

The Western Tanager

VOLUME 41, 1974-75 No.6 March

Birds of the California Channel Islands Part II

by H. Lee Jones



THE wildlife of the Channel Islands is interesting in several respects. These islands, because they are separated from each other and the mainland by large bodies of water, have evolved several endemic forms of plants and animals. There are some species which are common and widespread on the mainland which, for various reasons, have never reached the islands. Other species are much more common on the islands than they are on the mainland, and many species have undergone "niche shifts" (changed their life style, so to speak) on the islands. Because the islands are well-defined geographic units, they are ideal for studies in population dynamics, species turn-over rates and dispersal. Island biography is a popular field of study which incorporates various aspects of several disciplines, principally ecology, evolution, genetics and geography.

Perhaps the most interesting of the endemics is the diminutive Island Fox, *Urocyon littoralis*, a "pint-sized" version of the Gray Fox. This little fox is relatively tame, quite common and partially diurnal. It has a curious nature and on islands with human residents it has learned to eat from people's hands and on occasion, will even follow a person looking for hand-outs. It feeds on beetles, berries and bird eggs and can often be seen hunting food during the day, seemingly oblivious to the presence of nearby humans. When frightened, they usually run only a short distance, then stop to watch the intruder from a safe distance of 30 to 50 yards. They are found on all but the two smallest islands, Santa Barbara and Anacapa.

The most distinctive island endemic is the Island Night Lizard, *Xantusia riversiona*, which is found on San Clemente, San Nicolas and Santa Barbara Islands. Many scientists consider it the sole member of the genus *Klauberina*, but the general consensus now is that it is a very distinct species of *Xantusia*, a genus with several other members on the mainland. Rather than being a true endemic (a species that has evolved *in situ* on an island), this night lizard is believed to be a relict species (one that was once widespread) and now survives in only a few isolated localities). It is a secretive lizard, about five inches long, that lives under boards and debris most of the time occasionally venturing out into the open at night.

There are no endemic full species of birds, but one well-marked race, the Santa Cruz Island Scrub Jay, is easily recognizable in the field. It is larger, deeper blue and has a richer and darker brown back than the mainland forms. When it calls, it sounds like a typical Scrub Jay, but with its mouth stuffed with cotton. It is found only on Santa Cruz Island where it is common and easily seen. It was originally described as a distinct species, but relegated to subspecies status in 1931.

Among the plants, the most interesting near endemic is the Giant Coreopsis. It has a wood-like trunk and branches and bears lacy green leaves and yellow "sun-flowers" in late winter and early spring. It reaches its greatest height and density on Anacapa Island where individual plants may be eight feet high and groups of plants grow so close together as to be nearly impenetrable. They make quite a spectacular sight in March and April when the showy flowers turn much of the island bright yellow. This species can also be seen along the coast from San Luis Obispo to Pt. Dume near Los Angeles.

Another endemic plant (actually a relic), the Catalina Ironwood, *Lyonothamnus floribundus*, a tree with elderberry-like flowers, is found on the four largest islands. **There** are several other endemic plants, especially on San Clemente Island, including one, *Malacothamnus clementinus*, which is represented by only five individual plants in an old junkyard on San Clemente. Formerly common on the island, it was a favorite food of the goats and has held out only in this one small area (a few square feet) where it grows on a steep hillside among twisted metal and rubbish where the goats can't penetrate.

The large seal and sea-lion colony on San Miguel consists mostly of California Sea Lions which bear young, or "pup", in the summer and Northern Elephant Seals which pup in the winter. There is also a small colony of Steller's Sea Lions, the southernmost breeding colony of the species, a recently discovered colony of Northern Fur Seals, the only known breeding colony south of Alaska, and several small colonies of Harbor Seals. A sixth species, the nearly extinct Guadalupe Fur Seal, is occasionally seen also, but does not breed here.

There are few species of land mammals, as one might expect. Other than the Island Fox, previously mentioned, there is a shrew and the California Ground Squirrel on Catalina, The Spotted Skunk on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa, a harvest mouse on San Clemente, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa, a deer mouse represented by eight different subspecies, one each on the eight Channel Islands, and about ten species of bats. Several other species have been introduced by man, among them Norway and Black Rats, European Hares, a meadow mouse, various domesticated animals and man himself.



LEE JONES AT SEA

MALIBU LAGOON

The State Department of Parks and Recreation has plans for Malibu Lagoon. Bad plans. Picnic facilities and a 300-car parking lot threaten to encroach upon one of our finest natural bird sanctuaries. But there is good reason for hope. Unlike many environmental crises, in the case of Malibu Lagoon there is still time for active, resourceful opposition.

At present, the best way of preventing the damage inherent in existing plans is to advise Parks and Recreation of constructive alternatives, as they have indicated a willingness to consider outside suggestions for developing the proposed Malibu Lagoon State Beach. Recommendations should be sent to Dr. Tom Howell, Dept. of Biology, UCLA, Los Angeles 90024.

The State Parks Citizens Advisory Committee (Malibu-Las Virgenes Area), chaired by Faye Hove, is sponsoring a Malibu Lagoon Cleanup Day on March 8th, to demonstrate concern for present abuses. Those interested in participating should contact our conservation chairman, Glenn Olson at 472-4737. The above organization also plans a formal protest to the State Director of Parks and Recreation, and submission of a resource inventory to stress reasons for protecting the lagoon. Bird lists and other biological input would be useful; please submit information to Dr. Howell.

Last year's triumphant resolution of Legg Lake serves to remind us that we do not have to passively suffer the ill-advised decisions of government agencies. By working together we can protect the things we value and at the same time provide environs which will inspire in others a sensitivity to natural systems.

President Jerry Maisel has designated Malibu Lagoon as one of the target projects for 1975. We must save Malibu Lagoon. Save it from the black asphalt of ignorance. Save it for the good of all, if only as an example of our capability to appreciate and preserve.



UPPER REACHES OF MALIBU LAGOON Photo by Leslie Wood

FRIENDS OF NEWPORT BAY

Agreement has been reached by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, The State of California and the Irvine Company to allow the establishment of the largest State-managed ecological reserve in California. This agreement must still be approved by the State Lands Commission and the State Legislature. The need for public acquisition of surrounding uplands is becoming increasingly important as a buffer zone, as more and more open lands disappear. Letters to the Orange County Board of Supervisors, Newport Beach City Council, and to Senators Tunney and Cranston are appropriate at this time. Letters to Governor Brown urging his support of The Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve are also appropriate at this time.

CHRISTMAS COUNT '74

Sandy
Wohlgenuth

December 28 dawned wet and cold. At 7:30 the sun broke through and rainbows spangled the hills around the city. It was going to be all right. After the rainbows faded away it began to drizzle off and on and in mid-morning in various parts of the city a startling burst of hail descended. Through it all 82 observers counted birds, and the birds were there in surprising numbers. 50,000 of them! This was almost 50% more than last year when there were 93 observers and no hail. A very successful count. There was only one little problem: we went down from 156 species last year to 137 this year. There is no satisfactory explanation for the low species totals on most southern California counts this year. Unusually warm weather in the mountains was supposed to cut down our mountain birds, but we did get one White-breasted Nuthatch and one Mountain Chickadee. We lost the Red-breasted Nuthatch and the Varied Thrush, but Varied Thrushes the last two years were most unusual, and we find Steller's Jays infrequently and Pygmy Nuthatches only very rarely.

We took a solar plexus punch in the water birds, however. We got only one Arctic Loon and lost all three cormorants! There were lots of Surf Scoters, but none of the other two species. We missed the Shoveler, Gadwall and Cinnamon Teal, but these have been sometime birds for us. (Is there a public benefactor in the house who knows of a nice, secluded, shallow pond within our circle where we can do a Christmas count. We promise to keep it very hush-hush.) The hard-working experts at the Marina and Playa del Rey didn't let us down. Our own special Harlequin Duck is still with us and the Black Oystercatchers remain on the breakwater. I suppose we must reluctantly assume that for us the Snowy Plover is a rare bird. We got one last year and missed it entirely this year and in 1971. We lost the Snowy Egret as well as the American Bittern, but picked up the Great (Common) Egret, and for the first time on our count, got 3 Cattle Egrets. The 7 Great Egrets, by the way, were the first on an L.A. count since 1960. There were 2 birds that year and 112 in 1959. This year's count shows 201 Brown Pelicans, a most encouraging figure, and the highest since 1956. Some of the intervening years had appalling counts of pelicans: 1959 through 1962 read 5 - 1 - 0 - 34 birds.

Our marina coverage may have been seriously affected by the fact that the motor failed on the boat that was to have explored the outer breakwater and other less accessible areas. Many thanks are due the Axelsons for their generosity in engaging a boat for our count each year. This has been a most important factor in our past successes and their contribution is not taken for granted. (Next year Rock Sandpiper?)

Now for some of the good news. The Coues' Flycatcher that had been at the Bartholomews' home in Rustic Canyon for weeks was there on count day: the second Coues' in count history. The Bartholomews also had an Allen's Hummingbird and the first White-throated Sparrow on an LA count since 1966. A Gray-headed Junco was found at Forest Lawn in Hollywood along with 3 Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Juncos. A Western Tanager, a Wilson's Warbler and a Yellowthroat - birds that frequently elude us - turned up this year. Of some interest is the appearance of our only Common Snipe, not at the mudflats of Ballona Creek, but on a picnic ground in Griffith Park. We nearly overlooked Silver Lake reservoir this year, as the large lake had been drained, but at the smaller pond there, a Snow Goose was seen and photographed.

Where did all those 50,000 birds come from? Rounding off the figures, there were 3500 Audubon's Warblers, 1900 Brewer's Blackbirds, 3200 House Finches, 1300 Oregon Juncos, 1000 Robins, 3100 Cedar Waxwings, 700 Scrub Jays, 2700 Rock Doves, 5200 high-flying unidentified gulls, 700 Coots, 500 Western Grebes, 715 Anna's Hummingbirds and 260 Tri-colored Blackbirds. Our world-beating score of 242 California Thrashers last year was topped this year with 314. (So much for the Guinness Book of Records.)

There was more hail in the afternoon of the 28th and at times the rain really poured. Many, many thanks and congratulations are extended to all the heroes who came through the struggle with a smile on their lips, a song in their hearts and many birds on their damp check lists. See you next year!

audubon activities

EVENING MEETING, Jan. 14. From Jackass Penguins to Sugar Birds to Ostriches - the variety of bird life in South Africa was astounding. Mammals were no less intriguing, the Greater Kudu being one of the most magnificent. No wonder Dr. Gerald Maisel's program, presented to a capacity crowd, was enthusiastically received! His introductory maps of the geographical location of the places to be visited, the vegetation zones and the weather factors involved helped to explain the scene. He took us from modern Cape Town to the coast, the desert, the interior. One sequence, tantalizingly brief, showed the study area where Dr. Thomas Howell, Dr. Malcolm Gordon, and others from UCLA spent some weeks observing the nesting habits of Social Weavers. Some members of the audience who have thus far limited their trips to East Africa, were stimulated by Dr. Maisel's beautiful photography to visit the southern part of this most fascinating continent to see the vast variety of scenery and the different species of birds and mammals living there.

McGRATH STATE PARK, Jan. 18. After a delayed start resulting from a misunderstanding of the meeting time and place, thirteen stalwart birders and their "lost" leader met on the dunes and proceeded to sort out the hundreds of gulls to be seen there. At least nine species were identified. In the willow grove and pickle weed White-crowned Sparrows, House Finches, Savannah Sparrows and Song Sparrows were numerous, and a pair of Short-eared Owls and White-tailed Kites were found. The estuary was teeming with birds - Great Blue Heron, Egrets, Royal Terns, and ducks, including Canvasback, Bufflehead, Shoveler, Green-winged Teal and a possible Red-head. The morning's birding was interrupted about noon by an influx of extremely noisy off-road vehicles, but fortunately we had covered the area by then and returned to the campground for lunch. Leader, Norbert J. Schmitt.

SALTON SEA, Jan. 25. The day got off to a "shaky" start as those of us who spent Friday night in Brawley can attest. A series of light to moderate (4.2 Richter scale) earthquakes cracked walls and sprinkled plaster on the floor, making sleep almost impossible. Fortunately, most of the fifty or so birders spent the night elsewhere and had no natural phenomena, other than perfect weather, to report. The day ended, however, with the "bird of the day," a young male American Redstart, found by Laura Lou Jenner just at sunset at Finney Lake. During the day we observed the break-up of a tremendous flock of Snow Geese which, tragically, included virtually no immatures - a 99% nesting failure in the Arctic. In one segment of the flock we studied a Blue Goose (now blue phase Snow Goose) and several Ross's Geese. Three Least Bitterns, two of which were perched within twenty-five feet of us, were "lifers" for many and year birds for all. A total of 85 species (long on waterbirds and low on landbirds) was recorded, including all the hoped-for birds except White-fronted Geese which are uncommon at the Sea. Hal Baxter and Shum Suffel, co-leaders.

Alan M. Heller Exhibit

On exhibit at the Audubon House through March, 1975, is a display by Alan M. Heller on the endangered "Desert Pupfish." This display features photographs depicting the endangered species and their habitats as well as a map and short explanation of the pupfish plight.

Mr. Heller is a fellow member of the Los Angeles Audubon Chapter and Vice President of the Underwater Photographic Society.

books

SLATER'S "FIELD GUIDE TO AUSTRALIAN BIRDS — PASSERINES" — \$10.00

NEW FOR SPRING:

KEY TO TREES & WILDFLOWERS OF THE MOUNTAINS OF SO. CALIF., by Collins - \$7.95
(companion to Key to Coastal & Chaparral Flowering Plants, this volume covers elevation from 400 to 7,000 ft.)

BUTTERFLIES OF SO. CALIF., by Thomas Emmel (paper) - \$4.50
(Color plates of all adult forms, B/W photos & drawings of larvae and pupae.)

BOOKSTORE

The new 1974 revised edition of **BIRDER'S GUIDE TO THE TEXAS COAST.** by James Lane is now available at \$3.50.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COORDINATING COUNCIL

The quarterly meeting of the Southern California Coordinating Council of National Audubon Society was hosted by the El Dorado chapter February 1. The purpose of this meeting was to inform us of current conservation projects of all chapters.

A conclusion was made that we must focus on one main point: gathering of base-line data to aid in Environmental Impact Report or Statement compilation in the future. This will be done by using information normally collected on society field trips. We will now include an approximate number of each individual species observed in addition to the total of all species.

A better communication between chapters is advocated and the pooling of our resources in fighting important conservation issues is planned.

Coastal tidelands have been given the priority and we intend to monitor them as best we can. A current issue of importance is the fate of the Tia Juana River. San Diego Audubon Society will be working to keep us informed. They have been gracious to agree to provide us with a conservation program on the subject. An announcement will appear in the Western Tanager with the specific date of this meeting.

The meeting closed with a Least Bittern flying over the pond behind the meeting hall.

WHOOPING CRANE MIGRATION

Whooping Cranes in Migration. Two adult whooping cranes were sighted and photographed between two parcels of land of Nat'l. Audubon's new Lillian Annette Rowe Bird Sanctuary on the Platte River in Nebraska, Oct. 30 - Nov. 1. It has been thought that whoopers sometimes use the sanctuary area as a migration stop-over point (in addition to the more numerous sandhill cranes and other wildlife there); now these pictures have removed any doubt that they do so.

**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**

PRESIDENT Dr. Gerald Maisel
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Dorothy Dimsdale
HOUSE CHAIRMAN Abigail King

Audubon House Hours 10 to 3, Monday through Friday

Sun., Mar. 2. TUJUNGA WASH & HANSON DAM. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on the north side of Foothill Blvd. by the bridge, 2 miles west of Sunland. As the mornings are cold in this area, warm clothing is suggested. Cactus Wren and Costa's Hummingbirds are possibilities. Leader, Jim Stevens.

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

Tue., Mar. 11. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Dr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of birds and mammals at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History. "The Exotic Bird Trade, New Threat at Home and Abroad."

Sat., Mar. 15. FERNDELL (in Griffith Park). Meet at 8:30 a.m. in parking area. Take Ferndell Dr. north from corner of Western Ave. and Los Feliz Blvd. Chaparral birds and an enjoyable morning walk. Leader, George Ledec. *Good trip*

Thu., Mar. 20. CONSERVATION MEETING, 8:00 p.m. at Plummer Park. Glenn Earling Olson, Chairman.

Sun., Mar. 23. MALIBU LAGOON & TUNA CANYON. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the supermarket parking area on west side of lagoon. (Take Hwy. 1 to Malibu Creek Bridge.) Leader, Bob Pann.

Sun., Mar. 30. STARR RANCH. This trip is postponed because the access road is blocked during a development project.

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

Sat., Apr. 5. CHANTRY FLAT & SANTA ANITA CANYON. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at 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. Leader, Hal Baxter.

Tue., Apr. 8. EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Dr. Thomas C. Emmel of the Department of Biology, University of Florida, will present a beautifully illustrated program — "Some Aspects of Tropical Ecology."

Sun., Apr. 13. PELAGIC TRIP TO SANTA BARBARA ISLAND. This trip departs from Oxnard Marina on board the Paisano. Boat will leave at 5:00 a.m. Fee \$15 per person (48 passengers). Send check, with full names of all in party to Joann Gabbard, 823 - 19th Street, Apt. D, Santa Monica, CA 90403, together with stamped, self-addressed envelope, and telephone number where you can be reached the night before in case of cancellation on account of bad weather. Clothing for cold and wet weather is always advisable. Leader, Lee Jones.

Sun., Apr. 13. TRIPPET RANCH. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in picnic area near entrance. Take Topanga Canyon Blvd. to Entrada Dr., 1 mile north of the village. Take Entrada Dr. to fork and left fork to gate at end of road. Excellent area for chaparral birds and owls. Leader, Roger Cobb.

Thu., Apr. 17. CONSERVATION MEETING, 8:00 p.m. at Plummer Park. Glenn Earling Olson, Chairman.

Sat., Apr. 19. BUTTERBREAD SPRING. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Jawbone Canyon turnoff on Rte. 14, 20 miles north of Mojave. The group will move off promptly at 8:30 so allow time to fill gas tank, etc. This trip will be over dirt roads passable with caution. There are no toilet facilities. Bring own water. Chukar and spring migrants are possibilities. Group will camp at Kelso Creek. Leaders, Keith and Pam Axelson.

Sat., Apr. 26. 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 miles. Dry camping facilities in Joshua Tree National Monument and motels available in Twenty-nine Palms and Yucca Valley. Vermilion Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, and rare Spring migrants are possibilities. Leader, Jerry Maisel.

Sat., May 3. MORONGO VALLEY. (Same as above) Leader to be listed in April "Tanager."

UCLA EXTENSION COURSES OFFERED

Two programs are being offered by the Department of Biological and Physical Sciences for the coming spring. The lecture series "Marine Resources: Problems of Use and Preservation" is presented in cooperation with the Marine Studies Council, UCLA. The conference, "Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises: What is Their Future?" is being coordinated by Kenneth Norris, Professor of Natural History, UCSC. For further information write University Extension, Department of Biological and Physical Sciences, P.O. Box 24902, Los Angeles, Calif. 90024 or call 825-3839.

POINT REYES BIRD OBSERVATORY 1975 COURSE SCHEDULE

As they have done for several years, PRBO is scheduling study trips to areas in California, Arizona and Mexico. The popular excursion to Southeast Arizona the latter part of May is planned for '75, as well as the strenuous, but exciting "Transect of California" in late June. These excursions are planned on a strictly non-profit basis and are offered mainly to provide an opportunity for more people to see the kind of study and research done by PRBO staff members, many of whom they will meet as trip leaders. For information write Meryl Stewart, P.O. Box 442, Bolinas, Calif. 94924.

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

Official Publication of the
Los Angeles Audubon Society

EDITOR Gilbert W. King "The Western Tanager" is free to members of
Field Notes Shumway Suffel National Audubon Society assigned to the Los
Audubon Activities Donald Adams Angeles chapter. For all others annual subscription is
Calendar Caroline Adams \$3.50. For first class mailing, send \$1.00 to Audubon
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CONSERVATION TOPICS

Glen Earling Olson

LOCAL:

Malibu Lagoon - the State Department of Parks and Recreation has decided not to request funds for the development of Malibu Lagoon this year. The first phase of development was to include: a 160-car parking lot, 30 picnic units, and a service building. This at a projected cost of 1.1 million dollars. The plan, however, is still on the books. Those persons concerned with enhancing the lagoon's natural integrity are invited to express their ideas and to submit alternative plans.

Century Ranch-Audubon members should be aware of Century Ranch, the old Twentieth Century Fox property in the Santa Monica's which has been acquired by the state. Much of this large parkland has laid relatively undisturbed outside of an occasional Indian attack on Fort Wilderness. The ranch's natural diversity and scenic values are appreciable; indeed, in Los Angeles County such values of land are an endangered resource. The state is in the process of completing and evaluating a resource inventory of the area: its riparian communities, steep rock canyons, grasslands, and dense chaparral. State Parks Director Mott had expressed an intent to classify and develop Century Ranch as a State Recreation Area. Since then, the Brown Administration has moved in and, as an early appraisal, they appear more sensitive in environmental decisions concerning the best longterm use of the land.

While on the subject of natural values in the Santa Monica Mountains, a pregnant mountain lion was sited in mid-January on a Nature Conservancy preserve above Malibu.

REGIONAL:

At the state level, Gov. Brown has appointed Claire Dedrick California Secretary of Resources. Dr. Dedrick is a Ph.D microbiologist as well as a distinguished conservationist. She is presently a Sierra Club Vice-President, has been a director of both the California League of Conservation Voters and the Committee for Green Foothills. She was co-recipient of the National Wildlife Federation's Distinguished Achievement Award in 1970 and has, most recently, given testimony at Project Independence hearings on energy conservation. Good credentials, but how does this affect us: simply, as Resources Secretary, she will head more than a dozen departments including Fish and Game, State Parks, and Water Resources.

Southern California Birds (cont'd.)

BIRDS along Malibu Creek above the lagoon. They were found on Jan. 8, along with a female HOODED MERGANSER, by Roland Hull, who birds the area frequently, and the blackbirds were seen as late as Jan. 30, at which time they were rapidly losing their rusty feather edges (Jerry Johnson). Three SWAMP SPARROWS were more than our usual winter quota, one near Goleta (Paul Lehman), one in Tapia Park on Jan. 23 (Ed N.), and one above Newport Bay on Jan. 28 (J.J.).

As we mentioned last year, March is a good month for new birders to study the early migrants while there is a lull in birding activity and before the arrival of many new and confusing migratory species (see the March '74 "Tanager" for a brief discussion of field marks on hummers, kingbirds, and swallows). Morongo Valley, including Covington Park, is worth a visit later in the month as both VERMILION FLYCATCHERS and LUCY'S WARBLERS arrive there before April 1. Plan now to see the SAGE GROUSE on their strutting grounds above Bishop late this month or early in April. Early morning is the best time and even though they can be seen from your car, it can be bitterly cold and you will want to spend some time there, so dress

The Dept. of Water Resources has proposed a "Peripheral Canal" to send water to Southern California. The 43-mile long canal would divert water from the Sacramento River through a 400 ft. weir, bypassing the Sacramento Delta, and tying in to the California Aquaduct. A project of such large scale has considerable environmental ramifications. The historic outflow of freshwater through the Delta was approximately 30.3 million-acre feet/year. As of 1970 the Delta outflow was 17.3 MAF/yr., the decrease due to water development projects. By the year 2020 DWR projects that for a typical year the Delta outflow will be 9.4 MAF/yr. That is only one-third the normal outflow; each normal rainfall year will be a dry year in the Delta. This should significantly alter wildlife habitats such as the Suisun Marsh where as many as 20% of the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl winter yearly. It could further impair agricultural areas in the Delta which already are experiencing increased salinity in their irrigation water due to the intrusion of saltwater from the Pacific Ocean. Additionally, the Peripheral Canal will have unknown effects on the San Francisco Bay. The Bay has traditionally had the freshwater flushing action of river-delta drainage. Lower freshwater outflow could seriously affect the cleansing of the Bay. That this project is a component of a larger system is clear, what this system includes is unclear. The next step is, I believe, water diversion of the North Coast Rivers to the Sacramento River Drainage. Proposals include water diversion of the Columbia River of the Pacific Northwest south to California. The Alteration of habitat is the primary problem besetting healthy wildlife populations. The Peripheral Canal's ramifications should be understood before undertaken.

The result of the latest Kirtland warbler census was disappointing: 334 remaining, a 22% drop from the last census. The songbird's population was estimated at perhaps 1000 individuals in 1951 (Mayfield). The bird breeds solely in the Jackpine successional community of Central Michigan and is known to winter only in the islands of the Bahamas. Three factors are implicated in the bird's decline: (1) brood parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird, (2) possibility of an inadequate amount of suitable breeding habitat, and (3) a possible lack of adequate winter range with large-scale lumber operations, past and present, in the Bahamas.

BIRDING TOUR TO COLOMBIA. SOUTH AMERICA

Herb and Olga Clarke, longtime members and officers of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, are leading a birding tour to Colombia, a nation which contains the greatest variety of birds of any country in the world. The dates are August 11/24, 1975. Habitats to be visited include the llanos (plains), tropical rain forests, marshes, the Andes on up to the paramo region above timberline. Some of the bird probabilities are Andean Condor, Cock-of-the-Rock, Horned Screamer, dozens of bright colored tanagers, parrots, and hummingbirds. Accommodations will be the best available and the number of participants will be limited. The local guide will be Dr. Kjell von Sneidern, who assisted de Schauensee in writing the BIRDS OF COLOMBIA.

For more information contact:

Olga L. Clarke
2027 El Arbolita Dr.
Glendale, Calif. 91208
(213) 249-5537

warmly. Turn right off Hwy. 395 at the roadside church about thirty miles north of Bishop and follow the signs to the strutting grounds. If the birds do not tempt you in March, the wildflowers on the deserts will provide a good excuse for a day in the field.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDS

by Shumway Suffel

MARCH - A wise man once said "the best thing about March is that it keeps February and April apart" and, although I hope I am wrong, March can be a very dull month for birders. The earliest migrants, swallows and hummingbirds, are on the move now to take advantage of the flowers and insects of early spring, and a scattering of early passerines will give us many "firsts" for the year, but the main tide of spring migration must wait until late April or early May. So patience is required. However, if you must go birding, try for "a first" — Western Kingbirds, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Warbling Vireos, Bullock's Orioles and Black-headed Grosbeaks are all possibilities in March.

THE TURN OF THE YEAR GAVE US A NEW BIRD for the state and a new bird for our area, and both of them were swans. The initial report was of three TRUMPETER SWANS, an adult and two immatures at the mouth of the Santa Clara River, Ventura County, on Nov. 17; then on Dec. 24, a sub-adult swan, probably a Trumpeter, was seen at great distance on Lake Sherwood; and on Jan. 1, an adult Trumpeter was found at Legg Lake, El Monte, by Sheri Gjerdi, and was verified during New Year's week by most active birders in the area. The only other Trumpeter Swan recorded in Southern California since the 1890's was an adult at California Valley, San Luis Obispo County (Western Birds 4: 111, '73) in Jan. '73. Even more exciting was the sighting of an adult BEWICK'S SWAN with hundreds of Whistlers on a small lake near Red Bluff, Tehama County, on Jan. 13 by Steve Laymon. Dozens of birders from New York to San Diego studied these swans during the next ten days and observed that the Bewick's apparently was in a family group with an adult Whistler and three immature swans, either Bewick's or hybrids. The shape and extent of the distinctive yellow mark on the adult's bill indicated that this Bewick's belonged to the Siberian race — Jankowski's Swan — as would be expected on our Pacific Coast. This is the second North American record, possibly both of the same individual. In studying these swans, we also observed that the pink labial stripe mentioned in the field guides as being diagnostic of a Trumpeter is not to be trusted as many Whistlers have it too.

Noteworthy birds in the northern part of the state were **YELLOW-BILLED LOONS** at Tomales Bay in late December, and in Monterey harbor after Jan. 28 (Ruth Lohr and Jean Brandt); an immature **BROAD-WINGED HAWK** near the freeway in Monterey in January; an immature **LITTLE GULL** (third California record) near Moss Landing, from Jan. 19 into early February; and from the piers in Monterey harbor, Jerry Maisel, Arnold Small and Bruce Broadbooks used their telescopes to good advantage by finding two **ANCIENT MURRELETS** and a **THICK-BILLED MURRE** far out in the bay.

This is evidently a poor winter for **FULMARS**, as they were not seen on the Monterey Bay pelagic trip on Feb. 1, but Russ and Marion Wilson observed a dark phase from the Huntington Beach pier that same day. Our only report of a **RED-NECKED GREBE** south of Monterey was one in Santa Barbara harbor on Jan. 5 (Bruce Broadbooks), but **OLDSQUAWS** were seen from the Ventura pier on Jan. 31 (Don Sterba), at nearby McGrath Park on Jan. 5 (Keith and Pam Axelson), and in San Diego harbor, where they are regular in small numbers. No large flocks of **WHITE PELICANS** winter locally anymore, but a scattered few were seen in our area — five at Legg Lake Jan. 12 (Dennis Treadway), one at the Salton Sea on Jan. 25 (there are usually many more there), and two at Morro Bay on Feb. 2

(Hal Baxter). The adult **LITTLE BLUE HERON** and the **LOUISIANA HERON** remained at Bolsa Chica at least through January. The adult Little Blue Heron at the Salton Sea, found by Harold Swanton on Dec. 11, was still there Jan. 20 (the Wilsons) but the L.A.A.S. field trip on Jan. 25 did not find it. Although **SURF SCOTERS** were present in large numbers, **WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS** were scarce even in central California, and **BLACK SCOTERS** were unreported to early February. The male **EUROPEAN WIGEON** at McGrath Park stayed on into January and another male returned to Whalen Lake near Oceanside for the third or fourth winter. The male **TUFTED DUCK** at Lake Sherwood and the three **HOODED MERGANSERS** at the Big Dalton check dam near Glendora also seem to be wintering as they have been there since early November. The presence of single **WHITE-TAILED KITES** near Brawley on Jan. 25 (Guy McCaskie) and near Tecopa Hot-springs in Inyo County on Jan. 18 (Jan Tarble) reinforces the theory that these kites are expanding their range onto the deserts. The adult **GOSHAWK** in Big Sycamore Park proved difficult to find, but was seen at close range on Jan. 3 by J.B. Andersen. Two **BROAD-WINGED HAWKS** were seen locally, an adult at Harbor Lake, San Pedro, on Dec. 27 (B.B.) and another at Legg Lake on Jan. 3 (J. Maisel).

The six foot tide at Upper Newport Bay on Jan. 12 did not bring the hoped for **SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** out of hiding but searchers were rewarded with excellent views of an immature **BALD EAGLE** with a condor-like underwing pattern (Jon Dunn et al). The slightly higher tide (6.8 ft.) on Jan. 25 - 28 forced **SORA**, **CLAPPER** and **VIRGINIA RAILS**, as well as the sparrow into the open, but the only reports of **BLACK RAILS** there were by Lois Boylen on Nov. 17 and by Bruce Broadbooks on Nov. 24. Three **GOLDEN PLOVERS** were found on the west side of the bay on Jan. 28 (H.B.). About forty **STILT SANDPIPERS** were seen at various places near the south end of the Salton Sea in late January (G.McC. et al). The **RUFF** found by Hal Ferris on Jan. 6 on the end of the breakwater at Marina del Rey and easily seen there for more than a week met a sad end when it was picked up in an emaciated condition on Jan. 15 by Larry Sansone. It is now in the L.A. County Museum, which seems appropriate since it is a new bird for Los Angeles County.

The only report of a **FRANKLIN'S GULL** came from Pt. Fermin, San Pedro, where an adult in summer plumage (full black head) flew by on Dec. 27 (Ian MacGregor and S.S.). This seems to be a good winter for **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES** as they were seen near Ventura, at Malibu and at King Harbor in Redondo Beach.

Two **LEWIS' WOODPECKERS** were reported — one near San Juan Capistrano, which has been there since Thanksgiving (Shirley Wells) and one in Tapia Park, Malibu, on Jan. 23 (Ed Masthay). The **EASTERN PHOEBE** which has been at the Arcadia Arboretum since Dec. 11 is obviously wintering there as it was still present in early February; and the **SOLITARY VIREO** found the same day in the same area was seen again on Jan. 1. A **WARBLING VIREO** (very rare in winter here) was found at the Arboretum on Jan. 4 by Hank Brodtkin. Justin Russel's frequent trips to Griffith Park gave us our only off-season warbler report, a **NASHVILLE WARBLER** on Dec. 15. He also reports a **GRAY-HEADED JUNCO** with a large flock of Oregons on Dec. 18 and 20. The most sought after birds throughout January were the pair of **RUSTY BLACK-**

Continued on Page 5