen. (Signed):
Carl E. Rischer, Edward Shallenberger,
Kenneth Asplund, Margaret Fusari



The AUDUBON CENTER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA cordially invites the members and friends of the Los Angeles Audubon Society to visit the Center during the time it is open -- MONDAYS thru SATURDAYS from 9 to 5. The staff has recently completed a map and descriptive pamphlet for the Theodore Payne Trail. Other areas of the Sanctuary are also available for a variety of quiet nature observations.



BIGHORN SHEEP
IN THE
SAN GABRIELS

By Charles Jenner

Panting and perspiring, I reached the top of Kratka Ridge and saw Danny standing below me on the other side of the summit. He pointed to his right and called, "Five of them, Doc. Came up from below me and headed for the ravine!" Dan Monette and I had been spending the morning observing one of Southern California's handsomest and most interesting native wildlife species, Ovis canadensis nelsoni, the Nelson Bighorn Sheep.

Little is known about this particular herd of Nelson Bighorn which inhabits our local San Gabriel Mountain area. Despite rigid protection, they have remained static in numbers, according to Francis Winter, Wildlife Biologist of Angeles National Forest. Because of this, Angeles Forest personnel are concerned about the future of these magnificent animals in the face of increasing pressure on their habitat by the burgeoning army of Southern California recreation seekers. The Bighorn are known to be very conservative creatures, following the same trails and observing the same territorial boundaries generation after generation. Once they are forced from a habitat region by human "progress" they supposedly never return, retreating instead further into the remaining wilderness. Mere presence of man does not seem to bother our local Bighorn, providing the human observer acts openly and does not attempt to conceal his movements. Dan Monette and I, for instance, spent over thirty minutes this particular morning observing a ram from only a short distance above Angeles Crest Highway. He was evidently curious about our activities also, and made no effort to leave.

The California Department of Fish and Game is preparing a study of California's Bighorn populations, and our organization, The Jenner Ecological Foundation, has offered to cooperate with this study in the San Gabriel Mountain area. Dan and I were engaged in locating suitable observation sites which could be manned by wildlife observers and photographers without disturbing the normal activities of the sheep.

All Audubon members interested in participating as observers or photographers in this cooperative Bighorn study are requested to contact Dr. Charles Jenner, 11381 Loch Lomond Rd., Los Alamitos, 90720, (213) 431-7531. Persons with long range photographic equipment are especially needed to record the activities of this spectacular mountain climbing species.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED AT BIRD SANCTUARY

By—Louise Lasser

Two months ago I had occasion to visit Griffith Park and strolled into the Bird Sanctuary on North Vermont Avenue, a place that has much meaning to me for I have spent many hours there through the years. Yes, 15 years to be exact. The beauty of the Bird Sanctuary in years past has truly given great pleasure to many of our citizens. But what I saw on the day amazed and shocked me because of the deplorable condition. The death and destruction of the trees and shrubs and the awful erosion of the hillsides. All of this was hard to accept.

I immediately phoned my councilman and put in a very strong complaint. I was told to call Councilman Snyder because Griffith Park is in his district. Mr. Snyder passed on my complaint to William Frederickson, General Manager, Recreation and Parks Dept. I did not wait for a reply but immediately started to contact people in the Recreation and Parks department to call their attention to the extreme condition of the Bird Sanctuary. This condition came about because the watering system was in need of urgent repair and there was very little water in the Bird Sanctuary. No gardening work had been done on shrubs and trees for at least six months.

Some work has been started to restore the beauty of the Bird Sanctuary. I have made it a point to visit the Bird Sanctuary once or twice a week to see what is being done. It is difficult to restore a partly dying tree or shrub. Many months of hard work will be required. I feel as members of Los Angeles Audubon Society we must work diligently to see that it is restored to its former beauty.



Note: Your editor has been out of town during most of September and wishes to thank the anonymous person who has taken over the job of preparing this month's issue of "Tanager".

**The Western
Tanager**



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