

THE Western Tanager

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WESTERN SNOWY EGRET

Egretta thula brewsteri



Brewster's Snowy Egret along with the American Egret is among the few of the larger birds that have shown a steady increase in numbers during the last twenty years. During the last five years they have become more or less common birds on the sloughs and mudflats of Southern California. And during these last five winters I have had opportunity to observe the behavior and mannerisms of the Snowy Egret and I have found him a most droll and amusing fellow. As a fisherman he has many tricks in his bag.

The Snowy Egret's fishing methods are different under different circumstances. Fishing in the shallow pools of a mudflat the Snowy moves forward with a few deliberate strides, then with head cocked to fire he reaches forward with one of his large paws and softly pats the surface of the water to stir up any little fish that may be hiding in the mud. If a fish is routed from its hiding place there is a flash of bill, a toss of head and the fish has found a new resting place.

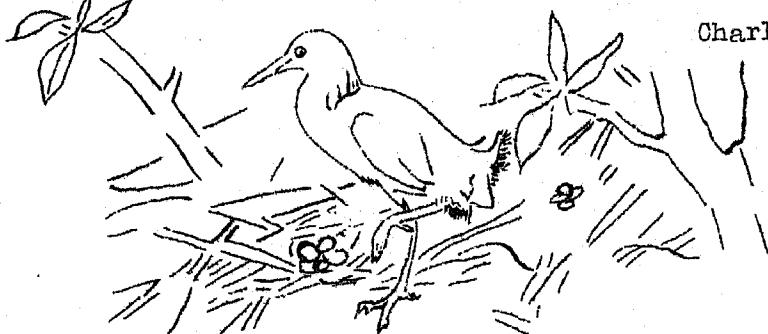
Fishing along the margin of a slough the Snowy employs a different method. Flying out over the water he will move in toward shore and low to the surface on hovering and fluttering wings he will shoo the fish into shallow water and then in a lively, leaping dance he will spear here and there and everywhere and may capture three or four fish before the school has escaped into deep water.

Like his big relative, the Great Blue Heron, the little Snowy sometimes stalks his prey in field and open meadowland.

While gulls and shore-birds loafed on the back beach a Snowy Egret improved the hours between tides with a change of diet. And to me and to Enid he demonstrated something new in his diversified feeding habits. On "pipestem" legs the Snowy moved cautiously along the rolls of kelp that lay stranded on the beach at the high water mark. There was stealth in every action and there might have been dignity too, were it not for the droll manner in which Snowy was picking up and laying down those large yellow soled feet. Feet so large and legs so thin that one was reminded of lily pads on long thin stems. There was reason for the stealthy movements for the Egret was catching flies.

Seemingly this Snowy Egret had been taking lessons in hunting from some of the smaller beach birds. With cautious steps and slow he would move into striking range, then leaning forward with head cocked he would take aim and pull the trigger. He was a good shot, for while we watched he never seemed to miss the bulls-eye.

Charles W. Michael



THE WESTERN TANAGER

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AUDUBON HOUSE NOTES

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MEETING NOTICES

FIELD DAY - February 1, 1940 - CHATSWORTH!
 Remember - Tanner bus leaves 544 South Hill St.,
 Los Angeles, at 8 a.m., sharp, and Hollywood
 Boulevard and Cahuenga at 8:30 a.m. Fare 80¢
 round trip.

BOARD MEETING - February 15, 1940 - 10 A. M., in the Directors' Room of the State
 Building, Exposition Park, Los Angeles.

PROGRAM MEETING - February 15, 1940 - 2 P. M., State Building, Exposition Park, Los
 Angeles. Mr. Ed N. Harrison will lecture on the "Cruise of the Kinkajou" and show
 motion pictures in color of Man of War, Booby and many other birds. Guests always
 welcome.

BOTANY CLASS - February 23, 1940 - 9 A. M. - Plummer Park - Mrs. Mary V. Hood in
 charge. And on the same day we will hold our

BIRD STUDY CLASS - 10:30 A. M., to 12 o'clock. Mr. C. V. Duff will conduct.

JANUARY INDOOR MEETING

It was a delightful experience, at the Program Meeting on January 18th, to follow
 Mrs. Mary V. Hood's summer vacation trip through the High Sierras and see with the
 help of her Kodachrome slides, some of the exquisite beauty she found there. Moun-
 tain scenery, stately pines silhouetted against fleecy clouds, wild flowers of many
 varieties, general views and closeups, all displayed skill of selection and handling,
 and were not only beautiful pictures but also fine studies. It will be remembered
 that it was on such trips as these that Mrs. Hood gained inspiration for her recently
 published "California Wild Flowers in Verse and Drawing."

Mrs. Louise Turner Colby, a pupil of Mrs. Milton Jeffs' class in whistling,
 presented several numbers, enthusiastically received by her hearers.

BIRDING IN THE RAIN!

"Postponed because of rain!" That was the notice sent out the day preceding the
 Audubon Field Trip scheduled for Chatsworth. However, rain held no terrors for a
 group of Audubonites, who, gathering their galoshes, lunch and courage, headed their
 car for Oak Grove Park, Pasadena.

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BIRDING IN THE RAIN!

Mrs. Grace Foss, whose home is located in the grounds, played hostess to the tenched individuals, and kept them comfortable in her cozy living room. From the windows they observed the many birds which come to her feeding trays.

A San Diego Wren has started her nest in the window awning, unmindful of prying eyes. Another regular visitor is Skippy, a House Finch which Mrs. Foss found injured, and cared for. She was allowed the run of the house until she could go on her own, a strong bird again.

The rain letting up a bit was an invitation to take to the walks through the park. At the edge of the reservoir were seen Kildeer, Western Sandpiper, one Spotted Sandpiper, Western Belted Kingfisher, Wilson Snipe, Anthony Green Heron, Ruddy and Mallard Ducks.

For an interval, the storm broke up and the sun in all its brilliance penetrated the trees, bringing forth activity and song from among the birds sheltered during the rain.

Flying in all directions were Green backed and Willow Gold Finches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Bush-tits, Pine Siskin and Titmice; Plump Robins and a shy Alaska Hermit Thrush fed at the Cotoneaster and Toyon bushes. A Sharp-shinned Hawk, perched on a pole, posed for the benefit of the audience.

Shoes got muddy as these enthusiasts hopped puddles, rain drops sneaked down their necks as they gazed into the trees, but it was worth all the discomforts to have had the heavenly experience of birding in the rain!

STARLINGS



From "Notes and News" in THE CONDOR, July, 1939, Page 174

"According to a report by C. W. Lockerbie in this issue of THE CONDOR (p. 170), Starlings have now appeared in Utah. It seems that invasion of the Pacific coast area is imminent. Much as we may regret the anticipated arrival of these birds, there is nothing that can be done to prevent it. Our one consolation is the opportunity we will have to record the way in which an invading species establishes itself. Much may be learned of biological importance if every person interested in birds in the areas now free of Starlings records in fullest detail the circumstances connected with the invasion. Not only the first arrival should command attention, but the many adjustments in population of Starlings and of other birds which will follow the pioneering period should be carefully noted. It will be some time before Starlings reach a state of equilibrium in the West, and every shred of information pertaining to their natural history should be gathered during that time. When the English sparrows spread westward, bird observers were much less numerous than at present and a rather incomplete picture is left us of the details of their dispersal. Will we do better on the Starling problem?"

"We are indebted to Dr. Lawrence E. Hicks, who is studying Starlings in the Middle West, for recalling to mind our strategic position for the future study of this species."

* * * *

The word from Utah mentioned above (THE CONDOR, July 1939, Page 170,) is as follows:

"Thirteen Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were discovered feeding with a flock of Brewer blackbirds about the corrals on the Jeremy ranch, in Salt Lake County, by Thayer Evans, February 26, 1939. Mr. Evans killed one of the birds for identification, mounted it and presented it to the University of Utah. I observed these birds on several occasions thereafter. Their attitude was decidedly like that of a Meadowlark rather than that of a Blackbird. The short tail, quick wing beat and long glides to alight are characters that differentiate them when in a flock of Brewer blackbirds."

(Signed) C. W. Lockerbie - Salt Lake City, Utah
April 15. 1939

NOTICES OF THE CALIFORNIA AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Mrs. Harriet Williams Myers,
President

Mrs. Merta White, Secretary,
Telephone: Cleveland 6-6702

FEBRUARY MEETINGS

February 8, 1940 - at 7:30 P. M., in the Los Angeles Central Library, 5th and Grand Streets, Los Angeles. Speaker, Mr. Howard L. Jones, whose subject will be "Birds and Flowers of Western National Parks" - This talk will be illustrated with colored slides.

Field Day - February 24th, 1940 - at 8:30 A. M., to 10 A. M., Fern Dell, Griffith Park. Public invited.

BIRDS VERSUS BATS

In a letter from Mr. Frank A. Thackery, of the United States Date Research Gardens at Indio, the question was asked as to the value of Hummingbirds as destroyers of gnats. These insects are appearing in such numbers that they are a serious menace in carrying eye trouble particularly among school children.

Authorities in control of gnats and mosquitos have considered importing bats and dragon flies, but feel that Hummingbirds are more desirable if they will do the job.

In replying to Mr. Thackery, I reported that Mr. B. F. Tucker's Bird Sanctuary at Oakwood in Modjeska's Canyon, is entirely free from gnats, credit being given to the thousands of Hummingbirds which visit or live on his place.

I suggested that Junior Audubon Societies be formed in the schools ... that each garden has food and water for the birds ... that Swallows be encouraged to nest in the community ... in short, to educate both young and old to the economic value of birds.

Mr. Thackery expressed appreciation, especially favoring the idea of forming Junior Audubon Clubs. Perhaps our readers have other suggestions which might be sent to Mr. Thackery.

Harriet Williams Myers

NEW AUDUBON STAMP
ANNOUNCED

Announcement has been made by the Post Master General that in the issuing of some new stamps during the year, a group of authors will be honored, among them John James Audubon, whose portrait will appear on the one-cent (1¢) stamps.

The stamps will originate from Audubon's home state - St. Francisville, Louisiana, on April 8th, 1940.

NOTICES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE SOUTHWEST BIRD STUDY CLUB

Feb. 5, 1940 10 A. M. Echo Park Library
Feb. 12, 1940 9 A. M. Oak Grove Park - Pasadena, California
Feb. 19, 1940 9 A. M. Anaheim Landing
Feb. 26, 1940 9 A. M. Stone Canyon

For further details, call Mrs. Alma Mason, at Capitol 3441.

IMPORTANT

Don't forget to make your reservations for the Field Day trip, on February 1st, through Mrs. Jesse L. Morain, 1041 South Gramercy Drive, Los Angeles. Telephone Parkway 0339 as early as possible! Let's all plan to go to Chatsworth Lake!

