WESTERN TANAGER

Volume 61 Number 3 November 1994 Los Angeles Audubon Society

FIRE

by Sandy Wohlgemuth

Olga Clarke

Santa Monica Mountains, spring flowers after November 1993 burn.

The seasons roll around and, before we know it, the fires are here again. The chaparral will burn in the Southern California mountains as it always has, consuming forest, homes, animals—and sometimes people.

Chaparral evolved in this semi-desert to live with fire. After a devastating burn, the trunks of mature sumac, oak and ceanothus stand as bare and charred as on a battlefield. The very ground is black and smells of smoke. And yet in a remarkably short time, green shoots spring up from the root crowns at the base of the trunks, fed by the long-undamaged roots that may go as deep as 50 feet to ground water. Buds at the root crowns are suppressed by a hormone in the living foliage. When the foliage is burned, the hormone is destroyed and the buds sprout quickly. Many plants of this ecosystem produce seeds that may lie in the soil for years and will germinate only after a fire.

The autumn fires in the Santa Monica mountains last year produced a spectacular display of spring "fire-followers." Some of these annual flowers bloom moderately each year, but after a fire they seem to explode with exuberance. Fire here is a multiple blessing: the hibernating seeds are activated, the ash provides an extra shot of nutrients, and stripping the overhanging vegetation cuts down the competition for sunlight. This year's crop of flowers was denser and seemed taller with larger blossoms.

Autumn fires are followed by winter rains. Torrential downpours can be very destructive, eroding the exposed soil, washing away valuable topsoil, undermining paved streets and driveways. Hydrologists tell us that hydrocarbon gases created by burning chaparral are trapped in the shallow soil where they coat the soil particles, forming a slick water-resistant layer about one inch below the surface. Rain saturates the surface soil and when it reaches the impervious layer the upper soil begins to slide, dragging down everything in its path.

Flood control departments have

struggled with mudslides for decades, and their answer to the difficult problem has been debris basins. Debris basins, also called catch basins, are large, deep, concrete tubs built at strategic places in canyons to hold the mud, the rocks, the downed charred wood and anything else that would harm or obliterate lives and property. They work well with an average, moderate rain, holding the debris and mud but allowing the water to pass through. A wild gully-washer will overflow the basins, and whatever is below them will suffer.

Mudslides in the Santa Monicas are relatively rare, though we recall last winter's mudslides in Las Flores Canyon west of Topanga Canyon that destroyed many homes and closed Pacific Coast Highway. The San Gabriels are higher and steeper and present more formidable challenges for the hardy souls who live there. Fire alone is bad enough, but the rains that follow bring horrendous nightmares. Mud slides down the mountains in unbelievable quantity, clogging the streets, bursting into homes, shoving autos downhill into canyons, carrying boulders along like gigantic, uncontrolled cannonballs.

After the fires there is a panicky cry to plant rye grass and other exotic grasses to prevent erosion by holding the soil in place. Though once a universal practice, most of the land management agencies now believe it is unproductive. Grass seed can be well dispersed but the rains may wash it away before it takes root. If it does grow, an alien plant is introduced into a natural ecosystem, choking off the new growth of seeds and shoots of the native chaparral. Critics of grass seeding call it a "lawyer repellent," a political device to ward off lawsuits claiming negligence.

Before the land bridge from Asia was crossed, only lightning ignited the dry resinous shrubs and trees, burning off old material and allowing new growth room to flourish. After *Homo sapiens* arrived, there were accidental burns set off by the cooking fires of these new Americans. Western Indian tribes would set deliberate fires in chaparral to open up the habitat for easier hunting and gathering. Now, at the close of the 20th Century, the west is getting more populated, bringing people closer to vulnerable wildlands. Not all people share the affection most of have for natural areas. To our dismay, a minuscule number of madmen live among us, pyromaniacs who get their kicks setting wildfires, so that today far more fires are caused by arson than lightning.

Olga Clarke

Fire Poppy

As population increased in Southern California, the mountains became more desirable for those who could afford it. One could find or build a place with more elbow room than the flatland offered. The views might be better and there was the feeling of living closer to nature. The price of a mountain home was the threat of fire, and with all the goodwill in the world the fire suppression philosophy of Smokey Bear became the rule. Fire was bad stuff. If people were allowed to build their dream house in the hills, they must be protected from incineration. And they were.

When the humidity was low and the Santa Anas blew, wildfires developed that could not be contained and losses were heavy. But most fires could be limited and then extinguished by skilled firefighters—which was all to the good. Putting out the fires saved the homes but generated a huge fuel build-up of dead, dry and combustible chaparral. When the flames arrive the fires are hotter, fiercer and the homes go up in smoke. A classic Catch 22. The 1993 fire area at the Cold Creek Preserve in the Santa Monicas had not been burned for 23 years. Fuel accumulation in chaparral can build up for as long as 50 years.

Coping with fire in Southern California has been a major problem—and a controversial one. Can it be prevented? Probably not. Lightning and firebugs will always be with us. Keeping homes clear of encircling brush plus a lot of luck can be helpful. The most promising solution is prescribed burning—the careful, deliberate application of fire that controls the growth of chaparral without endangering residential areas. The process requires moist air, no wind, and well-trained personnel. The fuel load is reduced and dense areas of chaparral can be broken up into manageable patches. Government agencies are using it successfully and it is cost effective.

Living in the mountains in the Los Angeles basin is an ongoing gamble. Most of the time you're a winner but when you lose you can lose big. We've seen many of the losers on TV wipe their tears, square their jaws and bravely vow to rebuild their demolished homes. We admire their courage, their all-American determination to overcome adversity. And yet we may wonder why they ought to be allowed to imperil their lives and the lives of their rescuers. Should a family be permitted to use its property unconditionally? Is it fair to the taxpayers who foot the bill? Government has to build the basins, haul the debris away, pay the firemen, provide emergency assistance in cash grants or low-interest loans. And public agencies may be sued for failing to protect the victims.

Housing development in the mountains continues apace. The in-

dividual who buys a few acres and builds his own house has given way to the mega-developer who owns vast contiguous property and builds thousands of homes. Although the houses are closer together and some of the wildness has been eliminated, the tracts are still vulnerable to fire and flood.

At this late date what can be done? Current residents can hardly be ordered to leave their cherished domains. Is it politically feasible for local government to re-zone high-risk areas to prevent residential construction? It has been suggested that anyone building in the mountains should sign a waiver releasing cities and counties from responsibility for their fate. Would that work? Another idea is to make it mandatory for mountain residents to pay into a fund annually to provide for future fire losses.

Forest departments and fire services at all levels of government have been wrestling with fire for years and still the rains come and the mountains slide. Is our technology incapable of finding a solution? Is settling the human equation impossible for intelligent people? Or is controlling fire, like preventing earthquakes and hurricanes, too much for humanity? Eventually we'll find out.

Invaluable assistance was provided by erosion expert, Peter Wohlgemuth, of the U.S. Forest Service.

Olga Clarke

Large-flowered Phacelia, Indian Pink and Sticky Monkey Flower

National Audubon Society Convention '94

November 11–15, 1994
Fort Myers, Florida

Please join us in Fort Myers for the National Audubon 1994 Biennial Convention, co-hosted with Florida Audubon. The theme "People, Water and Wildlife" comprises the most important environmental issues challenging our nation. These inter-relationships cannot be better demonstrated than in south Florida—a land of spectacular bird life, vast wetlands and growing human population.

Be part of the solution! By understanding the relations of people, water and wildlife, we will be able to better understand how these themes affect our communities, no matter where we live.

General sessions dealing with Endangered Species, Population and the Everglades Campaign are featured, and workshops are offered on myriad topics. A fine selection of field trips is offered before and after the convention.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt is the invited speaker for the Saturday luncheon, and Honorable Jimmy Carter will receive the coveted Audubon Medal Award at the Great Egret Annual Dinner on Sunday.

Native Plant Sale

This is the best time of year to set out native plants so they can start growing during the winter rains. The California Native Plant Society will hold a plant sale in Agoura Hills on Saturday and Sunday, November 19 and 20, 1994, from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at Calamigos Ranch, off Mulholland, 500 yds west of Kanan-Dume Rd.

There will be activities for kids, picnic grounds, exhibits, participation by State and National Parks, slide shows, sale of more than 4,000 plants of more than 400 species—and food! Admission is free.

For more information, contact the California Native Plant Society at (818) 345-6749 or (213) 933-8993.

PERSONAL HIGH

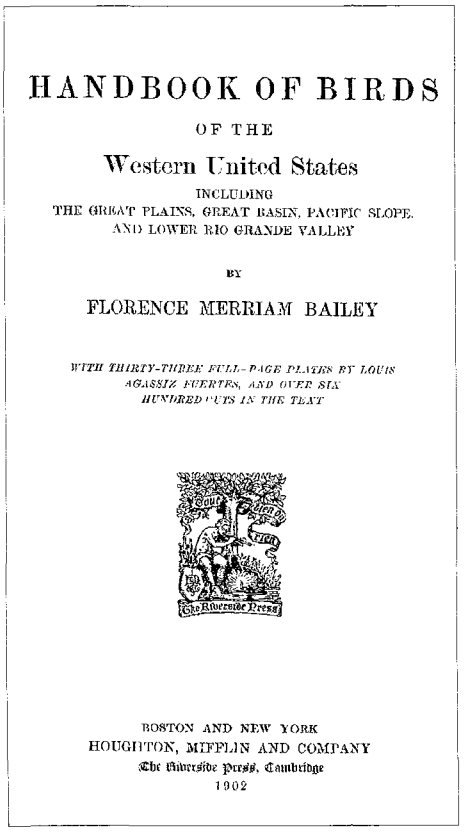
by Brad Schram

The First Adventure

I suppose that personal highs are often the result of firsts: first sightings, first records, first travel to an exotic, storied location. My personal highs follow suit with this supposition, of course, which at least explains my assumption if not its accuracy. I have examined meaning and motivation in my birding over the years and have found that three categories are constant: first, the bird itself—the interest, wonder, excitement and sheer joy that it brings; second, places—the context in which the bird is experienced; and third, the people with whom these experiences are often shared. Our *karma* as birders is an embarrassment of riches in that our activity frequently situates us favorably at the junction of these three elements, providing stimulation and memories which transcend the check marks on our lists or our ability to separate juvenal dowitchers by their tertial edges. When one is presented with a diverse avifauna in a beautiful natural setting, the stage is set for a peak experience. The addition of an unforgettable friend usually results in a "personal high." Such was my first "bird walk."

In 1948 my family built a cabin in Running Springs, between Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear in the San Bernardino Mountains. My mother and I spent many Easter vacations and summer holidays there, often with my great-aunt and uncle. The birds were very different from those in my Los Angeles backyard. "Bluejays," "Chickadees," "Red-headed Woodpeckers" and "White-headed Woodpeckers" were commonly in the trees outside the living room; I knew "wild canaries" were in the willows in the meadow where I caught pollywogs. My fascination was encouraged, if not directed, by the family.

I believe I was nine years old, making it the summer of 1952, when Wyatt A. Kent rented the rustic cabin across the way for a few weeks. Mr. Kent, I was informed by my family, was "President of the Los Angeles Bird Club!" I soon began walking over and talking with the old gentleman whenever he was outside, and when I officiously paraded my ornithological knowledge he corrected me gently: my "Bluejays" were "Blue-fronted Jays" (he showed me why), and my "Ruby-throated Hummingbirds" were "Anna's." He soon engaged my expertise, however, and asked if I could take him to some of the places nearby where there were lots of birds he could watch. The result of this expedition I now find myself recording 42 years later, modestly surprised that I have never written this down before.


HANDBOOK OF BIRDS

OF THE

Western United States

INCLUDING
THE GREAT PLAINS, GREAT BASIN, PACIFIC SLOPE
AND LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY

BY

FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

WITH THIRTY-THREE FULL-PAGE PLATES BY LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES, AND OVER SIX HUNDRED CUTS IN THE TEXT

The Riverside Press

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1902

We met in the morning and set off afoot on the dirt roads then interlacing the forested, sparsely populated region north of town. He had one pair of binoculars and a copy of Florence Merriam Bailey's *Handbook of Birds of the Western United States* with him. He especially wanted, I remember, to see Band-tailed Pigeons. He explained that these large pigeons were very unlike the pigeons I was used to at home. He mimicked their call, and I think I was in love.

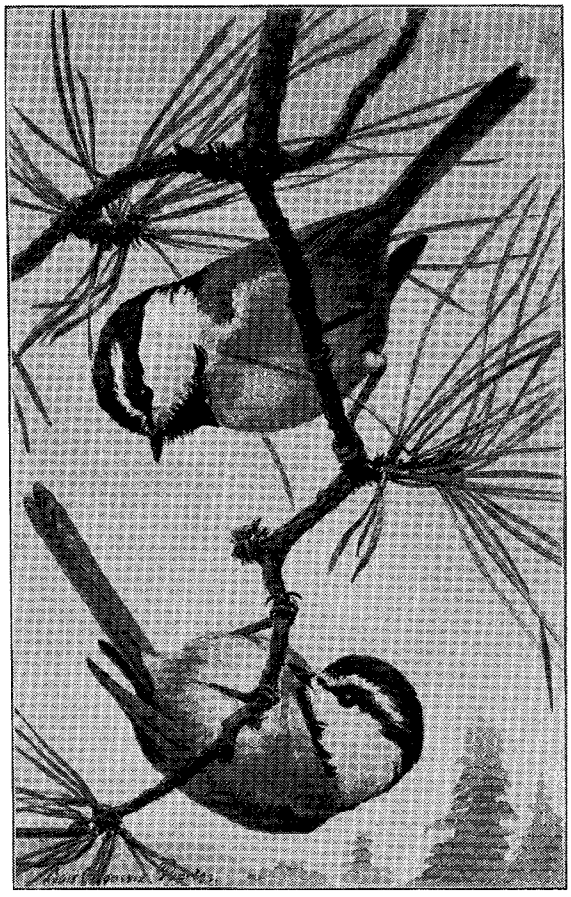
As we walked up the aptly named Avian Way, he confirmed that I had been right all along: they *were* White-headed Woodpeckers! I was relieved, I remember, because my confidence had been shaken by the bluejay and ruby-throated episodes; a humility I have felt innumerable times since, I hasten to add. The "Red-headed Woodpeckers" did not fare as well. They were called "Red-breasted Sapsuckers" and he explained that the true Red-headeds were eastern birds only. He could not show pictures in a field guide, and Bailey's black and white

photos of skins on their backs held little enchantment for me. I took his comments as authoritative, however.

Walking toward the meadow we encountered chickadees. He pointed out the white supercilium, which I knew to be there all the time of course, and told me that this translated to "Mountain Chickadee." I remember asking about the "others." On finally showing him the "others" I learned that the ones with black heads weren't chickadees at all, as we called them, but were rather "Oregon Juncos." When watching them fly up I could tell them by their white outer tail feathers, he noted. By this time my ego was blissfully absent and I simply hung on his every word because learning was never more fun, or painless; taxonomic and identification lessons were devoured as voraciously as Mom's lemon meringue pie.

Little birds flipping about high overhead were Violet-green Swallows, and he described the striking dorsal colors. I remember how badly I wanted to see those colors, an unrealized goal for many years to follow. Secret Drive had a bird I had never seen before, and I was frustrated that I could not see it well at all. It was, he said, a "Myrtle Warbler" because it was a warbler with a bright yellow rump. Although well-traveled, with previous trips to California's wilds in the '30s and '40s, he was a new permanent transplant to California from the east and can be forgiven imperfection. He struggled for a while with a woodpecker high in a pine. This was either a "Willow" or a "Northern Hairy," and one was more common than another. He finally settled on Northern Hairy after much consultation with Mrs. Bailey. I'm sure he was right.

A mewing in a tangle was a Green-tailed Towhee, and that I remember well—still a favorite bird. A noisy group on a dead Black Oak stub was a colony of "California" Woodpeckers; "Notice the big white patches in the wing and on the rump as they fly!" Western Wood Pewee was followed by the "quick-three-beers" of an Olive-sided Flycatcher, which we watched as it performed its test-pilot acrobatics and returned to its pine-top perch many times. The quail with the incredible straight plumes were Mountain Quail. I remember the feeling of pride on being told that they were unique to mountains. *My* mountains!



Mountain Chickadees
Handbook of Birds of the Western United States

A Red-breasted Sapsucker perched on a nearby pine trunk on our way home, and he showed me the yellowish belly I had always missed. The bird was more beautiful than ever. As we approached the cabin he suddenly became urgent. "Oh look! A Townsend's Solitaire!" He spoke in a stage whisper as the bird perched and sallied and perched again on the dead lower limbs of nearby Jeffrey Pines. This, he announced, was a wonderful way to end our walk. He was excited. He handed me his cherished binoculars and told me to look for the round white eye-ring and long outer tail feathers. I will never forget them.

We did not see, or hear, Band-tailed Pigeon that day. In many ways it was a metaphor for subsequent years; days of searching, alone and with friends, of finding or not, of being surprised, fulfilled, disappointed and exhilarated in their turn.

We met in Los Angeles a few times subsequently; he and his wife Ramona took me to MacArthur Park in winter where I learned about coots and Lesser Scaup, cormorants and Black-crowned Night Herons. He died not long after and his widow gave me his copy of *Handbook of Birds of the Western United States.* I still have it, of course.

Brad Schram resides in Arroyo Grande, California. He spends most of his time birding in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, but his lifelong interest in birds has taken him all over the world. He has written many articles for BIRDING, *the publication of the American Birding Association.*

Jonathan Alderfer
Paintings and Prints

November 6, 1994 — January 13, 1995
National Audubon Society Gallery
200 Culver Boulevard
Playa del Rey, California 90293
310/574-2799
Gallery Hours: 10:00 A.M. — 5:00 P.M., Monday — Friday

Opening Reception
Sunday, November 6, 1994
2:00 P.M. — 5:00 P.M.

Jonathan Alderfer is a local artist and member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Audubon Magazine (Nov-Dec '94) will feature a special poster about migratory birds. Jonathan's original paintings for the poster will be among the work on view. You are cordially invited to attend the Opening Reception.

Mountain Quail on a Ledge, 1994, india ink.

The Armchair Activist Needs Your Help

Are you looking for an easy way to help protect our environment? The Armchair Activist Letter-of-the-Month Club may be just the thing. The *Armchair Activist* is a monthly bulletin covering a single issue of environmental concern. It provides background information and current status of the issue, and includes a sample letter for you to write.

Several issues a year are devoted to national environmental issues; the rest to state and local. (Our monthly bulletin should not be confused with the national *Armchair Activist* which covers many topics of national concern each month.)

LAAS sponsors this grass-roots effort at no cost to its members, but we currently have only 50 "activists" out of many hundreds of chapter members. In order to mount effective campaigns, we need the letter-writing skills of as many of you as possible.

Please consider donating a small amount of time each month to this worthy cause. To join our activist network, please send your name, address and phone number to:

Armchair Activist
c/o Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90046

September's topic was rescuing the Bolsa Chica wetlands from development. Many of you have birded this area but may not know it is the largest unprotected wetland south of San Francisco. Its survival as habitat for birds and other wildlife is currently threatened by a proposal to build 5,000 homes on the site.

Personal letters opposing this project are badly needed, especially from residents of Southern California. They should be sent to:

Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Secretary Bruce Babbitt
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

California Birds: Their Status and Distribution

A Book Review by H. Lee Jones

by Arnold Small

At last, an up-to-date, well-researched book on all of California's birds!

Fifty years ago Joseph Grinnell and Alden Miller published the now classic, but much outdated, *The Distribution of the Birds of California*. In the five decades since, a plethora of local, county and regional "status and distribution" references have been published. One notable exception was Arnold Small's *Birds of California* (1974) which covered the entire state. But it emphasized the state's many bird habitats and Arnold's superb photography, presenting only "thumbnail" accounts for each species. *Birds of Southern California* by Garrett and Dunn (1981) filled the "status and distribution" void for the southern third of the state, and a number of other references have since filled the void for other portions of the state. Finally, with the publication this summer of Arnold Small's *California Birds: Their Status and Distribution* (1994, Ibis Publishing Company), we have an accurate, up-to-date volume that addresses the status and distribution of California's birds statewide. This time around, Arnold has devoted much more attention—and space (about seven times as much)—to the species accounts.

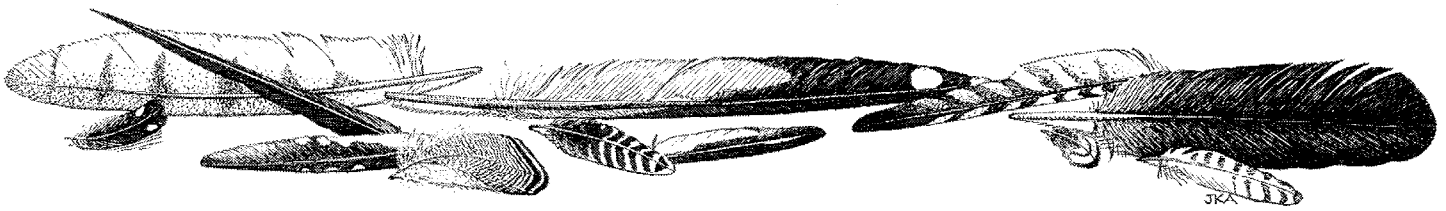
The many years of painstaking effort Arnold must have spent in researching this book are apparent from the outset. He makes liberal use of literature citations, unpublished (and often obscure) manuscripts, and personal communications to support the "hard" data on species occurrence, seasonality and range. He has divided each account into three sections—Seasonal Status, Habitat and Range in California. While the first and last are valuable in that they provide up-to-date information on all of California's birds, it is the section on habitat that I found most impressive. Grinnell and Miller provided useful species-specific information on habitat, but Arnold has greatly expanded upon and updated this information (cf., Common Raven, American Pipit). As in his earlier work, Arnold also includes a thorough treatment of California's landform regions and bird habitats, with the welcome addition of sections on migration, vagrancy and seasonal occurrence.

No surprise: the book is full of superb photographs by the author, from the glistening male Allen's Hummingbird "frozen" in flight on the dust jacket to the 336 crisp photographic images in the text. Unfortunately, all too many otherwise excellent photographs are printed much too dark (South Polar Skua, Lesser Scaup, Mountain Quail, Evening Grosbeak, to name only a few). Some birds (e.g., Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Audubon's Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet) have distracting wren-like barring in their flight feathers, another artifact of the printing process.

Arnold is well known for his close-up "photo portraits" of birds, but my favorite, hands down, is the not-so-close-up Sooty Shearwater demonstrating its mastery of the sea in Plate 1. I suspect this photograph was taken on a stomach-wrenching, bone-chilling gray day in late fall off northern California. If you have ever participated in such a trip, this picture will certainly evoke *vivid* memories!

While filling a significant void, *California Birds* is not without its limitations. It lacks the depth of analysis found in *Birds of Southern California*, especially its information-packed 26-page bar graph section, which remains an indispensable reference for any serious field ornithologist. And I still await a book with good range maps of all of California's resident birds. While virtually free of typographical errors, *California Birds* occasionally suffers from overly long, convoluted, and sometimes nonsensical sentences, especially in the introductory material (see p. 11, second full paragraph, for example). The terms "very rare," "extremely rare" and "exceedingly rare" in the species accounts are confusing and at times misleading, but they are adequately defined in the introduction and I eventually got used to them. Curiously, the pagination switches from Roman to cardinal numerals midway through the introduction.

California Birds is an attractive, well-researched and very welcome volume on the birds of *all* of California. It will serve as an excellent reference for many years to come and will be especially valuable as a good "one-stop" source for serious out-of-state birders who are planning a visit to California, as well as for those of us who live and bird in the state on a regular basis. Arnold is to be commended for a job well done!



A CLOSER LOOK

by Kimball L. Garrett

Kimball L. Garrett

Black-necked Stilt
Himantopus mexicanus

In spite of the severe depletion of its wetland habitats, Los Angeles County boasts an impressive list of 49 species of shorebirds (plovers, oystercatchers, stilts, avocets, sandpipers and phalaropes) recorded within its borders. But as the start of field work for the L.A. County Breeding Bird Atlas fast approaches, we might seem poised to forget about this fascinating group of migratory birds, for only six shorebird species are known to breed in the county. (A seventh species, the Common Snipe, formerly bred in the extreme northwest corner of the county.) This is hardly surprising—we're all aware that a good number of our visiting species are arctic or subarctic nesters and that most of the rest breed in interior prairie wetlands.

Of our six breeding species, the Black Oystercatcher is restricted to the coast, with breeding documented or suspected only for the detached breakwaters in Los Angeles Harbor and at Marina del Rey. The Spotted Sandpiper is limited as a breeder to gravelly river bottoms and flood control basins, mainly at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains and in the Santa Clara River drainage. By contrast, the Killdeer is widespread throughout the lowlands of the county. A fourth species, the Snowy Plover, has (or at least had) a duel breeding distribution in the county, with one population breeding along coastal sandy beaches and another on the edges of playas and artificial water impoundments in the Antelope Valley. The county's coastal breeding populations of Snowy Plovers have been lost to development and human disturbance, although the potential for restoration of this population is suggested by the recent breeding of Snowy Plovers in coastal Orange and Ventura Counties.

Finally, our two recurvirostrids round out the contingent of breeding shorebirds in the county. American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts often have a tendency to breed in the same areas and have even carried this to the extreme twice by producing "Avostilts" observed earlier this year at Pt. Mugu and in the San Francisco Zoo in 1974 (see Bill Principe's note in *Condor* 79:128-129,1977). In Los Angeles County, these species have bred in at least three situations. First, both stilts and avocets nest in the "estuary" along the lower Los Angeles River channel in Long Beach. Second, Black-necked Stilts nested in the 1970s and 1980s in the Whittier Narrows area (see Mickey Long's *Birds of Whittier Narrows Recreation Area*, published in 1993 by the Whittier Narrows Nature Center Associates), and both stilts and av-

Photo: Black-necked Stilt in flight over Piute Ponds, Los Angeles County, 13 July 1991

ocets have nested recently in similar habitats behind Hansen Dam. Finally, both species nest irregularly at Piute Ponds north of Lancaster, in artificial water impoundments with small islets. Birders who cover Piute Ponds in spring and early summer are well aware of the dive-bombing threats by American Avocets and the constant yapping of the less brazen Black-necked Stilts. The fuzzy, gangling young are of course the best evidence of breeding—watch for them in June or July.

Currently we have a very incomplete picture of the status and distribution of our few nesting shorebirds in the county. How many Black-necked Stilts nest in the county? Do their numbers fluctuate with interannual variation in water levels? And just where, exactly, *do* they nest? I'll repeat the now familiar refrain—we stand to learn a great deal over the next five years of atlasing!

Kimball L. Garrett

Black-necked Stilt incubating at the Salton Sea, 14 May 1993

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Join hosts Lauren Hutton and Richard Dean Anderson on this remarkable adventure, featuring Audubon's most powerful and controversial films of the last decade.

Premieres on TBS SuperStation
Sunday, November 20, 1994 at 9:00 P.M. (EST)

Encores:
Monday, November 21 at 12:00 A.M. (EST)
Saturday, November 26 at 10:05 A.M. (EST)
Monday, November 28 at 2:35 A.M. (EST)

BE SURE TO WATCH!

Western Tanager

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CONSERVATION: Sandy Wohlgemuth
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Nonmembers may subscribe to the *Western Tanager* for $15 per year. The newsletter is sent by first-class mail to subscribers and members who pay an additional $7. Make checks payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society.

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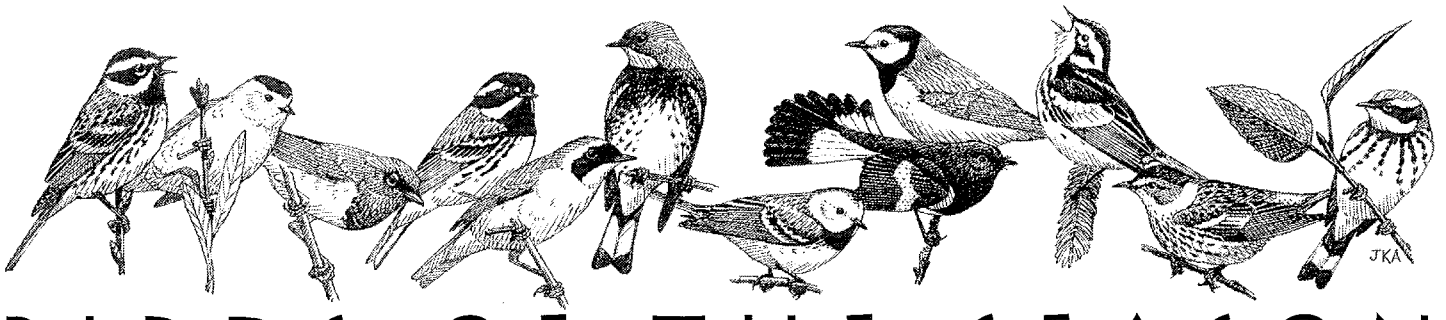

BIRDS OF THE SEASON

by Hank Brodkin

November brings the end of the long protracted fall migration season. It is a good time for sparrows, White-throated and Swamp and perhaps one of the *Ammodramus*—Sharp-tailed or LeConte's. The high tides of November send seekers of rails (and Sharp-tailed Sparrows) to Upper Newport Bay and the Imperial Beach Marsh in San Diego County—sadly the only places left along our coast for such searches. We should have a good idea by November of what winter invaders have come our way—and it is not too early to start staking them out for the Christmas Counts which are just around the corner.

The deserts are comfortable in November—good camping weather—and many good birds have been found at the oases this month; Wood Thrush, Rufous-backed Robin and Varied Bunting come to mind. So there is plenty to see and do for those of us fortunate enough to live in Southern California.

A **Magnificent Frigatebird** was seen over Hermosa Beach on 31 August (Kevin Larson), and the first migrant **Swainson's Hawk** of the season flew over Lake Palmdale on the same day (Charles Hood, Nina Merrill and Cal Yorke). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** turned up in Ojai on 29 August where one was seen last year (Brad Sillasen).

An **American Golden-Plover** was on the Oxnard Plain on 22 August (Bart Lane), and on the same day seven **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were reported from Seal Beach (Doug Willick). Now that these birds have been officially split by the AOU, more attention will certainly be paid to the two forms. On 21 August, seven **Solitary Sandpipers** and one **Semipalmated** were counted in a shorebird census on the L.A. River between Willow and Del Amo (Brian Daniels, et al).

A **Xantus' Murrelet** was off the Huntington Beach Pier on 22 August (DW), and a **White-winged Dove** showed up at a feeder near Robertson and Olympic on 20 September (John Levine).

A **Lewis' Woodpecker** at Galileo Park in eastern Kern County on 14 September might signal a winter invasion of this species (Rick Saval). A **Least Flycatcher** was near Pt. Fermin on 11 September (Mitch Heindel), and an **Eastern Kingbird** was seen at the Sepulveda Basin on 17 September (Dave Koeppel). There were two **Red-eyed Vireo** reports—one from Banning Park on 5 September (Jerry Johnson) and the other from Galileo on 15 September (Jon Dunn and Matt Heindel).

A prized **Blue-winged Warbler** was at Lake Palmdale on 31 August (CH, et al), and a **Lucy's** was at the same location on 27 August (Kimball Garrett). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was seen on a field trip to Whittier Narrows on 11 September (Leo Ohtsuki), and another was in Huntington Beach Central Park on 17 September (Jerry Friedman). An **Ovenbird** was also at the park on 27 August (Thomas Newhouse). A **Northern Waterthrush** was found in Madrona Marsh on 21 August (MiH), and a much rarer **Louisiana** was at Galileo on 16 September along with a **Mourning Warbler** that was found there a day earlier (JD and MaH) .

A **Summer Tanager** was at Huntington Beach Central Park on 27 August (TN), and two female-plumaged **Painted Buntings** were in the same area. An **Indigo Bunting** was seen at the Big Santa Anita Flood Control Basin (Mike San Miguel), and two were along the L.A. River below the Glendale Fwy. on 20 September (KG). Another good bird for Kern County was an **Orchard Oriole** at Galileo on 14 September (KG).

Many thanks to those of you who phone in reports to me. I'm sorry I don't always have the time to call you back—but I really appreciate your efforts!

Good Birding and easy on the turkey!

Records of rare and unusual bird sightings reported in this column should be considered tentative pending review by the *American Birds* Regional Editors or, if appropriate, by the California Bird Records Committee. Send your bird observations with as many details as possible to:

Hank Brodkin
27½ Mast Street, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292.
(310) 827-0407 E-Mail: hankb@kaiwan.com

Or call **David Koeppel** at (818) 784-0425.

Continued from page 12

attained full species status recently. Their difficult ID will be a primary topic. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in front of the Edison building on the N side of Hueneme Rd. just before Casper Rd. and about 1.5 miles W of PCH. From the 101 W, take Las Posas Rd. S to Hueneme Rd. W. Finish before lunch. Scopes helpful.

⚓ **Sunday, November 13 —** From San Pedro on the *R.V. Vantuna* to Santa Barbara Island and the Osborne Bank. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Arnold Small**.

Sunday, November 13 — Whittier Narrows Regional Park. Join ranger **Ray Jillson** to see wintering raptors, songbirds and others augment resident and breeding species. Cardinals are resident. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Nature Center, 1000 Durfee Ave. Take the Peck Dr. exit S off the 60 Fwy in South El Monte (just W of the 605 Fwy). Take the offramp onto Durfee Ave. heading W (right) and turn left into the Nature Center.

Reservation and Fee Events
(Limited Participation)
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:

LAAS Reservations
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90046-6694.

If there is insufficient response, the trip will be cancelled two Wednesdays prior to the scheduled date (four weeks for pelagics), and you will be so notified and your fee returned. Your cancellation after that time will bring a refund only if there is a paid replacement. Millie Newton is available at Audubon House on Wednesdays from noon to 4:00 P.M. to answer questions about field trips. Our office staff is also available Tuesday through Saturday for most reservation services.

⚓ **Friday Night, November 18 —** From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*. 30-hour trip departs 10:00 P.M. Friday and returns 4:00 A.M. Sunday. Fall is the best time to look for fall *Pterodromas*, including Stejneger's Petrels. Leaders **Kimball Garrett** and **Mitch Heindel**. $250 double bunk, $145 single bunk (meals included).

Saturday November 19 — Piute Ponds. Former ABA and LAAS president **Gerry Maisel** and his wife **Laurette** will lead us into this limited-access bird haven on Edwards Air Force Base. Bring a lunch and bird until about 3:00 P.M. White-faced Ibis, Redhead and Sora likely. Rough-legged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and owls have all been seen in the past. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the LaMont-Odett Overlook on the E side of Hwy 14, N of the Pearblossom Hwy turnoff and before Palmdale.

Monday, November 28 — Van Norman Reservoir. Leader **Dustin Alcala**. Riparian and grassland habitat surround the reservoir and adjacent ponds. Raptors, waterbirds and other wintering birds usually noteworthy. Take the 405 Fwy N to the Rinaldi offramp just S of the 5 Fwy interchange. Go W on Rinaldi about a mile to the front gate on the right (N) side. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in the lot inside the gate on the left. We will carpool from there and stop about 1:00 P.M. Restrooms on-site. *Note*: Van Norman and Chatsworth reservoir trips will be alternating one Monday a month in the future.

Sunday, December 4 — Topanga State Park. Leader **Gerry Haigh**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See November 6 write-up for details.

Saturday, December 10 — Carrizo Plains. Leader **Sam Fitton** of B.L.M. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in Maricopa. Vehicles $13 each. Good hawks, eagles and Mountain Plover. Sandhill Cranes hopeful. A jewel in the crown of the Nature Conservancy. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others. Sign up with Audubon House for exact directions. 8 car limit.

Sunday, December 11 — Whittier Narrows. Leader **Ray Jillson**. Meet at 8:00 A.M. See November 13 write-up for details.

Saturday, December 17 — Lancaster Christmas Bird Count. Compiler **Fred Heath**. If you were on last year's count, you'll be contacted. If you wish to join, leave a message for Fred with Audubon House.

Sunday, December 18 — Malibu Christmas Bird Count. Compiler **Larry Allen**. If you were on last year's count, you'll be contacted. If you wish to join, leave a message for Larry with Audubon House.

Spring 1995 Pelagic Trips

Friday Night, February 3 — 30-hour trip departs 10:00 P.M. Friday; returns 4:00 A.M. Sunday. From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*, NW past Point Conception to Arquello Canyon and W to the California continental shelf with several daylight hours along the shelf. $250 double bunk, $145 single bunk (meals included).

Sunday, February 26 — 8-hour trip on the *R.V. Vantuna* out of San Pedro to the Palos Verdes Escarpment and Redondo Canyon. $25.

Friday Night, April 21 — 30-hour trip departs 10:00 P.M. Friday; returns 4:00 A.M. Sunday. From Ventura on the *M.V. Vanguard*, NW past Point Conception to Arquello Canyon and W to the California continental shelf with several daylight hours along the shelf. $250 double bunk, $145 single bunk (meals included).

Bob Johnson

Crowned Crane

EVENING MEETING

Meet at 8:00 P.M. in Plummer Park.
ID Workshop precedes the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

November 8, 1994 **Bob Johnson**
Birds and Mammals of Kenya

Only in Kenya can one log 700 bird and 60 mammal species in just three weeks. Bob and his slides will take us there for a wildlife spectacular second to none.

ID Workshop: TBA

December 13, 1994 **Margaret Huffman**

Native Plants for Native Birds. What plants will attract native birds to my yard? How should I arrange them? Learn the answers to these and other questions at this informative program.

ID Workshop: Jonathan Alderfer

FIELD TRIPS

Before setting out on any field trip, **please call the Audubon bird tape at (213) 874-1318** for special instructions or possible cancellations that may have occurred by the Thursday before the trip.

⚓ Denotes Pelagic Trips

Saturday, November 5 — Newport Back Bay. Leader **Mary Carmona**. The 6'9" high tide should flush a few rails. Royal Tern and California Gnatcatcher also good bets. Take the 405 Fwy S to Jamboree Rd. Drive S over the channel past San Joaquin Hills Rd. to Back Bay Dr. on your right. If you hit PCH, you've gone too far. Continue to the first pullout hugging the bay along Back Bay Dr., ¼ mile off Jamboree Rd. Meet at 8:00 A.M. for a full day in the area.

Sunday, November 6 — Topanga State Park. Gerry Haigh will lead participants through this diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new in the area. A botanist is usually present. From Topanga Canyon Blvd. heading SW from the Valley, turn E (uphill) on Entrada Rd. (7 miles S of Ventura Blvd., 1 mile N of Topanga Village). Follow the signs and make a left into the park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of Trippet Ranch. $5 parking fee.

Sunday, November 6 —Jonathan Alderfer "Paintings and Prints" Opening Reception. 2:00–5:00 P.M. See announcement on page 6.

Saturday, November 12 — Oxnard Plains Ploverfest. Leader **Larry Allen** will scan the extensive sod fields and wind breaks for late migrants. Ranging from "sure thing" to "forget it" will be Black-bellied Plover, Water Pipit, Pacific and American Golden-Plovers, late warblers, Red-throated Pipit and Mountain Plover. The golden-plovers only

Continued on page 11

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