

WESTERN TANAGER

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Condor Fails to Survive

by John C. Ogden

The pair of California Condors that laid an egg in a nest hole in Santa Barbara County has failed in its nesting effort, the Condor Research Center reports. The pair initiated nesting later in the season than is usual for condors; they apparently laid the single egg and began incubation during the third week of April. Jan Hamber and her crew began observation of the nest cave late in April, at first from a station about one mile away, and later from a site about one-half mile from the cave. Behavior of the adult pair was normal during most of the 60-day incubation period, with exchanges between the adults usually occurring at two or three day intervals. During the third week in June, as the time for hatching drew close, several observations of one adult in the nest cave attempting to exclude the second adult from entering were the first indication that something might be wrong in the cave. On the 23rd of June, one adult appeared at the entrance of the nest cave carrying a rather large, unidentified white object in its bill, which it proceeded to eat!

The two adults continued to occasionally return to the nest through the remainder of June and into early July, although at a diminishing rate. Finally, no adults entered the cave at any time during the full week beginning on the 5th of July. By the weekend of the 11-12th July, almost three weeks after the expected hatching date, it was considered that there was little chance that a viable egg or living chick could still exist. Not only was it well past the expected hatching date, but it was unlikely that a newly-hatched chick, unable to regulate its own body temperature, could have survived the many days without close brooding by an adult.

Condor, continued page 7

December in Costa Rica

by Bob Van Meter

illustrations by Dana Gardner

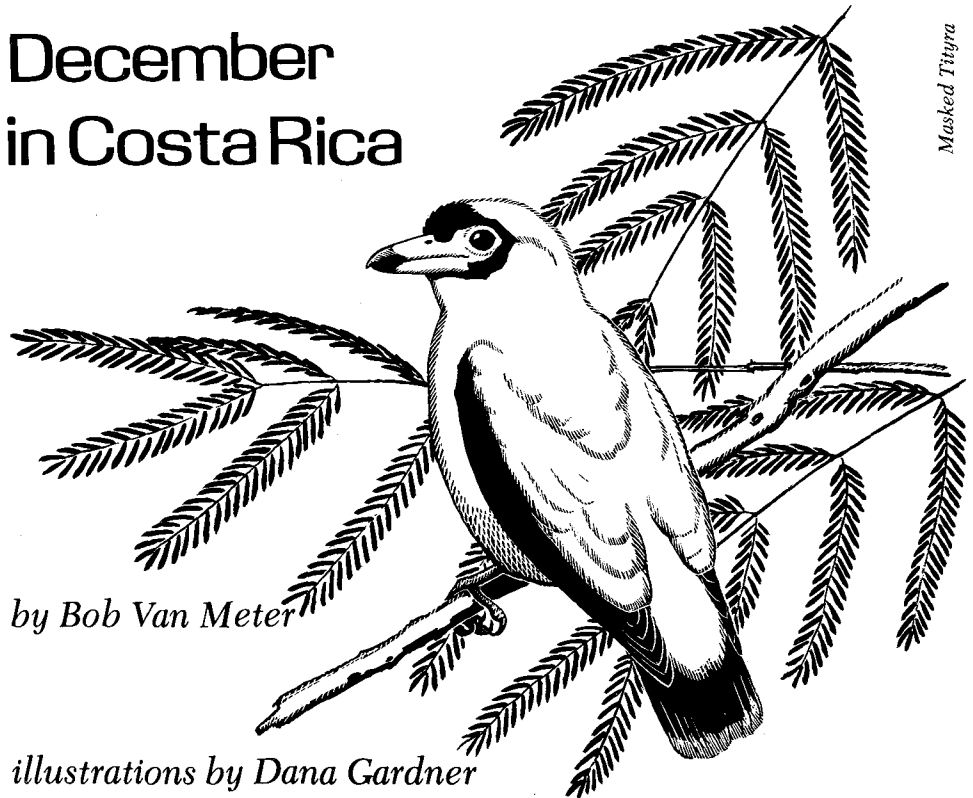
December 7, 1977, and I was off to Costa Rica. Why Costa Rica? A first chance at the New World Tropics: the challenge of a country with 815 species of birds; an opportunity to be with 25 highly compatible people led by a world authority, Mildred Mathias, professor emeritus, botany, UCLA.

It was after dark before we had cleared customs and piled into a waiting bus which took us to Holland House, a motel on the outskirts of town. Our first birds, in the greenery around the motel, were Clay-colored Robins and wintering Yellow Warblers. At a 3800-foot elevation, San Jose, the capitol, was cool enough for a light sweater at night.

Next morning after breakfast, we were bused to the University of Costa Rica for an introductory lecture by the country's most eminent scholar, Dr. Rafael Rodriguez. It was also a very special event because he now

lectures for only one group, that led by his old friend and colleague, Dr. Mathias. Dr. Rodriguez is presently a professor of botany at the university; he has painted murals in one of the state buildings, has studied and taught at Harvard, created the design on the current bill of paper money, written poetry, forgotten he was a bird specialist 20 years ago, and he was then preparing a monograph, painting each illustrative plate himself, one for each of the 11,000 species of orchids native to Costa Rica. On the university grounds were Rufous-collared Sparrows, Tropical Kingbirds, and high above, a Short-tailed Hawk.

Next day the aged bus with all our personal gear plus a great bale of sheets and towels headed north out of San Jose. A panoramic montage of tropical scenes flashed by on each side of us, palms, cacao, ferns, waterfalls, streams, showers, puddles and the vivid Scarlet-rumped Tanager poised



atop a spire of brush, clans of Social Flycatchers, svelte in brown and white, Ruddy Ground Doves taking off from the ground, a Roadside Hawk, a Black-cowled Oriole pitching into an erythina tree, and many Groove-billed Anis.

Then we reached the Volcano Poas and drove up the winding road to its rim. We were lucky because the clouds that normally hide its core were high and distant at the moment we arrived. The caldera was bleakly lunaresque; great billowings of steam issued from its throat; and every 17 minutes it spewed up jets of fiery lava. Afterwards, it was bananas, papayas, mangoes, coffee, occasional farmhouses, sugar cane, a Ringed Kingfisher, a Kiskadee, Pale-vented Pigeons, Double-toothed Kite, and butterflies and blossoms of arresting hot-climate colors, until we arrived at a boat landing on the Rio Sarapiquí late in the afternoon.

Our bus backed down from the main road toward the two long dugout canoes with outboard motors that waited on the river. We formed a line from the rear of the bus down to the boats and the luggage was passed hand over hand. Then with each boat

bank on one side had risen to a hundred feet or more. Under huge leaning and overhanging trees, our boats pulled up to a flight of concrete steps that rose almost vertically against the wet earth. Once more we made a chain and passed the luggage. We were at Finca La Selva, a natural history field station set in 70 hectares of virgin tropical rain forest.

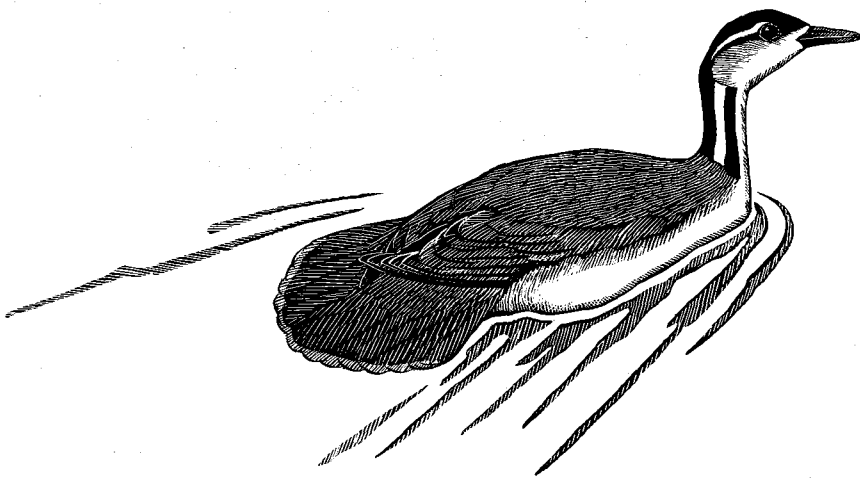
Night comes quickly. But just before, you sit outdoors in the light cast from the dining-room window, beer or coke in hand, watching the gyrations of the Short-tailed Night-hawks while the sky darkens enough to bring out the silent, wheeling bats. Under the blackness of the sky, the moisture-heavy forest stirs and becomes alive and palpable. And there are only you and your companions and the flood of light in which you sit and, momentarily, you feel you might be on a space ship bound for Uranus, for this has become a tightness that makes you forget where you came from and who you are — almost. So after dinner, an exploratory trek along the wet paths, flashlight beams stabbing the inky darkness, encircling a big toad by an upturned root, a tree frog or a spider

Tityras, the graceful arch made by a hawking male Long-tailed Tyrant, the dove-like coo of a Slaty-tailed Trogon; in the highest tree we glimpsed the posturings of a pair of Chestnut-mandibled Toucans, and high in the sky, like a pair of rockets, two colorful Macaws.

The day involved guided hikes in all directions and surveys of the whole habitat. We had to be really alert for only two things. One was an inch-long black ant that both bit and stung with a venom that could lay out a grown man for a day; the second was a tree, a palm with a trunk covered with rosettes of inch-long spines. Termite nests decorated many trees. They were large, blackish blobs of felt-like material wrapped around a high branch or upper trunk. And in the grassy spots were little poison arrow frogs. Their legs were green, their bodies, stop-signal red. And there were little speckled brown lizards with tails of cobalt blue. Here the birds were the White-fronted Nunbird, a Laughing Falcon, Scarlet-rumped Caciques, Lineated and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, Keel-billed Toucans and a Rufous Mourner. Here also were wintering Baltimore Orioles, Chestnut-sided, Kentucky and Wilson's Warblers, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

On the third day, we were joined by Gary and Sue, a married couple who had worked on the birds of Costa Rica while living there for many years. They erected mist nets to catch the birds unharmed to band, photograph and identify them. Into the nets came Long-billed Gnatwrens, the White-lined Tanager, Thick-billed Seed Finch, Bronzy, Long-tailed and Little Hermits, the White-collared Manakin and Slaty Spinetail, the Dusky and Dot-winged Antwrens, and the Band-tailed Barbthroat. In the bush around us were Squirrel Cuckoos, a Paltry Tyrannulet, Golden-browed Chlorophonias and Olive-backed Euphonias, Shining Honeycreepers, White-necked Jacobins, and Buff-rumped Warblers, Palm and Blue-gray Tanagers.

I believe it was on the morning of the fourth day that we were down to the launches again. For a whole day, we chugged slowly north past swamp forests, until the river angled up and across the border into Nicaragua where we made a rest and customs stop. Then the river curved back into Costa Rica. Finally we came to within a mile of the Caribbean. At this point, we ran into Great Frigatebirds, Sandwich Terns, Brown Pelicans, Osprey, Olivaceous Cormorants and Great-tailed Grackles. We headed down a series of endless canals which had been deepened and



Sungrebe

carrying half the gear and half the people, the two boatmen started the motors and we were swept out into the fast-flowing river, looking for alligators and manatees. One or more Black Vultures always kept the sky above; now and then a flock of Orange-chinned Parakeets went by, a screeching green whiz. We floated past tree snags and log wracks, the tops of which were perches for Blue and White Swallows, or we drifted under the shadow of a flapping Montezuma Oropendola. Dozens of Sungrebes paddled furiously out of our path; a sunning Anhinga and a Broad-winged Hawk came into view.

Soon we slowed down where the river

on a leaf, all amid the din of night insects, but no owls, no night bird sounds.

Light is provided by a noisy generator which must be turned off at 10 p.m. Water for the showers is cold but everyone has bathed and eaten and the two young researchers in-residence have described their projects to us. If you must get up in the night, you must wear shoes and take your flashlight, because it is then that the nocturnal and lethal fer-de-lance crawls about. Perhaps a brief hard downpour and then the breaking dawn vocalized with all manner of bird calls — the call of sequestered Rufous Motmots, the grunts from a pair of Masked

lined to flow parallel to all but out of sight of the sea. We ate and drank and huddled together under the boat's canvas cover during brief showers, and from the high river-bank trees families of Black Howler Monkeys would stare or hoot at us. And on quite high branches over the water, large green iguanas stretched in the sun, and on sticks and stubs protruding from the water were pair after pair of mud turtles.

Night fell and suddenly there were lights on the shore behind a row of silhouetted coconut palms. Behind these loomed a building with a brightly lighted ground floor. We had arrived at Tortuguero.

The canal was little more than a mile at this point. We landed on the far side and there, in the darkness, against the encroaching jungle, was the most perfect set imaginable for a grade-B movie laid in the tropics. It was dilapidated, decaying, palm-thatched structure of rambling rooms topped with a huge rain-catch tank from which the water constantly spilled through a large leak. Master of all this was a man who could well serve as any novelist's model for a gone-to-ruin-in-the-tropics character. He was a great hulk of a man about six feet eight inches tall with a four-foot thick girth, a retired American who had searched for and found a cheap place to live. But he was now on the tag end of a long-defunct dream. He had come as manager to this place which was to serve as a package trip for wealthy American fishermen. But the builder had died suddenly, leaving a wife who did not care and could not find a buyer. Tiny, for that was the name we gave him, had lingered on with a native black man as electrician and plumber. Tiny lived on beer and large fantasies now, for he was forever cornering one of our group to listen to his ideas for reclamation. He was never able to manage the water's being on for a full hour. And the generator for the lights worked more in the daytime than at night. The great bale of sheets and towels we had carried all the way from San Jose was for our use here. Tiny would take us on tours through the bar and dining room, abandoned and covered with thick dust, but still screened. In one corner grew an enormous toadstool big enough for a person to sit on. Outside was a rectangular pool with one fish, rather than the dozens which were to have teemed there as meals for rich tourists. And over-by a coconut tree were a pair of red Spider Monkeys chained to a shelter of



Boat-billed Heron

their own. This area yielded the Tiger Heron, Variable Seedeater, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper and Buff-throated Saltator. A drift down the waterways brought us Green Ibis, Chestnut-bellied (Agami) Heron, a roost of Boat-billed Herons, a pair of Muscovy Ducks, a Green Kingfisher, Jacanas and wintering Blue-winged Teal, a soaring Black Hawk-Eagle and a flight of Mealy Amazon parrots.

Across the canal our meals were cooked by a black woman and her daughters who lived some distance away. They had to be ferried up to prepare each meal, just as we, on our side, had to be ferried over in order to dine. Opposite the dining room 300 feet away lay the Caribbean Ocean, rough and taboo for swimming because of sharks.

Each day we would go exploring by ferry, some of us this way and some that, up all the connecting channels and down byways that ran like tunnels under branches that hung so low we had to lie back in the boats to pass through. The water here was always mirror-still and black with tannin from fallen, decaying leaves. Again, monkeys in the trees and once a sloth, and sometimes when a twig quivered there would be a splash and a skitter — a Jesus Christ lizard. To escape, it drops to the water and runs on top on its hind legs and tail without sinking; its front legs are held up like those of a kangaroo. And of course there were the birds — Hoff-

man's Woodpecker and the Red-headed Barbet, an Umbrellabird and Purple-throated Fruit Crows, a Black Hawk, the Pale-billed Woodpecker, a pair of Collared Aracaris and a silently surveying Semiplumbeous Hawk.

Again we were on the launch for a whole day on the canals. The water was like glass; the vivid blue Morpho butterflies wafted about the trees like falling leaves; water hyacinths, all in bloom, lined both sides of the canals for mile after mile after mile. Just before dusk we came to a final landing near which was a waiting bus which we boarded. We went into town to the Hotel Acon. This was Limon, the only port, and the largest city on the Caribbean.

Civilization at last. A really hot shower, a stroll through fetidly hot streets, a night cap in the hotel bar. Next morning another all-day ride. This time in our reserved car, the rear one, on a narrow-gauge railroad up to San Jose again, 80 miles and 59 stops. There is the movement of the food vendors who board at every stop and go through the train; the pleasant warm air, the magic scenery of, first, the houses of blacks built on stilts facing the tracks, potted plants on porch railings or tacked against the walls painted blue or even pink, yards riotous with ginger, hibiscus, crotons, and perhaps chickens, ducks or a pig. As we rose in elevation it became plantations of coffee trees, herds of zebu cattle, and great valleys and cloud-shadowed hills in the distance, and volcano-ed peaks on the horizon until we got to San Jose again and re-settled in Holland House once more.

Our last several days were spent in San Jose. We went from souvenir shops to orchid vendors to the Gold Museum. On the last Sunday we went out to Lankester Gardens, the national botanic treasure begun decades before by a Welshman who settled, prospered and amassed an enviable collection of plants. Another day we donned our cold-weather outfits for a bus trip to the Mountain of Death, a pass through the cordillera, so named because the Indians on the east, wanting to trade with those on the Pacific, used to walk across in loin cloths; it was so cold they had to flay each other to keep warm. Many died, so the name — Cerro de la Muerte. We were very fortunate; the weather was clear, warm and calm. It was like being at timberline in California. The vista was magnificent. On the final day, we took a long scenic drive to the Pacific Ocean at Punta Arenas.

December 21, 1977, 7:45 a.m. — boarding PanAm to Los Angeles. ☺

Call 874-1318

by Dorothy Dimsdale

Before deciding where to bird, it's always useful to call the Los Angeles Audubon tape recording. Every Thursday the tape is updated with news of the most recently recorded species, some rare and some abundant, and where they are to be found.

For years now it has been a ritual for me to call "the tape" without a thought of what is entailed in putting it together. Several people have made the recording since the tape's inception sometime in the '60's. It all started at the suggestion of long time LAAS member George Venatta, but the first voice I heard was that of Jean Brandt (now LAAS President), who would encourage, cajole and sometimes chastise birders and bird reporters. Many's the time I have dropped everything to search for a bird at the urging of Jean's taped message, feeling positively guilty if by some mischance I couldn't leave at once. She projected an enthusiasm which was infectious and she made a ritual of ending her report with "Thanks for calling Audubon!"

After Jean came Terry Clark whose caressing voice would give not only the bird and location but also why the bird would be there and what to look for. She would end the recording with a bright remark or "Toodle-oo!". Starr Saphir came next. She is an actress and her recordings were often dramatic, whispered or declamatory, ending always with "Do drive carefully". Now we have Becky Belkin who sounds calm and unruffled and it was she who called and asked me to cover for her while she went on vacation. I had "done" the tape only once before, during Jean Brandt's tenure, when I distinguished myself by announcing a couple of Merganizers (entirely new species!) at Malibu Lagoon. At that time I thought a Merganser was a dance step. Becky asked me if I would like my phone number announced so that birders could call direct with their reports.

The first caller was not the bird report I had been expecting, but a delightful lady who had found an immature Kestrel flopping about in her swimming pool, and she wanted to know what to do about it. Fortunately for me, the Humane Society (whom she had contacted earlier) arrived at her house and we were assured that they would care for the bird which would eventually be released to the wild when it could fend for itself.


Next came a call from someone living near the airport. There were a pair of Burrowing Owls raising a brood of six on the airfield. Two of the six had fallen into a gully and died. Now two more had been in the gully for two days but were being fed by the adults though they were in danger of being drowned by runoff water. What to do? It's always a bad idea to remove young birds from their parents — particularly Owls which need bone and fur to complete their digestive processes. The caller agreed to put a cardboard carton on its side and fill it with torn newspaper where the two "fallouts" could have a simulated burrow/nest above the water line but in a position where the parents could reach them. I didn't hear from the caller again so am hoping this tactic worked.

Next was an enquiry for the purchase of binoculars, and I began to realize the complexities of the problems which cause people to phone. However, so far there had been not one bird report. Admittedly the weather was scorching — well into the 100's — and no sane birder would be out, but then I have never really thought "sane" was an adjective to be applied to birders. I myself had been unable to bird as I was supervising what appeared to be the demolition of my home.

The end of the week was approaching and still no birders had phoned. I was really getting desperate, when a call came from a man who was curious to know if the Robin which had appeared in his Los Angeles backyard was unusual for June. My own experience with Robins is that they come and go as and

when they please; sometimes there are several in the yard and then I won't see any for a couple of years. So I understood his curiosity. Anyway, I was delighted that he called and his was the only bird report of the week! What, I wondered, did Becky do with the empty tape yawning before her and nothing to put on it? Before recording, the sightings must be put together in a script to be read into the microphone, so it's essential to have *something* to say. Well, I highlighted the Robin and pleaded for a few brave souls to battle the heat and give me some birds for the following week. Then I threw in a few details of up-coming pelagic trips to end my recording. I went home and sat on my phone, hoping for reports to come in.

The following week was *wonderful!* Everyone, it seemed, called in and I had so many lists of birds that they overlapped and I had a hard time deciding which I could leave out. The tape is only three minutes long, and so I cut out as much as I could spare and read the rest at a race-horse gallop. My main comfort was in knowing that Becky would be back for the following week. The only words which were perfectly clear may have been those announcing her return and giving her number for further reports.

I'll always be willing to help out, and I have a healthier respect for all that goes into the compellation of each script. I also realize the importance of phoning in my sightings after each birding trip. Even the most common birds can provide a filler at a time when there is a dearth of species. Call Audubon House at 876-0202 or Becky Belkin at 279-2450, and we'll all benefit. 

Pt. Reyes Birdathon Planned

Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory is planning their fourth annual Birdathon, in conjunction with the Mono Lake Committee. Last year, PRBO netted \$50,130 which they split with the MLC. This was the work of fewer than 200 volunteer bird counters.

This year's count will be on Saturday 26 September 1981. There will be prizes for the ten highest money raisers; all participants receive a free PRBO or Mono Lake T-shirt. There will be a dinner following the Birdathon in Tiburon, with free food, refreshments and door prizes.

For those who think they are not good enough to see more than a few birds, Bob Yutzky, PRBO Director of Education, will be your leader at Pt. Reyes on 26 September. All you need to do participate in Bob's

group is to gather \$2/species from your sponsors; Bob guarantees you'll see at least 100 species. And so you'll raise at least \$200 for Pt. Reyes and Mono Lake as well as have a super day birding.

Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory is a membership-supported, non-profit research, education and conservation institution that has been, since 1965, dedicated to the study and preservation of birds and their habitats. Pt. Reyes has always been an independent institution because of such fund-raising activities as Birdathon. For information on how to participate, or to sponsor one or more of the three-year veterans of Birdathon, write to Birdathon Coordinator, Bob Stewart, Pt. Reyes Observatory, 4990 Shoreline Highway, Stinson Beach, CA 94970.



Have you ever wondered how the tufa towers were formed? Why Mono Lake is salty? Who hatched chickens in Paoha Island's steam vents. How the Indians made brine fly soup? You'll find the answers (and much more) in the Mono Lake Committee's first book (this description leads us to assume there will be more) — the **Mono Lake Guidebook**. This is the first authoritative biography of America's most extraordinary lake. From tufas to volcanoes, brine shrimp to gulls, aqueducts to water conser-

Mono Lake

vation, it delves into Mono's geology, wildlife and human history, and the alternatives to its destruction. The **Mono Lake Guidebook** is lively, informative and thoroughly referenced; it is sure to delight the vacationist and the monophile alike. For your copy/copies, write to the Mono Lake Committee, PO Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541. Price: \$4.95 plus \$1.00 postage and 6% California sales tax.

Also available from the Mono Lake Committee is the **Mono Lake Color-and-Learn Book** for children. In the words of Huey P. Johnson, California Secretary for Resources, "The **Mono Lake Color-and-Learn Book** is an outstanding accomplishment. It combines entertainment, humor, and education in a water conservation message that all Californians — young and adult — must understand if we are going to preserve the quality of life that Californians presently enjoy." The Committee is offering these books at \$2.25 each or five for \$10.00. Add 15% handling and California residents add 6% sales tax. Checks should be payable to the Mono Lake Committee.

The Watt Line

James Gaius Watt was the ungrateful recipient of the first major setback of his meteoric career as Interior Secretary. He had launched a frontal attack on the entire continental shelf on the west coast, promising he was going to lease it all for oil exploration. He ran into a formidable road-block when Californians raised their hands and screamed an unqualified "No!" Democrats and Republicans (including even Sam Haya-kawa) agreed that the two-week supply of oil under the ocean was hardly worth the permanent disfiguring of our coast with oil rigs. Or the risk of destruction of fishing resources and the damage to birds and seals and sea otters.

Though he has retreated and claims he will sit things out for a while, there is no doubt he was bowed to the political realities and suffered a significant blow. It is to be hoped that this event will be educational for Mr. Watt. Recalling some of his choicer anti-environment (and anti-environmentalist) remarks of recent date, we wonder whether the lion can change his DNA code and replicate himself as a lamb. — S.W.

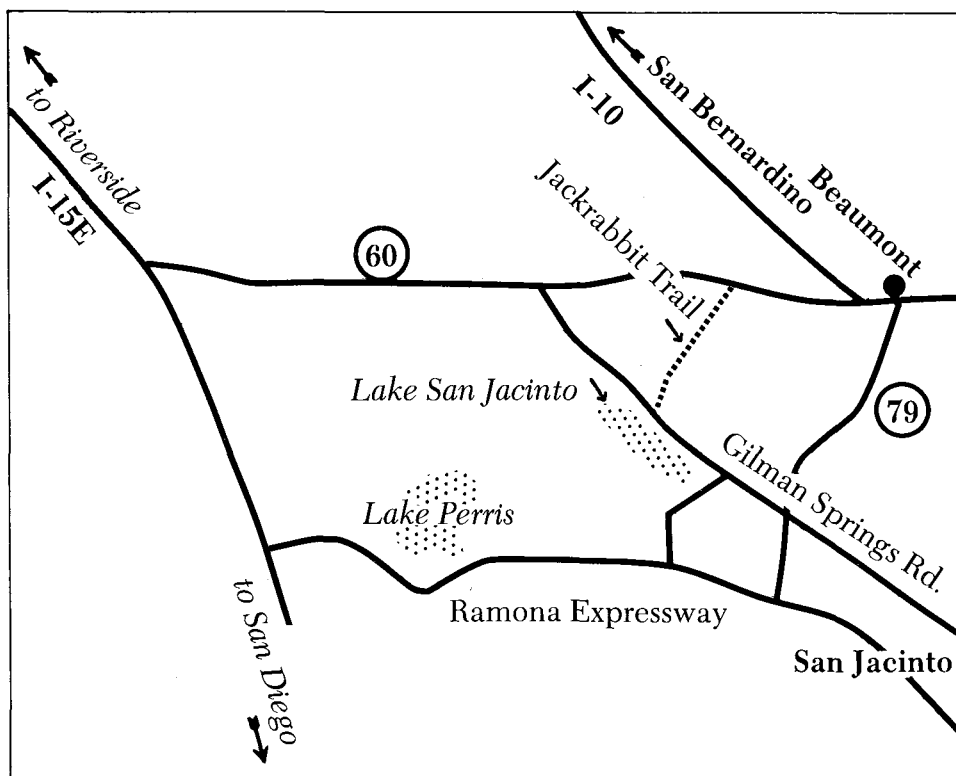
Birding the San Jacinto Area

by Henry E. Childs, Jr.

Birding in Riverside County is great, and you don't have to go all the way to the Salton Sea (NESS) for good birds. Closer to home you find Lake San Jacinto; vagrants and rarities have been turning up here regularly. This may be because more birders are getting to know the spot and they check it out more often. There has also been more water in the lake in recent years. This lake is not on the American Auto Club map for Riverside County so the following directions will be helpful.

Lake San Jacinto is located south of Highway 60 on Gilman Springs Road, about 11 miles northwest of the town of San Jacinto. It may be approached from Highway 60 (off-ramp sign says San Jacinto, Hemet) or from I-15 by going east on the Ramona Expressway past Lakeview to Bridge Road. Turn left and proceed to Gilman Springs Road; the lake is in sight. The lake shore can only be approached on a dirt road opposite the intersection with Jackrabbit Trail. Drive to the edge of the lake and use your telescope.

Seen here in March 1981 were two adult Bald Eagles, hundreds of White Pelicans, a Sandhill Crane, Canada and White-fronted Geese, Osprey and many species of herons and waterfowl. Among the rarer species which have occurred here in fall are Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Black Skimmer. A Groove-billed Ani was found in nearby weedy fields in the fall of 1974. In the early part of the century, the lake area was a breeding ground for large numbers of waterbirds.



Birds of the Season

by Shum Suffel



Rare shorebirds dominated summer birding. Guy McCaskie's breeding-plumaged **Curlew Sandpiper** at San Elijo Lagoon, San Diego Co., on 4 July just slipped in under the deadline for the last TANAGER. Then, on 12 July, David Koepel and Ed Navojosky identified a breeding-plumaged **Red-necked Stint** (Rufous-necked Sandpiper) at the Santa Clara River Estuary in McGrath Park, Ventura. Several confirming witnesses arrived that evening, and more than thirty birders studied and photographed it the next morning; the bird (Southern California's third) stayed for some eight days. Coming in second is almost like losing the race, as Mitch Heindel and Brian Daniels realized when they found another breeding-plumaged **Red-necked Stint** at Unit One of the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge on 19 July.

At the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 23 July, Jon Dunn and Sandy Wohlgemuth were excited to find a tattler some sixty miles from the nearest coast. Intrigued, they studied it only to find that the fine barring on the breast and flanks (the latter covered by the folded wings) left the belly and undertail coverts an immaculate white. They were convinced when they heard its two-noted "too-weep" call (unlike any call of the Wandering Tattler) that they had a **Gray-tailed (Polynesian) Tattler**, a first record for North America south of the Bering Sea. There were fourteen fortunate birders who saw it. Louis Bevier was returning from Yosemite via the Owens Valley, when he turned off to find the other birders studying the "bird of the year". The following morning dozens of birders covered the ponds and the nearby Edwards Air Force Base marsh without success.

The rarity of the above three species completely overshadowed such normally exciting shorebirds as **Semipalmated**, **Baird's**, and **Stilt Sandpipers**. Several dozen **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were reported along the coast and inland, with a maximum of 18 in the Lancaster area on 4 August (Starr Saphir). Certainly many more were overlooked. Other interesting shorebirds included a **Lesser Golden-Plover** at Goleta on 19 and 20 July (Larry Ballard); two **Surfbirds** at San Diego on 30 June (Richard Webster); a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Goleta on 18 July (Paul Lehman); a **Red Knot** at Seal

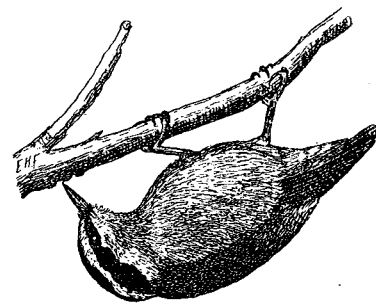
Beach on 15 July and nine at nearby Bolsa Chica on 7 July; several adult **Baird's Sandpipers** at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds in mid-July; two **Stilt Sandpipers** in the Los Angeles River Channel in Long Beach (Mitch Heindel); and a **ruff** in Batiquitos Lagoon, San Diego Co., 13-20 July (Jerry Oldenettle). By August 1st all the expected shorebirds except Solitary Sandpiper and Dunlin (always late) had been reported and most were increasing.

The unusual activity this July resulted in many noteworthy sightings other than shorebirds. A **Red-necked Grebe** at Pt. Mugu after 9 July (Richard Webster) may have been a holdover from last winter. **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** are casual this far south and particularly in summer; thus one half a mile off Goleta on 11 July (Jon Atwood, *et al*) was unexpected. July was not a good month for **Magnificent Frigatebirds**, with three near Santa Barbara, a female along the Malibu coast on 11 July (independently by Bob Pann and Jim Morris), one near San Diego on 13 July, and only one at the Salton Sea (Guy McCaskie). A **Reddish Egret** was at Mission Bay, San Diego, in mid-July (Claude Edwards), and the **Little Blue Herons** nested again in the Tijuana River bottom below San Diego (Guy McCaskie *et al*). Nine **White-faced Ibis** summered at McGrath (Richard Webster). **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** are seldom reported in recent years except below the Salton Sea; thus one at Mohave Narrows near Victorville on 12 July is of interest (Mitch Heindel).

Two **California Condors** feeding on the hillside east of the freeway a mile south of Gorman were a bonus for Starr Saphir on 10 July. There are few recent sightings for Los Angeles County, although there have been regular sightings this summer in the Pyramid Lake area. Several close condor sightings were made from the lookout at the National Forest boundary along Mil Potrero Road, some 20 miles west of the Cuddy Valley "triangle" at the foot of Mt. Pinos. A Turkey Vulture-like bird with white in the tail, seen but not positively identified from the west slope of Mt. San Jacinto on 18 July (Dana Butters) may have been one of the **Zone-tailed Hawks** nesting near Santa Rosa

Mtn., only 20 miles away. Two **Peregrine Falcons** were near the Salton Sea — one near the north end (Steve Cardiff and Andy Sanders), and one near the south end (Brian Daniels and Mitch Heindel).

Ed Navojosky's work in behalf of the **Least Tern** colony at McGrath reveals that despite Fourth of July fireworks, vehicles, dogs, and thoughtless people, some 40 adults fledged 17 young, with three hatchlings still near their nests on 20 July. A **Laughing Gull** was at Upper Newport Bay on 11 July (Jerry Tolman). One to three **Black Skimmers** were at the Santa Clara River Estuary from May through July. An **Arctic Tern** about 30 miles south of Oxnard, Ventura Co., on 11 July (Richard Webster) was very early. Seven **Common Murres** were near a fishing barge off Redondo Beach on 5 July (Arthur Howe); a **Xantus' Murrelet** at the Huntington Beach Pier on 26 July was the first one that Russ and Marion Wilson had seen there. The discovery of a dead **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at the Placerita Nature Center suggests the presence of cuckoos in riparian habitat along the Santa Clara River, where they have not been reported recently (*vide* Mickey Long). Bob Barnes, who is doing surveys in the undisturbed riparian habitat along the Kern River east of Bakersfield, has found several pairs of cuckoos there, along with **Summer Tanagers** and **Indigo Buntings**. Mitch Heindel and Brian Daniel's owl searches in the San Gabriel Mtns. revealed fully-grown **Spotted Owls** just below Switzer's Picnic area and two **Northern Pygmy-Owls** on 12 July in Vincent's Gulch just off the Angeles Crest Highway, but they did not see nor hear **Flammulated Owls** at Buckhorn Campground where one was reported earlier in the summer.



Send any interesting bird observations to:
Shum Suffel, 1105 No. Holliston Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91104.

Some 20 Chimney Swifts were seen overhead in Burbank on 4 July (Richard Webster and Jon Dunn); this is the same area where some 50 Chimney Swifts roosted in an air shaft of the Burbank Studios in July 1978. There was no evidence of roosting this summer. A **Brown-crested (Wied's Crested) Flycatcher** was reported at Salton City on 19 July (Brian Daniels and Mitch Heindel), where this species has not previously been recorded. At least two dozen **Bank Swallows** were at the Edwards AFB marsh in late July, where observers were cautious in distinguishing them from the hundreds of immature **Tree Swallows** which have brownish backs and indistinct bands across the breast.

Several pairs of **Hermit Thrushes** were breeding at San Marcos Pass and Refugio Pass behind Santa Barbara (Louis Bevier). Both passes are about 2,250 feet in elevation, which is quite low for these mountain nesters. The **Northern Parula** and the **Yellow-throated Warbler**, originally found on 11 May by Larry Ballard, are apparently summering in Santa Barbara, as they were both seen well into July. Similarly, a **Black-and-white Warbler** stayed on in Goleta through July (Paul Lehman). Six **Evening Grosbeaks** were found by Paul in the coast range behind Santa Barbara, on Figueroa Mtn. (4500 feet) and Big Pine Mtn. (6800 feet).

September may not be the end of summer for Southern Californians, but for the birds it is definitely autumn. Nesting is long past, family responsibilities are fulfilled and migration is in full swing. For birders, this is the most challenging time of the year, for these migrants are not as brightly garbed as those we saw in breeding plumage last spring. Ducks, particularly, are a dull lot as eclipse males, females, and immatures are all in "female" plumages. The immature and winter-plumaged passerines, too, are nondescript and this is where the challenge lies; these are the difficult identifications that make birding as fascinating for the experts as it is for the neophytes. In fall the coastal promontories from Pt. Reyes to Pt. Loma, and the coastal valleys with vegetation and water, provide the best habitat for migrants and vagrants.

P.S. California's most wanted warbler was found not here, but in the White Mtns. of Arizona. The finder was Gary Rosenberg, the date was 12 June, and the warbler was a **Swainson's Warbler**! Also in Arizona, a **Berylline Hummingbird** was found in Carr Canyon in the Huachuca Mtns. on 31 July by a Southern California birder, Roger Lindfield from Cal Tech. 🐦

Condor, continued from page 1



Upon receipt of this information, the California Department of Fish and Game decided that a visit to the nest should be undertaken in an effort to determine the cause of the nesting failure. On the 14th of July, a team of biologists led by Lt. Mike Walter of the Department of Fish and Game, and including personnel of the Condor Research Center and a veterinarian, Dr. Ron Dalzell, visited the nesting area. They found numerous scattered pieces of condor egg shell, a few feathers, and a few regurgitated pellets of food remains, presumably deposited in the cave by adults. No adult condors were seen on the day of the nest examination. The preliminary conclusion, based on the scanty evidence available, including a close examination of the egg shells, is that the egg probably hatched, and that the young condor chick died either during hatching or shortly thereafter. The cause of death remains unknown, although the pellets will be thoroughly analyzed for any possible additional clues.

The unsuccessful conclusion of this nesting effort is extremely unfortunate, although not totally unexpected in view of what we know of nesting success by condors. Studies of many larger birds have shown that the hatching and post-hatching period are difficult ones, which entail higher rates of mortality than during most other periods in the development of nestling birds.

From Condor Field Notes, vol. 1, no. 5, July 22, 1981, publication of the California Condor Research Center.

Peterson to Speak at UCLA

UCLA Extension is offering a major lecture series for the general public this fall — challenging Scientific Problems in the Decades Ahead. This lecture series brings together some of the most distinguished scientists and thinkers in the country today, addressing those critical, often dramatic developments in their own fields that will have impact on the whole of society. Norman Covsins, presently Adjunct Professor at the UCLA School of Medicine, will be series moderator and will introduce such speakers as Nobel Laureate Paul Berg, JPL Director Bruce Murray, National Audubon Society President Russell Peterson, Nobel Laureate Melvin Calvin and Cal Tech President Marvin Goldberger. These specialists will touch on developments ranging from the microscopic level of gene manipulation to survival issues facing the earth to an exploration of the universe within and possibly beyond our reach and imagination.

Noncredit fee for the entire five-lecture series is \$50. Tickets for single lectures will be sold at the door if space permits. Special, reduced single-admission tickets will be available for Audubon members to hear Russell Peterson on Wednesday 18 November. Proof of membership must be furnished to obtain these special \$8.50 tickets. Dr. Peterson will be talking on "The Ecological Challenge."

For further information on individual lectures or the series, to be held at the Wadsworth Theatre, Wadsworth V.A. in West L.A., contact UCLA Extension, Dept. of Sciences, (213) 825-7093.



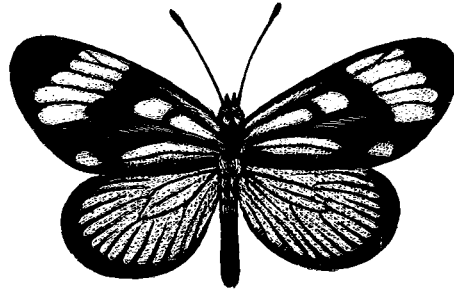
Santa Monica College Offers Bird Watching Classes

Roger Cobb will lead two introductory bird watching classes in the fall on four Saturdays commencing 19 September. The first class will meet mornings, 9 to noon and the second afternoons, 1 to 4. The course will include field trips to prime Southern California birding areas; the class will stress identification of both local birds and migrants, with some emphasis on behavior. For further information or to enroll, call (213) 450-5150, ext. 218.



CALENDAR

WANTED: A volunteer to help out in the membership department on Tuesdays. No previous experience necessary; we will train you. Typing ability an asset but not absolutely essential. Pleasant working conditions with congenial co-workers. Age and gender not a factor — we are an equal opportunity organization. Please call Tuesdays or Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and ask for Andrea Kaufman or Marge Wohlgemuth.



TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 8 — Lloyd Kiff will talk at the first fall evening meeting on the recent reintroduction of three Peregrine Falcons into the Westwood area, and on their reintroduction status in general: **The Rescue of the California Peregrine**. 8 p.m. Plummer Park.

The long awaited **Birds of California** by Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn, with illustrations by Lee Jones, is now on sale at Audubon House. At the September meeting on the 8th, Kimball and Jon will be available for autographs. Come help LAAS celebrate!

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 12 — Bird the **Ballona Wetlands** with Bob and Roberta Shanman (545-2867 after 6:00) Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Pacific Ave. bridge. Take 90 West (Marina Fwy) to its end at Culver Blvd. Continue west on Culver; turn north onto Pacific Ave. and continue to bridge and parking area.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 12 — **McGrath State Park**. Meet Starr Sapphire at 8:00 a.m. at the Santa Clara Estuary. Take Hwy. 101 north and exit at Victoria Ave. in Ventura. Pass under freeway to Olivas Park Dr., then turn right at the traffic lights at Harbor Blvd. Turn left and park by the bridge.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 16 — Dorothy Dimsdale and Ruth Lohr will lead at **Huntington Beach Central Park** (near Bolsa Chica in Orange County — see the map in June '81 **TANAGER**) Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot on the east side of Goldenwest St. between Talbert Ave. and Slater Ave.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19 — Meet Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett at the Lamont Odett Overlook on Hwy. 14 just south of Palmdale to bird the **Antelope Valley**; 7:00 a.m. Group will concentrate on *migrant land birds in the morning* and *shorebirds in the afternoon*. Bring lunch and drinking water.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5 — Ed Navojosky celebrates the tenth anniversary of his **Malibu Lagoon to McGrath State Beach** explorations. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot at Malibu. Bring lunch, to be eaten at Big Sycamore. (938-9766)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11 — Meet Jerry Haigh (455-1696) at 8 a.m. at the entrance to the **Trippet Ranch**, to bird the Ranch and **Topanga Canyon**. Chaparral birds and vagrants.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17 — Be present in the **Antelope Valley** for Fred Heath's "mini-Christmas count." Meet at the Lamont-Odett Overlook at 7:30 a.m. Bring lunch and water and be prepared for any kind of weather.

Shearwater Journeys — Pelagic Trips

Debra Love Shearwater is still in the pelagic trip business and living in Santa Cruz, CA. Her eight-page flyer of excursions includes bird- and whale-watching trips to Monterey Bay, Monterey Seavalleys, Davidson Seamount and the Monterey Submarine Canyon. A total of 30 trips between August 1981 and February 1982 have been planned. For your announcement of these trips, write to Debi Love Shearwater, 362 Lee Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. The **TANAGER** will give publicity to these trips as space allows.



LAAS Pelagic Trip Reservations — 1981 Schedule

To make reservations for 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, c/o Audubon House.

No reservations will be accepted or refunds made within two weeks 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. If you wish to carpool, please so indicate, and you will be contacted two weeks prior to the trip. *Please send a separate check for each trip!*

Important: Because of the rapidly rising cost of motor fuel, all listed trip prices are subject to change. Please bring an extra five dollars in one dollar bills to cover possible fuel surcharge. Boats will not leave port until trips have been paid in full, including any surcharge.

Audubon Bird Reports:

Los Angeles (213) 874-1318
Santa Barbara (805) 964-8240

Los Angeles Audubon Headquarters, Library, Bookstore and Nature Museum are located at Audubon House, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046. Telephone: (213) 876-0202. Hours: 10-3, Tuesday through Saturday.

WESTERN TANAGER

EDITOR Mary Lawrence Test
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