

The Western Tanager

Volume 40, 1973-74 No. 7 April

by J. R. HILTON

WHAT FUTURE FOR FALCONRY?



Falconry, one of the most ancient of all sports, is the flying of a trained raptor to hunt for bagged or wild quarry for man's pleasure or food. Although falconry once required considerable experience, patience and knowledge, times have changed. Today, many states allow 12-year-olds to practice falconry, and even the most stringent state regulations, which require a token anybody-can-pass quiz and aviary inspection, are easily met by any persistent applicant. Incongruous as it is, as raptor populations decline continent-wide, harvesting for falconry grows in popularity and legal approval. Except for a large but relatively powerless private sector to which the author belongs, falconry is viewed almost universally as a valid and harmless field sport. Yet there are few who would place as the majority in this sport persons who properly feed and regularly fly a hawk and who otherwise promote high standards of falconry practice. In fact, surveys made by game agencies reveal less than about 25% of all U.S. licensed falconers fly their birds at all, and easily fewer than 5% actually fly their birds in true falconry tradition.

The widespread and illegal field behavior of today's typical falconer has caused growing public mistrust of falconers generally, particularly so in California, the hub of falconry activity nationwide. Most falconers maintain a highly selfish attitude towards birds of prey, they treat their captives more like show pets than hunting companions, and the insatiably search the countryside for nest sites to vandalize or inspect. Combined with their habit of selling and collecting birds of prey and falconry paraphernalia, falconers have turned their sport into a profitable business sadly dependent on raptor exploitation.

Although the anti-possession argument has become more sophisticated over the years—from charges of cruelty to mismanagement of the resource—falconers have largely stuck by the claim that their take of young and adult birds is harmless to the population. Falconers quickly dispute any evidence to the contrary, like one study made recently in Southern California which makes clear the relationship between reduced nest production and harvesting. So convincing is researcher James Wiley's work that when referred to falconers fall mutely silent and Fish and Game officials wince.

Concern for the plight of the raptors and other problems of falconry in California wasn't noticeable until this time last year when the local Sierra Club took interest in the issue. In cooperation with the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey the two groups urged a state-wide collecting moratorium pending a harvesting impact appraisal. Support for the concept came when over 20 state conservation groups asked their members to support the plan.

But when the moratorium suggestion was proposed and presented Jan. 11 by a Sierra Club official at a Fish and game meeting in El Centro, a handful of smooth-talking leaders of the falconry movement and their ever-present cheering section persuaded Game Commissioners to merely make token revisions in the state's falconry regulations. So insulting were the changes,

soon to be finally approved, that a bill to entirely outlaw the taking of fledgling birds of prey in California is now being tried for legislative vote.

Since the bill—A.B. 3203—does not prohibit the taking of adult passage hawks, said by most falconers to be better than fledglings for training and eventual flying for falconry, extreme or too restrictive the bill is not. Some falconers even support the bill, and one leader of the California falconry movement reportedly has asked that a felony charge be given anyone illegally holding a peregrine falcon.

The Assembly Natural Resources Committee will likely favor the bill, since Assemblyman Jim Keysor of San Fernando is both author of the bill and a member of the committee. But the real test will come within a week or two from the Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee, whose members are heavily influenced by sportsmen interests.

Assembly Bill 3203 presents for LAAS members a rare opportunity for expression of views on the controversial possession-preservation issue. Take advantage of this opportunity by writing one of the Senators listed below. The fate of A.B. 3203 may someday decide the future for California's dwindling birds of prey.

Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814, John Nejedly, Chairman (Walnut Creek); Robert Lagonarsino (Ventura); R. Ayala (San Bernardino); Peter Behr (San Rafael); Claire Berryhill (Modesto); Dennis Carpenter (Newport Beach); Ralph Dills (San Pedro); Arlen Gregoria (San Mateo); James Wedworth (Inglewood).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Richard Hilton is President of the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey, which is very active on the East and West Coasts in trying to get the facts about the condition of our birds of prey known to all concerned.

CONSERVATION

FRIENDS OF MADRONA MARSH

A classic confrontation is shaping up with the plan for developing Madrona Marsh in Torrance. The 54.5-acre freshwater marsh, a welcome respite from the surrounding concrete, glass and pavement, is home for many kinds of amphibians, reptiles and mammals and over 120 species of birds. The property, along with an adjoining 150-acre field is owned by oil interests. A plan was recently submitted to the Torrance Planning Department for construction of 1700 high-density residential units with commercial satellite development. To counter the immediate threat of development a group of South Bay residents organized a non-profit corporation called the "Friends of Madrona Marsh," P.O. Box 1472, Torrance 90505.

If you agree that this important ecological resource should be preserved, write to Mr. Carl Busse, Secretary, Environmental Review Board, City of Torrance, 3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance 90503.

FRIENDS OF NEWPORT BAY report that negotiations toward land acquisition for the Upper Newport Bay Wildlife Refuge continue. They ask that letters be sent to the Mayor and City Council of Newport Beach and the Orange County Board of Supervisors urging public ownership of the open uplands around the bay.

The Tenescal Canyon Association is asking for support of the proposed Los Liones Canyon Arboretum and Nature Center in Pacific Palisades. The proposal has already been endorsed by Mayor Bradley, Councilman Braude and others. At the present time the proposal is being studied by the County Supervisors who will shortly vote on the construction and funding of the arboretum.

The canyon has a unique climate, including ocean breezes and totally frost-free conditions permitting the growth of both native flora and tropicals. Since the canyon is the last undeveloped site in the Los Angeles basin possessing these characteristics, it is considered extremely desirable for an arboretum site. Because it has been totally undisturbed and has varied habitat and water, it is also a natural preserve for many kinds of wildlife. It's history of nesting bird species as well as migrants is impressive, and it is also known to have several now rather rare animal species.

The plans for the canyon include some planting and the clearing of trails of varying difficulty, to enable visitors to explore the area according to their own ability and interest.

The Los Angeles Audubon Society enthusiastically endorses the Temescal Canyon Association's proposal for the Los Liones Arboretum and Nature Center and urge members to write to any of the feeling expressing their support of the proposal.

Baxter Ward or James Hayes. Kenneth Hahn, Chairman, Ernest Debs, Pete Schabarum. The address in each case is County Board of Supervisors, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, 90012.

No Trespassing: Peregrine Falcons. The National Audubon Society and the Defenders of Wildlife provided the funds to enable the California Dept. of Fish and Game to place an electronic detector system on Morro Rock Ecological Preserve, northwest of Santa Barbara, to protect this historic nesting site of peregrine falcons. Now anyone climbing the rock can be easily detected and will be subject to immediate arrest, heavy fines and possible imprisonment.

CONDORS GET CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Mr. and Mrs. Val Gerrish of the Big Sespe M.R.G. Oil Company, residents of Long Beach, donated a 320 acre inholding in the Sespe Condor Sanctuary to the National Audubon Society, on Dec. 31, 1973. This area, known as the Green Cabins, has long been a Forest Service priority in land acquisition for the protection of the California condor. The National Audubon Society expects to transfer this property to the USFS at a later date. Green Cabins is located on Sespe Creek in the heart of the Sespe Sanctuary and has long been a source of potential disturbance to the condors because of a private access road leading to the property. Several condor nest-sites are located near the property. All those who value the condor owe Mr. and Mrs. Gerrish heart felt thanks.

YOUR PEN POWER NEEDED TO PASS AB 3203

There are an increasing number of illegal activities surrounding the controversial sport of falconry. With your help a much needed bill can be passed that will tighten the regulations governing falconry and simplify current enforcement problems. Assemblyman Jim Keyser's AB 3203 is now pending before the Assembly Natural Resources and Conservation Committee.

AB 3203 will:

- 1) Outlaw the taking of all Fledgling raptorial birds.
- 2) Allow transfer of ownership or possession for a period not to exceed more than two weeks.
- 3) Mandate that all raptors possessed by licensees be banded.
- 4) Make it illegal for licensees to possess more than two raptors at anyone time.

WRITE NOW! Members of the committee are; Chairman Edwin Z'berg (Sacramento); Bob Wood (Salinas); Pauline Davis (Portola); March Fong (Oakland); Jim Keyser (San Fernando); John Miller (Berkeley); Robert Nimmo (Bakersfield); and Charles Warren (Los Angeles). All mail should be addressed to The State Capitol, Sacramento, California 95814.

MASSIVE CAMPAIGN TO RELAX DDT BAN IS FORCING EPA CHIEF TO DECIDE BY MARCH 1 ON PERMIT TO USE DDT AGAINST TUSSOCK MOTH IN WEST; YOUR TELE- GRAMS ARE VITAL

Environmental Protection Administrator Russell E. Train is under heavy pressure from the Department of Agriculture, the Forest Service, the agri-chemical industry and forces in Congress to relax the hard-won ban on uses of DDT and allow aerial spraying of the insidious pesticide over 650,000 acres of forest lands in the northwest to combat the tussock moth as requested by the Forest Service.

FALCON HITCHES A LIFT

When the Aberdeen trawler *Grampian Monarch* returned home from her maiden voyage in February, she was carrying a "stowaway" — white gyrfalcon. The bird was found, exhausted, resting on the nets on deck when the boat was 40 miles west of the Hebrides. It was a young male, probably reared in Iceland or Greenland the previous summer.

The bird was taken to Aberdeen Zoo, where it was fed and gradually recovered its strength. The Zoo's manager, Mr George Leslie, turned down a number of offers for the bird, including one of £150 from someone who wanted to keep it, and special security precautions were taken to guard the bird. After a week in the Zoo's good hands the falcon was ready to be released. Roy Dennis, the RSPB's Highlands officer, approached BEA, who offered to fly the bird and its cage free of charge to Shetland. On 2 March the falcon was flown north and Bobby Tulloch, the RSPB's Shetland officer, released it.

BOOK STORE

JUST OUT!

ARNOLD SMALL BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA

Winchester Press, N.Y.C. 1974 Price \$12.50

*Have it autographed by the author
at the Evening Meeting, April 9.*

audubon activities

TUJUNGA WASH, Mar. 3. Nine leaderless birders were on hand at the Foothill bridge meeting place as the sun replaced the clouds, though it remained quite cool in each area visited. We soon left for the improved Orcas Park area (restrooms, bridle trails, streamside willows, cactus and brush areas). Altogether a more productive place to begin birding Tujunga Wash.

Here we saw the bulk of the day's 41 species. Those after the CACTUS WREN were not disappointed (this bird may be guaranteed here), several BEWICK'S WRENS and (later at Hansen Dam's rocks) the ROCK WRENS also appeared as predicted. COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD visits Sunland feeders in March but I have never seen one in the wash at this time. Our best birds for this area were the unlikely TRI-COLORED BLACKBIRDS at the horse stable feed lot. Later, the after lunch survivors went to Hansen Dam Park to add TREE and CLIFF SWALLOWS to the VIOLET-GREEN and ROUGH-WINGED seen upstream in the Wash. On the dam crest, one could almost touch the hundreds of sailing WHITE-THROATED SWIFTS, seldom seen this well.

As a familiar observer at these places, I'd estimate the trip produced 8-10 fewer species than a good early March day should have. J. B. Stevens

EVENING MEETING, Mar. 11 Dr. Joseph Jehl of the San Diego Museum of Natural History described his recent voyage through the Straits of Magellan and up the coast of Argentina. He showed incredible slides of very large flocks of Wandering Albatross and Cape Pigeons. Slides showing Oystercatchers indicate the same kind of interbreeding between the Black and American as occurs on the coast of Southern California and Baja. Other slides of indigenous shore birds and remarkably beautiful local Cormorants made a very enjoyable and instructive evening.

FIELD TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

As a result of the energy crisis, the Field Trip Chairman is finding it extremely difficult to guarantee leaders for field trips. Since the gas shortage, leaders have occasionally been forced to drop out at the last minute. We suggest that if no leader appears by starting time that the group appoint their own leader for the day. The Field Trip Chairman is soliciting ideas for field trips close to the Los Angeles area and would also like to hear from anyone interested in leading a trip. The suggestion has been made that a bus be chartered for longer trips. Pam would like to have your response to this idea, too. Please call Pam Greene 398-2955 or write to her at 12023 Dewey St., Los Angeles, Ca 90066.

THE NEW NAMES

Harcourt's Petrel or Madeiran Petrel.

Since Harcourt is as unknown as the bird in North America, and since Madeiran is unpronounceable if one is neither a native Azorian nor a wine connoisseur; and since there is no question about this bird being a petrel, simply call it a Hard Core Petrel. Or in view of the current energy crisis and the scarcity of the bird in the U.S., why not call it the Scarce Petrel. Masked Booby or Blue-faced Booby.

Blue-faced Booby could be confused with Blue Tit and all boobies are masked (at least the ones I've tried to see have been). Therefore, call the bird an Indigo Booboo.

Great White Heron or Great White Race of Great Blue Heron.

Call it simply the Great White Hunter—both are no more. Great Egret or Common Egret or Great White Egret or Large Egret.

This is ridiculous! It is uncommonly large and a great name would be Biggest Egret.

Dark Morph of Snow Goose or Blue Goose.

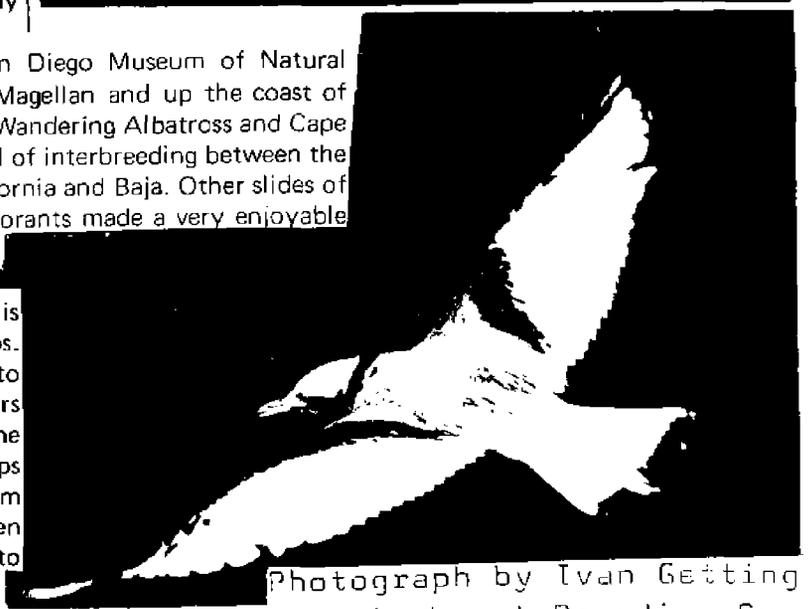
The first is too cumbersome and the latter is a lie since there never was a really blue goose. So call it more correctly, the Old Gray Goose (who ain't what he used to be).

The Pewee Complex Wood-pewee or Wood Pewee and Great Pewee or Coues' Flycatcher.

Here is a very knotty problem to be sure. The solution hinges on traditionally supposed, then Wood-pewee would suggest a bird that utters "a plaintive drawling whistle wood-pee-a-wee." So the non-hyphenated version is more appropriate for the two species that say their name in the eastern and western woods. But that still leaves the problem of Coues' Flycatcher being called a Greater Pewee unless it utters a much louder "plaintive drawling whistle." Since we all know it utters "a thin plaintive whistle ho-say, ma-re-ah" that isn't the answer. Perhaps the solution is to take the traditional patronomic retreat and call that bird Eisenman's Jose Maria. It's better than Coues' Pewee!

The Underworld Birding Association (TUBA).

The Nominating Committee for next year's election of Officers consists of: Jean Brandt, appointed by the President; Marjorie Wohlgemuth and Ruth Wood appointed by the membership at the evening meeting, March 12, in accordance with the provisions of the By-Laws.



Photograph by Ivan Getting
Black-legged Kittiwake at Paradise Cove.

**HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE
PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 90046 878-0202**

- Thu, Apr. 4 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.
Sat, Apr. 6 CHANTRY FLAT & SANTA ANITA CANYON. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the end of Santa Anita Canyon Rd. Take San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd., north on Rosemead to Foothill Blvd., east on Foothill to Santa Anita Ave., then north to the end of Santa Anita Rd. Be prepared to hike down to the canyon stream and upstream to the falls to see resident DIPPERS and spring migrants.
- Sun, Apr. 7 Lake MATTHEWS—Conservation Field Trip. For reservations phone Pamela Greene, 398-2955.
Tue, Apr. 9 EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m. Plummer Park. Arnold Small, past president of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, will present an illustrated program, "The Birds of California," to commemorate the publication of his new book of the same name. After the program, Arnold will autograph copies of his book which will be on sale at Audubon House. Don't miss this long-awaited event.
- Thu, Apr. 18 AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM, Albert J. Wook. Coastline California. Fulton Jr. High School Auditorium, Van Nuys, 7:30 p.m. For information call 881-8552.
- Sat, Apr. 20 BUTTERBREAD SPRING. Proceed out Antelope Valley Freeway through Mojave. Meet 20 miles north on U.S. 14 at the Jawbone Canyon turnoff at 8:30 a.m. Leaders: Keith Axelson and Pamela Greene, 398-2955.
- Thu, Apr. 25 CONSERVATION MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House or Great Hall, Plummer Park. Speaker to be announced on tape, 874-1318.
- Sat, Apr. 27 MORONGO VALLEY. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Covington Park, Morongo Valley. Take Interstate 10 east from L.A. to the Twenty-nine Palms Hwy. (State 62, 2.5 miles east of Whitewater). Go north approximately 10 mile. Dry camping facilities in Joshua Tree National Monument and motels available in Twenty-nine Palms and Yucca Valley.
- Sun, Apr. 28 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.
- Thu, May 2 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.
Sat, May 4 MORONGO VALLEY—see Apr. 27.
Sat, May 4 PELAGIC TRIP, San Diego to San Clemente, by California Field Ornithologists—5:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., \$15 to members of CFO or subscribers to "Western Birds of California," \$16 to others. Mail self-addressed stamped envelope, together with names of all members of the party, to Cliff Lyons, P.O. Box 369, Del Mar, CA 92014. Confirmation will be returned with details.
- Sat, May 11 FERDELL (details in May issue).
Sun, May 12 PELAGIC TRIP TO CHANNEL ISLANDS ON BOARD THE PAISANO OUT OF OXNARD. Fee \$12 (48 passengers). Leader: Gilbert King. 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.
- May 14-20 SOUTHEAST ARIZONA. Trip planned by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. For information write PRBO, P.O. Box 442, Bolinas, CA 94924. Leaders: Rich Stallcup, Bill Crow, Peter Warshall, Arthur Earle. Funds gained from educational courses are used to support the observatory's general program.
- Sat, May 18 TUNA CANYON & MALIBU LAGOON (details in May issue).
Sat, May 18 PELAGIC TRIP by California Field Ornithologists, from Moss Landing in Monterey Bay. Fee \$10. Write Bill Principe, CFO, Box 4215, Berkeley, CA 94704.
- Sun, May 19 PELAGIC TRIP TO CHANNEL ISLANDS ON BOARD THE PAISANO OUT OF OXNARD. Fee \$12 (48 passengers). Leader: Arnold Small. See above for reservation information.
Sun, May 26 MT. PINOS (details in May issue).

Official Publication of the
Los Angeles Audubon Society

The Western Tanager

EDITOR
Field Notes
Audubon Activities
Calendar
Typing
Mailing Supervision

Gilbert W. King
Shumway Suffel
. Donald Adams
Caroline Adams
Hanna Stadler
. Hans Hjorth

(Mrs. Chubb), and another pair on the east side of the new Lake Skinner, south of Hemet in Riverside Co. (Dr. Mayhew of U.C.R.). The best bet in April will probably be along the Mojave River above Victorville. Late April is not too early for a try at some of the mountain nesting owls — Spotted, Saw-whet and Pygmy. All of these can be found in the high flat area of Mt. Palomar, and probably at Mt. Pinos, in the San Bernardino, north and west of Fawnskin, and possibly in the San Gabriels. A tape recorder is almost a necessity, but don't be discouraged if you are not successful on your first try. May or June can be equally good, particularly in the higher mountains. Of course, we're all hoping that the Flammulated Owls will nest at Buckhorn Flats again this year.

The first trickle of migration, other than hummingbirds and swallows, appeared in early March. WESTERN FLY-CATCHERS (always early) were very early this year, with one at Diamond Bar Ranch on March 5 (John Schmidt), and another the same day at Tuna Canyon, Malibu (Ed Navajosky). Ed also saw a YELLOW WARBLER at Pt. Mugu on the fifth, but this was probably a wintering bird as one was seen at this same place in Jan. '73. A NASHVILLE WARBLER at the South Coast Botanic Gardens on Jan. 25 (Shirley Wells) was, of-course, wintering, as it was seen before and after that date.

Enough of what has happened; better times are here. Four special birds at four specific places are worth a trip to find. Grasshopper Sparrows are uncommon and secretive, but they sing from the highest weedstems in the spring. They have been found for several years on the grassy hillsides above Dana Mesa Rd. (between Capistrano and Dana Pt.), usually singing (if you

can call it that) from an artichoke plant. Farther afield, the Sage Grouse should be strutting above Crowley Lake. Turn right at the little church, 35 miles north of Bishop and follow the directions on the sign which California Fish and Game Dept. has placed there. The third bird is chancy, but possible — a single Olivaceous Cormorant has been seen with the Double-crested Cormorants at West Pond, just southwest of Imperial Dam, in mid-April for the past three years. (These are the only California records.) Bell's Vireos were formerly rather common here in riparian territory, but loss of habitat and predation by cowbirds has reduced their numbers locally until I know of only two places where they can be found. One of these is Mission Gorge in San Diego, and the other is on the west side of the San Gabriel River in Duarte. Take the #605 Fwy north over the #210 to Royal Oaks, then right to Fish Canyon Rd., then north toward the mouth of the canyon until you find a large opening in the high fence to your right. Park here and listen along the willow-bordered ditch inside the fence. The male sings very persistently, a threepart "question and answer" song, — first ending up, then down. Having heard this song, your only problem is seeing this small, inconspicuous gray bird.

If you aren't able to travel to these special places or to the desert oases, previously mentioned, your own yard, the nearest park or wildplace will be alive with newly arrived summer residents or migrating passerines before month's end. As for the Suffels, Africa calls and we'll miss the flood tide of migration in April, so give your bird observations to Lee Jones, Dept. of Biology, U.C.L.A., Los Angeles, Calif. 90024, or call him at 455-2398.

MORE ON THAYER'S GULL

Abstracted from article by J. T. Leverich: "Bird observer of Eastern Massachusetts, "Vol. 2, No. 1.

Sibling species are morphologically nearly identical, and presumably evolve from a parental stock in isolation. Quite possibly they are as biologically distinct as any other species. They may be sympatric, sharing the same breeding range; parapatric, breeding in contiguous areas; allpatric, having distinct ranges. Since these ranges are often inhospitable, and lengthy observations are needed to establish full particulars, no wonder there have been sibling species, one thought to be a subspecies of the other. Thayer's Gull is an illustration—totally overlooked for 152 years (except by the Canadians).

1763: the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) was first described.

1915: Thayer's Gull was described and classified as geographic subspecies of the Herring Gull (*L. a. thayeri*). It was originally identified by virtue of a distinctive egg-coloration pattern. The brown eye, so characteristic of this species, seems not to have been remarked upon before the late 1920's.

1950: Salomonsen examined a series of gulls collected in the Frozen Strait, one of the two areas of overlap of these two species. He decided that Thayer's Gull was not conspecific with the Herring Gull, but was instead a race of the Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*).

CONSERVATION

Sixteen Snowy Owls visited California this year. Six were shot.

A Boreal Owl was seen on Pullman, Washington, on January 10, 1974. It was identified by Dr. Richard A. Johnson, curator of the Conner Museum at Washington State University, and collected by him.

1961: Smith found the area of overlap of Thayer's Gull and Kumlien's Gull (*Larus glaucooides kumlieni*). He proved that these two forms coexist sympatrically in Home Bay on Baffin Island without interbreeding. Thayer's Gull was thus a separate species (*L. thayeri*).

1966: Smith's monograph correctly diagnosing these siblings was published.

1973: the A.O.U. officially recognized Thayer's Gull as a separate species

HIGH TIDES AT NEWPORT BAY

Times are given for high tide at Newport Bay, Pacific Standard Time. High in the Upper Newport Bay seems to be about ten minutes later. Height is given in feet. The movement of birds ahead of the tide is best observed two to one hours before high tide.

May	21	Tu	2036	6.4	Jul	16	Tu	1835	6.5
	22	We	2016	6.4		17	We	1923	6.9
	23	Th	2201	6.3		18	Th	2012	7.1
Jun	17	Mo	1854	6.3		19	Fr	2058	7.0
	18	Tu	1936	6.6		20	Sa	2147	6.7
	19	We	2021	6.8	Aug	14	We	1824	6.5
	20	Th	2106	6.9		15	Th	1915	6.8
	21	Fr	2155	6.6		16	Fr	2003	6.9
						17	Sa	2052	6.8
						18	Su	2138	6.4
					Sep	13	Fr	1906	6.3
						14	Sa	1955	6.3

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

SHUMWAY SUFFEL

BIRDS

april finds us emerging from the disappointments of birding in March - that feeling of "I know it's spring, but where are the birds?" is about to be satisfied. This annual frustration results from the timing of the spring migration which is set for the arrival of each species on their nesting grounds, possibly the arctic or the high mountains, at the optimum time for nesting and raising young, and this can be as late as mid-June. There's no reason for birds to arrive in Southern California, lovely as it is with flowers and insects in March, when the snow will not be gone from their nesting areas until late May. So, late April and early May is the time for a birder to be birding.

Ample rains in January, strong drying winds in February and badly needed showers in the first week of March, if supplemented by a storm or two before mid-May, should give us a normal rainy season. Lack of fall rains will deny us an exceptional floral display, such as we had last year, but there should be adequate water and food for both summer resident and migratory birds. The closest we Californians can come to the "waves" of migrants that occur in the East, is the concentration of birds at the desert oases caused by the prevailing strong westerly winds, particularly through San Geronio Pass, their point of entry into coastal Southern California. There are days in the Whitewater-Desert Center area when every bush, rock and gully shelters exhausted migrants from the wind that could force them back toward Mexico. Those birds fortunate enough to find a more hospitable refuge, such as Morongo Valley or Cottonwood Spring, provide an avian delight for any birder lucky enough to be on hand that day.

This past winter had some conspicuous, "no shows" Lewis' Woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadees and Harris' Sparrows were not reported, while Nuthatches and Hermit Thrushes, usually common, were seldom seen, but there were compensations. The most exciting bird of the winter was the RUFIOUS-BACKED ROBIN found near Imperial Dam on the Colorado River on the Yuma C.C. It stayed well into February, but could be difficult to find as many of us learned to our sorrow. After

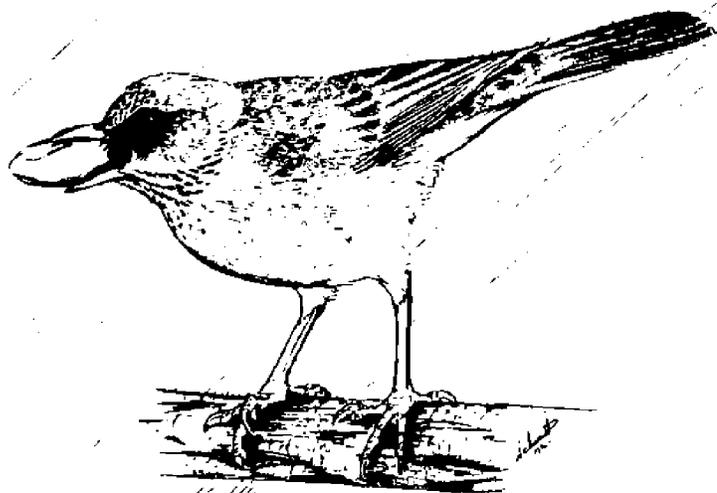
seeing the robin, Arnold Small found a CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (very rare in California) near the Bard Post Office in mid-January. It was seen several times thereafter, but there was some confusion because other observers reported a BENDIRE'S THRASHER (very similar) in the same vicinity. Since both birds were "out of range", there was some thought that only one thrasher was present. While searching unsuccessfully for the robin on Feb. 20, Jerry Johnson called, "Shum, come look at this big warbler with the black throat." After some study we determined that it was an immature male ORCHARD ORIOLE. His remark may sound ridiculous to one who is either very familiar or completely unacquainted with Orchard Orioles, which are very small and short billed, but since a previous immature Orchard Oriole was at first glance thought to be a Yellow Warbler by some very good birders, this mistake may prove to be pretty good field mark. Size can be very tricky!

The GLAUCOUS GULL at Terminal Island, which was pictured in the February Tanager, was seen there during January and February by Elizabeth Cooper who does a bi-weekly survey of Los Angeles Harbor by boat. A second white Glaucous Gull was seen several times in February at McGrath State Park near Ventura. Another large white gull found nearby had an all dark bill (not two toned and sharply divided as in a "Glaucous") and was probably an albino (or retarded) Herring or Glaucous-winged Gull (see picture in Clif. Birds 1971 pge 19).

At long last, two EUROPEAN WIGEON were seen in our area (there are sometimes five or more). The first was a repeater which has been at Whalen Lake, four miles northeast of Oceanside, for several winters, and the second was found by Dave Foster on a settling basin of the San Gabriel River near El Monte on March 1. COMMON MERGANSERS are one of our more difficult ducks to find locally, Lake Mathews and lake Cachuma being the best places, but Shirley Wells and Jan Tarble found about seventy of them on the new Lake Cahuilla near Palm Springs on Feb. 15. On the same trip they saw a FERRUGINOUS HAWK near Indio (where they are rare.)

Most owls are hard to see and for this reason they are usually the weakest order of birds on one's life list. LONG-EARED OWLS are rapidly decreasing as their undisturbed riparian habitat becomes more restricted. A pair nested, rather conspicuously, at Mojave Narrows Park, above Victorville, in the spring of '72, and two pairs have been reported to the east of us this winter - one pair at the Apple Valley Ranch in January

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The Rufous-backed Robin at Imperial dam, eating a date.

Drawing by John Schmidt.