



BARRED ANTSHRIKE
Thamnophilus doliatus

Isthmus to Andes

Part 2: Tropical Triangle Tour

By BETTY JENNER

Heat and humidity are facts of life in Panama. However, after leaving crowded and noisy Panama City, we followed roads that roughly paralleled the Canal, and did our birding in the Gamboa area; the heat and humidity bothered us not at all as long as we were finding new birds.

In the Canal Zone there remain many natural wooded areas. At each stop we saw colorful birds in the trees and ponds-- such as the Wattled Jaçana, Squirrel Cuckoo, Barred Antshrike, Giant Cowbird, Blue-gray Tanager, Yellow-billed Cacique, - and brilliant but frustrating hummers. Even in the clean and orderly housing areas were new birds: Tropical Mocker, Tropical Kingbird, Yellow-bellied Seadeater, and many of the amusing little finches called Johnny-jump-ups (Blue-black Grassquit). The glossy-black little male jumps several feet in the air from his perch on a fence or shrub, to give his explosive "bzee-eep" every ten or fifteen seconds for a half hour or more.

On our second day, Dr. Horace Loftin took us about thirty-five miles north of the Canal Zone to the southernmost mountain of North America, -- Mt. Campana. It's not very high, but is a

worthy companion to all the magnificent mountains extending northward to faraway Alaska. On the seaward side, the green hills curving down to the distant ocean are almost reminiscent of the Pt. Reyes scene: close-cropped grass with wind-sculptured trees in sheltered places. Rufous-collared Sparrows found this habitat to their liking. On the part of the mountain top away from the wind there is a grand patch of cloud forest with its complex biotic community of flora and fauna. Huge blue Morpho butterflies flitted alongside as we walked the path. Twice, a sharp-eyed member of our party spotted a sloth in the branches of a bare treetop. This strange and ancient species owes its very existence to the fact that its movements are almost imperceptible. Some of the birds: Red-crowned Woodpecker, Masked Tityra, some migrant North American warblers; and overhead, graceful Swallowtail Kites. At the small motel in the woods where we lunched, was the Chestnut-capped Warbler, a tropical species. Two interesting birds were brought to us dead: Barred Forest Falcon and Short-billed Pigeon. Here birds are not protected, and are often killed or caged.

The Florida Audubon Society has a small sanctuary in this area, as well as several others in Panama. They also sponsor the Canal Zone branch of the Audubon Society.

Our third day in Panama was in great contrast to the other two. We drove . . . south, I was going to say, but "toward South America" is in fact northeast from Panama City. At any rate we drove toward the Pacific side, to a savannah, or grass-and-pond complex, with bordering "gallery forests." Here the handsome Red-breasted Blackbird was abundant; there were several Seedeaters and Grassquits, which are finches; on fenceposts were Roadside Hawk and Laughing Falcon; in the forest edge was Black-chested Jay. Overhead were migrating flocks of Mississippi and Swallowtail Kites; in the pond area, Tiger Bittern, Pied Water-tyrant, Piratic Flycatcher, and numerous Cattle Egrets. We were already weary of seeing these as they seem to crowd out the other egrets. Here also was the basilisk, a remarkable lizard which can rapidly run on its hind legs on the surface of the water before submerging and swimming away from danger.

Leaving Panama, we arrived in Cali, Colombia, in the evening; the airline representative who met our group promised us Greater Kiskadees! How could we tell him that in whichever tree we saw movement, and focussed the binoculars, the bird usually turned out to be a Kiskadee? We thanked him warmly. continued on next page. . .

Some of us enjoy adding "mountain listing" to our "bird listing" activities, so it was an extreme pleasure next morning to look out the hotel window and see the green Andes, mountains found only in books heretofore. I surely had not read the books carefully, for I had not realized that in the Republic of Colombia there are three parallel ranges of the Andes, converging to a "knot" in the southern part of the country. There are the Eastern, the Central, and the Western Andes; the city of Cali is at an altitude of 3200' in the broad, fertile valley between the Central and Western Ranges.

Colombia is the "birdiest" country in the world with 1556 species, - of which 135 species are hummingbirds! It would be hopeless to try to identify these bewildering birds in a short time without a competent guide, - and we had the best. He is Dr. Carlos Lehmann, of the Museum of Natural History in Cali. How patiently he answered all our questions! I'm sure all the members of our group would join me in saying, "Thank you, Dr. Lehmann."

First he took us high into the Central Andes. In meadows on the way up we saw the Andean Lapwing, a handsome foot-long plover. We passed a 120-acre preserve purchased by the World Wildlife Fund; it is the sole remaining natural area on this part of the Pan-American Highway. On it are found 148 species of birds. Elsewhere, all the hillsides and steep mountain sides are being burned off and planted to crops by the natives. At 9000' altitude, where we ate lunch, we observed the 15-inch long Great Thrush on grassy slopes. Up and up we drove, stopping at every bridge to look into the fast-rushing streams for Torrent Duck, but we never did see it. We stopped on a high plateau to watch the smoking Volcano of Purace. We were hoping to see Andean Condors, but only Black Vultures were soaring overhead. As Dr. Lehmann said, - he can bring geologists up here and they see condors, but the breaks of the game decree no condors for birders! At Pasto, further south, there is a Condor Lookout where they almost certainly may be seen.

As we went higher, into the bleak Paramo of Purace, plants became xerophytic -- almost desert-like in character. At about 13,000' elevation, a cool drizzle started and all birds stayed safely in the scrubby growth, so we started homeward. At a mountain village we stopped at a small inn for hot native cocoa. Here the hillsides were covered with a fresh fall of snow, - we had been above the storm!

Our second day was spent in the Western range, - first in a cloud forest, then through lush rain forest as we reached the Pacific slope of the mountains. Our road clung to the steep hillside, with impenetrable growth straight uphill on our right, and downhill to a river far below on our left. Beautiful waterfalls leaped down the hillsides, - one descended right over the road, giving the car a free wash! Some of our birds were: White-capped Dipper, acting just like our own dipper in the stream; Lyre-tailed Nightjar;

Blue-and-white Swallow; Scarlet-rumped Cacique; Jet Antbird; Stripe-billed Araçari (a toucan); and Black-billed Robin. Dr. Lehmann had done extensive collecting along this road when it was first built, several years ago, so he knew the best birding spots. We stopped at a small wayside inn for lunch; we particularly enjoyed the hearty soup, which seems to be a feature of the country's menus. After driving far enough west to glimpse the Pacific Ocean, we headed for home.

The Cauca River and a strip of park beside it were across the street from our hotel. Here birding was by sight only, since the only way to drive a car, bus, or taxi in Cali seems to be with the horn going full blast, and bird notes were impossible to hear. However, it was easy to see abundant Vermilion Flycatchers, Blue-gray Tanager, Kiskadees, and House Wrens. Oddly enough, only the Southern House Wren is found in Panama, while the Northern -- our own House Wren -- is found in Colombia.

It is a good idea to constantly refer to the Latin names of the birds you see in the tropics. Sometimes birds have local names; sometimes the common name hasn't been agreed on; but the Latin name will tell you whether your bird is a new species for you or just a sub-species. For instance, Dr. Lehmann found it easier to identify the hummers he showed us, by their Latin names. For my own pleasure I'll list the hummers we saw: Violet-eared, Puff-leg, Bronzy Inca, Racket-tail, Speckled, Rufous-tailed, Fork-tailed Wood-nymph, Black-tailed Train-bearer, Blue-tailed Emerald, Black-throated Mango, Steely-vented, and Shining Sunbeam. The iridescence on these exquisite creatures is the result of the same optical effect as that of soap bubbles or oil film on water. Uncountable tiny platelets on the feathers catch the light in such a way as to apparently change the colors at different viewing angles.

Our third day was spent on a 1000-acre wildlife refuge in grass-and-marshland, down the Cauca Valley, fifty miles north of Cali. It is one of those timeless places like Malheur or Laguna Atascosa, only here were parrotlets, Tody-tyrant Flycatchers, and huge Caligo butterflies. We tramped in the mud, and side-stepped cattle droppings, and drifted along quiet channels among the reeds in tiny primitive boats. We saw the magnificent Horned Screamer, with its 7-foot wing span, - a close relative of the goose; Striated Heron, White-necked Heron, Spot-breasted and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers; Spectacled Parrotlets; Dark-billed and Striped Cuckoos; Common Tody Tyrant; Shiny Cowbird; Yellow-hooded Marshbird, plus many more. Naturally we developed ravenous appetites, and thoroughly enjoyed the delicious and beautifully-served lunch in the cool, high-ceilinged dining room of the Guadalupe, a resort hotel in the small town of Buga.

On the way home we went through a fairly arid habitat; Ultramarine Grosbeak, Ruddy Pigeon, Tropical Parula Warbler, Rufous Spinetail (an Ovenbird), and White-chinned Swift were some of the birds. This last area seemed much like



Swallow-tailed Kite
Elanoides forficatus

dry Southern California, and birds were fairly easy to see; but in the tropical forests, it is well to bear in mind that different types of birds inhabit different "layers" of the forest. The Ant-bird types stay on or close to the ground, following the processions of ants which set all insects flying ahead of them. Besides true Antbirds are the Ant-shrikes, Ant-vireos, Ant-wrens, Ant-thrushes, Ant-pittas, and such individualists as the White-backed Fire-eye!

Other species are fond of the lower branches; others prefer the tree-tops; others soar above the forest. The forest edges, where there are flowers with nectar and insects, attract many of the most colorful birds. Be sure to carefully read the introduction to de Schauensee's "Birds of Colombia", and read the Life "Nature Library" volume on South America for a clearer understanding of where to look for what.

I have not tried to actually list the birds we saw; but I must mention the colorful Tanagers, and such exquisite species as Flower-piercers. These are Honeycreepers, which are something like Warblers and something like Tanagers, which in turn means that they're a source of delightful frustration, or frustrating delight. Many names of Tanagers are descriptive: Flame-rumped, Scarlet-bellied, White-lined, Lemon-rumped, Golden, - these are some that we saw out of the 123 species found in Colombia.

Don't expect these brilliant birds to be found easily; even those with the brightest colors blend into the leaves and flowers of tropical trees. To add to the difficulty, several different species often travel together, and you go mad trying to see them all. Two or three people will be describing two or three different birds, producing hopeless confusion. Above all, don't expect to photograph them unless you have unlimited time and patience.

The music of cicadas, frogs, and toads was with us constantly. Many of these species have only been discovered recently. One frog species spends its entire life span in the "ponds" of rain water that collect in bromeliad "tanks" in tree tops. These are a favorite food of the motmots.

In both Panama and Colombia it was evident that humanity-wise, the safety level of population has been reached. In our world, there is just so much arable land; no amount of cutting and clearing of forests will result in more arable acreage. Too often the unhappy results of unwise land-use are obvious... leached-out soils, of no use for anything. World-wide, our heads of government

must become biologically AWARE. The best and highest use of land is usually just the simple one of leaving the forest or marsh alone. The U.S. policy of insisting on "improvement" of land to qualify for loans has sometimes done as much harm as good. Planting of high-yield crops on the present acreage of arable land seems to be the solution for our present level of world population. Beyond that level... be prepared to lose both beauty and the vital chain of biological interdependence... and a continuation of human starvation.

... continued in a later issue. . .

OVERPOPULATION: A BASIC CONSERVATION CONCERN

Population control must be a primary concern of conservationists. Very simply, we live today in a world of limited natural resources and unlimited growth of population.

Two eloquent statements on this subject were made recently in Washington. Senator Tydings, in calling for the formation of a joint Congressional committee on population and family planning, put it this way:

"Today . . . the population on this old planet of ours is going to grow by more than 200,000 people. Across the globe, two billion people will go to bed tonight without having had enough to eat. Hundreds of millions of people throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America will move closer to famine and mass starvation. . . . While you listen to this speech, at least one person, probably a child, will die of starvation."

Appropriately, the Aldo Leopold Memorial Award went last week to an ecologist, Dr. Durward L. Allen of Purdue University. His speech to the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference included this warning:

"There appears to be unmistakable evidence that the world at large has passed the optimum level of population. Any living thing that is too successful destroys the source of its livelihood . . .

"Man's vast power play in using, if not inhabiting, nearly every environment on this planet could be self-defeating if he does not have the insight to impose his own controls and work for the necessary stability in his ecosystem."

CONSERVANCY-AUDUBON SOCIETY FORM TEAM:

In many fields, when two or more organizations whose purposes are closely related become successful, duplication of effort can result. In an effort to prevent this eventuality in the area of land conservation, the Conservancy and the Audubon Society have joined forces.

The Joint Committee for Land Preservation of the National Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy will meet monthly to discuss opportunities for joint action in the conservation of land, and to exchange information. The committee will channel problems dealing with land acquisition, land gifts, or information to the local or national group best equipped to handle it.



"Hey, you guys, what is this 'culling' they're talking about?"

See page 87 for answer

TULE ELK
Cervus nannodes

—Stephen H. Sax

THE AUDUBON SCENE

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

On Tuesday, March 18, Dr. Elvis J. Stahr, President of the National Audubon Society, accompanied by Paul Howard, Western Representative, visited Santa Barbara for a first-hand look at the results of the oil disaster.

After a morning flight over the channel, somewhat hampered by fog, they lunched with several UCSB faculty members, Natural History Museum and SBAS representatives, who discussed with them the effects of the oil spill on marine life and sea birds, and the actions being taken by various local groups.

In the afternoon they visited the harbor to see the cleanup operations; the Child's Estate to see the few remaining survivors of the 1500-odd birds which the zoo personnel and volunteers have cleaned and cared for with such devotion; and several beaches where oil was still coming in on each wave. They found the pollution much worse than they had expected. Dr. Stahr told us that the public outcry caused by the Santa Barbara Channel disaster was louder than any protest heard in years.

In view of Secretary of the Interior Hickel's latest order permitting the resumption of drilling in the Channel, it seems that we must continue to cry out even more loudly. Not only must our voices be heard, but they must be heard continuously until our environment is properly protected. Every oil rig spills some of the time, and many of them most of the time. The annual toll from many small spills may well be as great as a major leak. It is not necessary to have another well blowout to ruin our environment. A proliferation of wells in the Channel will do the job just as effectively, if somewhat more slowly. Man is looking increasingly to the ocean as a food source for his exploding population while, at the same time, he is polluting the coastal shallows and estuaries which are the breeding grounds of many marine species, and a vital link in the ocean's great food chain.

These facts, so well known to conservationists, must be made known to everyone before the trend becomes irreversible. There is more at stake than our own area. The problem is worldwide.

REFUGIO CANYON: This seems to be another case of "Let's not arouse the natives". State highway officials think the public is not interested in their plans for Highway 101 at Refugio; not having been informed, the public has hardly been in a position to react! It is especially interesting that the State Department of Parks and Beaches apparently was not told of what interests it considerably; a plan to construct an 80-foot-high land fill. (The alternative, would, of course, be a bridge.) The land fill will affect the environment and the ecology of the area detrimentally in many ways; a bridge would be far less obtrusive (although somewhat more expensive). Surely we can afford to preserve the natural beauty of this area . . . if we can stop the bulldozers, which are scheduled to start their work soon.

EL TECOLOTE, April, 1969
Santa Barbara Audubon Society

FROM PHOENIX:

Grace Nixon, our birder friend from California, decided to do a "Big Thrasher Day" count in Maricopa County because it is the only place in the United States where one could see six Thrashers in one day: Curve-billed, Bendire's, Crissal, Sage, LeConte's, and Brown. (A Brown Thrasher is spending the winter in the Diven's yard.) She succeeded in seeing the six thrashers in one day, but not all in Maricopa County. The LeConte's was found just over the border in Yuma County. However, it could be done, because LeConte's has been reported in at least three places in Maricopa County, -south of Gila Bend, near Painted Rock Dam, and near St. John's Indian Mission. . . . According to Jay Sheppard in California who has been making a study of LeConte's, they are not as uncommon as they were once thought to be. He has found them about every 44 miles in their habitat in California.

THE ROADRUNNER, May, 1969
Maricopa County Audubon Society



calendar

Miss Laura Jenner, *President*
 639 W. 32nd. Street
 Los Angeles 90007
 748-7510

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

HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE
 PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046 876-0202



1969		MAY			1969	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

May 1 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p. m. , Audubon House

May 10 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Big Sycamore Canyon in the Pt. Mugu State Recreation Area. Meet at 8:00 a. m. at entrance which is approximately 20 miles up the coast highway from Malibu. This is a new area and appears to be an excellent canyon for birds. Migration will be in full swing. We will walk up the canyon for 2-3 miles round trip.

Leader: Sandy Wohlgemuth 344-8531

May 13 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p. m. , Great Hall, Plummer Park. "Channel Islands National Monument - - Past, Present and Future. " Monument Superintendent Donald M. Robinson will present an informative and pertinent program on this close by, yet little known area. The meeting will begin right at 8:00. We hope to have time enough at the end for a question and answer session.

May 25 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mt. Pinos. Meet at 8:00 a. m. at the turn off to Frazier Park, about 2 miles beyond Gorman on Highway 99. This is a good trip for montane species such as Red Crossbills, Cassin's Finch, Calliope Hummers and possibly Condors.

Information: Bruce Broadbooks 670-8210

June 5 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p. m. , Audubon House

June 10 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p. m. , Great Hall, Plummer Park. Presentation of new officers and an Arnold Small program. Details in June Tanager. Refreshments will be served.

June 14 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Buckhorn Flats

AUDUBON HOUSE is now open on SATURDAY from 10:00 a. m. to 4:00 p. m.

ALWAYS BRING lunch and binoculars on field trips

PLEASE, no pets, and no collecting of any kind

EVERYONE WELCOME AT ALL ACTIVITIES

Shirley Wells regrettfully announces that the planned Big Day in May will have to be cancelled. She had planned to have the Palos Verdes Christmas Count area covered thoroughly on May 17, but the demands of other activities will not allow time to arrange all the details of such a complicated project. Next year for sure!

THE AFFAIR OF THE RED-TAILED HAWK

An interesting news release was reported over several radio stations in Los Angeles County last month regarding an attack by a hawk in the La Verne area near the L. A. County Fair Grounds in Pomona. Later the incident received front page coverage by the Los Angeles TIMES. According to the news sources, the "hawk-like bird" savagely attacked a young boy about the face. When the youngster began to flee, it was reported that he then was attacked from behind-- "clawed on his face and neck."

According to a police spokesman, the victim of the attack -- a 14-year-old boy--was attended by a health official for possible rabies infection. No investigation was ever made, and evidently it is not planned to find out the cause for such an attack, - leading people to believe that the incident was unprovoked, and unjustifiable on the hawk's part.

Because of the circumstances, I decided to investigate. I phoned the La Verne police department and talked to an officer on duty who gave me this account:"At approximately 12 noon on April 2, a call came to the La Verne station regarding an apparent attack by a large hawk in a local wilderness area with few houses."Officer Steve Toth, who later shot the hawk, related that he was called to the scene and saw the hawk atop a house roof as it was just taking off. He followed it over the rim of the hill and then with a small caliber shotgun took aim and shot one of the wings. It turned around and "came at him from behind." He then drew his gun and shot it to the ground.

What had not been told in the news releases was that the boy had been throwing rocks at the hawk. A former resident at the scene used to toss meat to a hawk which used to perch atop the very same telephone pole from which the boy was throwing the rock. It used to catch the thrown food in the air upon takeoff. It probably was the same hawk which associated the thrown object as food prior to the attack. However, food is not a problem to the local hawks, since there are plenty of cottontail rabbits. I inquired from local residents as to whether there was a nest in the area, and apparently there was not.

We can draw two conclusions: the hawk was being teased; and someone, in feeding the hawk by throwing food in the air, was conditioning it to "attack."

It is a great pity that the general public is not being educated regarding the equilibrium of nature. Recently, a pair of eagles caused great alarm to school children in the area when they soared low over the playground during a school recess. Local authorities and property owners should take the time to educate their children about hawks and eagles and their contribution to the balance of nature. At the same time, they should try to urge "protective measures" for these unique birds, instead of for the children who molest and disturb them.

Officer Toth, who shot the Red-tail, is planning to have the bird stuffed -- as a trophy of its "savageness."

--- Richard Hilton

conservation

NOTES

FROM AGENDA OF STATE WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING --

At the Jan 9, 1969, meeting, the Wildlife Conservation Board instructed staff to proceed with negotiations for the purchase of approximately 62 acres of wetlands in the Buena Vista Lagoon as the nucleus for an ecological area. A reserve of \$250,000 was set up for this purpose.

The lagoon is located immediately north of the City of Carlsbad and about 33 miles north of San Diego in San Diego County. A 74-acre portion of the lagoon is owned by The Nature Conservancy. Acquisition of the 62 acres would add to the 74-acre portion presently owned by The Nature Conservancy. The two parcels mentioned above are mostly open water. This is one of the few freshwater lagoons remaining on the Pacific Flyway. The water depth varies from a few inches to six feet. A few low islands and a minimum shoreline provide vegetation, feeding, nesting and resting areas for land and shorebirds. A sandbar forms an ocena beach across the mouth of the lagoon, breached only infrequently by high tides or floodwaters. The present water source consists of annual watershed runoff and agricultural waste water.

The wildlife values of the lagoon are nationally known and have been recorded in documents and literature over a period of years. Nearly 200 species of birds use its land and water environs. In 1950 a study for the Wildlife Conservation Board reported "concentrations of 60,000-70,000 ducks use the lagoon." Recent developments requiring the filling of the marsh lands in the upper part of the lagoon have to some extent decreased the wildlife-carrying capacity of the lagoon. It is estimated that the lagoon has lost about 25% of its original value for wildlife to commercial development.

This is one of the foremost birdwatching areas in Southern California. Easy access from the freeway bisecting the area has encouraged high use by passing tourists. The area is proposed to be designated as an ecological reserve. Regulations for ecological reserves limit use of such areas to non-appropriative uses, except that fishing and scientific collecting by permit is allowed.

Following the Jan. 9 meeting, several contacts were made with the owners of the subject property, and late in February an agreement with the owners was reached. As is outlined in their proposal, they have agreed to transfer the lagoon land for \$250,000. This amounts to approximately \$4000 per acre, a figure believed to be well within fair market value. A state appraisal will be available prior to March 27th.

The Nature Conservancy, a private organization, owns the adjoining wetlands on all sides, totalling some 74 acres, and has agreed to deed these lands to the WCB for inclusion in the ecological reserve. These lands will be deeded free to the State, the only costs being their various tax and

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Audubon Activities

March 22 - TUCKER SANCTUARY & O'NEILL PARK - After a month of disastrous floods, we had another inch of rain in Orange County the day before the field trip. When we met at Irvine Park at 8:00 a.m., we were not allowed inside the park on account of flood damage. We birded around the gates for a half hour and saw an early Wilson's Warbler and a Lincoln Sparrow, along with the more common resident species. Then we went on to the Tucker Bird Sanctuary, where Lee Waian, the new director, from Cal State Fullerton (who did his graduate work at UCSB on the ecology of the White-tailed Kite) told us of their new program which includes informing the public, teaching the children, and teaching the teachers.

We then went on to O'Neill Park, had lunch, and watched a Red-shouldered Hawk sitting on its nest 35 feet over our heads while apparently incubating. After lunch we went to the outskirts of the Robinson Ranch (which has been sold, so our future there is uncertain at this point) and saw some Chipping & Lark Sparrows and Western Bluebirds. A tall eucalyptus in flower was full of noisy Rufous & Allen's Hummers, and a bright male Bullock's Oriole. All in all we had a fair day considering the previous stormy conditions. There were about 25 of us and we saw 57 species; nothing to write home about, -but as the morning clouds cleared, and the good company that always abounds at an Audubon field trip strolled down the dirt road at Robinson's Ranch, I felt that I had enjoyed myself and that the others had, too. Thanks for the invitation to be the leader!!

-- Tom Heindel, Sea & Sage Audubon Society

(Note: We thank Tom, & also his son Mitch who not only identified bird species for us, but brought to our attention many others items of natural history interest.)

April 8 - TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - Important business of the evening was the reading of the slate of officers for the 1969-70 year. The nominating committee presented the following list of candidates:

- President.....Herb Clark
- First Vice President.....Dr. "Johnny" Johnson
- Second Vice President.....Leslie Wood
- Executive Secretary.....Abigail King
- Recording Secretary.....Frances Kohn
- Treasurer.....Olga Clarke
- Registrar.....Mimi Small

Voting will take place at the May, Tuesday Evening Meeting. Our speaker, David Weide, gave us an entertaining tour of Southern California. One thing was made abundantly clear in the pictures presented of our "geological junkpile" -- many homes have been built in areas where permission should never have been granted. The question is, how long will we allow "developers" to continue hacking away at our delicate, chaparral covered hills and mountains?

April 12- SANTA ANITA CANYON - Twenty-eight birders gathered for the annual trip around Chantry Flats picnic ground and down into Santa Anita Canyon. Among them was a visitor from New Jersey, Mr. Ken Clark of the British Travel Commission.

It was an overcast, almost foggy day but the picnic ground produced the usual birds, including a number of migrants. Predominant were Bullock's Orioles, Warbling Vireos, and an unusually large number of Black-throated Gray Warblers.

The canyon, however, was a different story. The winter rains have made tremendous changes, - the road is almost entirely gone and many of the cottages have been washed away or badly damaged. There was almost no sign of the usual resident birds such as wrens, reportedly at least partially due to loss caused by a severe hailstorm.

Fortunately, the dippers were still there and we were treated to a courting display by a pair on the rocks above the Falls. Total count for the day was 37 species.

-- Harold Baxter, Trip Leader

Each year our society offers a scholarship to the AUDUBON CAMP OF THE WEST as a means of helping to promote conservation education. Our recipient this year is Mr. Carl S. Chavez, a California State Park Ranger assigned to the Pt. Mugu Area. This is comprised of three units including Leo Carrillo State Beach, Pt. Mugu State Recreation Area and Malibu Lagoon State Beach.

Among his other duties, Mr. Chavez is called upon to interpret the natural surroundings in the park to the visitor through nature walks, slide talks, and countless questions asked of him. Mr. Chavez was selected by camp director, Paul Howard. We think it was an excellent choice. We will be looking forward to hearing about his camp experiences.

The Executive Board voted unanimously to send a check for \$100 to the Audubon Center at El Monte to help with the expenses incurred from damage during the recent floods. Individual members are asked to give financial help as well; our center is visited by thousands of school children, and should be restored to its normal attractive condition.

BUENA VISTA LAGOON continued.....

administrative costs - a figure of appr. \$10,000. An allocation of \$5000 is estimated to be required for appraisal, appraisal review, title and escrow costs, and signs for the area.

No development is envisioned for this area except the posting of appropriate signs. The property is within the cities of Carlsbad and Oceanside, and occasional patrol of the area to see that litter is picked up is expected.

With the confirmation of market value, it is recommended that WCB allocate a total of \$265,000 for the purchase of the wetlands heretofore described, and the staff be authorized to make application for federal matching funds under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program.



Canada replies...

(Ed. Note: We had wired a protest regarding the slaughter of baby seals. We received this reply and believe our readers would like to read it.)

A REPORT ON SEAL HUNTING IN CANADA --

On behalf of the Ambassador and the Canadian Government, may we thank you for your recent message on seal hunting and the understandable concern you expressed over allegations of cruel and inhumane practices connected with these operations. Because of the large number of such communications to be acknowledged, our replies must of necessity be somewhat less personal than we would like, or is normally the case in our correspondence.

These facts may interest you:

All hunters are required to be licensed by the Federal Department of Fisheries and are subject to the seal protection regulations which you may be assured are stringent. The taking of adult seals from breeding patches is strictly prohibited. So of course is the skinning of seals before they are dead; the means by which seals may be killed are clearly defined and are as humane as possible.

The hunting period is restricted. The 1969 season will commence on March 7 and extend until April 25, or until such time as the limited quota has been filled. This is usually accomplished in less than one week.

The efficacy of these regulations, and the strictness with which they are enforced, has been attested to by impartial observers of the hunt. Last year's observers included the Secretary of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Mr. Tom Hughes; Dr. R. A. Jones of the Royal School of Veterinary Studies in Scotland; and Dr. Eugene A. Costello of the Canadian Department of Agriculture. Following a careful survey of the hunting grounds they concluded that the operations of the Canadian sealers were being carried out in as humane a manner as possible.

Other veterinarians representing humane societies from various parts of the world have also examined the Canadian seal fishery, and they reported similar conclusions. One of the principal opponents of Canadian sealing was Dr. Grzimek, Director of the Frankfort Zoo. German scientists representing him attended the seal hunt in 1968 and all agreed that Canadian operations were conducted in a humane manner. Dr. Grzimek has made a public statement to this effect.

This year's hunt will be witnessed by the new Canadian Minister of Fisheries, Mr. Jack Davis.

He will take along with him qualified observers, including Dr. Henri Schneider, an expert veterinarian recommended by the ASPCA in the United States, the publication of whose findings he will welcome. In announcing on Friday, Feb. 28, his intention to personally study this year's hunt, the Minister disclosed he had written to the sealing industry saying:

"If its operations do not measure up to the high standards which my department now is demanding of the hunter we will put an end to the operations in 1970".

"I want to have a good look at the sealing operations myself. And I want to hear from all those people who are likely to be affected by a blanket closure of the harp seal fishery".

As Mr. Davis himself indicated, in a statement issued by his office on Friday, the problem is not simple. There is the question first of all of maintaining in Canadian waters a balanced, healthy seal population-- a condition which could be seriously disturbed by the institution of a hunting ban. On this the Minister proposes to solicit conservation and other expert opinion.

He will also seek to determine what an abolition of the hunt would mean for the six thousand Canadian men and their families who are in varying degrees dependent for their livelihood on the seal fishery, as were their fathers and grandfathers. In searching for a just and reasonable solution to the problem of the seal harvest, Mr. Davis said he was not ready at this early stage of his own investigation to commit himself either way -- in favor of abolition or of continuation. He asked only, in reply to those who have written him protesting the seal hunt, that the most "thoughtful" consideration be given to the human and conservation implications of a ban.

It is our hope you will find reassuring this further evidence of the Canadian Government's active and sympathetic interest.

Washington, D. C.
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The Western Tanager



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"I just found out what 'culling' is. It's a sport invented by humans. Like it's target practice."

Read enclosed letter for details.

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

BIRDS

By G. SHUMWAY SUFFEL

Spring migration reaches its climax in early May and tapers off as the month progresses, but even though the migrants are fewer they are not less interesting. - Black Brant, Phalaropes, Olive-sided and Traill's Flycatchers, Swainson's Thrushes, and Yellow Warblers are all late migrants. Our Traill's Flycatcher will puzzle birders with an Eastern background because it will probably have no eye ring, and its song is "fitz-bew", not "fee-bee-o". Ours is probably a new and distinct species -- the Willow Flycatcher. In addition to the late migrants there are the always fascinating vagrants. By definition, vagrants are "lost" birds, and lost birds tend to be late birds. Last year the Mississippi Kite, and the Kentucky and Connecticut Warblers were all found in late May or early June, and all were first or second records for California. Nesting, of course, is in full swing now, so don't forget to fill out those "Nest Record Cards." They're available at Audubon House.

If you were to ask the average active birder "What is the weakest part of your life list?", the answer would almost surely be "the Owls", or possibly "the Pelagics." The pelagics require a very specialized piece of equipment - a boat; but the owls require nothing more than a free evening, a powerful spotlight, and an armor-plated lack of self-consciousness. For you can feel very silly when, right in the middle of your finest, off-key, imitation of a Spotted Owl, a non-birder shines his equally powerful spotlight right in your face, mumbles "I'm sorry" or worse, and walks away shaking his head. The area north of Big Bear Lake, between Fawnskin and Hanna Flats Camp, has Flamulated, Saw-whet, and Spotted Owls; but the flat areas of Mt. Palomar, from the top of the grade to the Observatory, is probably the surest place for Spotted Owls. Start your "owling" before dark. You may be lucky enough to see them before the last light is gone. Listen intently; if you hear an owl, imitate the call softly at first then a little louder, but don't overdo it, - owls are usually closer than you think. If you don't hear an owl, it's going to be more difficult, so practice a few assorted calls, and if you don't get an answer, it's a good time for dinner. Choose a quiet place and you should hear an owl calling while you're eating. If you don't, try another spot a mile or so away with a different habitat - a little woodsier, more open, in a canyon or up the mountain further. If this doesn't work, try again in a week or two when the phase of the moon is different. With the heavy snows this winter, early May should be about right for the mountain-nesting owls. The traditional place for Elf Owls is Cottonwood Springs, east of 29 Palms, but the Paul Hesslers suspect them at Covington Park in Morongo Valley. Pygmy Owls are more diurnal, - I've seen them sunning on an exposed branch in mid morning. Charlton or Chilao Flats, along the Angeles Crest Road, are as good places as any south of the Sierra. Memorize their call if you can. It is one of the best ways to attract small birds in the mountains,

for they fear, hate, & "mob" (gang up on) Pygmy Owls in daytime.

With the waterfowl nearly gone, reports in March were not as exciting as they have been through the winter. An uncanny coincidence found Paul Hessler walking the beach near the Venice Pier, a few days after he saw the small dark petrel reported last month, - there on the beach was a small dark petrel! It measured out at 7 1/2", indicating an Ashy, and a visit to the L. A. Museum confirmed that it was indeed an Ashy Petrel. The last few reports of winter birds drifted in; a Townsend's Solitaire at Laguna Beach on Mar. 9th, and 8 White-winged Scoters at Venice Pier on the 31st (both Jerry Johnson), an immature Harris' Sparrow at Tapia Park on the 11th (Paul Hessler), and 25 Chestnut-collared Longspurs seen near Temecula by Guy McCaskie on March 15th. John Dunn reported many large hawks of several species in the Antelope Valley in mid-March. Many of these are probably migrants, as most of the locally wintering Buteos had already departed (only six Redtails on the Irvine Ranch on the 19th vs. 40 to 50 in the same area this winter). The latest report of Bohemian Waxwings was five that Sea & Sage A.S. found March 8th on their Morro Bay field trip (Trudy Siptroth).

"First arrivals" made the news in the last half of March. Shirley Wells found twenty or more Purple Martins along the coast on the 12th, and later, Warbling Vireos, Empidonax Flycatchers, and a singing male Bullock's Oriole at Palos Verdes on the 22nd. Ralph Mancke had a Black-headed Grosbeak at Sycamore Canyon, along the Malibu coast, on the 29th, and two Western Kingbirds at the Arboretum on the 25th. Black-throated Gray and Wilson's Warblers were found, but in smaller than expected numbers. A trip to Morongo Valley and lower Whitewater Canyon (they show little damage from the winter floods) revealed few migrants, - four Kingbirds and several Bullock's Orioles, (all males), but only one Wilson's Warbler and no vireos or flycatchers. There were, however, two pairs of Vermilion Flycatchers, - the males skylarking and singing, if you can call it that, before their drab little mates. Despite rumors to the contrary, Mr. Levin is still living on the Morongo Valley Ranch and the "No Trespassing" signs are out.

If you want to make a weekend out of it after "owling" at Fawnskin, continue east from Baldwin Lake to Round Valley. Here you should find Gray Vireos (the only local area where they are probable), Gray Flycatchers (almost a certainty in late May), and possibly a Waterthrush or Hepatic Tanager (they were found there last year). The Cedar Canyon area, near Cima in eastern San Bernardino County, is the best place for Bendire's Thrashers, - you should also find LeConte's Thrashers, - and Swainson's Hawks, with Gilded Flickers and Gray Vireos as possibilities. Shorebirds should be moving up the coast early in the month and they will be in their summer finery, with the Phalaropes the most colorful of all. If you have a chance for a pelagic trip, May is one of the best months. (Ed. note: the sharp-eyed team of Suffel & Broadbooks is off to S.E. Texas as of this writing -- early April; we're looking forward to a report on the exciting Texas specialties.)