



# WESTERN Tanager

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 49 50

Number 7

April 1984

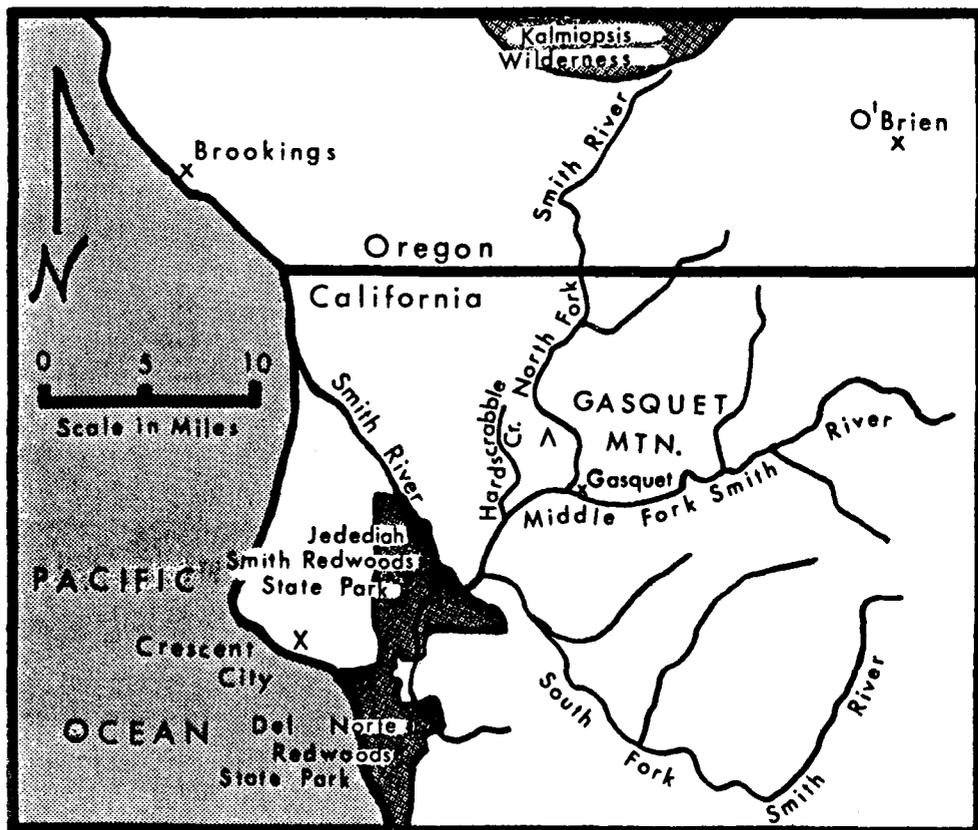
## Another Part of the Forest

By Sanford Wohlgenuth

**S**equoia sempervirens, "ever-living," the tree that lives forever. . . . Looking up from its base on a clear day, a mature coast redwood does seem to go on forever. A natural wonder of the western world, the coast redwood grows from a tiny seed in a half-inch cone to the tallest tree in the world. So tenacious is its hold on life that a fallen redwood sprouts young trees from its stump and trunk. Its thick, fibrous, tannin-rich bark discourages insects and resists fire and disease. Its chief adversary is the chain saw.

Occurring only in a narrow strip of coast from central California to southern Oregon, the redwood is the most spectacular member of an extraordinary ecosystem. Moisture makes the difference. The finest redwood stands flourish with an annual rainfall of over 100 inches. In the dry summer months coastal fog keeps the soil damp with fog drip as high as 30 or 40 inches a year. Though the redwoods dominate the forest, there is a vigorous and substantial understory. Tanoak, laurel, huckleberry, salal, salmonberry, and vine-leaf maple are only some of the trees and shrubs that live in the shade of the tall trees. The damp earth sprouts redwood sorrel, star flowers, bleeding hearts and several species of ferns.

There are breaks in the redwoods, especially along the many creeks, and red alder and big-leaf maple grow exuberantly. In the sunny places in the spring, wild flowers grow along the edges of the dark forest: rhododendrons, wild roses, Iturriel's spear and the magnificent western azalea with its incomparable perfume. And in June the woods are flooded with the songs of Swainson's Thrush, Wilson's Warbler and the wild, haunted whistle of the Varied Thrush. Winter Wrens scurry in the brush undersoot, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees whisper to each other in the trees. A walk along a creek may find a Water Ouzel feeding its young. Redwood country is one of the few places in California where one may catch a fleeting glimpse of the elusive Ruffed Grouse.



Map by Peter Wohlgenuth

To walk the trails through the forest is to tread on a six-inch cushion of duff, the accumulation of years of fallen leaves and twigs. Your footsteps are muffled and you find yourself aware of the silence. The trees push upward to form a canopy so high you can barely see it. An occasional shaft of sunlight slips through. A cathedral seems like man's attempt to emulate the awe and majesty of the promise of infinite peace that exists in the depths of this forest.

In pre-columbian days the redwoods prospered in an unbroken sweep from Big Sur to Oregon. With the phenomenal growth of the country in the nineteenth century the demand for this desirable lumber became irresistible. Great swaths of 2000-year old trees fell to the axe and the two-man saw. But a moment in time was reached when the wealth of American no longer seemed inexhaustible, when the buffalo no longer stretched from horizon to horizon, when white egrets and

alligators became scarce in the southern swamps. An urgent concern developed, a conservation ethic was born and groups like the "Save The Redwoods League" were created. Groves of old growth trees were bought and preserved. Some were given to the state as the nucleus for Redwood Parks. As time passes, whole watersheds were acquired to protect the ecosystem. A planned freeway that would have disrupted the integrity of the parks was moved to a less disturbing route. In 1968, on the wave of the Environmental Decade, the Redwood National Park was formed and Ladybird Johnson had a grove named after her.

As things stand today a kind of equilibrium exists between the timber industry and the environmentalists. Privately owned redwoods are cut and the public redwood parks prosper. But into this benign equipoise has crept a new and different element that threatens to destroy a sizeable portion of the redwood

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forest. And much more.

The California Nickel Corporation (Cal-Nickel), a wholly Canadian-owned company, has been seeking permits to strip-mine a sizeable area of the North Coast, in Del Norte county in northern California and adjacent part of southern Oregon. Scattered through this region are "lateritic" soils wherein heavy metals have become highly concentrated after eons of time have washed away the nutrients that support normal plant growth. (Darlingtonia, the California pitcher plant, thrives in this soil as it gets its missing nutrients from the insects it consumes.) The most valuable metals in this laterite are cobalt, nickel and chromium.

Cal-Nickel proposes to mine the soil, remove the metals and then put the tailings—the waste residue—back where it came from. This is not as simple as it sounds. After the power shovels scrape off the laterite, it is to be treated on site in a processing plant with a 250-foot smokestack. The soil is then mixed with sulfuric acid and steam-heated under pressure to 465° F., to leach out the metals. The operation will take great amounts of water and power. Three dams are to be built on Hardscabble Creek, a tributary of the Smith River. The power plant will burn nearly 300,000 tons of high-sulfur coal a year, plus 64,000 tons of fuel oil and 8500 tons of diesel and gasoline. This initial project is to be Cal-Nickel's Gasquet Mountain Mine where it plans to process 2700 acres of laterite. Gasquet (pronounced "Gas-key" locally) is a town on the middle fork of the Smith River; the mine site is just north of the town.

The Smith is no ordinary river. It drains a vast area of spectacular scenery that encompasses one of the richest hoards of wildlife and plants to be found in the lower 48 states. The redwoods remain behind within their narrow coastal domain. North and east extends a great mixed forest wilderness, with over 1000 plant species—including 21 conifers—that support bald eagle, mountain lion, marten, spotted owl, pileated woodpecker, Roosevelt elk and peregrine falcon. Salmon and steelhead migrations every year attract thousands of fishermen. The Smith has been officially designated a California Wild and Scenic River, and is the only undammed major river left in the state.

The potential for environmental disaster in the Gasquet Mountain Mine project is almost too dreadful to contemplate. The disturbance of the land and the replacement of mine tailings would increase the turbidity and sedimentation of the creeks and rivers when the heavy rains arrive. It can be imagined what this will mean to salmon and steelhead, which require clear unsilted streams to spawn successfully. When the mine tailings are replaced, they will contain residual acid and soluble heavy metals. Rain will leach these toxic substances into the creeks where all forms of riparian life will be affected. And there is nothing to prevent these poisons from

percolating into the ground and contaminating the drinking water.

What of air pollution? The fossil fuels will generate the usual sulfur and nitrogen oxides that are producing acid rain all over the industrialized world. In addition, the 250-foot stack will release significant traces of heavy metals. Some of this effluent will be dispersed, but on the frequent days of heavy fog coming in from the ocean, much of it will be trapped and held close to the ground. What this will do to the creeks and vegetation may remind us of the sterile lakes and dying conifers of New England under the path of acid rain. The North Coast residents are not looking forward to breathing this gift of acid fog.

But Gasquet Mountain may only be the beginning. Cal-Nickel and other mining companies already own claims on some 50,000 acres of laterite. If Cal-Nickel gets its permits from the California Division of Mines and Geology, it will be difficult to deny similar operations. Now, Cal-Nickel simply hasn't got the money for the Gasquet project. It is banking on the fact that cobalt is a *strategic material*, which makes a cobalt mine eligible for federal subsidies. It wants \$300 million to build the plant and the dams. The U.S. Air Force has been stockpiling cobalt and already has 50% of its requirement. It is buying the metal on the world market for \$5.75 a pound. A study by the Congressional Budget Office in August 1983 concluded that "... for meeting either an acute or sustained military emergency, the national stockpile provides *substantial insurance even at its current roughly 50% fulfillment level*. (our emphasis) If the remaining 50% was purchased at current prices, it would cost about \$210 million." The CBO also says that to make it profitable, domestic mining companies need a \$25 a pound price floor guaranteed for at least ten years. The subsidies to Cal-Nickel would cost the taxpayers about \$120 million a year over today's prices. It seems elementary that if a stockpile is indeed necessary it makes sense to buy available foreign cobalt now and leave our own in the ground until we really need it.

Cal-Nickel has been putting pressure on all public agencies involved to expedite the mining permits. Once they get the permits they can go to Congress and ask for the money, claiming national defense and the lure of jobs. About 540 jobs would be created if the mine becomes operational. In an economically depressed area this is an inviting promise. The Friends of Del Norte County, an old-line, conservative environmental group, says, "A possible 500 jobs for 20 years must be balanced against the loss of many more jobs in our traditional industries of fishing and tourism." Los Angeles Audubon wrote to U.S. Senator Pete Wilson asking him to oppose the Cal-Nickel project. He replied, "when discussing this project with California Nickel representatives I was favorable impressed with the new employment opportunities that would be created. I told (them) that their

project would have my full endorsement contingent on the receipt of necessary construction and operating permits." The Attorney-General of California, on the other hand, strongly criticized the initial draft Environmental Impact Report and asked for a supplemental EIR from the U.S. Forest Service and Del Norte county.

Gasquet Mountain is within six miles of Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park and the Redwood National Park, with Del Norte Redwoods State Park a few miles south on the coast. The entire Smith River drainage, Oregon's Kalmiopsis Wilderness and the proposed Siskiyou Wilderness will suffer possibly irreversible damage if Cal-Nickel is successful. Imagine what a dozen more strip-mines could do to the land, the wildlife and the human population. And for what? So the taxpayers can not only buy the plants for the companies and their investors but pay them an outrageous price for cobalt the country may not need. As one environmental paper put it, "Cal-Nickel Mines U.S. Treasury."

Most of us have never heard of Cal-Nickel, Gasquet or cobalt mining in the west. No important newspapers or magazines or TV documentaries have covered the issue. It is happening far away from the big cities, tucked away in a corner of the west where the animals outnumber the people. Yet it could be one of the most serious assaults on the American environment in our entire history.

Sources:

Martin C. Kelly, president,  
The Friends of Del Norte County  
The Northcoast Environmental Center  
"Econews"  
Earthwatch, Oregon  
National Audubon Society, Western  
Regional Office

\* \* \*

What can you do about this? Write to your congressman. Though at this moment there is no bill to be voted upon, he may not be aware of the gravity of the Gasquet project. ("He" here means "He/She") This is more than a local matter. You are concerned about what happens to the Smith River, the redwoods, the wildlife, the health of the people. If the mining companies can get away with this kind of thing it will encourage others to whittle away more of our natural bounty. The more awareness we can spread around—especially to our legislators—the better our chances to fight off this sort of grab.

Addresses are:

House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson  
U.S. Senate 90510

Tell Wilson you don't agree with him. Be nice but firm.

## How Important Are Those Letters?

Several years ago, Sandy Wohlgemuth started a letter writing tree within L.A. Audubon, a very quiet but effective method for telling you political representatives where you stand on different issues. How important are these letters? All the feedback we get is that they are EXTREMELY important—and influential.

The following article was taken from the January 1984 issue of the AUDUBON LEADER, and was authored by an authoritative voice, Rep. Morris K. Udall.(D. Ariz.) Take a minute to read through it, and keep his points in mind when writing to your representatives. Don't wait for us to call you when you have an opinion. Just get the letter off in a timely manner. And, if after reading the Congressman's article you would like to join the phone tree, call Sandy and let him know at (818) 344-8531. The tree has 115 branches and is growing!

## The Right to Write

by Hon. Morris K. Udall

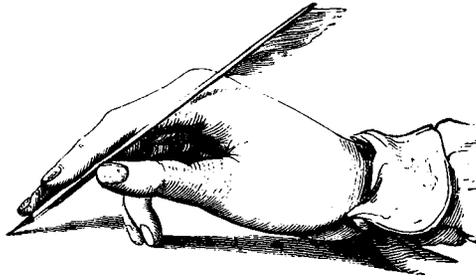
Surprisingly few people ever write their congressman. Perhaps 90 percent of our citizens live and die without ever taking pen in hand and expressing a single opinion to the person who represents them in Congress—a person whose vote may decide what price they will pay for the acts of government, either in dollars or in human lives.

Mail to a modern-day congressman is more important than ever before. In the days of Calhoun, Clay, Webster, and Lincoln, congressmen lived among their people for perhaps nine months of the year. Through daily contacts in a constituency of less than 50,000 people (I represent 10 times that many) they could feel rather completely informed on their constituents' beliefs and feelings. Today, with the staggering problems of government and increasingly long sessions I must not only vote on many more issues than early-day congressmen but I rarely get to spend more than 60 days of a year in Arizona. Thus my mailbag is my best "hot line" to the people back home.

*Some suggestions that apply to all congressional mail:*

**(1) Address it properly.** "Hon. \_\_\_\_\_, House Office Building, Washington DC 20515" or "Senator \_\_\_\_\_, Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510."

**(2) Identify the bill or issue.** About 20,000 bills are introduced into each Congress so it is important to be specific. If you write about a



bill, try to give the bill number or describe it by a popular title ("truth in lending," "minimum wage," etc.).

**(3) The letter should be timely.** Sometimes a bill is out of committee or has passed the House before a helpful letter arrives. Inform your congressman while there is still time to take action.

**(4) Concentrate on your own delegation.** All letters written by residents of my district to other congressmen will simply be referred to me for reply, and vice versa.

**(5) Be reasonably brief.** Every working day the mailman leaves some 150 or more pieces of mail at my office. It is not necessary that letters be typed—only that they be legible—and the form, phraseology, and grammar are completely unimportant.

**(6) Student letters are welcome.** Their opinions are important to me.

**(7) Write your own views—not someone else's.** A personal letter is far better than a form letter or signature on a petition. I usually know what the major lobbying groups are saying, but I don't often know of your experiences and observations, or what the proposed bill will do to and for you.

**(8) Give your reasons for taking a stand.** I may not know all the effects of the bill and what it may mean to an important segment of my constituency.

**(9) Be constructive.** If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, tell me what the right approach is.

**(10) If you have an expert knowledge, share it with your congressman.** I can't possibly be an expert in all fields; many of my constituents are experts in some of them. I welcome their advice and counsel.

**(11) Say "well done" when it is deserved.** Congressmen are human too, and they appreciate an occasional "well done" from people who believe they have done the right thing. I know I do. But even if you think I went wrong on an issue, I would welcome a letter telling me you disagreed; it may help me on another issue later.

### Some don't's:

- (1) Don't make threats or promises.
- (2) Don't berate your congressman.
- (3) Don't pretend to wield vast political influence.
- (4) Don't try to instruct your congressman on every issue that comes up. Don't be a pen pal.

**In conclusion:** During the two-year life of this Congress, the House clerk will record my votes on more than 250 issues. But in a very real sense these will not be my votes, they will be yours too.

## Backstage

In the Spring of 1983 Al Myers appeared at Audubon House, asking if we needed help and volunteering to come in five days a week. It took a while for us to adjust to this astounding offer and to make proper use of his time.

In the film business (Al is a retired cinematographer) a person who will do literally whatever is asked is known as a "gofer" and Al could be so described at Audubon because there is nothing he is unwilling to go for, or do do, and with unfailing cheerfulness and good humor. During the summer, while Bert Mull was out of town, Al took care of the *WESTERN Tanager* subscriptions. And during the worst of the construction time at Audubon, when there was sawdust and plaster dust everywhere and Carol Niles had broken her foot, he became her arms and legs and made it possible for her to keep on working.

As the only volunteer who is at Audubon House every day, Al is the one who knows where everything is, no mean feat at a time when everything has been moved around several times.

Now we really cannot imagine how we ever got along without Al Myers.



Among the many activities of the Los Angeles Audubon Society is the world famous BOOKSTORE. A number of volunteers work many hours to make this operation function smoothly and efficiently. These people not only work hard, but weekly, drive long distances to perform thie chores with great enthusiasm.

Recently the difficulties of moving from the burned out Plummer House into the still-

being-revnovated new headquarters have compounded the usual day-to-day problems associated with providing prompt and good service to the membership. The income derived from the Bookstore also helps support the many worthwhile conservation projects of the Society.

There are seldom opportunities to make the public aware of and give recognition to the work done by these dedicated people. We herewith salute the members of our fine little group, whose cheerful cooperation makes the taks of operating the Bookstore pleasant and rewarding.

**LAURA LOU VANCE** has held a number of offices in the L.A.A.S. including that of President, Wild Life Films Chairman, and Field Trips Chairman. She has birded many places in the world and is a former elementary school teacher. She resides in Saugus.

**JAMES W. HUFFMAN** is a past President and former finance Chaitman of the Society, and has led many field trips for the L.A.A.S. Jim has birded all over the world and lives in Pacific Palisades.

**WANDA CONWAY** efficiently assists customer at our monthly evening meetings. Besides being a busy housewife, she is also Vice-President of the Southwest Bird Study Club, and is currently Field Trip Chairman of the L.A.A.S. She makes her home in Canoga Park. Wanda is also a very active birder.

**EDNA CHAMNESS** is a retired bookkeeper and formerly served on the Executive Board of the Sea and Sage Audubon Society. She now lives in Costa Mesa.

**BARBARA BERTON** was Exhibit Chairman and Christmas Count Chairman for the Sea and Sage Audubon Society. She taught school for many years. Besides being an active birder, she serves as National Secretary of the National Fuchsia Society, and is active in both the Orange County Begonia and Camelia Societes. She resides in Santa Ana.

**HELEN BAYNE** has faithfully assisted in the Bookstore since 1970 and received an Award of Merit from the L.A.A.S. in 1978 for her long time service. She is a retired English and history school teacher, and lives in Los Angeles.

Olga L. Clarke  
Sales Chairman  
LOS ANGELES  
AUDUBON SOCIETY BOOKSTORE

## Birding Australia II. The Northeast Quadrant

by Henry and Helen Childs

Australia presents to birders the opportunity to see a unique avifauna, country and people. Here one doesn't have to travel in a group for fear or language problems or security. The people are friendly and always helpful to Yanks. Because of the vast size of the country, plan to spend as much time as possible there. After all, noone would think of birding the whole United States—an area about the same size—in two weeks.

In the Fall of 1982, my wife and I birded the country for 55 days, identified 435 species (out of 725 pssible). We wish to share our experiences with you. In this paper, we list the birds seen in the area, starting at Cairns (pronounced Canes), Darwin and vicinity, Alice Springs and Townsville.

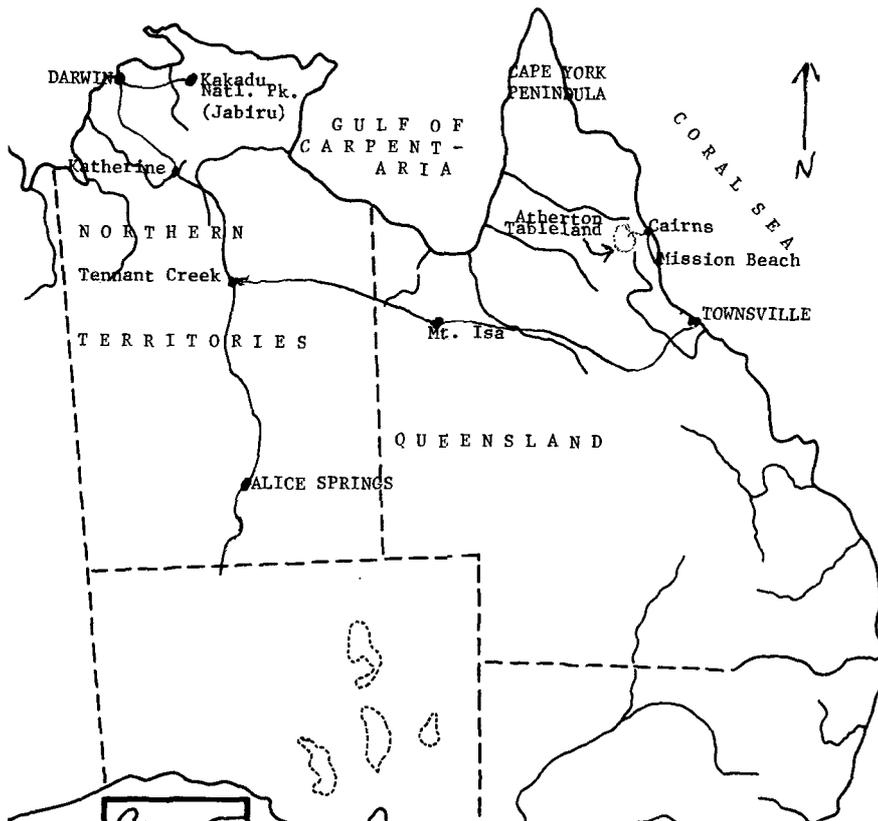
**Townsville, Queensland.** Our trip started here, the only other entry point from Los Angeles on the east coast of Australia besides Sydney. Within short walking distance of the airport, and although tired from the 15 hour flight from Los Angeles, we obtained a good group of "lifers" before flying on to

Cairns. Two weeks later, we were to return and bird the Townsville "Commons" where we saw our only Australian Bustard. Eighteen life birds in the first hour in Australia was not bad birding.

Those seen were:

Straw-Necked Ibis  
Pied Goose  
Black Kite  
Brahminy Kite  
Whistling Kite  
Nankeen Kestrel  
Masked Plover  
Black-Frontet Dotterel  
Peaceful Dove  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Blue-Winged Kookaburra  
Galah  
Welcome Swallow  
Richard's Pipit  
Common Mynah  
Magpie Lark  
Australian Magpie  
Golden-Headed Cisticola

**Cairns, Queensland.** The Tuna Lodge, a moderately priced motel located on the Esplanade and one of only a few we stayed in during our entire trip, is located across the street from exceptionally fine shorebirding. Masses of birds were seen here in this lovely tropical location, many of them trans-equatorial migrants from northern Asia. Sharp-Tailed Sandpipers and Red-Necked



Australia — The Northeast Quadrant



*Royal Spoonbill*

Stints were the most numerous, but Red and Great Knots, Wandering and Grey-Tailed Tattlers, and Black-Tailed and Bar-Tailed Godwits occurred in good numbers along with the Terek Sandpiper. John Crowhurst, a local "birder," pointed out the difficult ones to me with unaided eyes when I couldn't spot them with my telescope!!

A partial list of the birds on the Esplanade:

Australian Pelican  
Darter  
White-Faced Heron  
Mangrove Heron  
Little Egret  
Plumed Egret  
Nankeen Nightheron  
Sacred Ibis  
Royal Spoonbill  
Mongolian Plover  
Eastern Curlew  
Greenshank  
Curlew Sandpiper  
Pied Stilt  
Yellow Figbird  
Red-Capped Dotterel  
Double-Banded Dotterel  
Silver Gull

The next day, Dawn and Arnold Magarry took us to the Atherton Tableland above Cairns. What a day it was! My first Bird of Paradise, the Paradise Rifleman, and my first Bowerbird, the Green Catbird, plus all the others on the following list! Localities visited on the Tableland were Lake Eachim with its Azure Kingfisher, Crater National Park with Green Catbirds, and Lewin's Honeyeaters sharing our lunch; Nodelos Lagoon with hundreds of Brolga and seven Saurus Cranes; and Black Mountain Road, with its mixed flock in which nearly every bird was different, so typical of birding experiences in the tropics.

Birds of the Atherton Tableland:

Little Grebe  
Jabiru  
Black Swan  
Black Duck  
Gray Teal  
White-Eyed Duck  
Green Pigmy Goose  
Swamp Harrier

Brush Turkey  
Swamphen  
Lotusbird  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Wompoo Pigeon  
Brown Pigeon  
Topknot Pigeon  
Squatter Pigeon  
E. Spinebill  
Varied Triller  
E. Whipbird  
Variegated Wren  
Red-Backed Wren  
Large-Billed Warbler  
Brown Warbler  
Gray-Headed Robin  
Pale Yellow Robin  
Yellow Robin  
Grey Fantail  
Northern Fantail  
Pied Flycatcher  
Olive-Backed Oriole  
Pied Currawong  
Australian Crow  
Black-Faced Cuckoo Shrike  
Rufous Whistler  
Golden Whistler  
Gray Shrike Thrust  
White-Throated Tree Creeper  
Gray-Breasted Silveryeye  
Scarlett Honeyeater  
Graceful Honeyeater  
Bridled Honeyeater  
White-Eared Honeyeater  
Yellow Honeyeater  
Yellow-Faced Honeyeater  
Atherton Scrubwren

The following day was disappointing, as we drove 100 km. south to Mission Beach and did not find the Cassowaries regularly found there. However, the Torres Strait Pigeon, Tooth-Billed Catbird, Mistletoe Bird and Koel made up in part for missing it.

Birds seen enroute and at Mission Beach:

Pied Cormorant  
Little Pied Cormorant  
Brown Falcon  
Fairy Martin  
Spice Finch  
Chestnut-Breasted Finch  
Red-Browed Finch  
Grey-Crowned Babbler  
Helmeted Friarbird  
Bower Shrike-Thrush  
Forest Kingfisher  
Rainbow Bee-Eater  
White-Browed Wood-Swallow  
Green-Winged Pigeon  
Sulfur-Crested Cockatoo  
Black-Faced Flycatcher  
Spectacled Flycatcher  
Spangled Drongo  
Black Butcherbird  
Yellow-Breasted Sunbird

Our lists will get shorter, which only means that no species will be repeated that were

seen in other localities.

**Darwin, Northern Territory.** We were surprised to find Darwin to be a large modern city. Completely demolished three times by storms since World War II, it is now a substantial city with a large shopping mall, equal to our best, in the center of town. There were no rusted, corrugated shacks, swarming mosquitos or gutter sewerage, usually seen in tropical cities around the world. We stayed at the Larrakeyah Lodge, a YWCA operation in a former hospital dormitory. The rooms were large and facilities were down the hall . . . but the \$30/day was half the cost of the nearby motels.

Here, for a day, we used a professional guide for the only time on the trip, and Hilary Thompson was worth every penny spent. In a boat we tackled the mangrove swamps and saw the Mangrove Golden Whistler, Red-Headed Honeyeater and Chestnut Rails. The Darwin Sewer Ponds rank with the best, with White-Winged Black, Whiskered and Crested Terns, Pied Herons, Burdekin (Rajah) Shelduck and Water Whistling Ducks. A number of Australian Pratincoles were seen in the area. A sample of the birds seen around Darwin:

White-Breasted Sea Eagle  
Little Bronze Cuckoo  
Clamorous Reed Warbler  
Mangrove Kingfisher  
Red-Backed Kingfisher  
Leaden Flycatcher  
Reef Heron  
Pink-Eared Duck  
Bushlark  
Common Sandpiper  
Marsh Sandpiper

**Katherine, Northern Territory.** The drive south (226 km.) was relatively uneventful, if one ignores the huge truck trains that carry goods from Adelaide to Darwin. Or if one considers flocks of the magnificent Red-Tailed Black Cockatoos flying over, soaring Wedge-Tailed and Little Eagles, Square-Tailed Kite and—at the stops—Little Friarbird, White-Rumped Miner and Blue-Faced Honeyeaters, just everyday birding. Most of the area along the road was burned, since, as is so typical of the tropics around the world, slash and burn is practiced.

Just outside of Katherine, at the Low-level Reserve, birding in the late afternoon was spectacular. Here we found the beautiful Northern Rosella, Red-Winged Parrots, Rufous-Throated and Brown Honey-Eaters plus a kettle of 1000 migrating Black Kites.

The next morning, at a small water hole 16 km. west of Katherine, we were fortunate to see Gouldian and Masked Finches, Hooded Parrot and Cockatiels. Along the road were Zebra Finches, Little Cuckoo Shrike and Crested Pigeon. At the Gorge, where we took the boat ride, many Greater Bowerbirds and Blue-Faced Honeyeaters were literally trash-birds . . . feeding in the trash cans: And we saw our first Emu!

**Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory.** Located at the end of the paved (bitumen) road, 223 miles east of Darwin, this park is the place to look for the rare northern endemic species. The only motel is at Cooida, and the only communication is by radio . . . when they're listening. We arrived and they did have a room for us. Located in the heart of aborigine land and in wild, uninhabited country, the Yellow Waters Billabong was exceptional. Eighteen-foot crocodiles and six-foot monitor lizards basked along the bank at ten feet from the boat; many species of waterbirds allowed very close approaches, and I saw the first Shining Starling recorded for the Northern Territory (but no one in Darwin would believe the Yank). There were thousands of Plumed Whistling Ducks, Green Pigmy Geese and Little Corellas. In our opinion, this is one of the world's most beautiful places, and it is unspoiled as yet by tourists.



*Silver Gull*

Outside our door the next day were many Double-Barred Finches, a Pheasant Coucal, Yellow Oriole and Rufous Shrike-Thrush. Near Nourlangie Rocks were Partridge Pigeon, Long-Tailed Finch, Black-Banded Pigeon and Black-Breasted Kite.

On our way back to Darwin, a stop at Fogg Dam at Humpty Doo produced several thousand Little Corellas, a small White Cockatoo, as well as Black-Faced and Little Wood Swallows, Weebill, Restless and Shining Flycatchers and Oriental Cuckoo. Nearby were the peculiar magnetic anthills, thin termite mounds oriented north-south magnetic (I checked).

**Alice Springs, Northern Territory.** Again using the economy facilities of the YWCA's Stuart Lodge (\$22), our birding in Alice was fabulous. This small city, located in the center of the continent and the "Outback," is a thriving, busy area about half-way along the

highway from Darwin to Adelaide in the south. With an Avis rent-a-car, we explored Simpson's Gap to the west and found the rare Dusky Grasswren, the White-Winged Wren, Diamond Dove, Yellow-Rumped and Chestnut-Rumped Thornbills, several species of Honeyeaters, and the Little Crow.

To the east, at Jessie's Gap, we found the Crimson Chat, White-Rumped Miner, Port Lincoln and Mulga Parrots, Turquoise Wren, major Mitchell's Cockatoo—the latter a superb white and pink bird—and the Little Falcon.

The high point of our stay here was the sewer ponds! Even more productive of bird varieties than those in Darwin (and Fargo, N.D.), these ponds, which are the only permanent body of water for over three hundred miles in any direction, were loaded with birds. A partial list of birds seen at the sewer ponds and vicinity:

Yellow Spoonbill  
Australian Wooduck  
Hoary-Headed Grebe  
Red-Kneed Dotterel  
Black-Tailed Native Hen  
White-Plumed Honeyeater  
Spiney-Cheeked Honeyeater  
Grey-Headed Honeyeater  
Wood Sandpiper  
Red-Necked Avocet  
Singing Honeyeater  
White-Backed Swallow

The next day we returned by plane to Townsville where we picked up our rented campervan, a Toyota pop-top which cost approximately \$65 per day, and were off on an exciting driving tour of the east and south quadrant of Australia. Part III will describe the birds seen on our travels down to Brisbane, across New South Wales to Broken Hill, Adelaide, and Melbourne. Part IV will cover Tasmania and Perth, Western Australia. ☞

## Sanderling Watch

An extensive survey of the migration patterns of Sanderlings is being conducted by scientists in North and South America, under the direction of J.P. Myers of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. All birders are urged to watch for color-coded or banded Sanderlings, and should report their sightings to the Sanderling Project, Bodega Marine Laboratory, P.O. Box 247, Bodega Bay, CA 94923. We should see quite a few color-coded birds this spring, as their northward migration is being traced. Volunteers for serious Sanderling-searching and census-taking anywhere along the coast are needed and should contact the project at the address above.

## Birds of the Season

by Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett

April is certainly not the cruelest month to birdwatchers in southern California. Each day brings the promise of a new spring arrival, culminating by the end of the month in a diversity of birds unmatched anywhere else in North America north of the Mexican border (as pre-Jet set "Big Days" will attest). While outlandish vagrants should be few (wintering birds have largely departed and spring offshoots will mostly appear after the middle of May), the birding is nevertheless exciting in nearly every habitat. Nesting activity will be in full swing on the coastal slope, and opportunities to become intimately familiar with behavior patterns of our common species will be many. Along the coast the observer will have the chance to chart the spring movements of seabirds such as brant, scoters and loons from coastal promontories (e.g. La Jolla, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Pt. Dume and Goleta Point). With all the birding potential, one wonders how there will be time to follow the new Dodger season!

February found southern California birders studying the various unusual wintering species which had been found, for the most part, during or before the Christmas Count period. Such lingerers included the **Yellow-billed Loon** and **Tufted Duck** on Lake Perris, the **Tufted Duck** on Quail Lake near Gorman, the **Vaux's Swifts** over Pasadena and elsewhere in the Los Angeles Basin, the **Greater Pewee** at the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round, the **Bendire's Thrasher** east of Lancaster, the **Black-throated Green Warbler** near the Santa Ana River Mouth, **Worm-eating Warblers** along San Jose Creek in Goleta and (more elusive) along Bonsall Dr. in Malibu, and the **Hepatic Tanager** at Vogel Flat above Sunland/Tujunga. While a variety of difficult to identify birds gave us something to scratch our heads about, Goleta's wintering **Ken-tucky Warbler** gave us something to scratch our legs about—many of those who looked for it discovered that there was a lot of poison oak under that rampant network of German Ivy (California's answer to the kudzu vine). Many opted to view the far more obliging Kentucky Warbler



in Corona del Mar!

Dick Erickson must receive a morbid pleasure from calling southern California with the news of a new state record from his Humboldt/Del Norte County haunts, knowing that the call will catalyze the exhausting 15-20 hour marathon drive northward for incurable listers. He's made this call for Steller's Eider, Barred Owl, White-collared Swift (nobody bothered with that one . . .), and, very recently, Rustic Bunting. On 15 February the latest call came: A **Brambling** at Jim Rooney's feeder in Crescent City. The bird had been present for some ten days, but its identify was only known after Dick visited the Rooney yard expecting to find a grosbeak (California birders are certainly excused for not being familiar with the Brambling—this Eurasian species is accidental in North America outside of Alaska). The bird was far better behaved than its Siberian neighbor, the Rustic Bunting, and was seen by all who looked for it.

No season is complete without a couple of "controversial" birds. A female-plumaged **Anhinga** at Lee Lake between Corona and Elsinore was first discovered on 27 November 1983 by Neil Wainstock and widely seen by other birders after late January. Previous Anhinga records from Sweetwater Reservoir near San Diego (for several years after early 1977) and San Francisco (1939) have been treated by the California Bird Records Committee as probable escapes, though many feel that one or both of these were "wild". The current bird will undoubtedly precipitate similar debates. A puzzling **Empidonax** flycatcher discovered on 2 February by Jerry Johnson in Banning Park, Wilmington, was first thought to be a **Least Flycatcher** (unrecorded in Los Angeles County, though there are many records to the north, south, east and west). Careful inspection over the ensuing three weeks shifted the prevailing opinion to **Dusky Flycatcher** (perhaps even rarer in southern California in mid-winter than Least). The bird's relatively long bill, lack of a white-throated effect, dull brownish wing coverts (as opposed to blackish), relatively long tail, and softer "wit" call note all differed from the two Least Flycatchers wintering in Goleta and at the Fillmore Fish Hatchery. But all of these differences are meager, and any cooperative *Empidonax*, such as this individual, can be a valuable lesson in the fine art of field identification of the genus.

**Red-throated Loons** were found inland in unprecedented numbers, and many observers commented on the abundance of this species along the coast as well. A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen aboard a short boat trip out of Redondo Beach organized by Wanda Conway on 1 February. The trip, one of the regular whale-watch excursions aboard the *Voyager* out of Redondo Sport-fishing, had as its goal (apart from the Gray Whales) the study of **Short-tailed Shear-**

**waters**, which have been seen in numbers up to a dozen on virtually every excursion out of Redondo. Fred Heath took the same trip on 12 February and saw not only several Short-taileds, but an estimated 3000 **Black-vented Shearwaters** in a large feeding mass. The prize of the 1 February trip was a first-winter **Laughing Gull**, well-seen and studied by Barbara Elliott, Ed Navojosky and others.

Over a thousand **Canada Geese** in the fields near Pierce College was a spectacular sight for an urban area through January and February, but was further enhanced by the presence of up to five **Greater White-fronted Geese**, two **Snow Geese** and two **Ross's Geese**. White-fronts were also found at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds (two on 25 January; Barbara Elliott and Dorothy Dimsdale), at the Whittier Narrows New Lakes (three on 27 January; Barbara Cohen and Chuck Hamilton), and at the San Joaquin Marsh near Irvine (at least ten after 27 January; Kurt Radamaker); this species is a very early spring migrant. At least one **Oldsquaw** was present near the Queensway Bridge in Long Beach after 2 February. **Hooded Mergansers** never did appear at Malibu, but four were on the Mission Viejo Golf Course after 24 December (Kurt Radamaker), a female was at the north end of the Salton Sea (Henry Childs, 21 January), and two females were at the Whittier Narrows New Lakes (Ed Navojosky, 15 February).

A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was seen at Caspar Park, eight miles east of San Juan Capistrano on 29 January (Ray Boehmer); Ray also found a **Merlin** nearby, and a second Merlin was east of Lakeview on 14 January (Brian Keelan). Some 165 **Sandhill Cranes** were between Brawley and El Centro on 22 January (Gene Cardiff); this species winters regularly here. Jean Brandt went rail-watching at Upper Newport Bay on 30 January and was rewarded with the sight of a **Clapper Rail** going, literally up-to-its-neck, in mud to nab a small clam, then proceed to carry the prey to the nearby channel to wash it before swallowing it. Interestingly, this exact maneuver was reported from a San Francisco Bay Clapper Rail back in 1928 (Williams, *Condor* 31:52-56, 1929)! A female **Ruff** (or "Reeve") was at a farm pond on Kimball St. near Grove St. in Chino after 3 February (Milt Blatt).



Send any interesting bird observations to:

**Hal Baxter**

**1821 Highland Oaks Drive  
Arcadia, CA 91006**

**Phone # (213) 355-6300**

An unseasonal **White-winged Dove** was seen near the mouth of the Whitewater River on 21 January (Henry Childs). Henry also reports a **Tropical Kingbird** at Lake Seranos near Chino on 4 February. The wintering **Least Flycatcher** at Fillmore, mentioned above, had unprecedented winter tyrannid company: both phoebes, an **Ashthroated Flycatcher**; a **Willow Flycatcher** and a **Western Flycatcher**! Early migrant **swallows** included a **Violet-green** at Placerita Canyon on 12 February (Kimball Garrett) and two **Northern Roughwingeds** at the Sepulveda Basin on 20 February (also K.G.). **American Robins** were exceptionally abundant in West Los Angeles, parts of the San Fernando Valley, and elsewhere during February. And **Cedar Waxwings** were even more abundant and widespread, feasting not only on berries but on fresh early spring buds of a variety of deciduous trees. This has turned out to be an excellent winter locally for **Varied Thrushes**, with high counts including 25 in Topanga on 5 February (Kimball Garrett and Lee Jones) and 20 at Walker Ranch, Placerita Canyon on Charles Darwin's birthday (Kimball Garrett, 12 February). The **Brown Thrasher** remained in a San Pedro yard through at least mid-February (Brian Daniels *et al*). A **Sage Thrasher** near the wintering **Bendire's Thrasher** east of Lancaster on 28 January may well have been a spring migrant (Brian Keelan, Jim and Ellen Strauss).

A **Northern Parula** played hide and seek with birders in Veterans' Park, Long Beach, after 11 February (Brian Daniels *et al*). A **Painted Redstart** at Holly Harmon's Chatsworth hummingbird feeder (!) had been present since late November and was widely seen for a week or so after 1 February. "**Baltimore**" **Orioles** included a male at the east end of Legg Lake on 7 February (David White) and a female (with a female Hooded) at the Arcadia Arboretum on 5 February (Hal Baxter, Kimball Garrett, Betty Suffel and Don Sterba; found earlier by Barbara Cohen).

Central and northern California hosted a number of unusual species. The **Whooper Swan** reported last month disappeared soon after it was found (though it was probably still present somewhere among the tens of thousands of swans in the Sacramento Valley); there remains some question as to its wild status. The Foster City **Smew** (in its third winter there) was not seen after about 1 February. The **Common Black-headed Gull** and the **Little Gull** remained at the Stockton Sewage Ponds through the period. And a **Wood Thrush** was present through the period at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Just north of us, San Luis Obispo County had two rarities: a **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Los Osos Golf Course (after 22 January), and a **Pine Warbler** on the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Campus through the period.



# CALENDAR

## Field Trips

It is always a good idea to check with the Bird Report prior to any trip. That way you will learn of any special instructions or unexpected changes that occur (at least through Thursday).

**SUNDAY, APRIL 1: Topanga State Park, Trippet Ranch.** Gerry Haigh will lead a morning trip through oak woodland and meadows overlooking the canyons and sea. Raptors, warblers and other migrants will be seen. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., take a sharp east turn uphill on Entrada Drive. Keep bearing to left on Entrada whenever road forks, to where it ends in parking lot (\$2 fee) Meet at **8 a.m.**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 7: O'Melveny Park.** Join Harold Bond for a morning walk through one of the Valley's newest and wildest parks, where waves of migrants have been seen. From Simi Fwy. exit north on Balboa to Orozco. Turn left and follow Orozco to its end at Senson St., left on Senson to parking lot. Meet at **8:30 a.m.**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 10: Evening Meeting at 8:00 p.m.** Plummer Park. Well known bird-photographer and past L.A.S. President Herb Clarke will take a new approach to a slide show on birds of western North American by showing multiple views an plumages, adding up to a series of PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF OUR BIRDS. Refreshments will be served.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 15: Ballona Wetlands.** Jacob Szabo will lead this morning's walk at 8 a.m. from the Pacific Ave. bridge. Expect a variety of water related birds including migrants. Take Marina Fwy. (90) west to Culver Blvd. Turn left to end, turning right to bridge.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 15: Pt. Dume Sea Watch.** Join Kimball Garrett for this study of migrant Loons, Cormorants, Brant, Scoters and Gulls. Meet at 2 p.m. at the base of the bluffs at the end of Westward Beach parking lot (bottom end of Zuma Beach). (\$3 fee)

**SATURDAY, APRIL 21: Whittier Narrows.** David White will lead his monthly morning walk alongside the San Gabriel River, through a chaparral area and to the New Lakes. Look for migrants in addition to raptors, chaparral birds and good variety of waterbirds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Aven., So. El Monte near crossing of freeways 10 and 60.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 24: Hollywood Lake.** Meet Jean Brandt and Sandy Wohlgemuth at 8 a.m. for a pretty five-mile walk between pines and chaparral. See resident birds and possible migrants. Exit Hollywood freeway at Barham, N. on Barham, right on Lake Hollywood Drive, follow winding road to first reservoir gate at bottom of hill. No facilities, bring fluids and lunch.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 28: Chantry Flat and Santa Anita Canyon.** Meet Hal Baxter at 8 a.m. at the end of Santa Anita Canyon Road (about 5 miles north of the 210 Freeway). Be prepared for a strenuous hike down to the stream, and possibly some rock-hopping to reach falls. See resident Dippers, Canyon Wrens, Black Swifts, and spring migrants. Lunch optional at Chantry Flat after the walk.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 29: Antelope Valley.** Meet Fred Heath at 7:30 a.m. at the Lamont-Odett Overlook (of Lake Palmdale) on A.V. Fwy. 14. We will look for migrants, LeConte's Thrasher, Ladder-

back Woodpecker and Scott's Oriole, Bring lunch and lots of liquids. We'll be seeing wildflowers before continuing to the Edwards AFB Piute Marsh for waterbirds.

### Some Outings to Keep in Mind:

- Sun., 6 May — Placerita Canyon Park with Jacob Azabo
- Mon., 7 May — Ojai Area with Guy & Louise Commeau
- Sat., 12 May — Mojave Narrows with Ruth Lohr
- Sun., 13 May — Whittier Narrows with David White

## Pelagic Trips

**Monday, MAY 14 — Horned Puffin trip. Santa Barbara Island and out to sea.** Depart 6 a.m., return 6 p.m. Price is \$22 per person — NO discount for 2.

**Sunday, AUGUST 12 — Shearwater and storm petrel trip. Santa Barbara Island and out to sea.** Depart 6:00 a.m., return 6:00 p.m. Price is \$22 per person. NO discount for 2.

**Sunday, SEPTEMBER 23 — Red-billed Tropic-Bird Trip. San Clemente Island** Depart 5:30 a.m., return 6:00 p.m. Leaders to be announced. Price is \$25 per person.

All trips will be on the *Vantuna*, leaving from Terminal Island, San Pedro. All prices are tentative and subject to fuel cost increases. Reserve spaces early. To take part in these pelagic trips, send your reservations with the names and telephone numbers of all members of your party along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to Reservations c/o Ruth Lohr, Los Angeles Audubon Society (see address at left). There is no galley on board, so bring lunch and fluids.

## Shearwater Trips

Sun. May 13	Monterey Bay	\$25
	Garrett/Baldrige/Rowlett	
Sat. May 19	Cordell Banks	\$37
	Allison/Baldrige/Chandik	
June 2-9	Orcas and Eagles	\$850
	Leaders TBA	
Sat. July 28	Monterey Seavally and Ascension Canyon	
	Chandik/TBA	
Sat. Aug. 4	Cordell Banks	
	Leaders TBA	

Reservations are made by sending a check payable to Debra Love Shearwater, 362 Lee St., Santa Cruz 95060 (408) 425-8111. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

### Audubon Bird Reports \*

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## WESTERN TANAGER

**EDITOR** Dexter Kelly  
**DESIGN** Keith Lee  
**PRINTER** Artisan Press

**CONSERVATION EDITOR** Sandy Wohlgemuth  
**ORNITHOLOGY CONSULTANT** Kimball Garrett

Published ten times a year by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

**PRESIDENT** Bob Shanman

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Subscriptions to THE WESTERN TANAGER separately are \$8 per year (Bulk Rate) or \$13 (First Class, mailed in an envelope). To subscribe, make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

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