

Trip from New Mexico to Northern California

Fall, 1989

(See list of campgrounds at end.)

This diary was written before I got my laptop computer, so is more terse in its construction than the later ones are. Complete sentences are a luxury you can forego when you're writing things by hand.

Tues., Oct. 10, 1989.

Although we left home Oct. 1, our pace has been so frantic, I haven't had time to write up our travels until now.

Our 1st day out, we left home quite early--about 6:30 a.m.--and drove to Victorville before having breakfast. (Belgian waffles have been added to their menu--good!) Stopped for lunch in Needles, otherwise spent the entire day on the road. Not too hot. Spent night at KOA in Seligman, AZ. 5000' altitude made it pleasantly cool. The place is well off the freeway, but not the railway. There were quite a few birds in the campground--Robins, Lesser Goldfinches, Great-tailed Grackles, etc. No sign of the Say's Phoebes that Jim got such cute pictures of the last time we were there--fledglings on the picnic table.

Mon., 10/2, was another day on the road, as we completed our journey to Albuquerque. We found a place just east of the mountains which abut the east side of the city (Tourquoise Trail Camp.) The full hookups were jammed together, so we took an EW (electric & water, no sewer) site on the edge. The area was in pinyon-juniper habitat. A fair number of birds, including the "new" Canyon Towhee--result of the "split" of the Brown Towhee.

I called Gordon Vickery, who was our reason for coming to Albuquerque. He had bought slides from Sea and Sage and invited us to come hawk-watching at the local hawk-watch site.

We met him at his home just on the edge of the national forest--lovely area--the next morning at 8:00. It took 1½ hours to drive south to the Manzano Mtns., where the local folks had determined the hawk-watching was the best. Unfortunately Gordon elected to drive his own car, so we couldn't chat with him on the way back and forth. He drove like the wind, too, so we really had to dash to keep up with him.

The site was at about 9000 ft on a rocky promontory which juts out westerly. We had to hike about 1/2 mile to get there. It involved scrambling up some steep rock steps, which I didn't like. (I liked them even less on the way down!) It wasn't a terrific day for hawks. There was rain in the mountains to the north, and that apparently halted the migration. We saw a fair number of Sharpshins, a few Red-tails, and one Merlin.

There were two young (20-ish) men who had been hired by a foundation [now called HawkWatch International] to count hawks from there from late Aug. through early Nov. They were very friendly and actually more outgoing than Gordon, who seemed a bit taciturn. It's strange, for he wrote very friendly letters. (He's a naturalist and interpreter at an Albuquerque Nature Center.)

We were chased off the site around 2:00 p.m. by threatening storm clouds. In fact, I got a good shower before I got back to the truck. (I'd sent Jim on ahead, because I was so slow on that steep trail and we didn't want to get his camera gear wet.)

It rained intermittently all night, but had ceased by morning. Still cloudy, though. It was a tropical thing, so not particularly cold. We drove all morning to Bandelier Natl. Mon. (NW of Santa Fe).

We had no sooner selected a campsite when the Corvidae converged--Steller's and Scrub Jays, Black-billed Magpie. Jim salted the area with his goodies and wouldn't budge all p.m. I drove down to the monument headquarters and looked at the exhibits, got literature, etc. It started to pour

while I was there and did so nearly continuously from ten until the following morning.

We had no hook-ups, so tried to conserve electricity. We just bought solar panels for our trailer, but aren't really sure yet how much electrical use we can get away with. Besides, it was very dark and gloomy. The panels don't need full sun to work, but of course the more light, the better.

The next morning (10/4), the rain had stopped, so I took a walk from the trailer over to the overlook of the Indian ruins down in the canyon while Jim stayed by the trailer. I saw lots of birds for a walk through such uniform woodland--Mountain Chickadees, Western Bluebirds, Juncos (Gray-headed), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and even a Canyon Wren.

It started to rain lightly before I got back. When I got there, Jim was fuming! The people in the site right next to us had gone off and left their little dog tied up outside their tent-trailer. The poor thing was whining and howling loudly--scared to death. It didn't have sense enough to stay under the trailer out of the rain either. Jim said the dog had been doing that for an hour. Out of 40 or more unoccupied camp sites, why did those people have to select the only one next to someone else anyway? The rain looked like it was setting in for the day, so a walk around the ruins seemed uninviting. Sitting in the dark trailer listening to that poor dog seemed even less so. So we decided to leave and head northwest where the weatherman had promised clear skies. I hated to leave, for the lush riparian area down in the canyon held promise of all sorts of interesting birds. Martin and Mildred Litke had been there a couple of weeks earlier and told us where to look for a Northern Pygmy Owl, a bird I've never seen. [I've still never seen one!]

But we left anyway. The first part of the drive was through mountains. The aspens were in full color and seemed to be trying to substitute for the nonexistent sun--and doing pretty well, too. Jim took a few pictures of them in the rain. Lovely layers of fog plus golden trees, emerald grass--should be nice pictures. [They were.]

We did get out of the rain after several hours. It was never pouring, though. We spent the night at KOA, Bloomfield, NM.

Next day we drove north about 10 miles to Aztec Ruins NM, which I remember from the Tru-Vue stereo reel when I was a child. They're really Anasazi ruins--misnamed by the early settlers. Ruins of a fairly large pueblo and a restored Kiva were quite interesting.

Then on to Moab. (We decided we didn't have time to stop in at Mesa Verde.) We drove the road from Durango to Cortez which Mother and I took in an awful snowstorm on an earlier trip. It was much nicer this time. Mountain slopes covered with aspens, some of which were still colorful. Others had lost their leaves.

We tried to stay in Arches National Park, but the campground was full. So we settled happily for a site with a nice view of a pasture at a private campground on the north edge of Moab. There was a tiny brook and weeds at the near edge. Lots of American Goldfinches, Song Sparrows, "Oregon" Juncos--and House Sparrows--in the weeds. The site wasn't quite level, and they didn't think we'd want it, but all the sites were very narrow and we wanted to be on the end of a row. Actually, it wasn't especially hard to level the trailer. No one was too near to us either, for those sites weren't level either (Slickrock Country Camp, Site #100).

The next day we spent at Arches. It was Jim's first visit. Lovely puffy clouds enhanced the views of the arches. We also spent an hour or two in Courthouse Wash, a nice riparian area. There was even a bit of standing water here and there from the recent rains. I scared up two female Cinnamon Teal. Jim played games with a Red-naped Sapsucker, who seemed to take exception to his red shirt. (He'd worn it thinking we wouldn't be birding.) The bird kept flying out and around him, then back into its works. Jim took quite a few pictures.

After lunch Jim was tired and took a nap in the truck, while I walked the trail to Landscape Arch. We also drove through the full campground. It is very nice. Maybe another time.

Sunday, 10/8, we spent the morning driving the road east out of Moab which goes through the Colorado River Gorge--a truly spectacular drive. We found lots of people camped here and there along the road--wished we had known to do that. Legal, too, for a brochure we picked up in Moab mentioned it.

Returned to the trailer. Had lunch, then drove west to Butch Cassidy Camp, Selena, Utah. Campground not listed in Trailer Life Guide, yet a Good Sam spot. Why? Was in Woodall's Guide. The Trailer Life place in town was awful--a gravel parking lot behind a gas station. Our place had nice wide sites, a few trees. Must remember it.

Mon., 10/9 we drove 1/2 day across the deserts of Utah to Great Basin National Park, in extreme eastern Nevada. It's located in a desert mountain range, which contains Wheeler Peak--the highest mountain range in the Central Great Basin.

Our campsite is one of the most beautiful we've ever had--along Lehman Creek and surrounded by aspens in full color. We really had to work to level the trailer here, but managed by perching the tongue on a somewhat precarious pile of jacks. Sites are widely spaced, so one feels alone. I'm sitting outside the trailer by the creek watching a Least Chipmunk munch Magic Meal as I write this.

Yesterday afternoon we picked up literature, but decided the weather was too beautiful to spend 90 min touring Lehman Cave, no matter how nice it is. Jim found another Red-naped Sapsucker to play with. I walked the nature trail. Last evening we discovered we could even get TV from Salt Lake City--3 channels including PBS (12-volt, of course--no hookups here).

This morning we drove the 10 miles to the end of the road up Wheeler Mtn. It goes almost up to the timber line. The mountain is >13,000', road went to about 10,000'. Took a lovely hike through the woods. I recorded a few birds--Mtn. Chickadees, Clark's Nutcrackers etc., plus wind in pines. Nothing I didn't have already, but will make nice background "music" to a show sometime.

I'm writing this while Jim has gone back over to the Visitors Center to play with his Sapsuckers again. He's also going to try for a Cliff Chipmunk, which I saw yesterday. (We already have photos of the common Least Chipmunk by the trailer. He photographed the Colorado Chipmunk at Arches. We're gradually getting pictures of the western mammals, as well as birds.)

Sat., Oct. 21

I don't seem to find much time to write up our travels on this trip. But now we're sitting in a KOA near Mariposa, CA, waiting out a rainy day. It's a lovely spot, and our site overlooks a small creek bed. Lots of birds--just saw Steller's Jay, Rufous-sided Towhee and Hermit Thrush right outside the window in the rain. Now to go on with the chronological log.

We loved our stay at Great Basin NP. The 2nd morning there were deer (10-12 of them) all around our trailer for a while--until they heard some tiny sound. Then they instantaneously disappeared. One leaped over our very large picnic table from a standing start with no trouble.

We spent all day Wed., 10/11, and half a day Thurs. driving across Nevada. Spent Wed. night at the Baptist Church Campground in Austin, NV. It's a fund-raiser and minister-supporter for the church. Right in town, but not bad. (Not in either trailer book, though. We'd thought we might have to park overnight beside the road.)

(The avian distractions outside the window are numerous. While I was writing the last 2 paragraphs, I've added 4 more species to my list--including a Black-throated Gray Warbler.)

We checked out a couple of Reno campgrounds and finally settled for the Panther Valley RV Park. It was very recently delisted by KOA. Too many full-timers who surrounded their trailers with junk is what we suspect to be the reason. We got a nice site in the top tier of the hillside park. No one right near us. We had a nice view out over the valley--if you could overlook the foreground. We were a bit apprehensive about the type of people living there, but had no problems with noise or any other annoyance. The alternative would have been a brand new RV park with paved sites and other trailers right next to us. We were happy where we spent the four nights in Reno.

Our main reason for staying in Reno was to attend the Western Field Ornithologists meeting. It started Fri., 10/13, with a field trip to Pyramid Lake. (The lake gets its name from a pyramidal rock formation on one shore.) The trip was a bit of a disappointment, for all the birds were Questar (telescope) specks in the distance. That evening there was a delicious BBQ dinner put on by the

Lahontan Audubon Society.

All day Sat. there were indoor sessions--fairly interesting. Jim got bored and went outside to photograph Canada Geese on the lake. [Later: I made fun of his subjects, but when we got the slides back, I discovered they were exquisite. He had managed to photograph the birds with the reflections of golden fall trees on the water all around them.] That evening was a banquet at a downtown casino. The parking spaces in the parking structure were so narrow that we almost couldn't fit our Suburban into one.

Sunday we took a field trip with WFO to Stillwater NWR near Fallon (ca. 70 mi. from Reno). The water is very low there--a critical problem. Demand by the Indians at Pyramid Lake (also low) and by the ever-expanding population in Reno/Sparks/Carson City all compete for a finite supply of water. Again the birds were all-too-far away and, in addition, against the sun.

Mon. morning, 10/16, we got a late start. (Jim had some routine work done on the truck, while I did some work on my recording gear.) We drove I-80 across the Sierras, then down SR-49 (very slow and winding here) to a nice RV Park near Plymouth (Gold Beach Camp). We had a nice secluded place across the Cosumnes R. from the road. The place has sites on both sides of the river. We'd have returned there today, but we feared they wouldn't let us go across their portable bridge due to the rain (and prediction of three more days of same.)

Tues. we drove the rest of the way to Yosemite via SR 120, the N entrance. Along the way we had views of the area burned in the huge fire (3200 acres) of 1987. We elected to stay at the Crane Flats Campground in hopes of finding the Great Gray Owl. It is frequently seen behind the gas station in the meadow there.

Jim searched for the owl in the late afternoon through dusk three of the four nights we were there. He finally saw the bird the last night at a great distance, so got no pictures. I stayed in the trailer fixing dinner, which we ate around 7:30 each evening.

Each of the three days we took day trips to various spots in the park. The weather was glorious, with a few clouds the 3rd day.

Wed. we spent in Yosemite Valley, which was at the peak of its fall color--golden oaks, bright yellow big-leaf maples accented by red dogwoods. We hiked the trail up almost to Vernal Falls--pretty steep toward the end. We were puffing. Got to the bridge where we could see the falls. Not much water coming over. Jim took lots of scenic pictures of fall color, Merced R., etc.

Thurs. we drove to Glacier Point. Stopped at Bridalveil Campground (closed) and walked in. We searched the meadow where I saw the Great Gray Owl several years ago. No luck. We saw a few common birds. No Sierra specialties. On to Glacier Pt, which Jim had never seen.

[I'm surprised I didn't write up our coyote encounter at Bridalveil. Will attempt to do it eight years later from memory:

As I was walking along the deserted campground road, I stopped to listen for an extended period, as I often do. Suddenly a coyote bounded out of the forest and ran right up to within just a few feet of me before it realized its mistake. It stopped and stared at me for what seems in retrospect to have been several minutes, but was probably only a few seconds. What a thrill to see a wild animal like that at such close range.

Finally it got its wits together and turned and ran back into the woods. It seemed to be circling the perimeter of the campground and heading toward where I thought Jim was, so I yelled "coyote coming your way" at the top of my lungs and hoped he'd hear me. He did, but this time the animal was more wary. Jim did get some moderately distant shots of the beast, though.]

Fri. we drove to Tuolumne Meadows. On the way we passed beside a management fire, which was smoldering away in the undergrowth. Amazing how quietly it burns when the conditions are as they were--cool, calm, moderate humidity. The notices said they expected it to burn for two weeks. It was lit 10/16. I guess today's rain has put it out by now. Jim took some interesting photos of it burning in a hollowed-out conifer.

Got back to the trailer for a late lunch. Afterwards I took a walk in the woods near our trailer. I recorded Golden-crowned Kinglets at close range--also the calls of Hermit Thrushes from a bit farther

away. I went back and fetched Jim, because the kinglets were foraging low for a change, but they had disappeared by the time he got there. [Even today, he has yet to get a decent shot of that bird.]

We bought a solar panel for the trailer before we left home. Our voltage held up well for 3 nights in the deep forest of Crane Flats Campground, but our shady site and yesterday's cloudiness, combined with three days of battery usage, caused the voltage to plummet below 9 volts (rather than 12). Jim hooked up the truck and ran the generator to get us through the evening, but by morning it was down again. We were glad to leave and drive down here (Mariposa) to full hookups again. The birds are so promising, we may stay here a while. (They've found the food Jim put out now.)

Sun., Nov. 5, 1989.

Lava Beds NM

It seems as though I rarely have time to write up our trip. Only when it rains or, as now, we have photographable birds around the trailer do I have free time. Right now I'm watching Juncos (Oregon mostly, plus one each of Pink-sided and Slate-colored), Robins (all over the roof and at our water), Plain Titmice, Black-billed Magpies, Townsend's Solitaires, Least Chipmunks, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels. We've also had Mountain Chickadee and Cassin's Finch here briefly. The others are steady customers at the food and/or water.

The habitat here is pinyon-juniper--very few Pinyons, if that's what they are. [We revisited the area in 1997: There are no pinyons.] The junipers have lots of berries on them. I watched a flock of robins at a tree with very few berries (fruits really). They hovered and made a real clatter trying to get every last berry. Nearby was a tree loaded with berries, but no robin action. The popular tree was bright green, while the foliage on the unpopular tree was grayer. I picked a berry from each tree and cut it open. The reason was obvious: The meat was much thicker on the greener tree's fruits.

The robins swallow the fruits whole and later cough up the seeds. (Jim watched one cough one up into the bird bath, and he picked it out to identify.) He's seen many seeds coughed up as he's watched the robins from the blind.

Enough about here. Better go back to where I left off last time.

The birds at Mariposa turned out to be a disappointment. Only when it rained were they around. It poured most of Oct 22 and 23. I didn't dare venture very far from the trailer and certainly not with my recording gear. Besides, it was too windy for good sound.

The clouds seemed to be breaking up 10/24, so we left, driving slowly via back roads on the east side of the valley to Oroville, where we stayed at Dingerville USA. Isn't that an attractive name for an RV park? It was just an open area, but the sites were wide and we had no one right next to us. The usual House Sparrows and Brewer's Blackbirds came for our food. We saw American Goldfinches around. Can't remember if Jim said he was successful in stalking them.

The campground was right across a back road from Oroville State Wildlife Area--a riparian woodland along the Feather River. I took a long walk along the road. No trails into the place could I detect. Saw lots of the expected birds.

The next morning (10/25) we drove the back roads looking for roadside birds for Jim to shoot from the truck. Had good luck with Western Meadowlark, Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrow. The latter was in Gray Lodge State Wildlife Area.

We had to quit early, because Jim had a 2:00 appointment to get a new windshield for the truck. A fluke rock had been thrown up by a small car we met on a paved road the day before. It hit right in the worst place, directly in front of the driver's eyes--\$180.00. After Jim got back, I took the truck and went grocery shopping. That pretty well used up the afternoon.

Thurs., 10/26 was spent in a similar fashion. This time we had time to drive the entire tour road at Gray Lodge. The birds were far away mostly and the light always seemed to be wrong. I couldn't do very well recording either--too much gunfire. Lots of hunting in the area. I don't know what they were after, for waterfowl hunting in the refuge hadn't started yet. Maybe they were just honing their skills.

After lunch we drove up into the hills east of Oroville--beautiful oak savannah habitat mostly. In one small settlement we found a group of Lewis' Woodpeckers. Jim tried to photograph them from the road, but they wouldn't come near him. We hated to walk on people's property, so gave up.

Fri. 10/27 we set out again, driving north. Just north of Red Bluff we spotted a sign at a freeway exit pointing to a campground several miles away on a side road (oak savannah). By then we were past the exit, but I looked it up in the Trailer Life Guide. It sounded nice, so we turned around at the next exit and went back. It was partly mobile home park, partly RV park, but we got a nice, fairly isolated site backed up against some bushes with trees overhead. Hookup was EW and sewer for gray water only. (It turned out that the outflow was directly into the Sacramento R.!) It was Bend RV Park in the tiny settlement of Bend--logically enough located at a bend in the river. We spent three nights there.

The first afternoon after we checked in we drove farther along the road (Jelly's Ferry Rd.) and found another Lewis' Woodpecker flock. We sat in the truck for an hour or more hoping a bird would return to a previous perch, so Jim could photograph it. It would fly nearby, but never got enough courage to land. Finally we gave up and drove farther. I had succeeded in recording the bird from the truck while it was hidden in a nearby tree, though.

Just across the Sacramento River about 8 miles from Bend we found a little Corps of Engineers river-access park full of birds, especially woodpeckers (6 species: Red-breasted Sapsucker, N. Flicker, Acorn, Nuttall's, Downy--and Lewis'). This time Jim finally succeeded in photographing Lewis'. ONE bird (a bit scruffy, unfortunately) overcame its qualms and continued to store acorns in its granary on a pair of utility poles. Lewis' Woodpeckers differ from Acorns in 2 respects: (1) They do not maintain cooperative granaries. Each bird defends its own, even though the birds live in loose colonies. (2) They shell their acorns before stuffing them into crevices.

We went back to the same area several more times until Jim had all the pictures he could get, including some flight ones. Hope they come out. [The flight ones didn't.]

On Sat (10/28) the air was so clear that Mt. Lassen in the distance was irresistible, so we decided to drive up there for the day. We could only get about a mile inside the park from the north entrance, but Jim got some beautiful pixs with snow in the foreground and wind blowing a plume of snow off the crest of the peak. The rain storm we sat through a few days earlier had brought snow in the mountains and shut off the road.

The RV park itself was on a bluff above the Sacramento R. It had lots of trees, too, and 27 species of birds. We had California Quail and Golden-crowned Sparrows regularly at our feeding station. I think Jim got the best photos yet of the sparrow. He couldn't get better quality pictures than he already has, but no doubt he took a bunch anyway.

We left there Mon (10/30) and drove around Mt. Shasta on a crystal clear day and over to Sheepy Ridge Campground between Tulelake and Lower Klamath NWR's. The campground is just a gravel parking lot, but the facilities are OK and the location is ideal. We spent 3 days driving about the refuges and on nearby roads. The waterfowl were pretty timid, but the hawks were anything but timid. They were everywhere! Red-tails and Northern Harriers were the most common, but we also saw Rough-legged, Ferruginous, Bald and Golden Eagles, American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon. One stretch of back road at Lower Klamath had a Red-tail on the top crossbar of nearly every power pole, frequently two and in one instance four on a pole. (We got a photo.)

The most amusing and cooperative hawk was the immature Red-tail (fairly melanistic) at the entrance to Lower Klamath. It sat on the various informational signs and allowed approach as close as 15 ft before flying off. It was so close that Jim was able to take full-frame vertical photos of it with a 200-mm lens. It was not banded, so we're sure it is a wild bird. [Later: Rich Stallcup saw the same bird, as well as Jim's photos, and thinks it was an immature Harlan's Red-tail.]

Most of the people in the campground were duck hunters. When Jim ran into them at the rest rooms, they'd ask the usual, "How'd you do today?" and were taken aback by his response, "Six rolls by noon."

The air in the Klamath Basin was quite hazy all the while we were there. This was not helped

by the smoke from burning stubble in the fields and slash from lumbering in the mountains. The TV news from Klamath Falls had stories about pending legislation to restrict fireplace wood-burning in homes. It seemed to us that the other sources of smoke were much more significant.

The lack of wind, which prevented good scenic photography, was perfect for recording. I got good sounds of geese and Tundra Swans. Despite all the hunters in the area, gunfire was infrequent, even in the mornings. They had to stop at 1:00 p.m.

After we'd been there two days, our friends Bill and Jill Head arrived. We'd tentatively agreed to meet there, so we were happy to see them. They had been coming to our photographers' meetings for Sea and Sage. Bill was a cameraman for KABC-TV. Jill worked there, too. They just recently quit their jobs, sold their house, bought a large motor home and set off to gravel North America for a year or so. He's a novice nature photographer, but has real talent. I hope he can make it in that business, but the competition is fierce and most people can't do it full time. [After their year on the road, they settled in Atlanta, GA, where Bill does free-lance TV camera work and shoots nature photos in between jobs. They're doing very well.]

We spent all day 11/2 with Bill and Jill. They went with us in our truck. Too bad they bought such a huge motor home--and no small vehicle to tow. We feel they made a big mistake, for many of Jim's best photos were taken from the truck window with me driving.

After spending two evenings and the intervening day with the Heads, we felt that we really have a lot in common with those two. They're going to Texas, as we are. Hope we can meet again there. But neither of us have a fixed itinerary, so it may not happen. [It didn't.]

We arrived here at Lava Beds Friday a.m. (12/3) and have been here since then. No facilities except pit toilets are open in the campground, so very few other campers are here. Even last night (Sat.) there were only 2 or 3 other parties, and they're all gone now. The birds and animals give evidence of people having been here in the summer, though. They're very tame. We can wander in and out of the trailer and practically have to shuffle to keep from stepping on robins, squirrels, titmice, etc. The deer lie in the shade of the nearby trees hoping for handouts. The Solitaires swoop by within a few feet of our heads. Sort of like some "peaceable kingdom" scene. We love it.

While we were eating breakfast the first morning, we looked out the window and saw a doe approaching. With her were two deer "teenagers," about two-thirds grown. Jim decided to step outside and see if they would stay put for a photograph. When they didn't flee, he reached under the trailer and got a handful of old trail mix that he had be using to fatten up the squirrels. When he extended his hand toward the doe, she immediately trotted up to him and began eating the trail mix from his hand. The two "teenagers," following mother's cue, started to do the same. Jim said that there was a little problem with this because, while the mother had gently removed the trail mix from his hand with her lips, the "teeagers" had yet to learn the difference between trail mix and the tips of fingers. This caused him to jerk his hand back occasionally while feeding them, but of course didn't prevent him from continuing to do it.

Even as I write this, Jim is out photographing a young spike buck deer which just wandered by. He's very tame--eats out of Jim's hand and permits petting! Poor Jim can't get far enough away from the animal for a photo! We had the doe and 2 teen-agers this a.m. . . . Here comes another doe.)

Weather has turned colder and we have intermittent clouds. Was calm for recording only the first day here. Moderate wind now. Our solar cells are standing by us this stop. Don't know how long we'll stay, but Jim really wants to get the Black-billed Magpie, which has come in a couple of times.

I was just amused by a territorial dispute between two Townsend's Solitaires on the ground behind the trailer. No birdseed there, either. Each bird puffs itself up as large as possible, and they face off. Usually that's it, but this time one bird sang a few melodies. Some loud noises scared them off before I could record them. Darn!

We estimate that the nearest water is sevral miles away, and because of this we have a real gaggle of robins coming to Jim's tiny birdbath with water drip above. Four robins maximum can drink at the same time from the bath. It's funny to see them alternately dipping their heads and tilting back. It reminds Jim of a bunch of buxom dowagers sipping tea. It's all very leisurely. Several more robins

are always awaiting their turn at the water.

Yesterday, while Jim spent the day in the blind as he is doing today, I took a couple of walks. In the morning I walked around the cave loop road. Saw a N. Shrike--the first ever besides the one I saw at Katmai, AK, in 1975. (The one Pete Bloom trapped in Antelope Valley on a Sea and Sage hawk trip doesn't count, because I didn't see it before it was trapped.) This shrike was an immature and pretty far away, but there was a Loggerhead on the same walk and seen from the same distance to help clinch ID of the Northern.

The main reason for the Monument's existence is the lava caves which underlie it. They don't appeal to me. Too dark. Stairs too steep. No birds! It is interesting to read how they formed as a flow of lava froze on the surface. The hot lava kept flowing underneath until the source quit abruptly and the hot lava receded back into the earth. This left many hollow tubes--big enough for a man to walk through--under the crust. They're broken open in spots. Some of the breaks occurred during the cooling process. Others came since the flow several thousand years ago. No flow here is younger than 1000 years.

Unfortunately I wrote no more on that trip. We returned home via Hwy 395, stayed there a few days, then spent six weeks in Texas. How I wish I hadn't pooped out on my diary. I'd love to be able to relive that trip, too--and to share it with you.

CAMPGROUNDS

10/1	KOA, Seligman, AZ
10/2-10/3	Tourquoise Trail Cpgd., nr. Albuquerque, NM
10/4	Bandelier NM, NM
10/5	KOA, Bloomfield, NM
10/6-10/7	Slickrock Country Camp, Moab, UT
10/8	Butch Cassidy Camp, Selena, UT
10/9-10/10	Great Basin NP, NV
10/11	Baptist Church RV Park, Austin, NM
10/12-10/15	Panther Valley RV Park, Reno, NV
10/16	Gold Beach Camp, Hwy. 49 N of Plymouth, CA
10/17-10/20	Crane Flat Cpgd., Yosemite NP, CA
10/21-10/23	KOA-Midpines, nr. Mariposa, CA
10/24-10/26	Dingerville USA, Oroville, CA
10/27-20/29	Bend RV Park, N of Red Bluff, CA
10/30-11/2	Sheepy Ridge RV Park, W of Tulelake, CA
11/3-11/6	Lava Beds NM, CA
11/7-11/8	Honey Lake RV Park, nr. Susanville, CA
11/9	Comstock Country, Carson City, NV
11/10	Lower Lee Vining Creek Cpgd., nr. Lee Vining
11/11	Home