

# The Western Tanager



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## BIRDS of the CALIFORNIA CHANNEL ISLANDS by Lee H. Jones

**THE** Channel Islands lie off the coast of southern California between Point Conception and San Diego. Despite their close proximity to one of the most densely populated areas in the U.S. they have been largely ignored by biologists until recently and remain relatively unknown, both to biologist and layman. Few people can even name all eight of them!. Geographically they can be separated into two groups, a northern one consisting of San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz and Anacapa, and a southern one more loosely associated, consisting of San Nicolas, Santa Barbara, Santa Catalina and San Clemente. The northern four are a westward extension of the Santa Monica Mountains and were once connected to the mainland in the vicinity of Pt. Mugu. The southern four, with the exception of Santa Catalina, are principally volcanic in origin and were probably never connected to the mainland or other islands.

**S**anta Cruz Island is the largest island (96 square miles) and has a large central valley running east-west between two high ridges. It is protected from ocean breezes and fog and is thus subjected to greater extremes of temperature. It has a permanent stream which empties at Prisoner's Harbor on the northeast coast and is the location of the Stanton Ranch and the University of California at Santa Barbara Marine Institute Field Station. There are several magnificent stands of eucalyptus and Coast Live Oaks which make this valley, perhaps, the most beautiful on any of the islands. Island Tree Poppies, *Dendromecon parfordii*, with their showy orange flowers, and Island Ceanothus, *Ceanothus arboreus*, with its large clusters of pale blue flowers, dot the hillside adding even more beauty to this area in late winter and spring.

**D**uring the last half of the nineteenth century there was a winery at the present location of the Stanton Ranch and Santa Cruz Island wines were considered among the best domestic wines available. Sheep were raised here in the past and a few feral sheep and pigs still roam the island. These are hunted for a short while each year to keep their numbers down. At the present time only cattle are raised. Because of hunting and careful management of the feral animals and livestock, the destruction of the island's native vegetation, though bad, has not been severe here as on some of the other islands.

**S**anta Catalina Island is the best known island because of the popular tourist resort of Avalon. Most of the island is owned by the Santa Catalina Island Company under the management of Charles Wrigley, grandson of the

chewing-gum tycoon, William Wrigley. The SCIC operates a cattle and buffalo ranch and Mr. Wrigley maintains a private ranch, *El Ranch Escondido*, in the center of the island where some of the finest Arabian horses in the country are raised.

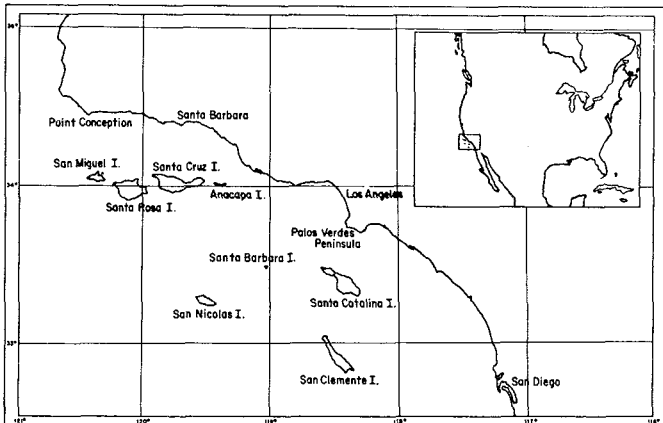
**T**he University of Southern California has a Marine Biology Laboratory at the isthmus near the north west end of the island and there are numerous coves and beaches on the leeward side of the island with private summer camps and yacht clubs. Except for Avalon, the isthmus and a campground at Little Harbor on the seaward side, the island is off limits to the public.

**G**eologically, Catalina is 30 million years older than the Palos Verdes Peninsula and the other southern islands. Geologists are uncertain whether it was ever connected to the mainland, but most agree that it was not. If it was connected, it has been isolated long enough so that most of the present flora and fauna certainly reached the island since its separation.

**S**anta Rosa Island is second in size only to Santa Cruz. It is owned by Vail and Vickers Co. and Al Vail operates a cattle ranch on the island. Elk, Mule Deer and wild pigs have been introduced to the island at various times. For a while in the last century sheep were raised, but they have all been removed, Tchumash Indians still lived on the island as late as the 1880s, but they were rapidly killed off by Russian and American fur traders. There is an interesting account of some of the early visits to the island by white men and their encounters with Indians in *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever* by William Henry Ellison (U.C. Press, 1937).

**T**here are many beautiful sandy beaches on the east and west side of the island and precipitous rocky shorelines on the north and south sides. The interior of the island is predominately rolling grassland interspersed with coastal sage, scrub and chaparral. There is one particularly beautiful canyon, Canada Lobos, with spectacular sandstone cliffs and an impressive stand of live oaks in the canyon bottom. The Vail Ranch is located in the northeast shore at Beecher's Bay and is pretty much unchanged since 1834 when the island was granted to Don Carlos and Don Jose Carillo by the Spanish crown. The ownership of the island changed several times between 1834 and the early 1900s when Vail and Vickers took possession. →

*Aerial view of Anacapa Island with Santa Cruz Island in the distance*  
NationalPark Service photo



**S**an Miguel, San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands are owned by the Navy and small naval bases are located on the latter two. San Miguel has been uninhabited since 1948. Prior to this there was a small sheep ranch here, but it was abandoned in 1948 and the sheep were removed a couple of years later. The only remaining sign of civilization is a small herd of donkeys and the chimney of the old ranch house. Near the site of the old ranch is a small monument to Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the discoverer of California, who is believed to be buried on the island.

By the early part of this century, the island had been almost completely denuded of vegetation, but since the sheep were removed, the vegetation has partially restored itself. It has always been a windswept grassland with little or no trees. Today there are numerous deep erosion gullies grown to Coyote Bush and Bush Lupine. There is a major seal and sea-lion colony at the west end and several important sea-bird colonies on the offshore islets, principally Prince Islet and Castle Rock. There are some interesting sandstone formations, containing root and stem casts which are well represented here. They are sandstone casts of ancient plant stems and root systems. They are pure sandstone, sometimes solid. Their resemblance to the often twisted and gnarled stems and roots which they replaced is quite remarkable.

San Miguel is part of the Pacific Missile Range at Pt. Mugu and landing is prohibited without prior approval from PMR and the National Park Service, which shares joint jurisdiction with the Navy.

San Nicolas Island is the farthest from the mainland 61 miles south of Pt. Mugu and has an airstrip and naval base with about 200 personnel. It is a medium-sized, low-lying island with a maximum elevation of 900 feet. Its physiography is similar to that of San Miguel Island, being mostly grassland with Coyote Bush and Bush Lupine in the canyons and erosion gullies. The only trees are several species of exotics planted around the naval facilities and these attract large numbers of vagrant land birds during spring and fall migration. Most birds that reach the islands are individuals which have become lost at sea while migrating during foggy weather or Santa Ana conditions.

This was the last island with a Tchumash Indian population. It is described in *Island of the Blue Dolphin*, a true story about an Indian woman who spent 18 years alone on the island, from 1835 to 1853, after the rest of the tribe was taken to missions in the Santa Barbara area. She was accidentally left on the island, but an expedition led by George Nidever in 1853 found her still alive and well. They took her to Mission Santa Barbara where she died a few weeks later. There are still many Indian remains and artefacts on the island and it has been a popular place for archaeologists. Like San Miguel, this island has a large seal and sea-lion colony at the west end, though not as large or diverse as the one on that island. There is a large Western Gull colony also at the west end.

San Clemente is the southern most island and second farthest out. There is a small naval base and airstrip at the northern end. It is a long, fairly narrow island rising gradually to a height of 1900 feet near the southern end. Most of the island is covered with grasses and cactus, but there are some rather spectacular, precipitous canyons along the southeast coast with large boulders waterfalls (in winter) and many Catalina Cherries, *Prunus lyonii* and Ironwoods, *Lyonothamans floribundus*. Most of the island's original native fauna and flora have been seriously affected by goats which have eaten nearly all of the vegetation below four feet and caused the extinction, or near extinction of several endemic species and races of plants and birds. The herd of goats numbered around 12,000 prior to a goat removal program sponsored by the Navy last year. About 4,000 were removed last year and an additional 2-3,000 have been removed this year. If successful, most of the native plants that are still extant should again flourish if they can compete with the many introduced grasses which now predominate.



*Giant Coreopsis (National Park Service photo)*

The two smallest island, Anacapa and Santa Barbara comprise the Channel Islands National Monument and are maintained by the National Park Service with headquarters in Ventura. Both islands have large sea bird colonies and Santa Barbara has a fairly substantial sea-lion colony. Anacapa is a chain of three contiguous islets running east-west between Santa Cruz Island and Pt. Mugu. It is the closest island to the mainland, lying 13 miles southwest of Port Hueneme. There is a park ranger stationed on the island year round and the Coast Guard maintains an automated light house at the east end. West and Middle Anacapa have been set aside as a natural preserve and East Anacapa is open to the public for picnicking and camping. West Anacapa is probably the least disturbed of all the channel islands, though sheep were raised here for a while in the 1800s and early 1900s.

Santa Barbara Island is the smallest Channel Island (1.0 Square miles) and lies 38 miles offshore between Catalina and San Nicolas. It is rather barren, though in the past it has been covered with Giant Coreopsis, *Coreopsis gigantea*. There is a ranger stationed on the island from Memorial Day to Labor Day to oversee the increasingly large numbers of tourists that visit the island every summer.

This little island has probably been the most disturbed by men. In 1915 the land was cleared to raise barley and sheep. Prior to 1915, there were a large number of goats on the island left there by the Spaniards. Cats were introduced to the island early in the 20th Century and they ravaged the seabird colonies. The Cassin's Auklets and Tufted Puffins were exterminated and never recolonized. In 1938 the Park Service took over, but during World War II the U.S. Military established a small base there and built roads and buildings. Upon their departure, they left some European Hares on the island which quickly multiplied into the thousands. By 1953, the island had been completely devastated by rabbits and the Park Service initiated a rabbit control program which is still in effect today. The population is down to a dozen or so rabbits now and the vegetation has slowly begun to recover. The *coup de grace* was delivered in the summer of 1959 when a fire swept over the island destroying most of the vegetation and causing the extinction of the Santa Barbara Island Song Sparrow, a race endemic to this island.

Like San Nicolas Island, this island attracts hundreds of lost migrants in spring and fall. At these times it is a good place to observe some of the more secretive land birds since there are no trees or dense brush for them to hide in.

to be continued

# audubon activities

# Book Review

## BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA, by Arnold Small, published by Winchester Press, 1974.

MT. PINOS, June 15. While the "2 o'clock CONDOR" was the highlight of this field trip, a number of other species added to the day's pleasure and occupied the time before and after the magic hour. At Iris Meadow we finally located a male CALLIOPE after checking out many ANNA'S and ALLEN-RUFOUS types. The FOX SPARROWS and GREEN-TAILED TOWHEES were plentiful and their similar songs could be compared. On top of the mountain there were WESTERN BLUEBIRDS, MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES, VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOWS, and a pair of CLARK'S NUTCRACKERS.

Mt. Pinos, July 1. An impromptu trip to Mt. Pinos attracted a group of 15 people for a fine day of birding. In the field at the base several singing Brewer's Sparrows were studied, resulting in a life bird for several. The adjacent woods provided Chipping Sparrows, Cassin's Finches, Pygmy Nuthatches, Western Wood Pewee and Western Bluebird.

Continuing on to Iris Meadow our group found the flowers in bloom and hummingbirds very active in the area. A male Calliope perched dazzling his gorget in the sunshine and again giving several people a life bird. In a pugnacious display of territoriality, he pursued a Rufous male. Nearby, excellent views of singing Green-tailed Towhees were seen and calls of a juvenile studied.

At the summit Mountain Bluebirds, a flash of Pine Siskins, Fox Sparrows and Clark's Nutcrackers were found. A Cassin's Kingbird and a Say's Phoebe, a bit out of its usual haunts, were flycatching on the mountainside.

As an extra bonus, Larry Norris, an expert on the plant life, identified for us many species found there. Although the sometimes elusive Condor was not seen, we enjoyed the day and some 30 species. Ed Navajosky, leader.

BUCKHORN, July 6. It is unfair to ask me to write about Buckhorn because I cannot be rational when I think of this nonpareil resting quietly in our mountains. Spring had come, bringing lupine 4 ft. high, clusters of tiger lilies, paints scattered about, but, most of all, it brought the biggest crop of Western Bluebirds I have ever seen. Amongst the columbine, the Van Essens pointed out a nesting Wilson's Warbler. Gayle and Peppy had camped over night and met the 14 others of us at the road. We had wandered down the road past the spent snow flowers and fledgling Audubon's Warblers and Juncos. Fox Sparrows and Cassin's Finches were singing intermittently. Mountain Quail with 8 young were seen running through the bracken. Quite a number of Lawrence's Goldfinches were flying about and Red-naped Sapsuckers tried to lure us away from one locality. We had 43 species, including a Rock Wren and an Acorn Woodpecker, at this 6700 ft. camp. We dropped down to Charlton Flats for lunch, and then finished the afternoon assuring ourselves the Purple Martins had returned to Chilao. If you are ever tired of birding up here, the spot by the Bee Nature Trail is the place to sit down and watch the parade. That's why I say I can't be rational in talking about Buckhorn. There is no finer place to see our resident mountain birds. Otto Widmann, leader.

### THE 1 O'CLOCK CONDOR

MT. PINOS, July 20. The day started off cool and quiet. After the unbelievers left, the wind picked up and one minute after 1 p.m. an adult Condor sailed over the peak about 200 feet overhead, on the updraft.\*It was seen very clearly through binoculars and telescopes. At 2 o'clock a Golden Eagle sailed by to test the perspicacity of the assembled group. John Borneman, Condor Naturalist, National Audubon Society, N.A.S.

MT. PINOS, Aug. 17. At precisely 12 noon an adult Condor circled Mt. Pinos for the edification of a large crowd. At 2 o'clock an immature sailed over-head, and landed on a dead pine. A Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and Cooper's Hawk were available for comparison. \*There had been another distant sighting earlier

This is a book which was written for and should appeal to the so-called amateur-birders, but it would be also a good book for the professional ornithologist who only too often restricts his observations of birds to the dissecting table. The knowledge of the life of California birds has grown spectacularly in the last few years, in large part owing to the field observations of Arnold Small and his colleagues. One can still marvel at Grinnell and Miller "The Distribution of the Birds of California" for the amazing knowledge of the whereabouts and habitats of the birds in the vast unpopulated areas before the nineteen forties. To some extent Small's book is a revision of Grinnell and Miller, based on observations of many amateurs and professionals since those days. It goes much further. Many, even experienced native birders of California, will appreciate the chapters describing the habitats of California, with explicit references to what birds can be expected in each of them. The principal feature of the book of course is the Annotated List of the Birds of California. Here the beginner will marvel at what he can see, and the 600-er can be challenged at what remains to be seen even in a single state.

Some of us are pleased to note that Small can still distinguish between a Yellow- and Red-shafted Flicker and has not entirely obliterated these, and the other birds with distinct field marks, recently given the same name by ornithologists.

The book is remarkably well proof read—the reviewer has found only one spelling mistake. It is unfortunate that in spite of modern technology it is beyond the economics of the U.S. society to be able to publish colored photographs. Many of us know Arnold Small's colored photographs are beyond belief—and have suffered a great deal in black-and-white reproduction. Nevertheless, the photographs greatly enhance a newly arrived classic.

## BOOK STORE

JUST ARRIVED:

BIRDS OF THE WORLD: A CHECKLIST by James F. Clements  
AUSTRALIAN FINCHES by Immelmann  
BIRDS OF NEW GUINEA by Gould  
BIRDS OF PARADISE & BOWER BIRDS by Gilliard  
LAS AVES SUDAMERICANAS by Olrog  
FLOWERS OF THE SOUTHWEST DESERTS by Dodge/Janish  
FLOWERS OF THE SOUTHWEST MESAS by Patraw/Janish  
FLOWERS OF THE SOUTHWEST MTNS. by Amberger/Janish  
CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF ETHIOPIA by Urban/Brown

### 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 bird-watchers valuable techniques and equipment used to study birds in a variety of habitats. Dept. Biological and Physical Sciences. UCLA Extension, P.O. Box 24902, L.A. 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 Oct. 2, Oct. 16, Nov. 6, Nov. 20 and Dec. 4. Weekend field trips will be Oct. 12, Oct. 26, Nov. 9 and Nov. 23. (One day each.) Arnold Small, M.S., Instructor in biology at Los Angeles Harbor College, Wilmington. Fee: \$65.00. 3 units of quarter system credit may be earned.

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Audubon House Hours 10 to 3, Monday through Friday

Thu., Sep. 5. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

Fri., Sep. 6–Sep. 8. POINT REYES BIRD OBSERVATORY. Shore-bird Ecology–Landbird Migration. For information write or call Meryl Stewart, P.O. Box 442, Bolinas, CA 94924, 415–868-0696.

Sun., Sep. 8. MALIBU LAGOON & BIG SYCAMORE CANYON. Returning shore-birds and late summer residents. Meet at west side of lagoon at 8:00 a.m. Leader, John Schmitt.

Tue., Sep. 10. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Herb Clarke, former president of L. A. Audubon and well-known bird photographer, will give an entertaining, informative, and challenging program on bird identification, using his excellent color slides of American birds.



Sat., Sep. 14. PELAGIC TRIP FROM SAN DIEGO, led by California Field Ornithologists. Boat leaves Seaforth Sports-fishing Landing, Quivira Road, Mission Bay, promptly at 5:30 a.m., returns approximately at 7:00 p.m. This trip probably will be to the warm waters south of San Clemente Island, where the Red-billed Tropicbird has been seen some years ago. Other pelagics such as Craveri's Murrelet, Palefooted Shearwater were seen last year. Price, \$15 to members of CFO or subscribers to "Western Birds"; others \$16.50. Send check with full names of all in party to Cliff Lyons, 4988 Northaven Ave., San Diego, CA 92110, together with stamped self-addressed envelope. Departure information will be sent with confirmation. Clothing for cold and wet weather is always advisable.

Mon., Sep. 19. CONSERVATION MEETING, 8:00 p.m. at Plummer Park. A raptor program is planned.

Sat., Sep. 21. PELAGIC TRIP EASTERN CHANNEL ISLANDS. Boat leaves Quarterdeck Wharf, Oxnard, promptly at 7:30 a.m., and returns approximately at 4:00 p.m. Price \$14. Send check made out to Los Angeles Audubon Society, with full names of all members of party, to Joann Gabbard, 823 19th St., Apt. D, Santa Monica, CA 90403, phone 395-1911, together with stamped, self-addressed envelope and telephone number where you can be reached in case of last-minute cancellation. Clothing for cold and wet weather is advisable. Bring lunch. To reach Quarterdeck Wharf, turn south on Victoria at junction with Channel Island Blvd., Oxnard, for one mile. Parking is in Quarterdeck lot between Murre and Pelican Streets. Detailed trip instructions will be sent with confirmation. Leader, Arnold Small.

Sun., Sep. 22. CABRILLO BEACH. Meet in front of Museum at Cabrillo Beach at 7:30 a.m. Will go to Pt. Fermin for eastern vagrants and for those who are interested will stop at the Botanical Garden after lunch. Leader, Shirely Wells, 831-4281.

Sat., Sep. 28. EVENING BIRD WALK AT TRIPPET RANCH. Meet at gate at 6:00 p.m. To reach the ranch take Topanga Canyon Blvd. to Entrada Dr.—1 mile north of village. Take Entrada Dr. to fork. Take left fork to gate at end of road. Leader, Harvey Kirk.

Mon., Sep. 30. MALIBU LAGOON TO McGRATH STATE PARK. Meet in Malibu Inn parking lot opposite pier between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. As many as one-hundred species have been seen on this trip. Leader, Ed Navajosky, 938-9766.

Thu., Oct. 3. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.



Sat., Oct. 4. PELAGIC TRIP FROM MONTEREY, led by California Field Ornithologists. Boat leaves Sam's Wharf promptly at 7:30 a.m. and returns approximately at 4:00 p.m. Monterey Bay has surprises at any time of year. Thousands of petrels are expected to be in the bay, possibly some Fork-tailed. Price, \$11.50 for members of CFO or subscribers to "Western Birds"; others \$13.00. Send check with full names of all in party to Cliff Lyons, 4988 Northaven Ave., San Diego, CA 92110, together with stamped self-addressed envelope. Departure information will be sent with confirmation. Clothing for cold and wet weather is always advisable.

Sun., Oct. 6. NEWPORT BACKBAY. Meet any time after 8:00 a.m. at lower south side of the bay. Shore-birds should have returned in numbers. Black rails have been seen on this trip, although very difficult to see. Leader, Freeman Tatum.

Tue., Oct. 8. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Arnold Small, past president of L.A. Audubon and well-known bird photographer and author, will give a program on Birding in the Land of the Incas, from the steamy jungles to the glacier crowned volcanos of the high Andes, illustrated with his outstanding color slides.

Sat., Oct. 12. TIJUANA RIVERBOTTOM. Meet at Meyer Ranch. Returning fall migrants should be in abundance.

Sun., Oct. 20. GOLETA SLOUGH, SANTA BARBARA. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at east end of slough. Many shore- and land-birds should be in transit. Leader, Nelson Metcalf.

Sat., Oct. 26–27. BUTTERBREAD SPRINGS. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Jawbone Canyon and Route 14, 20 miles north of Mojave. This trip will be over desert roads passable with caution. Desert birds, including possible Chukars. Camping at the Kelso river. Absolutely no facilities. Bring own water. Leaders, Pam & Keith Axelson.

Nov. 9–17; Nov. 23–Dec. 1; Dec. 7–15. POINT REYES BIRD OBSERVATORY will lead trips through one of Mexico's birding spots, including San Blas and Mazatlan. For information write or phone Meryl Stewart, P. O. Box 442, Bolinas, CA 94924, 415–868-0696 before October 10.

Sat., Dec. 7–8. CARRIZO PLAINS. Meet in center Maricopa at 8:00 a.m. Trip will depart south on Route 33 for a few miles to see LeConte's Thrashers. Sage Thrasher 71. In Carrizo plains the Sand-hill Cranes should be seen in the evening or morning. Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plovers usually are seen. Bald Eagle 71. Barn Owl 71. Leader,

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EDITOR . . . . . Gilbert W. King "The Western Tanager" is free to members of  
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Calendar . . . . . Caroline Adams \$3.50. For first class mailing, send \$1.00 to Audubon  
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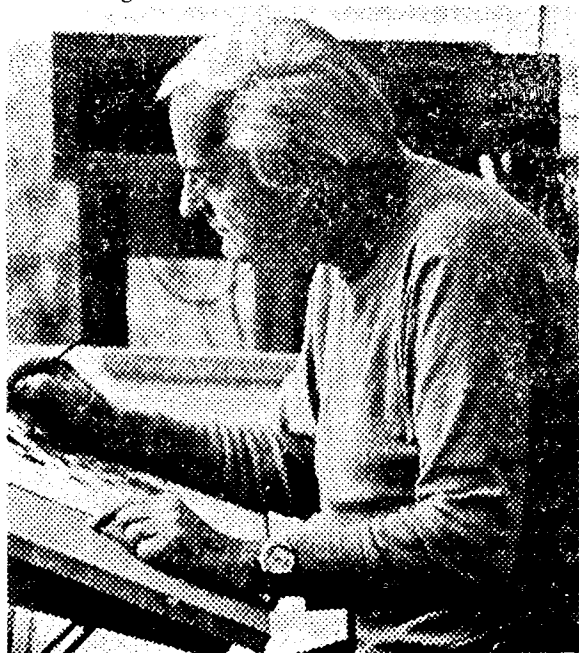
# Field Guide Author Turns to Painting

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF PETERSON'S FIELD GUIDE

As we conclude the Fortieth volume of "THE WESTERN TANAGER," we are reminded that this year is also the Fortieth anniversary of Roger Tory Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds." The apparent chauvinistic title (it was followed by "A Field Guide to the Western Birds") puts emphasis on the great innovation and contributions this guide made to the activity of birding. Few of us now can remember birding without a guide, unless one tries to bird in other countries.

Peterson's guides are unique in being condensed but containing the real information needed in the field. A proficient birder can confide in you that "even the adult California Gull has remnants of black on its red spot on the bill"—but it is all in Peterson. Until Peterson and Chalif produced "A Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico" it was an exasperating experience to bird in Mexico, to thumb through the available texts—even in the evening after a day's birding. Those of us fascinated by birding in East Africa were hopeful that the recent guides of John Williams would put this area on the map—but are greatly disappointed. Although extremely knowledgeable, these two guides somehow failed to catch the critical field marks useful in a guide in the field.

Perhaps most of all the Peterson guides are most remarkable because of the excellent drawings of the birds. Although stylized they nevertheless portray the shape of birds more precisely than any other guides. (Photographs fail remarkably in providing field identification marks.) Peterson, too, had demanded and obtained quite good color reproduction at least in early editions—and the subtleties of color (as with Cassin's and Purple Finches) are contributing to bird recognition.



On the 40th anniversary of the publication of "A Field Guide to the Birds," Roger Tory Peterson will receive the Explorers' Medal, the highest honor given by the Explorers' Club. As he approaches his 66th birthday his ambition is to establish himself as a "gallery painter" after all these years of illustrating his field guides. (His latest, "A Field Guide to Mexican Birds," with Chalif, appeared this year.) "Serious painting is what I have always wanted to do." He started his first field guide while teaching science at the Rivers School in Brookline, Mass. Five publishers turned the book down before Houghton-Mifflin accepted it and cautiously published 2000 copies.

## HIGH TIDES

The principal object which determines the height of the tides is the Moon, but the highest tides occur when the Moon and Sun are both in line with the Earth. Since the Moon and the Earth circulate around their governing bodies (the Earth and Sun, respectively) in elliptical rather than circular orbits, the tide-raising forces are largest when the Earth, Moon and Sun are in addition at the part of the elliptical orbits of closest approach. Although all orbital conditions cannot be at an optimum simultaneously maximum tidal effects have occurred in the years 1340, 1433, 1526, and 1619 A.D., but will not occur again for over a millennium, namely in 3182 and 3275 A.D.!

Recent very high tides (but not the maximum possible) occurred in Brest on September 21, 1922, when the tide was 1.72 times the mean lunar amplitude, and at Nelwyn (1.64 times). Widespread press reports grossly exaggerated the forecasts of unusually large tides for certain days in 1974. They will in fact be no higher than those in 1966 and 1972; but 1974 is perhaps remarkable for its large number of fairly large tides, as reported in the April issue of "The Western Tanager" (and to be continued in the September issue).

On shallow coasts the major factor in excessive height of high tides, and danger of flooding, is the occurrence of steady offshore winds for days preceding the time of high tide—as was the case in Norfolk in 1954 (and presumably too when King John lost his baggage in the Wash).

### HIGH TIDES AT UPPER NEWPORT BAY

Date	Time	Ht.	Dawn	Date	Time	Ht.	Dawn
Oct 15 Tu.	0841	6.5	0553	Dec 11 We.	0720	6.5	0641
16 We.	0916	6.6	0553	12 Th.	0758	6.5	0641
				13 Fr.	1833	6.5	0642
Nov 29 Fr.	0826	6.6	0631	27 Fr.	0732	6.5	0650
30 Sa.	0905	6.6	0632	28 Sa.	0814	6.8	0650
				29 Su.	0856	6.9	0650
Dec 1 Su.	0947	6.5	0633	30 Mo.	0939	6.7	0651

### PACIFIC STANDARD TIME

#### The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker

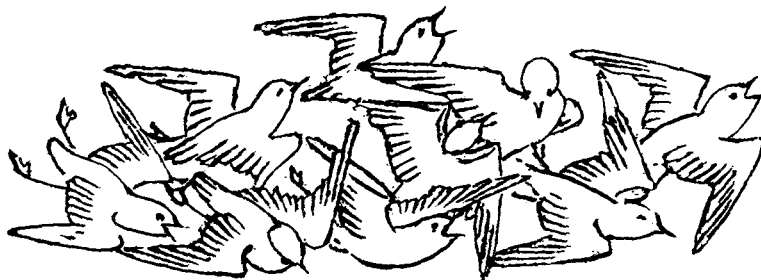
Written on the basis of the article "Some Characteristics of Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Cavity Trees in Georgia," by Harley Kemp Jones, Jr., and Frederick T. Ott, in "The Oriole," Volume 38, Number 4, December 1973.

The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker is one of the most habitat specific of the North American birds, and of woodpeckers in general. It almost exclusively uses pine trees whose heartwood has been broken down by the Red Heart disease, *Fomes pini*. In Georgia the pine trees subject to this disease, and in which Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers may be found, are the longleaf, *Pinus palustris*, shortleaf, *P. echinata*, and the loblolly, *P. taeda*. The cavity trees, indicators of Red-Cockaded inhabitation, are identified by resin glazing on the outside of the trunk. Often the cavities are located near the center of the glaze as the bird strives to maintain a sap flow near the cavity. In fact, this species will not make or maintain a cavity in a tree in which the sap has stopped flowing. The cavities are used both for nesting and for dens, and are specific indicators of this species, and used to identify the presence of the bird in the habitat.

The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker is gregarious and forms colonies, often using members of the colonies as helpers in feeding fledglings. The colonies choose diseased trees of quite specific characteristics, as far as age and size go; the diameter is at least 8 inches. The species displays strong preference for a particular type of nesting site. Cavities are built to face the wind, either to provide aeration or prolonged exposure to the heat of the sun, and usually just below the understory.

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Birds

## Shumway Suffel



**SEPTEMBER** is a month of migration- the last migration for the always early hummingbirds and the start of migration for wintering waterfowl, northern gulls and a few late passerines, but for most shorebirds and for nearly all the passerines this is the month of maximum movement. In addition, there are more migrants in the fall than in the spring, for the surviving adults from the spring are outnumbered by the young of the year making their first migratory flight. These neophyte migrants are doubly interesting to birders – initially, because most are in dull, immature plumage which poses interesting identification problems, and secondly, because they sometimes get lost, (usually irrevocably and often tragically). Since they are lost, they tend to concentrate at the desert oases, the coastal promontories and canyons, and the offshore islands which the regular, “on-the-beam” migrants shun or pass through rapidly. Also, because they are lost they tend to be late, which makes late September and early October the most rewarding time to look for them.



The outstanding avian event in July was the almost successful nesting of PAINTED REDSTARTS in the Arizona-type habitat of the Laguna Mountains in San Diego County. They did hatch three young according to Phil Unitt, who later found the nest deserted, the young birds dead, with the hoof prints of cattle in and near the nest. Another pioneering species, the HEPATIC TANAGER, which have nested at Arrastre Creek in the San Bernardino Mountains for at least two summers could not be found in that area, but a very few were seen on Clark Mountain in extreme northeast San Bernardino County. Many of us who looked for the FLAMMULATED OWLS at Buckhorn Camp in the San Gabriel Mountains found that they were not occupying their 1973 nest hole and feared that they had left the area, but Russ and Marion Wilson spent the night there and heard their characteristic call. According to Arnold Small, a pair of WHITE-TAILED KITES raised two young near Lancaster this summer. These Kites are strictly birds of the coastal and interior valleys, and this is the first nesting record for the desert side of the mountains.

Locally there were few reports of interest to take our minds off the early and continuously hot, muggy weather. The male HARLEQUIN DUCK which has remained at Marina del Rey since March 1972 was again in dull eclipse plumage. The LEAST TERN nesting colony nearby which was subject to disturbance by equestrians in June, was fenced off by Ken Stager and his hot-shot staff from the Los Angeles County Museum, and Ed Navajosky was able to report 22 Least Terns including 14 juveniles on a nearby beach on July 29. The only report of an “eastern” warbler since early June was a female plumaged AMERICAN REDSTART in Averill Park, San Pedro on July 9 (Jesse Morton). An adult male and two streaky juvenile RED CROSSBILLS in Mrs. Robert Stewart’s Monterey Park pine trees on July 15 were out of range and out of season, but who can account for the presence of these erratic wanderers. The Gilbert King’s West Los Angeles swimming pool seems to have an attraction for unusual birds. I remember stories of a Great Blue Heron and a Virginia Rail, and now Gilbert was dive-bombed by a LESSER NIGHTHAWK while enjoying his morning dip. Nearby on June 28, Abigail King and Joan Mills studied a wide ranging BLACK SWIFT, and compared it sizewise with other birds in the air. BLACK SWIFTS are now known to nest behind Santa Anita Falls above Arcadia, and a few of us (Baxters, Comeaus, Kruegers and Suffels) were fortunate enough to be there on the evening of July 29 for operation “Band Black Swifts”, expertly planned by Dr. Charles Collins and executed with the help of Glenn Wolfenden from Florida, Shirley Wells and Grace Nixon. After a tedious two hour wait, (spent studying the resident Stellar’s Jays and Dippers, and scanning an almost swift-less sky), we became a little restless, but Charlie assured us that the swifts would come in by eight o’clock. At 8:04 a black feathered projectile hit the net and we had a chance to see a Black Swift in the hand – incredibly long primaries, large brown eyes, a tiny beak, but an oversize gape, which extended back below the eyes. A few minutes later a second bird hit the net, but bounced off. There were no tears, one Black Swift in the hand is enough for a lifetime!

At least fifteen KITTIWAKES summered in Los Angeles Harbor, according to Elizabeth Copper who does a bi-weekly survey there, and a few were seen up the coast at King Harbor and Malibu. By early August about 1,000 ELEGANT TERNS had arrived at the mouth of the Santa Clara River, near Ventura, and with them were three probable PARASITIC JAEGERs. Chances for a Red-billed Tropicbird on the September pelagic trips are the best in years – an immature was sighted by Lee Jones off Catalina Island on July 9, the offshore waters are on the warm side this summer, and Arnold Small will not be present. Very unusual was the presence of a SABINE’S GULL (the most pelagic of all our gulls) at Imperial Dam on the Colorado River on June 22 (Guy McCaskie). Immature FRIGATE BIRDS were seen off San Diego, at Laguna Beach (Jerry Johnson), at Terminal Island (Isobel Ludlum), off Palos Verdes, at King Harbor, and at Pt. Dume (LJ), (but probably only one or two individuals were involved.)

The Salton Sea was a little disappointing to early August with no reports of Boobies, Spoonbills or southern herons. There were at least 16 BLACK SKIMMERS (5 at the north end and 11 at the south end with three nests –G. McC.); YELLOW-LEGGED WESTERN GULLS were present particularly at Salton City; our only report of a FRANKLIN’S GULL came from the north end on July 10 (Harry K.); LAUGHING GULLS were common with a few even at the northend; GULL-BILLED TERNS were uncommon both north and south; WOOD STORKS were common, but fewer than their usual hundreds; and by July 27 seven STILT SAND-PIPERS had arrived at the south end (Bruce Broadbooks and Hal Baxter). At Finney Lake, near Brawley, George Ledec reported 3 LEAST BITTERNs and a WIED’S FLYCATCHER on June 22, and at nearby Ramer Lake, Harry Kreuger saw a female GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE on July 23.

Despite the above, even early September is not too late for the Boobies, Spoonbills, etc. to show up at the Sea, and the best, (almost the only) place for Stilt Sandpipers is at the south end of the Sea – go north from Bannister Road on Bruchard Road (east of Vendel Road) past some duck club shacks on your left, to a sign on the left “No Unauthorized Vehicles”, park and walk to the west surveying the shallow ponds on your right as you go. (They associate with Dowitchers, but are taller and thinner, with a slight superciliary stripe and a droop at the tip of the bill. If you don’t find them there go north to the next side-road, park and walk northwesterly.)

If you are interested in passerine migrants, the same desert oases mentioned for spring migration will be good, but coastal canyons and promontories should be just as good and a lot more comfortable. From north to south you might try McGrath State Park and the adjoining riparian area, both above and below the bridge; La Jolla, Sycamore and Tuna Canyons in Malibu; the fennel patches around the Marineland parking lots (but don’t trespass); Pt. Fermin and Averill Parks in San Pedro and Recreation Park and Nature Center in Long Beach. Plan extra free time in September; there’s lots of birding to do and this is the month to do it.