

The Western Tanager

Volume 40, 1973-74 No. 6 March

A BIRDER BIRDS James A. Tucker



“Birding” is one of those words that emerges from contracting a phrase into one word and thereby creating a more efficient and communicative semantic unit. Actually, linguistic history is in the making because the word is not found in any of the standard dictionaries as yet, even though it is being used widely. It is a most appropriate term to designate the activity involving birds that is also called bird-watching, bird-finding, bird-listing and bird-spotting.

For a word to catch on as quickly as this one has, it has to fill a niche in man’s attempts to communicate with his fellows. For many years, the terms *birdwatching* and *birdwatcher* were sufficient to identify the activity involved. More recently, however, the term *birdwatching* has fallen into disrepute as a descriptive term for our hobby. It not only implies the “little old lady in tennis shoes” that the journalists have immortalized, but it also is used in some areas as a synonymous term for girl watching. *Bird spotting* has never really taken hold and *bird listing* as well as *bird finding*, while they describe activities that characterize many birders, are not generally used to designate the overall activity that is called birding.

Birding is like fishing. A fisherman may sit all day on a river and not even get a nibble or he may spend an exciting day working up a terrific sweat fighting for a record-breaking swordfish. So the birder may enjoy the simple observation of birds at his feeder or he may spend a grueling day fighting against the clock for a record-breaking Big Day count.

Essentially, a birder is a person who enjoys any bird-related activity which affords him recreation, fun, or sporting experiences. He may or may not be a professional ornithologist; just as the fisherman may or may not be an ichthyologist.

As with any emerging activity that is relatively new to society, the problem of role identity becomes critical. Just who has the right to say what a “birder” should be or do? There are some who jealously regard themselves as birders but denounce certain activities of others calling themselves birders. This is particularly characterized in the dichotomy between listers and non-listers. Some professional ornithologists and other serious bird students feel that bird listing, practiced because of its competitive motivation, is so much less than scientifically oriented that to be identified with listers is to stain their image as scientists. Their argument, or course, is that when the motive is only to beat another lister, the observation capabilities are reduced in direct proportion to the competitive motive. This assumes that the competitive aspect of birding is the only motive of the lister. This is, more often than not, not the case. There is no question that some observers are not careful about field observations and most serious and careful listers could name persons whose list totals range from suspect to almost total fabrication. But such practices are not true in the majority of cases and to hold that they are is an unfair and bigoted attitude which should not characterize those that enjoy the binocular fraternity.

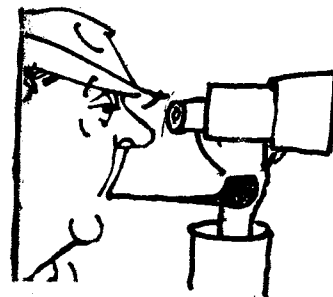
There is no question that some listers do enjoy the competitive aspects of birding most. It is just as true, however, that most of these “hard-core listers” are extremely careful in their observations and play the game according to an inherent set of rigid rules of honesty and careful documentation of results in questionable cases.

One of the first questions I am asked when presenting birding as a sport (which obviously includes competitive listing) is, how can we control the honesty of persons competing? We don’t attempt to because we can’t in most cases, but there are two controls which work very effectively to eliminate the fraudulent lister from serious contention in the listing game. First, he is unable to produce his rare finds for verification in most cases; and more importantly, he is unable to demonstrate expertise in field identification and general knowledge of bird distribution commensurate with the level implied by his spuriously high list totals. It only requires a few consistent goofs to be known as an undependable observer if your list totals rank you with the experts. The list totals of such a person, regardless of how impressive, are not taken seriously by those playing within the rules.

This is not to say that the experts do not make mistakes; they do, and they are the first to admit it even if it means removing a hard earned new bird (or what they thought was a new bird) from their list.

The picture has another side also. Some birders who are not interested in the academic ornithological aspects of bird study seem to feel that birding is their private domain which is not to be tampered with by scientific professionals. Both of these extremes are minority views, however, and most birders are not only tolerant of opposing views but enjoy the enthusiastic exchange of opinions.

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THE 1973 CHRISTMAS COUNT

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

When darkness fell on that last Sunday in December — a rather mild, pleasant, unremarkable winter day in southern California — most of the Los Angeles Christmas count observers seemed to feel that it wasn't a particularly exciting day for birds. And yet, when the 41 parties of 94 people filled out their check lists and mailed them in, it turned out to be an extraordinarily successful Christmas count. There seemed to be many counts in which one or two birds showed up that were not especially unusual, but when all the returns were in they proved to be the only individuals of the species we got. For example, the lone WESTERN BLUEBIRD in Elysian Park, the one WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH at Stone Canyon reservoir, the single CASSIN'S KINGBIRD in Griffith Park and the ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD in the Bel-Air hills. A bird here and a bird there all added up to 38,000 individuals and 156 species. This was only two species less than last year's great count and only the second time since 1966 we've made it over 150. In fact before the incredible 165 species was achieved in 1966 we have to go back to 1954 to reach the 150 mark.

Marina Del Rey is still our most productive resource. Although the HARLEQUIN DUCK showed up too late for this year's count a host of prize birds there took its place: ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, MERLIN, BLACK OYSTERCATCHER, GREATER SCAUP, SHORT-EARED OWL, AMERICAN BITTERN, SNOWY EGRET and PARASITIC JAEGER.

The reservoirs were somewhat disappointing this year but Franklin Canyon had a TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE and Stone Canyon a THAYER'S GULL. The zoo in Griffith Park had a couple of remarkable wild birds: a FULVOUS TREE DUCK and a SNOW GOOSE. Mike Dee, who works there, reports that four SNOW GEESE had flown into the area a week before count day and three of them flew off just the day before. The TREE DUCK had been there for some time and fortunately stayed through the holidays. (Ya gotta have luck!)

The party in the Santa Monica mountains near Mulholland Drive had a fine day with 49 species including a rare WESTERN TANAGER. Their most exciting moment was when they saw a RED-TAILED HAWK harassing an unmistakable GOLDEN EAGLE. It was a great opportunity to compare the markings and especially the size of the two birds. This was the first eagle on a Los Angeles Audubon Christmas count — at least since 1948. And not too far away, near those skimpy rushes in the pools above Fern Dell in Griffith Park, George Ledec and Jonathan Gershenzon flushed a VIRGINIA RAIL they had

staked out for two weeks. Surprisingly enough, this too is the first VIRGINIA RAIL ever to show up on our count. This is surprising because the Ballona Creek area was a far better habitat before the marina was built and, though CLAPPER RAILS were reported years back, no VIRGINIAS were seen. Other firsts this year are the Black Oystercatcher, the FULVOUS TREE DUCK and the ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, bringing our total bird list over the years for the Christmas count to 271. A most unusual sighting for count day was six WILSON'S WARBLERS — black beanies and all — seen by Ruth Wood in MacArthur Park.

As predicted, the mountain birds stayed away in droves this year and we were lucky to squeeze out four RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES and only one WHITE-BREASTED. There were no MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES or BROWN CREEPERS and only six PURPLE FINCHES. Last year we counted 166 PURPLE FINCHES and PYGMY NUTHATCHES and RED CROSSBILLS were seen at Hollywood reservoir.

Part of the reason for our excellent score this year was the fact that we managed to get most of the expected, reasonably common birds. Other than the chickadee and the creeper, the only glaring omissions were the RED-SHOULDER HAWK and the COMMON SNIPE — and the snipe isn't all that common. All in all a good year.

A few additional tidbits of information. The Jenners got twenty CACTUS WRENS in the Baldwin Hills — probably a record for Los Angeles. We counted 4 GREEN HERONS while last year we couldn't even buy one. 926 ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRDS is far and away the most we've ever had. 858 COMMON BUSHTITS is the second highest count we've had after the 1125 in 1952. (For those who collected batting averages when they were kids, Oakland, Calif., holds the world's record — 1587.) Varied Thrushes popped up the second year in a row. Sad to relate the STARLINGS continue their relentless proliferation with a new record of 1832. The new AOU dispensation lumping together hitherto separate species would lose us only one bird, the MYRTLE counting as an "additional race". Since we muffed our usual SLATE-COLORED JUNCO and our YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER, there was little cause for gnashing of teeth. One final morsel: our 242 CALIFORNIA THRASHERS is probably a new national record since we were the previous record-holders with 206 in 1953. Thanks to all for an outstanding job. Next year — same time, same place.

(con't from page 1)

Birding is here to stay. As a hobby and sport it is growing very rapidly. This is partially due to the conservation ethic presently in vogue, but also because it affords an outlet for man's hunting instinct which is becoming more and more frustrated by reduced bag limits, legal hunting areas and wild-life populations.

Birding affords outlets that range in excitement from sitting in an armchair watching a mother chickadee feed her young at the window feeder to dangerous exploits willingly undertaken to gain access to a particular bird's habitat so that it may be observed in the wild. With possibilities ranging this widely, the hobby cannot fail to appeal to a broad segment of modern society. Also, birding affords ideal subject matter for

so many other avocational pursuits such as photography, painting, travel, camping, writing and even mountain climbing.

What birders are and what they do will explicitly define what the hobby of birding is and what the word "birding" means. If the standard dictionaries choose to include the word as a verb with appropriate derivatives in future editions, my definitions for their consideration would be something like
bird (verb), to observe birds for pleasure
birder (noun), one who birds
birding (noun), the observing of birds for pleasure.

I can hear the English teacher now: "I bird, you bird, he birds; we bird, you bird, they bird; I bird today, I birded yesterday, I will bird tomorrow."

Some like to fish. I like to bird. Good Birding!

audubon activities

DONALD ADAMS

SALTON SEA, Jan. 25-26. A few hardy souls searched the arid (gasoline-wise) lower end of the Salton Sea. The numbers of geese and ducks were markedly below previous years, indicating a successful hunting season. ROSS' GOOSE was noteworthy for an unusual representation. Along Davis Road all five species of geese were seen at once. Two WHITE PELICANS flew low over Red Hill, 27 immature BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS and an immature LITTLE BLUE HERON were seen together in the reeds. CATTLE EGRETS are no longer a rarity, and SNOWY EGRETS were abundant. A SHARP-SHINNED and a COOPERS HAWK were seen at Finney Lake, where were also seen four AMERICAN REDSTARTS in excellent plumage. A novelty was the appearance of a few MEW GULLS in the flocks of RING-NECKED GULLS. A male VERMILION FLYCATCHER was seen on Gentry Road. In all 104 species were seen.

MORRO BAY, Feb. 2 and 3. Fear of difficulty in obtaining gasoline reduced attendance to 9 birders. Otherwise the day was successful with 80 species found, including the Peregrine Falcon and Common Murre. Jim Clements, leader.

ANNUAL DINNER, Feb. 12. A large attendance and an excellent meal made this year's Annual Dinner a great success. The facilities at the Lobster House were excellent for the general meeting before dinner, — a very pleasant occasion. The highlight of the after-dinner ceremonies was the presentation to Paul Howard, Western Regional Director of the National Audubon Society, of a check of \$2300 toward THE CONDOR FUND, of which the Los Angeles Audubon Society is notable in its support, together with an extremely gratifying announcement by Paul Howard. A critical in-holding within the Sespe Condor Refuge used by a hunting club, the 480-acre Green Cabin Area, has been given by its owners to the National Audubon Society. This was the result of efforts by the Audubon Condor Warden, John Borneman and of Paul Howard. Details will be published later in "The Western Tanager."

The main feature of the evening was the slide show of Alaska by the President, Dr. Maisel and Mrs. Maisel. It was greatly appreciated by all.

RAPTOR MANAGEMENT STUDY BY Pamela Greene

The Raptor Management Study, if adopted, can be the most important step in history toward the protection of our birds of prey. Although our goal is the complete and permanent protection of predatory birds, an intense program of study can and will be the influencing factor in their preservation.

Please write to the Fish and Game Commission and urge that this study be effective immediately during which time the issuance of falconry permits be ceased and no predatory birds be allowed taken from the wild.

We believe this study will indicate the desperate need for protection of our birds of prey.

Write to: Mr. Sherman Chickering, President
c/o Mr. Leslie Edgerton, Executive Secretary
Fish and Game Commission
1416 Ninth Street Sacramento, California 95814

BOOK STORE

Since many people will be traveling to the south Pacific this summer on tours and many will be attending the "International Congress for Bird Preservation" in Australia, we have a wide variety of specific bird books covering that particular part of the world including:

New Zealand	In Search of Birds in New Zealand by McKenzie Butterflies of New Zealand by Laidlaw Smaller Birds of New Zealand Bush by Oiwier The Tuatara Lizards and Frogs of New Zealand by Sharell Waders in New Zealand by Power
Australia	Field Guide to Australian Birds by Slater Australian Warblers by McGill Australian Flycatchers by Officer Australian Parrots in Color by Robinson Australian Parrots by Forshaw Birds of the Southwest Pacific by Mayr (between Samoa, New Caledonia & Micronesia)
Fiji	Birds of Fiji in Color by Belcher Field Guide to Fiji Birds
Hawaii	Birds of Hawaii by Munro Hawaii's Birds

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE STUDIES FALCONRY

At its first meeting the Conservation Committee voted to select a few issues pertinent to the work of the Audubon Society, to study actively these issues and to present its findings to the Los Angeles membership. The first topic selected was raptor management and falconry. At the second meeting, January 22, Lloyd Kiff of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology and UCLA doctoral candidate in ornithology discussed raptor management.

Pesticides, habitat destruction and exploitation by man are the most destructive forces behind the dwindling bird of prey populations. The taking of raptors, particularly fledglings, by vandals and falconers removes birds from the wild and reduces breeding populations. Preventing such exploitation is difficult because of the lack of effective legislation, and public knowledge and support of the problem.

Lloyd Kiff suggested that L.A.A.S. take the following action: 1) support a statewide moratorium on the issuance of falconry permits and the taking of all predatory birds from the wild until a comprehensive population study is done, and a proper raptor management program is devised. 2) Take part in population studies of birds of prey in the Los Angeles area.

In the future, the conservation committee will meet with a member of the Sierra Club's committee developing raptor management legislation, and an active falconer.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Continued from page two

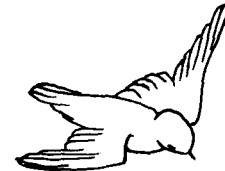
Jim Tucker is the Editor of "Birding," the official publication of the American Birding Association. (See this week's Time Magazine.) He was one of, if not, the founder of this association, and has been a leader in stimulating birding in every state of the Union. He recently received his Ph.D. in Psychology, which interfered with his own birding activities—but now we hope to see him again in all parts of the country.

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

Dr. Gerald Maisel, PRESIDENT
 Agnes Evans, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**Audubon
 Bird Reports
 874-1318**

- Sun, Mar. 3 TUJUNGA WASH & HANSEN DAM. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on north side of Foothill Blvd. by bridge, 2 miles west of Sunland. Cactus Wren and Costa's Hummingbird possibilities. Leader: Phil Sayre. Call Audubon House for further details.
- Thu, Mar. 7 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8 p.m. Audubon House.
- Tue, Mar. 12 EVENING MEETING, 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Dr. Joseph Jehl of the San Diego Museum of Natural History will give a slide program on "Sea Birds of Tierra Del Fuego and the Strait of Magellan."
 AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM: Charles Hotchkiss "Big Bend Country." Fulton Junior High School Auditorium, Van Nuys, Corner of Saticoy and Kester.
- Sat, Mar. 23 MALIBU LAGOON & TAPIA PARK. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the supermarket parking lot adjacent to the upper lagoon. Leader to be announced.
- Mon, Mar. 25 to NATIONAL AUDUBON WESTERN CONFERENCE. The Western Regional Office cordially extends an invitation to attend a renewal of the popular Asilomar Conferences. The challenging theme for the Conference is: "Golden Opportunities in Conservation" with special emphasis being placed on WHAT'S NEW IN '74?
- Thu, Mar. 28 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8 p.m. Audubon House.
- Thu, Apr. 4 CHANTRY FLAT & SANTA ANITA CANYON. Details to be announced.
- Sat, Apr. 6 EVENING MEETING, 8 p.m., Plummer Park. Program to be announced.
- Tue, Apr. 9 BUTTERBREAD SPRINGS. Details in April Tanager.
- Sat, Apr. 20 MORONGO VALLEY. " " " "
- Sun, Apr. 21
- Sat, Apr. 27 PELAGIC TRIP OUT OF OXNARD ON BOARD THE PAISANO. This trip will be a workshop on pelagic birds for beginners and for those who feel they need help in pelagic identification. Leader: Lee Jones. Fee: \$11.00 per person. Send check, self-addressed envelope and list of members of party and phone numbers to: Joann Gabbard, 823 19th St., Apt. d, Santa Monica, CA 90403.
- Sun, Apr. 28
- Sun, Apr. 28



"FIELD STUDIES OF CALIFORNIA BIRDS"

. . . is to be an introduction to the field observation, identification and study of Southern California birds within their natural habitats. Four field trips will emphasize the biology and natural histories of birds found at: Upper Newport Bay, the UC Irvine San Joaquin Marsh, Morongo Valley and Covington Flats, Placentia Canyon, and Mt. Pinos. Lectures at UCLA will precede each field trip. The course is intended to show beginners and amateur birdwatchers valuable techniques and equipment used to study birds in a variety of habitats. Dept. Biological and Physical Sciences, UCLA Extension, P.O. Box 24902, LA CA 90024; (213) 825-3839. Wednesday evening lectures will be held from 7 to 9:30 p.m. in Room 4216 of Young Hall. UCLA on March 27, April 17, May 8. Weekend field trips will be March 30, April 21, May 11 and June 8 (one day each). Arnold Small, M.S., instructor in biology at Los Angeles Harbor College, Wilmington. Fee: \$65. 3 units of quarter system credit may be earned.

NOTICE

Owing to the energy crisis Audubon House will be closed on Saturday. The House will be open Monday through Friday from 10 to 3.

Field Trip Information: The society cannot be responsible for transportation. Always bring binoculars and lunch. No pets or collecting permitted. On weekend trips leader is scheduled for Saturday only. The Los Angeles Audubon Society and its authorized leaders accept no responsibility for the protection or well-being of persons attending field trips, or for any accident, personal or otherwise, incurred during a society sponsored trip. For last minute changes or cancellations always call the Bird Report 874-1318 on the Friday before a scheduled trip.

"The Western Tanager" is free to members of National Audubon Society assigned to the Los Angeles chapter. For all others annual subscription is \$3.50. For first class mailing, send \$1.00 to Audubon House.

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The Western Tanager

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS CONTINUED

RHINOCEROS and CASSIN'S AUKLETS, ALBATROSS, FULMARS, an adult THAYER'S GULL and a white GLAUCOUS GULL. In Monterey Harbor itself there was a YELLOW-BILLED LOON early in January, an immature male KING EIDER (almost identical with ours), four white-phase FULMARS and an OLDSQUAW. Nearby, in Pebble Beach, California's third or fourth CATBIRD came regularly to a feeder during the early part of the month.

The high tides in early January and February at Upper Newport Bay brought CLAPPER, SORA and VIRGINIA RAILS into view, and a very few lucky people even glimpsed the BLACK RAIL, but the three Sharptailed Sparrows which wintered there in '72 - '73 were not reported. Nearby, at Bolsa Chica, the LITTLE BLUE HERON had assumed full adult plumage (slate blue - not white) and one or more LOUISIANA HERONS were present there or at Seal Beach marsh. At south San Diego Bay the REDDISH EGRET and the BLACK SKIMMER proved elusive, but three LOUISIANA HERONS and several dozen KNOTS were easy to find. San Diego's small but very well kept Presidio Park has a panoramic view over Pt. Loma and the harbors, and a host of rare winter birds. The star of the group was a COUES' FLYCATCHER (rare except in Southeast Arizona), but other birds seen in January were two SUMMER TANAGERS, a ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK, a WESTERN FLYCATCHER and a SOLITARY VIREO. Along the Santa Ynez River near Solvang, Jon Atwood saw two RUSTY BLACKBIRDS, an adult and an immature, on Jan. 8. Despite several intensive searches, they were found again only by Larry Sansone who spent the night there. A last minute report from Andrew Hazi tells of seeing a TROPICAL KINGBIRD on Jan. 14 at the Andre Clark Refuge in Santa Barbara. This is our only report since early fall, but one did winter in a nearby cemetery two years ago.

March is a little too late for the waterfowl at the Salton Sea and a little too early for the migrants at the desert oases, but the shorebirds should be starting north along the coast and our summer resident species will be deeply involved with nesting activities. Don't forget the "Nest Record Cards". Keep an eye

on the sky for migratory Turkey Vultures, hawks, swallows and Vaux's Swifts and, if the birds disappoint you, the wildflowers should make a day in the field well worth the effort.

Errata: In the January issue of the Tanager, in the last paragraph of Southern California Birds, CASSIN' SPARROWS on the P.V. Peninsula should read CASSIN'S FINCHES.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

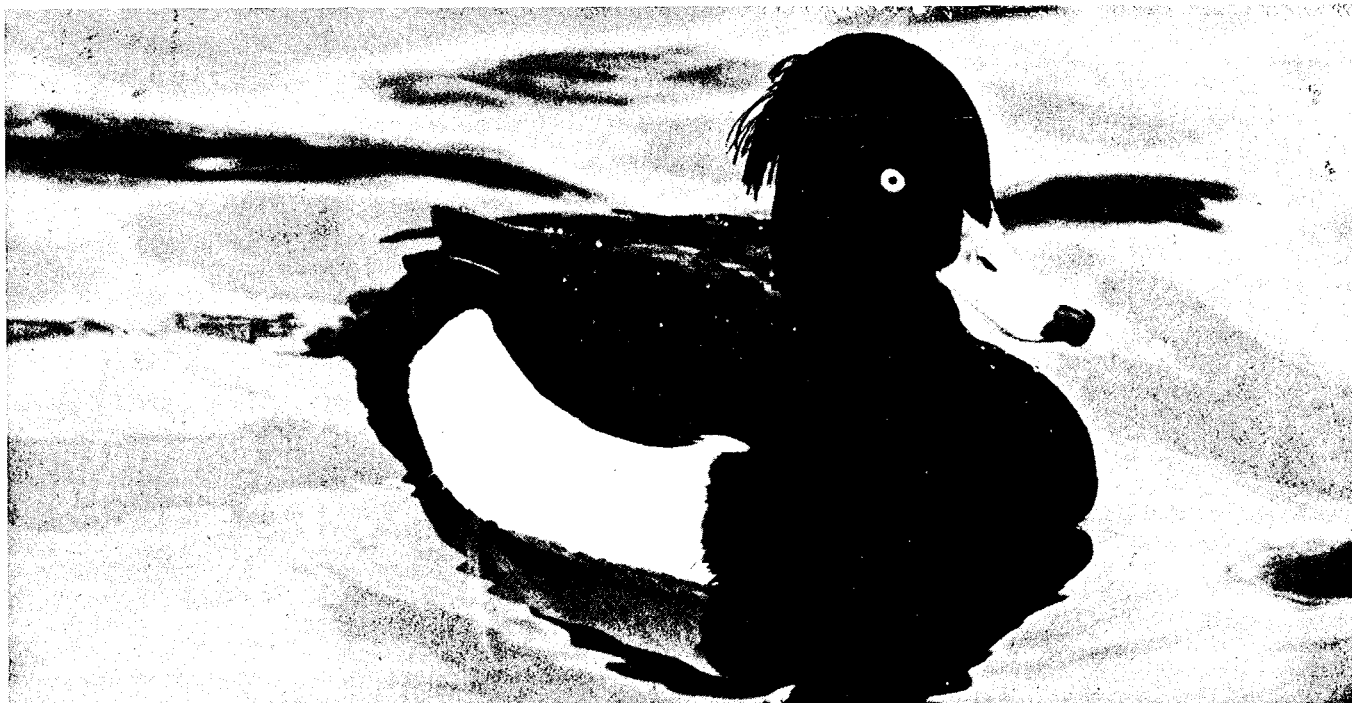
Mr. Suffel will be leaving shortly for Africa for several weeks of birding. Lee Jones will take over his column in the April and May Tanagers. Please mail sightings to Lee, care of The Department of Biology, U.C.L.A., Los Angeles, Calif. 90024, or call him at 455-2398.

SNOWY OWLS

Two Eureka men have been fined a total of \$690 for the illegal shooting of an ARCTIC SNOWY OWL on the tidal flats north of town, the Department of Fish and Game said. Criminal complaints for taking a migratory nongame bird were filed against David J. Ayers and Larry W. Kryla. The owl was the first seen in the Humboldt County area in six years, the department said. Both men pleaded no contest to the charges in municipal court. Ayers, identified as the shooter, drew a maximum fine of \$500 plus a \$125 penalty assessment. Kryla was fined \$65.

WE HEAR THAT...

Point Reyes Bird Observatory has announced a series of field courses for 1974. In addition to studying birds and their habitats, research programs will be explained. The money raised by these courses will be used for the Observatory's general programs. The courses vary in length from two to eight days and in area, from Point Reyes to San Blas, Mexico. Those of our members interested in joining one of these programs may write to Meryl Stewart, Box 422, Bolinas, Calif. 94924 for information.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

SHUMWAY SUFFEL



BIRDS

MARCH, as we've written so many times before, can be a dull month for birders — most of the winter birds have already gone and only the earliest spring migrants have arrived. If March is anything birdwise, it's a time for "first reports". Actually the first migrants are here already — Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds for the early spring flowers and the swallows, mostly Cliffs, Roughwings and Violet-green's for the earliest insects. By mid-March the first Western and Cassin's Kingbirds (a few Cassin's winter here), Western Flycatchers, Warbling Vireos, Wilson's Warblers, and Bullock's Orioles should be arriving in our area, and before April first we should have Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Black-throated Gray Warblers, Hooded Orioles and Black-headed Grosbeaks.

A few of these species can be confusing to new birders and March is a good time to study them. Western and Cassin's Kingbirds are superficially alike — large for flycatchers, dark backed with gray and yellow underparts, but the Western's black tail has narrow white sides, the Cassin's tail is plain, possibly lighter edged at the extreme tip. The white sides on the Western's tail can be difficult to see except at close range in good light, but shades of color underneath are distinctive. The Cassin's has a pure white throat contrasting with the medium gray breast and the yellow belly. The Western's grayish-white throat shades into the light gray breast which in turn blends into the yellow belly. Male Rufous and Allen's Hummers are very much alike, both have fire-red throats and show a great deal of rufous on the flanks and tail. If it has rufous on the upper back it's a Rufous Hummingbird, and if the upper back is green it's probably an Allen's, but it could be an immature male Rufous. The females, for most of us, cannot be separated. Swallows, too, give beginners a lot of trouble, chiefly because they won't stop to be recognized. Barn Swallows are the easiest because of their deeply forked tail and buffy underparts. Cliff Swallows also have buffy underparts, but their tail is square at the end, not forked. They are our common nesting species. Tree Swallows and Violet-greens are much alike, dark green above and white below, but the white on the Violet-greens extends up onto the sides of the rump and onto the face above the eye. The Violet-greens back is just the color which gives it its name — an iridescent blend which unfortunately can be fully appreciated only in the hand. The two brown swallows, Rough-winged and Bank are not too difficult if seen well. Both are brown above and white below, but the Rough-wing has a brownish throat which blends into the white underparts. The Bank Swallow is smaller and much more contrasty — rich brown above with a clear white throat and belly, sharply separated by a dark brown breastband. It is the least common swallow in our area.

Despite the scarcity of invading passerines, particularly as compared with their abundance last winter, this January was far from dull. Two arctic predators — SNOWY OWLS and ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS — were present in Northern and

Central California in unprecedented numbers — over twenty Snowy Owls were seen on the coastal dunes from the Oregon border to the mouth of the Salinas River. They were undoubtedly driven south by a crash in the rodent cycle (mostly Lemmings), which occurs every four years, but seldom drives the Snowy Owls down as far as California. A small invasion took place in 1967, but 1916 was the last time that a major invasion, such as this winter's occurred. Very few ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were found locally, but the one in Purerco Canyon, Malibu, which was first seen by Sue Willumsen in early December was still there in early February. An adult GOSHAWK, found by Shirley Wells and Eric Brooks in the South Coast Botanic Gardens on Jan. 26, was widely seen and admired until at least Feb. 2, but the immature BROAD-WINGED HAWK found by Harry Kreuger near Chatsworth on Jan. 21 could not be found again. Merlins are becoming quite rare here and seldom stay in one place long enough to be seen by other birders, so Ed Navajosky's MERLIN in the San Fernando Valley on Feb. 1 is not likely to be refound.

At Malibu, the PIPING PLOVER stayed on at least through January, and the KING EIDER was rediscovered by Guy Commeau on Jan. 28, but the "ATLANTIC" BRANT disappeared when the heavy rains in early January turned the mouth of Malibu Creek from a placid lagoon into a raging torrent. The TUFTED DUCK at Lake Sherwood was recorded on the Conejo Valley Count on Dec. 31 and was reported to L.A.A.S. by "Lee" Culver, who lives at the lake, on Jan. 29. It proved difficult to see, but was found by Rich Stalcup about Feb. 1.

California's first RUFIOUS-BACKED ROBIN at Imperial Dam above Yuma stayed through January, at least, and although it was sometimes difficult to find, it was seen by many persistent birders. After finding the robin on Jan. 8, Lee Jones stopped at Brock Ranch, an oasis near Holtville, where he spotted a TENNESSEE WARBLER (almost unknown in winter) and two GRAY-HEADED JUNCOS (regular there). Another GRAY-HEADED JUNCO was found in Diamond Bar Ranch by John Schmidt on Feb. 5.

Two pelagic trips from Moss Landing out into Monterey Bay on Jan. 26 and Feb. 2 provided at least one lifebird for most of the birders on board, as excellent sightings of at least five SLENDER-BILLED SHEARWATERS were obtained. The best field marks proved to be the very small bill and the fact that they were almost concolor underneath from wingtip to wingtip (not contrasty as in the "Sootys" which have a dark body and light wing linings). Some fortunate listers even saw more than one lifebird, as the first trip had several FORK-TAILED PETRELS at fairly close range, but the second trip had only one at some distance. In addition there were ANCIENT (first trip only) and MARBLED MURRELETS,