

# WESTERN TANAGER

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## Species Diversity in South America

by Richard Webster

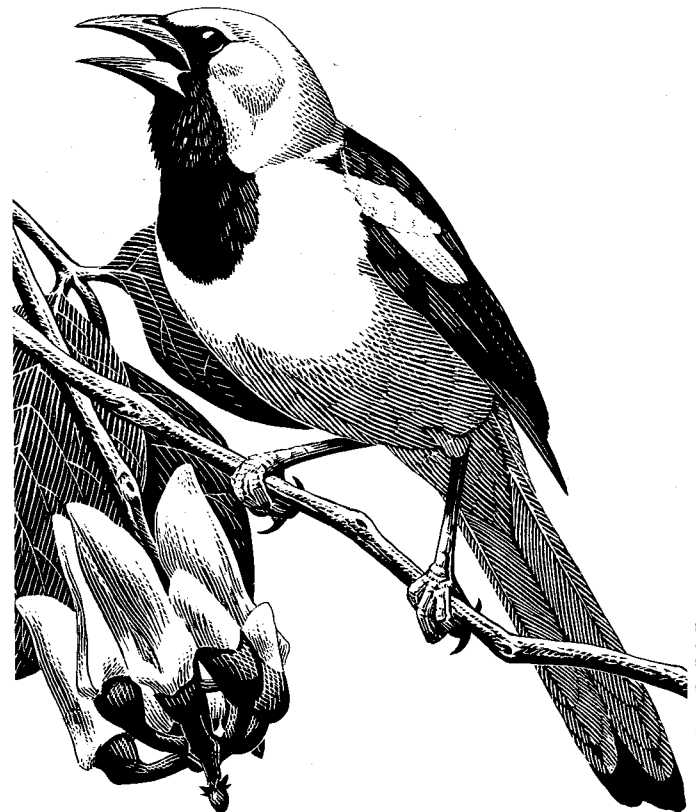


It is an intriguing fact that there are areas in South America no larger than a Christmas Count circle which, when well studied, produce bird lists as long as those for the entire states of California or Texas. To the temperate birder the prospect is little short of maddening; but after the initial "I wanna go there!" reaction, the inquisitive among us may well begin to wonder *how it is* that a place like Ecuador, itself no larger than the state of Colorado, can support over 1400 species of birds.

It has long been recognized that the diversity of many plant and animal groups (and birds are no exception) is inversely related to latitude, tapering off toward the poles and reaching a climax around the equator. Many theories, involving factors such as competition, predation, and climate, have been advanced to account for latitudinal gradients in diversity. Though the real mechanism (undoubtedly involving many of these factors) is only vaguely perceived at present, by narrowing our focus to the birdlife of the neotropics we may discern at least the broad outlines of how the process works.

Contrary to conventional notions, there *are* seasonal changes in the tropics (even the wettest regions become relatively dry once or twice a year), but none of the fluctuations is as severe as those of temperate latitudes. The importance of such stability should be obvious to the temperate-zone birder (how many insectivorous birds can you reasonably expect on a Christmas Count in Massachusetts?), and the occurrence of 142 more species of tanager in Colombia than in North America (all but Summer and Scarlet are resident) vividly attests to the advantages of a constant supply of fruit. Indeed, for some birds in the tropics, the most important seasonal change may be the arrival and departure of migrants from North America.

The measurement of foliage height diversity (a summation of how much vegetation is how far above the ground)



Yellow-tailed Oriole

Don R. Eckelberry

has been found to be a fairly good indicator of the number of species of land birds present in a habitat. The logic is simple: the more complex the vegetation, the more species can coexist without the competition becoming too severe. And nowhere is the vegetation more complex than in the tropical rainforest. The complexity of the bird communities becomes obvious when one begins to try to sort out the habits of some thirty-odd species of flycatcher in a small patch of this forest. And there are many types of rainforest. Temporary or permanently flooded forests such as *varzea* and *igapó* support bird communities differing substantially from those of the forests of *terra firme*.

Although it is a less important factor than the complexity of the forest, the diversity of the flora also plays a role in influencing avian diversity. Many species of trees fruiting at different times of the year are necessary to provide food for that horde of tanagers and cotingas—and certainly the diversity of other food sources, such as insects, is positively correlated to the diversity of such avian predators as flycatchers.

Richard Webster, a recent graduate in English from Harvard, has made a half dozen birding trips to the neotropics. He lives in Santa Barbara.



Red-legged Honeycreeper

Don R. Eckelberry

Competition between species usually leads to exclusion, extinction, or some degree of specialization. A species can specialize only if there is no danger that its food source will be destroyed, as by a bad drought or a severe winter. The more complex the environment, the greater the number of specialists that can subdivide it. Thus, in the tropics, and most especially in the forest, large numbers of species can pack into a habitat. And it follows that a species which specializes on a resource which is necessarily scarce (as a result of competition and subdivision) cannot itself be numerous. (Consider, for example, that well known North American specialist, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker). The effect of all this is that the birder visiting the tropics will find that most of the residents are rare, and must be searched for in just the right place. Only by traversing an area of forest for weeks on end does one begin to get an idea of the number of species present and their habitats and relative abundance.

**N**ot only are there more birds in South than in North America, but the birdlife of South America is substantially richer than that of any tropical region in the Old World. 2700 species of breeding freshwater and land birds dwell in South America; 1200 fewer species breed in Africa.

In addition, the processes affecting evolution in South America differ from those at work in Africa. One of the most dramatic distinctions between the two continents is in the degree of isolation which South America has enjoyed. Through most of the Cenozoic Era South America has been a rather large island, and faunal exchange, even with North America, has been limited. This isolation permitted the resident species to evolve and radiate in a fashion not too unlike Darwin's finches of the Galapagos, or the Honeycreepers of Hawaii. The remarkable radiation of Suboscines (roughly, the non-songbird passerines, such as the ovenbirds, antbirds, and flycatchers) is presumably one

result of this isolation. There is also evidence to suggest that the Suboscines are better able to exploit the complex South American ecosystems than are the Oscines. The fact that only six of the continent's 79 families of birds (of which 30 are endemic to the neotropics) constitute 50% of the total avifauna is further evidence of the effects of isolation. Predominance by so few families (three of them Suboscine) is comparable to the situation that prevails on the island continent of Australia, and very unlike that of Africa, which has had close historic connections to the Eurasian landmass, and, evidently, sufficient interchange to decrease the chances of a few groups gaining a great numerical advantage.

Though equatorial South America has been buffered for millions of years from catastrophic climatic change, the belief is no longer held that its tropical forests have endured for eons in an utterly unaltered state. During glacial periods (such as the episode which ended 12-15,000 years ago) precipitation decreased over Amazonia, and the forest is believed to have contracted into large, wet pockets around the rim of the basin. Interglacial periods, such as the present, brought increased precipitation and the unification of the forest refugia. The ranges of birds presumably expanded and contracted with the forests (with perhaps a half dozen contractions in the last 700,000 years) and some populations, having diverged in isolation, either interbred freely on recontact, or maintained reproductive isolation—the mark of the full species. Species of the savanna were obviously influenced in a similar fashion by the expansion and contraction of the forest. The newly formed, ecologically similar species would, in most cases, compete on contact and would eventually diverge or specialize until ecological compatibility was achieved. By this process of speciation throughout the Pleistocene, the avifauna increased in diversity, while moving closer to the point of saturating the available habitats. It is an ongoing process, and in South America today one can see evidence of the phenomenon in the existence of active zones of hybridization, zones of narrow overlap, and adjacent but non-overlapping ranges.

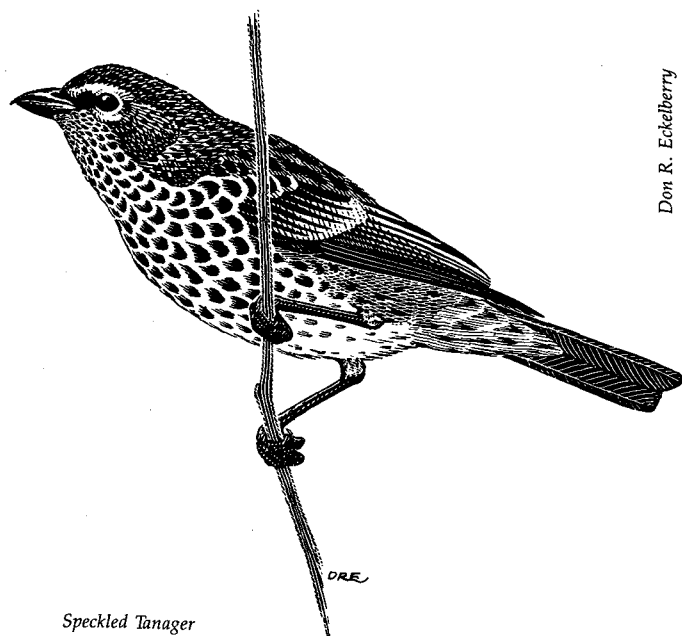
In Africa, fluctuations of climate were much more severe than in South America, and the result was the formation of fewer forest refugia, the conditions in which were less favorable to speciation. The contractions of the South American forests, though on a scale sufficient to insure extended periods of isolation, were apparently not so drastic as to cause a preponderance of extinction over speciation. Similarly, it is conjectured that expansion, contraction, and latitudinal migration of the North American forests as a consequence of Pleistocene climatic change led to speciation in such nearctic groups as the wood warblers (cf. Mengel).



The rather recent uplift of the Andes (concluding almost one million years ago) created many new habitats. In these habitats extensive radiation occurred in groups such as hummingbirds and tanagers on the forested slopes, and ovenbirds and flycatchers in the *paramos* and *punas*, the alpine zones of South America. Stretching from tropical to temperate latitudes, the Andes have caused an increase in rainfall in some areas, while producing within their rain-shadow some of the world's driest deserts. Probably the most important distinction of the Andes, however, is the fact that the range represents the only extensive mountain system within tropical latitudes, with a montane avifauna that may be matched in size only by that of the mountains of southeast Asia.

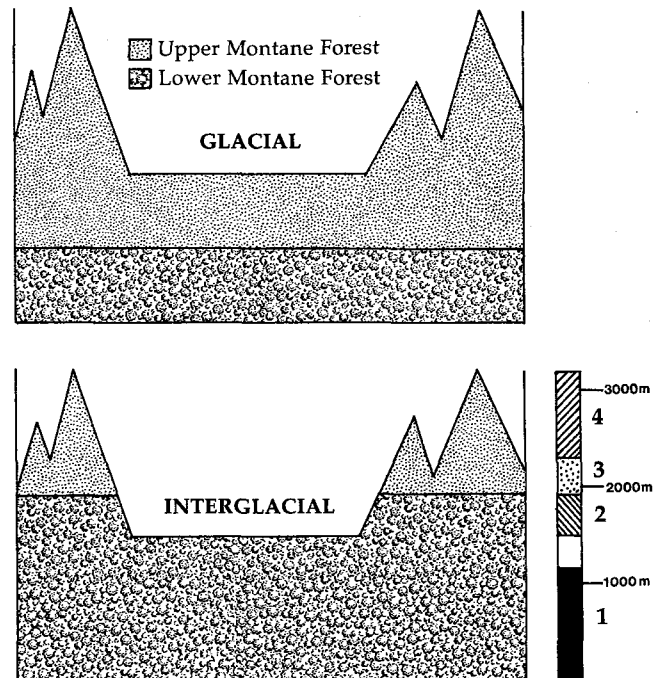
In the tropical highlands as well as in the lowlands, Pleistocene climatic changes influenced speciation. During glacial periods temperature changes lowered vegetation zones by as much as 1500 meters; then, during the interglacials the vegetation climbed the slopes again. This vertical migration of habitats brought bird populations into proximity or isolated them—depending upon the local topographic characteristics (see the diagram on this page). Many newly-formed species, coming into contact as belts of forest shifted, remained ecologically incompatible, but segregated themselves altitudinally, dividing the slope among themselves. (Note the example of the caciques: here four species in the same genus have avoided competition by arranging themselves by altitude). The importance of this process is revealed by a study in Peru which indicated that the altitudinal ranges of fully one third of the species are limited by competitors.

While the forested lowlands and mountains of tropical South America boast the continent's richest bird life, many species are restricted to other well-defined habitats. A few small but isolated deserts provide an extreme contrast to the rainforests, and a variety of distinct types of savanna, open woodland, deciduous forest, and scrub forest occur north and south of the Amazon basin. The Argentine pampas and steppes have very distinct temperate avifaunas, and, isolated on the south coast of Chile, an ancient beech forest



Speckled Tanager

Don R. Eckelberry



Glacial and interglacial vegetation patterns of a hypothetical mountain region in the tropical Andes. Note that the upper montane forest is isolated on the peaks in the interglacial and connected in the glacial. The lower montane forest is a continuous zone in the interglacial period, but is isolated on the front and back sides of the ridge of mountains during the glacial. The altitudinal zonation of four species of caciques of the genus *Cacicus* is indicated at the right of the lower chart.

supports a small but highly individual avifauna, with 50% of its landbirds endemic. It is this incomparable diversity—millions of years in the making—that accounts for South America's enduring appeal to biogeographers and birders alike. ♡

Such a brief account can provide at best a foretaste of the engrossing subject of speciation in South American birds. The following references are recommended, in order of importance. All are available at UCLA's Biomedical Library in Westwood.

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## Record Christmas Counts

The most thorough coverage to date (nearly 100 observers in 38 parties), combined with a convenient lull in the year-end rainstorms, produced a record total of **168 species** on the **Malibu Christmas Count** on December 18th. The stake-outs stuck it out (Northern Waterthrush in Tapia Park for its third consecutive winter, Cattle Egrets in Malibu Canyon, Lewis' Woodpeckers at Malibu Creek State Park, Gray-headed Junco at a feeder in Topanga Canyon, Greater Scaup in Malibu Lagoon, etc.); and a host of surprises were uncovered: two Rhino Auklets east of Pt. Dume, an American Bittern at Tapia Park, Wilson's Warblers at Pt. Dume and above Malibu Lagoon, a Swamp Sparrow at Malibu Lagoon, and a Burrowing Owl on Kanan Rd., to mention a few. Although most ducks, gulls, and shorebirds were down in numbers, record counts were obtained for nearly 50 species, including Band-tailed Pigeon (183), Varied Thrush (185!), Golden-crowned Kinglet (50), Orange-crowned (62) and Townsend's (31) Warblers, and all four *Carduelis* finches.

Keen eyes on the shoreline compensated for the aborted (heavy seas) boat coverage. The count's first tubenoses (15 Northern Fulmars and 26 Manx Shearwaters), two jaegers, two alcids, and White-winged Scoters were all observed from shore.

Disappointing misses were few; but surprisingly absent were Pelagic Cormorant and Northern Shoveler.

Two weeks later, on Jan. 1st, local birds and birders cooperated to achieve the highest **Los Angeles Christmas Count** in forty years—**170 species!** The 81 birders (11 more than in 1976) counted about 55,000 birds (twice as many individuals and 27 more species than last year). A great beginning to the new year!

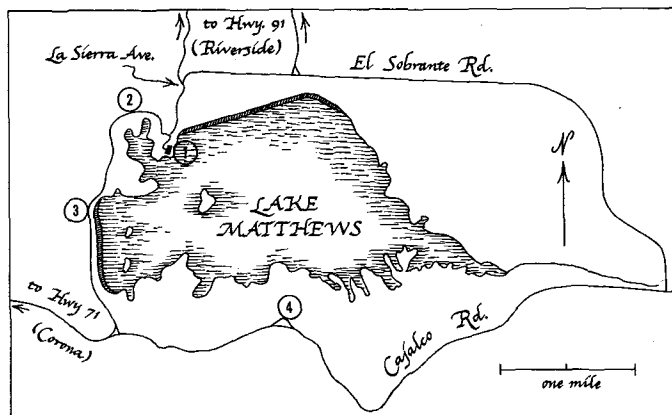
The weather certainly helped. Rains came up a few days before Count Day and left the fields at Playa del Rey full of large puddles, perfect conditions for attracting shorebirds of all kinds, including an American Avocet and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. An American Golden Plover was with the large flock of Black-bellied Plovers, and the breakwaters had a Red Knot, Black Oystercatcher, both Turnstones, and Surfbirds. White Pelicans and Manx Shearwaters were also seen from the breakwater, as were nine species of gulls. The fields east of Lincoln Blvd. must have been rich with food for raptors, as large numbers of White-tailed Kites and Red-tailed Hawks were joined by an imm. Bald Eagle, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, Marsh Hawks, and Short-eared and Burrowing Owls.

The mountainous areas stretching along the city from Griffith Park west to Pacific Palisades were blessed with "the best acorn crop in three years," according to one resident. As a result, three birders found **seven** Acorn Woodpeckers!!! Many of the berrying trees were rich with fruit, attracting thousands of Cedar Waxwings and Robins, and more than a score of Varied Thrushes. Among the special finds were Summer Tanager, Western Tanagers, Northern Orioles, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, and Wilson's Warblers, White-throated Sparrow, Roadrunners, Brown Creeper, Virginia Rails, Hairy Woodpecker, four Costa's Hummingbirds, and one *Selasphorus* hummer, plus seven species of wren, including Winter and Cactus. Perhaps the most unusual bird of the day was the Broad-billed Hummingbird which has been coming to an apartment feeder near the coast.

Though no one in their wildest dreams ever thought that more species could be found in the heavily-urban Los Angeles circle than in the more pastoral Malibu circle, this year—thanks to good weather, good fortune, and the diligence of our birders—the impossible happened!

The compilers, Jean Brandt and Kimball Garrett (for Malibu) and Nancy Spear (for L.A.) extend their appreciation to the talented and enthusiastic corps of birders who combed the count circles to make this year's counts an unprecedented success. ♡

## Jean Brandt/BIRDING at Lake Matthews



**B**ald Eagles! and many of them, both adults and immatures! Lake Matthews, a Metropolitan Water District Reservoir near Riverside, has the largest wintering population of Bald Eagles in Southern California, plus a few of the more common Golden Eagles. The lake, created in 1940 and expanded to double its size in 1962, is the western terminus of the Colorado River Aqueduct, enclosing within its boundaries 2500 acres of water and adjacent land. As it stands the area provides adequate protection for the rare and endangered Bald Eagle, and no recreation is now allowed at the lake. But to guarantee the eagles' status, it is to be hoped that the reservoir will be declared a refuge, with proper nesting sites provided for the birds.

As the lake is large and completely fenced-in, viewing the eagles can be difficult. A spotting scope is a must.

Except for pre-arranged field trips (see the Calendar page of this issue), no visitors are allowed within the fence. Therefore, in order to bird the lake, one must drive slowly around the perimeter, pulling over wherever there is room to park. Some of these places are numbered on the map.

From the overlook parking lot at the west end of the dike (#1 on the map), scan the sky, dike, islands, and far shores. The eagles are usually sitting on some promontory or another, and often fly over the lake. On weekdays the headquarters are open and a viewing platform with a mounted telescope is available to visitors. To reach the headquarters, take the road at the west end of the overlook parking lot.

#2. is a good place to stop to look for ducks in the shallow end of the lake.

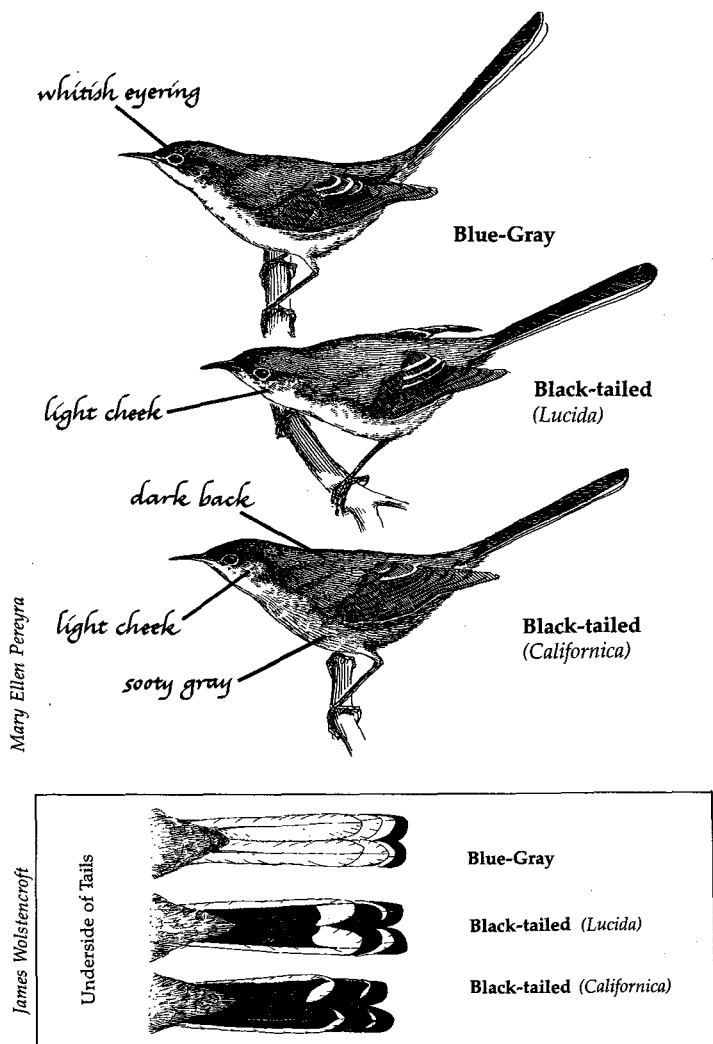
#3. is the dam, which is about one mile long, with easy parking all along the fence. Keep scoping the shores and hillsides for the eagles, and also scan the lake for ducks, especially Common Mergansers, which winter here in large numbers.

#4. Watch closely or you'll miss this rough dirt pull out—another good overview.

Lake Matthews is in Riverside County, 12 miles southwest of the City of Riverside and 3.5 miles south of the Riverside Fwy. (State Hwy. 91) on La Sierra Ave. There are *no* facilities at the lake other than the restrooms at the headquarters (which are closed on weekends). Fill your gas tank, take your lunch, and... *Good birding!* ♡

## Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

## So. Calif. Gnatcatchers



The *Polioptila* genus of gnatcatchers has caused observers a good deal of confusion, in part a result of the fact that many birdwatchers are unaware that there are two very distinct races of the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher in California: *P. melanura lucida*, and *P. melanura californica*. A thorough understanding of these two races is necessary in order to safely separate the Blue-gray from the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, particularly in winter, when male Black-tails of both races lose their distinctive black caps.

The **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** is a common winter visitant throughout southern California, excluding the colder northern deserts. During the summer the species is less widespread, but it does breed in some of the coastal canyons, on the higher slopes on the desert side of the coastal mountain ranges, and in the pinyon-juniper belt of the northern desert ranges. The most distinctive feature of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is its *outer tail feathers*, which are almost completely white. While this mark is diagnostic, extensive wear or the way the bird has its tail feathers arranged can sometimes give the impression that the underside of the tail is largely black. However, the call note of the Blue-gray, a soft *pwee*, is unlike any of the notes of either race of the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher.

The pale **desert (*lucida*) race of the Black-tailed** is resident in the dry desert washes from the eastern Mojave Desert south through the Colorado Desert, and most closely resembles the Blue-gray. Indeed, in the winter, when Blue-grays are found in *lucida*'s range, identification can be very difficult. During the winter the best way to tell the two apart is by noting the underside of the outer tail feathers: in the *lucida* these are only partially tipped with white (see illustration). The Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher also has a more distinctive whitish eye ring and lore spot, and its cheeks are bluish or brownish-gray rather than dull white, as are those of the *lucida*. However, since these characters are not conspicuous, I would recommend that the observer rely on call notes to differentiate the two. The *lucida* gives a distinctive quick series of staccato *chee* notes on one pitch, as well as a descending, raspy, House Wren-like call.

The **coastal (*californica*) race of the Black-tailed** was at one time considered a distinct species from *lucida*, but Grinnell in 1926 lumped the two on the basis of two additional races in Baja California that exhibited intermediate characteristics. The study was founded solely on a study of museum skins however, failing to take into account the important vocalization differences between the two California races. At the present time there are no known areas of overlap between *lucida* and *californica*, and it may well turn out that further studies will show that these are distinct species after all.

*Californica* is a local bird, found along the coastal slope from Los Angeles County south through San Diego County, favoring patches of sage that occur either on mesas or in the dry coastal washes. The race formerly occurred north to the Santa Clara Valley in Ventura County, but there are no recent records from that part of the range. Like the *lucida*, it is a year-round resident, and individuals are almost never seen outside areas of known occurrence. The most striking plumage characteristic of the *californica* is the fairly dark sooty-gray color of the underparts. The upperparts are also correspondingly darker than either the Blue-gray or the *lucida*. In addition, relative to the *lucida*, the belly and flanks of the *californica* are much more extensively washed with pinkish-buff—a character that is particularly apparent when comparing females of both races. The underside of the outer tail feathers shows even less white than in *lucida* (see illustration), being only slightly edged in white. But the most distinctive feature of *californica* is its voice. The only call note I have ever heard from this race is an ascending and then falling three part *cat-like call*. This call note is totally unlike any other North American bird call, and, once learned, it is not likely to be forgotten. Sound is usually very helpful in locating both races of the Black-tailed, since by and large the species is more secretive than the Blue-gray.

In general, the observer should keep in mind the locality and the time of year in identifying gnatcatchers. A *lucida* is unlikely to turn up on the coast, and, likewise, a *californica* would not be expected in the desert. Therefore, a pale gnatcatcher on the coast is almost automatically a Blue-gray; and, conversely, a gnatcatcher found on the low Colorado desert during the summer is almost certainly a *lucida*. Particular attention should also be paid to the vocalizations, for once these are mastered, the observer can easily tell any gnatcatcher on the basis of its call alone. ♡

## Shumway Suffel

## BIRDS of the Season



The year 1977 ended, as it began, one of the most exciting of all birding years in California. Few of us will forget our first California **Anhinga** at Sweetwater Reservoir below San Diego, or the flock of more than 100 **Bohemian Waxwings** which lured us to the desert side of the San Gabriel Mts. in mid-February. No less remarkable was the **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** at the U.C. Irvine marsh in mid-May, the first one locally in 14 years. Those who birded the desert oases in late May and June will remember the scores of vagrant "eastern" passerines, among them a substantial number of the 40 species of wood warblers recorded during the year. Then in late June we had our first **Wilson's Plover** since 1918. August brought a dozen **Blue-footed Boobies** to the Salton Sea (the first such invasion in five years) along with a **Brown Booby**, a **White Ibis**, a dozen **Spoonbills**, several **Frigatebirds**, and a **Black-bellied Whistling Duck**. Monterey Bay pelagic trips are renowned nationwide, but none exceeded those of last fall: A **Galapagos Petrel** was seen on at least two trips, and later an incredible **Streaked Shearwater** was found and photographed (only the second record in the eastern Pacific). So outstanding was 1977, in fact, that at least four birders managed to record over 450 species in California during the year (including 10 introduced birds). This remarkable tally sets a new year-list record, and constitutes 85% of all the species ever recorded in the state.

As predicted, this is a winter for northern and mountain birds: **Varied Thrushes** are to be found in every woody area, with some Christmas Bird Counts recording over 100 individuals. **Lewis' Woodpeckers** are not as common, but are widespread in open oaklands and mountain areas. Even **Northern Shrikes**, though scarce, have been reported at several places east of the mountains. The first report came from Lucerne Valley (Peppy Van Essen, Nov. 27); then there was one along Ave. A, northwest of Lancaster on Dec. 17 (Sea & Sage A.S.), and two more there on Dec. 19 (the Commeaus). Since Ave. A is the dividing line between L.A. and Kern Counties, it was a frustrating experience for those working on L.A. Co. lists, as the birds stayed on the Kern side of the road. This problem was alleviated on Dec. 28 when Fred Heath found another Northern Shrike in Bouquet Canyon, well within L.A. Co. Later, three more were found in the same area. **Evening Grosbeaks** are irregular winter visitors to our mountains, but are rare along the coast; thus three just inland from Zuma Beach in Malibu were noteworthy (Kimball Garrett and Terry Clark, Nov. 23).

Last winter was a poor season for **Fulmars**, but this year we have several reports, including birds swimming off the piers at Malibu and Huntington Beach, and 15 individuals on the Malibu Christmas Count. A vast congregation of seabirds (thousands of gulls, hundreds of **Manx**, and a few **Sooty Shearwaters**) just off Trancas Beach, Malibu, attracted Larry Sansone's attention, Nov. 3rd; and a similar flock was studied by Ed Navojosky off Will Rogers Beach, Santa Monica, Dec. 8th. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of **Cattle Egrets** have nested recently at the Salton Sea, but they are still unusual and conspicuous locally: five at the City of Hope in Duarte, two in the pasture behind Mike San Miguel's house in Monrovia, six in Bellflower, and even one on the Altadena Golf Course. Three **Reddish Egrets** below San Diego were joined by an imm. **Little Blue Heron** and two **Louisiana Herons** in November, but none of these herons has been reported north of there this winter. A bright pink **Roseate Spoonbill** at Malibu Lagoon on Sunday morning Dec. 4 was seen by Bob Pann and a few others before being flushed by the weekend crowd and their dogs. This is probably not the same bird that was at Goleta earlier in the fall, as that one was a very pale pink.

Three **Mute Swans** at Upper Newport Bay (Franklin Orlaski, Nov. 23) must certainly be escapees, since they are not yet feral here, as they are in the eastern states. At Apollo Lake near Lancaster, Fred Heath had a "Black" Brant on Dec. 27, and on Dec. 29, Jon Dunn and Terry Clark found an **Oldsquaw** and a "Cackling" **Canada Goose**. A **Ross' Goose** and another **Oldsquaw** were seen in Goleta by Larry Ballard on Nov. 30. Five **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** at the Long Beach Nature Center (Brian Daniels, Nov. 19), if wild, were the first in L.A. Co. for several years. There have been no reports of the Tufted Duck, which visited Lake Sherwood for the past five winters, nor of the flock of Ring-necked Ducks with which it associated. Surf Scoters are here in large numbers, and with them are several widely-reported **Black Scoters**—but there are only a few reports of **White-winged Scoters**.

We have three reports of probable **Goshawks**—one in Pacific Palisades (Ed Schaar, Dec. 3), one on the Malibu C.B.C. (Arnold Small, Dec. 18), and one on the Pasadena C.B.C. (Armand Cohen, Dec. 18.) All were brief sightings, but they do give hope that others will be found in the near future. The Hughes Airport near Marina del Rey provided L.A. Co. listers (yes, even L.A. City listers, if there are any) with a group of raptors unusual in urban areas—some twenty **White-tailed Kites**, several **Red-tails**, a **Red-shouldered**, two **Rough-legs** (Bob Margolis: as early as Nov. 9), a **Ferruginous Hawk**, an imm. **Bald Eagle**, and six **Short-eared Owls**. Another **Rough-leg** was in Altadena on Nov. 17 (John Fischer), and an imm. **Broad-winged Hawk** was reported near Harbor Lake, San Pedro, where one was seen two years ago (Jean Muller, Dec. 11-12). A **Harris' Hawk** near Mecca, Riv. Co. (Jon Atwood, Dec. 17) was probably an escaped bird (even though it had no bands or jesses on its legs). Escapees have been seen near the Sea before. **Merlins** were reported more often than usual: the bird previously reported in Altadena remained through December (Jon de Modena); another was seen at the Arcadia Arboretum from Nov. 11 through December (Armand Cohen), and a third was near Newport Bay (Ed Nav., Nov. 20). Once established, Merlins are inclined to winter here.

About ninety **Sandhill Cranes** had returned to the Imperial Valley below Brawley by Nov. 11 (Barbara Turner). With spreading urbanization, **Mountain Plovers** are becoming rare birds in the coastal area. Thus seventeen near Bellflower are of interest (Barbara T., Dec. 9). Five **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** this fall increase the previous state total by almost 50%. Three were reported in October, another was found at McGarth S.P. by Richard Webster on Nov. 7, and Paul Lehman's third at Goleta this fall was very late on Dec. 15. **Jaegers** (probably **Parasitics**) are rare birds inland, and two at the Salton Sea the same day—one at the north end and one at Red Hill—are doubly unusual (Barbara T., Nov. 11). There are few records of **Franklin's Gulls** in winter, but two were at the U.C. Irvine marsh (Ed Nav., Nov. 20), one was seen on the San Diego C.B.C., and another was found at McGarth S.P. (Dave Lalideree, Jan. 2).

Incredible as it may seem, we have a third **Broad-billed Hummingbird** in 1977—another male, in an apartment complex at Marina del Rey (Jerry Johnson, Dec. 14). These three plus the one on Mt. Washington in Jan. '76 are the first since the 1960's—adding up to a total of nine state records. Though our only winter resident flycatchers are Black and Say's Phoebe, a very few others sometimes winter here. Three **Tropical Kingbirds** at Goleta (Paul Lehman, Dec. 15) stayed for the Santa Barbara C.B.C. Our only **Eastern Phoebe** was found at McGarth S.P. (Larry Sansone, Nov. 13). A **Gray Flycatcher** at the Arcadia Arboretum stayed for the Pasadena C.B.C., but the **Western Flycatcher** (both found Nov. 24 by Armand Cohen) was last seen Dec. 4. Every few winters a **Coues' Flycatcher** is found on a C.B.C., and this year it was in a

eucalyptus grove near Lemon Heights in Orange Co. The only **Brown Thrasher** appeared on the Santa Barbara C.B.C. on Dec. 31. **Townsend's Solitaires** were unreported in the lowlands except for one at the feeder of C. F. Quiros in Palos Verdes on Nov. 9, and two on the Malibu C.B.C., Dec. 18. **Sprague's Pipits** were unknown in the state prior to 1974, and there are less than 10 records, but one appeared briefly below San Diego (Guy McCaskie, Nov. 20).

A **Warbling Vireo** at the Arcadia Arboretum (Don Sterba, Nov. 13) stayed for about two weeks, but could not be found in December. A scattering of **Black & White Warblers** appeared to be wintering at Santa Barbara, in Tapia Park, Malibu, and at the Salton Sea. **Tennessee Warblers** were also found on the Santa Barbara C.B.C., at the Long Beach Recreation Park (Jon Atwood, Nov. 17), and at the Salton Sea (J. A., Dec. 17). Jon also found a **Lucy's Warbler** on Santa Cruz Id. Nov. 14, plus three **Black-throated Green Warblers**—one at Long Beach Nov. 7, one in south L.A. Nov. 8, and another on Santa Cruz Id. Nov. 14. A single **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was reported near the Mexican border below San Diego (Eric Knight, Nov. 5). An **Ovenbird**, apparently wintering, was found near Bouquet Reservoir, L.A. Co., by Fred Heath Dec. 28.

Eastern orioles are seen here in winter about as often as their western counterparts. An **Orchard Oriole** and a "Baltimore" **Oriole** were found on the Santa Barbara C.B.C., and there was a male **Hooded Oriole** in Arcadia (Armand Cohen, Dec. 31), plus a few "Bullock's" **Orioles** locally. Both orioles were also on the Santa Barbara C.B.C. The **Rusty Blackbird** at the Goleta sewage plant returned for its second C.B.C. (Paul Lehman); but an earlier one at the South Coast Botanic Gardens stayed for only one day (Eric Brooks, Nov. 7). Two more were found on Santa Cruz Id. (Jon A. Nov. 14). Reports of grosbeaks decreased as winter approached but a male **Rose-breasted** was in Sierra Madre (Glenn Gorelick, Dec. 14), and, almost as unusual, a male **Black-headed** was in the Arcadia Arboretum (Don Sterba, Nov. 24), with two more in Zuma Canyon Dec. 10 (Terry Clark). The **Sharp-tailed Sparrows** which have been at Upper Newport Bay for the last six winters could not be found during the extreme high tides of early winter. Our most unusual **junco**—a **Gray-headed**—was at Lee Jones' Topanga Canyon feeder through December. The imm. **Clay-colored Sparrow** in the Arcadia Arboretum (Armand C., Nov. 6) proved difficult to separate from the accompanying Chipping Sparrows, but was widely seen until at least Jan. 3.

As befits a fabulous year, the best is saved for the last. Even with inadequate coverage, the desert oases still produced spectacular birds. The previously-reported **Prothonotary Warbler** at Stovepipe Wells stayed for a week to cancel the jinx which has kept this bird off my list on so many occasions. The **Streak-backed (Scarlet-headed) Oriole** at Furnace Creek Ranch (Jon Dunn, Nov. 6) was the first since 1966, and drew birders from all parts of the state well into December. After viewing the oriole, the Brodskins, et al. saw a **Goshawk** at Mesquite Springs, and Arnold Small found a female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** there. The same afternoon we found a **Red-necked Grebe** (a new bird for Inyo Co.) at the Stovepipe Wells sewage pond, and later an **Ovenbird** at Panamint Springs (Bruce Broadbooks, Nov. 6). Even though Donna Dittman missed the oriole on Nov. 18, she did find a male **Varied Bunting** at Mesquite Springs—the first confirmed state record since 1914. Those who rushed out the next day found a **Broad-winged Hawk** and a **Cape May Warbler**.

At the northwest corner of the state there were two **Blue Jays** (near Crescent City), and a **Snowy Owl** (near Eureka: Dave Rudholm, Nov. 14). In central California there was an easily-seen **Snow Bunting**—at the base of the Lake Berryessa Dam, where Yolo, Napa, and Solano Cos. intersect, plus three **Emperor Geese** at Limantour Spit, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; and in the delta region, a **Bewick's Swan**—for those with the patience to separate it from the thousands of Whistling Swans which winter there.

You've made a good start, 1978. Can you top 1977? 🐦



## The Los Angeles Audubon Society ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday, February 18

at the

California Yacht Club

Marina del Rey

Roast Beef Buffet

\$12 per person

LIVE DIXIELAND BAND

Cocktails 6:30 p.m.

Dinner 8:00 p.m.

Celebrate a memorable year for LAAS with an evening of conviviality, fellowship, and fun. Entertainment and Dancing after Dinner.

To make your reservation, send your check (payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society) to Audubon House, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046. Be sure to reserve early, as seating is limited.



## WESTERN Tanager

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Audubon membership (local and national) is \$15 per year (individual), \$18 (family), or \$8.50 (student), including AUDUBON Magazine, and THE WESTERN Tanager. To join, make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, and send them to Audubon House. Subscriptions to THE WESTERN Tanager separately are \$3.50 per year (Third Class), or \$6.00 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

# CALENDAR

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

*Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318*

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

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11**—Point Mugu Naval Air Base, including Callegua Creek Estuary. This trip is courtesy of the Base Commander, and is limited to 25 people. To sign up, call Audubon House (876-0202) before February 7th. Be sure to include the names of everyone in your party. The Base is just south of Oxnard, along Coast Hwy. 1. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot just inside Gate #2, the only gate open on weekends. The lagoon, marsh, and estuary will be covered in the morning, and land habitats in the afternoon. For those who do not wish to picnic, lunch can be purchased at the Base. Leader: Elmer Colley, a naturalist from the Base.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12**—Lake Matthews and Lakeview. This trip is limited to 25 people, as only 5 cars will be permitted to enter the area. To sign up, call Audubon House before February 7th. Lake Matthews is about 12 miles southwest of Riverside (see Jean Brandt's column for directions). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the main gate, where car pools will be arranged. In the afternoon we will bird at Lakeview, about 15 miles east of Lake Matthews. Leaders: Doug Morton and John McDonald.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18**—Los Angeles Audubon Society Annual Dinner, at the California Yacht Club, Marina del Rey. Cocktails at 6:30 p.m., Dinner at 8:00 p.m. For reservations (\$12 per person) call Audubon House.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25**—Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip. The *Miss Monterey* will leave at 7:30 a.m. from Sam's Fishery Cruises #16 at Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey, returning at 3:00 p.m. Price \$15.00 per person. Leaders: Arnold Small and Shum Suffel.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26**—Point Mugu Naval Air Base, including Callegua Creek Estuary. This trip, like the one on February 11th, is limited to 25 people. To sign up, call Audubon House before February 19th. All details identical to those for Feb. 11th.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 14**—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Plummer Park. Diver-photographer Alan Heller will present a program entitled **Strange Encounters of the Underwater Kind**. Heller is President of the Underwater Photographic Society, and in his years of diving he has explored the waters off the Calif. Channel Islands, Hawaii, Florida, and British Honduras. His photos have won numerous awards and his articles have appeared in several magazines.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 16**—Anacapa and Out to Sea. The *Sea Con* will leave Channel Island National Monument dock in the Ventura Marina at 7:00 a.m. and return at 5:00 p.m. The American Oyster-catcher is generally seen on this trip, the only spring cruise to the area. Price \$15.00 per person. Leaders: Ed Navojosky and Larry Norris.

**SATURDAY and SUNDAY, MAY 13-14**—San Miguel and Santa Rosa-Cortez Ridge. The *China Clipper* may be boarded in the Oxnard Marina at 9:00 p.m. Saturday for a midnight sailing, returning late on Sunday. There is a large galley on board with reasonable prices. No ice chests are allowed. Bunk space limited to 53 people. \$30.00 per person. Leaders: Lee Jones and Kimball Garrett.

## Field Trip Reservations

For all trips, make checks payable to LAAS and send with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, your phone number, and the names of all persons in your party to Phil Sayre, Reservation Chairman, P.O. Box 831, Monterey Park, California 91754. No reservations or refunds will be accepted within 48 hours prior to departure. To guarantee your space please make reservations as early as possible. Trips will be cancelled 30 days prior to departure if there is a lack of response.

## Galapagos and Ecuador

Lee Jones and Kimball Garrett will be leading a natural history tour to the Galapagos and Ecuador, August 3-17th. For information on the trip, contact Aventura Natural History Tours, 503 No. Sierra Drive, Beverly Hills 90210, or call 213-276-6081.

## Cave Creek Canyon

There is probably no more diverse biotic unit in the entire National Forest system, and certainly no more heavily birded or intensively studied area than Cave Creek Canyon, in Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains. Now the time has come to provide input which will help influence Cave Creek's future—for the Forest Service is in the process of deciding how the Canyon is to be managed in the years to come. If you agree that Cave Creek basin should be declared a Wildlife Habitat Management Area—preserved primarily for wildlife, then direct your letters expressing this opinion to: **Ken Weissenborn, Supervisor, Coronado National Forest, 301 West Congress Street, Tucson, Arizona 25701.**

## Help for Oiled Birds

*Help!*, a new booklet describing effective techniques for caring for oil-coated birds, is now available for 50¢ per copy (including postage) from the N.Y. Zoological Society, Bronx, New York 10460.

## Treasurer Needed

A vacancy now exists on the Los Angeles Audubon Board for the position of Treasurer. If you have a few days of free time a month and feel you could help out in this capacity, please call Sandy Wohlgenuth, at 344-8531.

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