



# WESTERN TANAGER

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Volume 52 Number 5 January/February 1986

## Field Tips: The Single Field Mark Syndrome

by Kimball Garrett

Over and over again Jon Dunn and I have pointed out in our bird identification articles the pitfalls of basing identifications on single field marks. So often a conspicuous feature of a bird becomes overridingly important as our minds try to attach a name to the creature we are studying; because of this we may ignore a suite of more subtle but, in sum, more important characters which militate against the identification which the conspicuous single feature calls for. A frequent example involves albinistic or highly leucistic large gulls. Trained by field guides to base identifications on major "field marks," we read the combination of large size and whiteness to indicate Glaucous Gull. Closer examination (bill color and shape, eye color, body size and proportions, wing length, etc.) usually reveals that these "white" gulls are variants of our more common species (Western, Glaucous-winged, Herring).

Another example of the "Single Field Mark Syndrome" involves our kingbirds. Tropical Kingbirds are regular fall visitors to coastal California; however, during September and early October the Western Kingbird is far more numerous along our coast. I know of at least two cases where fall Western Kingbirds were reported as Tropical Kingbirds (presumably Cassin's was eliminated because of the lack of a conspicuous white chin against a dark gray chest). In each case the identification was based on the lack of white in the outer tail feathers, a condition which obtains rather commonly in fall Western Kingbirds which are either extremely worn or have dropped, but not yet replaced, the outer tail feathers. A whole set of additional characters (bill size, tail color, breast color, back color, auricular color, etc.) would have indicated to the observer



Fork-tailed Flycatcher (left) and Pin-tailed Whydah: The Single Field Mark Syndrome.

Illustration by Kimball Garrett

that these birds were indeed Western Kingbirds.

This month I'll illustrate the Single Field Mark Syndrome with a field problem which actually involves two completely unrelated passerines native to different hemispheres! This fowl-up (and I reiterate that all such fowl-ups have understandable origins, and that none of us is immune) has occurred several times in widely separated parts of North America, most recently in a case reported to me from the Sepulveda Basin in the San Fernando Valley.

Imagine a bird the size of a sparrow, with grayish to blackish upperparts, a black crown, whitish underparts, and an absurdly long pair of black tail feathers. This certainly doesn't match anything normally expected to occur in California. A look through the field guide, however, reveals one bird which fits this description: the Fork-tailed Flycatcher. A casual, but somewhat regular stray to eastern North America (especially the coasts), this Middle and South American species would have to be considered a potential stray to California. [In fact, Monroe

and Barron, in their summary of Fork-tailed Flycatcher records from North America (*American Birds* 34: 842-845, 1980), list an 1883 record from Santa Monica, though the purported specimen was destroyed and the record must remain suspicious.] Photographs of the Sepulveda Basin "Fork-tailed Flycatcher," however, quickly revealed it to be a male Pin-tailed Whydah (*Vidua macroura*, a species native to sub-Saharan Africa). Perhaps because of its abundant rank, weedy growth and proximity to the thousands of pet shops and private aviaries in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, the Sepulveda Basin attracts its fair share of exotic finches (up to three species of *Euplectes* bishops have been recorded here in a day!). Even so, birders could hardly be expected to be familiar with the names and field marks of every potential exotic in this area. So, again, the identification of this individual as a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, superficially the most similar bird in the North American field guides, becomes entirely understandable.

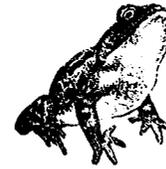
The accompanying sketch shows how the salient features, and in particular the long, black tail streamers, are similar in these two species. Of course there are compelling differences in a number of other features (bill shape and color, back color, tail shape, wing pattern, and behavior), but the "Single Field Mark Syndrome" allows these to be overlooked.

One can imagine other scenarios in which an unfamiliar exotic is matched up with the most similar bird in the North American field guides (some of these have, in fact, been reported to me): Yellowfronted Canary (*Serinus mozambicus*, from Africa) being identified as Dickcissel; female bishops (*Euplectes*, spp., from Africa) being identified as Grasshopper Sparrows or fall Bobolinks; Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosa*) as Connecticut Warbler; "monster" Mallards (of muddled genetic background) as American Black Ducks, and so forth.

Two points emerge from this discussion. The first, about the danger of basing identifications on single field marks, has been reiterated several times. The second point is especially applicable to areas like southern California, with large human populations, a nearly subtropical climate and a port-of-entry position on the geographical edge of the United States. This is the problem of exotic birds. The active birder in southern California will likely encounter dozens of species from a potential pool of several hundred) which have escaped from captivity or otherwise occurred unnaturally in the region. One should keep this fact in mind before trying to "fit" an exotic to a species pictured in the local field guides.



## Conservation Conversation



### Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler

*I thought this letter to the editor belongs in the Conservation Conversation column.*

— Editor

Dear Fred,

A young school teacher named Jim O'Donnell has been banding Black-capped Vireos for the past three years on the Davenport Ranch in Austin, Texas. This property is on the western edge of town, and is very near City Park Road, where birders have gone for years to see Black-capped Vireos and Golden-cheeked Warblers. I wouldn't be at all surprised if many L.A. Audubon members have gotten their first looks at one or both of these birds in one of these very places. Jim tells me he has taken over 200 people out to see the vireos on the Davenport Ranch property.

What you may not be aware of is the fact that the Black-capped Vireo is on the list of threatened species, and the Feds are considering a proposal to put it on the endangered list. Its habitat is shrinking and it suffers tremendously from cowbird parasitism. This is where Jim's banding work comes in. He has discovered that *the density of breeding Black-capped Vireos on the Davenport Ranch is unmatched anywhere*. No other known locations hold the breeding potential for this threatened species that the Davenport Ranch does!

The reason I am writing you is that the Davenport Ranch property is slated for development. The plight of the vireos has gotten some local attention, however, and the developers, fearing negative publicity, have given a reprieve until the end of January. The Austin City Council is considering proposals to either buy the land or swap another parcel for it. Either option would save a lot of vireos.

There are other places near Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio where these birds breed and can be seen. All of these areas, however, are threatened by encroachment, and none of them have anywhere near the density of birds that occurs on this land. Saving this property represents an important opportunity to preserve this threatened species for future generations of birders.

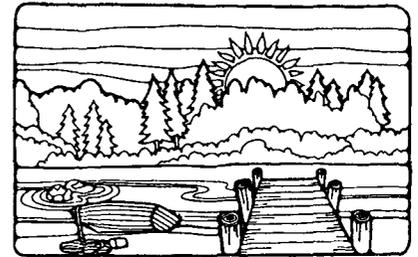
What you can do to help in this cause is to encourage concerned birders and others to write letters as individuals to the Mayor of Austin urging him and the City Council of

Austin to take action which will preserve the unique habitat which exists at the Davenport Ranch. It is our hope that if the City Council sees that this issue has more than local significance, they will act in a way that will be favorable to the birds, the birders, and the citizens of Austin. The address is:

Mayor Frank Cooksey  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767

Sincerely,

Byron Stone, President  
Bexar Audubon Society  
San Antonio, TX



### Mono Lake

*I also received this news release from the Mono Lake Committee.*

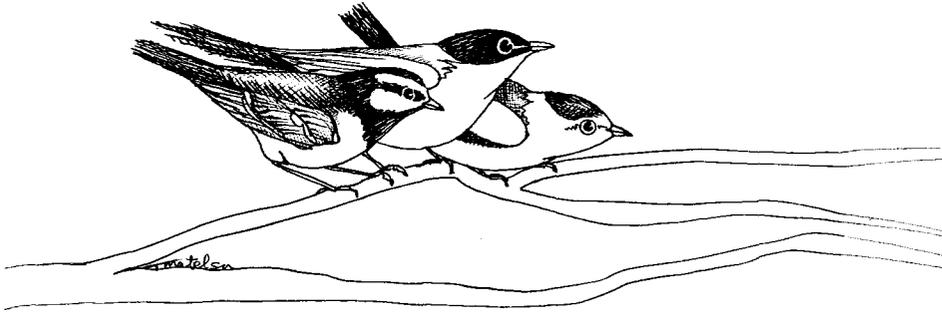
— Editor

### Cascading Lawsuits Pour Water Into Mono Lake

A rising tide of legal challenges is rocking DWP's boat. For more than a year, a court has restricted the amount of water that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power can divert from the Mono Basin. A lawsuit over Rush Creek, Mono Lake's largest tributary, has brought several thousand acre-feet of water into the lake. New legal action promises to deliver even more.

The timing couldn't be better. Although recent heavy winters gave the lake a reprieve, Mother Nature has not kept up with DWP's water exports. The lake is declining an average of one and a half to two feet per year. Forty-five years of diversions have reduced Mono Lake's volume by one half!

Unless DWP shares more water, there could be a replay of landbridged islands, abandoned gull colonies, increasing salinity, declining brine shrimp populations and thousands more acres of exposed alkali lake bed. North America's oldest and most life-productive lake could become a birdless chemical sump.



From left to right: Golden-cheeked Warbler; Black-capped Vireo; Colima Warbler

Illustration by Teri Matelson

### DWP In Deep Water

DWP's licenses to divert water from Mono Lake's tributary streams and from the Owens River Gorge may not even be legal.

The Mono Lake Committee and the National Audubon Society have joined California Trout in challenging the licenses granted by the State Water Resources Control Board in 1974. This dramatic action was filed on October 16 in the Third Appellate District State Court in Sacramento. The groups charge that the DWP licenses to divert water from Parker, Walker, Lee Vining and Rush Creeks and the Owens River Gorge violate State Fish and Game Codes. The Codes require a dam owner to release enough water to keep "in good condition" downstream fisheries. It appears that DWP has dried up these streams and destroyed fisheries in blatant violation of state law.

The plaintiffs are asking that the SWRCB revoke DWP's licenses and reissue them only in full compliance with the Fish and Game Codes. They ask that the SWRCB determine the water flows necessary to restore basin fisheries to their pre-diversion levels. This litigation could provide a substantial proportion of the water necessary to save Mono Lake!

### Rush Creek Flows!

On September 4 Mono County Superior Court Judge David E. Otis ordered what will be the first court-conducted "public trust balancing" in California. Otis ruled that "protectable public trust values" lie in lower Rush Creek and its fishery. He concurred with Rush Creek's defenders that a trial must take place that will weigh the water needs of Los Angeles against the rights of a healthy Rush Creek to exist. Otis set the trial for August 4, 1986. This affords enough time to conduct studies to determine the flows necessary to sustain a healthy fishery.

Desiccated by DWP's diversions since 1941, lower Rush Creek was resurrected by the wet winters of 1982-83 and a thriving wild brown trout fishery was reborn. Since November '84, the Mammoth Fly Rodders, California Trout, the Mono Lake Committee and the National Audubon Society have managed through legal action to keep 19

cubic feet per second flowing down the stream and into Mono Lake.

### State Court Asked To Halt Lake's Decline

Rush Creek's defenders, joined by the Friends of the Earth, have asked the Third Appellate District State Court to block DWP from lowering the level of Mono Lake any further.

The request, filed on October 8, is an appeal of part of Judge Otis' opinion in the Rush Creek lawsuit, that the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 is not applicable to DWP's water diversions. The plaintiffs argue, however, that DWP should prepare an Environmental Impact Report on its "annual decisions" to divert water from the Mono Basin. They assert that unless the lake level is maintained while an EIR is being written, irreparable damage to the lake may result.

### Bradley's Plans Ignore Mono Lake

Los Angeles seems unable to see the legal handwriting on the wall. Although Mayor Tom Bradley has proposed a sweeping new program of water conservation and storage, he has omitted Mono Lake and the Owens Valley from his plans.

"Through creative conservation programs and new capital investment," he told the press, "we can begin saving and storing large quantities of water in the south . . . for the first time we can guarantee the north tough environmental protections . . . in exchange for needed future expansions in the state water project."

In his bid for Governor in 1988, Bradley has focused only on resolving California's simmering north-south water wars. He has not yet dealt with the area hardest hit by LA's thirst — the Eastern Sierra. While Bradley talks about "environmental protections for the north," he mentions only San Francisco Bay and the delta.

Unfortunately, Bradley hears nothing but the DWP line on Mono Lake. In a recent letter to one of our members, he claims that "natural variations in the Mono Lake ecosystem, especially the effect of two abnor-

mally wet winters, have had a much greater negative impact on the Mono Lake environment in the 1980-85 period than have water diversions and the lake level."

To those of us who have seen the rising lake submerge alkali, resurrect Negit Island, rejuvenate the brine shrimp hatch and restore the beauty of the Mono Basin landscape, Bradley's statement seems incomprehensible. Someone is pulling the wool over the mayor's eyes.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Write Mayor Tom Bradley, City Hall, Los Angeles, CA, 90012. Let him know that he will never allay northern fears so long as the LA DWP continues to devastate the Eastern Sierra. Commend him for backing conservation, but urge him to stand up for Mono Lake as well!

Urge Bradley to commit his administration to maintaining a living lake level of 6,380 feet while necessary studies to determine a long-term solution are conducted. **THE TIME IS NOW** for Bradley to demonstrate his leadership — and avoid lengthy court battles that, ultimately, Los Angeles cannot win. It is possible to fashion an out of court solution that saves Mono Lake while meeting the real water needs of LA residents. Bradley can do it!

## Galapagos-Ecuador-Peru and Amazon, too!

*A Benefit for Mono Lake,  
June 24-July 10, 1986*

Mono Lake Committee is sponsoring an exciting fund-raising excursion to the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador and Peru in 1986. This trip offers participants an exceptional opportunity to experience Darwin's "enchanted isles" and the rich cultures, ancient and present-day, of the Andes. An optional 3-day extension into the jungles of Tambopata National Park in the headwaters of the Amazon is also available. Costs for double occupancy, depending on cabin category, are \$1805, \$1910, and \$2035 for the 12-day Galapagos-Ecuador segment. The 5-days to the cities and Inca ruins of Peru is \$655 and the 3-day extension into the headwaters of the Amazon River is \$200. Airfare is additional. Part of the total cost is a tax-deductible donation to help save Mono Lake. The costs quoted are for reservations made before January 15. After that they will be \$100 more. Reservations close February 15. For full information, please send self-addressed, stamped 4½" x 9" envelope to:

Adventure for MLC  
c/o M. Bennett  
2719 Marin Ave  
Berkeley, CA 94708

## Book Store News

### Bent Life Histories

The Bookstore is pleased to announce that it has obtained another complete 26 volume set of the **Life History of North American Birds** by Arthur Cleveland Bent. These fine references have long been out-of-print.

This set is specially priced at \$350.00 complete, plus sales tax, shipping and handling charges.

### Rails of the World

A limited number of the out-of-print **Rails of the World** by Ripley are also available at the LAAS book store.

## Help Wanted

THE L.A.A.S. BOOKSTORE would like to invite anyone interested in assisting the sales and processing of orders for books and related items at the Plummer Park Headquarters on Wednesdays on a regular basis.

Here's your chance to take part in an interesting activity in a congenial atmosphere and at the same time know that you are helping further the programs of the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

If you are interested, call Olga Clarke, Sales Chairman, or Carol Niles at (213) 876-0202, during regular hours.

## From The Editor

by Fred  
Heath



Usually I don't have a lot to write about, so this column just rambles about. But this month due the *magnificent* job I did on the December *Tanager* I have a bunch of things I must put straight.

The easiest to rectify is the date of the 1986 Annual Banquet. If you'd been paying attention, in both the November and December issues, you'd notice the date stated as February 11, 1985. Needless to say, I have trouble getting the *Tanager* out on a timely basis each month, but I'm not a year late . . . yet!

I might mention while on the topic of the banquet, that we are having a heck of a time finding some of the LAAS Past Presidents to be honored. Some have moved, some have changed names through marriage (or even divorce). Some have done all three . . . several times. (After all, this is California.) At any rate, if you are a past president please contact Audubon House. It's worth it, for the free meal alone, not to mention Herb Clarke's terrific show on the Galapagos.

To get back to my mistakes, the second worse one concerns the *President's Corner*, by Ken Kendig. In writing about the California Condor Ken had the following sentence printed: "The captive program has been spectacularly successful and we should not give hope for the continuance of a wild population."

Sounds pretty bleak . . . all because I left out one little bitty word: "up." *Up* should be placed between *give* and *hope*. None of us should give up hope for the Condors. Ken's column this month reiterates this message.

Finally we come to the worst mistake I've ever made as editor of the *Tanager* (other than taking the job in the first place . . . twice too). I gave one of our past presidents a sex change operation. In the note on the Malibu Christmas Count I referred to one of the past co-compilers as *Gene* Brandt. Needless to say, *Jean* is no longer speaking to me.

There is a rumor out that I deliberately make these errors so I have something to write about each month. This is definitely no ture.

Send articles, drawings, photos, corrections, etc. to Fred Heath, P.O. Box 5036, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

# ANNUAL BANQUET

Honoring LAAS Past Presidents

See what a few years as  
president of LAAS can do to  
a person!!

Tuesday, February 11, 1986

at the  
FISH SHANTY  
8500 Burton Way  
at La Cienega

Cocktails 5 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m.

Cost: \$20.00 per person

Speaker: Herb Clarke

Bird Photographer Extraordinaire  
will present —

**GALAPAGOS: CROSSROADS OF EVOLUTION**

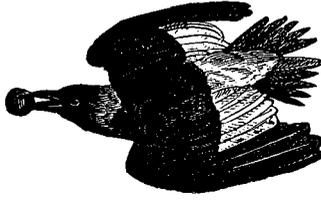
ADVANCE RESERVATIONS REQUIRED!  
NO TICKETS SOLD AT DOOR

Send check with stamped self addressed envelope to  
LAAS no later than January 31st.

Specify Wing, Fin or Hoof  
(Chicken, Fish or Beef)

# Birds of the Season

by Hal Baxter  
and Kimball Garrett



**W**e southern Californians are increasingly beginning to feel that all of the "action" these days is up north. This sentiment seems to be strongest in the wintertime when many far northern species reach slightly beyond the southern extremes of their normal winter ranges, barely entering our state. We also can't help but feel that all of the offshore action is up north — pelagic trips off southern California have been rather unproductive in recent years, while those off the northern part of the state seem to get better all of the time. These kinds of trends, of course, are often more apparent than real, and the north-south pendulum will forever swing erratically back and forth. We can only suggest that southern California birders take advantage of our (relatively) "tropical" climate, put on their sandals and short-sleeved shirts (forget the umbrellas!) and comb their counties to bring southern California back to the forefront.

The northern California scene was highlighted by the presence of an immature **Short-tailed Albatross** around a fleet of fishing boats at Cordelle Bank, off Bodega Bay, Sonoma County. This huge, dark pink-billed albatross was first seen on 3 November and refound by a boatload of birders on 5 November. Recall that Short-taileds used to be a common albatross just off the coast of California, but drastic population declines this century resulted in endangered status and a long dearth of California observations. The Cordelle Bank sighting was one of the few for the northeast Pacific in the last few decades, although additional sightings are to be expected as the species slowly recovers its numbers. Other birds noted on the trips out of Bodega Bay included a **Laysan Albatross**, four or more **Black-footed Albatrosses**, a **Flesh-footed Shearwater**, many **Buller's Shearwaters**, many **Short-tailed Shearwaters**, and over twenty **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels**. Of great interest were concentrations of up to 40 **Wilson's Storm-petrels** in this area, easily the largest (and latest) concentrations of this species to be recorded in California.

In the far northern part of the state, a **Brambling** (California's second) put in a brief appearance in Arcata on 21 November, and four **Trumpeter Swans** accompanied a group of Tundra Swans at Smith River in Del Norte County after 2 December (*Jide Dick Erickson*). A **Three-toed Woodpecker** at the unlikely spot of Likely, in the Warner Mountains, would constitute the first California record if accepted by the Bird Records

Committee; it was seen on 2 November, but could not be refound the next day. This species is resident in Oregon, not far north of the California border, and there have been previous (but insufficiently documented) reports from the far northern part of California.

Sightings of an interesting *Brachyramphus* murrelet in Monterey Harbor on 10 and 17 November stirred up a heated discussion of the identifying marks of **Marbled** and **Kittlitz's Murrelets**. Identified initially by many as a Kittlitz's (potentially California's second), the bird also showed marks of a Marbled and the current consensus is that the bird was most likely of that more expected species.

In southern California, birders did not report any major "invasions" of northern or montane species; in fact, many observers commented on the notable paucity of nuthatches, chickadees, corvids and finches. When such invasions materialize, they are usually detected by October or November (occasionally even earlier).

Two inland **Pacific Loons** were noted: one was grounded at Scotty's Castle in Death Valley National Monument (Marge Pamas *et al.*, 9 November), and another was on Quail Lake in the extreme western Antelope Valley (Janet Cupples, 10 November). The identification of these inland birds as Pacific Loons rather than Siberian Arctic Loons is, of course, based on overwhelming probability. It might pay, however, to point out the interesting case of the Marbled Murrelet, in which inland records pertain to the Asiatic race, while our more normal coastal records are of the expected North American race. We're not suggesting that there is a parallel among these loons, but simply that we should at least entertain the possibility of unusual long-distance vagrancy in such cases.

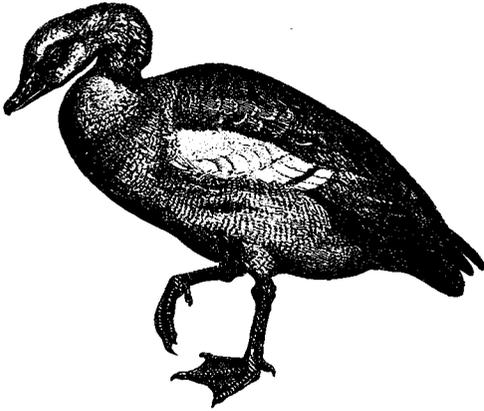
The first **Short-tailed Shearwaters** reported were three birds off San Pedro on 8 November (Charles T. Collins and his Cal. State Long Beach class). A **Reddish Egret** once again appeared at Gunpowder Point at the end of E Street in Chula Vista this winter. The UCLA-USC football game at the Los Angeles Coliseum was highlighted by a fly-over **Cattle Egret** early in the third quarter (at least the observer felt that it was the game's highlight; Kimball Garrett, 23 November). Five **Ross's Geese** were with **Snow Geese** at the Lancaster Sewage Ponds on 30 November (Fred Heath), and two were with **Canada Geese** on the Encino Reservoir on

4 December (Jon Dunn). A male **Wood Duck** arrived at the arboretum in Arcadia on 4 December (Barbara Cohen). Two **Oldsquaws** were on the Pt. Mugu Navel base on 11 November (Southwest Bird Study Club). The male **Harlequin Duck** seen at Bolsa Chica on 26 November was probably the same male that has been present there for well over a year. A female **King Eider** was seen sporadically on Morro Bay in the early part of November (Tom Edell). Inland **Black Scoters** included one on the golf course ponds at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley (Guy McCaskie, 2 November), and one on Little Lake in the Owens Valley in late November (Doug Willick). A female **Hooded Merganser** frequented the small ponds on the Pepperdine Campus in Malibu after 23 November (Sandy Wohlgemuth, Bob Pann *et al.*). A female **Common Merganser** was on Malibu Lagoon, along with the expected **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 19-28 November (Don Galli).

An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** at the south end of Morro Bay on 2 November (L.A.S. field trip) was the third of the fall for that general area (the earlier birds included an unusual dark-morph bird found by John Arvin). **Zone-tailed Hawks** were reported from Westgard Pass in the White Mountains (Marge Pamas, 10 November) and from Lake Los Serranos in Chino (Hank Childs, 19 November). The few **Rough-legged Hawks** reported so far this winter from the Antelope Valley included one on 28 October west of Lancaster (Guy and Louise Commeau). A dark-morph **Ferruginous Hawk** was in the Chino area on 19 November (Hank Childs). Merlins were reported from the San Joaquin Marsh (Kim Garwood, 13 October), the Arcadia arboretum (Barbara Cohen, 5 November), Pt. Mugu (Southwest Bird Study Club, 11 November), and Pepperdine in Malibu (Jonathan Alderfer), through November.

Unusual were single **Sandhill Cranes** at Oasis Ranch, Mono Co. (Marge Pamas, 9 November) and Prado Regional Park (Hank Childs and Rick Clements, 13 November). An amazing count of 19 **Black Oystercatchers** was obtained on the Long Beach/San Pedro breakwaters on 11 October by Loren Hays. The most unusual bird in southern California this period was the juvenile **Spotted Redshank** seen by Louis Bevier west of Santa Maria on 25 October. It could not be refound the following day. This represents only the second record of this species from southern California, the other being in spring at the north end of the Salton Sea. **Rock Sandpipers** are exceedingly rare as far south as the southern California region; one was on the rocks at Avila Beach, San Luis Obispo Co., on 18 November (Curtis Marantz and Tom Edell). A **Marbled Murrelet** was in this same area

on the same day. The count of **Black Skimmers** at Bolsa Chica continues to creep upward, with 60 being tallied on 26 November (Ed Navojosky, Phil Sayre and Bert Mull).



Jerry and Laurette Maisel's owling expedition up the back side of the San Gabriels, above Valyermo, yielded at least two **Western Screech Owls** and one or two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** on the night of 3 November. Two **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were found in Silverado Canyon, Orange Co., by a visiting birder from Massachusetts in early December (Michael Greenwald, *fide* Chris Floyd). A **Common Poorwill** in Palos Verdes Estates on 15 October may have been a transient (Linda Farrier). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, in brown juvenile plumage, was in Covington Park, Morongo Valley, on 18 November (Jerry Johnson). A male **Williamson's Sapsucker** was at Buckhorn on 9 November (Hank Childs).

Orange County's Lemon Heights **Thick-billed Kingbird** returned for its fourth winter. An **Eastern Phoebe** was at Carpinteria Creek after 19 October (Strausses and Parmeters). A **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** put in a brief appearance in Isla Vista on 1 December (Jon Dunn *et al.*). The wintering **Gray Flycatcher** was back at the arboretum in Arcadia on 9 November (Barbara Cohen).

Among the few **Red-breasted Nuthatches** reported were four at California City Central Park on 18 October (Barbara Elliott). Small flocks of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were noted at scattered localities, such as California City (Hal Baxter), Bouquet Canyon (the Commeaus), and Buckhorn (Jean Breheny). The status of **American Dippers** in the Santa Monica Mountains is uncertain. The several records from the Malibu and Topanga Creek drainages come from the fall and winter, but there exists the possibility that one or more pairs of the species may be resident in these mountains. Jonathan Aldefer and Kimball Garrett found one dipper in the middle of Malibu Canyon, below the old Rindge Dam, on 24 November. Additional work should be conducted in this area to further clarify the species' status.

A belated report was received of a **Red-throated Pipit** on the Furnace Creek Gold Course, Death Valley, on 5 October (Jon Atwood); this constitutes the most inland record of this species from California. A **Northern Shrike** was at Oasis on 9 November (Marge Pamias).

A "**Plumbeous**" **Solitary Vireo** at Pierce College on 26 October was in full song (Kimball Garrett). It is interesting that Solitary Vireos routinely sing on their wintering grounds. A **Yellow-throated Vireo** was at the Pt. Loma cemetery after 13 November. Late vagrant warblers included a **Magnolia** at Huntington Beach Central Park 29 October to 2 November (Loren Hays), another **Magnolia** at Furnace Creek Ranch on 9 November (Marge Pamias), a **Black-throated Blue** at the D.W.P. headquarters in Mohave on 24 October (Bruce Broadbooks), a **Chestnut-sided** at the arboretum in Arcadia on 1 December (Barbara Cohen), **Palms** at Pt. Vicente (17 October, Richard Hubacek) and the Santa Ana River in Anaheim (Doug Willick, 11 November), **American Redstarts** near Lake Hughes (the Commeaus, 28 October) and on the Santa Rosa Plateau Preserve (Charles and Isabel Ludlum, 30 October), and a **Painted Redstart** in San Clemente after 25 November (Pearl Sylvester). The wintering **Grace's Warblers** near Santa Barbara returned faithfully, and a **MacGillivray's Warbler** appears to be wintering in Huntington Beach Central Park.

A **Scarlet Tanager** was on Pt. Loma 13-14 November. **Summer Tanagers** were at Long Beach Recreation Park on 26 November



(Navojosky, Sayre and Mull) and at Bluff Lake above Big Bear on 3 November (Brian Keelan; an unusually high locality). An immature **Indigo Bunting** banded in the Santa Anita Creek wash in Arcadia by Mike San Miguel on 10 November was the fifth one of the fall for that locality. A **Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was seen during a 6.6' high tide at Upper Newport Bay on 15 November (Eric Brooks). **American Tree Sparrows** were reported from Baker, and from Mesquite Spring, Death Valley (Marge Pamias, 9 November). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Chaffey College on 28 October (Hank Childs). An immature **Harris' Sparrow** was present in Palos Verdes Estates 17-18 November (Linda Farrier), and another was at the more expected locality of Furnace Creek Ranch on 2 November (Guy McCaskie). Chuck Murdock had a **White-throated Sparrow** in his La Crescenta yard on 20 October, and another White-throat was in Huntington Beach Central Park on 9 November (Doug Willick). A **Swamp Sparrow** was on the lawn of the small museum at Malibu Lagoon on 27 October (Hank Brodtkin); another was banded in Santa Anita wash by Mike San Miguel on 10 November. A **Lapland Longspur** and three **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** were on Plano Trabuco in Orange County after late October (Brian Daniels, Tom Wurster). This productive open habitat is soon scheduled to go the way of most of the rest of Orange County — housing tracts. [This disease is by no means limited to Orange County — has anyone been to the northern part of the Malibu Christmas count circle lately?]

Another in a long line of exotics to be found in southern California, a **Black-crested Finch** (*Lophospingus pusillus*) from South America frequented the arboretum in Arcadia through November (Barbara Cohen and Lou Falb).

It is always difficult to believe that, as the January-February **Western Tanager** arrives, spring migrants are beginning to pass through our region (just *which* migrants depends on how efficient the editor is at getting the issue out). The standard early migrants are the waterfowl, the swallows and the hummingbirds. Subtle (or striking) behavioral changes, and molt into alternate plumages will be noticed among many of our wintering and resident species, and should entertain the birder through the relatively "lean" months of February and March. Remember also that breeding season is in full swing for many species by this early period — a good time to brush up on your "atlasing" techniques!

Send any interesting bird observations to:

**Hal Baxter**  
1821 Highland Oaks Drive  
Arcadia, CA 91006  
Phone # (818) 355-6300

## The President's Corner

by E.H. "Ken" Kendig Jr.

Since publication of the December issue of the *Tanager*, I have had extensive conversations with National Audubon condor people and am advised that money is needed more than ever. They are doing detailed studies of the condor habitats to learn more about sources of contamination. This includes studies of other species with regard to lead and other nasty substances. These studies will benefit many bird species in addition to the California Condor, so your contribution to the Condor Fund will be doubly valuable this year! Give until it hurts.

Even the *Los Angeles Times* is pro-condor as evidenced by this editorial in an early December issue of the *Times*.

## The Ugly Beauty

Let's face it: Look it in the eye, and the California Condor is not a terribly appealing creature. It is a big, grey, bald-headed bird with ugly wattles and beady red eyes. As a form of vulture, the condor feeds on carrion — a role that somebody has had to fill down through the ages, but not the sort of pastime that would add to a glamorous image.

But there have been many reasons behind all the effort expended over the years to save the condor from extinction. The California Condor is one of the world's largest flying birds. It has a wingspan of up to 10 feet. It can soar for miles at a time, at great speed, over its 11-million-acre habitat centered in Ventura and Kern counties. From a distance the soaring condor is a majestic sight.

The condor is one of our rare living links with the past, dating from pre-Ice Age times. Some of its ancestors have been found with

other pre-historic creatures in the La Brea tar pits.

A few years ago as many as 30 California Condors survived in the wild. That number has fallen to six, and three of the birds are being captured for use in a program to perpetuate the species in captivity. The other three may not survive. Attempts will be made to reintroduce some of 21 captive condors to the wild. Such efforts have been successful with Andean Condors, but no one knows if the California birds will make it.

The end has come for the wild condor as we know it. But it may have a future if the transplant program is given a chance to succeed. To that end, the wild-condor habitat must be preserved intact for as long as there is an opportunity for the condor to soar in freedom again.

### RESERVATION TRIPS

(continued from back cover)

**WEEKEND, APRIL 12-13** — Take advantage of an opportunity to see the memorable displaying **Sage Grouse** with local leader **David Gaines** of "Save Mono Lake" fame and author of "Birds of the Yosemite Sierra." We'll meet Saturday at 9 a.m. for a day of birding in the Bishop area (5 hours from L.A. — easy driving conditions) to look for Crossbills, Blue Grouse, Mt. Birds, Black-billed Magpies, and others in a diversity of habitats from the Owens Valley floor to 9,000 feet. We'll meet before dawn Sunday to see the Sage Grouse display then look for singing Sage Thrashers, northward migrating waterfowl, White Pelicans and possibly Whistling Swans, ending around noon. You have the option of birding either day for \$12.50 (be sure to specify Sat. or Sun.) or the weekend for \$20/person.

### PELAGIC TRIPS

**SUNDAY, MARCH 9th** — **Bruce Broadbooks** and **Kimball Garrett** will lead an Alcid and Shearwater Trip around **Santa Barbara Island and out to Sea** on the MV Vantuna. Expected species — Shearwaters: Sooty, Pink-footed, Black-vented; Jaegers: Pomarine, Parasitic; Terns & Gulls: Sabine's, Black-legged Kittiwake, Arctic Tern; Alcids: Rhinoceros Auklet, Pigeon Guillemont, Xantus Murrelet, Common Mune, Cassin's Auklet. Rareties and other Possibilities: Black-footed Albatross (March), Short-tailed Shearwater, No. Fulmar, So. Polar Skua, Puffins. Meet at USC Dock in San Pedro. Departure at 7:00 a.m., return at 6:00 p.m. 38 spaces available, \$20 per person.

**SATURDAY, MAY 31st** — Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Louis Revier** will guide an Alcid and Shearwater trip through the **Santa Barbara Island Area**. See Sunday, March 9th for expected species. Meet at MV Vantuna, USC Dock in San Pedro for 6:00 a.m. departure. Return, 6:00 p.m. 38 spaces available, \$20 per person

### Addition to Regular Birdwalk Listing in 9/85 *Western Tanager*:

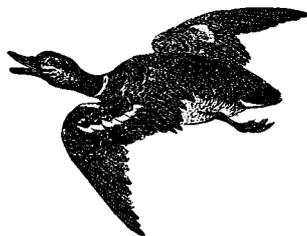
First & Second Saturdays (thru April) — **Tijuana River National Estuarine Sanctuary**. Park rangers and/or docents lead morning walks through this largest salt water marsh in southern California. 173 bird species listed — great for variety of herons — sometimes Little Blue and Tri-Colored. Take I-5 south to Coronado exit to Imperial Beach Blvd., then left on Fifth Street to end. Meet at 9 a.m. Further info: Pat Flanagan, Interpretive Coordinator 619-237-6768.

### Other Notes:

High Tides: Thursday thru Sunday, January 9-12

Friday thru Sunday, February 7-9

July 28-August 4 — **American Birding Association Convention**, Tucson, Arizona. Further info: ABA, P.O. Box 4335, Austin, Texas 78765.



**CARPOOLING:** IS encouraged to reduce gas consumption and air pollution whenever possible. While the IRS allows business to reimburse car expense at the rate of 20¢ per mile, a recent study shows that the average cost *per mile* to own and operate a new subcompact car was 34.6¢ and a standard car was 55.4¢. One suggestion has been for riders to at least share the 4-5¢ per mile gasoline expense.

**EDITOR** Fred Heath

**DESIGN** etc. graphics inc.

**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** Ellsworth Kendig

**1st VICE PRESIDENT** Carol Friedman

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY** Marge Wohlgemuth

Audubon membership (local and national) is \$30 per year (individual), \$38 (family), \$18 (student), \$21 (senior citizen) or \$23 (senior citizen family) including AUDUBON Magazine and THE WESTERN TANAGER. To join, make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, and send them to Audubon House at the above address. Members wishing to receive the TANAGER by first class mail must send checks for \$5 to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Subscription 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.

©LA Audubon 1985

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.



# CALENDAR

January/February '86

## CALL THE TAPE!

Before setting out for any field trip, call the Audubon Bird Tape, (213) 874-1318 for special instructions or last minute changes that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

## FIELD TRIPS

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 11** — Join **Bob Shanman** for a morning walk at the unique **Ballona Wetlands**. This is peak season for viewing shorebirds, waterbirds and residents. Take Marina Fwy. 90 west to Culver Blvd., turn left to Pacific Ave., then right to footbridge at end. Meet at **8 a.m.** \$3 parking. (More info: 213-545-2867 after 6 p.m.)

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 12** — Spend a morning birding **Malibu Lagoon State Beach** with **Dennis Morgan**. This should be a prime time to see numerous ducks, gulls and other waterbirds. Beginners welcome. Bring a scope if possible or we'll be glad to share. Meet at the kiosk by the parking lot at 8 a.m. (More info: call (818) 883-1413 after 6 p.m.)

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 18** — **David White** will lead his monthly trip at the **Whittier Narrows Regional Park**, in search of a good variety of residents in addition to waterbirds and raptors. Meet at **8 a.m.** at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave., So. El Monte, off Fwy. 60 between Santa Anita and Peck Dr. exits, west of Fwy. 605.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1** — Take advantage of a unique opportunity of free **bird sketching instruction** with **Jonathan Alderfer** (213-828-6568). Alderfer is the talented artist and illustrator of the forthcoming Dunn and Garrett Field Identification Manual. Bring pencils, erasers, and sketchbook or drawing pad along with your regular birding equipment (a scope if available). This outing is designed for birders with no previous drawing experience. Emphasis will be on basic drawing skills and the recording of field marks through drawings. Come participate in an educational and entertaining experience. Meet at 9 a.m. at the kiosk at **Malibu Lagoon State Park**.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8** — **Ballona** with **Bob Shanman**. Same as January 11.

**WEEKEND, FEBRUARY 7-9** — **Western Field Ornithologists Annual Convention**, in Sacramento. Includes local field trips, workshops and sessions on: Breeding Bird Atlas, El Nino, Pacific Seabirds, Peregrine Falcon, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Field I.D. etc. with banquet address by our own Dr. Arnold Small on "Birding Planet Earth." Non-member registration: \$34; contact WFO, Tim Manolis, 3532 Winston Way, Carmichael 95608.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16** — **Whittier Narrows** with **David White**. Same as January 18.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22** — Spend a day in the **Antelope Valley** with **Fred Heath** looking for wintering raptors and waterfowl and to work the fields for possible Longspurs, Mt. Bluebirds & Mt. Plover. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Lamont-Odett Overlook on Hwy. 14 (of Lake Palmdale, about 40 min. no. of intersecting Fwys. 5 & 14). Bring lunch and be prepared for cold weather. Carpoolers are to meet across the street from Denny's at the Roxford exit off Fwy. 5 (no. end of S.F. Valley) by 7:15 a.m.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23** — Meet **Joe Zell** at 8 a.m. at the kiosk of **Malibu Lagoon** for a morning of birding. A variety of shorebirds and other waterfowl are expected. If timing allows, we may go on to **Tapia Park**. Beginners are welcome.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 1** — **Loren Hays** says to "expect the unexpected" while viewing shorebirds, ducks, gulls, terns and raptors during a morning walk at **Bolsa Chica**. (Even Peregrine & No. Fulmar have been seen there.) Take the Seal Beach Blvd. exit from Fwy. 405 to Coast Highway, then south to marked parking lot across from State Beach, between Golden West and Warner. Meet at 8 a.m. Scopes helpful.

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

## RESERVATION TRIPS: (Limited Participation)

### RESERVATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE:

Reservations will be accepted ONLY if ALL the following information is supplied: (1) Trip desired (2) Names of people in your party, (3) Phone numbers (a) usual and (b) evening before event, in case of emergency cancellation; (4) Separate check (no cash please) to LAAS for exact amount for each trip; (5) Self-addressed stamped envelope for confirmation and associated trip information. Send to: Reservations Chairman Ruth Lohr, IAAS, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two weeks prior to the scheduled date (4 weeks for pelagies) and you will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation during that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement.

If you desire to carpool to an event, Ms. Lohr (usually in office on Tuesday) can provide information for you to make contact and possible arrangements.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 19** — **Pat and Paul Nelson** will lead a morning walk around **Norconian Lake**, a limited access Naval facility. A wide variety of numerous ducks in a lovely, quiet setting is the highlight. Bring picnic lunch if you wish. \$5 per person, refundable to attendees at the facility. (Cameras permitted in the wildlife area, but no children please.)

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 26974  
Los Angeles, CA

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 25** — **Hal Baxter** will lead this popular annual jaunt to the unique **Salton Sea Area** for a long day of unforgettable birding. The large quantities of ducks and geese are the highlight. Other birds to be looked for: Abert's Towhee, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Yellow-footed Gull, Mountain Plover, Sandhill Cranes and other waterbirds. Mr. Baxter is an outstanding birder and knows the area and its birds thoroughly. \$15/person.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2** — Spend a morning birding **Pt. Mugu Naval Air Base**. Shorebirds and other waterfowl will be the highlight with White-faced Ibis a probability and a chance for rarities in this coastal location. Carpooling on the base required. As the base desires ensured participation, a \$5 fee is being charged and will be refunded at the beginning of the trip. (Please, no children or cameras and if not a U.S. Citizen, please give date and place of birth with reservation.)

**WEEKEND, MARCH 22-23** — Spend a spring weekend enjoying nature in the unique **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park** with **Stephen Gustafson**. The wildflowers should be in bloom and some migrant warblers are expected. We'll look for the typical desert birds — Phainopepla, Verdin, Gambel's Quail, also Prairie Falcon, Black-tailed and Gray Gnatcatchers, Hummingbirds, particularly nesting Costas. We'll learn about owls, their habits, food supply, etc. then look for them Saturday evening. Gustafson was recently appointed Asst. Curator of Birds and Mammals at the San Diego Natural History Museum. He received his Masters Degree ('83) in Raptor Ecology, specializing in Owls (Great Horned, Barn, Long-Eared) with Anza-Borrego his study site. \$25/person.

See page 7 for further Reservation Trips, Pelagic Trips, etc.

## EVENING MEETINGS

Meet at 8:00 P.M. in Plummer Park

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 14** — **Fourth Annual Membership Slide Contest**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11** — **Annual Banquet**. See page 4 for details.