

The Western Tanager

VOLUME 40, 1973-74 No.9 June

WINTER BIRDING IN ST JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

ROBERT TURNER



ST. JOHN'S is the most easterly city of North America, less than 700 miles from Greenland, and 1200 miles from Iceland and Ireland, so the Avalon Peninsula on which it is situated is visited by European birds, especially after severe storms. The unbelievable marvelous harbor, into which Cabot sailed on Christmas Day 1497, is still a haven for gulls of many species. Many of these birds also frequent inland lakes such as Quidi Vidi within the city limits. Here are to be found regularly in the winter the Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*, both as adults and immatures. The noteworthy feature of both of these groups was the markings on the head—much more striking than in any field guide or book. A black stripe goes from one eye to the other over the top of the head. Similarly, a second stripe goes from one ear patch to the other. It is now thought this species breeds in Newfoundland. Associated with the Black-headed Gulls was a single Mew Gull, the European subspecies with green legs, *Larus canus canus*.

GLAUCOUS GULLS (*Larus hyperboreus*) only take three years to reach adult plumage (all three being seen at one time), whereas the Greater Black-backed (*L. marinus*) takes five. The latter seems to have much greater contrast between black and white than the birds seen further south, but of course this might be an illusion due to the different northerly lighting conditions. Iceland Gulls (*Larus glaucoïdes*) are abundant, uniformly marked beige immature being quite striking. Iceland Gulls breed in Greenland, not Iceland. The only "Iceland" which breed in Northern Canada is the Kumlien subspecies (*L. g. kumlieni*), detectable by small black spots on two primaries. Included in this instructive lesson were Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*), with much more heavily speckled heads than birds seen on the West Coast in the winter. With them were Thayer's Gulls (*L. thayeri*), considered by the Canadians as a separate species. They retain their distinctiveness even though their nesting grounds are adjacent to those of the Herring Gull. Kittiwakes (*Rissa tridactyla*) and a Little Gull (*L. minutus*) complete the list of gulls to be seen at one time.

IVORY GULLS (*Pagophila eburnea*) one is very fortunate to see in the United States, but they can be seen on the eastern and southern coasts of Newfoundland. They are completely absent until the ice comes down the Atlantic Coast in late winter. April is the time to see these birds. A European visitor, the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) has been seen in the spring, and may possibly occur quite regularly at that time. A western birder might have some concern that he is looking at a wandering yellow-legged Western Gull from Baja, California, but the latter never has dark speckles at the back of the neck.



THE COASTLINE of Newfoundland to the north is incredibly rugged, and the road north soon peters out, but magnificent views of the bays are obtained from the cliff tops. It is said that in January and February one can walk across the bays on the backs of Eider Ducks. The Common Eider was already present in thousands, with one in 3000 being a King Eider. The latter are detectable by the black back, although there are false alarms from the Greater Black-backed, which also cohabits with the Eiders—stealing their food from them. Rafts of Oldsquaws cover the remainder of the ocean. Closer in, were Harlequin Ducks in the heavy surf they love, and in more sheltered spots Dovekies and Black Guillemots were present in numbers.

The Coast south from St. Johns is more like Nova Scotia, and a round trip to Placentia Bay is good birding at all seasons. On the east coast are a number of islands in a sanctuary where many pelagic species nest in the spring (Puffins, Guillemots, Dovekies, Razorbills, Murres, etc.). It is possible to arrange with local fisherman to be taken by boat around these islands.

Inland the story is different in winter. Bleak plateaus and hills are scattered with tiny sparse trees, and at higher elevations are completely barren. Nevertheless, the search was on for Willow Ptarmigan, which although plentiful in Newfoundland (even to be found within the city limits) are hard to see. Hunting is widespread, for historically the inhabitants of Newfoundland had to depend on wildlife for food, and still do. For example, we were told that "it takes three Dovekies to make a meal," and one local seeing us looking at a late Semipalmated Plover said, "Yes, I had one of those yesterday."

All life in Butterpot National Park is protected, and the rangers reported several ptarmigan, but although we walked several miles through snow-covered barrens (some on snowshoes) the only birds seen were, about every mile, associations of Black-capped and Boreal Chickadees with Golden-crowned Kinglets. The simultaneous presence of the two species made identification much easier than we expected from perusing the field guides (and "Birds of Canada"). In fact, as the superbirders say, "they are 'different' birds." The Boreal is very much browner on the sides, and there is no mistaking the brown cap, at least in good light. *concl'd overleaf*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Turner is not a birder, but accompanying a birding party in Newfoundland in winter for lack of better to do, made this account of his observation and overheard conversations among the birders.

Abigail King

During most of our visit to East Africa we stayed in lodges, but when we went north of Samburu for the total eclipse of the sun, we spent a few nights camping in Samburu National Park. Arrangements had been made ahead of time for a camp to be set up and although we realized it would be unlike the camping we are accustomed to at home, we were hardly prepared for "tenting" as we found it.

The first hint of the unusual came when our driver hurried us through several rather choice birding spots, saying that it was important that we arrive promptly for one o'clock lunch. After a long, bumpy drive, fording and refording a variety of streams and washes we saw some small green tents through the trees. We thought surely these must be ours, but our driver said, most positively, that they were not. We continued for some distance until we saw some brightly colored beach umbrellas, something of an absurdity in the jungle, in the midst of an encampment apparently planned for at least fifty people. This turned out to be our campsite which we were to share with an additional six or eight people.

The camp consisted of a number of tents, each with two cots, a night stand complete with flashlight, camp chairs and hooks and hangers for our clothes. On a little veranda was a wash stand with basin and underneath a jug of river water for washing. Although quite brown in color, it seemed to effect its purpose quite successfully. Towels hung from racks attached to the stand, and beside the wash basin were two glasses and two Haig & Haig pinch bottles containing a liquid of characteristic color. One of our group was convinced that the bottles still contained the original brew, and not being an imbiber, insisted on brushing her teeth in the river water. Obviously her principles sustained her, for she suffered no ill effects.

Behind each pair of tents, a shower tent and a privy had been set up. The sleeping tents filled about half a semicircle, the other half being taken up with cook and dining tents, and tents for the not inconsiderable staff. The beach umbrellas shaded tables and chairs placed in the middle of the semicircle, facing a barbecue used for the evening meal.

Soon after our arrival we were ushered into the dining tent. Lunch was typical of the fare we had become accustomed to at the lodges; soup, several kinds of cold meat, a variety of salads and a wide selection of desserts. Although the main course was buffet, the soup was served to us by a waiter, who, though in somewhat unconventional garb including a large gap between shirt and trousers, had a clean white napkin carefully folded over his arm. The tables, needless to say, had tablecloths and the glass and silverware could have graced our tables at home.

We were delighted with the number and variety of birds that came in to the camp, or could be seen in the sky, but because there were many animals around us, we were not permitted to wander more than a few yards away from camp. Late in the day we were taken in our VW bus to look for lions, (we saw two) and on the way back in the dark, passed many elephants, some of them so close that we almost touched them. On a few occasions we had to wait for them to cross the road, being careful not to separate a mother from her young. We saw number of nighthawks that evening, and wished more than ever that we had someone with us who was knowledgeable about African birds. Although we studied our field guides thoroughly and constantly, as well as examining mounted specimens when available, we found the birds in the field very often extremely confusing.

At nightfall flares were lighted all around the camp to warn animals away and there was a large campfire during the evening. Although we heard animals at night, none actually came up to the

Although perhaps not an annual occurrence, one specimen of the Hoary Redpoll (called "Arctic" in Canada) was seen. The white rump and general lightness of this species relative to the Common Redpoll is unmistakable.

Crows and Ravens closed the list of this cold, windy, desolate countryside. In other years there have been invasions of Boreal Owls, an occasional Hawk Owl, and just after we left a Fieldfare came from Europe for the Christmas Count.

Twelve active birders in all of Newfoundland, are all that can be found between St. John's and St. Anthony's (where the Vikings settled in 1000 A.D.) - 700 miles by road. All but two (not counting park rangers) live in St. John's. Many Newfoundlanders maintain "bird tables" in the winter but do not identify and report their visitors. There must be many unnoticed Arctic and European birds which visit Newfoundland all year round, so extensive searching would be rewarding.

D. Leslie Tuck of the Canadian Wildlife Service in St. John's is a professional ornithologist, the author of monographs on Snipe and Murres, and of a useful checklist of European birds seen in Newfoundland. Dr. Tuck keeps the records of sightings in Newfoundland, and is very ably supported by non-professional but equally observant members of the Newfoundland Natural History Society, where publication "Osprey" has informative articles on birding.



Willow Ptarmigan Country

camp (at least that we were aware of). Elephants were often visible within a few hundred yards and served to remind us not to become too casual about following birds from tree to tree in a desperate effort to identify them before they disappeared from view altogether.

We met many people who were camping on their own in a far simpler manner, some spending the entire summer touring East Africa with their families. We had great admiration for these brave souls who would set up their tiny camp amid elephants, water buffalo and other jungle residents. The roads are not particularly good, flat tires are a common occurrence, and even with maps, the roads within the park can be confusing even to the experienced visitor.

* * * * *

audubon activities

BOOK STORE MARION PICKETT

BUTTERBREAD SPRING, Apr. 20 — 21. A grand total of 108 birds was seen on two lovely spring desert days. Well over 90 were observed on Saturday, with the balance the next day. The usual desert species such as SCOTT'S ORIOLE, LE CONTE'S THRASHER, SAGE and BLACK-THROATED SPARROW were seen at Butterbread Spring. Five species of warblers and two more orioles, BULLOCK'S and HOODED, helped build the list at Kelso Creek. A hike up a flower studded canyon Sunday morning produced MOUNTAIN QUAIL, BLACK-CHINNED and BREWER'S SPARROWS singing from their low bushy perches, and COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRDS. Under clear starry skies, we crowded around the evening campfire to discuss the day's finds and enjoy the good company. It was a great trip for all 26 people in attendance. Pamela Greene, leader.

MORONGO VALLEY, Apr. 27 — 28. Beautiful sunny weather — not too warm or windy — brought out some 40+ members who saw a lot of birds. Altogether there were three Audubon Societies there on Saturday, with Laura Lou Jenner leading the group from Long Beach. The Wilsons, Russ and Marion, were also there taking another survey for April and May as they did a few years ago. By noon Saturday we had 76 species, adding the BLUE-WINGED TEAL to the park's amazing list of 230 species. Many left after lunch, but the ones who stayed on through Sunday morning ran the list up to 103, including 4 species of Thrashers. Two of these, CALIFORNIA and CRISSAL were seen in the park itself, the other two were about 5 miles west of Yucca Valley on the Lucerne Valley Rd. After climbing steadily you drop like a roller coaster down to a wide wash where a gravel road leads right a short distance to a windmill with a water trough. The road is marked as a sanctuary by a garden club sign. Near the windmill were a family of 5 LECONTE'S plus a pair of BENDIRE'S, hopefully breeding! If so, this would be the furthest west and north limit for this bird. Only one pair of VERMILION FLYCATCHERS is in Morongo this year, but the nest, in the big cottonwood at the park entrance, is easy to find. SUMMER Tanager was finally spotted on Sunday, strangely silent. Two pairs of LUCY'S WARBLERS and 2 VIRGINIA'S were seen. A family of GREAT-HORNED OWLS with two young, still partly downy but out of the nest, attracted much attention. George Venatta, leader.

PELAGIC TRIP TO SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND, May 4. This trip again proved that pelagics are unpredictable. There were very few birds indeed; nevertheless, there was an unforgettable incident of a Black-footed Albatross circling the boat, landing and taking off several times in all angles and lightings, so that the mechanics was well observed by everybody. The appearance of two (possibly three) albatrosses may be correlated with the advent of a small destroyer rounding the southern point of San Clemente. At one point the albatross was joined on the water by a Sabine's Gull in full breeding plumage.

A Fulmar in a curious plumage, white with black blotches, came by, and later a normal light phase. Finally a brown Fulmar of the Antarctic race was seen. In the late afternoon a bird came by which may have been a Skua. The boat turned around and chased it into the setting sun, but it was never identified.

Another memorable feature of this trip was the large number of Pomerine Jaegers with full-blown tail feathers which came into view.

Alcids were remarkably few in number, three Xantus' Murrelets, and several Cassin's Auklets. One was caught in a net, brought aboard and widely photographed. Black Petrels were abundant. A few Sooty Shearwaters and very few Pinkfooted were seen. Arctic terns were well off shore. Common Loons and Red Phalaropes in breeding plumage showed spring is here.

More on page five

In case you haven't been in at Audubon House recently, we now have some of our own identifying decals on display for glass and/or luggage. Also the new cloth patch or sew on decals are very colorful as well as meaningful. With a local membership of our proportion, the many inquiries prompted the need to offer a personal local emblem to our increasing members.

"Birds of California" by Arnold Small continues to reflect how much in need we are for a specialized book of this quality. AUTOGRAPHED COPIES are available only through our Bookstore. Order yours now!

"Birds of the World: A Check List" by James F. Clements, will be available by June 1st. Jim is no stranger to Audubon House and its Staff and we feel very fortunate to help promote the success of his forth coming book. Back orders are now being accepted.

"Curassows and Related Birds" by Jean Delacour & Dean Amadon is a highly specialized book and a "first" in a detailed study of "The Family Cracidae" — the curassows, guans, and chachalacas. For persons with a deep appreciation for these fowl-like birds and eager to learn more about them, the authoritative depth of this book and the thirty colorplates would quickly persuade anyone to at least have a look at this book.

We just received Vol. 9 of Handbook of the Birds of India & Pa kistan (robins to wagtails) by Ali & Ripley. At present our Store has Vols 1 through 9 inclusive. When Vol. 10 is published,



65 cents apiece; 3 for \$1.50.

this will complete this series and bring up to date the description of 1200 species of birds in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

We have one set of "Wild Flowers of the U.S. (Northwestern States — Parts I & II) by Rickett. If anyone has thumbed through the similar copies we have in the Library at Audubon House, they will agree that there are no words to describe the intense true reproductions of the natural wild flower and its detailed descriptions.

We have a fine selection of Bird Guide Books on Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Southwest Pacific. A phone call to Audubon House will gladly give you more information.

Louise Esther Vann

It is with great regret that we announce the death on April 6th of Louise Vann, a long time member of the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Audubon Society. For many years she attended most of the society's field trips and will be remembered as a good birder and a delightful companion. She will be greatly missed by her many friends among the Audubon members.

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

**Audubon
Bird Reports
874-1318**

Dr. Gerald Maisel, PRESIDENT

Audubon House Hours 10 to 3, Monday through Friday

Sun., June 2. MC GRATH STATE PARK. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the entrance to the park. A small parking fee may be charged. Leader: Pam Greene, 451-2808.

Thu., June 6. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

Sat-Sun., June 8-9. GREENHORN MTNS. This is an overnight camping trip involving approximately 350 miles of driving. Meet at 8 a.m. at Rancho Bakersfield. From Freeway (Rte. 99) take 24th St. turnoff east about 15 blocks to H St., turn left (north) on H which runs directly into the Rancho Bakersfield located on old Hwy. 99 (business). Be prepared to leave at 8:15 sharp. Motels are available in Kernville 15 miles east of Greenhorn. Montane species have been seen, such as Brown Creeper, Macgillivray Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Solitaire, Cassin's Finch. Leaders: Don and Caroline Adams, phone - 545-6406.

Tue., June 11. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., "SURINAM, THE FORGOTTEN CORNER," a slide program by Herb Clarke, depicting a recent birding trip.

Sat., June 15-17. MARICOPA Audubon Society Field Trip to the Arizona White Mountains. Hope to see the Northern Three-toed Woodpecker, Gray Catbird and Pine Grosbeak as well as many Arizona species. For information write Robert Bradley, 6240 N. 15th St., Phoenix, Ariz. 85014.

Fri., June 21-27. PT. REYES Bird Observatory east-west transect from Mono Lake to Monterey. Last year they had 233 species of birds. Group limited to 16. For information write Meryl Stewart, Box 442, Bolinas, Calif. 94924, or send check made out to PRBO. Cost \$150.00.

Sat., June 22. MT. PINOS Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Condor Observation Point on the peak. Leader: John Borneman, Condor Naturalist. For further information call Pam Greene, 451-2808. California Condor plus other montane species should be seen.

Sat., July 6. BUCKHORN FLAT.

Fri., July 12-18. PRBO east-west transect from Mono Lake to Monterey. Same as June 21-27.

Sat., July 20. MT. PINOS.

Sun., July 28. MALIBU LAGOON.

GOLDEN TROUT CAMP, Through the generosity of the Thatcher School of Ojai, the Southern California chapters of the Audubon Society have been given the use of this camp, for a portion of the summer the school is not using it. The Pasadena chapter is organizing the use of it Aug. 11 - 17.

COST: \$60 per person for the week. A down payment of \$25 with your application; the rest by July 1st.

CANCELLATION POLICY: No refunds are possible unless someone else is found to take your place by July 1, since we must reserve the whole camp for the whole week.

For more information write Pat Brame, 1690 N. Altadena Dr., Altadena, California 91001, (213) 794-3334.

NEEDED: VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUTH WORK

The Education Committee needs volunteers for each geographical section of Los Angeles to serve as resource people - to be available to give occasional short talks to elementary, junior high or high-school age children. Subjects: Identification of Resident Birds, Conservation of Wildlife, Endangered Species, and related topics.

You don't need to be an expert to qualify - just be interested. People having experience in youth work or teaching would be especially welcome.

Drop a note to the Education Committee at Audubon House or phone and leave a message for WILLABELLE MALONEY.

AWARDS TO RICHARDSON AND PETERSON

The American Association of School Administrators annually awards solid gold keys to an "outstanding American and to the teacher who had a great influence on his life". This year's Golden Key Awards went to Elliot Richardson, former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and former Attorney General, who chose Roger Tory Peterson as the teacher who had a decisive influence on his formative years as a student at the Rivers School in Brookline, Massachusetts.

A RADIO STATION THAT CARES ABOUT CONSERVATION

In contrast to the soft listening music of Radio KPOL are its frank and hard-hitting commentaries on many conservation issues such as the commentaries on Falconry, the harvesting of lumber by the Forest Service and Proposition 1. These provocative commentaries may be heard on KPOL, 1540, on the six, seven and eight a.m. news and at six p.m.

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.

The Editor will be pleased to receive photographs or line drawings for publication in The Western Tanager. High contrast glossy prints are preferred, but we can also work from colored slides. All material will be returned after publication.

The Western Tanager

Official Publication of the
Los Angeles Audubon Society

EDITOR
Field Notes
Audubon Activities
Calendar
Mailing Supervision

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

200 Acres of Unspoiled Marsh Becomes a Treasure for the Public

MORONGO, May 4. The trip got off to a good start with the VERMILION FLYCATCHER pair giving everyone leisurely close-up views. Unfortunately, they appear to have abandoned their nest. All the common western warblers were seen, although the MACGILLIVRAY'S was not found until after most of the group had left. Two pairs of LUCY'S showed themselves to all. Most of the group saw the elusive CHAT, a SUMMER TANAGER flew close overhead, several WESTERN TANAGERS were seen, and LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH were in abundance. OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, CEDAR WAXWING, WESTERN BLUEBIRD, VAUX' SWIFT, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, YELLOWTHROAT, LAZULI BUNTING, BLUE GROSBEAK, and LARK SPARROW were among the somewhat less common birds for the area. A portion of the group continued onto a spot near Yucca Valley and were rewarded with BENDIRE'S THRASHER, SCOTT'S ORIOLE, and GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE among others. On an early pre-trip survey that morning, LE CONTE'S THRASHER and several WIED'S CRESTED FLYCATCHERS were observed. Thirty members and guests enjoyed 78 species in near-perfect desert birding weather. Jerry Maisel, Leader.

PELAGIC TRIP OUTSIDE OF ANACAPA ISLAND, May 5. An unbelievable second sighting of a Horned Puffin was made at the same spot (7 miles S. by E. of San Pedro Point, Santa Cruz Island), within 24 hours of the sighting last year. The bird was in good plumage and studied by everyone with ease.

Another unusual event was the sighting of two XANTUS' MURRELETS - with a chick swimming between them. When the parents went too far away, it screamed like any other young bird. This sighting occurred ten miles from land, but the chick could neither dive nor fly!

Several sightings were made of SABINE'S GULL, a good adult and an interesting sub-adult sitting on the water. POMERINE and PARASITIC JAEGERs were seen, a few BLACK PETRELS, SOOTY and PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATERS. A dozen flights of ten or more CASSIN'S AUKLETS went by, and many RED and NORTHERN PHALAROPES were seen in full plumage. A single COMMON MURRE in intermediate plumage was also spotted near the boat. A few ARCTIC TERNS were identified. Gilbert King, Leader.

MONTEREY BAY, May 18. Pelagic trips continue to be a surprise. Seven miles off Point Lobos the very rare LAYSAN ALBATROSS was briefly sighted. It flew to the north-east, followed by the boat at full speed. Two hours and twenty-five miles later, it was again sighted, and although headed back to Point Lobos, it kindly settled on the water and was studied at all angles for half an hour by all on board, at close quarters. By this time the fifty BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS were ignored.

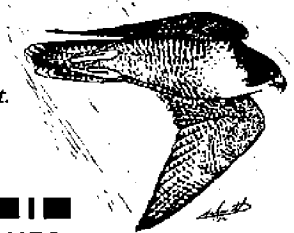
COMMON MURREs were in good plumage, as were COMMON, ARCTIC, and RED-THROATED LOONS, seen in large formations. A few RHINOCEROS AUKLETS were about, and very few SOOTY and PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATERS. There was an occasional ASHY PETREL.

Outside the Harbor were many PIGEON GUILLEMOTS in splendid plumage. As is often the case, the Harbor itself provided some of the best birds - this week RED PHALAROPES in alpha plumage.

PROGRAM BEGINS TO ALLEVIATE RAPTOR ELECTROCUTION. The joint private-state-federal program to stop raptor electrocution from power lines, on which National Audubon has been working since 1972 has been moving ahead, though there's still a long way to go. The U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reports that many power companies are showing cooperation in removing or modifying offending power lines or poles, even though there are still several cases where the companies are reluctant to do their part.

Two hundred acres of marshland on the Hudson River has just been given to the National Audubon Society by Mr. Henry Livingston of Oak Hill, N.Y. David Seymour of the Audubon staff managed the transfer of title, which greatly enhances the preservation of habitat in this part of the country. The public is free to visit the marsh now, but at this stage it is really only accessible to those with flat-bottomed boats who can enter it from the river.

Peregrine Falcon, drawing by John Schmidt.



THE WAKES

'The Wakes' should be visited by every birder to southern England. Not only is the house the same as in Gilbert White's time but the trail up the hill behind is a fine place to see the local birds, much the same as 200 years ago when Gilbert White wrote about them.

'The Wakes' was a private house until 1953 when the last owner died. In 1953 an appeal was launched in *The Times* for funds to enable the house and grounds to be purchased and endowed as a perpetual memorial to Gilbert White, the 18th-century clergyman-naturalist and author of *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, who lived most of his life in the house. Unfortunately, the money received from the appeal only raised a token sum. At this stage, however, Mr. Robert Washington Oates made available substantial funds at the disposal of a trust he had previously created in memory of his family. With these the property was secured, and the sums subscribed by the public were used for the restoration and redecoration of 'The Wakes,' which was opened as a museum on 6 September 1955.

It was in 'Wakes' that Gilbert White wrote *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* that has made both its author and his village famous throughout the world. It is a work which has become not merely one of the most widely read books on natural history but also a literary classic which has appeared in some 150 editions and impressions and been translated into German, French, Danish, Swedish and Japanese. There have been several American editions.

It was in the garden of 'Wakes,' which he created, and in the surrounding countryside, that his observations and investigations on natural history were made.



"The Wakes" as it was in Gilbert White's time.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds



LEE
JONES

This is the time of year when I wish I could be everywhere at once. Late May and early June is one of the best times of the year to find truly rare birds. Migration is all but over, but the birds that are best are getting farther and farther from where they're supposed to be, thus making them that much rarer in the areas where they eventually show up. Right now the desert oases, though not crawling with migrants as they were a month ago, should provide a lot of excitement in the way of unexpected vagrants from the east. Last year, for instance, such exciting vagrants as Broad-winged Hawk, Mississippi Kite, Chimney Swift, Golden-winged, Cape May, Bay-breasted Kentucky Warblers, Scarlet Tanager and Dickcissel were all seen between May 20th and June 3rd in Southern California.

This time of year is also the peak of the breeding season for many of our local species and there is much still to be learned by diligent observers who are interested in the breeding biology of southern California birds. Besides information that one can get on clutch-sizes, dates and locations of breeding records and habitat preferences for nesting, there are several intriguing problems that remain to be unravelled on who breeds with whom and how often. For instance, both California and Gambel's quails have been found together in places such as Yaqui Well (Anza-Borego State Park) and in the Morongo-Yucca Valley area and hybrids have been recorded from these areas. Who knows, maybe someday we'll be blessed with the Common Quail, a "lumped" species derived from the California and Gambel's. Though that's not likely, there is still quite a bit to be learned about the breeding biology of closely related species in areas where they occur together. Some other questions still to be answered include: are Spotted Sandpipers breeding at Hansen Dam? Are Red Crossbills breeding on the Palos Verdes Peninsula this year? Are Nashville and Hermit Warblers breeding in the San Gabriel Mountains? Will someone find a nest of MacGillivray's Warblers in the San Gabriels this year to document breeding of that species south of the Sierras?

April, as expected, produced the usual waves of migrants, particularly in the areas along the western edge of the deserts and San Diego. The Channel Islands, however, went virtually "migrantless" throughout April, unlike last April when migrants were much in evidence. The lack of migrants on the islands was undoubtedly due to clear weather and prevailing westerlies off the coast, which probably prevented most migrants from straying out over the ocean.

Russ and Marion Wilson reported waves of migrants at Morongo Valley on April 18th and 24th and May 3rd. A result of the wave of birds on the 24th was the recording of 103 species there on the weekend of April 27th and 28th! The wave on May 3rd consisted mostly of WILSON'S WARBLERS (perhaps as many as a thousand according to Shum Suffel) and WESTERN TANAGERS (100's). A few days prior on April 30th and May 1st, a large number of WESTERN TANAGERS passed through San Diego, but the most numerous species of warbler present then was NASHVILLE, not WILSON'S. Less than a week later, on May 5th, there was an influx of TOWNSEND and HERMIT WARBLERS into San Diego (Jon Dunn, Guy McCaskie), followed two days later by a wave of these same two species into the Los Angeles area (Shirley Wells, Ed Navajosky, Joan Mills, Abigail King).

LAZULI BUNTINGS were particularly common in the coastal canyons as well as inland areas by the end of April and a "mini-wave" of these reached San Clemente Island the first of May. With them was a male INDIGO BUNTING seen by Bob Stewart, Bill Clow and Jan Larson.

By the first of May most of our local wintering birds had departed as is usual. A few WHITE-CROWNED, GOLDEN-CROWNED and LINCOLN'S Sparrows were still being reported, along with a few late-lingering Y-R AUDUBON'S WARBLERS and RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS. CEDAR WAXWINGS, however, were still present in good numbers and they should remain until early June. They're always the last wintering bird to head north.

This spring seems to have produced more pelagic trips, if not more pelagic birds, than ever before. So far, with two pelagic trips reporting in (Oxnard to Anacapa on April 28th and San Diego to San Clemente Island on May 4th), numbers of pelagic species appear to be down from normal, but things could change considerably by the end of May. SOOTY SHEARWATER numbers seem to be down considerably, but they are somewhat unpredictable and their numbers could skyrocket in May. When Sooty Shearwaters are passing through in peak numbers they may be one of the most abundant birds in California. There are few sights

more spectacular than watching tens or even hundreds of thousands of these birds streaming past or flushing from in front of an approaching boat! It is certainly a spectacle that you're not likely to forget for awhile.

Though 60 POMARINE JAEGERs were seen off San Diego on May 4th, I know of no other reports so far this season, which is a little surprising. Other pelagic species which have been seen so far this spring include two BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSSES and three NORTHERN FULMARS off San Diego, a few BLACK PETRELS, a possible SKUA, fifteen SABINE'S GULLS off San Diego, good numbers of XANTUS' MURRELETS and CASSIN'S AUKLETS and four COMMON MURREs off Santa Cruz Island.

If late April and early May are any indication, this spring is already shaping up to be a great one for vagrants. On April 23rd a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER was photographed near Calexico and on the same day Jon Dunn found a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER in Presidio Park in San Diego. This is only the seventh record from California! Fortunately, the bird stayed around for four days and a number of people were able to see it. For an encore Jon and Guy McCaskie found a CURLEW SANDPIPER in breeding plumage at Salton City four days later on the 27th. Judging from the number of records, this species is at least twice as rare in California as the Yellow-throated Warbler, this being only the third record!!! Earlier in the month, Jon and Guy, along with Cliff Lyons and Bruce Broadbooks, found a CURVE-BILLED THRASHER at Brock Experimental Farms, while on their way back from a trip to Mexico. That was the second one seen this winter and the second from Brock Farms in two years. In the wave of TOWNSEND'S and HERMIT WARBLERS that reached San Diego on May 5th was, appropriately enough, a male TOWNSEND x HERMIT WARBLER hybrid, found by Guy and Jon, (some people have all the luck!) On May 7th Shirley Wells found a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER in Peck Park, San Pedro. Not bad when one considers that vagrants aren't supposed to start showing up until around May 20th.

Some other noteworthy birds reported in the latter half of April and first week of May are the male HARLEQUIN DUCK which was still being seen at Playa del Rey as late as the first of May; an AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER in partial breeding plumage on San Nicolas Island on May 4th; a nest of LONG-EARED OWLS at Morongo Valley (Russ and Marion Wilson); a BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD at San Pedro in mid-April (Shirley Wells); a BLACK SWIFT and PURPLE MARTIN at UCLA on April 29th (Robert Fleischer); GRAY FLYCATCHERS at Playa del Rey and La Jolla Canyon on April 24th and 29th, respectively (Ed Navajosky); three BELL'S VIREOS near Capistrano on April 23rd (Alice Fries), another at Palm Springs on April 27th and two more the same day in the San Gabriel River Wash, Duarte (Jim Stevens); and a breeding colony of GRASS-HOPPER SPARROWS at Diamond Bar (John Schmidt).

The WIED'S CRESTED FLYCATCHERS were first reported at Morongo Valley this year on May 4th (Shum Suffel), but, surprisingly, no SUMMER TANAGERS could be found here this date.* Nearby, at Yucca Valley, Jim and Polly Huffman found both LE CONTE'S and BENDIRE'S THRASHERS on April 20th. While the former is fairly common in this area, the latter is relatively scarce anywhere away from the Providence Mountains area near Cima. Alice Fries found SNOWY PLOVERS with chicks at Lake Elsinore on April 23rd. Though common breeders along the coast, there are relatively few breeding records for this species inland in California.

*A late report states that a male SUMMER TANAGER was seen by members of the LAAS field trip to Morongo on this date. Ed.