

WESTERN TANAGER



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LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S SENSITIVE BIRD SPECIES

—BY THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY SENSITIVE BIRD SPECIES WORKING GROUP (MEMBERS LARRY W. ALLEN, MARY CARMONA-FREEMAN, DANIEL S. COOPER, JON FEENSTRA, KIMBALL L. GARRETT, GARRY GEORGE, MARY LOQUVAM, ELEANOR OSGOOD, TOM RYAN, MIKE SAN MIGUEL, AND STACEY VIGALLON)

Our county's Breeding Bird Atlas Project was conceived as a conservation tool, and among the many uses envisioned for its data was the highlighting of breeding species that might be at risk of extirpation in the county. Although the Atlas findings provide a static, not dynamic, picture of the county's avian life, our data can provide indications of which species might be in peril by:

- Providing information on the distribution of our less-common species.
- Identifying species making use of uncommon habitat types.
- Identifying uncommon species not utilizing all available habitats across a landscape.
- Pointing out populations vulnerable to declines as a result of continued urban and suburban development.

As a supplement to our field data, the Atlas will also include statistical trend data from two long-term surveys of our county's avifauna: eight county routes from the *Breeding Bird Survey (BBS and USGS 2001)* and (for resident species only) eight local count circles from the *Christmas Bird Counts (CBC and BirdSource 2002)*. These data sets, covering up to 30 and 20



Hellman Park, Whittier, habitat for Greater Roadrunner and various sensitive species, including what may be the county's largest population of coastal Cactus Wren. Photo by Dan Cooper.

years, respectively, must be approached with caution, but can provide indications of change and point to species that might need more intensive study.

In the winter of 2008, T. Ryan, K. Garrett, G. George, and others suggested that, in light of the formal publication (*Shuford and Gardali 2008*) of the list of California Bird Species of Special Concern (BSSC), the time would be propitious to develop a list of at-risk species tailored to Los Angeles County. Accordingly, a Los Angeles County

Sensitive Bird Species Working Group (hereafter referred to as *Working Group*) was convened under the aegis of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, with Mr. Ryan as chair, and members as listed above. Meetings were held at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Evaluation Process

There were two underlying goals of the endeavor. The first was to examine the status of all bird species occurring in

the county by including migrants and wintering birds, not just the breeding birds treated by the Atlas Project. The second was to emphasize species at risk in the county that did not enjoy protection (or at least attention) by either a legal listing (as under the state or Federal Endangered Species Acts) or by recognition as a California BSSC.

The Working Group wished to make the process as transparent, understandable to the layperson, justifiable, and scientifically accurate as possible. In order to assess our county's rich avifauna, we took pains to consider whether a species or subspecies (hereafter referred to as "taxon") might face differing threats if it occupies multiple county habitats, nests at different elevations, occupies both sides of the county's mountain spine, or faces differing circumstances at various times of year. We called each of these separate circumstances a "role."

The group agreed on eight criteria by which to judge a bird's risk of decline or extirpation in the county in each of its roles. We followed the methodology of other conservation assessments (e.g., National Audubon Society 2002, Partners in Flight 2005) by calculating species rankings by using a modified Boolean matrix where each risk criterion was given a numerical value (values ranged from -2 to 3 depending on criterion), with higher values corresponding to greater threat or concern. Decisions were by consensus, rather than formal votes, and drew upon the considerable Los Angeles County birding experience of the group. By summing the values we established a numerical hierarchy for overall concern. The criteria we used are:

- Extirpated from the county: in winter (1), as breeder (1), or both (2).
- Sensitive to urbanization: species is abundant in urban and

Los Angeles County SENSITIVE BIRD SPECIES

Part I County Sensitive Bird Species (32 taxa)	Part II County Sensitive Bird Species listed by other agencies (38 taxa)
Greater White-fronted Goose Snow Goose Eared Grebe (breeding) American Bittern White-faced Ibis (breeding) Turkey Vulture (breeding) Ferruginous Hawk Prairie Falcon (breeding) Virginia Rail Sora (breeding) Long-billed Curlew (wintering) Caspian Tern (breeding) Royal Tern (breeding) Elegant Tern (breeding) Greater Roadrunner Long-eared Owl (wintering) Short-eared Owl Lesser Nighthawk (coastal slope) Belted Kingfisher (breeding) Hairy Woodpecker (lowland) Gray Flycatcher (breeding) Loggerhead Shrike (coastal slope wintering) Horned Lark (coastal slope) Marsh Wren (interior breeding) Mountain Bluebird (wintering) Swainson's Thrush (breeding) Le Conte's Thrasher Wilson's Warbler (montane & lowland breeding) Vesper Sparrow Lincoln's Sparrow (breeding) Western Meadowlark Scott's Oriole (breeding)	Fulvous Whistling-Duck Brant (wintering) Redhead (breeding) Least Bittern (breeding) Sandhill Crane California Condor White-tailed Kite Bald Eagle (wintering) Northern Harrier (breeding) Swainson's Hawk (breeding) Golden Eagle Clapper Rail Snowy Plover (coastal & inland) Mountain Plover Calif. Least Tern (breeding) Black Skimmer (breeding) Yellow-billed Cuckoo Burrowing Owl Spotted Owl Long-eared Owl (breeding) Black Swift (breeding) Olive-sided Flycatcher (breeding) Willow Flycatcher (montane & lowland breeding) Loggerhead Shrike (desert slope & coastal slope breeding) Bell's Vireo (breeding) Gray Vireo (breeding) Purple Martin (breeding) Bank Swallow (breeding) Cactus Wren (coastal slope) Marsh Wren (<i>clarkii</i>) California Gnatcatcher Yellow Warbler (breeding) Yellow-breasted Chat (breeding) Summer Tanager (breeding) Savannah Sparrow (<i>beldingii</i>) Grasshopper Sparrow (breeding) Tricolored Blackbird Yellow-headed Blackbird

suburban landscapes (–2); species occurs regularly within urban, suburban, and other human-altered habitats, e.g., golf courses, urban parks, and urban-adjacent reservoirs (–1); species occurs in native habitat patches within urban areas or along suburban-wildland interfaces (1); species appears to be highly sensitive to disturbance, or its range has contracted away from human-altered habitats (2); mixed response, no data, or not applicable (0).

- Listed as either endangered or threatened under federal or state law (3), or included in the California BSSC: first priority (3), second priority (2), third priority (1).

- Population trend, if known (based on BBS and CBC data): increasing (–1), no trend in the data (0), decreasing (1), mixed indications (M, scored as 0) or no data (blank).

- County’s importance to population: if 1% or more of the North American population is found in the county at any season (1), otherwise (0).

- Limited distribution: if greater than 10% of county’s population occupies one site (1), otherwise (0).

- Limited habitat: if species is confined to a threatened or scarce natural habitat (1), otherwise (0).

The Working Group’s list of these habitats and the codings used in the spreadsheet are: estuarine *a* ; freshwater marsh *b* ; agricultural fields and grassland *c* ; remote cliffs *d* ; undisturbed coastal strand *e* ; alkali flat *f* ; riparian (including montane riparian and montane meadow) *g* ; subalpine forest *h* ; steep foothill canyons *i* ; alluvial fan scrub *j* ; oak savanna and oak

woodland *k* ; desert woodland and scrub *l* ; pinyon-juniper woodland *m* ; coastal sage scrub *n* ; intact chamise chaparral *o* ; rocky coast *p* .

- Threat: if the species faces an immediate threat or vulnerability in the county in one or more of its roles (e.g., breeding, wintering) (1), otherwise (0).

The Working Group identified the following threats facing individual species: a change in management practices at Piute Ponds or Rosamond Lake wetlands *a* ; tree-trimming *b* ; loss of the few Antelope Valley sites where known to occur *c* ; recreational disturbance, including off-highway vehicles *d* ; beach recreational use and grooming *e* ; change in agricultural practices *f* ; loss of the Terminal Island area tern breeding sites *g* ; development of the few Santa Clarita area sites where known to occur *h* ; human-modified wildfire regimes *i* .

At the end of our process, scores ranged from –3 to 10, with most of the higher-scoring birds already recognized as needing protection (e.g., by BSSC). The group’s consensus was that a score of 4 or above would justify placing a species on the county’s list of sensitive bird species (that minimum score would require a score in at least two threat categories). Since we wished to target species not already receiving conservation attention, we split the list in two: Part I includes birds not already recognized as being under threat, and Part II includes at-risk species that are listed as threatened or en-

Los Angeles County BIRD WATCHLIST

(31 taxa)

Mountain Quail
Northern Harrier (wintering)
Prairie Falcon (wintering)
Spotted Sandpiper (breeding)
Flammulated Owl
Northern Pygmy-Owl
Lesser Nighthawk (desert slope)
Common Poorwill
Williamson’s Sapsucker
Western Wood-Pewee (breeding)
Plumbeous Vireo (breeding)
Hutton’s Vireo
Oak Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch (breeding)
Cactus Wren (desert slope)
Canyon Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet (breeding)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (breeding)
Hermit Thrush (breeding)
Nashville Warbler (breeding)
Hermit Warbler (breeding)
MacGillivray’s Warbler (breeding)
California Towhee
Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Brewer’s Sparrow (breeding)
Black-chinned Sparrow (breeding)
Black-throated Sparrow
Sage Sparrow (*belli*)
Savannah Sparrow (*rostratus*)
Black-headed Grosbeak (breeding)
Indigo Bunting

Table 1. Los Angeles County Sensitive Bird Species

Species	Extirpation in any role	Urban tolerance	Protection	Trend (Atlas analysis)	Trend CBC	Pop. (US)	Pop. (LA Co)	Habitat	Threat	RANK	Habitat Detail
Greater White-fronted Goose	1	2					1	0	0	4	
Snow Goose	1	2					1	0	0	4	
Eared Grebe (br.)		2		0			1	0	1	4	
American Bittern	2	1					0	1	0	4	b
White-faced Ibis (br.)		2		0			1	1	1	5	a,b,c
Turkey Vulture (br.)		2		0		0	1	1	0	4	d
Ferruginous Hawk		2			0	0	1	1	0	4	c
Prairie Falcon (br.)		2		0		0	1	1	1	5	d
Virginia Rail		2		0	1	0	1	1	0	5	b
Sora (br.)	1	2		0		0	1	1	0	5	b
Long-billed Curlew (wintering)		2			0		1	1	0	4	c
Caspian Tern (br.)		1		0			1	1	1	4	a
Royal Tern (br.)		1		0			1	1	1	4	a
Elegant Tern (br.)		1		0			1	1	1	4	a,e
Greater Roadrunner		2		M	1	0		1	0	4	l, l, n
Long-eared Owl (wintering)		2					1	0	1	4	
Short-eared Owl	1	2				0		1	1	5	a,c
Lesser Nighthawk (coastal slope)		2				0	1	1	1	5	j
Belted Kingfisher (br.)		2		0		0	1	1	1	5	g
Hairy Woodpecker (lowland)		2		0		0	1	1	1	5	g
Gray Flycatcher (br.)		1		0		0	1	1	1	4	m
Loggerhead Shrike (coastal slope wintering)		1			1		1	1	1	5	c
Horned Lark (coastal slope)		1			0	0	1	1	1	4	c
Marsh Wren (Interior breeding)		1				0	1	1	1	4	b
Mountain Bluebird (wintering)		1			1	0	1	1	0	4	c
Swainson's Thrush (br.)		2		1		0	1	1	0	5	g
Le Conte's Thrasher		2		0		0	1	1	1	5	l
Wilson's Warbler (montane br.)		1		1		0	1	1	1	5	b
Wilson's Warbler (lowland br.)	1	2		1		0	1	1	1	7	g
Vesper Sparrow		2			1	0		1	0	4	c
Lincoln's Sparrow (br.)		1				0	1	1	1	4	g
Western Meadowlark		2		1	0	0		1	0	4	c
Scott's Oriole (br.)		2		1		0	1	1	1	6	l

Table 2. Los Angeles County Sensitive Bird Species recognized as Threatened, Endangered, or California BSSC

Species	Extirpation in any role	Urban tolerance	Protection	Trend (Atlas analysis)	Trend CBC	Pop. (US)	Pop. (LA Co)	Habitat	Threat	RANK	Habitat Detail
Fulvous Whistling-Duck	1	2	3				1	1		7	b
Brant (wintering)	1	0	2				1	1		5	a
Redhead (br.)		1	1	0			1	1	1	5	b
Least Bittern (br.)		0	2	0			1	1		4	b
Sandhill Crane	1	2	1				1	1		5	c
California Condor	2	2	3			1	1	1		10	d
White-tailed Kite		1	3	0	0		1	1		6	c
Bald Eagle (wintering)		1	3				1	0		5	
Northern Harrier (br.)		2	1	0			1	1	1	6	b, c
Swainson's Hawk (br.)	1	2	3	0		0	1	1	1	9	c
Golden Eagle		2	3	0		0	1	0	1	7	
Clapper Rail	2	2	3			0		1		8	a
Snowy Plover (coastal)	1	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	1	8	e
Snowy Plover (inland)		2	3	0			1	1	1	8	f
Mountain Plover		2	2		0		1	1	1	7	c
Calif. Least Tern (br.)		1	3	-1		1	1	1	1	7	e
Black Skimmer (breeding)		1	1	0	-1		1	1	1	4	a
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	2	3			0		1		7	g
Burrowing Owl		2	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	7	c
Spotted Owl		2	2	0		0	1	1		6	l
Long-eared Owl (br.)		2	1	0		0	1	0	1	5	
Black Swift (br.)		2	1	0			1	1	1	6	l
Olive-sided Flycatcher (br.)		2	2	1		0		0		5	
Willow Flycatcher (montane br.)		1	3	0		0	1	1	1	7	g
Willow Flycatcher (lowland br.)		2	3	0		0	1	1		8	g
Loggerhead Shrike (desert slope br.)	1	1	2	1		0		1		5	L
Loggerhead Shrike (coastal slope br.)		2	2			0	1	1	1	7	c
Bell's Vireo (br.)		2	3			0	1	1		7	g
Gray Vireo (br.)		2	2	0		0	1	1	1	7	m
Purple Martin (br.)		2	2	0		0	1	0		5	
Bank Swallow (br.)	1	2	3			0		1		7	g
Cactus Wren (coastal slope)		2	3	1	0	0	1	1		8	n
Marsh Wren (clarkii)		2	2	M		0	1	1		6	a, b
California Gnatcatcher		2	3	0		0	1	1		7	n
Yellow Warbler (br.)		1	2	0?		0		1		4	g
Yellow-breasted Chat (br.)		1	1	0		0	1	1	1	5	b
Summer Tanager (br.)		1	3	0		0	1	1	1	7	b
Savannah Sparrow (beidingi)		2	3	?		0	1	1	1	8	a
Grasshopper Sparrow (br.)		2	2	0		0	1	1		6	c
Tricolored Blackbird		2	3	0	1	1		1	1	9	b
Yellow-headed Blackbird		2	1	0		0	1	1	1	6	b

dangered or that are California BSSC. The scores of birds in Part I ranged from 4 (the cutoff score) to 7; scores for birds in Part II ranged up to 10.

Our SENSITIVE BIRD SPECIES comprise 32 taxa in 33 roles in Part I, and another 38 taxa in 41 roles in Part II (see Sidebar 1). Tables 1 and 2 contain the matrix of factors and assigned values that have led us to these rankings. (The full spreadsheet with all species scored is posted on Los Angeles Audubon's website at www.laaudubon.org.) For birds in Part I we include brief justifications for the values we assigned in Appendix A: Species Accounts. Sidebar 2 identifies 31 additional taxa with a conservation score of 3. We deemed these birds not to share the same level of risk as those considered Sensitive Bird Species, but that one or more risk factors, if actualized, could move them into higher rankings. We have called these Watchlist Species, as their populations warrant monitoring.

Conservation Actions— What You Can Do

The members of our Working Group regard all species on this list as being at risk of extirpation from Los Angeles County, and therefore as warranting explicit consideration as part of impact analyses conducted under the *California Environmental Quality Act* (CEQA). Biologists undertaking surveys in Los Angeles County for purposes of CEQA documentation should ensure that their survey protocols are adequate to determine the presence or absence of these species if potentially suitable habitat is present on or near a survey site. Findings of potentially significant impacts, and hence the provision of mitigation, may be warranted for proposed actions that adversely affect species on this list or their habitats.

We anticipate that this list will enable open-space areas in Los Angeles County to be evaluated in terms of their potential conservation value to the county's at-risk bird species. Areas determined to have high conservation potential could be prioritized in various ways, such as identifying unprotected lands whose circumstances facilitate their protection through grassroots effort, or identifying degraded park lands that could provide high conservation value through restoration.

You as a birder will aid this process by participation in such conservation organizations as Los Angeles Audubon or other Audubon chapters. In addition, we urge you to direct your field outings to less-visited areas, to take note of Sensitive and Watchlist species wherever you find them, and most importantly, to report your sightings so that we may build a case for protection and restoration of our county's remaining natural areas. It is important that your sightings be publicly available in a format that can easily be compiled. We feel that reports to e-bird (www.ebird.org) or the *California Natural Diversity Database* (www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/) are the best ways of accomplishing this.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Robert A. Hamilton for reviewing the codings we assigned for each risk factor, and for providing comments that greatly improved an earlier draft of this paper. We thank the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County for hosting our meetings, and thank Los Angeles Audubon Society for sponsoring the effort and publishing the results.

Appendix A: Part I Species Accounts

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*. In the wintertime, west coast populations frequent open water or unvegetated

shorelines for roosting and nearby post-harvest grain fields for foraging (*Ely and Dzubin 1994*). In 1898 this bird was characterized as quite numerous (*Grinnell 1898*), but by 1933 *Willett* would call it only "formerly common." Today, isolated individuals or small numbers may be reported from the odd park or golf course, but the county's role in supporting large flocks of this species has ended. There are few data by which to judge the causes of the decline, but in the early decades of the 20th century much of the county was still agricultural, and many of the coastal-slope wetlands were yet intact. Overhunting here surely had a role (*Grinnell 1898*), but population-wide factors (including overhunting elsewhere) may have played a part as well. The only expansive area of potentially suitable habitat remaining for this bird in the county would be in the Antelope Valley, but both agricultural practices and reservoir management would have to be tailored for it to thrive there.

Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens*. Wintering birds on the Pacific coast generally commute between evening roosts in tidal marshes or river deltas and diurnal feeding areas on agricultural stubble and pasture (*Mowbray et al. 2000*). This was the historic pattern for the "great numbers" wintering in the county; however, by the early 20th century, hunting pressure caused these birds to forage in coastal-slope grain fields at night, while spending their daytime hours at sea (*Willett 1933*). Extirpation of this goose from the county was clearly tied to market hunting (see *Willett's* discussion), but the near-universal conversion of coastal-slope agricultural fields to housing would have doomed the county's ability to support wintering flocks in any event. There are few CBC reports of this species; mostly from the Lancaster count. Interior flocks frequent marshes or shallow lakes with adjacent fields (*Garrett and Dunn 1981*). The only possibility of supporting this goose as a regular wintering species would involve tailored management of both reservoirs and agricultural fields in the Antelope Valley.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (**breeding**). This waterbird can use a variety of freshwater habitats for nesting (lakes, reservoirs, sewage lagoons, sloughs, etc.), including



Eared Grebe, Adult
Photo courtesy of Audubon California



Sora, Photo by Larry Sansone

highly alkaline ones, so long as emergent vegetation and "... highly productive macroinvertebrate communities" are present (Cullen *et al.* 1999). In the county, this bird is thought to nest at only two remote sites in Antelope Valley: Piute Ponds (confirmed) and Quail Lake (unconfirmed). Although never common here as a breeder, old records show it to have nested at several locations on the coastal slope as well as in the county's interior (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Willett 1912). This contraction in range reflects not only the elimination of natural freshwater wetlands, but possibly indicates degradation of other potential nesting reservoirs due to water-quality concerns (vegetation and invertebrate control measures) and recreational uses of these water bodies. The possibility of changed water-management regimes at Piute Ponds threatens the county's only confirmed breeding population of this species.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*. Nesting birds seem to require extensive freshwater wetlands with tall emergent vegetation standing in shallow water; wintering birds can make use of a wider variety of wetlands, including saltwater marshes (Gibbs *et al.* 1992). This bird was always uncommon as a breeder in the county, with only three documented nests (all prior to 1912): two were in wetlands in present-day Carson drained c. 1916–1918, and a third was in marshes bordering Alamitos Bay. The county supports but few wintering birds—CBC reports from five circles have averaged only two per year in recent times. In the absence of large-scale marsh restoration, the American Bittern probably cannot be expected to occur here except as a scarce wintering species.

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* (breeding). Breeding populations of White-faced Ibis have two requirements: fresh- or saltwater wetlands containing dense stands of emergent vegetation for nest placement and nearby fields, pastures, or shallow wetlands with short vegetation for foraging (Ryder and Manry 1994). This species no longer breeds at three historic locations on the coastal slope, but since 1988 a few dozen pairs have nested at Piute Ponds, and foraged there or in nearby agricultural fields. Risk factors include a concentrated population, scarcity of suitable breeding locations, and the possibility of changes in either water management at its nesting location or agricul-

tural practices at its foraging locations.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* (breeding). As a carrion eater, the Turkey Vulture needs a large area for foraging, but the foraging areas do not necessarily need to be suitable for nesting. For western populations, nesting birds require remote, rocky locations with caves, cliff ledges, and piles of large boulders (Kirk and Mossman 1998). Breeding birds are highly sensitive to disturbance. This bird's breeding range once encompassed every area of topographic relief in the county. The species now breeds (if at all) in only the most remote portions of the San Gabriel and northwestern county mountains, with perhaps one pair remaining in the Santa Monica Mountains (Atlas data) and possibly in the Whittier Hills (Cooper 2000). This bird's specialized habitat requirements and its concentration in a very few (suspected) breeding locales are causes of concern. Although most of the remaining breeding sites are on protected National Forest lands, the possibility of disturbance by recreational activities (rock-climbing, hiking) cannot be dismissed.

Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis*. This hawk occurs here only as a winter visitant, making use of extensive agricultural fields and areas of grassland and open desert scrub in the Antelope Valley to forage for rodents and lagomorphs (Bechard and Schmutz 1995). Residential and commercial development in the Antelope Valley continues to encroach on both of these classes of habitats, limiting the food resources available to this species. Agricultural fields planted in alfalfa seem to be the areas most frequented by these birds in the county, and the potential loss of these fields to housing or to other agricultural crops appears to be the greatest near-term threat.

Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus* (breeding). This falcon forages widely over desert scrub and arid grasslands, but its nesting is generally confined to sheltered cliff ledges, potholes, and caves in rugged terrain (Steenhof 1998). As is the case with other cliffside breeders in the county, Prairie Falcons apparently no longer occupy certain locations from which historical records exist. The concentration of the county's entire population (fewer than 10 pairs) at just a few sites is itself a risk factor, as is potential competition with the more common (and increasing) Peregrine Falcon (Corman and Wise-Gervais 2005). The limited availability of this habitat and the risk of disturbance from rock climbing or other recreational intrusions add to our concern.

Virginia Rail *Rallus limicola*. Historically, this rail has occupied both freshwater and saltwater marshes in the county (Willett 1933), but Atlas sightings were reported at just six widely scattered freshwater locations. CBC data indicate that wintering populations are also declining in the county. The quality of the wetlands seems important, with a mix of early successional emergent vegetation, matted vegetation, mud, and open water being optimal.

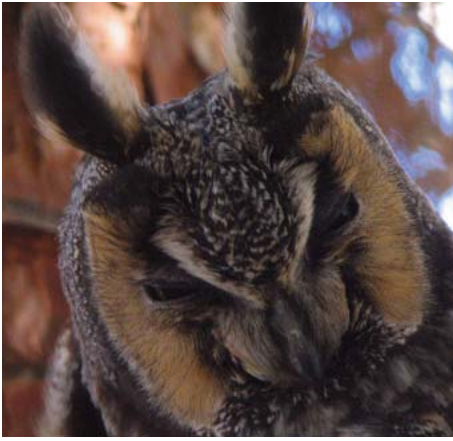
That said, this rail is much less widely distributed in the county than are seemingly acceptable wetlands. The concentration of the county's population and the fact that few if any of its breeding locations are explicitly managed for marsh species add to our concern.

Sora *Porzana carolina* (breeding). Typical breeding habitat for the Sora consists of extensive wetlands with emergent cattail, bulrush, burreed, or sedge, but wet meadows and stream margins have also been used (Melvin and Gibbs 1996). It was considered "common" in appropriate habitat on the coastal slope by Willett (1933), but Atlas Project detections of possible breeding Soras were limited to just two locations in the county: one on the coastal slope and one in the northwest county. Habitat removal is clearly implicated as the cause of this bird's disappearance from three historical wetland locations where nesting can be reasonably inferred (in the respective vicinities of Carson, Whittier, and San Pedro). The limited availability of high-quality wetland in the county, the bird's seeming intolerance for disturbance, and the consequent concentration of breeders at few sites are separate but interrelated risk factors for our breeding population.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus* (wintering). Based on historical records (Grinnell 1898), together with its current status in less-developed regions north and south of Los Angeles Co. (e.g., Oxnard Plain), this large shorebird formerly wintered in flocks in wetlands and agricultural habitats on the coastal plain, such as the Ballona/Venice Marshes and the coastal prairie near present-day Los Angeles International Airport. With the rise of agriculture in the Antelope Valley, and concurrent decline and eventual disappearance of farms and large wetlands along the coast, these wintering flocks shifted to the interior of the county, where they co-occur with other open-country birds such as White-faced Ibis and Mountain Plover, often in the company of sheep, in pastureland and irrigated alfalfa fields. As the Antelope Valley becomes more urbanized, and as farming becomes less practical in a water-starved region, a further decline of this species seems likely.



Prairie Falcon, Photo by Larry Sansone



Long-eared Owl, Photo by Mary Freeman

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (breeding). While considered a widespread species, the Caspian Tern nests here only within the highly disturbed estuary at the Port of Los Angeles/Port of Long Beach. It is a new addition to the nesting avifauna of Los Angeles County, first nesting here in 1996. They have nested on unused barges and on islands created from dredge spoil (for ultimate development as shipping terminals) at Pier 400. Originally, they nested within and adjacent to the Least Tern mitigation area, but have moved to a newly created island where they nest among large numbers of Elegant Terns. Their numbers peaked in 2000 with 336 nests recorded, with around 150 nests present in subsequent years (K. Keane pers. comm.). In 2006, the mixed-flock colony relocated to barges anchored in the Port of Long Beach (this colony was cleared from the barges before young could fledge). In 2007, there were 53 successful nests on a barge (W. Ross pers. comm.). Caspian Terns nesting in Port of Los Angeles/Port of Long Beach face several threats including disturbance at nesting colonies, and development or removal (barges) of the current nesting sites. They are faced with few alternatives to nesting in these disturbed areas. They are included on this list based on their occurrence at few sites, their preference for a rare and threatened habitat type (isolated islands within bays and estuaries), and threats to their few nesting areas.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* (breeding). The Royal Tern is a relatively new addition to the breeding avifauna of Southern California and Los Angeles County. Their first nesting attempt was in 1998 at the Port of Los Angeles. Since 1998, they have continued to nest sporadically among Caspian Terns and Elegant Terns at two locations at Pier 400 (K. Keane pers. comm.). Their populations have remained low with a peak of 17 nests in 1998. Royal Terns nesting at the Port of Los Angeles/Port of Long Beach face several threats, including disturbance at nesting colonies and development of their current nesting sites.

They are included on this list based on their occurrence at few sites, their preference for a rare and threatened habitat type (isolated islands within bays and estuaries), and threats to these few nesting areas.

Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* (breeding). The Elegant Tern is another new addition to the breeding avifauna of Los Angeles County, first nesting here in 1998, when approximately 3600 nests were established adjacent to the Least Tern mitigation area at Pier 400 on Terminal Island. This number increased to over 10,000 nests in 2004, but declined to 2700 in 2005. In 2006, the colony relocated to barges anchored in the Port of Long Beach. This colony, mixed with Caspian Terns, was cleared from the barges before young could fledge. Unlike the Caspian and Royal Terns, Elegant Terns currently nest in only five locations worldwide. The population that nests at the Port of Los Angeles/Port of Long Beach is likely composed of many of the same individuals that nest at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve (Bolsa Chica) in Orange County. Initially, years when there have been large numbers at the Port of Los Angeles/Port of Long Beach correspond to years where they have abandoned Bolsa Chica due to disturbance or predation. County nesting areas are among few alternative locations for these birds in Southern California. Elegant Terns nesting at the Port of Los Angeles/Port of Long Beach face several threats, including disturbance at nesting colonies and development of their current nesting sites. The species is included on this list based on its occurrence at few sites, its preference for a rare and threatened habitat type (isolated islands within bays and estuaries), and threats to these few nesting areas.

Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus*. A year-round resident of steep foothill canyons, desert woodland, and coastal sage scrub, this ground-dwelling cuckoo is largely intolerant of urbanization. Population declines have been seen throughout its geographic range, though southeastern California may still contain some of the densest populations. Within Los Angeles County, CBC data shows population declines. These declines are likely due to urbanization and associated changes in habitat and introduction of non-native predators. It can now most readily be observed in the Antelope Valley, the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, the Santa Monica Mountains, and the Puente Hills.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* (wintering). Considered a BSSC in its breeding role, this owl has been long absent from the Los Angeles Basin. It requires dense stands of vegetation adjacent to large tracts of open habitat for wintering. Within Los Angeles County, suitable habitat is now largely confined to the Antelope Valley. Known to use communal roosts during the nonbreeding season, the loss of just a few of the remaining suitable groves of trees within the Antelope Valley could potentially extirpate this species from the county. Addi-

tionally, potential nesting areas within canyons containing dense stands of riparian habitat are subject to disturbance from development and recreational activities.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. This bird was described by Grinnell (1898) as a “common winter visitant to wet meadow lands and fresh water marshes ...on the county’s coastal slope.” Wintering birds favor expanses of open country: freshwater and saltwater marshes, wet meadows, weedy fields, agricultural stubble, and the like (Holt and Leasure 1993). Although the county is well within this owl’s wintering range, the bird is no longer found here with the exception of infrequent reports from the Ballona area (during migration) and the Antelope Valley (generally in winter at Piute Ponds, but including also three summertime records). Degradation and elimination of habitat at former coastal slope wintering locations have resulted in the species’ virtual extirpation from this portion of the county. The apparent concentration at Piute Ponds coupled with the unknown impact of possible changes in water management there provide cause for concern.

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* (coastal slope). This nighthawk still breeds (or summers) along the Santa Clara River and tributaries (e.g., Bouquet Canyon), Big Tujunga Wash (upstream of Hansen Dam), San Gabriel River (upstream of Santa Fe Dam), and San Antonio Wash (upstream of Arrow Highway). Though some of these sites are not facing imminent development (e.g., Santa Fe Dam), none is formally protected or managed for biodiversity. The Lesser Nighthawk is a characteristic nesting species of one of the rarest habitat types in the state, Riverside alluvial fan scrub, characterized by sparse coastal sage scrub amid boulder-strewn riverbeds at the base of mountains. Specific threats include the replacement of river banks with soil cement and landscaped vegetation, as well as the increase in urban run-off, which transform arid alluvial fan scrub to more mesic riparian scrub and woodland. Increased recreation within stream beds is also cause for concern.

Belted Kingfisher *Megasceryle alcyon* (breeding). Though widespread throughout North America and readily seen during the



Elegant Tern, Adult Breeding
Photo courtesy of Audubon California



Mountain Bluebird, Photo by Larry Sansone

winter in Los Angeles County, Belted Kingfishers are seldom encountered along our local rivers during the breeding season. Because they require earthen riverbanks in which to excavate nest burrows and appear to prefer nest sites that are within close proximity to foraging sites, the loss of unpaved riverbank greatly constrains this species' ability to breed within the county. River-channelization projects along the Santa Clara River and its tributaries could potentially extirpate remaining breeding populations of this species.

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus* (lowland). Though still a widespread resident in coniferous and mixed oak-conifer forest of the San Gabriel Mountains, occurring at lower elevations along deep, shady canyons (e.g., Arroyo Seco near Pasadena), true lowland populations of this species have been virtually eliminated. This woodpecker once resided year-round in the willow thickets of the Los Angeles Basin nearly to the coast, particularly along major rivers (including the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers). A small population (c. 10 pairs) persists in mature cottonwood-willow (riparian) woodland along the Santa Clara River and major tributaries (including San Francisquito and Soledad Canyons). However, ongoing development and river-channelization projects here, notably the massive Newhall Ranch development approved west of Interstate 5, threaten the continued existence of this key population.

Gray Flycatcher *Empidonax wrightii* (breeding). Overall uncommon in the county throughout the year, breeding Gray Flycatchers rely on arid, brushy habitat away from urbanized areas. Wintering birds are often found in urban parks and flood-control basins. During the breeding season, this species is confined to a few sites in arid conifer woodlands (dominated by pinyons) on the north slope of the San Gabriel Mountains. Changes in the fire regime over the past century have decreased the occurrence of small, low-intensity fires and increased the risk of catastrophic fire events. Severe, high-intensity fires within the nesting habitat of this flycatcher can result in the destruction of mature conifers, thereby altering the plant community and effectively removing suitable nesting habitat. Although much of the

pinyon-dominated habitat is on National Forest lands, development of private lands and recreation on public lands with these habitats are causes for concern.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus* (coastal slope wintering). Loggerhead Shrikes largely avoid urban areas and face declines due to the development and conversion of scrubland, grassland, and agricultural areas. Historically, Los Angeles County coastal lowlands supported abundant populations, but wintering birds have declined severely on the coastal slope and valleys along with the habitat they depended upon (CBC data). Development projects in the Santa Clarita Valley put additional habitat for this species at risk. There are few data characterizing this bird's winter requirements; non-habitat factors impacting its presence on the coastal slope are unknown. Predation by our increasing population of Cooper's Hawks may be a factor. Declining populations of small vertebrates (e.g., lizards, mice) and large invertebrates in urbanized areas may play a role in the shrike's decline.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* (coastal slope). This species requires open areas with short vegetation, sparse brush, and a preponderance of bare ground (Beason 1995). Although many of the major habitat types on the county's coastal slope have been conserved in natural parks and open spaces, almost all of the sparsely vegetated flatlands that constitute typical habitat for larks have been built upon. The Atlas Project detected this species in only seven coastal-slope blocks, in four widely scattered areas. The concentration of breeding and wintering populations in just a few non-contiguous localities increases the risk of local extirpations and consequent range contraction. Of added concern (and confusion) is the fact that populations in the southeastern portions of the county appear to belong

to the coastal subspecies *actia*, whereas the few birds breeding in the San Fernando Valley may belong to the widespread Mojave Desert subspecies *ammophila* (Behle 1942).

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris* (interior breeding). Mirroring its status in other southern California counties (e.g., San Diego County), the Marsh Wren has seen both an increase as well as a loss of its breeding habitat. On the coastal slope (where represented by what is presumably a different race), natural freshwater wetlands are essentially extinct, replaced by reedbeds within storm-control drains, golf course ponds, and other man-made features supported by treated wastewater and urban run-off. Treated wastewater also supports a sizeable population in the Antelope Valley at Piute Ponds, and locally elsewhere along the northern base of the Sierra Pelona (e.g., Lakes Palmdale and Elizabeth).

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* (wintering). Always occurring almost exclusively as a wintering bird in the county, small flocks of this species once wintered on the coastal plain, though in varying numbers year to year. Currently, the species is extremely rare on the coastal slope, and birds are confined to remote expanses of grassland and irrigated pastureland on the floor in the Antelope Valley, approaching the northern slope of the Transverse Range (Sierra Pelona) near Gorman. Like the Long-billed Curlew, their presence seems tenuous here, as these extensive grasslands become subdivided for ranchettes and subdivisions.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (breeding). West coast populations of this thrush primarily occupy riparian woodlands, and our county birds were historically concentrated in willow-alder riparian thickets in the lowlands (Mack and Yong 2000). Atlas participants found only small numbers in a few scattered locations in the county (mostly foothill



Loggerhead Shrike,
"Arnold Small Photographic Collection,
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County"

blocks) and this bird was not detected in numerous known historical breeding locations. This contraction has continued into modern times: detections on our one coastal-slope BBS route declined over a 19-year span (*USGS 2001*). With the county's declining population limited to just a few sites, and flood control measures continuing to impact riparian areas in the lowlands, continuation of breeding in the county is tenuous.

Le Conte's Thrasher *Toxostoma lecontei*. The Le Conte's Thrasher is limited to desert scrub communities in the Antelope Valley and western Mojave Desert within northern Los Angeles County. It is intolerant of disturbance and rarely found away from intact native habitats. It especially favors sandy washes with saltbush within creosote scrub or Joshua tree woodlands. It has a limited distribution within the county and is only relatively common in the few remaining areas of intact desert scrub habitat. Its overall population within the county is approximately 100 pairs. Much of its primary habitat has been removed by the growth of Lancaster, Palmdale, and their suburbs. In the past, native desert scrub habitat was removed for agricultural development and there is continuing disturbance from off-road vehicle use, illegal dumping, and superabundant populations of Common Ravens. New threats include continued housing and industrial development, as well as the installation of large solar energy arrays and wind farm access roads.

Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* (montane-breeding population). The county's montane-breeding population of this warbler occupy riparian areas dominated by low willows and other shrubs, often within steep ravines on north-facing slopes. These shady, cool, streamside locations are also favored locations for hiking trails and general recreational use. There are few historical records from our local mountains (egg sets are mostly from the basin), but *Willett (1912)* regarded this bird as being "abundant ... to at least 8500 feet in the mountains of the region." Detections on the two county montane BBS routes have declined over the last two decades (*USGS 2001*), and the bird was reported from only a scattering of Atlas blocks



Wilson's Warbler, Photo by Larry Sansone



Scott's Oriole, Photo by Larry Sansone

in the San Gabriel Mountains. In recent years, diminished snowpacks and drier summer conditions in the mountains have rendered many formerly occupied sites unsuitable for this species. The concentration of our county's population at a relatively few sites, the scarcity of montane riparian habitat in general, and the relatively high risk of disturbance from recreational activities all impose risks to the continued breeding of Wilson's Warbler here. **(lowland-breeding population)** Lowland-breeding populations in the west favor riparian woodlands with shrubby understory (*Ammon and Gilbert 1999*). Judging by egg-set locations, our formerly numerous population was concentrated in riparian groves along our major watercourses (Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers). These rivers have by now been largely confined to concrete channels, and ongoing flood-control concerns have prompted continued removal of habitat (e.g., along the soft-bottomed areas of the Los Angeles River) in recent years. As a result, this population has all but disappeared (there was one Atlas-period report at the "probable" level on the coastal slope). Ongoing disturbances to the few patches of regenerating habitat will continue to impede the restoration of our lowland population.

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*. The Vesper Sparrow winters in open grasslands and sparse shrublands in the valley and desert regions of Los Angeles County. This species has been shown to be in decline throughout North America by CBC, BBS, and other monitoring programs (*Jones and Cornely 2002*). Los Angeles County CBCs indicate it is declining here as well. Its local and range-wide declines are likely due to conversion of lowland grasslands and shrublands to housing and other commercial developments (*Jones and Cornely 2002*). They are known to avoid small habitat patches (*Unitt 2004*) and are rarely found within habitat patches or along the wildland-suburban interface. They are susceptible to habitat loss through fragmentation and there are few remaining areas

within the valleys and desert region that are not heavily developed or fragmented.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii* (breeding). This sparrow nests only in damp mountain meadows that support tall grasses, sedge, and corn lilies interspersed with low-growing shrubs such as willow (*Ammon 1995*). The Atlas Project documented only two locations in the county meeting the requirements of this bird, both in the high San Gabriel Mountains. The scarcity of such habitat here, and the use of only two locations by the entirety of our known breeding population are *ipso facto* causes for concern. Although both locations are on National Forest lands, they are still at risk from disturbance from recreational forest use. At least one site has already been heavily impacted by construction associated with a skiing development.

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*. Western Meadowlark populations face declines throughout their range, likely due to conversion of agricultural land to urban space. Similar to the Loggerhead Shrike, the Western Meadowlark was once abundant in Los Angeles County's lowlands but now can only commonly be found in agricultural land and other open habitats in the Antelope Valley. However, as grasslands and agriculture fields continue to be developed and as water constraints make farming less tenable in Los Angeles County, Western Meadowlark populations will likely continue to face declines.

Scott's Oriole *Icterus parisorum*. Throughout the southwest, this oriole favors arid slopes and highlands supporting larger plants such as Joshua trees, mesquite-acacia associations, pinyon-juniper woodland, and dry oak woodland. It will breed in oases with larger trees, but is absent from areas of low desert scrub. The large territories typical of this species further constrains the breeding locales available (Flood 2000). County breeders are concentrated in a few tracts of extensive Joshua tree woodland in the eastern Antelope Valley and patches of pinyon-juniper woodland on the north flank of the San Gabriel Mountains. The former is threatened not only by development,

but also by such disturbances as illegal trash dumping and off-road vehicular recreation. Our pinyon-juniper woodlands are highly susceptible to human-induced wildfire, and additionally are under pressure from development.

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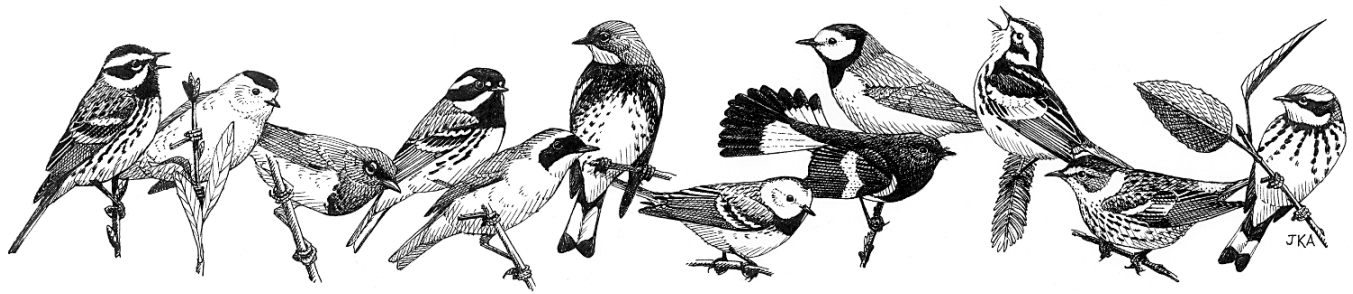
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BIRDS OF THE SEASON

—BY JON FISHER

At a time when fall weather is expected to arrive, the month of October turned out to be one of the warmest ever recorded. Over the period we flip-flopped between pleasantly cool autumn days and summer-like heat. A few weak weather systems passed through and just barely reminded us what rain is. But whether wet or dry, hot or cool, autumn brought the usual diverse mix of birds to the county.

Waterfowl had arrived in numbers by early November but with nothing unexpected found thus far. Our scarce but regular sandpipers—Solitary, Baird's and Pectoral—were reported in about average numbers, but no true vagrant shorebirds were recorded.

Even though migration was sluggish in the early going and—judging by reports—less than robust even at its peak, it was passerines that were in the limelight this fall. Plenty of vagrants were discovered and a few remarkable rarities turned up. Warblers put on a pretty good show coastally with 15 species of 'vagrants' in addition to our expected western migrants.

Also worthy of mention is Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale. The weedy and grassy area above the dam was an impressive hotspot for vagrants in mid-October until the area was flooded—certainly evidence that

where there is good habitat, there is great potential.

At least through early November, there was scant evidence of any significant movements or irruptive species on the move. There were only a couple of out-of-place Brown Creepers and the expected few Red-breasted Nuthatches wandering to the coastal slope.

Here's a look at what was reported over the past two months...

The first **Greater White-fronted Goose** in the area was at Malibu Lagoon on October 1 (Richard Greer). A handful of others were reported later including 50 at the Piute Ponds on Edwards AFB on October 4 (Ed Stonick). A **Snow Goose** returning for a second winter was in Willowbrook at least as of October 8 (Richard Barth).

Aside from that, the only other waterfowl of note were the fall's first **Black Scoter** and **White-winged Scoter** found off Dockweiler State Beach in El Segundo—the most reliable spot for these species in the county—on November 8 (Richard Barth).

Two juvenile **Bald Eagles** appeared in late October, one at Santa Fe Dam on October 24-25 (Andrew Lee) the second being seen repeatedly at El Dorado Park in Long Beach from October 27-November 11 (Sam Hung).

There were only two reports of southbound **Swainson's Hawks**, those being a single bird in Claremont on September 16 (Tom Miko) and a flock of thirty over Altadena on October 22 (Lance Benner).

A flock of 26 **Mountain Plover** in the Antelope Valley on October 26 (Mike San Miguel) had grown to over 50 birds by November 1. The plowed fields in the Antelope Valley continue to be a reliable place to find them in winter, but sadly this elegant plover is declining due to loss of breeding habitat.

About a dozen **Solitary Sandpipers** had been found through early September, with subsequent reports including one on the LA River in Long Beach on September 17 (Richard Barth) and another at Santa Fe Dam on September 28 (Andrew Lee).

Baird's Sandpipers were present at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds throughout September, with a high count of 26 on September 18 (Mike San Miguel, Kimball Garrett, Jon Feenstra, John Garrett). A month later, there was a late Baird's along the LA River in Long Beach on October 18 (Kevin Larson).

Reports of **Pectoral Sandpipers** included a total of seven on the

lower LA River between September 17 and October 25. Elsewhere, three Pectorals were at the Piute Ponds on September 20 (Nick Freeman) and two were there on October 11 (Trina Jones). Another two were at the Sepulveda Basin on October 18 and one was on San Jose Creek near City of Industry on November 9 (Jon Fisher).

Above average numbers of **Sabine's Gulls** moved through the deserts this fall. Eight were at the Lancaster Sewer Ponds and one was at Lake Palmdale on September 18 (M. San Miguel, K. Garrett, J. Feenstra, J. Garrett) and 13 were at the sewer ponds on September 20 (Nick & Mary Freeman) with two more were at Lake Palmdale on October 3 (Charles Hood).

A few **Common Murres** were found, with one off Point Dume on September 20 (Kimball Garrett) and another (continuing?) bird along Ballona Creek on September 28 (Kevin Larson). An injured murre was at Dockweiler State Beach on October 13 (Vic Warren) and others were seen off Manhattan Beach on October 10 (John Novembre) October 26 (Walter Lamb). The only other interesting alcid was a **Xantus's Murrelet** off Zuma Beach on October 5 (Dexter Kelly).

LA County's third **White-winged Dove** this fall was at Del Rey Lagoon in Playa del Rey on September 17 (JoAnne McKenzie).

Two reports of **Burrowing Owls** were a migrant at Santa Fe Dam on October 16 (Andrew Lee) and a returning wintering bird on LAX property near Playa del Rey found on October 24 (Kevin Larson).

Scarce anywhere away from the deserts was a **Long-eared Owl** near

Santa Clarita on November 7 (Kris Ohlenkamp). Very rare along the coast was a **Short-eared Owl** at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh near Playa del Rey from November 9-11 (Jonathan Coffin).

Woodpeckers of note included a **Williamson's Sapsucker** at Veteran's Park in Sylmar on October 25—a location where they are not unexpected in fall and winter (Doug Martin)—and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in Tick Canyon near Santa Clarita on October 23 (Kris Ohlenkamp).

Vagrant flycatchers were virtually absent, with but a single **Tropical Kingbird** in Playa del Rey on September 15 (Jon Feenstra).

An elusive **Ash-throated** or **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** was seen briefly at Valhalla Cemetery in Burbank on November 9 (Richard Barth). Regardless of its identity, any *Myiarchus* after October is unusual.

A **Yellow-throated Vireo** at Apollo Park in Lancaster on September 18 was a very nice find (M. San Miguel, K. Garrett, J. Feenstra, J. Garrett). While it can't compete with desert hotspots like Galileo in Kern County, Apollo has nonetheless repeatedly demonstrated an ability to produce good fall vagrants.

The first report of a **Plumbeous Vireo** came from Ladera Heights on September 19 (Richard Barth). Following that, one after another after another appeared on the coastal plain. Reports of this species have been on the rise since the 1980s due at least in part to the increased observer awareness and interest following the split of the

Solitary Vireo complex into three separate species.

A **Brown Creeper** at Woodlawn Cemetery in Santa Monica on October 29 and another in El Segundo on November 12 were away from regular areas of occurrence (Richard Barth).

A **Sage Thrasher** at Santa Fe Dam from October 17-20 was also rather unusual away from the deserts (Mike San Miguel, Jon Feenstra).

Arguably the best bird in the county this fall was a **Sprague's Pipit** at Santa Fe Dam on October 16 (Andrew Lee). This bird was seen again the following day when a **Red-throated Pipit** was found within shouting distance (Mike San Miguel, Jon Feenstra). What may have been the same Red-throated Pipit, or possibly a second one, was at Santa Fe Dam on October 25 (Andrew Lee).

Two **Tennessee Warblers** turned up, one at Legg Lake on September 14 (J. Webster, Larry Schmah) and the other at Big Rec Park in Long Beach on October 14 (Robb Hamilton).

Three **Virginia's Warblers** were found with birds at Creek Park in La Mirada on September 23 (Jonathan Rowley), at the Piute Ponds on September 27 (Mike San Miguel), and at Augustus Hawkins Natural Area in Los Angeles on September 30 (Dan Cooper).

A **Lucy's Warbler** at Legg Lake on September 14 was the third one reported this fall (Jeff Webster) while the fourth was at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 8 (Jon Feenstra).

Three **Magnolia Warblers** included one at Banning Park on October 2 (Tom Miko), one at the Village Green Condominiums on October 8 (Richard Barth) and one in South Gate Park on October 12 (Richard Barth).

A **Bay-breasted Warbler** (Martin Byhower) and a **Black-throated Green Warbler** (Martin Byhower, Ed Griffin) were both at Harbor Park in Wilmington on October 12.

A **Blackburnian Warbler** was at the Pepperdine Ponds on October 20 (Liga Auzins, Janet Cupples, Nita Costa) and one was at Ladera Park on October 26 (Richard Barth).

Reports from Catalina Island are scarce due largely to a lack of coverage, thus a **Prairie Warbler** at Avalon on September 21 was an rare and unexpected find (Matt Sadowski).

Palm Warblers were at Santa Fe Dam on October 3 (Andrew Lee), at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh on October 15 (Don Sterba), along the Lower Arroyo Seco on October 17 (John Garrett) and in El Segundo from October 21-29 (Richard Barth).

Blackpoll Warblers were in Zuma Canyon on September 20 (Kimball Garrett), at Wilderness Park in Redondo Beach on October 5 (Kevin Larson), at DeForest Park in Long Beach on October 11 (Kevin Larson), at the Village Green Condominiums on October 22 (Richard Barth) and at Legg Lake in South El Monte on October 21 (Andrew Lee).

Two **Black-and-white Warblers** at Madrona Marsh in Torrance on October 29 (Dave Moody) and one at

Piute Ponds on September 28 (Kimball Garrett) were the only ones reported.

An **American Redstart** – only the second in the county this fall— was at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on September 20 (Mark Conrad), while the Bonelli Park **Painted Redstart** had returned for its fourth winter in San Dimas as of October 6 (Rick & Lisa Clements).

The only **Ovenbird** was at the Village Green Condos from October 11-16 (Richard Barth) and **Northern Waterthrushes** were at the Ballona Freshwater Marsh near Playa del Rey on September 17 (Don Sterba) and at Oak Park Cemetery in Claremont on September 27 (Tom Miko).

As expected a few **Summer Tanagers** were found. Two were at the Village Green Condominiums in Los Angeles, one on September 19 and a second on October 4 (Don Sterba). Others were at Kenneth Hahn Park on September 20 (Eleanor Osgood), at Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach on October 11 (Tom Miko) and at Ed Vincent Park in Inglewood on October 23 (Richard Barth).

Rare but regular in fall was a **Clay-colored Sparrow** on Tuna Canyon Road near PCH on September 28 (Andy Birch). Elsewhere, two Clay-colored were at Santa Fe Dam from September 28 through October 5 (Andrew Lee) and single birds were seen at DeForest Park in Long Beach on October 4 (Kevin Larson) and on Catalina Island from October 7-8 (Hugh Ranson).

While expected in small numbers coastally in fall, there were very few reports of **Brewer's Sparrows**. Two were at Madrona Marsh in Torrance

on October 8 (Jon Feenstra) and another was at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale from September 28-October 5 (Andrew Lee).

A handful of **Vesper Sparrows** were reported on the coastal slope. A count of six at Bonelli Park on September 23 (Rod Higbie) was unusual as records typically involve just one or two birds. Thus more expected was one was at Madrona Marsh on October 5 (Kevin Larson), two at Santa Fe Dam on October 17 (Mike San Miguel, Jon Feenstra), and singles at Madrona Marsh on October 8 (Jon Feenstra) and the Sepulveda Basin on November 8 (Jon Fisher).

A **Sage Sparrow** at Bonelli Park in San Dimas on October 20 was quite unusual away from the desert slope (Rod Higbie).

Very rarely encountered as a migrant was a **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Santa Fe Dam on October 17 (Mike San Miguel, Jon Feenstra).

The only longspur reported was a **Lapland Longspur** in the Antelope Valley in the fields near Ave I and 110th Street East (Mike San Miguel).

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks included one at Avalon on Catalina Island on September 21 (Matt Sadowski), one in the Antelope Valley on September 27 (Mike San Miguel) and another at Columbia Park in Torrance on October 14 (Richard Barth). Also of note was a late immature male **Blue Grosbeak** at Harbor Park in Wilmington on October 25 (Martin Byhower).

The only buntings aside from the expected Lazuli were found on Catalina Island. An **Indigo Bunting**



First Year Bald Eagle at El Dorado Park, Long Beach, Photo by Mary Freeman

was there on October 7 and a **Painted Bunting** followed it on October 9 (Hugh Ranson). Catalina could certainly produce vagrants consistently if regular coverage were easier logistically.

With quite a few reports for southern California this fall, a **Dickcissel** recorded at Madrona Marsh in Torrance from October 7-8 was not completely unexpected, but still a very rare bird for LA County (Dave Moody, Tracy Drake).

Wrapping things up at the impressive Santa Fe Dam were two **Bobolinks** – the only ones reported during the period — on September 28 (Andrew Lee).

A late **Hooded Oriole** was near the Whittier Narrows Nature Center on October 3 was late (Tom Miko), while a **Baltimore Oriole** was at West LA College on October 19 (Don Sterba). Another Baltimore was along the LA River in Long Beach on November 8 (Kevin Larson) close to where an **Orchard Oriole** was found back on October 25 (Kevin Larson).

Now the days have grown short and most of migration is over, but there are still plenty of birding opportunities.

Christmas Bird Counts are on the horizon and these often turn up previously unknown rarities, and CBCs can always benefit from the help of experienced birders. So if you haven't already, be sure to put one or two on your calendar.

Otherwise, the Antelope Valley offers good winter birding. Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plover and Mountain Bluebirds are regular here and possible Rough-legged Hawks and longspurs are to be watched for.

The relatively unpopulated and underbirded northwest county has potential and our larger reservoirs often draw unusual gulls and waterfowl.

A Glaucous Gull turned up last winter at Castaic Lagoon and Tufted Duck is always a possibility.

While they require patience, coastal promontories such as Pt. Vicente, Pt. Dume and Leo Carillo regularly produce tubenoses, jaegers, alcids and others. City and regional parks are always worth birding for unusual wintering flycatchers vireos, warblers and orioles.

Our channelized rivers, especially the San Gabriel, Los Angeles and Rio Hondo, and their flood basins can be good for both waterbirds and passerines. The caveat being that good conditions are dependent upon the variable flow of water levels which can be highly variable.

Though just mid-sized by southern California standards, ours is still a big county. Even with a relatively high number of enthusiastic birders, we really only scratch the surface of what's out there.



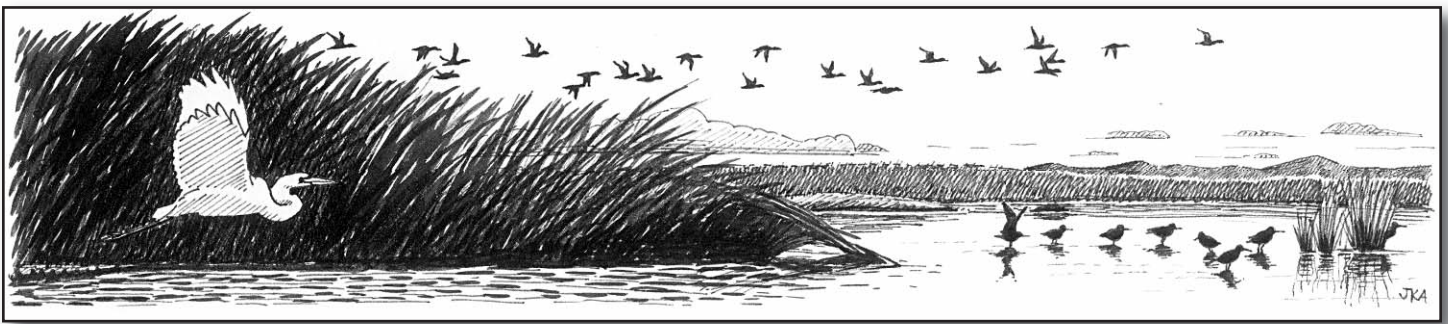
THANK YOU!

The Membership Department wishes to thank all of our members and donors, both new and renewed! Your memberships help us to fulfill our mission...

The mission of Los Angeles Audubon is to promote the enjoyment and protection of birds and other wildlife through recreation, education, conservation and restoration."

* Indicates a NEW member. We hope you will become involved with our many activities. Please contact Mary Freeman, President, with any questions.

- Marvin & Gloria Baker
- Richard Barth
- Lorna Brown
- Paul & Barbara Caplan-Bennett
- * Karen Czerniawski
- Roy Disney
- Georgianna Dryer
- Thomas Duque
- * David Fikse Family
- Roberto Fradera
- * Julie Gonella
- Jan Harmon
- Willard Huyck
- Carol Louise Johnson
- John Kelly
- Amanda Mintz
- Bill & Deb Moore
- Marilyn Morgan
- John A Shrader
- Phillip Skonieczki
- Margaret Sobel
- * Louise Stevenson
- * George Sugarman Family
- Edward Tuttle
- James Wheat & Family
- Irwin Woldman
- Callyn Yorke
- Joe Zell & Ellen Gelbard



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

—BY GARRY GEORGE & STACEY VIGALLON

Using the New List of Sensitive Species of Los Angeles County as a Conservation Tool

Some months ago, Audubon released a watch list of birds in the U.S. sorted by zip code. When we looked at this list for Los Angeles County, we couldn't relate to it. The birds we knew were in trouble, based on our experience on field trips and by reading bird-watching reports, were not a high priority, and some sensitive and federally listed subspecies, like California Least Tern and coastal populations of Western Snowy Plover and Cactus Wren, did not even appear on the list. By our estimation and that of other conservation chairs in Los Angeles County, the list was fairly useless for local advocacy or conservation opportunities. The idea sprang forth in discussions with biologist Tom Ryan to create our own list in which to identify conservation priorities in our patch. Those priorities could help identify where Los Angeles Audubon could best spend our resources – time, money, and communication network – to help the birds we love.

What good is a list?

This new list is a science-based, peer-reviewed, citable document developed by a team of local experts who have decades of combined field experience as well as familiarity with local conservation issues and stakeholders. Reading the feature article in this issue of the *Western Tanager* will provide you with details about how the list was created, such as the criteria used to determine which species made the list and descriptions of threats faced by each species. This list has the potential to serve as a powerful conservation tool. Its concise, readable format, defensible criteria, and publication in a place accessible to the public (*The Western Tanager*), all make it extremely easy to disseminate to a wide range of stakeholders. From government agencies to Audubon chapters to ecological consultants, we can all literally be on the same page at the local level.

How is the list useful to Audubon chapter leaders and members?

What connects all Audubon members is a love of birds and a desire to see them protected through conservation measures. When conservation goals and advocacy efforts are based in

science, they typically demand more respect and attention from other stakeholders – they become harder to ignore. Using the list as a guide shifts the focus away from “favorite” species, and instead trains our efforts on science-based, achievable conservation goals. This list can help us set conservation priorities for a wide range of projects: restoring or protecting remaining habitat in Los Angeles County, community-based monitoring projects, education programs, and galvanizing our community around focal species. In addition, the list will be incredibly helpful to cite when commenting on development and energy projects in Los Angeles County. Having county-wide bird conservation goals can facilitate partnerships between chapters, collaborations that could result in new funding opportunities, larger volunteer rosters, and broader community impact.

At Los Angeles Audubon, we are excited about the many possibilities that the new **List of Sensitive Species of Los Angeles County** presents and are proud to be a part of its creation.



INTERPRETING NATURE

—BY STACEY VIGALLON, DIRECTOR OF INTERPRETATION

Thinking beyond just creating future ornithologists...

Urban areas are ecological frontiers presenting researchers from a wide range of scientific fields with a host of fascinating questions and challenges. Because so much overlap exists between issues of social justice and environmental justice, it will be vital that the next generation of urban ecology problem-solvers comes from urban centers, and from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. High school students currently participating in Los Angeles Audubon programs have a wide range of interests: music, athletics, literature, ethnic studies, film, teaching, and law. They are all extremely interested in environmental issues as well, and they don't view their diverse interests as mutually exclusive. This sentiment will only serve to their advantage as more colleges and universities develop broad programs that promote "ecological literacy" among all majors. And, perhaps more importantly, it will serve them best when confronted with problems that require innovative answers.

Solving urban conservation issues requires an interdisciplinary approach, and academic institutions are certainly creating opportunities for collaboration. For example, the University of Washington offers advanced degrees in urban ecology, where students from diverse emphases (wildlife science, urban planning, architecture, and geography, to name a few) work

together to approach research questions too complex to be addressed in a single thesis or dissertation. The UCLA Anderson School of Management now offers the Leaders in Sustainability Interdisciplinary Certificate Program, which is available to UCLA graduate students in all disciplines, from business to law to engineering. Museums of art and natural history are already cross-pollinating. Places like L.A.'s Center for Land Use Interpretation currently hosts the exhibit, "Post-Consumed: The Landscape of Waste in Los Angeles", and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County offers a whole series of *Art+Science* workshops in the coming months (the one scheduled for November 22nd is all about birds!).

A quick Google search for "green jobs" yields dozens of websites aimed at connecting job seekers with environmentally and socially responsible employment opportunities. Imagine the possibilities as younger generations continue to develop these nascent career tracks:

- Architects who make green buildings the rule and not the exception
- Web designers and video game developers who create programs for the classroom that engage students in environmental concepts
- Psychologists who specialize in helping people who suffer from extreme anxiety over environmental issues
- Engineers and mechanics, inter-

ested in both the green fuel technology and racecars, capable of revolutionizing a franchise like NASCAR

- MBAs who create successful "green" business models for non-profits, small business, and large corporations
- Urban planners who juggle both large-scale sociological and ecological concepts
- Fashion designers, hair stylists, and makeup artists who not only have vast sway over consumer tastes, but also have the power to develop and promote "green" fibers, fashions, and products
- Writers, and visual and performing artists who can explore ecological and social ideas in ways that science can't – through short stories, paintings, film, theater, dance, and more.

As parents, teachers, mentors, consumers, neighbors, and birders our responsibility is to make sure that younger generations, particularly those from the inner-city, get the opportunities they deserve to step in and make a difference. It is our responsibility to encourage them to use their talents and interests in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Just imagine something as fundamental as living in a community whose members have a basic understanding of ecological principles and who are motivated to implement community gardens, wildlife-friendly landscaping, and water conservation measures. The possibilities are vast and exciting...



BOOK REVIEW

Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens

By Douglas W. Tallamy

Published in 2007 by Timber Press, Inc.

If you read no other book this year on birds or nature, you must read *Bringing Nature Home*. What is unique about Douglas Tallamy's approach and how he goes about explaining it chapter by chapter is how he connects the use of native plants to attract beneficial insects in our gardens as the vital missing link to bringing nature back home. Tallamy builds his case with newly revealed scientific studies on simple principles of observation, "...a large percentage of the world's fauna depends entirely on insects to access the energy stored in plants."

The statistics quoted in the book are not new, we've know about the decline of nature for decades, but what Tallamy does so well is punctuate his concept with the reality of what has already happened and will continue to happen if we don't do something now. "We've already lost 50% of most bird species in 50 years due to habitat loss. "...much of our wildlife will not be able to survive unless food, shelter and nest sites can be found in suburban habitats", Tallamy writes, because only "...3 to 5 percent of the land remains as undisturbed habitat for plants and animals." "There simply are not enough native plants left in the "wild"... to support the diversity of wildlife most of us would like to see survive into the distant

future." "Our preserves and national parks are not adequate to prevent the predicted loss of species, and we have run out of the space required to make them big enough. "...unless we restore native plants to our suburban ecosystems, the future of biodiversity in the United States is dim."

Tallamy keeps driving his point home, "Unless we modify the places we live, work and play to meet not only our own needs but the needs of other species as well, nearly all species of wildlife native to the United States will disappear forever."

The book is both thoughtful and scientific, profound and pragmatic.

As a Westerner who is particularly sensitive to "all-encompassing" books that flood the market focusing on birds and wildlife found only on the East Coast, I was pleased to read Tallamy qualify what might appear initially as limited recommendations based on data gathered from the mid-Atlantic region to attract Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies). He goes on to explain that this information was used mainly because it is the only area for which exhaustive literature search for host plant relationships was done. Tallamy redeems himself by stating that many of the plant genera discussed in this chapter entitled, "What Should I Plant?", have broad geographic ranges that are useful for gardeners throughout the entire country. So don't let this chapter fool you, Westerner. It is for us.

In answer to the simple question "What should I plant?" Tallamy says, "...the answer, of course, is to plant the species that support the most insect biodiversity," and then he goes about meticulously listing those host species and the insects that thrive on them. It seems so simple. If only doing it were so simple. But there is hope. A few native garden nurseries do exist in Southern California. The large nursery chains occasionally carry natives. It is possible to transform your garden to mostly native plants. Will it be easy? No, you will have to work at it.

If ever there was a book to inspire you to make that final connection between plants and insects, birds and wildlife, this is the one. I almost didn't want the book to end, it was so rich with information that I was so hungry to absorb. For instance, I have a new appreciation for aphids and other insects of annoyance. I get it. I get the connection. I welcome them to my garden.

The last quote I will tantalize you with is this, "Throughout suburbia, we have decimated the native plant diversity that historically supported our favorite birds and mammals." "...the most compelling reason to return native plants to the landscape is the role such plants have in producing food for our charismatic fauna, particularly our birds." Could there be any better reason?



—BY LISA FIMIANI

NATURE STORE NEWS—INVENTORY CLEARANCE SALE

The Nature Store is reducing its inventory. Over half of the inventory has been put on **sale**.

You can come in and check out all our bargains or go to our on line store site,

www.laudubon.org and click on the **SALE TAB**.

BIRD WALKS — JANUARY FEBRUARY

Upper Franklin Canyon (Sooky Goldberg Nature Center), Beverly Hills Sunday, January 11, 2009

Time: 9 a.m.

Leader: Eleanor Osgood

Join us as we take a casual walk around the ponds and trails of this urban oak woodland nature preserve. We are guaranteed to see the resident Wood Ducks and chaparral bird species such as California Quail, Spotted and California towhees, California Thrasher. Also expect to see some many of the wintering birds such as Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows. This canyon is a hidden treasure where the surrounding urban residences of Sherman Oaks and Beverly Hills disappear from view. Meet in the parking lot of the Sooky Goldberg Nature Center and bird for a few hours in the cool of native trees and creek.

Directions: From the 101 Freeway, take Coldwater Canyon Blvd. south to the intersection of Coldwater Canyon and Mulholland Drive. Make a 90 degree right turn onto Franklin Canyon Drive. There is no sign indicating the entrance to the park; the turn at Franklin Canyon Road reads "Road Closed 800 Feet" and "Sunrise to Sunset"; this is the park entrance. Do not make a U-turn as this will take you onto Mulholland Drive instead of Franklin Canyon. Stay on paved roads to reach the Sooky Goldberg Nature Center. From Sunset: take Coldwater Canyon to Mulholland Dr. Turn right on Mulholland. Make right turn onto Franklin Canyon Dr. (refer to directions from 101 Freeway).

Binoculars provided.

Topanga State Park Birdwalk 1st Sunday of every month Leaders: Ken Wheeland and Chris Tosdevin

Sunday, January 4, 2009

Sunday, February 1, 2009

Time: 8 a.m.

Ken and Chris will lead participants through this beautiful and diverse coastal mountain area. An ideal trip for a beginning birder or someone new to the area. From Ventura Blvd, take Topanga Canyon Blvd 7 miles S. Turn E uphill on Entrada Rd. Follow the signs and turn left into Trippet Ranch parking lot. From Pacific Coast Hwy, take Topanga Canyon Blvd. 5 miles to Entrada Rd. Parking fee.

Contacts: Ken: (310) 455-1401,
ksafarri@aol.com;

Chris: (310) 455-1270

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

3rd Saturday of the month

Saturday, January 17, 2009 –

Eleanor Osgood

Saturday, February 14, 2009 –

Eric & Ann Brooks

Time: 8 a.m.

This trip covers landscaped parkland, a lake and natural coastal scrub habitats and is paced for beginning birders and members of the Baldwin Hills community. Come look for wintering birds such as merlin, hermit thrush, white-crowned, fox and golden-crowned sparrows and ducks. The park entrance is off of La Cienega Blvd. between Rodeo Rd. and Stocker St. After passing the entrance kiosk (\$4.00 parking fee) turn left (leading to the "Olympic Forest") and park in the first available spaces.

Binoculars provided.

Ballona Wetlands Bird Walk 3rd Sunday of the month

August through May

Sunday, January 18, 2009

Sunday, February 15, 2009

**Leaders: Bob Shanman and
Friends**

Time: 8 a.m.

Join us for a walk through L.A.'s only remaining saltwater marsh and the adjacent rocky jetty. Wintering shorebirds and terns should be present, plus the resident Black Oystercatchers frequent the rocky shores of Ballona Creek. Meet at the Del Rey Lagoon parking lot. Take the Marina Fwy (90) to Culver Blvd and turn left for a mile. Turn right on Pacific Ave. The lot is on the right. Lot or street parking is usually not a problem. Three hour walk. 'scopes helpful.

Contact: Bob (310) 326-2473;
wildbirdbob@cs.com

Bird Walks are geared for the beginner/intermediate looking for an introduction to local birds or a less strenuous excursion. Appropriate for young bird watchers age 6 years and older. Carpooling is encouraged. Call Eleanor Osgood at (310) 839-5420 if you need a ride or are able to carpool.

Binoculars are provided on some walks as noted in text.



FIELD TRIPS

FIELD TRIP FEES BENEFIT LOS ANGELES AUDUBON'S *RALPH M. SCHREIBER RESEARCH GRANT FUND*.

GRANTS FOR AVIAN RESEARCH PROJECTS ARE GIVEN TO STUDENTS AND NON-PROFESSIONALS HAVING LIMITED ACCESS TO RESEARCH FUNDING.

ENVELOPES FOR VOLUNTARY DONATIONS TO THE FUND WILL BE DISTRIBUTED ON SOME NON-FEE TRIPS.

Sunday, January 4, 2009 —

Los Angeles Basin Christmas Bird Count.

Contact compiler *Daniel Cooper* at *dan_cooper_90042@yahoo.com* or email to *lacbc@laudubon.org* to be placed on a team or be given an area.

☒ SASE before Dec. 30, 2008, No Fee Confirmed - U.S. citizens only.

Sunday, January 11 Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station Wetlands — Meet 7:30 a.m. at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd

Leaders: *John Nieto, Nick Freeman* and a base biologist will escort up to 24 lucky L.A. AAudubon and Palos Verdes Audubon participants around this prime wetlands site where wintering Pacific Golden-Plover, Mountain Plover, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Sage Thrasher and numerous raptors have been sighted. 6.9' high tide at 8:42 a.m.. **Send SASE** to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093. Provide e-mail and phone number (phone # required) by **December 30, so act now!** **Only SASE-confirmed U.S. citizens with photo ID allowed on base. No cameras or weapons.** Meet at the main public lot at 800 Seal Beach Blvd. at 7:30 a.m., and bird until noon. Take Seal Beach Blvd. S from the 405 Fwy, pass Westminster Blvd., turn left onto the base at the Forrestal Lane light, and left again into the lot. *No fee.*

☒ SASE, \$40, No Limit

January 17 & 18 Salton Sea Weekend —Meet 7 a.m. January 17 at Wister Unit parking lot by the portapottys.

Leaders: *Nick and Mary Freeman.*
Yellow-footed Gull, Snow & Ross'

geese, Sandhill Cranes, Stilt Sandpiper, and Gila Woodpecker all hopeful to certain. *Fee: \$40. No Limit, but sign up with SASE, phone, and e-mail address for more details. Mail to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093. Meet at 7 a.m. Saturday at the Wister Unit parking lot by the portapottys. This is 5 miles north of Niland where Davis joins Hwy 111. Calipatria Inn (800) 830-1113 (leader's preference) and Brawley Inn (760) 344-1199 are recommended. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. Arrive fed and gassed up, bring lunches, those who wish will dine together at Calipatria Inn Steak House.*

Saturday, January 24

East Antelope Valley —Drive into the Park-and-Ride just to the east of the offramp. Meet at 8 a.m. at the W end of the lot.

Leaders: *Stan Gray and Todd Battey.* Beyond 50th Street East is neglected territory for many birders. However, Mountain Plover, raptors, LeConte's Thrasher and other AV specialties are sometimes easiest to find in the far eastern reaches of the Valley. Take Hwy 14 N to Avenue S (next to Lake Palmdale). Drive into the Park-and-Ride just to the east of the offramp. Meet at 8 a.m. at the W end of the lot. Bring lunch and a full tank of gas for a full day of splendor in the alfalfa. *No reservation.* 'Scopes and FRS radios helpful. *Nominal donation suggested.*

☒ SASE, Limit 14

January 31 & February 1 Weekend Carrizo Plain —Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa

Leaders: *Larry Allen & Mary Freeman.* Meet at 8 a.m. in Maricopa. Spectacular scenery. We will see Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, LeConte's Thrasher, Merlin and pronghorn; with likely Rough-legged Hawk, Mountain Plover and Sandhill Crane. We will meet in Maricopa, drive around the Plain all weekend, then leave the Plain heading north via Bitterwater Road on Sunday before we away to LA. If possible, please carpool or avail your vehicle to others when you reserve. Your phone number will be released for carpooling unless you request otherwise. *Send name, phone number, e-mail, \$40 per person, and SASE to sign-up to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093 for exact directions and further information.* Reserve your own room in Buttonwillow for Saturday night. Motel 6 is one option here. FRS radios & 'scopes helpful. *Limit: 14.*

Sunday, February 15

Private Duck Club —Meet 7:30 a.m.

Leader: *Irwin Woldman.* The duck club in Ventura has a long history of producing the kinds of birds that most rich, well-birded and disappearing habitats can lay claim to, including Sora and Virginia rails, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, and one Lesser Sand-Plover. Get to the preserve by taking the 101 Fwy W to Rice Avenue S, following the Rice Ave. prompts to the T-intersection, then take Hueneme Rd. west just past

the buildings on the right. Meet on the side of the road at **7:30 a.m.** **No sign-up required.** We will walk the property, so good hiking/mud shoes with energetic legs inside a plus. We may have one car. Scopes & FRS radios helpful.

Saturday, February 21 Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area —Meet at **8 a.m.** **Leader:** *Kris Ohlenkamp.* “Freeway close” morning of birding. Kris has led this walk on-and-off for 21 years, noting 200 species, and averaging 60-65 per walk. Take the 405 fwy N into the San Fernando Valley, turn W on Burbank Blvd. and N (Rt.) on Woodley Ave. to the second Rt., which is marked “Wildlife Area”. Turn here and park in the lot at the end. Meet at 8 a.m., and bird until about 11:30 a.m. ‘scopes helpful.

Saturday, February 28 Parrot Patrol —Meet **4 p.m.** **Temple Park, Temple City**
Parrots have become a common sight in much of the LA basin, with many species well established. *Larry Allen* will take us to staging areas and roosting spots for up to eight species of parrots and parakeets now found in the San Gabriel Valley. Meet at **4 p.m.** in Temple Park, Temple City, and pick out parrots until about 5:30 p.m. Take the 210 Fwy E, turning S on Baldwin Ave. in Arcadia. Turn west on Las Tunas to Golden West Ave., and meet in the gazebo of the park at the NW corner of this intersection. Thomas Guide p.597, A2. *Nominal donation suggested.*

☒ SASE, \$30, Limit 20
March 21 & 22 Weekend
Anza Borrego Birds, Butterflies and Beyond —Meet **7 a.m.** at **Yaqui Wells across from Tamarisk Grove Campground**
Leader: *Fred Heath.* High points over

the years: blooming desert evening-primrose and indigo bush, chuckwalla, collared lizard, desert bighorn (annual), Swainson’s Hawks, LeConte’s Thrasher, Long-eared Owl (hopeful). Suggested accommodations: Tamarisk Grove Campground (reserve through www.reserveamerica.com), or Stanlund Motel in Borrego Springs (760) 767-5501. Anticipate a busy weekend, and reserve camping (up to 3 months early) and motels very early. Meet at **7 a.m.** at Yaqui Wells across from Tamarisk Grove Campground. *Limit 20 people. Send SASE with phone number, e-mail and \$30 fee to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093 to learn more details.* Pleasant to warm days, cool to cold nights (30-100°F!).

☒ SASE, \$55, Limit 20
April 18 & 19 Weekend
Owens Valley Grouse Trip —
Mary and Nick Freeman lead. Greater Sage Grouse on the lek, breathtaking scenery. Meet early Saturday and Sunday mornings in Bishop. *Limited to 20. To sign up, send \$55 (Schreiber Grant Fund Raiser), phone#, and e-mail in a SASE to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093.* More details next issue and in mailer. Reserve rooms early. Motel 6, Mountain View Inn, Bishop Elms are some of many hotels in Bishop.

☒ SASE, \$25
April 25 & 26 Weekend
East Mojave Desert
—Meet **8 a.m.** in **Baker**
Larry Allen will lead 15 durable birders in search of the four toughest California thrashers, as well as Scott’s Oriole and other desert birds. Probably an excellent time for herps. Lots of driving on paved and dirt roads, and some rock-hopping and hiking. Meet in Baker at 8:00 a.m.. Dry camp Saturday in the desert. High clearance recommended. Bring enough gas, food, and

water for the weekend. *Reserve with \$25, SASE and e-mail & phone, mail to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093.* Contact info. will be released for carpooling, unless requested otherwise.

April 29-May 6
Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival —

Come visit “America’s Birdiest Inland County” ’04 -’07, including the Globally Important Bird Areas of Sequoia National Forest, and South Fork Kern River Valley. ±233 bird species seen during the festival! Trips spanning Central Valley / Giant Sequoias / Mojave Desert / Owens Valley. Check website:
<http://kern.audubon.org/KRVSNF.htm>
Organized by *Bob Barnes.*

☒ SASE, \$60 for 4 days or \$15 per Day, Limit 15
June 26-29 Long Weekend —
Southern Sierras with *Bob Barnes.*
150 species likely in 4 days. Meet in Inyokern for Friday morning’s start. All other days start early in Kernville. Joint trip with our good neighbors in Sea & Sage Audubon Society. *To reserve, and receive trip information including lodging, send SASE with e-mail, phone number and \$15 for each day attended (\$60 for 4 days) Mail to PO Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093.* Lots of driving, so bring a friend, and we will carpool. Contact info will be released for carpooling. More info in March. *Maximum 15.*

Wings and Wildlife Festival of Southern Nevada
Thursday-Saturday,
March 12-15, 2009
Laughlin, Nevada, on the Colorado River
Information/Registration:
www.LaughlinBirds.com
Phone: 702-298-0630 (Jena Morga)

Field trips often require more time or effort than **Bird Walks**, and delve more deeply into identification, natural histories and interactions observed in the field. All are welcome on either type of trip. No pets or small children on field trips, please. Reserve per instructions as noted within the text descriptions.



2009 PELAGIC SCHEDULE



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28 - PALOS
VERDES ESCARPMENT AND
REDONDO CANYON

Departs 7:30 a.m. Ports of Call in San Pedro This 8 hour trip departs from Ports of Call In San Pedro at 7:30 a.m. on the m/v Pacific Adventure. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar, Short-tailed, Black-vented, Sooty and possibly Pink-footed Shearwaters; rocky shorebirds; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Xantus Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Occasionally: Ancient Murrelet. Rarity: Manx Shearwater. Gray Whales and several species of dolphins are often seen. There is a full galley on board. Please restrict your carry-ons due to very limited cabin space.

\$70. Send a SASE to Los Angeles Audubon, P.O. Box 9310571, Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057. Include a contact phone number. Or call Los Angeles Audubon at (323) 876-0202 (Mon. - Thur.) from 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

E-Mail: Los Angeles Audubon:
laas@laaudubon.org
Pelagic Info: <http://www.SoCalBirding.com>

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 - A DEEP WATER
TRIP TOWARD THE SAN JUAN SEAMOUNT

Departs 7 a.m. Santa Barbara Harbor This trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor on the fast catamaran Condor Express at 7:00 a.m. and will return approximately by 8:00 p.m. We will cruise along the deep water shelf by the San Juan Seamount. Birds previously seen: Black-footed Albatross; Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; Ashy and Leach's storm-petrels; Pomarine, Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers; Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. Uncommon species seen on prior trips: Laysan Albatross; Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel; Red-billed Tropicbird and Tufted Puffin. Rarity: Murphy's Petrel. There is a complete galley that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

\$195. Details as to how and where reservations can be made will be forthcoming. *If there is insufficient response 35 days before the trip departure, the trip will be cancelled.*

NOTE:

Destinations may be changed to maximize bird sightings, or minimize rough seas.

With increased fuel costs there can be a \$5 to \$10 energy surcharge per person.

Refund Policy: You may receive a refund less a \$4.00 handling charge if you cancel 31 days prior to departure, or if a paid replacement can be found.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6 - LAND ON SANTA
CRUZ ISLAND FOR THE ISLAND SCRUB
JAY, AND THEN OUT TO SEA.

Departs 8 a.m. Oxnard Harbor This 8 hour trip departs from the Island Packer dock in the Oxnard Harbor at 8:00 a.m. on the m/v Vanguard. We will land at Prisoner's Cove where the endemic Island Scrub-Jay is easily seen. Then, we will cruise out to sea for pelagic birding, returning by Anacapa Island. Birds seen on prior trips: Northern Fulmar; Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters; rocky shorebirds; South Polar Skua; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Sabine's Gull; Pigeon Guillemot; Xantus Murrelet. Uncommon birds seen on prior trips: Flesh-footed Shearwater; American Oystercatcher; and Tufted Puffin. A Brown Booby has been seen on Anacapa Island. A box lunch and breakfast can be ordered at the dockside deli, Latitude 34 (805) 815-4131.

\$95. Send a SASE to Los Angeles Audubon, P.O. Box 931057, Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057. Include a contact phone number and email address (if used). Or, call Los Angeles Audubon at (323) 876-0202 (Mon. - Thur.) from 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and charge (MC & Visa) reservation with a \$3.00 fee.

E-Mail: Los Angeles Audubon:
laas@laaudubon.org

For pelagic information:
<http://www.SoCalBirding.com>

SATURDAY, JULY 25 - A DEEP WATER
TRIP TO THE SAN JUAN SEAMOUNT AND
SANTA ROSA RIDGE

Departs 7 a.m. Santa Barbara Harbor This trip departs from Santa Barbara Harbor on the catamaran Condor Express at 7:00 a.m. and will return approximately by 8:00 p.m. We will cruise along the deep water shelf by the San Juan Seamount. Birds previously seen this time of year: Black-footed Albatross; Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed and Sooty shearwaters; South Polar Skua; Pomarine Jaeger; Black, Ashy and Leach's storm-petrels; Pigeon Guillemot; Common Murre; Xantus Murrelet; Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. This time of year Cook's Petrel and Red-billed Tropicbirds have been seen in the area. Mega-rarities to be looked for are Dark-rumped, Stejneger's petrels and Wedge-rumped Storm-petrels. There is a complete galley on board that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

\$195. Details as to how and where reservations can be made will be forthcoming. *If there is insufficient response 35 days before trip departure the trip will be cancelled.*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 - AROUND
THE NORTHERN CHANNEL ISLANDS FOR
RARE SHEARWATERS

Departs 7:30 a.m. Santa Barbara Harbor This 8 hour trip departs from the Santa Barbara Harbor at 7:30 a.m. on the catamaran Condor Express. Birds to be expected: Northern Fulmar; Sooty, Pink-footed and Black-vented shearwaters; Black, Ashy, and Leach's storm-petrels; cormorants (3); rocky shorebirds (up to 5); Red-necked and Red phalaropes; Pomarine, and Parasitic jaegers; Sabine's Gull; Royal, Common and Arctic terns. Uncommon species or rarities to be looked for: Buller's Shearwater, Least Storm-Petrel; Red-billed Tropicbird; South Polar Skua, Long-tailed Jaeger; and Craveri's Murrelet. Whales and dolphins can be seen this time of year. There is a complete galley that serves breakfast and lunch.

Cost: To Be Advised. Details as to how and where reservations can be made will be forthcoming. *If there is insufficient response 35 days before the trip departure, the trip will be cancelled.*

THE BEST OF COSTA RICA

MARCH 6-18, 2009



Keel-billed Toucan, Photo by Herb Clarke

If you have been considering visiting and birding in Costa Rica, wait no longer! We have an itinerary that offers six of the major locations that are distinctive, each offering a marvelous profusion of tropical birds. Costa Rica has a well deserved reputation as a tiny country sincerely interested in conserving its natural resources, and one that is invariably on all birder's wish lists. Tropical forests harbor howler monkeys, Resplendent Quetzals, poison-dart frogs, giant morpho butterflies, over 830 species of birds, and the beauty of thousands of plant species.

Habitats encountered will range from semiarid ranch land, to misty cloud forest, the transition zone between the dry and moist forests of the Pacific lowlands, the treeless paramo, and what may well be the highlight of our trip, a visit to La Selva, a lowland rainforest where nearly 400 birds have been recorded. As part of our small group, enjoy some of the best tropical birding in Costa Rica, where you will be accompanied by outstanding leaders throughout. **Space is limited.**

For information and itinerary, contact: *Olga Clarke*

Los Angeles Audubon Travel Director 2027 El Arbolita Dr. Glendale, CA 91208-1805 Ph/Fax: (818) 249-9511

oclarketravel@earthlink.net

SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING EXPEDITION

DEPARTING SEPTEMBER 5 TO 20, 2009

Upon your arrival in Johannesburg, the country's largest city with ultra modern skyscrapers, you will be whisked away to a haven of peace and tranquility to a country lodge facing a lake, and find yourself in an unmatched environment, surrounded by countless species of birds. From then on, the excitement of enjoying not only the great infrastructure, but some of the most varied country on the continent - truly a birder's paradise. Spectacular scenery awaits you every day of this trip, along with the diverse wildlife and unusual species of birds. Experience untouched wilderness in Kruger National park, with the tradition of safari in the style of the past. Set on the banks of the Nwatswitswonto River. Views of long-lashed Ground Hornbills, plus comical birds with enormous yellow or red bills, hornbills not toucans, and colorful azure-winged beauties like the Lilac-breasted Rollers, to name a few of the common species.

The extension to Cape town offers incredible vistas of the Cape Peninsula, Boulders Beach, Table Mountain, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, along with specialties like Jackass Penguins, Cape Cormorants, Southern Black Korhaan, Blue Crane, Cape Sugarbird, and others too numerous to list here. Join us and see for yourself, South Africa, "A World in One Country."

The dates for the main tour are September 5/20, 2009, plus the Cape Town Extension from September 19th through 27th.



African Jackass Penguins, Photo by Herb Clarke

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

**MEET AT 7:30 PM IN THE COMMUNITY BUILDING IN PLUMMER PARK
7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90046**

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Graham Chisholm presents:

The Tejon Ranch Agreement

Audubon California and four other partners reach an agreement with the Tejon Ranch Company in May 2008 to set aside 240,000 acres for conservation. Covering four distinct ecological regions, and perhaps the biologically most important property in California, the Tejon Ranch has been on the list for protection by environmentalists for a long time. Come learn about the settlement agreement that is setting 90% of the ranch aside for conservation.

Photo by Garrison Frost



Wednesday, February 11, 2009

Phil Unitt presents:

The 2002 and 2003 Fires of San Diego, California

In 2002 and 2003, over 738 square miles of San Diego County burned. To evaluate the effects on birds of fires of such unprecedented size, Phil and his team began with 32 survey routes in the area burned by the Pines fire in 2002, which affected mainly chaparral and oak woodland on the east slope of San Diego County's mountains. Almost every possible pattern of postfire response is exemplified by some species. Species favoring the burned area, once vegetative recovery had begun, include granivores exploiting open habitats, insectivores foraging on exposed rock or bare ground, and migratory summer visitors adapted to early successional habitats. Some of these fire-followers colonized in large numbers the first year after the fire, then tended to decline, whereas others, preferring the intermediate stages of succession, increased, at least for a while.

Repeated fires on this scale are likely to eliminate the more susceptible species from large areas where they were once common.



Photo by Mary Freeman

Los Angeles Audubon Society
P.O. Box 931057
Los Angeles, CA 90093-1057

*DATED MATERIAL
Please Expedite*



PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO
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WWW.LAAUDUBON.ORG

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

