





FLIGHT PLAN:
THE BIRDS OF SUNNYLANDS

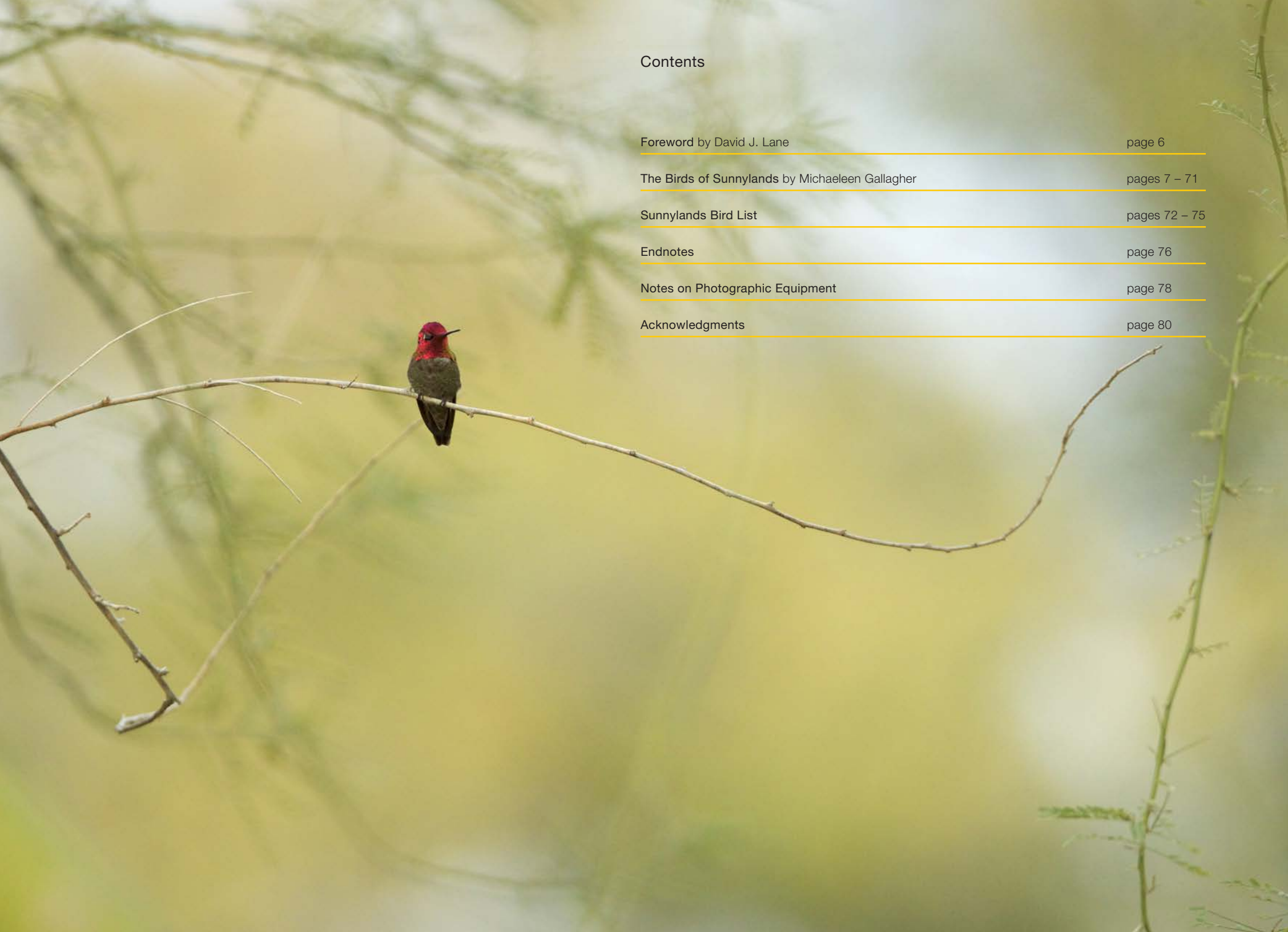
September 12, 2018, through June 2, 2019

Essay by Michaelleen Gallagher
Photography and notes by Tim Laman



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Page 1
Adult male Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) landing on a lake at the historic grounds. Mallards are common residents and nest regularly on site.
Previous pages
Adult green-backed male Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) on Desert Marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*) in the wildflower field at Sunnylands Center & Gardens.
Left
Adult Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) on Medicinal Aloe (*Aloe vera*) at Sunnylands Center & Gardens. These residents are among the most common nesters at Sunnylands.
Opposite
Adult male Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) on Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia x 'Desert Museum'*) at the Center & Gardens.



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FOREWORD

When someone mentions Sunnylands, there are many things that come to mind, and almost certainly birds would not be at the top of the list. *Flight Plan: The Birds of Sunnylands* offers a fresh look at this historic estate which has a current mission of fostering international cooperation through high-level retreats. Our usual narrative has focused on the history of the Annenbergs, the people who visited, and the cultural significance of the place. Other themes have been explained, including the role of Sunnylands in the midcentury modern architecture of California, the interior design by William Haines, the Annenbergs' art collection, and Dick Wilson's unusual golf course design. However, the constructed environment and its role in the natural ecology of this region have not been the subject of significant research until now.

This exhibition highlights the effect the Sunnylands oasis has had on birdlife in the desert. The fact that Walter Annenberg was such an enthusiastic and committed birder may come as a surprise. His desire to create a bird sanctuary informed his thinking from the start of the Sunnylands project, and his personal engagement in ensuring the success of the plantings to attract birds as well as his delight in watching birds is recorded in countless letters.



This successful businessman and diplomat was curious about birdlife wherever he was living—in London, Pennsylvania, and California. But it was here in the desert that he was able to shape the environment so that it would be a sanctuary for birds. As a result, more than 130 species of birds have been sighted at Sunnylands and are recorded in the bird list in this publication (see pages 73–75).

So, how does Walter's interest in birding inform Trust thinking today? With the problems of maintaining the Salton Sea, situated 50 miles southeast of the estate, as a major stop on the Pacific Flyway, large sites with lakes and trees like Sunnylands have become even more important to the health of migrating birds. We believe that we can achieve our mission of preserving Sunnylands' cultural landscape and simultaneously support bird migration and environmental health.

National Geographic photographer Tim Laman was the perfect professional to capture the breadth of birdlife on the estate in spectacularly beautiful images. The exhibition features his photographs in which the birds' habits are observed, their connections to habitat are visible, and their movements are captured. Visitors can catch glimpses of the vibrant birdlife at Sunnylands and appreciate these feathered visitors and residents in the way that Walter Annenberg did.

At Sunnylands, we spend much of our time being grounded—trying to solve real-life problems in practical ways. The estate provides a serene landscape for those conversations, encouraging visitors and retreat participants to let their imaginations soar and their dreams take flight.

David J. Lane

President, The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands

Left

Leonore Annenberg with *Watch Bird*. Birds appear as the subject of numerous art objects at Sunnylands, including this surprising bird constructed of beads and watches by Finnish artist Birger Kaipiainen in the 1960s. This sculpture is currently exhibited in the president's office.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.8122, Photo by Mary Frampton, date unknown.

Opposite

Adult male Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) with blooming Blue Elf Aloe (*Aloe x 'Blue Elf'*).

FLIGHT PLAN: THE BIRDS OF SUNNYLANDS





Opposite
Adult male Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) on a lake at the historic estate. Hundreds of ducks stop to rest on the lakes during spring and fall migrations.

INTRODUCTION

When Sunnylands opened in 2012, the creation of public programs as a way to share the Annenberg legacy was part of the mission of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. Tours on the estate and theme-based programs for families, artists, and history enthusiasts introduced the historic house, art collection, and legacy of Walter and Leonore Annenberg to visitors.

The plans for the Trust had been finalized by the Annenbergs in 2001. Following the death of Walter in 2002 and Leonore in 2009, Sunnylands began its transition from a private residence to The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, guided by The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. The historic practices for collection maintenance became museum-level conservation practices, and the landscape decisions took on climatic concerns that did not exist when the estate was first built. Collections including art, correspondence, photographs, and books began to be cataloged. For the landscape, historic preservation and sustainability considerations included new concerns regarding water limitations and environmental conditions related to climate change.



Far left
An astute observer, Walter Annenberg customarily carried binoculars.
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.5738, photographer unknown, April 1987.

Left
Sharing in Walter's birdwatching passion, Leonore Annenberg often carried binoculars.
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.8123, photographer unknown, July 19, 1994.

The landscapes of the grounds within the Trust's 400-acre holdings include three distinct ecosystems. The 200-acre historic estate (1966) contains rolling hills of turf, trees, shrubs, and a system of lakes connected by streams that reflect the landscape aesthetic of the 1960s when the estate was built. The Center & Gardens (2012) and administrative campus (2017) add desert natives and arid-adapted species in a water-conscious landscape aesthetic. The undeveloped acreage remains a blow-sand desert that reflects the native landscape of the Coachella Valley floor.

This combination of distinctly different ecosystems offered opportunities for staff to engage in discussions of landscape management, historic preservation, and sustainability. As part of that discussion, the extent to which wildlife occupied the property began to be apparent. Birds were the starting point for wildlife documentation in 2012 with expert-led bird walks and tours. These weekly programs provided an additional way to interpret the space. For the public, these programs granted access with a wildlife perspective, and for Sunnylands, they established a mechanism for documenting and producing a bird list of more than 130 species (see pages 73–75).



Above
Over 4,000 visitors have participated in expert-guided bird tours and walks at Sunnylands. Their weekly observations helped establish the official Sunnylands Bird List.
Photo by Phil Channing, 2017.

Right
Adult Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) displaying shoulder coloration from which its name is derived.

Opposite
This adult male Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), in flight over a lake at the estate, is an uncommon winter migrant at Sunnylands.





The collections and education staff began to recognize that there was an opportunity to explore and share this “collection” that included some surprising species like the Vermillion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), and Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). Questions about the intent of the landscape design at Sunnylands and the inclusion of birds as a repeated motif in both exterior and interior design plans exposed a larger historical context for the Annenbergs’ interest in birds and suggested a deliberate cultivation of a space for birds within their own lives.

A list was created of all art and objects that were bird inclusive in the Annenberg collection. Correspondence, receipts, and books that referenced birds were identified and reviewed. A story began to unfold that preceded the Trust’s contemporary interest in environmental documentation. The research showed a decades-long intent to create habitat at each of the Annenbergs’ homes that was inviting and deliberately planned to be hospitable to human and feathered visitors alike.

In 2016, the Trust commissioned *National Geographic* photographer Tim Laman to begin seasonal documentation of the bird species at Sunnylands. Through Laman’s lens the current bird list has been documented in vivid color and detail. These images, when merged with archival resources, illustrate the story that is told in the exhibition, *Flight Plan: The Birds of Sunnylands*.



Far left
Adult female Vermillion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) perched on a Meiji crane sculpture at the historic grounds. These flycatchers are found year-round at Sunnylands.

Left
The Annenbergs placed this porcelain eagle in all three residences.
Volkstedt Eagle, circa 1925.
Arthur Storch (1870 – 1947)
Porcelain
Volkstedt porcelain factory, Thuringia, Germany
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.3954.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Opposite
Adult American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) on a lake at the estate. Ducks in the distance include Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) and American Wigeon (*Anas Americana*).



SANCTUARY

In the archives at Sunnylands, among letters to and from presidents and royalty, is correspondence sent from Walter Annenberg to A. Quincy Jones, the architect who designed Sunnylands. In a letter dated May 20, 1963, Walter wrote:

“Dear Quincy:

*It occurred to me that you would like to see the enclosed copy because it is my hope to incorporate a bird sanctuary in my California acreage.”*¹

A copy of this letter was also sent to Dick Wilson, designer of the Sunnylands golf course. Included in both letters is the following notation: “Enclosed copy of letter, same date, to Dr. Arthur A. Allen, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.”² Dr. Allen was the first titled professor of ornithology in the United States. Walter had read a 1962 *National Geographic* article written by Dr. Allen entitled “Sapsucker Woods.”

Retired at the time of this letter, Dr. Allen was well known for his ability to engage professionals and amateurs alike. Walter regularly connected with the foremost experts in areas of his interest, so Dr. Allen was an obvious choice for discussing his desire to increase bird activity at his soon-to-be-built California estate.



PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Male Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) Portrait

Hummingbirds like this male Costa's are tiny, so it is a challenge to get a close portrait. I had to be within five or six feet of the bird to get this shot, even with my biggest lens. But the great thing about hummingbirds is that they are not afraid of us slow-moving humans. So I located one of his favorite perches and moved my whole big camera and tripod a little closer each time he left. He returned to the perch briefly about once every five minutes, and over the course of an hour or so, I worked my way in close enough for this shot. What I like about it is the way it reveals detail that is hard to see with your naked eye of this bird that rarely sits still.

Left

Ornithologist Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and his wife Williamina accompany Walter Annenberg on a birdwatching excursion while visiting Sunnylands.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.5026, photographer unknown, circa 1976.





PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Hummingbird and Moon

It was early October, and as usual, I was out before sunrise on the grounds at Sunnylands. As I passed a row of Cape Honeysuckle (Tecoma capensis) bushes where I had often photographed Costa's Hummingbird (Calypte costae) and Anna's Hummingbirds (Calypte anna), I noticed the full moon beginning to set behind them just as the glow of dawn cast a little light on the flowers. I knew the hummingbirds would be starting to forage, and I had the idea for this shot, an Anna's hummingbird silhouette against the moon. The trick was to get a hummingbird in the right spot before the moon disappeared. In this case I found some flowers that lined up with the moon, got ready to shoot, and just hoped that as the hummingbirds began their foraging rounds, they would come to that cluster of flowers. My efforts were rewarded, and I captured this unique shot. For many of my best images, like this one, I see the shot in my mind first, and then try to execute it.

In his letter to Dr. Allen, Walter requested written resources or professional contacts who could advise him about ways to build Sunnylands so that it would “afford aid and comfort to the birds native to the region....”³ Walter stated that the property would encompass 200 acres and that 15 to 25 acres would be dedicated as a “sanctuary.” There is no evidence of a response from Dr. Allen who died eight months after this note was written.

This communication is one of the earliest between the Annenbergs, Jones, and Wilson as they began the design process for Sunnylands. Although it is a simple planning note, it provides significant insight into the Annenbergs' involvement in the aesthetic design of their surroundings. It is clear through correspondence and interviews with those close to the Annenbergs that Leonore had an avid interest in flowers and gardens, while Walter enjoyed the sights and sounds of birds.

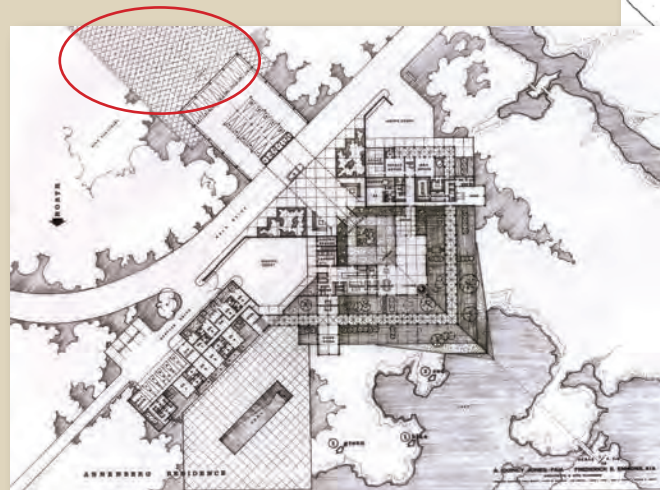


Above

Leonore Annenberg included cloisonné incense burners in the shape of cranes in a table setting.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.3461, Photo by Gloria Etting, March 1968.

In an architectural drawing of Sunnylands dated August 1963, A. Quincy Jones included an aviary that was to be built just northeast of the historic house.⁴ Walter had used the term “bird sanctuary” a second time in a letter sent to Jones on July 26, 1963: “P.S. please remember that I hope to fit into the property a unique cactus garden as well as a bird sanctuary.”⁵ This repeated use of the term “sanctuary” may have been interpreted by Jones as an aviary building, but it seems that a physical structure was not what Walter intended. Instead he likely wanted to consider landscape decisions that offered resources for wild birds. There was no need to build an enclosure in which to house birds when the estate could provide sanctuary for migrating and resident species. Jones’ correspondence to Walter on September 16, 1963, referenced a phone call in which this was clarified: “In regard to your telephone call last Friday, it is assumed that I should wait to hear from Mr. David Anderson [Sunnylands’ first estate manager] concerning the coordination of landscape design between this office and Mr. Dick Wilson. The plot plan, floor plan, and elevations of the project are being sent to Mr. Wilson as we discussed in our last meeting. As you requested, I will restudy the guest room, game room, and house relationships, as well as delete the aviary.”⁶ The aviary was removed in later architectural drawings.



Above left

This A. Quincy Jones architectural drawing with an aviary building included (shown ringed in red) was delivered to the Annenbergs in September 1963.

Permission to reproduce: Hillary, Michael, and Timothy Jones.

Above right

A later architectural drawing in which the aviary building was removed per Walter’s instructions and clarification of his desire for a sanctuary as part of the landscape design.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.1099, November 30, 1963.

Opposite

Adult female Costa’s Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) in flight next to Red Hesperaloe (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) at Sunnylands Center & Gardens.





In 1977, years after Sunnylands was built, Walter and wildlife photographer and writer, George Harrison, who was a managing editor of *National Wildlife* magazine, corresponded regarding increasing resources for attracting more birds to Sunnylands. Walter invited Harrison to visit Sunnylands in order to better advise him and stated: "I don't want to attract any Canada Geese. Seriously, we are on the migratory passage between British Columbia and Mexico and we do get a number of lovely water birds in my ponds; I have developed a stand of tules which attract the magnificent Yellow-headed Blackbird each spring and they are a joy to watch; we have endless multi-shaded finches and plenty of quail."⁷

Walter was aware of how Sunnylands' location in the desert could play a role in offering respite to birds traveling the Pacific Flyway, a major migration corridor that extends through North and South America. He wanted to provide what was needed to make the estate attractive not only to the native resident species, but those traveling thousands of miles in migration.

Right

The Yellow-headed Blackbird, referenced in correspondence as one of Walter's favorites at Sunnylands, is not on the current bird list as it has not been seen at the estate during the duration of documentation of the current list.

Yellow-headed Blackbird, date unknown.

Edward Marshall Boehm (1913 – 1969)

Porcelain

The Boehm Showroom LLC

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10523.

Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Opposite

Adult male Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) with wings spread on a Mesquite branch (*Prosopis hybrid*) at Sunnylands Center & Gardens.



THE PACIFIC FLYWAY

Sunnylands, located in the Coachella Valley, has the good fortune of being situated on a major North American migration corridor—the Pacific Flyway. Walter Annenberg was aware of Sunnylands’ location on the migration route, and referenced it in correspondence.

In the United States this flyway passes over states west of the Continental Divide including Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Western portions of Canada and Mexico are also part of this flyway, which stretches from the Bering Strait to Patagonia, and is used by more than 350 species of birds on annual migration flights.

The Pacific Flyway is particularly fragile in relation to water availability. The 2017 EPA *National Water Quality Inventory: Report to Congress*⁸ rated the biological condition of wetlands in the west at 27.2% in good condition, 26.2% in fair condition, and 46.1% in poor condition. Coupled with more than 90% total wetlands loss in California, more birds will be forced to seek out man-made water sources.

The Salton Sea, California’s largest lake, is the result of human error. In 1905, an accidental diversion of the Colorado River failed, flooding the basin for two years before repairs were made and the water was brought back under control. Two decades later it was designated as a catch basin for agricultural wastewater. Situated approximately 50 miles southeast of Sunnylands, this artifical lake now serves as a major rest stop providing food and habitat for birds traveling the flyway. On route to or from the Salton Sea, they pass over the Coachella Valley and Sunnylands, and while many of the natural water sources along the flyway are in decline, man-made sites like Sunnylands have seen an increase in birds stopping for water, food, and respite.



Opposite
Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) in flight display at the historic estate. These birds often perch on the iconic pink pyramidal roof.



I absolutely love to take guests on the estate bird tours. Being able to see so many water birds in the desert is a real treat: Snowy and Great Egrets, Great Blue and Green Herons, Belted Kingfishers, Pied-billed Grebes, and a number of ducks: Ring-necked, Mallard, Ruddy, Redhead, Northern Shoveler, and Canvasback.

On every tour I do, I hope that everyone will get to see, really see, up close the ‘Sunnylands Surprise,’ a Vermilion Flycatcher! The male Vermilion is truly a sight to behold. I always appreciate how this little guy will sit out in the open, often in the sun, so we all can enjoy his colors.

Of course, when going birding, one never can tell what will turn up. It is the hunt and its unexpected pleasure that entice us. On the estate tours our little group goes at our own pace, so we get to know one another and take the time to get good looks at the birds that we encounter.

There is always the possibility of seeing some or all of the raptors that call Sunnylands home. Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, and Cooper’s Hawks along with the American Kestrel are most common, but we also see occasional Prairie Falcons and Swainson’s Hawks. It’s not unusual for migrating Turkey Vultures to overnight on the estate in groups of 50 or more.

White Pelicans are another species that is thrilling to see. Watching them wheeling against our famous blue skies is something most people will never forget.

I especially appreciate the way the plantings are arranged with more of the succulents on the outside of the circular path, and the other desert species, including wildflowers, at the Center. Almost any day I walk there, I have trouble keeping track of how many Costa’s Hummingbirds, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers, and House Finches I encounter. A special treat is the endangered Bell’s Vireo which is easy to hear if it is singing, but is always hard to see.

Frank Sterrett
Bird guide

Quite a good day this morning out on the estate, beautiful and one of many recently. Spotted Sandpiper was a nice surprise. The lone Cedar Waxwing was as well, although we think he may have had several friends.

As I was going to my car I heard the moaning of a Greater Roadrunner. Found him in a leafless tree with a lizard in his bill. I was able to point him out to the garden tour group, which was a big hit.

Mark Leggett
Bird guide



Just down the Pacific Flyway from Sunnylands is the Salton Sea: one of the most important stopover and wintering sites for millions of migratory birds in the western hemisphere. In 2018, water transfers began to shrink the Salton Sea significantly, altering the fragile ecosystem which will ultimately cause the fishery to collapse. Nearby lakes like the ones at Sunnylands (especially ones with fish) will become an even more important option for Salton Sea avian refugees in search of suitable habitat.

Kurt Leuschner
Bird guide



A captured quiet moment for an adult Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) hunting in a lake at the estate.





HOSPITALITY

Anyone who has been enchanted by birds inevitably falls into certain routine practices and the Annenbergs were no exception. This included making decisions to enhance habitat, increase bird-watching opportunities, and maintain feeding stations in order to attract a wide range of feathered visitors.

In a 1956 letter to American hotelier, Conrad Hilton, Walter shared details about a large multi-chamber bird feeder at Inwood, his Pennsylvania estate: “‘The Feathered Hilton’ is the latest bird feeding station on the grounds at my home in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, and is so named because it is the latest and most luxurious. In the first compartment there is an ample supply of suet. The second compartment contains bread and cake crumbs sautéed in deep fat. The third compartment contains cracked nuts (peanuts, almonds, walnuts and pecans). The fourth compartment, scratch feed and corn, and the fifth compartment, sunflower seeds. We are now doing a thriving business with woodpeckers, jays, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, bobwhites, thrashers, robins, cardinals, juncos, finches and sparrows.”⁹

The Annenbergs also suffered the same challenges that other bird enthusiasts share as Walter explained to Hilton: “In case you are curious about the circular disks just below the feeding compartments, they are the only practical means of keeping the squirrels from getting at the feed.”¹⁰ The hospitality shown to feathered visitors appears to have rivaled the level of hospitality offered to human guests.

Walter expressed a feeling of caretaker responsibility to ornithologist S. Dillon Ripley, the Secretary of the Smithsonian from 1964 to 1984, in a January 19, 1977, letter: “At my home in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, which I left last week I have several bird feeders out, the largest of which carries the name, ‘The Feathered Hilton,’ this particular feeder is about six feet long and has several compartments with different bird food. I also have a ‘bird buffet’

Previous pages, left

Adult White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) in a lake at the historic property. This is just one of the species that surprise visitors.

Previous pages, right

A commonly sighted adult Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) scratching its face at the estate.

Above

The Feathered Hilton’s multi-compartment design attracted a variety of birds for viewing at the Annenbergs’ estate at Inwood.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.4195, photographer unknown, January 4, 1956.

Opposite

A captured sunset view with the silhouette of a Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) in an olive tree (*Olea ssp.*) at the historic estate.

and a little stone receptacle to hold water, all of which are carefully watched by a faithful old gardener who has been with me for several years... I get a certain comfort out of providing for these feathered friends.”¹¹

Walter was also an astute observer of the birds on his property. When he discovered that three species of flycatcher existed in the cactus garden at Sunnylands, he inquired of Ripley why they would occupy the same space, since they provided the same services, and questioned the reasoning behind their coloration differences.



Ripley, appreciative of the opportunity to discuss birds, responded to the inquiry in great detail: “You ask why the Creator made three species of flycatcher, Wied’s Crested Flycatcher [current classification Brown-crested Flycatcher], the Ash-throated [Flycatcher], and the Black Phoebe, who all spend so much time feeding around your lovely terrace of cactus. This is a significant observation because it goes to the heart of ecology. The study of the environment brings us up short immediately to the awesome realization of the diversity of climates, even so called micro-climates, as they affect the living space for all creation on our planet. When you see three species of flycatchers, all doing the same things at one spot, right in front of your dressing room window, you must realize that the Creator actually has allowed evolution in the case of the flycatchers to adapt several different species to slightly different niches within the same geographical areas. The Ash-throated [Flycatcher] and the Black Phoebe both range widely as your bird guide volume will tell you, from Oregon south into Latin America, but they have different habitat preferences. The Ash-throated [Flycatcher] prefers to live in the neighborhood of the saguaro belt in Arizona for example, or over into desert habitat in the adjacent states. The Black Phoebe breeds near water, along the banks of streams, cottonwoods, near golf courses, and town environments. Thus at ‘Sunnylands,’ where you have created a miracle in the desert, you have provided an environment artificially where these two species, otherwise separated by habitat preference in a delicate balance with each other, come together. So mankind influences and bends the environment to his will.

Above

The only desert garden original to the estate is the cactus garden that can be viewed from the master bedroom. Today, additional arid plants and succulents have been introduced at the cottages.

Photo by Ken Hayden, 2014.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Western Grebe

During this project, I often roamed the property at Sunnylands with a golf cart loaded with my camera equipment scouting for birds. One day, I spotted this single Western Grebe (Aechmophorus occidentalis) in one of the ponds. It was the first individual of this species I had seen, and I really wanted to get some shots of it. When approaching wild birds, especially in the open where they can clearly see you, they are less likely to be disturbed if you keep yourself low. So first I slowly walked toward the pond, but as I got closer, I switched to a crouch. I got some shots from a kneeling position, and then as I moved even closer, I switched to an army crawl, lying on my belly, scooting my camera in front of me toward the pond until I was right on its edge. The bird still hadn't spooked, and was diving and foraging around the pond. I was starting to get some good shots but still waited for a closer approach. It was then that I heard the sprinklers on the fairway come on one by one, getting ever closer to me. I had a choice. It was either run for it and scare away the bird to stay dry, or put the camera under my body and get soaked. I did the latter, and after the dousing, got some really nice close views of this grebe, including this one of him peering into the depths.





PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

American Wigeon Sleeping

For some of my photography of waterfowl on the ponds at Sunnylands, I used a blind positioned along the shoreline where I could hide and wait for birds to come. On this day, a group of American Wigeon (Anas americana) arrived, but then they didn't do much of anything interesting, mostly just resting. I kept following them around the pond with my lens, none-the-less, hoping for an interesting image to develop. The birds were drifting slowly around, passing through different ripples and reflections, even while they had their heads tucked in. When they got to this area, I noticed how the shapes formed by the ripples in the water matched the bird's feathers, and also how the green color in their plumage matched the green in the reflection. Sometimes it can be these small elements that make a picture something special.

Right

Cactus Wren and Prickly Pear, date unknown.

Dorothy Doughty (1882 – 1962)

Porcelain

Royal Worcester

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10525.

Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

“The [Weid's] Crested Flycatcher is a 'casual' to Southern California. In other words it does not normally range so far west of Arizona or New Mexico, where it prefers cactus stands or thick scrub near streams. It does not breed in Southern California so far as I can recollect, and so may be a transient in your area. [Walter may also have been looking at a Say's Phoebe which would have looked like the Weid's Crested Flycatcher and was more likely to have been in the region at that time.] Transients can be tolerated where there is not a question of pressure for food. Often closely related bird species can co-occur on their winter, non-breeding ranges which does not bring pressure to bear on their nesting ranges. It is at nesting time that the real territory pressure becomes apparent, and the miracle of animal diversity reveals itself in the precise adjustment of species to habitat, even with minute differences in the same general range. 'Sunnylands' like Noah's Ark, has allowed these species to come together temporarily at no risk to their future as species, each able to bend slightly with the times and circumstances. So you have provided a new micro-climate for them.”¹²



One of Walter’s favorite birds is also mentioned in correspondence. In a letter dated May 7, 1986, Ripley wrote about visiting friends in Texas: “I was delighted to come across Yellow-headed Blackbirds and it made me think of you and the delight with which you always showed me your favorite birds at ‘Sunnylands.’ I hope they are still giving you great pleasure.”¹³ To which Walter responded: “Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Sunnylands are in full force this winter and they continue to give me great joy.”¹⁴

Ripley’s letters reveal a friendship that developed beyond professional inquiry—a common occurrence in Walter’s relationships with other bird enthusiasts. Ripley enjoyed and appreciated Walter’s interest and observations of the birds he encountered. He wrote to Walter that it was indeed a compliment that he offered an opportunity to discuss matters of ornithological interest, which Ripley enjoyed as a respite from the administrative challenges of heading an institution like the Smithsonian.¹⁵

Below

The Annenbergs’ extensive collection of books included many for bird identification and natural history information.

Sunnylands Collection.

Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.



PHOTOGRAPHER’S NOTE

Pied-billed Grebe with Reflection

When photographing birds, I pay a lot of attention not only to my main subject, the bird, but also to the background. This image of the Pied-billed Grebe (Podilymbus podiceps) among beautiful reflections is a perfect example of how the background can make the shot. There was only one section of the pond where the trees lit by the morning sun were creating this brilliant reflection, and I saw how spectacular it could be if the grebe were to surface there. So what I did was both wait for the grebe to move to that section of the pond, but also keep adjusting my position to line up the reflection with the bird. Fortunately, I was able to get the elements to line up and capture the image I envisioned.







At Sunnylands the Ambassador loved to observe the hummingbird feeder and watch the hummingbirds eating. One hummingbird in particular would muscle the other birds away until he had finished. The Ambassador named him ‘Mussolini the dictator’ which amused me.

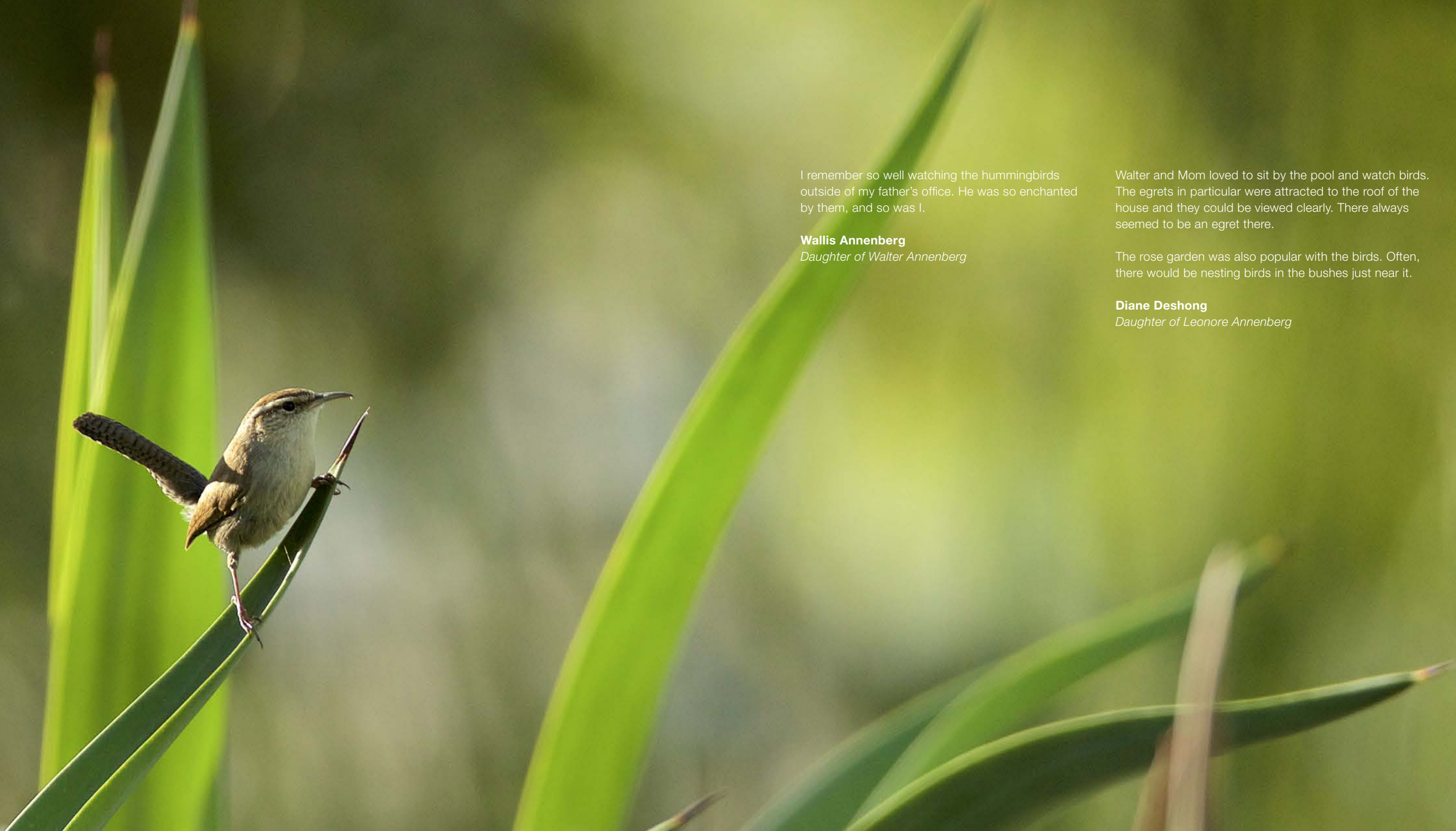
The Ambassador loved his birds, both at Sunnylands and Inwood, where he had a bird feeder called the Feathered Hilton installed. It was erected in the front yard so he could observe it as he dressed in the morning. He placed large plates on the support to stop the squirrels from climbing up and eating the bird food. The bird microphone worked so very well! The Ambassador enjoyed listening to the birds as he got dressed in the morning.

When he and Mrs. Annenberg went golfing, he always took his binoculars so he could see the birds up close and he brought a book, *The Only Bird Book You Need*, by David Sibley.

Michael Comerford
House Manager, Sunnylands

Previous pages, left
An adult female Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and her brood explore. Mallards commonly nest around lakes at the historic estate.

Previous pages, right
An adult American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) stops to rest in a lake at the estate. These sea birds increasingly stop on their migration between the Salton Sea and the California coastline.



I remember so well watching the hummingbirds outside of my father’s office. He was so enchanted by them, and so was I.

Wallis Annenberg
Daughter of Walter Annenberg

Walter and Mom loved to sit by the pool and watch birds. The egrets in particular were attracted to the roof of the house and they could be viewed clearly. There always seemed to be an egret there.

The rose garden was also popular with the birds. Often, there would be nesting birds in the bushes just near it.

Diane Deshong
Daughter of Leonore Annenberg

I accompanied them on an Alaska cruise aboard the *Compana*. Walter wanted to see the Bald Eagles, which were endangered at the time. Everyone was very intense about watching the birds on the way to Juno. If one was spotted, they would all grab their binoculars to see it.

Walter liked to read and had several books on birds. I remember he liked cardinals and robins at Inwood, and hummingbirds at Sunnylands.

Elizabeth Kabler
Daughter of Leonore Annenberg



A prolific hunter, a Bewick’s Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) perches on Smooth-skinned Agave (*Agave desmettiana*).

BASIL AND WALTER

Another friendship developed between Walter and renowned avian artist Basil Ede (1931 – 2016). Their correspondence, which was discovered in the archives at Sunnylands, is extensive. It reveals a relationship that was initiated through a business venture for a commissioned art project.

Basil Ede was a British painter known for his work in avian portraiture. His precision in watercolor and later in oil resulted in comparisons of his work to John James Audubon. What had begun early in his life as a casual pastime grew to become a lifelong career. Already well known in Britain for his dramatic style that considered the avian subject, ornithological details, and their ecological placement, Ede rose to prominence in the international art world with a 1964 exhibition of his watercolors at the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He was the first living artist to be invited to the National Collection of Fine Art for a one-man exhibition.¹⁶

Ede broadened his notoriety in the United States with the publication of *Wild Birds of America: The Art of Basil Ede*. This book was being produced in part during the same years that Ede was painting the Annenbergs' collection, and they discussed it often. It was commissioned by Chairman/CEO for Gulf States Paper Corporation Jack Warner, and included 103 plates, along with sketches and field notes, and a foreword provided by Walter: "As a long-time admirer of Basil Ede and the quality of his artistry, I am gratified that Jack Warner, chairman of the board of Gulf States Paper Corporation, has had the good taste and judgment to assemble much of Basil's work. What is further gratifying to me is the fact that an increasing number of people will have the opportunity to learn about Basil Ede's talent through this book."¹⁷



Above

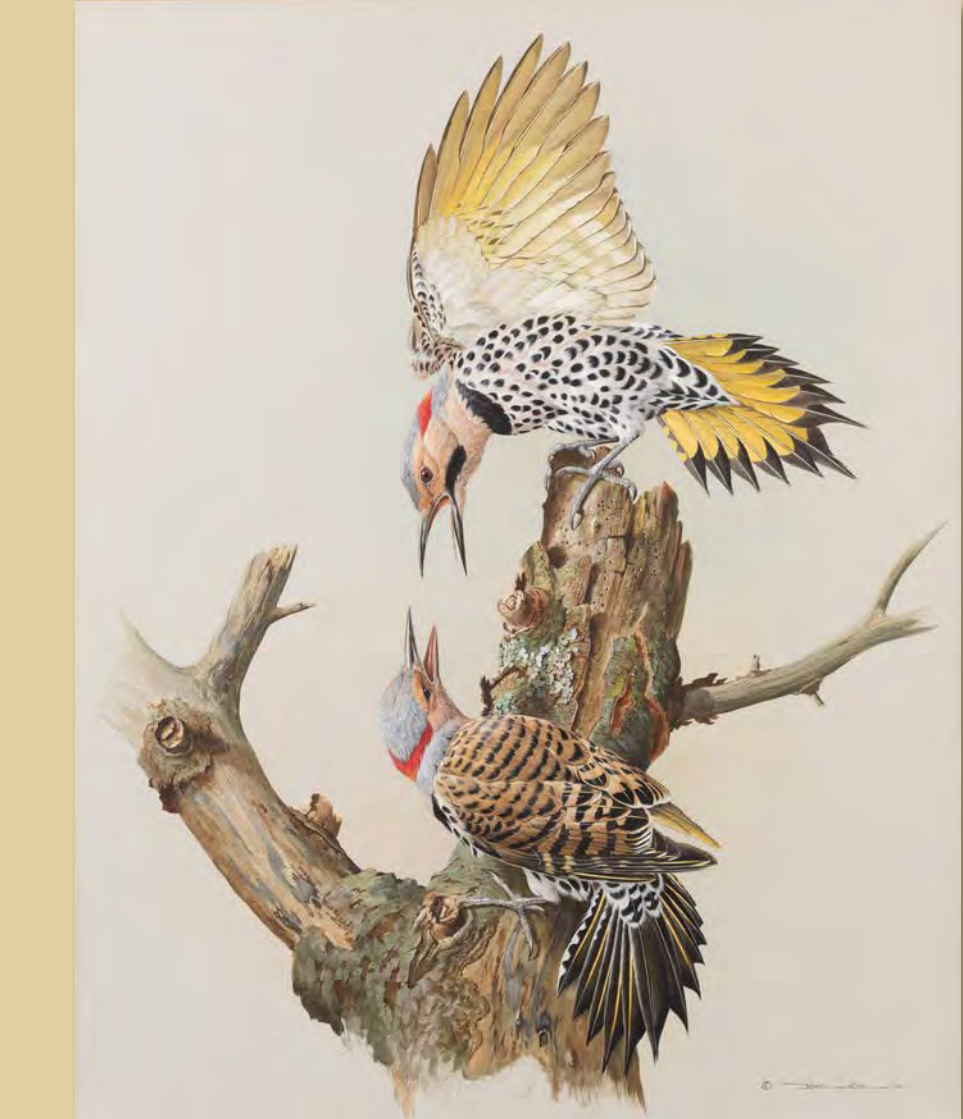
Portrait of Basil Ede, date unknown.

Courtesy of The Ede Collection.

Opposite

This adult Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) perches on Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia* x 'Desert Museum') at Sunnylands Center & Gardens.





Walter was drawn to Ede paintings because of their realistic representation of birds and Ede's skill in bringing the subjects to life on paper and canvas. Throughout their correspondence Walter complimented Ede's work and shared his own views and affection for birds. In a letter dated October 1, 1971, Walter shared his passion for birdwatching and his favorite British subject which he first observed while in England. "I am a confirmed bird watcher, and my particular favorite here at Winfield House is the Great Titmouse [Great Tit (*Parus major*)]."¹⁸ Ede sent Walter the catalog from his second New York exhibition at Kennedy Galleries which opened October 6, 1971. From this exhibition, Walter purchased his first Ede painting, a watercolor of male and female yellow-shafted, Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). This was followed by the commission of ten paintings to be displayed at the Annenbergs' Inwood estate in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. The collection included Walter's favorite birds of Eastern Pennsylvania, all of which could be seen on the estate. At Ede's request, Walter also offered recommendations for the Annenbergs' favorite trees and shrubs to complement the birds. This list included the Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Common Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*).¹⁹

BIRDS OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA (IN PAIRS)

Finches and Grosbeaks:	1. Cardinals *	2. Purple Finches *	3. American Goldfinches *	4. White-throated Sparrows *
Chicadees:	5. Black-capped Chickadees *	6. Carolina Chickadees *	7. Tufted Titmice *	
Nuthatches:	8. White-breasted Nuthatches *	9. Red-breasted Nuthatches *		
Woodpeckers:	10. Pileated Woodpeckers *	11. Hairy Woodpeckers *	12. Downy Woodpeckers *	
Thrushes:	13. American Robins *	14. Wood Thrushes *	15. Hermit Thrushes *	16. Eastern Bluebirds *
Crows and Jays:	17. Blue Jays *	18. Common Grackles *		
Swallows:	19. Tree Swallow *			
Kingfishers:	20. Belted Kingfishers *			
Owls:	21. Screech Owls *	22. Great Horned Owls *		
Game Birds:	23. Ring-necked Pheasant *	24. Ruffed Grouse *		
Waterfowl:	25. Canada Goose *			

Baltimore Orioles

*I feel this gives a good selection of both large and small birds. I have not included Warblers but there are many colorful members of this family which could be considered. Those marked * I think are essential in a collection of Pennsylvania birds.*

Far left
Northern Flicker
(Yellow-shafted), 1972.
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10530.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Left
An early list of East Coast birds
to be painted by Basil Ede.
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.4255,
November 16, 1971.

Opposite
House Finches (*Haemorrhous mexicanus*) take cover in Creosote (*Larrea tridentate*) in the wildflower field at Sunnylands Center & Gardens.

The process of selecting the birds to paint and even the manner in which they were painted was highly collaborative between Walter and Ede. The first list for consideration included Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapilla*), Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*), Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*), Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Eastern Screech Owl (*Otis asio*), Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*), Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus cochicus*), White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*), and Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*).²⁰ In order to keep the commissioned works to the ten plates Walter desired, the list of birds and how they would be displayed on canvas was refined over months of correspondence prior to the series execution, and on two occasions during execution of a painting.

The first recommendation showed both Walter and Ede’s desire to include ornithological exploration in this series. Ede wrote to Walter: “I would wish you to consider including the Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) in the Black-capped Chickadee painting. I can visualize a nice composition of the two pairs (practically alike species) which will show the technical difference on the one painting. Both species occur in Eastern Pennsylvania but are usually taken to be one and the same bird.”²¹ Walter replied positively to the suggestion, but noted: “I had been unaware that the Carolina Chickadee occurs in Eastern Pennsylvania but I assume that you have carefully researched this.”²²

Right
The painting of chickadees was meant to display subtle differences between the Black-capped and Carolina Chickadee species.

Chickadees in Leafy Branches, 1972.
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10536.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Opposite
An adult female Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) perches on the trunk of an olive tree (*Olea ssp.*) on the historic property.





PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Verdin in Backlight

Photography is all about light, and the direction of that light has a huge effect on the atmosphere of an image. When photographing birds, I like experimenting with the effects of light from all different directions to create a variety of moods in my photographs, but backlighting is one of my favorites. For this shot, I purposely chose my position looking into this garden of flowering aloe almost directly toward the setting sun. When the Verdin (Auriparis flaviceps) came and perched among these stems, the pattern created was beautiful, and I knew I had a special image. Besides the lighting, another key to making this image work was using a very shallow depth of field to create the pattern of beautiful blurred highlights in the background.

Ede had painted both Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers for the 1964 exhibition and wished to repeat the combination, but possibly predicting that Walter would not want a copy of the original, he assured him: "I visualize a much more dramatic composition for a new picture."²³ This too met with Walter's approval.

Whereas much of their discussion was how to combine species into single paintings in order to keep important species and to highlight their most distinct features, some omissions became necessary. Ede suggested the removal of the Belted Kingfisher, as he did not think they would be common at Wynnewood. In a 1972 letter, Walter confirmed he had seen them and recalled memories of bird watching in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania: "Regarding the Kingfisher, I have already seen them around my property in Wynnewood but they are a handsome and exciting bird to watch along the shoreline of a lake. My father had a large estate up in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania and I was ever fascinated watching the belted Kingfishers in action...."²⁴ Walter didn't insist on their inclusion and they ultimately disappeared from the list.



Left
Downey Woodpecker and Hairy Woodpecker.
Woodpeckers, 1972
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10531.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Another omission was the Canada Goose, which was replaced by the Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). This was another suggestion by Ede who reasoned that the mockingbirds were common and geese were seasonal. His suggestion may have been attributed to his preference to paint in scale. In extensive field studies, Ede combined methods of recording using both drawings and photography. He then visited ornithological collections where he took accurate measurements and noted details not visible in the field. In regard to the Canada Goose, he suggested that he could, at a later time, paint it in true scale on a larger canvas. Walter delayed making that decision as he thought the geese, though migrant, were notable. This collection was painted on canvas measuring 25 x 20 inches; the Canada Goose would have been out of scale with the others. This may also explain the disappearance of the larger Great Horned Owl from the list while the smaller Eastern Screech Owl, though altered, remained in the final collection.

The execution of the Eastern Screech Owl painting exemplified the close collaboration between Walter and Ede, and how strongly Walter, as the collector, felt about the way in which the birds were represented. In March 1972, just prior to the execution of that painting, Walter sent Ede an *Audubon* magazine that included a “spread” of owls.²⁵ Ede replied that it was an “extraordinarily competent study which manages to capture the somewhat uncanny feel of these birds... Their activities are of immense benefit to man and they can be regarded as one of our best allies.”²⁶

The painting of the Eastern Screech Owl that ended up in the final collection was the result of a second rendering. Ede first painted the owl pair in their gray plumage. These owls have two feather colorations—rufous/brown and gray. Ede made a choice, but he had not consulted Walter. It turned out that Walter preferred the rufous coloration, so Ede repainted the owls. There is only one other reference to an alteration of a painting already in process or completed. That was a request to build up the breast feathers or to provide a “fattening” of the American Robins, to which Ede complied.²⁷ The final painting with alterations and an image of the original before alterations were completed still exist.



Right
Final painting of Screech Owls.
Two Screech Owls, 1972.
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10528.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.
Opposite

An adult male Common Yellow Throat (*Geothlypis trichas*) perches on varieties of rush and iris at the edge of a lake at the estate.





Opposite

An adult male Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) perches on an olive tree (*Olea ssp.*) at the historic grounds. This species is commonly found hunting from tree groves on the edge of fairways.



Left

A Christmas card with a British Great Tit created by Basil Ede for the Annenbergs. This bird was Walter's favorite to watch at the bird feeder at Winfield House in London, England.

Great British Tit and Snowberry, 1971.
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.4432.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.



Below

At Walter's request, the Titmice appear with the Nuthatches in the final painting seen here.

Nuthatches and Two Titmice, 1972.
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10537.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Ede was aware that one bird Walter wanted on the list was his favorite bird at the Ambassador's residence in London—the Great Tit. Early in the commissioning process, Ede sent Walter a Christmas card of the bird with a background of Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus laevigatus*). Walter replied that he intended to frame and display it. He did regret he would lose the thoughtful inscription from Ede and his wife, Mary. Walter wrote: "Not only do I like the Great Titmouse's coloration and personality, but his grace of flight has a certain style. Incidentally, he is one of the most vigorous of my feathered friends at the nut feeder outside my dressing room window."²⁸ The variety of titmouse in Eastern Pennsylvania would be the Tufted Titmouse. Per Ede's recommendation it was ultimately painted with White-breasted Nuthatches. Some decisions were made to display ornithological differences, but in the case of the titmice and nuthatches, the decision was an artistic one. Ede suggested the "harmony of soft silvery and gray which I believe could make for an intriguing picture."²⁹ To this Walter agreed, but requested the addition of the Red-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis*). According to the artist's notes which accompanied each print, the "artist was able to make a more dramatic composition by carefully positioning the birds to create an illusion of living tension."³⁰

During the progress of the Pennsylvania series, Ede and Walter had conversations about the possibility of additional series. One would have focused on owls and one on the birds in the desert around Sunnylands. Though neither was commissioned by Walter, he expressed his gratitude for the Eastern Pennsylvania series: "May I also tell you how delighted I am with your water colors of my favorite birds; they shall always have an intimate relationship with me and will be a most handsome addition to my study in my home 'Inwood,' Wynnewood, Pennsylvania."³¹

Their friendship encompassed decades of transatlantic correspondence and included conversations related to commissioned work, the sharing of natural history articles, discussions of art techniques for interpreting wildlife, business advice, and views on world events of their time. Ede appreciated being able to confide in Walter, asking for guidance in working with American magazine publishers and the general media as he promoted his paintings and books.

Right

Two of the Christmas cards sent to the Annenbergs by Basil Ede.

Bald Eagle, December 1972.
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.14433.
Eastern Bluebird, December 1973.
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.4434.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.



The progression of this friendship is expressed clearly in the salutations of their correspondence. In his first letter, Ede addressed Walter as “Sir,” in a professional engagement where he shared a catalog of his 1971 New York exhibition.³² This correspondence was followed with a letter and salutation “Your Excellency,” which reflected Walter’s position as Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s.³³ In this letter, Ede thanked Walter for his time and for being shown the Annenbergs’ art collection. He also included a more personal gift, a copy of the book *Birds of Town and Village*, containing his first published works: “Will you do me the honour of accepting this specially bound volume in order to assist you and Mrs. Annenberg in identifying the birds in the gardens of Winfield House. Although the plates are early examples of my work I do hope you will derive pleasure from them.”³⁴

Correspondence soon became “Dear Basil” and “My Dearest Walter.” Ede always showed great appreciation for Walter’s interest and support of his work. In response to a request by *The Illustrated London News* to do a feature on the Eastern Pennsylvania collection, Walter offered advice, reminding Ede to be discretionary and insist “the coverage measures up to the distinction your work commands... [and is] treated in a major way.”³⁵

With the final painting of the Ring-necked Pheasant, completed in October 1972, the friendship continued with exchanges of Christmas cards, including Ede’s hand-painted cards featuring Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Eastern Bluebird (*Sialis sialis*). Ede wrote to Walter in his excitement when His Royal Highness Prince Philip took interest in his work. He again thanked Walter for his support: “Despite all the new and exciting events I do not forget those who have honoured me with friendship and help in the past years. Your name, sir, is synonymous with the warmth and vitality I have been privileged to enjoy in my association with America.”³⁶



Above

This image of pheasants was the final painting by Basil Ede in the set commissioned by the Annenbergs.

Two Pheasants, 1972.
Basil Ede (1931 – 2016)
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.10526.
Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Opposite

This profile of the adult male Vermillion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), caught while perched in a Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia x ‘Desert Museum’*), provides a close-up view of its facial rictal feathers, dark eye stripe, and bright vermilion feathers from which it gets its name.





BIRDS INDOORS AND OUTDOORS

Walter's interest in birds and ecology and Leonore's interest in flowers and gardens is expressed in the design of their homes. Photos from Inwood (their Eastern Pennsylvania estate), Sunnylands (their winter home in California), and Winfield House (the U.S. Ambassador's residence in London) show rooms filled with images of nature, overwhelmingly with birds. One interior feature of note at all three estates is the inclusion of floor-to-ceiling, hand-painted wallpaper with images of birds and plants. At Inwood and at Sunnylands, the background color of the wallpaper is pink, while at Winfield House, the background is green.

For Winfield House, the Ambassador's residence in London, an eighteenth century, hand-painted Chinese wallpaper with birds and flowers was installed in the Garden Room.³⁷ According to an article in *McCall's* magazine, this selection of restored wallpaper from the Irish Castle, Townley Hall, helped to allay concerns which had been reported in the British media about the quality of restoration work the Annenbergs were planning.³⁸ After being carefully removed, the wallpaper was repainted in Hong Kong at the Annenbergs' request.³⁹



Above

Pink wallpaper with a floral pattern decorated the walls of the Annenbergs' Pennsylvania home known as Inwood.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.8124, photo by John Condax, July 6, 1979.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Kestrel Landing

I love capturing the beauty of birds in flight and there are a couple different approaches that I use to get these action shots. The first is to actually track birds through the air with a hand-held lens, which works pretty well for larger birds like hawks and water birds. But for the extremely quick little American Kestrel (Falco sparverius), that is extremely difficult, especially to get them in focus. So for this shot I used the second approach, which is observe a bird's habits, and anticipate a place it will land. I had been watching this Kestrel on several afternoons as he moved around between a few favorite trees while he hunted. One day when the light was good, I framed up, pre-focused, and waited for him to return to this particular perch. Happily, he cooperated and finally landed, right on his mark.



Previous pages, left

An adult Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) glides over Sunnylands. These large vultures use the historic estate and its tall pines and eucalyptus to rest. In the late winter they can gather in the hundreds, sitting open winged in the tree canopies and creating an eerie experience for visitors and staff.

Previous pages, right

This profile of a Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) shows the brightly displayed eye stripe behind the eyes. Roadrunners nest at Sunnylands Center & Gardens and their confident nature means they do not hide, instead offering a close-up view to visitors.



When Walter commissioned William Draper to reproduce his portrait as Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, he also commissioned a portrait of Leonore to accompany it. Leonore's portrait was painted in the Garden Room with the avian-themed wallpaper as background. In her hand she holds a carnation matching the one in Walter's lapel. The two Draper portraits were hung at Inwood. When Inwood was sold in 2007 and Leonore settled in permanent residence at Sunnylands, she had the indoor pool room converted to what is now called the 'Inwood Room.' There she was able to appropriately incorporate one room that preserved the design references of Inwood, within the midcentury design of Sunnylands. In this room she displayed favorite pieces from the Pennsylvania house, including the Draper portraits, and on the walls, installed hand-painted wallpaper of birds and a bamboo forest.

When visitors arrive at Sunnylands through the historic entrance on Frank Sinatra Drive, the first two art pieces that come into view are a pair of Japanese cranes known as the *Meiji Cranes*, and the cast bronze and aluminum sculpture known as *Birds of Welcome*. The *Birds of Welcome* was commissioned in 1971 from Canadian sculptor, Art Price, and is one of three that were produced. The Annenbergs admired the original at Gander International Airport. Walter wrote to Price: "We contemplate placing your distinguished piece somewhere on the grounds in an appropriate manner that will indeed help to welcome our guests."⁴⁰ Walter stated he was impressed with the "spirit of it—a circular cluster of birds resembling ganders [male geese]."⁴¹



Opposite

The pink hand-painted wallpaper at Sunnylands in the Inwood Room.

Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.

Above

Walter and Leonore Annenberg in the Garden Room at Winfield House, London.

Sunnylands Collection, 2009. 1.5269, photographer unknown, date unknown.

Right

A bronze and aluminum sculpture, the *Birds of Welcome* can be seen as visitors approach the historic house on the main driveway.

Photo by Ken Hayden, 2014.

This desire to have birds and flowers, hand selected by the Annenbergs, and incorporated within every level of design detail was also reflected by Leonore in an interview with *Vogue* regarding her commissioning of a needlepoint depicting Winfield House: “I had a view of the house painted by Felix Kelly, but I wanted another remembrance of our years here to give to my children and grandchildren, so I asked the Royal School of Needlework to make me a tapestry. The work took about five months, and it is beautifully done—the back is almost as neat as the front. I sent them photographs, and their artist came to make her own sketches... The view is the back of the house, with the trellis, looking over the garden. We had the border worked with our initials and the American seal, and with our favourite birds and flowers—on the left, the Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) and Tit, with Cowslips (*Primula veris*) and Dog Roses (*Rosa canina*), on the right, the American [Northern]Flicker and [Northern] Cardinal, with Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and Lupines (*Lupinus*). My husband is keenly interested in birds.”⁴²

In interviews and correspondence both Walter and Leonore express their awareness of each other's preferences in incorporating flowers and birds throughout their surroundings. When out on the grounds they carried binoculars for chance bird sightings. Inside their homes they surrounded themselves with painted and sculpted versions, sharing a singular view that informed their selection of art objects as much as it did their landscape design.

Right

The Winfield House needlepoint was commissioned by the Annenbergs, and Leonore directed the artists to include the couple's favorite birds, flowers, and initials.

Winfield House, date unknown.

*Royal School of Needlework
Needlework*

Sunnylands Collection, 2009.1.144.

Photo by Mark Davidson, 2018.



PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Roadrunner Blur

There are different ways to interpret birds in a still photograph, and every image does not have to be a tack-sharp, frozen moment in time. As I watched Greater Roadrunners (Geococcyx californianus) doing their thing, chasing small prey on the grounds at Sunnylands, I had the idea to create an image that conveyed a sense of their rapid movement. To do this, I used a slow shutter speed of 1/30 sec., and panned with the running bird to create this blurred effect. The key thing for the shot to work is that, at a minimum, the bird's eye must be reasonably sharp, which requires a precise tracking shot so the eye doesn't move in relation to the frame. After a few tries, I got this shot when the bird ran perpendicular to me, and I was able to follow him nicely and fire off a burst of images. There was just this one frame that was any good, but I think it does the job of capturing the action in a unique way.





MAINTAINING SANCTUARY TODAY

During the 2010-2011 restoration of the estate, landscape experts at CMG Landscape Architecture assembled the historic architectural plans and correspondence for the design and construction of the estate in a cultural landscape report. It provided the landscape history, including planting decisions and original intent. This exhibition, *Flight Plan: The Birds of Sunnylands*, shares another part of the landscape narrative—the desire for bird visitation to the historic estate and desert landscape at the Center & Gardens. Though different in aesthetic, the historic grounds and the Center & Gardens are connected by a philosophy of design which reflects the Annenbergs’ concern with creating “experience.”

Walter used the term “sanctuary” as a common descriptor for what he envisioned. In the aesthetic of the 1960s, a sanctuary in the desert meant transformation. It required the creation of a park-like oasis with turf and trees to mask the harshness of the native blow-sand ecosystem. It also required water, made available through the creation of thirteen man-made lakes, connected by streams. These decisions, in part, provided for the needs of the birds that were residing in or migrating through the estate.

Leonore shared her vision of what the Center & Gardens should offer visitors with James Burnett, the landscape architect who designed the Gardens. Burnett described Leonore as the ideal client who trusted his judgment, but also challenged him. She was very concerned with how the visitor would experience the new Center & Gardens. In the book, *Art and Nature: The Gardens of Sunnylands*, Burnett reflects on the project: “We envisioned Sunnylands Gardens as a place where visitors could traverse a variety of sensory settings, delighting in the diverse smells and sights of the desert. Our goal was to craft an environment that was not only beautiful but also fascinating, to offer an experience unlike other garden experiences.”⁴³

Previous pages, left

This Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) is being driven off by an adult Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*). Both nest on the historic estate, so these types of conflicts are inevitable.

Previous pages, right

A Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) pecking the head of the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) while fully displaying the rarely seen red crown. The hawk protects his eyes by engaging a nictitating membrane, which is a semi-transparent inner eyelid.



Above

A pair of Ring-necked Ducks (*Aythya collaris*) relaxing on a lake at the estate.

Opposite

Aerial of historic property and Center & Gardens.

Photo by Sibylle Allgaier, 2018.





The Trust updated maintenance practices and instituted a new green vision to allow the estate to be utilized as an environmental laboratory, including practices to reduce the chemical load on the property. These included experimenting with integrated pest management techniques and a new philosophy of managing olive trees. Instead of restricting olive tree production with chemical fruit suppressants, the more than 600 historic olive trees are allowed to produce olives which are harvested for the production of Sunnylands Olive Oil.

An aggressive reduction in water use was accomplished without compromising the aesthetic of the estate. Healthy groundwater is maintained through participation in the Groundwater Guardian Green Site program⁴⁴ and monitoring of aquatic macro-invertebrates in lakes and streams. Because human access to Sunnylands is limited, the quiet of the estate offers a welcoming respite to wildlife and still provides water access for resident and migrating birds traveling the Pacific Flyway. Some pass through, while others including Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Great Horned Owls, nest on the estate each year.



Opposite

An adult Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) basks in the canopy of an olive tree (*Olea spp.*) at the historic grounds.

Left

A view of the Gardens to the east of the Center with Mt. San Jacinto in the background.

Photo by Millicent Harvey, 2018.

Above

As part of Sunnylands' commitment to environmental responsibility, staff created a makeshift nest for an owlet, fallen from a tree, to provide a secure space where the adult Great Horned Owls could care for it.

Photo by Michaelleen Gallagher, July 19, 2015.

Hospitality does not stop with the bird community as the Trust also adopted a Coyote Coexistence Plan that allows coyotes to access the estate. This program helps maintain the health of the ecosystems at Sunnylands by allowing natural wildlife interaction.

The addition of 32 acres of desert landscape at the Center & Gardens and administrative campus introduced over 64,000 specimens representing more than 80 species of plants. The species, mostly succulents, include varieties of cactus, agave, and aloe planted under a canopy of palo verde and mesquite trees. All are desert natives or arid-adapted species that provide for birds and pollinators like Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), and many migrating song birds.

The undeveloped acreage around the estate and Center & Gardens encompasses a large holding of a blow-sand desert ecosystem. Parcels of this size are rare in the rapidly developing Coachella Valley, but are crucial for maintaining diversity of native species. Decisions will have to be made to responsibly manage an estate that encompasses so much history and so much property in a way that preserves the Annenbergs' vision and intent, while providing for the public's education and inclusion in the future of this special place.

The Trust's selection of Tim Laman for this photo-documentation project is reminiscent of the relationship cultivated between Walter Annenberg and Basil Ede to capture Walter's favorite birds in Eastern Pennsylvania. Ede was chosen because of his precision and expertise in capturing ornithological detail through paint. Likewise, Laman was chosen because of his combined experience in biology and photography that allows him to capture the vivid color and form of birds with artistic detail.

The Trust's collection of correspondence and interviews exposed the deep interest of the Annenbergs in designing and cultivating a habitat welcoming to birds. The legacy continues as Sunnylands today provides for birds, both resident species and those traveling the Pacific Flyway. Through the photographs of Tim Laman, the Trust now shares the history of Walter and Leonore's *Flight Plan* and the birds of Sunnylands with the public.



Above

Aerial of historic property.

Photo by Sibylle Allgaier, 2018.

Opposite

A juvenile Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) glides across the estate. They can often be seen hunting at both the estate and Sunnylands Center & Gardens.





SUNNYLANDS BIRD LIST

Annotated list as of April 2018 (by common name), following *National Geographic* format⁴⁵

DUCKS & GEESE

- Greater White-fronted Goose** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Snow Goose** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Canada Goose** – uncommon resident, sometimes flying over or on ponds
- Wood Duck** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Mallard** – common resident on ponds
- Gadwall** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- American Wigeon** – common migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Eurasian Wigeon** – rare winter visitor/migrant to ponds
- Northern Shoveler** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Cinnamon Teal** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Canvasback** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Redhead** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Ring-necked Duck** – common migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Lesser Scaup** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Bufflehead** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Common Goldeneye** – rare migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Ruddy Duck** – common migrant/winter visitor to ponds
- Common Merganser** – uncommon winter visitor/migrant to ponds
- Red-breasted Merganser** – uncommon winter visitor/migrant to ponds

GREBES

- Pied-billed Grebe** – fairly common permanent resident on ponds
- Eared Grebe** – uncommon migrant/ winter visitor to ponds
- Western Grebe** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds

CORMORANTS

- Double-crested Cormorant** – fairly common migrant/winter visitor to ponds

PELICANS

- American White Pelican** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds

Opposite

Multiple species of migrating ducks bask on this lake in view of the historic house at Sunnylands. Eighteen species of ducks and geese have been seen on the lakes at the estate.

HERONS & BITTERNS

- American Bittern** – rare migrant to ponds
- Least Bittern** – rare migrant to ponds
- Great Blue Heron** – fairly common resident/winter visitor to ponds
- Snowy Egret** – fairly common migrant/winter resident on ponds
- Great Egret** – common migrant/winter resident on ponds
- Green Heron** – fairly common migrant/winter resident on ponds/ streams near main house
- Black-crowned Night-Heron** – uncommon migrant/winter resident on ponds/streams

IBISES

- White-faced Ibis** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor to ponds

NEW WORLD VULTURES

- Turkey Vulture** – common migrant, roosts in large trees

HAWKS

- Cooper's Hawk** – common resident, nests in large trees
- Sharp-shinned Hawk** – uncommon winter visitor
- Red-shouldered Hawk** – common resident, prefers to nest in Eucalyptus
- Red-tailed Hawk** – fairly common resident of open areas
- Swainson's Hawk** – rare migrant, spring and fall
- Northern Harrier** – uncommon migrant, spring or fall

FALCONS

- Prairie Falcon** – uncommon resident of the area
- American Kestrel** – common resident of the area

COOTS

- American Coot** – common resident on ponds

PLOVERS

- Killdeer** – fairly common resident on open grassy or gravelly areas

SANDPIPERS

- Spotted Sandpiper** – uncommon migrant

GULLS

- Ring-billed Gull** – fairly common migrant/winter visitor
- California Gull** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor

TERNS

- Caspian Tern** – uncommon visitor to ponds

PIGEONS & DOVES

- Rock Pigeon** – uncommon resident of area
- White-winged Dove** – fairly common summer resident
- Eurasian Collared-dove** – uncommon resident of the area
- Mourning Dove** – fairly common on grounds

ROADRUNNERS

- Greater Roadrunner** – uncommon permanent resident

OWLS

- Barn Owl** – fairly common permanent resident
- Great Horned Owl** – fairly common permanent resident of the area

GOATSUCKERS

- Lesser Nighthawk** – fairly common summer resident of the area

SWIFTS

- Vaux's Swift** – uncommon migrant, especially in spring
- White-throated Swift** – uncommon resident of the area

HUMMINGBIRDS

- Costa's Hummingbird** – most common resident in the Gardens
- Black-chinned Hummingbird** – uncommon in summer
- Anna's Hummingbird** – fairly common resident on the golf course
- Rufous Hummingbird** – uncommon migrant, spring and fall

KINGFISHERS

- Belted Kingfisher** – uncommon migrant/winter visitor

WOODPECKERS

- Northern Flicker** – common migrant/winter resident of golf course
- Ladder-backed Woodpecker** – uncommon resident of the area
- Nuttall's Woodpecker** – uncommon resident of the area



TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

- Olive-sided Flycatcher – uncommon migrant
- Western Wood-Pewee – fairly common migrant
- Willow Flycatcher – uncommon spring migrant
- Pacific-slope Flycatcher – fairly common spring migrant
- Black Phoebe – common resident near water or grassy areas
- Say’s Phoebe – fairly common resident on open areas such as the golf course
- Vermilion Flycatcher – fairly common resident, especially in winter on the golf course near the ponds
- Brown-crested Flycatcher – very rare migrant
- Ash-throated Flycatcher – uncommon migrant, spring or fall
- Cassin’s Kingbird – uncommon spring migrant and winter resident
- Western Kingbird – fairly common summer resident in large trees

SHRIKES

- Loggerhead Shrike – uncommon resident

VIREOS

- Bell’s Vireo – uncommon migrant and possible summer nester
- Cassin’s Vireo – uncommon spring migrant
- Warbling Vireo – fairly common spring migrant

CORVIDS

- California Scrub-Jay – uncommon spring visitor
- American Crow – fairly common resident, especially around main house
- Common Raven – common resident of area

LARKS

- Horned Lark – uncommon winter visitor

SWALLOWS

- Northern Rough-winged Swallow – uncommon migrant and summer resident of area
- Barn Swallow – fairly common spring migrant

CHICKADEES

- Mountain Chickadee – uncommon migrant/winter visitor

Opposite

A Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) hunting in a lake at the historic grounds. Lakes are stocked with fish including bass, bluegill, and catfish, providing hunting opportunities for many bird species.

VERDINS

- Verdin – common resident, especially near the Center

BUSHTITS

- Bushtit – rare winter visitor

WRENS

- Bewick’s Wren – common resident in the Gardens
- Rock Wren – uncommon migrant/visitor
- House Wren – uncommon migrant and winter resident
- Cactus Wren – uncommon resident of the area

KINGLETS

- Ruby-crowned Kinglet – common migrant and winter resident

GNATCATCHERS

- Black-tailed Gnatcatcher – uncommon resident, prefers creosote and palo verde trees

THRUSHES

- Western Bluebird – mainly a migrant and winter visitor
- Hermit Thrush – uncommon migrant and winter visitor

MOCKINGBIRDS

- Northern Mockingbird – common resident in trees and shrubs

STARLINGS

- European Starling – fairly common resident of the area

WAXINGS

- Cedar Waxwing – uncommon migrant and winter resident

WOOD-WARBLERS

- Orange-crowned Warbler – fairly common migrant/winter resident
- Nashville Warbler – uncommon migrant
- MacGillivray’s Warbler – rare migrant
- Yellow Warbler – fairly common migrant and possible summer resident
- Black-throated Gray Warbler – uncommon migrant
- Hermit Warbler – uncommon spring migrant
- Townsend’s Warbler – uncommon spring migrant
- Yellow-rumped Warbler – common migrant and winter resident
- Wilson’s Warbler – fairly common migrant

TOWHEES, SPARROWS & JUNCOS

- Abert’s Towhee – uncommon resident in the Gardens
- Spotted Towhee – uncommon migrant and winter resident
- Chipping Sparrow – fairly common migrant/winter resident
- Brewer’s Sparrow – uncommon migrant/winter resident
- Savannah Sparrow – fairly common migrant/winter resident
- Song Sparrow – uncommon migrant
- Lincoln’s Sparrow – uncommon migrant/winter resident
- Lark Sparrow – uncommon migrant/winter resident
- White-crowned Sparrow – common migrant/winter resident
- Dark-eyed Junco – uncommon winter visitor

CARDINALS & BUNTINGS

- Summer Tanager – uncommon migrant, possible summer resident
- Western Tanager – fairly common migrant
- Black-headed Grosbeak – fairly common spring migrant
- Blue Grosbeak – uncommon migrant
- Lazuli Bunting – fairly common migrant, especially in spring

MEADOWLARKS & ORIOLES

- Western Meadowlark – uncommon migrant
- Bullock’s Oriole – fairly common migrant
- Hooded Oriole – fairly common migrant/summer visitor
- Brown-headed Cowbird – fairly common resident

FINCHES

- House Finch – common resident
- Lesser Goldfinch – fairly common resident
- Lawrence’s Goldfinch – uncommon-to-rare visitor
- American Goldfinch – rare migrant or winter visitor

SPARROWS

- House Sparrow – Introduced species, fairly common resident of the area

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Opposite

An adult male Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) on a lake at the estate.



NOTES ON PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT

I used two main camera systems for this project. It was a unique situation for me as a wildlife photographer to have a golf cart I could load up with camera gear and tripods, allowing me to move freely around the landscape while keeping everything handy so weight wasn't a concern. Since my goal for the project was to shoot both stills and video, I kept two cameras ready at all times. For stills, I used a Canon 1DX Mark II, and for video, I used a RED Epic-W camera. The two main lenses I used for all the bird photography were the Canon 400 f2.8 and the Canon 200-400 f4 with built-in 1.4x converter. I had these two lenses, often with additional 1.4 or 2x converters, always mounted to the two cameras. I often shot with the Canon camera hand-held or on a mono-pod, but I always used a large Sachtler tripod and video head with the video camera. The high resolution of the RED camera, at up to 8K (8000 pixels across the image), is even higher than my still camera, and so under the right conditions, I sometimes shot video, and selected individual frames as still images for the gallery and catalogue. I never used any strobes or artificial lighting. All the images were made with the beautiful natural light of Sunnylands.



Above and opposite

Photographer Tim Laman at work on the Sunnylands bird project.

Photo by Mark Davidson, 2017.





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Michaeleen Gallagher, director of education and environmental programs, mined the archives to write the history of the Annenbergs and their love affair with birds. She wrote the essay for this book and served as curator of the exhibition with assistance from Ivonne Miranda Correa, bilingual art specialist, and Danielle Sombati, education programs coordinator. Ashley Santana, communications editor, and Carla Breer Howard, copy editor, ensured the quality of the book's text.

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We are profoundly grateful to Tim Laman. This exhibition would not have been possible without the extraordinary photographs that he took during his eight trips over two years to Sunnylands. The photographs are a testament to his knowledge of birds and his artistic talent.

Our gratitude goes to all these professionals for their many contributions that resulted in the exhibition and catalog for *Flight Plan: The Birds of Sunnylands*.

Janice Lyle, Ph.D., *Editor*
Director, Sunnylands Center & Gardens



A beautiful silhouette of a female Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) cleaning her beak on a Mesquite branch (*Prosopis hybrid*).