

# WESTERN TANAGER

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## Birding the Other Coast

28½ Life Birds in Two Years

by Hal Ferris



It was in 1942, while I was a student at Cornell in upstate New York that my serious pursuit of the birding sport began. In the years to follow, before I moved to L.A. in 1966, I managed to encounter most of the birds of eastern North America—especially after fifteen productive birding years spent in Texas. California boosted my spirits with 380 birds, but by 1976 my life list was languishing at a mere 570—and it was clear that drastic action was called for if I was ever to reach the magic 600 mark. A helicopter engineering career made it easy to bid on an FAA position in New England, and the prospect of all those East Coast rarities I had heard about was all the motivation I needed to pack up and go.

What follows is an account of two memorable years among the birds and birders of Massachusetts—a sojourn interrupted during the big blizzard of February 1978, when another call from the FAA brought me back to L.A.

Despite its size, little Massachusetts appears to lead the nation not only in conservation, but in the aggregate of active birders, birding "experts" per capita, and the number of birding "hot spots" situated along its 1500 miles of coastline. In fact, birdwatching in Massachusetts has become such a status symbol that it's not unusual to spot twenty telescopes lined up along a tidal flat during a migration weekend; and even during bitter winter storms a few hardy birders may be found huddled on the coastal promontories, hoping for a big alcid day. Yet these active birders are fiercely independent and will seldom set foot outside the state to chase a rare bird or a specialty. Few belong to the ABA and there are no National Audubon Chapters. How can we account for this?

First of all, the populace of the Boston area hasn't always been conservation-minded. During the 1800's market



Black-capped Chickadee

Dana Gardner

gunners did their best to rid the state of waterfowl and migrant shorebirds, and in the case of such species as the Eskimo Curlew, their efforts were all too successful. Boston, however, was also a center of learning, and largely through the influence of its established families it became the first state to mobilize an active conservation movement—a groundswell which launched the Audubon Society. In point of fact, Massachusetts Audubon predates National Audubon, and with its large staff and impressive sanctuary system, it enjoys a position of enviable stature within the state.

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, Massachusetts

produced some great authors and ornithologists, whose works included the classic three-volume *Birds of Massachusetts*, published around 1910-1915. Notable among the luminaries was the legendary Ludlow Griscom, who still counts devoted disciples among the local birders. In effect, then, Massachusetts got off to an early start, both in environmental exploitation and appreciation—a fact which may at least partially explain the state's advanced position today.

Though things have changed since Griscom's day, Massachusetts is still an exciting place for birders. The immediate vicinity of the coast is where most of the action is concentrated—at such famous spots as Plum Island, Cape Ann, Mt. Auburn Cemetery, and Cape Cod. The Massachusetts Audubon telephone hotline is updated three times a week, and thousands of birders use the system. Although the tape does tend to concentrate on the commoner species, when an exceptional rarity turns up the hotline may send hundreds out to see the bird.

The local bird clubs—such as the Brookline Bird Club—sponsor as many as 10 well-led field trips a week to the best birding areas. For the newcomer like me, this proved to be the best way to enter the “clan,” and to find the most productive sites—at a cost of only \$1.00 per year. Some 1600 members belong to the Brookline Club, the largest and most

influential among many such local groups. After I had learned the areas and committed to memory the number of the eastern Massachusetts “Voice of Audubon” (259-8805), I was ready for a life bird on my own.

In spite of New England's reputation for cold weather and a cold shoulder to outsiders, the Massachusetts birding clan can be extremely friendly and helpful. If you're a birder, you're “in,” and unless you wish to, there's no reason to go birding alone. Besides, even if you start out on your own, you're sure to meet up with good birders at any of the well-known birding spots.

Among the many rewards of northeastern birding are the pelagic trips to the well-known fishing banks in the North Atlantic. These trips can be better or worse than California trips, depending on the state of the sea and the weather; but at only \$8.00 the price is certainly right.

Of course, a Southern Californian is bound to notice the weather. The green flies and mosquitoes can get you on Plum Island in the summer, and the snow and ice can keep you inside for a good part of the winter. However, lots of repellent in summer and a good variety of feeders in winter will help you see plenty of birds. After all, there is a special pleasure, in mid-winter, when Redpolls and Pine Siskins alight on your hand while you hold a familiar feeder, or when a Pine Grosbeak permits you to reach up and touch it as it feasts on berries.

But perhaps the most noteworthy difference between birding in the Northeast and in Southern California is the relatively short distance involved in chasing the birds. My Smew in Rhode Island and my two misses in Biddeford Pool, Maine (the Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Rufous-necked Stint) were only 200 miles apart. Within a 100-mile radius of Boston—or a two hour drive—I had all I would need, a compact and easily-workable birding territory.

When I arrived, in February, I called Massachusetts Audubon and explained my plight to Bob Forster and Jim Baird, two expert birders on the Society's staff, who told me where the current rarities were and directed me to specific areas for easy-to-get life birds. The first Saturday found me heading down to Rhode Island for the Smew. At the prescribed spot along the Newport coast I found lots of birders looking for the little white merganser from Eurasia, but he wasn't at his previous haunts—and things began to look bad. We spread out with our scopes and scanned the ice floes—until we beheld, hidden by the ice on a tiny island of grass, a truly beautiful sight! In moments the word spread, and for the rest of the day the area was thronged with birders and telescopes.

Two hours later, after adding several Mute Swans to my list, I was at Plum Island and the Newburyport-Salisbury Beach in search of some of the more challenging lifers. After satisfying closeups of a real rarity, the Ivory Gull, and a regular, but hard-to-see winter visitor, the Snowy Owl, a quick scan of the Playa-del-Rey type rock jetties revealed Black Guillemots, Great Cormorants, and Purple Sandpipers, while large rafts of Common Eiders bobbed on the sea. So, with eight lifers under my belt on my first Saturday of birding, I felt pretty certain that my move to Boston was going to add up to a great adventure.

That day several birders told me about a Hoary Redpoll at a feeder in Weston, and, as a result, the following day I was



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Downy Woodpecker

able to watch dozens of redpolls, including the Hoary, at close range. As things turned out, two winters later I had Hoary Redpolls at my own feeders in Acton. The value of the feeders is hard to overestimate. For while Californians have their hummingbirds, the Massachusetts feeder-watcher has winter finches—plus an occasional Boreal Chickadee. And what could be more beautiful than a feeding tray full of Evening Grosbeaks, against a snowy backdrop?

In winter, when the weather permits, the places to go are the coastal areas, to seek out the rarer gulls and alcids—but you'll need to wear your long underwear. For a four-month period along the windy North Atlantic coast, it seemed no matter what I did I could never get sufficiently warm. Still, for this birder at least, the rewards were great.

Cape Ann, 25 miles north of Boston, is noted for alcids. Thick-billed Murres, Black Guillemots, Dovekies, and Razorbills are seen every winter, and with luck one may find an Atlantic Puffin. The Newburyport area, 25 miles further north, will usually produce Black-headed and Little Gulls. Swarms of ducks may be found on the river in winter, often including a Barrow's Goldeneye, and Harlequin Ducks frequent the rocky coast to the south, as do lots of Oldsquaws. This is also the place where the famous Ross' Gull was observed the year before I arrived.

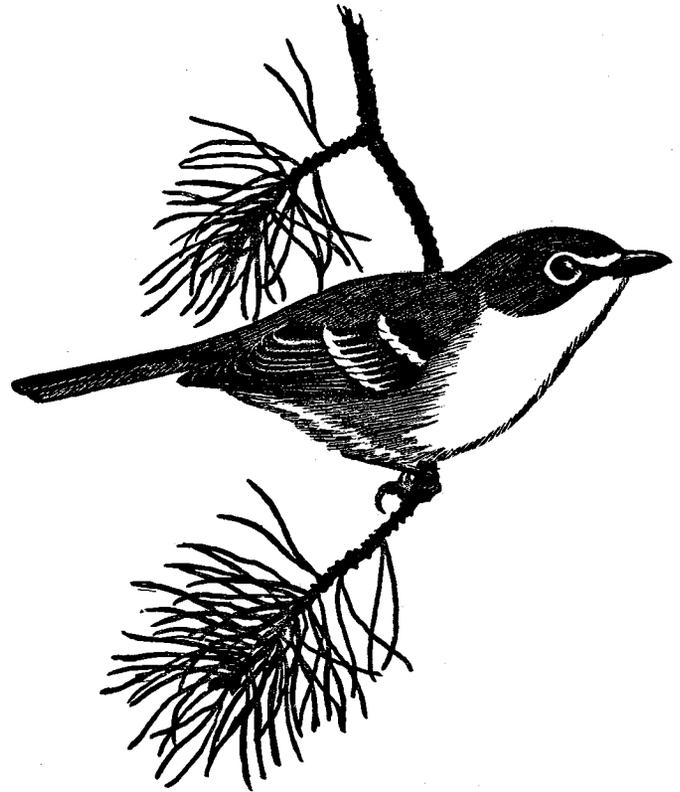
When spring arrives, the birding clan shifts its attention to the Mt. Auburn Cemetery, a wooded oasis in the heart of the Boston-Cambridge metropolitan area, and an ideal place to study all the regular migrant warblers and landbirds. Though I found no lifers here, I was able to learn most of the confusing warbler songs—an essential skill for every serious eastern birder, since the foliage is often thick and the birds hard to see. Once a "warbler tree" is found, however, the birder may simply settle down to sort through the dozen-or-so species it may contain.

A few trips to Plum Island in spring turned up a Curlew Sandpiper in breeding plumage, a Bar-tailed Godwit, Saw-whet Owls, and Roseate Terns. The same habitat in winter produced the rare Northern Shrike, both crossbills (absent most winters), and the very irregular Bohemian Waxwing—plus my 600th bird.

One Thursday afternoon, needing a break from my desk job, I routinely dialed the bird tape, and suddenly was off to Plum Island with my scope. The bird I was after, however, wasn't where it was reported—and I was rapidly losing hope when a college student said he saw a "Snowy Owl" out on the ice pack. Since no owls had been reported recently, I took off across the ice and snow with my scope—and there it was: a stunning white *Gyr Falcon*, sitting on an ice block—certainly my most spectacular bird to date, and an incredible number 600!

Summer in Massachusetts is a time to take a vacation from area birding and try for the Spruce Grouse in the mountains of Maine or New Hampshire—though all I got was a lot of good exercise.

Fall, however, brings the real rarities, and the pelagic trips. Trips to Monmy Island off Cape Cod produced the Eurasian Curlew (the second North American record for this



Solitary Vireo

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accidental species, seen again two years later), plus two of the most beautiful rarities I saw in Massachusetts: the "Greenland" Wheatear and the Steller's Eider.

While the pelagic trips generally proved unpredictable, a birder might still hope to see hundreds of Greater Shearwaters and Wilson's Petrels, dozens of Gannets, and, in summer, a good number of Cory's Shearwaters southeast of Cape Cod.

But, about that 1/2 bird: It seems that the question of escapes will forever trouble the serious birder. When you spot a duck never before sighted in North America, flying with Canada Geese, you must assume it's an escape. But when a Garganey Teal shows up with wild Green-winged Teals, and the bird has been recognized on both coasts, what do you do? Well, since birding is a personal sport, I decided to call it a "half." Can you add two halves and get a whole? We'll let ABA argue that one.

The time was approaching to head back to L.A., and I still hadn't seen the Lesser Black-backed Gull—a yearly visitor. But as luck would have it one was reported at the Connecticut River Valley in mid-state—and I was off. I devoted a day to the cause, and was not disappointed. It was time to come back.

Now it's good to be home. There are still some birds out here in California that I have yet to see; and I've begun to think about 650—a reachable goal, if you hang in there long enough. (Perhaps when I've seen what there is to see here I'll bid on a job in Florida for a couple of years... or maybe Alaska...). But wherever I go I'll take with me the memories of the birds, the birders, and all the unforgettable days of adventure I enjoyed along the northeast coast. ♡

**Arnold Small**

# Toward a Birding Ethic

In 1942, when I first began to look at birds, I had no idea that there might be others who shared this unusual—and often ridiculed—hobby. In fact more than a year went by before I actually met another birder in the field. His reaction was nearly the same as mine—utter surprise at finding a kindred spirit. As it developed, we both attended the same high school in the Bronx, and so we happily joined forces in birding ventures. As we enlarged our areas of birding, we gradually met others, and eventually came to know the Linnaean Society of New York, a meeting place for a small number of other birders. Birding remained a highly ingrown pursuit until after World War II, at which time American lifestyles began to change, individual mobility increased, and environmental awareness accelerated. Suddenly the out-of-doors was swarming with people, and birding began to come into its own as one of the most popular and constructive of outdoor pastimes.

Today, as every active birder knows, it is a rare day indeed when other birders are *not* encountered in one's favorite birding area. Birding clubs and Audubon Societies are springing up like mushrooms after a rain, while birding classes of various kinds are ubiquitous. Birding tours (even to local areas where one does not really need a guide) are proving ever more popular. Birding, then, has progressed from an almost private and individual affair to virtually a mass endeavor. Field trips involving scores of birders are fanning out over the landscape in all directions.

One dividend of these developments is that new birding areas are constantly being revealed, better coverage of well-known areas is achieved, a much better knowledge of bird distribution and identification is obtained. However, the increasing popularity of birding as a hobby and sport has generated a new host of problems for the birds, the birders, and the environment itself, suggesting that the time may at last have come for us to soberly consider a "birding code of ethics"—to identify the worst offenses and minimize their impact in the future. It is not the intent of this essay to compile such a code, but rather to point the way—by singling out some of the more obvious abuses, whether promulgated by individuals, small groups, or large field trips.

No one can deny the adverse effect that the mere presence in the field of large numbers of people may have upon the fragile habitats of some birds. We all know that certain species are shyer than others (especially during the nesting season), and hordes of people on the scene cannot fail to cause considerable distress. Of course, the rarer the species the more attention it attracts, and consequently the greater is the disturbance caused by birders eager to see it. The cases of this kind of conflict between birds and birders are too numerous to recount. In addition there are deliberate insults inflicted upon individual birds by over-zealous birders, who have been known to flush rare species from the nest in order to obtain a sighting. "Tree-whacking" to arouse cavity dwellers is another



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disturbing practice, as is the excessive and improper use of tape recorders.

One of the most sensitive problems is that of the relationship between birders and the owners of private property which birders wish to visit. The impulsiveness of a few individuals can often jeopardize good relationships built up over many years; and even sympathetic U.S. Forest Service people, Fish and Wildlife Service people, and National Park personnel have been known to lose patience with thoughtless birders.

But most of the problems arising from birding activities can be avoided by employing some simple common sense and common courtesy while birding. It devolves upon the field trip leaders of large groups to explain a few "ground rules" before venturing into the field. These ground rules should relate to the birds themselves, the environment, and to the other birders in attendance. We are faced with a burgeoning population, one which is daily growing more and more active in the out-of-doors—and in this group are many future birders. If we wish to continue to enjoy the hobby we all love, then we must learn to police ourselves—by imposing certain restrictions upon our own activities before they are imposed upon us by others. ♡

## Note

Birders contemplating an excursion to the Edwards Air Force Base marsh in the Antelope Valley should be aware that permission must be obtained before entering the area—a good policy before trespassing on any privately-owned property.

Jon Dunn/FIELD NOTES

# The Myiarchus Flycatchers

Last month we discussed Ash-throated and Wied's Crested Flycatchers. The other two species in the genus *Myiarchus* that have been recorded in California are the Great Crested and the Olivaceous (Dusky-capped) Flycatchers—both strictly vagrants in the State.

The **Great Crested Flycatcher** has been recorded close to 20 times in California, but only five of these records are from Southern California, with the majority of the northern records from the Farallon Islands. All of the records from the State are for the fall, and of these virtually all are from late Sept. to early October. Further, all of the mainland sightings are from locales in very close proximity to the coast—and none of the birds have stayed longer than a day.

The Great Crested Flycatcher is *very slightly larger* than the Ash-throated, but *distinctly smaller* than the Wied's Crested. Among the field characteristics, the best mark is the *mousy gray breast* that sharply contrasts with a *bright yellow belly*. The gray is of a distinctly darker tone than on the Ash-throated, and the yellow is of a slightly darker and more intense hue. The other distinctive feature is the back, which is strongly washed with *olive-green* in contrast to the Wied's Crested and the Ash-throated, which exhibit *brownish-gray* upperparts. The upper sides are also washed with *olive* (see illustration), and the wings appear to be of a slightly *darker brown* than those of the Wied's Crested or the Ash-throated, with the outer web of the inner tertials more broadly edged with creamy white, slightly tinged with yellow. Since the actual feather is of a darker brown, the *contrast* is much greater on the Great Crested than on an Ash-throated or Wied's Crested, which show thinner grayish-white edgings on duller tertial feathers. The bill of the Great Crested is similarly shaped to that of the Ash-throated, but the base of the lower mandible is *distinctly pale*, while the Ash-throated has an *all dark* bill. As far as the tail pattern is concerned, each individual retriex is patterned as in the Wied's, except that the rufous on the inner web extends almost to the shaft (see illustration)—a mark which would probably be of use only in the hand. Needless to say this species should be identified in California with extreme caution, and reports falling outside the period of mid-Sept. to early Oct. should bear a heavier burden of proof to establish their credibility.

The **Olivaceous Flycatcher** is an accidental visitant to California, having been definitely recorded on only four occasions, all during the late fall and winter—a fact which suggests that the species may show the same pattern of occurrence in the State as the Coues' Flycatcher—a species with a similar breeding range (S. E. Arizona and Mexico).

The Olivaceous is by far the smallest of the group of *Myiarchus* Flycatchers under discussion here, appearing distinctly *smaller* than the Ash-throated. Despite the bird's size, however, the bill is just as large as that of the Ash-throated, lending the bird a proportionately much *bigger-billed appearance*. In addition the Olivaceous has a *slightly darker brown* crown than the Ash-throated, and its underparts are of a slightly *brighter shade of yellow*, while the sides of the breast are *very slightly darker*, suggesting a *breast band* that contrasts with a paler throat. By far the best character, however, is the total *lack of rufous on the retrices*, and only a trace on the flight feathers. It is worth pointing out, though, that in juvenal plumage (July-Aug.), the inner and outer edge of each retriex are broadly edged with rufous, and the wing feathers show much more rufous. But, assuming the established pattern of occurrence of the species, it is extremely doubtful that a bird in this plumage would turn up in California, since the juvenals would have assumed the adult wing-and-tail pattern a couple of months before moving north and west.

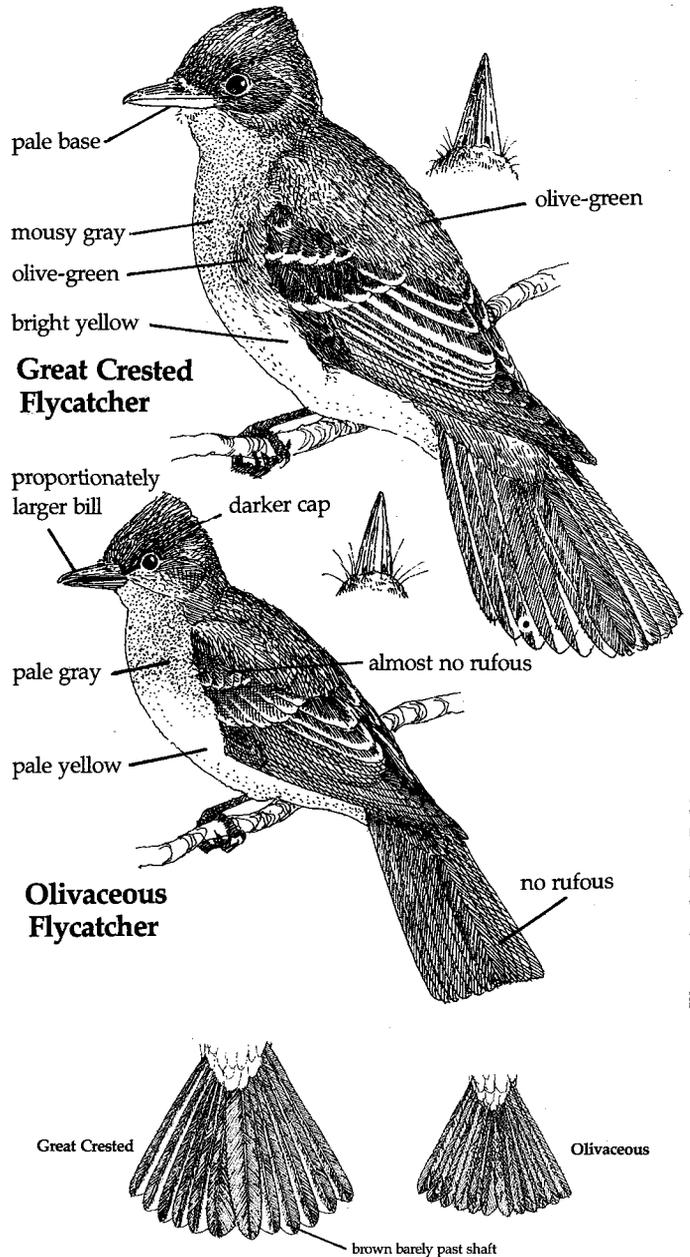


Illustration by Ray Robinson

The common call of the Olivaceous is a soft and mournful descending whistle, described as *pee-ur*—very unlike the calls of the other members of the genus treated here. It is the only call I have heard from the species in California. 🗣️

## The Condor Fund

The preliminary results from the recent Condor Survey are discouraging, for the total population of the species is now estimated at only 25 birds—a new and dangerous low. Donations to the LAAS Condor Fund are therefore all the more urgently needed. If you have not done so already, please send your contribution to **The Condor Fund, Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046.**

## Shumway Suffel

## BIRDS of the Season



Year's end finds birders busy with the holidays, Christmas counts, and preparations for 1979. But for those with a spare half day, many nearby areas offer good winter birding. Local parks, golf courses, and cemeteries (downtown Rosedale Cemetery is one of the better ones) are oases of quiet green in our urbanized area, and any flowering eucalyptus tree can be a haven for hummingbirds, unusual orioles, and tanagers—or possibly an eastern warbler. If you missed the high tides at Upper Newport in November or early December, a tide of medium height (6.3') occurs on Dec. 13, and on the 28th and 31st the height will be 6.7-6.9', with even higher tides forecast for January and February. Along the coast the harbors and piers have hundreds of gulls and scoters, plus many loons and grebes; and with luck one might even spot an alcid or two.

This was the fall of the shorebirds. The two rarest, a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** at Vancouver, B.C., and a **Temminck's Stint** on the Oregon coast, were too far afield for most of us—but there were still plenty of interesting birds to see only an hour or two away. Many of these were noted last month, but an update reveals the following: After 15 years, the long-lived **American Oystercatcher** is still on Anacapa Island (LAAS trip); four prairie-loving **Mountain Plovers** appeared unexpectedly on the mudflats at McGrath State Park near Ventura (Jon Dunn, Oct. 13); a widely-seen **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** remained for a week at McGrath (Arnold Small, Oct. 21)—with one or two more at the mouth of the Santa Maria River during most of October (Louis Bevier and Paul Lehman); Richard Webster tallied a high count of **110 Pectoral Sandpipers** in a single day (Sept. 30); a very late **Baird's Sandpiper** turned up at McGrath on Oct. 13 (Jon D.), with three more near Daggett, S. Bd. Co. the next day (Steve Cardiff); one to three **Stilt Sandpipers** (rare except at the Salton Sea) were found in Ventura Co. (Richard W.); and a second **Ruff** was discovered at McGrath on Oct. 7 (Dan Guthrie et al).

A photo of a large white albatross off our coast (either **Short-tailed** or **Wandering**) gives us hope that one will be seen on a future LAAS pelagic trip. The three sightings of **Streaked Shearwaters** in Monterey Bay during the past four Octobers (Alan Baldrige et al, Oct. 14) are the only records in the eastern Pacific. A large gathering of pelagic birds just off the Santa Maria River mouth on Oct. 19 included **Sooty** and **Manx Shearwaters**, **Pomarine** and **Parasitic Jaegers**, and, surprisingly, a **Skua**. Nearby on the beach was a single **Arctic Tern** in a flock of **Commons** (Kimball Garrett and J.D., Oct. 19). Russ and Marion Wilson's **Franklin's Gull** at Huntington Beach on Oct. 30 was the only report this fall. A probable **European Wigeon**, still partially in eclipse plumage, was at Upper Newport Bay on Oct. 29, and six male **Blue-winged Teal** (no Cinnamons) were on a freshwater pond in Huntington Beach (John McDonald).

Experienced birders agree that the fall passerine migration was a disappointment. There were very small numbers of the expected western species, and no single days when 12-15 warbler species could be found, as in years past. Instead, five or six warblers a day was a top count this fall. But the *quality* was superb. To begin with there was California's second **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher**, at U.C. Santa Barbara in Goleta, from Oct. 6-9 (Louis Bevier), plus California's second **White Wagtail** nearby in Devereaux Slough, from Oct. 9-11 (Louis B. and Terry Clark). Then a **Great Crested Flycatcher** was sighted briefly on Pt. Loma, San Diego, Oct. 6 (Elizabeth Copper and Phil Unitt). A **Cerulean Warbler** (very rare here) was on Pt. Reyes on Oct. 16, and California's fourth **Wood Thrush** (the first since 1968) was found below San Diego on Oct. 25 (Larry Sansone). The next day, alas, it was killed by a cat, leaving only a handful of feathers for the frustrated birders who arrived the

afternoon of the 26th. (Coincidentally, the 1968 Wood Thrush was also killed by a cat, and its tailless remains are in the L.A. Co. Museum). A **Sprague's Pipit** stopped briefly at McGrath and then flew on (R.W., Oct. 27), and on Oct. 31 a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** turned up near the lighthouse on Pt. Reyes (Rich Stallcup), but could not be located again.

Not entirely unexpected, but still noteworthy, were many out-of-range birds from the east, the north, and the south. The **Broad-billed Hummingbird**, first reported at Big Sycamore S.P. on Sept. 16, was still there on Oct. 7 (Dan Guthrie). Probably the most amazing sighting of the fall was a flight of **104** (by actual count) **Lewis' Woodpeckers**, winging inland over the Veteran's Cemetery in West Los Angeles (Kimball G., Sept. 22). The following day six were seen by Terry C. headed north over Bonsall Cyn., Malibu. In early Oct. more than 20 more were noted in the San Bernardino Mts. (Gene Cardiff), four were seen at Morongo Valley (Mike San Miguel, Oct. 21), and another was at 29 Palms the same day. This is our only early portent of a winter invasion, as few, if any chickadees, nuthatches, or the like have yet been sighted in the lowlands.

John McDonald's **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** below San Diego (Oct. 27) was the only report of the species this year. On the same day Jean Brandt et al had an **Eastern Phoebe** on the fence above the McGrath lagoon. Neither of these flycatchers could be located the following day. **Red-throated Pipits** were widespread in mid-October, with three in Santa Barbara Co., seven on the sod farms of Ventura Co., and one or two below San Diego. **Dippers** are rarely seen away from clear mountain stream; thus Steve Cardiff's sighting of one on the shore of a bitter, highly mineralized, and presumably lifeless lake at the bottom of a great pit left by the now-abandoned Vulcan Mine in the middle of the Mojave desert was unprecedented. One or two **Winter Wrens** spent most of October at Big Sycamore (Hank Brodtkin et al).

Vireos and warblers, favorites of many birders, were widely but sparsely seen—a fact which tended to color the overall impression of the passerine migration. The few Los Angeles Co. warbler reports include a **Magnolia** at Long Beach Rec. Park (Jon Atwood, Oct. 23), a **Chestnut-sided** in Pt. Fermin Park (Pat and Paul Nelson, Oct. 21), a **Canada** at Pt. Fermin on Oct. 16, a tailless **Northern Waterthrush** in Roland Hull's Westchester bird bath on Oct. 7, and, in the Antelope Valley, a female **Bay-breasted** east of Lancaster; plus a male **Black-throated Blue** just over the line in Kern Co. (J.D., K.G., and Kent Van Vuren, Oct. 22).

Most of the San Diego warbler reports resulted from the almost daily coverage of the area by Guy McCaskie, Elizabeth Copper, or Phil Unitt—unless otherwise noted below. Two unusual vireos were a **Red-eyed** at Pt. Loma Cemetery (Jon De Modena, Oct. 15) and a **Philadelphia** there on Oct. 21 (Jerry Tolman). A **Prothonotary Warbler** on Oct. 6 was one of the rarer warblers. The Pt. Loma Cemetery had two **Cape Mays** on Oct. 24, a **Chestnut-sided** on Oct. 28, and a **Palm Warbler** on Oct. 21 (Jerry Tolman). A male **Black-throated Blue** was on the Point, Oct. 24-28. Below San Diego there was a **Black-throated Green** in the tamarisks, and a **Canada Warbler** in the willows during late October. Morongo Valley was lightly covered, but a **Tennessee Warbler** was there Oct. 21 (Mike San Miguel).

Ventura Co. enjoyed almost daily attention from Richard Webster, who found or saw most of the following species at Big Sycamore, McGrath S.P., or at several spots on the Oxnard Plain: A **Philadelphia Vireo**, a **Black-and-white Warbler**, five or six **Tennessees**, a **Black-throated Blue**, two **Blackburnians**, a **Chestnut-sided**, three **Blackpolls**, a **Prairie**, three **Plam Warblers**,

an **Ovenbird**, a **Hooded Warbler**, and a **Canada Warbler**. That's what saturation coverage can achieve—at the height of the vagrant season.

Along the coast, from Santa Barbara to Gaviota, Paul Lehman and Louis Bevier found or saw one or two **Cape Mays**, a **Chestnut-sided**, a **Bay-breasted**, and a **Canada Warbler** (near Goleta). Terry Clark had a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Refugio S.P., Oct. 30, and two **Palm Warblers** the same day at Gaviota S.P.

The desert oases of Inyo-Mono Counties were disappointing, but there was a rare **Yellow-throated Warbler** and a **Bay-breasted Warbler** at Deep Springs, plus a **Tennessee** at Oasis (the Brodkins and Arnold Small, Oct. 29). Another **Tennessee** was at Furnace Creek Ranch (Dan G., Oct. 15). On the Mojave Desert, Steve Cardiff found a **Northern Parula Warbler** on Oct. 26 and 29, a **Black-throated Blue** on Oct. 12, and a **Hooded Warbler** Oct. 26 and 29. Near his home in Rialto he discovered a **Prairie Warbler** on Oct. 5.

Other passerines appeared in good numbers, but few were noteworthy. A **Rusty Blackbird** turned up at McGrath (Kent Van Vuren, Oct. 26), and Paul Lehman had a northerly record of a **Great-tailed Grackle** at Jalama Beach, Santa Barb. Co. A male **Scarlet Tanager**, which flew in from the sea, dropped exhausted on the beach at Ventura, and was promptly captured by a Sharp-shinned Hawk (R.W., Oct. 7). Two **Dickcissels** were seen at Goleta on Oct. 6 and 7 (Paul Lehman). A **Tree Sparrow** was at Furnace Creek Ranch, and the same day four **Harris'** and four **White-throated Sparrows** were at F.C.R. and Deep Springs (the Brodkins and A.S.). Of local interest was the return of the **Clay-colored Sparrow**, so widely seen last winter at the Arcadia Arboretum (Barbara Cohen, Oct. 8). Longspurs were rarely seen this fall, but three **Chestnut-collareds** were in the Antelope Valley on Oct. 22; two more were in Ventura Co.; and another was seen below San Diego.

Add it all up and it sounds like a birding bonanza—but it really wasn't, as these sightings encompass a vast area, and few birders saw more than a handful of the good birds.

Perhaps winter will be more kind. Certainly, if things work out true to form, the numerous Christmas counts in our area will turn up something surprising close to home. ♡

### A Gift to LAAS

The J.B. and Emily Van Nuys Charities have presented LAAS with a grant of \$5000, in appreciation of the many conservation activities of the chapter. The funds will be used to pursue the society's environmental goals and projects.



## WESTERN Tanager

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### The Sepulveda Basin

We won, it seems. Responding to massive public pressure, Mayor Bradley announced in early Nov. that the racetrack-sports complex will not be built in the Sepulveda Dam Basin in the San Fernando Valley. However, he indicated that the city still hopes to put some *Olympic facilities* in the basin. LAAS will therefore continue its efforts to preserve the open space and protect the riparian habitat. We are currently working with the Army Corps of Engineers and Dr. Hartmut Walter of the UCLA Dept. of Geography to develop the wildlife refuge which is a part of the master plan for the basin.

### New Conservation Chairman

**Corliss Kristensen** has assumed the post of Conservation Chairman for LAAS, and has requested volunteers to join her on the Conservation Committee. Persons willing to devote their energies to a particular project or phase of the chapter's conservation efforts are urged to contact Corliss at 391-8843.

### LAAS Christmas Counts

This year the **Malibu Christmas Count** will be held on **Sunday, Dec. 17**, and the **Los Angeles Christmas Count** will follow on **Saturday, Dec. 23**. These counts have enjoyed thorough coverage in recent years, and it is desirable to continue these efforts in order to insure that count results remain comparable from year to year. Among the precious and beleaguered habitats within these two count circles are Malibu Lagoon, the central and eastern Santa Monica Mts., and the Ballona Wetlands. And this year, with a major portion of the Malibu circle (and a small part of the Los Angeles circle) denuded by October's devastating fires, we have the opportunity to begin a long-term monitoring of winter bird populations in the burned areas.

Birders are urged to contact the co-leaders for both counts, listed below:

Jean Brandt: 213-788-5188; Kimball Garrett: 213-477-5769; Jon Dunn: 213-981-1841; and Lloyd Kiff: 213-454-7603, or 213-472-7869 (office).



The Los Angeles Audubon

## ANNUAL DINNER

Sunday, February 18

at the

**California Yacht Club**

Marina del Rey

Roast Beef/Fish Buffet

\$13.25 per person

**Dancing after Dinner**

To make your reservations, send your check, payable to Los Angeles Audubon, to Audubon House, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90046.

# 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, Tuesday through Saturday.

*Audubon Bird Report—call 874-1318*

## Field Trip Reservations

To make reservations for bus and pelagic trips, send a check payable to LAAS plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope, your phone number, and the names of all those in your party to the Reservations Chairman, Audubon House. No reservations will be accepted or refunds made within 48 hours of departure. To guarantee your space make reservations as early as possible. Trips will be cancelled 30 days prior to departure if there is insufficient response.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2—McGrath State Park and the Oxnard Plain.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the bridge over the Santa Clara estuary. A great opportunity to study wintering gulls and shorebirds. Take Hwy. 101 north and exit at Victoria Ave. in Ventura (1½ hours from L.A.). Pass under the freeway to Olivas Park Dr., then turn right to the traffic light at Harbor Blvd. Turn left and park by the bridge. Leader: Larry Sansone, 463-4056.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5—Malibu Lagoon.** Meet at 1:00 p.m. on the north side of the lagoon, on the west side of the bridge, for a thorough study of wintering gulls. Leader: Jon Dunn, 981-1841.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Audubon House.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Plummer Park. **George Bryce**, a Ph. D. candidate in entomology at UCLA, will present a slide program on **The World of Insects**—an introduction to this varied and endlessly-fascinating life form.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17—Malibu Christmas Count.** See notice in this issue for details.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23—Los Angeles Christmas Count.** See notice in this issue for details.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 4—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Audubon House.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 6—Santa Barbara and Goleta.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Goleta Beach Park in the parking lot at the base of the pier. Take Hwy. 101 north through Santa Barbara to the Goleta turnoff, marked "University of California, Santa Barbara Airport, and Goleta." Follow this road (Ward Memorial Blvd.) to the Sandspit exit. Turn left and proceed to Goleta Beach Park, on the right. Please car-pool as much as possible, as the places to be visited can accommodate only a few cars. Leaders: Paul Lehman and Louis Bevier, 805-968-7394.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 9—Evening Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Plummer Park. **Dr. Hartmut Walter**, Assoc. Prof. of Geography at UCLA, will present a program on **The Search for the Sooty Falcon**—a record of an expedition along the coast of Southeast Arabia. The program will include a rare look at the birds of the Sultanate of Oman, plus unique photo coverage of the little-known Sooty Falcon, as well as such species as the Sooty Gull and the White-cheeked Tern.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 21—Morro Bay Pelagic Trip.** Departure is 7:30 a.m. from Virg's Landing, 1215 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, with return at 3:00 p.m. Price: \$18.00 per person. Leaders: Herb and Olga Clarke, 249-5537.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 27—Salton Sea.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Wister turnoff on Hwy. 111 (about 36 miles south of Mecca, north of Nyland). The trip promises spectacular birding, with large numbers of wintering geese, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Those who wish to stay over for more birding on their own on Sunday may find motels in nearby Brawley. Camping, with no water, is available at Finney Lake. Leaders: Hal Baxter and Shumway Suffel, 797-2965.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1—Executive Board Meeting, 8:00 p.m.,** Audubon House.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18—LAAS Annual Dinner, 6:30 p.m.,** California Yacht Club, Marina del Rey. For details see notice in this issue.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24—Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip.** Departure is 8:00 a.m. from Sam's Fishing Cruises, No. 16 Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey, with return at 3:00 p.m. Price: \$16.00 per person. Leaders: Arnold Small and Kimball Garrett, 477-5769.

## Pelagic Trips: Spring and Fall, 1979

**Saturday, March 24—Bodega Bay to Cordelle Bank.** Price: \$22 per person.

**Saturday, April 28—San Pedro to Osborne Banks.** Price: \$18.00 per person.

**Sunday, May 6—Santa Cruz Island, landing at Pelican Bay.** Price: \$25.00 per person.

**Saturday-Sunday, May 19-20—San Miguel Island.** Price: \$29.00 per person.

**Sunday, August 26—Morro Bay.** Price: \$22.00 per person.

**Sunday, September 9—Osborne Banks and Catalina Channel.** Price: \$18.00 per person.

**Saturday, September 22—Monterey Bay.** Price: \$16.00 per person.

**Saturday, October 13—Monterey Bay.** Price: \$16.00 per person.

**You are urged to make reservations for these trips as early as possible, as popular trips fill up well in advance, and trips may be cancelled 30 days prior to departure if there are insufficient reservations.**

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