



# BIRDS IN THE ECLIPSE

**THE** phrase "birds in eclipse" comes from the same Greek word used to describe that majestic natural event, a total eclipse of the Sun.

A most peculiar coincidence in nature is the equality of the angular aperture of the Sun and the Moon as seen from the Earth, so that the Moon exactly obscures the Sun when it is in a direct line between an observer on the Earth and the Sun. This occurs at the moment of a truly new moon and would occur every month were not the Moon's orbit around the Earth at an angle to the orbit of the Earth around the Sun. In fact the line up of the three bodies to give a total eclipse of the Sun occurs about once every year and a half.

Since the orbits are ellipses, a certain geometric regularity occurs, the orientation repeating itself every 18 years, a period called "saros" known to the Babylonians and Mayans, enabling the ancients to predict the eclipses of the Moon—the earliest triumph of the scientific investigation of nature. By a historical coincidence Christopher Columbus obtained food and support from the Indians by predicting an eclipse of the Moon when in desperate straits in Jamaica.

The ancients could also have predicted the eclipses of the Sun by the same rule, were it not for the difference in size of the Earth's and Moon's shadows. When the Earth's shadow falls on the Moon, the eclipse is visible from all points on the Earth over which the Moon has risen. On the other hand, the Moon's shadow is never more than 170 miles in extent so that the existence of a total solar eclipse is only known to those in the path.

Because of the rotation of the Earth, the 18-year repetition is never over the same path. Small deviations and perturbations of the motions cause a secular drift of the paths from the North Pole to the South—about 70 saros in 14 centuries, after which a new series begins.

Any one point on the Earth sees 20 partial eclipses in 50 years, but only 1 total in 400 years, on the average. The longest possible duration of totality is 7-1/2 minutes. In London not one total eclipse was witnessed during the 575 years from 1140 to 1715, nor will another be seen during the succeeding 5 centuries. Moreover, although the path traced out is several thousand miles long, only 1/7 of the surface of the Earth is land, and at any one moment half the Earth is covered by clouds. Indeed the total eclipse of 1904 fell in a path 8000 miles long over the Pacific, but the shadow never touched land except for a small

rock, and that was covered at high tide. As a consequence, everyone with a lifetime of a few years on Earth experiences a partial eclipse, but very few (less than 1 in 1000 humans) experience a total solar eclipse. To a bird the onset of an eclipse is an unprecedented experience, and it has been often observed that birds go to roost as they do at the end of the day. Details of this behavior—whether it is disturbed or normal, and what happens at totality and after, has not been recorded.

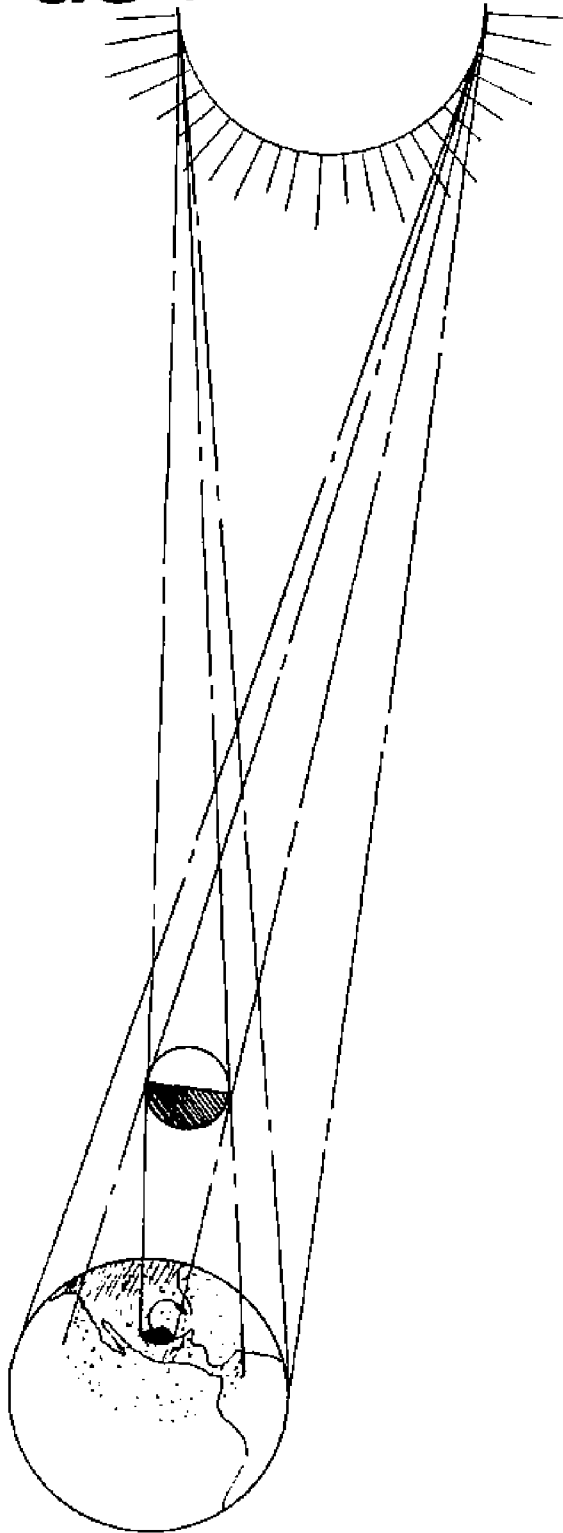
A total eclipse of the Sun swept over the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico on March 7, 1970, over the ruins of Mitla and Monte Alban of the Mixtec empire. Indeed there is an astronomy building which very likely was erected in response to some great eclipse which was a predecessor in the cycle of this one of 1970. That day these desolate ruins were visited by hundreds of dark-haired descendants, with the same profile as inscribed on the rocks, of those who cut out the living hearts of victims on the sacrificial platforms to appease the gods of nature.

This area, like all Mexico, is being converted to desert by overcropping by goats, and erosion is evident on all sides. The thickets and great trees have been destroyed, as were the Cedars of Lebanon, and like the coasts of the Mediterranean, for that reason the land has gone to desert. The enormous tree of El Tule, said to be the oldest living thing in the New World, is a remnant of those days, and now is the home of thousands of house sparrows from Europe.

At 10:00 a.m. the whole world was innocent of the impending spectacle. The new moon was invisible, even at dawn, being so close to the Sun. But at the instant of time computed a century ago, the Moon's disc obscured the Sun, and for an hour and a quarter the light slowly dimmed on this vast plain, causing the birds to roost as they do at dusk, flitting songless when disturbed, from bush to bush. A peculiar uneasiness settled on the more learned homo sapiens, possibly due to the strange light. A blue sunset, shadows sharpened as the illuminating area of the Sun grew small. Even the hairs on one's head formed sharp shadows. Sunlight through the leaves of branches dappled the ground with curious crescents. Silence settled, and it was as cold as a desert night. Venus shone brightly to the East. Suddenly the last ray of sunlight was extinguished and the black shadow swept in from the southeast at half a mile a second, and one could turn one's

# Birds in the Eclipse

Continued...



head to the spectacle in the sky. So far the Moon had been a completely flat black disc, but all of a sudden it appeared in splendor as a sphere surrounded by the glory of light, the corona—a sight which may have inspired the *Orbis Mundus* of medieval paintings. Stars exploded into view, Mercury being visible at the edge of the corona. Through binoculars the corona and "sphere" were even more spectacular. Fine silvery rays in the corona were not straight and radial, but bent like veins in a flower petal.

In the three and a half minutes of this eclipse there was time to look around the landscape, illuminated darkly as at full moon. In the distance 50 miles away could be seen the red light of sunlight beyond the edge of the shadow. No birds large or small were stirring.

Looking back at the black sphere and silver rays, after 2 minutes a large crimson spot—a prominence—was visible at 4 o'clock, and in a moment a second one at 2 o'clock.

Then, all of a sudden, the Sun appeared between two mountains on the Moon—a Bailey bead, and the eclipse was over. Daylight came as the shadow's edge raced away, and grew rapidly—some sixty times as fast as a normal dawn. In thirty seconds, keeping pace with this fast pace, an association of birds burst out of a bush where they had been roosting, flew high, then started feeding—Lark Sparrows, a Black-throated Gray Warbler and a Botteri's Sparrow.

An observer in the mountains reported the same observation, of the bursting out of an association of Warblers—Black-throated Greens, a Tennessee, a Black-and-White, and a Slaty-throated Redstart.

In an hour the eclipse has gone irrecoverably. The people on the plain pack up to go home—families who had driven down 500 miles from Mexico, young people who walked the 100 miles from Oaxaca, and the scientists with their equipment, overjoyed with a completely successful expedition.

The Mexican Government contributed greatly to the successful and orderly expeditions, both private and scientific. This was a great influx to a rather remote area, but no one ran out of gasoline, food, or campsites. The University of Mexico also was a great host to official and unofficial visitors to Miahuitlan. —G. W. King

\*\*\*\*\*

Another astronomical phenomenon this spring was the appearance of Bennett's Comet. Several birders have seen it from their sleeping bags, when on the desert. For the first two weeks in April there has been no moon in the morning, and the desert sky provided ideal conditions to view this large bright comet with the naked eye. It rises about 2:30 a.m. and can be seen even now 3:30 a.m. to dawn, east by one W-length of Cassiopeia, in the constellation of Pegasus.

"As when the sun...from behind the moon  
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the nations..."  
—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

# Birding in Africa

Concluded... BY BONNIE KENNEDY

Williams, John G. A FIELD GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL PARKS OF EAST AFRICA. Houghton Mifflin, 1968. 352 pp. with 16 color plates and 16 black-and-white plates by Rena Fennessy. Foreword by R. T. Peterson. \$8.50

Part 2 is a field guide to the mammals of these parks and reserves and Part 3 is similar guide to the rarer birds not already covered by the earlier volume. Again the Peterson system and format are followed.

Both these books are musts if you are planning a trip to Africa in the next few years, and it would be a good idea to get them now in order to familiarize yourself with the fauna you expect to see. There is also the fact that the cost of books is going up faster than the cost of living by a considerable margin and these books have not changed price since their publication; the situation can't last.

Both books are available at Audubon House, as are two records that would be useful to those who are capable of birding by ear. The records are VOICES OF AFRICA and MORE VOICES OF AFRICA.

Williams, John G. A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA. Houghton Mifflin, 1964. 288 pp. with 16 color plates and 24 black-and-white plates by the author and Mrs. R. Fennessy. Introduced by R. T. Peterson. \$6.50.

It appears that when Mr. Peterson was asked whether he was going to do a field guide to the birds of East Africa, he said "Oh, no! But the man who should do such a book is... John Williams." Williams is Curator of Birds at Nairobi's Coryndon Museum and reportedly an extraordinarily sharp field observer. This book is one of the many splendid Houghton Mifflin field guides; the one we know best is Peterson's guide to western birds. Williams uses the Peterson methods of identification and illustration and his guide is indistinguishable from a Peterson guide except that the drawings are obviously by other hands. Descriptions, which are always ample, include identification, voice, distribution and habitat, and sometimes allied species. All birds are illustrated except the ostrich, which, the author tells us, is unmistakable.

# Book Review

CALIFORNIA BIRDS, Journal of California Field Ornithologists; Editors, V. P. Coughran, A. M. Craig, J. T. Craig, P. DeVillers, C. R. Lyons, G. McCaskie. By membership in various categories (\$5 to \$1000), c/o C. R. Lyons, 6424 Mt. Adelbert Dr., San Diego, California 92111.

The first issue has just appeared, and should be welcomed by all Californian birders, as well as visitors to the Coast. The contribution of this issue is primarily a revised Checklist of the Birds of California, prepared by experts—experts who have a continuous and wide field experience, and who are well read in the literature. It is too soon to state categorically whether universal agreement on the list will be forthcoming. There is a section on species deleted from previous lists—members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society will be particularly interested in the rationale of deciding that both the Falcated Teal and Red-breasted Goose are considered escapees only.

The nomenclature and classification by species is basically that of the 1957 A. O. U. Checklist of North American Birds, but recent studies have been used to group and to separate some species of the 1957 list. The circumstances are discussed in detail, with references. For example, a new name appears, "Willow Flycatcher," for one of two species into which the former Traill's Flycatcher has been separated. "Wood Stork" is used here as the vernacular for *Mycteria americana*. Neither "Wood Ibis" nor "Wood Stork" appears in the Appendix of the 1957 A. O. U. Checklist, possibly reflecting the indecision of the A. O. U. Committee.

The Editors and Publishers are to be commended for an impeccable production, both in Latin and English—G. W. K.

CATALOGUS FAUNAE GRAECIAE, pars II, AVES, W. Bauer and O. von Helversen, Max E. Hodge and J. Martens. Published privately, Thessaloniki, available from Mr. Hodge at 6345 Western Ave., Washington, D.C. 20015. 1969. Paper. Pp. 203. \$4.75.

The first book on the birds of present-day Greece. Printed in German, but with an English summary and an explanation of the principal German terms used. Essentially an annotated check-list of Greece birds, but thoroughly done taxonomically.

## Books Reviewed

BIRDS OF ASIA, John Gould (Text by Abram Rutgers), Taplinger Publishing Co., New York. 1969. pp. 321. \$15.00. Reviewed in "Atlantic Naturalist," Vol. 24, No. 4, Winter 1969 by George F. Watson, Chairman of the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of the Smithsonian Institution.



# Announcements

At the April Evening Meeting of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, the President introduced the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, George Venatta, and the members, Donald Adams and Bruce Broadbrooks. The Chairman presented a slate of nominees for Officers in the Society. For

|                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| President             | Herbert Clarke         |
| First Vice President  | Leslie Wood            |
| Second Vice President | Frances Kohn           |
| Treasurer             | Dr. Moulton K. Johnson |
| Executive Secretary   | Abigail A. King        |
| Recording Secretary   | Olga Clarke            |
| Registrar             | Virginia Johnson       |

The President reminded the membership that nominations from the floor may be made at the next Evening Meeting, in May, through petitions signed by 15 members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Elections will be held at the May meeting.

## Bird Locations

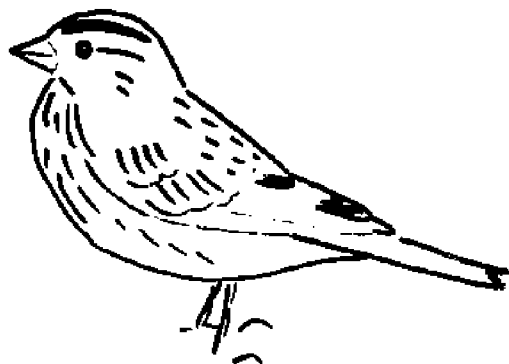
### Dusky Sea-side Sparrow

Is still to be seen at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge at Cape Canaveral, in spite of the space age. Go to Titusville cross the Indian River to the northeast, proceed to a fork where a road turns right and due east, but continue northeast on Route 406 for a quarter mile. Then left and west parallel with the railroad. The birds will be in bushes by the impoundments. It is said, however, that most of these birds have gone to the St. John's River, which however is now polluted with an oil spill.

—G. W. King

### Ipswich Sparrow

Can be seen at the southwest corner of the bridge at Indian Inlet, Delaware—G. W. King



## \* Sales Department

Audubon House

We are now in the process of increasing our inventory, in order to give you the best selection of fine books available. We are expanding into and beyond the realm of bird books and are reaching out to other branches of natural science. There will also be a variety of children's books to interest our young naturalists. Some of the new titles to look forward to include:

- A PLACE IN THE SUN
- BASIC ECOLOGY
- THE SANDHILL CRANE
- THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS
- OKLAHOMA BIRDS
- BIRDS OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
- 1001 QUESTIONS ANSWERED
- BIRDS OF THE WEST INDIES
- THE BIRD WATCHERS QUIZ BOOK
- BIRD DISPLAY AND BEHAVIOR
- COMMON SPIDERS OF THE U.S.
- OPEN HORIZONS
- BIRDS OF HONDURAS
- CAMPING HANDBOOK
- SINCE SILENT SPRING
- BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA
- NATIONAL PARKS OF THE WEST
- SONG OF THE SWALLOWS
- INTRODUCING OUR WESTERN BIRDS
- UNDERSTANDING ECOLOGY
- ADVENTURES WITH FLOWERS

Besides the new books in stock we also have many lovely gift items. Among these are Italian ceramics, stationery, wastebaskets decorated with bird prints and trays by Couroc. Each Couroc tray is an original piece of enduring beauty. Their fine workmanship and durability make them a most attractive and practical gift.



The following Bird Locations have been published in "Birding."

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Tufted Duck</i>             | - Massachusetts       |
| <i>Ipswich Sparrow</i>         | - Massachusetts       |
| <i>Swainson's Warbler</i>      | - Missouri            |
| <i>European Tree Sparrow</i>   | - St. Louis           |
| <i>Greater Prairie Chicken</i> | - Illinois            |
| <i>Colima Warbler</i>          | - Big Bend Nat'l Park |
| <i>Green Kingfisher</i>        | - Texas               |
| <i>Cave Swallow</i>            | - Texas               |

Details are provided in inserts of the issue of "Birding," together with general information about Birding Locations.

"Birding" is available by membership in the American Birding Association, P. O. Box 4335, Austin, Texas 78751, \$3 per annum for regular membership.

HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE  
 PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90048 876-0202

Mrs. Abigail King, Executive Secretary  
 700 Halliday Avenue  
 Los Angeles, California 90048  
 478-5121

| 1970 |     | May   |     |      |     |     | 1970 |  |
|------|-----|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|------|--|
| SUN  | MON | TUES. | WED | THUR | FRI | SAT |      |  |
|      |     |       |     |      |     | 1   | 2    |  |
| 3    | 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  |      |  |

- May 2 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Morongo Valley & Joshua Tree.
- 3 SUNDAY - National Monument. Meet between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. See April 25 instructions for route. As this is one of our most popular field trips, we schedule it twice each spring on successive weekends. Leader: Jim Huffman, 545-1224
- May 7 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p.m.
- May 9 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Big Sycamore Canyon, Pt. Mugu State Recreation Area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance, which is approximately 20 miles up the Coast Highway from Malibu. The success of last year's trip has encouraged us to repeat it this year. Migration should be in full swing. The walk up the canyon is 2 - 3 miles round trip. Leader: Sandy Wohlgenuth, 344-8531
- May 12 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Jay Sheppard, "Studies of LeConte's Thrashers" (slides, skins, and tape recordings).
- May 14-18 THURSDAY - MONDAY - 65th NATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING, Washington Plaza Hotel, Seattle, Washington. If interested, send a \$6 registration fee to National Audubon Convention, 555 Audubon Place, P.O. Box 4446, Sacramento, Calif. 95825, or write for information.
- May 24 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - Mt. Pinos. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the turnoff 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. Bob Blackstone 277-0521
- June 4 THURSDAY - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 8:00 p.m.
- June 9 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park.
- June 13 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP - Buckhorn Flats.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

## The Western Tanager

AUDUBON BIRD REPORTS 874-1318

Official Publication of the  
 LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard  
 Los Angeles, Calif. 90046

EDITOR Gilbert W. King

Assistant Editor James D. McClelland  
 Field Notes Shumway Suffel  
 Typing Janis Leventon and  
 Hanna Stadler  
 Mailing Supervision Hans Hjorth

*Dick Robinson is now responsible for the up-to-date recordings on bird sightings. If anyone has a sighting that they believe should be listed, please call him at 749-1886 or call Audubon House, 876-0202, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. any day except Sunday.*



# audubon activities

TUESDAY EVENING MEETING, April 1970

Arnold Small, our speaker, as is his custom, gave us a spectacularly illustrated talk on his trip to Columbia last year. He has described his impressions in an article for "The Western Tanager" (October 1969).

TUESDAY EVENING MEETING, March 1970

Dr. Jay Savage's "Ecology of the Neo-tropics" was copiously illustrated with many slides and charts.

The tropics support a billion people with a rainfall that varies widely from none at all on the Peruvian Coast to 35 feet in the Assam Jungle, yet on every square inch the sun strikes at a never ending angle 12 hours of each day. The temperature varies only a few degrees—no matter what altitude—each zone remaining constant. The people tell the seasons in varying degrees from the Equator by the periods of rain and the periods of dryness. Because of the vast amount of rain most mineral salts have been leached from the soil, leaving the irons and coppers, magnesiums. The calciums and nitrates long since have been washed away, yet the jungle thrives on its own waste. The bacteria and microbes, fungi can decimate a fallen tree not to the tenth part but the 100th in six months' time. Dr. Savage dramatically illustrated this with the falling leaf, which is literally attacked by microbes before it reaches the earth. The jungle therefore supports a vast number of species of trees—maybe 100 in one square mile—hundreds of subspecies.

Now how does this affect us? The greatest damage we in the temperate zones have done is to introduce crops and domestic animals which are not indigenous to, not suited for and do not thrive well at all in the jungle. To raise corn the vegetation is stripped—the corn grows well for 2 years, not so well on the third and on the fourth none at all. There is no vegetation to restore the soil, the earth soon washes to the sea, and desolation results. The quest for food goes on. One day Dr. Savage foretells there will be a population explosion—not as we know it—but an explosion in quest of food. "And we will have to help them," he adds.

Meanwhile we were entertained with his many slides of the most exquisitely colored and shaped frogs I have ever seen. The rainbow has been lavishly raided and used by these many night prowlers whose size varies from one inch to over a foot. Dr. Savage's specialty in the field of ecology demonstrated survival in the jungle.

—Otto Widmann

The terrible devastation described in the article was very evident in the photographs. Because of the extremely high birth rate the Colombian government insists on the burning of cloud forests, to provide agricultural land, in spite of the desires of some landowners to preserve the native ecology.

Arnold Small's beautiful photographs preserve our knowledge of the avifauna rapidly becoming extinct. There are even now over 1600 species of birds, owing to the wide variety of habitat, varying from jungle to arctic conditions on mountain tops, as was shown on a very instructive map. In addition, Mr. Small remarked that jungles survived the ice ages, so are very ancient compared with temperate habitats, with the result that there has been time for many more evolutionary developments. Food conditions in the jungle also provide for two or three nestings a year, accelerating the effect of mutations on the evolution of different species—G. W. K.

\*\*\*\*\*

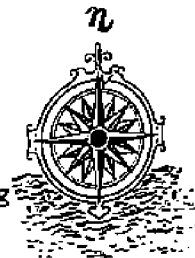
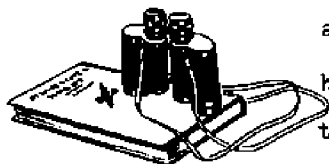
FIELD TRIP - IRVINE PARK, March 1970

While we were birding at the edge of Irvine Park, a Red-shouldered Hawk flew in low and perched close by. Later the 26 of us were able to see the Red-tailed and Sparrow Hawks to advantage. Raven were all over the place as well as Acorn Woodpeckers and one Nuttall's; at all locations the House Wren was in full song. The return of some of the migrants was of interest: White-breasted Nuthatch, Tree and Rough-winged Swallows, Rufous Hummingbird; conversely the fact that our winter residents are still with us is of interest: White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Cedar Waxwings, White-throated Swifts. There were 41 species in all.

It was with regret that I had to announce the Irvine Company would not give us permission to bird along the Peter's Canyon Road—no reason was given. So all the water birds we usually add to our annual list were missing; also many of the field birds we do not see elsewhere were not sighted—Otto Widmann

## FIELD TRIPS MEETING

Anyone who is interested in our field trip program is invited to attend a meeting at Audubon House, Plummer Park, on May 14. If you have any suggestions as to new areas for field trips or for improving the program in any way, we particularly want to see you there, but come and join in the discussion anyway. 7:30 p. m.





*One of our members, Mr. Hiram Beebe, received this letter from a friend and correspondent in England, which may be of interest to all our readers.*

35 Athelstan Rd., Harold Wood  
Romford, Essex, England

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Beebe,

I am very sorry; I meant to send you a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Christmas Cards, but they did not reach me in time. So as you asked us to write to you, here goes. I hope my son's efforts to find you a bus at Paddington Station were successful and that you reached your hotel without difficulty. Even more so, we hope that you enjoyed your stay in this country, and have arrived safely back in California.

You asked me to tell you something about our birds. That is a lengthy subject and I do not know quite where to begin. Perhaps it would be best if I said something about the species that visit our garden, and you can then compare them with those you see in your town.

First and foremost are the STARLINGS and HOUSE SPARROWS which have spread over America, and which you will know only too well. They are only too numerous and soon snatch up most of the food put out for the other birds. Next in order of prominence is our BLACKBIRD, a very close relative of your Robin. The cock is jet black all over with a yellow bill, and I expect you saw any number while you were in this country. The hen is a browner bird. The cock is one of our finest songsters, and it is always sad when the song comes to an end at the latter half of July. The Blackbird tends to dominate other birds, and so thrives very well, though his main diet is worms. Related to it, but smaller, is the SONG THRUSH. He is rather like your Wood Thrush, and is also a fine songster. We do not get so many as the Blackbird, as he is dominated by the larger bird, and often chased away. He likes nothing better than to find a snail, which is smashed to bits on a stone or brick.

Our most beloved bird, however, is our ROBIN. No doubt you will know it is quite unlike your Robin, and perhaps you even saw one while you were here. It is thrush-like in shape and manner, but is only the size of a sparrow and has a gorgeous orange-red breast, which is used in threat display to keep other Robins out of its territory.

It is too our tamest bird, particularly if one is gardening. At these times it will loop around one's feet, snatching up small worms and grubs. It is said that this habit dates from the time England was covered in forest, and robins waited on herds of wild pigs, as they nosed up the soil. Young robins are delightful birds, but very drab. They very quickly, however, acquire the red breast in late summer.

Equally delightful in its own way is the HEDGE-SPARROW or DUNNOCK. This is also quite a drab bird, with no distinctive coloring, but has very dainty habits which make it attractive. It is about the size of a sparrow, but is slimmer and is in no way related. You have no equivalent in America. These days bird-watchers are tending to call it a "dunnock," and not the hedge-sparrow to avoid it being classified as a sparrow. We frequently find its nest in hedges around here, and see the beautiful sky-blue eggs.

Then we get two species of tits coming to pea-nuts and the food basket. The BLUE-TIT is a charming little fellow, looking minute compared with the other birds. He is a bit smaller than the chickadee, blue and white in colour with yellow breast. Our other common tit is the GREAT-TIT, which is the size of a sparrow. It has a clear black and white head, blue and green upper parts, yellow breast with black stripe longitudinally down the centre. Both species nest in nest-boxes in our neighbouring gardens, and there is much squabbling for the boxes in the spring. It is amazing how many chicks they will rear in these boxes at one go.

Then two finches visit us regularly in the winter, the GREENFINCH and the CHAFFINCH. Both are about the size of a sparrow, but the Greenfinch is stouter and as its name suggests is green all over with lemon-yellow edges to the wing and tail patches. The Chaffinch is salmon-pink in colour with white wing flashes, though the hen is duller. The Greenfinch nests in evergreens commonly around here, but the Chaffinch has become much scarcer as a breeding bird.

A common visitor is the wren, the same bird as your WINTER WREN, but it never stays to breed. It is quite independent of man, so does not come to our feeding stations, and it suffers badly in cold weather.

A regular winter visitor is the BLACK-HEADED GULL, much like your Bonaparte's Gull. Numbers regularly descend to a neighbouring garden for scraps, but they rarely alight in our garden as we have too many trees. There is usually one or two COMMON or MEW GULLS.

So I could go on describing the many visitors we get from time to time, but I must not weary you.

It is good to hear of moves against pesticides, and we must hope that this and other threats, like oil pollution, to our wild-life may soon be overcome. It is in this sphere that international cooperation is most needed—one nation cannot usefully act alone—and birds know no international boundaries.

Yours truly, R. B. Warren



# CONSERVATION

A great deal is being said about stopping the devastation of country in the United States, but no visible action, so it is not our policy to publish promises, such as the following. However, it will be interesting to see if, a year from now, there has been any noticeable change in attitude of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

## CORPS OF ENGINEERS MAPS ECOLOGIST TIE

WASHINGTON, April 4 (AP)

The chief of the United States Army Corps of Engineers has said that the corps will try to avert criticism from environmentalists in the future by seeking their views earlier in the planning of its projects.

The corps, builder of many major public works projects on the nation's waterways, has been accused of bulldozing its way across the landscape without proper regard for the finer values.

Gen. Frederick J. Clarke, chief of the corps, disputing such views at a news conference Thursday, announced the creation of a six-member board of outside experts to advise the corps on environmental issues.

Then, in response to questions, General Clarke said the corps would issue instructions by May 1 on the treatment of environmental aspects in its consideration of future projects.

Interim instructions were issued March 3 to guide its officers in observing the environment-protection policies of the Environmental Quality Act of 1969.

### CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING

The next meeting of the Conservation Committee will be May 26, 1970. The meeting starts at 7.30PM at Audubon House. All members and friends are invited to attend.

### WESTERN REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Statement by Paul Howard  
Presented by John Borneman

### AT THE SANTA BARBARA DECLARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS JANUARY 28, 1970

We strongly urge the immediate creation of a non-oil industry oriented organization whose purpose would be to police and enforce the restrictions already imposed by state and federal governments on the petroleum industry. It would be the people's watchdog. It would be financed by the use of a small percentage of the oil land lease money. It would pinpoint offenders and provide courts with evidence.

A naturalist's life is not a happy one. All the magazines he used to enjoy and still subscribes to nowadays is full of gloom and doom. Even this newsletter is 10% bad news.

If too much of our literature becomes saturated with this type of information, conservation societies will defeat their own objectives, and their publication just will not get read. There is too much repetition and far too many disorganized futile appeals for help, often in hopeless causes.

Nevertheless, every naturalist must be concerned, and contribute as much as he can to causes he has the most concern about. The various organizations could do well to coordinate their approaches.

Naturalists could be very influential in another way, one to which lip service is given, but relatively little real effort is made. That is to write letters or telegrams to lawmakers. This is a right of every citizen, but it must be done by each individual, not a group, and it should show a genuine interest based on sound facts. Our regular Conservation Corner, as well as other organizations can give the facts. The Audubon Society can help by providing information on how to write letters or send telegrams, how to address the President, U. S. Senators and Congressmen, and State Senators and Congressmen. It can also provide the names of representatives of the various local areas in which our readers live.

But only the individual can write the letter or send the message, if he really believes in a cause.

We propose that the oil industry immediately set aside one cent per barrel minimum on all crude oil it extracts. This money will be placed in the hands of a special foundation of the industry's own creation which would then make it available in the state specifically for conservation education purposes, within the framework of the state's public school system.

Paradoxically, this state has a \$15 million annual expenditure for driver education financed through licensing tax, while difficulty is encountered currently in appropriating a mere \$77 thousand for conservation education. Such a foundation would have \$4 million available in its first year from the over 400 million barrels of oil taken from the state last year. We challenge the oil industry to move out and respond by action.

(Excerpts from the statement)



before the first of April this year. This seems early but is probably normal in our mild climate. She also reports that RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES and STELLER'S JAYS, usually mountain birds, are still present on the Peninsula. It is possible that they may try nesting in the lowlands where conditions are mountainlike—pine trees, water, etc. This has happened with our Western Robins and Bandtail Pigeons which were formerly exclusively mountain nesters. Also near Palos Verdes, Don Sterba saw a life bird from the cliffs overlooking the ocean at Pt. Fermin Park—a lone SABINE'S GULL. Nearby at Terminal Island, the Clarkes found a BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW, well out of its high chapparal habitat on this land filled island.

South Texas lured several L. A. A. S. members during Easter vacation to leave their own sunny but relatively birdless area in favor of the equally sunny but more exciting avifauna along the Gulf of Mexico. Kim Garrett writes of forty



The BRANT, *Branta bernicla*, photographed at Goleta Slough by Richard Webster.

Whooping Cranes, a pair of Masked Ducks, of Black-headed Orioles, Prairie Chickens and a host of other Texas specialties. He also tells of meeting Arnold Small and Dick Robinson, travelling separately, but both enjoying the same avian wonders. It can't just be "binoculars around the neck," it's got to be some form of extra-sensory communication that brings birders together in a state as big as Texas.

Closer to home Gerald Tolman writes, with the enthusiasm that only a trip to a new and exciting birding area can generate, about south-

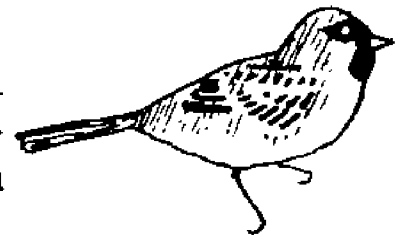
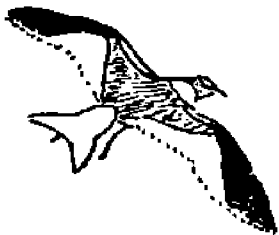
eastern Arizona. Here he found the expected resident birds, but discovered that the summering Flycatchers had not yet arrived in late March. He did however find a RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN, casual straggler from Mexico to southern and central Arizona. Although "Birds of Arizona" lists only one Arizona specimen, this is at least the third winter report since publication of that book. At any rate, it's a great find, and a real incentive to visit the fabulous Sonoita Creek area where the ultra-rare Five-striped Sparrow nested last summer.

Unfortunately all of us cannot get to Texas or Arizona at the drop of a hat, so we'll have to be satisfied with one or two day trips locally, and this is the time to take them. Morongo Valley is a must—the whole area (Covington Park and the Levin Ranch) is now open for walking, but not for driving. The other desert oases are almost equally good—Cottonwood Springs, Thousand Palms (by permission), Palm Canyons, Borrego Springs, etc. Further afield, Furnace Creek Range in Death Valley and the Colorado River above Yuma are famous stopovers for migrants. Live every birding day as if it were your last, it may be a long hot summer.

P.S. I'll be in Florida the first week in May, if you have any late observations please mail them to me before May 9th at 1105 No. Holliston Ave., Pasadena, Calif. 91104.

#### WHO CLEANED TUNA CANON?

Those of us who have birded this lovely, but litter-filled, little canyon in the Malibu Mountains through the years will have a pleasant surprise on their next visit. IT IS CLEAN! Our thanks are due to those unknown and hard-working benefactors, for it was no small job to clean "our favorite little stream." By what right do we call it "our stream"? Now it is "their stream." They faced the problem which we overlooked. They loved the canyon well enough to do something about it. We thank them for its newly, pristine condition and our increased enjoyment of it.—G.S.S.



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

**These** are the days—the peak of migration—that we waited for so impatiently during March and early April. Now that they have arrived, let's take advantage of them to the fullest. Almost anywhere is good for birding now—the ocean, the shore, the coastal lowlands, the foothills, and the desert should be productive in early May.

Even the mountains, still too cold for the nesting small birds, are at their best for owls. Those who tried owling last Spring were disappointed, probably because of the late wet season, but this year, hopefully, should be different. SPOTTED OWLS are almost guaranteed on Mt. Palomar, and are a probability in Santa Anita Canyon - one roosted beside the Winter Creek trail in broad daylight on March 27th. FLAMMULATED and SAW-WHET OWLS are more likely to be found in the higher mountains, with Mt. Pinos, the San Bernardino Mts. between Fawnskin and Holcomb Valley, and Mt. Palomar as good bets locally. If you are able to get up in the Sierras the field of operations is expanded and the chances increased. Unless you are an experienced owl imitator you will find tape recorded calls almost a necessity. Fortunately for those who like to sleep at night, early evening and early morning are the best times. A last minute call from Jon Atwood tells of banding an ELF OWL at Cottonwood Springs, east of Indio, on April 7th. This is the only place in California where this tiniest, desert-dwelling owl is known to occur.

Most reports in late March and early April were of "firsts" for the year. Aside from Swallows and Hummers, our earliest migrants, these were:  
 WARBLING VIREO - one banded near Azusa by Mike San Miguel on March 8th, and another banded in San Diego about the same time by Alan & Jean Craig, thereafter, a few singles were seen from San Diego (Bruce Broadbooks) to Santa Barbara (Richard Webster);  
 WILSON'S WARBLER - although one or two wintered in our area the first presumed migrants were two seen below San Diego on the 22nd (Bruce B.) and one near Santa Barbara (Richard W.) the same day;  
 WESTERN FLYCATCHER - four were found in Tuna Canyon, Malibu, on the 22nd (Don Sterba), and one near Santa Barbara the same day;  
 WESTERN KINGBIRD - a single bird was seen with the CASSIN'S near Lake Mathews, Riverside Co., on the first of April (Abigail King & Jean Brandt) and within a week they were pretty generally distributed throughout our area;

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE - a male at Chantry Flats above Arcadia on the 27th (Don Sterba) and another at Brush Canyon in the Hollywood Hills on the 29th (Kim Garrett);  
 HOODED ORIOLE - our only report to April 8th was at Herb and Olga Clarke's feeder in Glendale in mid-March.

These records would indicate that, except for Warbling Vireos, most common migrants were a week or two later than normal this Spring. A late report of an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER at Riverside on April 4th (Don Sterba) is an early sighting for this bird. Not all reports were of "firsts", however, Richard Webster writes from Santa Barbara that the "ATLANTIC" BRANT found on March 8th and seen by many rare birders from the L. A. A. S. remained until at least April 4th. He also brings sad news, "The OSPREYS (reported last month as building a nest at Lake Cachuma) are through - of the three: one has left, one has died, and one remains at the lake. The nest has fallen apart." *Sic transit gloria*. He also reports at least 15 CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEES at the Dunes Lakes, south of Pismo Beach. This is probably the most southerly record for this unique species of the north Pacific coast (I do not recall any previous reports south of San Louis Obispo).

Down Palos Verdes way, Shirley Wells reports that first broods of SONG SPARROWS and ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS hatched

## LOYE HOLMES MILLER

1875 To 1970

It is not often that an obituary brings feelings of well-being and satisfaction, yet certainly this must be the case with the thousands of people whose lives were touched by the genius of this extraordinary man, in his ninety-five years. Ornithologist, father of an ornithologist, idol of his students and kindly mentor of young naturalists everywhere. These are only a few of the qualities which endeared him to all who knew him. He was friend and contributor to the Los Angeles Audubon Society. His hand-carved Ivory-billed Woodpecker door knocker hangs in Audubon House, and his feature articles in past Tanagers are nostalgic literary genius of years gone by. So, his many years of "Lifelong Boyhood" (his autobiography) are ended and we are the richer for having known him. —G. S. S.