

WESTERN TANAGER

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Man and the Condor

by Ian McMillan



The year 1907 stands as a milestone in the field of condor study. In that year two eager young men took a historic streetcar ride to the outskirts of Los Angeles. One of the pair was John C. Merriam, who was establishing a department of paleontology at the University of California. The other was Loye Miller, a teacher of biology at the Los Angeles Normal School. Near a stop on the streetcar line was an open grain field and a tumbledown ranch house—and close by was a small pit where some old bones had been discovered. The location was called Rancho La Brea, and the two naturalists had come to look for fossils.

During the three years that followed this first expedition, Loye Miller devoted all the time he could spare to digging and collecting at the tar pits. Predominant among the entombed birds he found was the ancestral condor, *Gymnogyps amplus*.

In 1960, using the new technique of carbon-14 dating, Miller's colleague, Hildegard Howard, placed the age of the bones at around 14,000 years. Previous to this time, the fossils were assumed to be "about 50,000 years old"—and on this mistaken assumption, the California Condor had been widely characterized as a decrepit, fading relic of a remote geologic age. But now a profoundly different concept of condor evolution began to emerge. In a study made in the 1940's, it was demonstrated that the condors now living belong to a new species, *Gymnogyps californianus*, not only distinct but probably younger than the condor that left its bones in the tar pits. So instead of a "dying relic of the Pleistocene," the California Condor now appears to be a creature of the present—and hopefully, of the future.

There seems to be no concrete evidence that the California Condor existed prior to the Recent geological epoch, or roughly the last 10,000 years. Zoologist Carl Koford lists sites in Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, and California where subfossil remains of the present species have been found—and significantly, the age of the bones ranges from 500 to 3000 years. *Man* has been in these areas much longer than that.

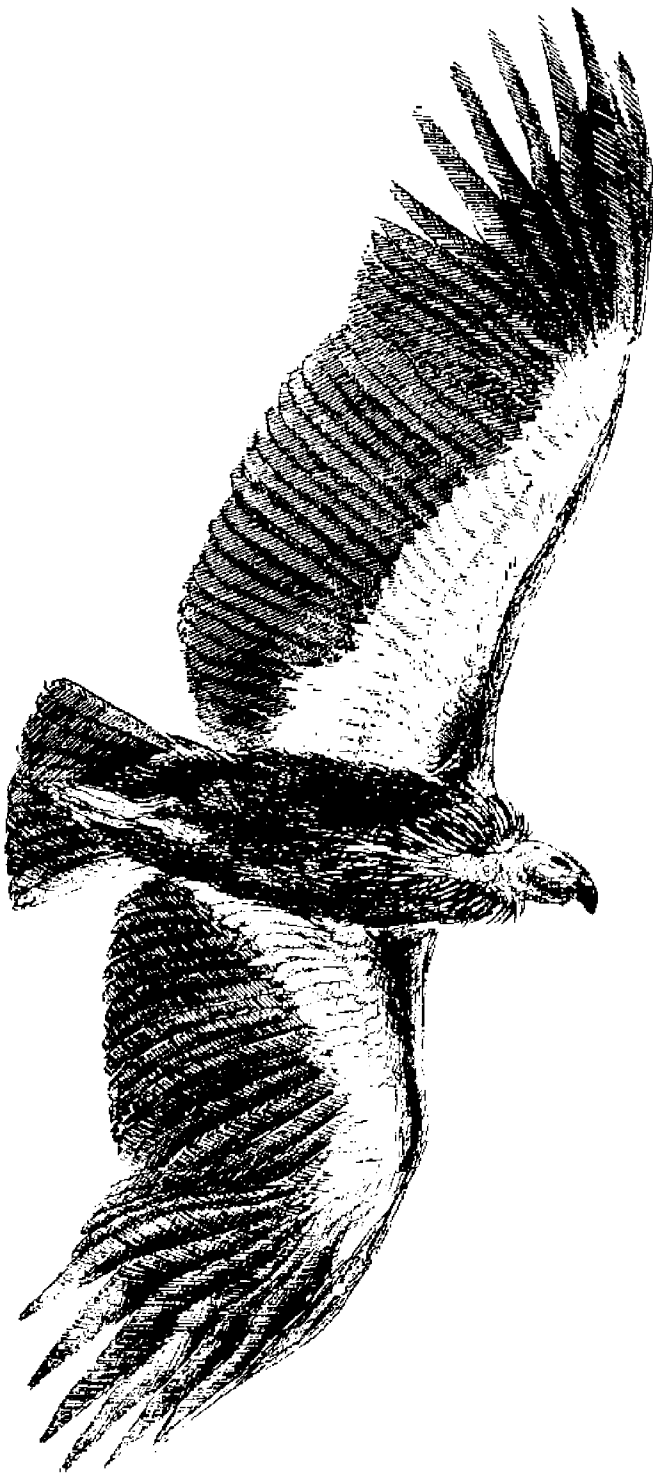
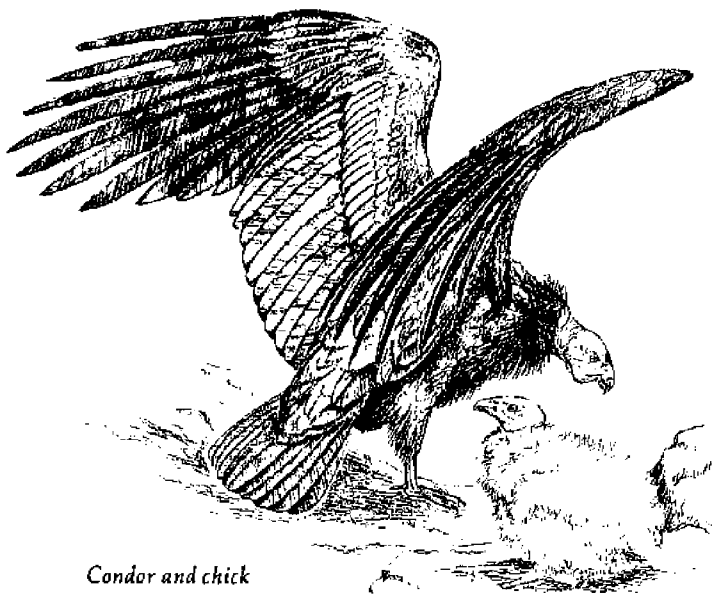


Illustration by Mary Ellen Pereyra

Illustration by Mary Ellen Pereyra



Condor and chick

With the advent of man, *Gymnogyps amplius*, the condor of the La Brea tar pits, vanished into extinction, along with a host of its contemporaries. Although this was long before *homo sapiens* had the gun, he had another equally deadly weapon—the torch. In a realm that had evolved without adaptation to human kind, the impact of this new agent of destruction must have been profound.

In fact, just as human predation may have caused the extermination of the Pleistocene condor, adaptation to that predation may have given rise to the condor of today. In the process of selection, those birds choosing the most secluded and inaccessible nesting sites would rear the most young. And where this choice represented inherent behavior, the trait would be passed on to succeeding generations. Steadily, the predilection to nest beyond the reach of humans would become characteristic. Through this process of adaptation the range of the condor would become restricted to remote places, yet still within year-round cruising range of supplies of food.

The first written record of the California Condor appears in the diary of a friar attached to the Vizcaino expedition of 1602. On the beach at Monterey, the friar saw a group of condors feeding on the carcass of a whale. The next record comes from the same region in 1769, when the Portolá expedition witnessed the ritual slaughter of a condor by Indians—a practice that was evidently widespread at the time. Later, in 1957, Loye Miller was to discover a surprising collection of condor bones at a pre-historic Indian midden along the Columbia River in Oregon.

In 1792 the British ship *Discovery* under Captain Vancouver anchored off Monterey, and Archibald Menzies, the surgeon with the expedition, collected the first scientific specimens of both the California Condor and the California Quail. Then in 1805 Lewis and Clark observed several condors just above the cascades on the Columbia—and Captain Lewis, in the tradition of the day, attempted without success to shoot one. In 1834 the renowned naturalists John Kirk Townsend and Thomas Nuttall followed the trail down the river; but though Townsend collected extensively in the area, he rarely saw more than “two or three” of the big birds, and was able to kill only one. His specimen amounts to the last positive record of the species in Oregon. Within three decades of their first discovery by the white man, the condors of the Columbia

River were gone—in all probability the victims of the gun. Since the species was evidently shot at every opportunity, the effect on a local population that might well have numbered no more than “two or three dozen birds” would be drastic.

The wave of empire that swept westward following the Lewis and Clark Expedition brought an increasing number of scientific collectors into the Pacific region—many of them seeking the elusive California Condor. There is no evidence to suggest that the condor has been abundant at any time since the coming of the white man—and many of the collectors failed in the attempt to get a single bird. Under this new pressure, however, the range of the species steadily drew in toward its prehistoric center in the region of southern coastal California. By the 1860's condors were extinct or very rare in the Sacramento Valley, and by 1890 they had practically disappeared from all their former range north of San Francisco. In the south, only a few unsubstantiated reports from San Diego County trickled in after 1910, while further south, in Baja California, a few of the birds were reported as late as 1932. But there have been no sightings of condors in that region in recent years.

In the late 1800's, the main breeding territory for condors appears to have been the coastal region of southern Monterey County, an area once grazed by great herds of livestock owned by the Spanish ranchos and the San Antonio Mission. But the last specimen from this area was taken in 1917, and there have been few sightings since then. There seems to be no reason to suspect that food shortage was the key factor in the disappearance of the birds, for sufficient cause for their demise can be found in the movement of settlers into the region during the homesteading boom that began in the 1880's. Throughout its range, it now appears that human predation was the main cause of the great bird's retreat.

During the next two decades, the Sisquoc area, about 120 miles southward, was a favorite breeding ground for the remaining condors—but by the 1940's the center had shifted further south into Ventura County, where the Sespe Condor Sanctuary is now situated.

There may be ecological significance in the fact that the hard-pressed condors of today are finding their most secure retreat in the same general territory that apparently served as the last center of abundance for their predecessors of 10,000 years ago. But there could be another meaning in this odd situation—for the ancestral home of the great bird lies in the same general area where condor preservation had its beginnings and has reached its greatest strength and development. ☞

Ian McMillan is a well-known California naturalist, rancher, and conservationist, whose family has lived in condor country since the 1880's. He's the author of the book, *Man and the California Condor* (Dutton, 1968), from which this article was excerpted. The book may be purchased at Audubon House.

Mary Ellen Pereyra is a 17-year old Los Angeles artist, a senior at Culver High. In her spare time she works with Ken Stager and Jim Northern at the County Museum of Natural History—and she plans a career in ornithology. Recently she was awarded 2nd prize for her design for the 1976 California Bicentennial Medallion. Cards featuring her drawings of birds are available at Audubon House.

Improving the Odds for Survival

by John Borneman, Condor Naturalist, National Audubon Society

Along the northern boundary of Ventura County runs a small group of mountains that rise to 8000' in elevation. The north slopes of these mountains are covered with White Fir and Ponderosa Pine, while the summit of the highest peak, Mt. Pinos, has a few scattered Limber Pines, growing low and twisted. At the base of the north slopes a small valley, Mill Potrero, graphically marks the San Andreas Fault. Until very recently those who stood on the summit could see few signs of civilization as they scanned the sky for the elusive California Condor. Today, gazing down across the slopes, one sees a sprawling "second home" development spreading over the valley floor.

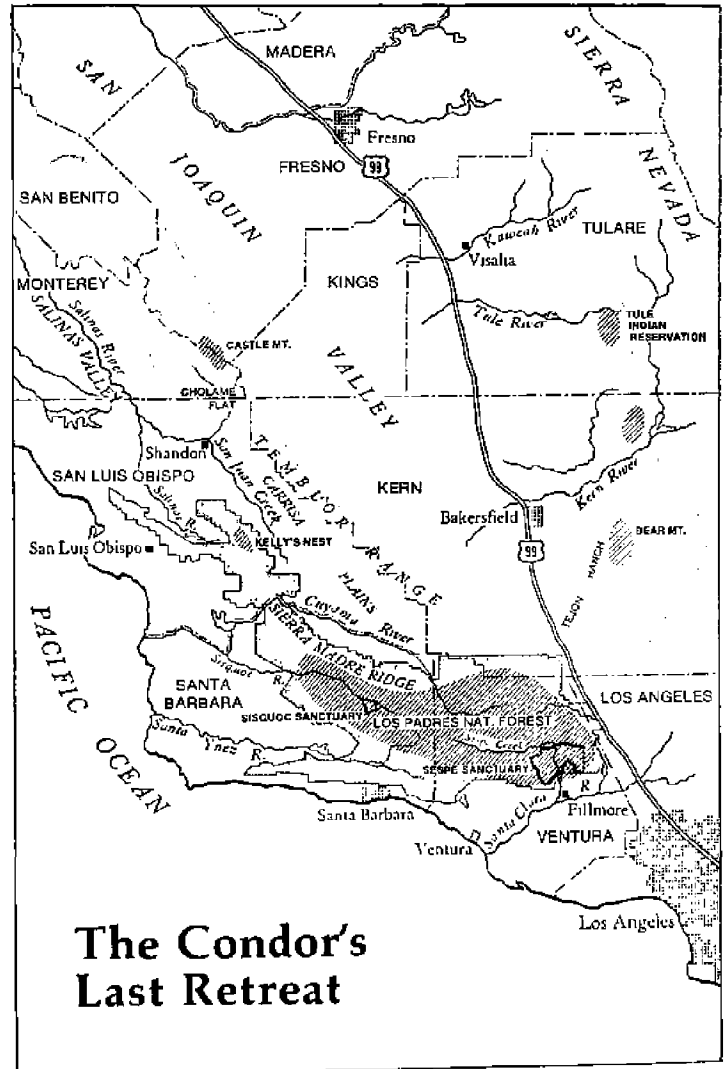
Unfortunately, private inholdings exist throughout our National Forests, and they can pose a real problem when their use conflicts with that of the surrounding land. In fact, this very problem has been a constant source of concern in the Sespe Condor Sanctuary, where several private inholdings still remain.

For a time, the number one administrative problem was associated with a 320-acre inholding known as Green Cabins. This private land lay well within the 1½ mile radius of at least two condor nest sites. A four-wheel drive road through the Sanctuary connected the Squaw Flat road with Green Cabins, and was used as a fishing and hunting trail for all of the lessee's friends. The Forest Service wanted to obtain this inholding but did not have the funds to do so. Finally, following months of negotiations with "Agee" Shelton, our Western National Audubon Director, the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Val Garrish, donated the land to the National Audubon Society in December 1973. The land has since been turned over to the U.S. Forest Service and is now included in the Sespe Condor Sanctuary.

After Green Cabins, the number two priority for acquisition was 160 acres of private land called Squaw Flat, in the middle of the Sanctuary. The Forest Service and the Condor Advisory Committee were greatly concerned, since there was the threat that someone might buy the property and develop it for a purpose incompatible with the needs of the California Condor. In 1974 the Los Padres National Forest found some funds to purchase the property—but, unfortunately the available money was \$6,000 short. Once again, Agee went into action. He and the Directors "borrowed" the money from a fund, with the understanding that it would all be paid back. As a result, the Forest Service now has title to the property—but the remaining \$6,000 has yet to be made up.

For this reason we're calling upon our California membership for assistance. It's an opportunity to participate in a very tangible effort to prevent the California Condor from going the way of the Dodo. Realistically, does the purchase of Green Cabins and Squaw Flat guarantee the future existence of the California Condor? By no means. But we can be sure that the condor's struggle for survival would be made much more difficult without these properties.

This year there are signs that two and possibly three condor pairs nested successfully—out of a population of less than sixty remaining individuals. As I survey the condor's present condition, the bird's future looks rather bleak. But as I look back over the past ten years and count the hurdles that have been cleared, the picture grows more encouraging. At one time, pessimism could have defeated the entire Condor Program. But fortunately, the Audubon Society was founded and continues to run on high expectations. Now the condor's hope is tied to our ability to act on these expectations. ☐



Map from *Man and the California Condor*

The Condor Fund

Your contribution will permit LAAS and the National Audubon Society to continue the effort to preserve this outstanding species. An envelope for the purpose is attached.

Bird of the Month

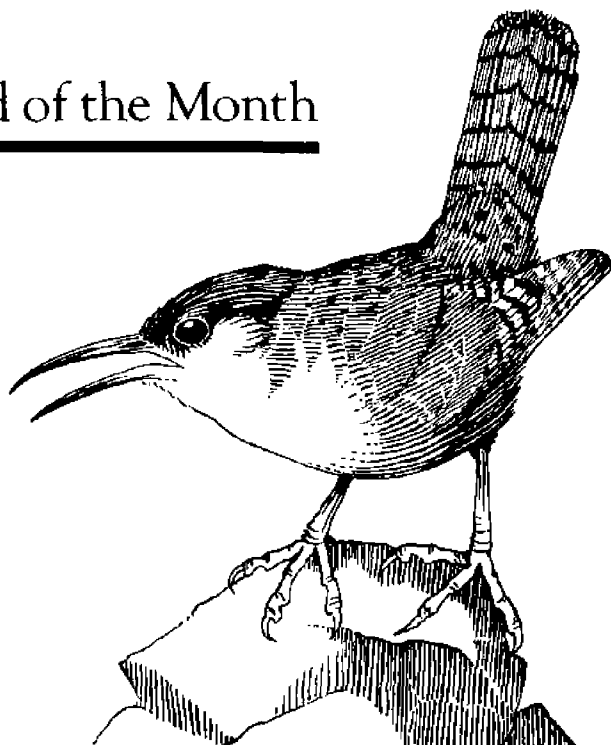


Illustration by James A. Davis

The Canyon Wren, *Catherpes mexicanus*, was first described in 1829 by William Swainson, the eccentric British naturalist, from a specimen collected in the Central Mexican state of Hidalgo. But the species was well known before that time—for in colonial days its song echoed in the hewn stone canyons of Guadalajara and Mexico City—and before that it may have haunted the avenues of Tenochtitlan. Still, the bird's favored habitat is not the city but rugged arroyos, where steep rock cliffs rise near running water.

The wren family is believed to have evolved in North America some half-million years ago, an offshoot of the common progenitor of the dippers and the mockingbirds. Essentially a Western bird, and the sole member of its genus, the Canyon Wren probably owes its origin to the isolating effects of geologic and climatic changes during the past 50 millenia.

In California the bird frequents Upper Sonoran Zone canyons, from sea level to 7500'. It is nonmigratory, but never very common, and only a pair or two may inhabit a sizable canyon. The song is unmistakable, a long, descending cadence—but when not singing the birds can be hard to find. The best way seems to be to patiently scan a promising cliff face, searching for a mouse-like creature scurrying across the rocks. Like most wrens, the birds like to keep to the shadows, seeking out spiders and insects in the clefts between the rocks. Their clawlike feet permit them to climb vertical faces, and even to walk on the roofs of caves. The Rock Wren, easily told by its even gray coloration, prefers more gravelly terrain, but at times the two are found together. In fact, near the rocky escarpment ½-mile up Big Sycamore Canyon, you might see the House, Bewick's, Canyon, and Rock Wrens all at once. Other guaranteed spots for the Canyon Wren, good in any season of the year, include Arroyo Seco, above Pasadena (at the mouth of the narrows), Santa Anita Canyon below Chantry Flat (where the Dippers also live), and Tuna Canyon, off Hwy. 1 above Santa Monica, in the cliffs near the bottom of the canyon.

BOOKS

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA by Ben F. King and Edward C. Dickenson. Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1975 (\$17.50).

This field guide is one of the few long-awaited items that doesn't disappoint you in any respect. Ben King has done a thorough job of covering the 1198 species of birds found in South-east Asia—though it's unfortunate that today there are so few places covered by this guide that are available for the birder to visit. Those birders who have explored the area armed with six or seven volumes of local field guides will especially appreciate the book, and anyone accustomed to the Peterson series is bound to feel completely at home.

A major feature of the guide is the illustrations: 627 species in color and 455 in black-and-white. The text provides ample material for identification of difficult and confusing species, and gives an excellent account of the range and terrain in which the bird is most likely to be found.

One technical criticism is the lack of any guide to relative abundance of individual species—a useful aid for birders entering an unfamiliar area, particularly when encountering new families for the first time. This is a minor point, however, and it should not diminish the usefulness of the guide. It ought to serve as the standard manual for this important birding area for many years to come.

—James F. Clements

THE BIRDS OF THE BAHAMAS by P.G.C. Brudenell-Bruce. Taplinger Publishing Co., 1975 (\$10.95).

Here is another in Taplinger's tantalizing series of Worldwide Field Guides. The best available book on the subject, it features 31 excellent color plates and 62 line drawings by Hermann Heinzel, illustrating all of the Bahamian species not pictured in Peterson's Eastern guide.

As credentials, the author claims 4½ years of field work on New Providence Is., which he describes as "of an almost ideal size from an ornithologist's point-of-view, small enough to cover regularly and systematically, and large enough to keep him busy."

Now, with this new book in hand, you'll be free to ignore most of the 400-odd species in Bond's *Birds of the West Indies*, and concentrate on the 222 species reported from the Bahamas. (It would be a big day on New Providence if you found 75 of these, but among them you'd have at least 25 species that would be unfamiliar even to a Florida birder.) And for listers lusting for Bahamian vagrants, this volume is a must, for it serves up a foretaste of the kind of surprises that might blow into the Keys from the south-east.

—Barry Clark



Jean Brandt

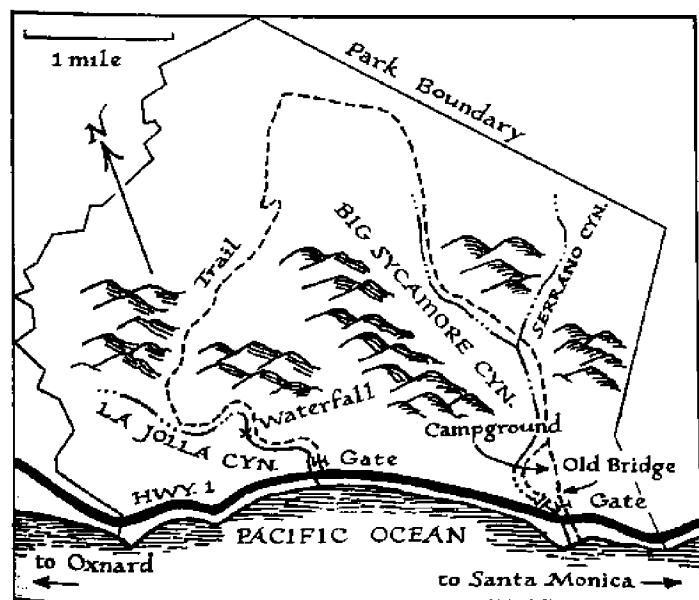
BIRDING at Pt. Mugu

Big Sycamore Canyon was "discovered" to be a birder's paradise just last year when Hank and Priscilla Brodwin found *two* new birds for California—the Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and the Veery—near the entrance to the park. Subsequently, other birders, while looking for those birds, found an astonishing variety of vagrants, including a Brown Thrasher, many eastern warblers, and a possible Black-billed Cuckoo!

Big Sycamore and nearby La Jolla Canyon are part of Point Mugu State Park, which contains 6554 acres of mostly undeveloped chaparral and scrub oak. There is a campground near the entrance, and backpackers may hike the 15-or-so miles into La Jolla Valley—but otherwise the park has been left in a natural state. Near the entrance to Big Sycamore is an old bridge. The immediate area of the bridge and about ¼-mile upstream is the best place to bird in the park. The tall sycamores in the campground should also be checked.

Four species of hummingbirds nest in the canyons: Costa's, Black-chinned, Allen's, and Anna's—and both Rufous and Calliopes have been seen during migration. Rufous-crowned Sparrows also nest, as well as all of our local chaparral birds. Barn Owls are usually seen from the trail up to the falls in La Jolla Canyon, a pleasant one-mile walk overlooking a streambed. Lazuli Buntings are common summer residents, and an Indigo Bunting was seen last spring. A Green-tailed Towhee wintered last year, as did several Fox, Sage, and Black-chinned sparrows. La Jolla Canyon is not open to vehicular traffic, thus affording the quiet and solitude necessary to serious nature study.

An incredible 25 species of warblers and 14 species of sparrows have been found in Big Sycamore since Sept. '75. Since these areas have only been birded extensively for one year, many other vagrants might be expected. To find some for yourself, see the CALENDAR page for the Big Sycamore field trip, scheduled for October 4th. ☞



Based on a map by Glenn Cunningham

Jon Dunn

FIELD NOTES

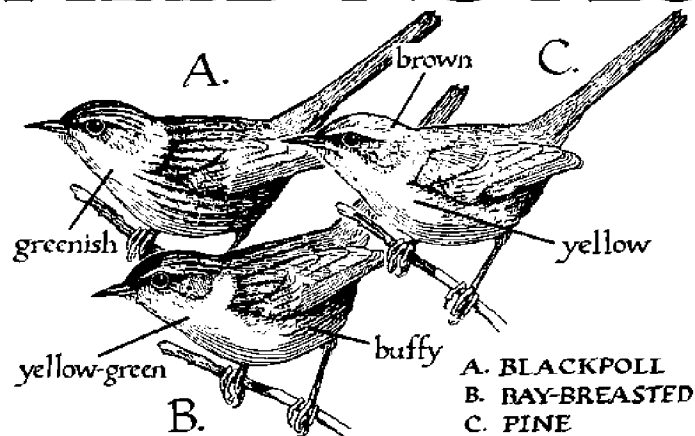


Illustration by James A. Davis

Full-plumaged warblers have always caused some confusion, particularly since so many vagrant species occur in California. Three of the toughest vagrant warblers to tell apart are the Pine, Blackpoll, and the Bay-breasted Warblers. Since all three have been found in California, it is important that observers familiarize themselves with their characteristics. All three are fairly large greenish birds with whitish tail spots and two bold white wingbars. These marks should set them apart from the other species of warblers.

By far the commonest of the three is the Blackpoll. From mid-September through October they usually can be found consistently at various points along the coast. The Blackpoll is the greenest of the three on the breast, crown, and back. It also has a tendency to have diffused streaks on the sides of the breast. While the extent of greenish on the underparts is variable, the undertail coverts are *almost* always white. The Blackpoll is the most active tail-wagger of the group.

The Bay-breasted is a much rarer bird. However, the active observer should average at least one every fall at the known "vagrant traps." The diagnostic mark on this species is the buffy or chestnut lower flanks. A trace of this mark is present even on the dullest immature females. The Bay-breasted Warbler has a clear yellowish-green breast, lacking the streaking of the Blackpoll. The crown, nape, and upper back also appear much brighter due to the stronger yellow hue of the plumage. While the guides emphasize the importance of leg color, the issue is confused, since some Blackpolls have dark legs like the other two species (feet still usually pale). I would also de-emphasize the importance of the undertail coverts, as I have seen several Bay-breasts with whitish undertail coverts, and at least one Blackpoll that had yellowish undertail coverts.

There are only five reliable records of the Pine Warbler in the state, ranking it as one of our rarest warblers. The typical immature Pine Warbler (by far the most likely possibility) has a distinct brownish cast to the crown, nape, and back. Furthermore, the dusky vertical back-streaking is absent, although it sometimes is very faint on the two previous species. Finally, the throat and breast of the Pine Warbler are of a bright yellow hue, lacking the greenish tones of the Bay-breast, and particularly the Blackpoll. I urge the utmost of caution with this species, as many reports of supposed Pine Warblers merely turn out to be Blackpolls with dark legs and very faint back streaks. ☞

Shumway Suffel

BIRDS of the Season



October will see the pace of the passerine migration taper off to a virtual standstill by month's end.

To some this may come as a welcome relief after the frantic activity of late September and early October, but there is still much birding to be done, and for the "rare-birder" this is the best time of the year. One has only to reread the report of last October's bird sightings in the December 1974 *Tanager* to have this abundantly confirmed: four new species for California—**Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Sprague's Pipit, Veery, and Groove-billed Ani**; two new species for Southern California—**Le Conte's Sparrow and Eastern Wood Pewee**; and at least two species seen here but nowhere else in the U.S.A.—**Red-throated Pipit and Blue-footed Booby**. Additional observations included some twenty flycatchers, eight vireos, nearly forty warblers, and about forty-five fringillids (cardinals through longspurs). If anyone still questions that this is America's best birding area and that October is the best birding month, he should recall our many pelagic birds, plus the host of other rare vagrants not included above. Yes, October is the month for rare-bird watchers!

Unfortunately, the past was not so bright as the future promises to be. It was a dull summer, and August did little to liven things up. Ian MacGregor sighted an adult **Brown Booby** flying overhead toward the north end of the Salton Sea on Aug. 16. Coincidentally, he saw an adult in this same area a year ago, but both birds proved difficult to relocate. Immature **Frigatebirds** were sighted at the south end of the Sea on Aug. 9 (Dave Foster), at the north end on Aug. 16 (Ian MacG.) and again at the north end on Sept. 1 (Jon Dunn).

Condors were seen at Mt. Pinos by persistent searchers, who waited at times as long as two days—but the real surprise was Jon Dunn's sighting of one giant bird circling with a flock of Turkey Vultures over the Ventura Freeway near the Malibu Cyn. turnoff on Aug. 20. A quick check proved it to be an adult condor. John Schmitt, whose meticulous pen-and-ink drawings of raptors have appeared in the *Tanager*, reports two noteworthy observations in Icehouse Cyn., San Gabriel Mtns. on Aug. 10—a **Sharp-shinned Hawk's** nest, with juveniles being fed by their parents; and a **Red-shouldered Hawk** at 7000'. These birds are normally residents of the interior valleys, at low elevations.

The only southern heron reported since last winter was an immature **Little Blue Heron** on the Colorado River below Imperial Dam on Aug. 10 (Fred Heath). Two **Black Oystercatchers** at Abalone Cove, Palos Verdes on July 31 reaffirm our impression that nowadays they are being found more frequently along our mainland coast. An early **Golden Plover** was seen at Pt. Mugu on Aug. 11. The first report of a **Solitary Sandpiper** came from Roland Hull at Malibu Lagoon on Aug. 22. **Baird's Sandpipers** are usually early, uncommon, and widespread. Thus the first three sightings were of single birds on the same day, Aug. 10—

one at the hot little pond under the bridge in Baker, near the Nevada border (Jon Dunn), one at the Salton Sea (George Ledec), and one in a grassy pond at Pt. Mugu. A week later Bruce Broadbooks found *six* Baird's in the same Pt. Mugu location. The first report of a **Pectoral Sandpiper** comes from Harbor Lake, San Pedro, where Shirley Wells found one early on Labor Day morning.

The LAAS Pelagic Trip on Sept. 6 turned up the **American Oystercatcher**, sighted for 11 yrs. now on Anacapa Island, plus at least 8 **New Zealand Shearwaters**. Two **Cassin's Auklets** were spotted, plus a probable **Craveri's Murrelet**, a rare bird in U.S. waters. **Arctic Terns** were found on nearly every kelp raft, and a few **Sabine's Gulls** were seen at a distance. **Black Petrels** were also sighted, plus a single **Red Phalarope** in a small flock of **Northerns**.

The yellow-legged **Western Gulls** from the Gulf of California, which are seen at the Salton Sea every summer (up to 200 this year according to Dave Foster) are most puzzling birds. In fact, it's very possible they're not **Western Gulls** at all, according to Pierre DeVillers, since the species is said to have a three year maturity cycle vs. four years for the pink-legged coastal race. They may well be more closely related to the **Kelp Gull** of South America, which is also large, dark-mantled, yellow-legged, and is said to have a three year maturity cycle.

Our only summering **Black-legged Kittiwake** was first reported by Harry Kreuger at Upper Newport Bay on Aug. 4, and later found independently there by Jon Dunn on Aug. 19. Jon also had a **Heermann's Gull** on Sept. 1 at the north end of the Salton Sea. An **Inca Tern** off San Diego, sighted and correctly identified by Jan and Erich Witmer on Aug. 8, proved to be an escapee from Sea World. It has lingered in that area for about two years.

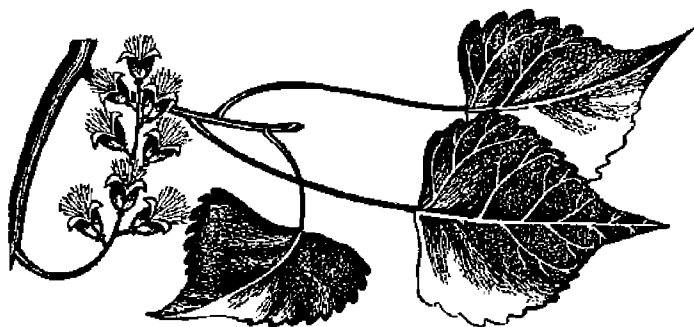
The most unexpected bird at the Salton Sea this summer was a **Whip-poor-will** at the Federal Refuge h.q. on Aug. 23. At first Guy McCaskie and Jon Dunn speculated that it was a bird from our local mountains on its southward migration, but a closer inspection revealed that it belonged to the "Eastern" race, as have most off-season "Whips." Harry Kreuger reported **Barn Swallows** nesting for the third year in the Wister Unit of the State Refuge at Salton Sea. They are considered to be uncommon nesters this far south, and then, only along the coast.

Shirley Wells found a **California Thrasher** on the top of Mt. Pinos (8,800'), an odd location for this typical bird of the coastal foothills. But Justin Russell's reports of a **Gray Catbird** that summered in the canyons on the south side of Griffith Park should remind us that any promising area, if birded consistently, will produce good birds—and yes, even rare ones. You'll recall that Justin had a **Harris' Sparrow** and an **Orchard Oriole** in the Park in April.

Only three "Eastern" warblers were reported in August. The first was Justin Russell's fall-plumaged **Tennessee Warbler** in Griffith Park on Aug. 9. On Aug. 31, in

Redondo Beach, an exhausted adult male American Redstart alighted on the head of a sympathetic human, who caught it and took it to the South Coast Botanic Garden, where it was released unharmed. During the Labor Day weekend, Hank Brodtkin found three American Redstarts, two at Big Sycamore Cyn., and an adult male on the rocks lining Ballona Creek channel at Marina del Rey. Also that weekend, Jon Dunn located two Northern Waterthrushes at Scotty's Castle and Oasis (two popular desert vagrant traps), plus an Eastern Kingbird at Desert Center.

The presence of a Brown Creeper in Jean Brandt's Encino garden on Aug. 18, and of Mountain Chickadees in Pasadena and Flintridge in late August may portend a winter invasion of the lowlands by mountain birds. But whether it does or not, we can count on the return of our most welcome and predictable winter residents, the White-crowned Sparrows and the Yellow-rumped ("Audubon's") Warblers, both of which will surely rejoin us around October first.



The technique of finding rare birds may bear repeating. First, get to know the unusual birds in advance by careful study of the field guides.

Then choose a likely location, one that affords vegetation and water: e.g. a nearby park, cemetery or golf course; a coastal canyon or promontory; a desert oasis; or an agricultural area with clumps of trees or other vegetation. Then conscientiously examine every bird you see, and write a detailed description of any unusual species, to compare with the description in the field guides. It's essential to check every bird, even if you only sweep a flock with your binoculars. Once I missed a "life bird" because I only glanced at a flock of House Sparrows in a chicken pen. Among them was one odd bird: a Prothonotary Warbler. The real expertise of birding is in the knack of extracting that one rarity from the hordes of commoner species—that one odd shorebird among a hundred waders, the lone Lark Bunting or Clay-colored Sparrow among a flock of seed-eaters, or the odd Longspur flushed with a flight of Horned Larks.

Though there is no substitute for field experience, there are a few shortcuts. If you've got a good ear, learn the calls and chips of the commoner species. For example, if you know the chip of the "Audubon's" Warbler, you won't have to check out each one, and can concentrate on identi-



fying that warbler with the *different* chip. And if you hear the rattle of a Longspur, you'll know that the flock of larks is worth pursuing.

Of course, not all birds occur in flocks. Raptors, flycatchers, and many others are inclined to be solitary, and every one should be studied individually. Later this month, watch for the Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, joining our local *buteos*, and keep your eyes open for the few Tropical Kingbirds that will travel *up* the coast (while our Western and Cassin's Kingbirds travel *down*). Also, there's always the chance of finding a Bobolink in an area of reeds or tall grass (their "pink" note is very distinctive).

But when it comes to developing your birding skills, the most important thing is to try to get out with our better birders. From them you'll pick up the fine points of identification that can only be acquired in the field. In fact, a fine way to begin is with one of our organized Field Trips, or the annual Audubon Christmas Count. There are lots of exciting birds to be seen, and we can count ourselves fortunate to live in an area with a wide range of habitats—all of them readily accessible. In addition we should be grateful to the hard-working conservationists, who are helping to save a bit of this wildness for us all to enjoy.

Butterbread Decals

Express your support for the campaign to save Butterbread Spring. Colorful decals are now available at Audubon House, \$1.00 apiece.



WESTERN Tanager

EDITOR Barry Clark

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CALENDAR

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, and Nature Museum are located at Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046. Telephone: 876-0202. Audubon House hours: 10-3, Monday through Friday.

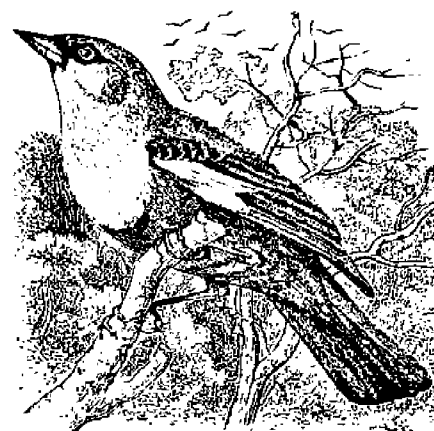
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4—Big Sycamore Canyon. Meet at the entrance to Pt. Mugu State Park at 8:30 a.m. Parking is available near the entrance. This is a hot spot for fall migrants and rare Eastern vagrants. Leader: Larry Sansone.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5—Upper Newport Bay. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on Back Bay Drive. Take the San Diego Fwy south to Jamboree Blvd. offramp. Go west on Jamboree to East Bluff Dr. Right on East Bluff to Back Bay. Look for the group of birders along the bay. We expect to see wintering shorebirds and waterfowl, plus resident rails—and, if extremely lucky, the Black Rail. Leader: Freeman Tatum.

SAT-SUN, OCTOBER 11-12—Tia Juana Riverbottom. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the restaurant parking lot on the right side of Palm Ave., Imperial Beach. Take Route 5 south to Imperial Beach, Palm Ave. turnoff, and proceed 3/4 mile to the restaurant. Look for the group in the lot. Returning fall migrants should be in abundance. This prime birding area, famous for its rare vagrants, is in jeopardy of becoming another channelization project of the Corps of Engineers. So, enjoy it while you can. Leader: John Rieger.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Everyone Welcome. UCLA ornithologist, **Thomas R. Howell** will show slides and a film made this year on an excursion with Captain Jacques Cousteau to Mexico's **Isla Isabella**. In particular he will emphasize the courtship of the seabirds of Isabella.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18—Goleta Slough, Santa Barbara. Meet at 8:30 a.m. As you enter Santa Barbara, turn off Hwy 101 at Cabrillo Blvd. (left-hand offramp). Meet at the bird refuge to the right just under the bridge. A good place to look for fall migrants and returning waterfowl. Leader: Nelson Metcalf.

SAT-SUN, OCTOBER 25-26—Butterbread Spring. 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. There are absolutely no facilities. Bring your own water and be sure to have plenty of gas before joining the group. Birds to be expected are the usual resident desert species, including a possible Chukar, and various fall migrants. Leaders: Keith & Pam Axelson. For further information, call Pam at 474-6205.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Audubon House.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9—McGrath State Park.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Renowned birder, **Herb Clarke** will show a program on this summer's exciting birding expedition to Colombia and Ecuador.

Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318

Madrona Marsh is a historical remnant of the wetlands that once covered the South Bay area. Surrounded by 200 commercially developed acres on the west, and fully developed residential and industrial areas on the north, east, and south, it provides a much needed wild oasis in the midst of an intensely urban environment. The Marsh is home to about 130 species of waterfowl, shore birds, birds of prey, and song birds. In addition there are various mammals, frogs, toads, lizards, and numerous other members of the aquatic food chain. Since the fresh-water vernal marsh is considered an endangered habitat by the County Museum of Natural History, the preservation of the site is of great importance. Saving Madrona Marsh and the surrounding grasslands is the goal of an organization called **The Friends of Madrona Marsh**. The energetic group was formed in 1973, and has sponsored studies of the area, its ecology, and potential uses, by graduate students of UCLA's Institute of Evolutionary and Environmental Biology. In July, The Friends were awarded the National Recreation and Park Association award for their contribution to the park movement. If you'd like to help save the marsh, join the **March for the Marsh** on October 12, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Meet at Torrance Rec. Center, 3031 W. Torrance Blvd. at 1:00 for a 1-mile walk to Madrona Marsh and back. There will be exhibits, entertainment, food and plant sales, from 3:00 to 4:00 at the Rec. Center. The Marsh needs wide support. For info. call Betty Shaw at 375-7425.

Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90046

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