

Western Tanager



Vol. VIII

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SUBSPECIES

By W. A. Kent

Whatever may be your present opinion about subspecies, you will have a real eye-opener if you will study this subject on a trip to Canada.

Let us start with our San Diego Song Sparrow, then hop to Port Orford, Oregon. "What bird is that?" Looks like a Song Sparrow, but see that rusty red color. Answer - a Rusty Song Sparrow.

Now place the Samuel's Song Sparrow on the Pacific slope of middle California then try to push our San Diego Song Sparrow north to meet it. A glance shows the difference in color in some cases, in others, not so, and that is perhaps what causes the intense interest in bird study.

Then there were Shufeldt's Juncos in British Columbia, not so unlike our Thurber's. I must leave subspecies to tell of the many slate-colored Juncos at Athabasca Glacier in Jasper National Park, a real joy to see this eastern bird again. Now let's hop down into north eastern Washington and northern Oregon. We see Oregon Juncos, we think, not so by the A.O.U. Check List, which says the Oregon Junco nests from Alaska to Vancouver Island, wintering southward. So, they are still Shufeldt's and they smack up against our own Thurber's Junco in its northern reaches. Intriguing, isn't it, if it doesn't get you down?

Let us now dabble with the Wren-tits, on our most interesting trip. Our own Pallid Wren-tit reaches to Shasta county. The type form, Gambel's Wren-tit fits into the picture from San Luis Obispo county to around San Francisco Bay and adjacent valleys, then we will boost up a little to the Transition Zone of the Pacific Coast of Oregon and ring in the Coast Wren-tit.

Mr. Van Huesen, at the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge at Willows, Calif., remarked to us, "There you see the Modesto Song Sparrow and all three Red-wings; Bi-colored, Tri-colored and the Nevada Red-wing." Mrs. Kent turns her eyes to me, without moving her head, at the new names, but I nonchalantly thumb the pages of my bird book. Geographic, color or what?

If these subspecies are confusing to us, and I am sure they are, it signifies that we must own a copy of the new A.O.U. Check List when it is published in the next year or two. Then, rather than just learning the birds we stub our toe against in the Los Angeles area, broaden our scope of bird study and see that few get away without being identified when on our vacation trips.

We shall visit a species again in the Athabasca Glacier vicinity. A White Crowned Sparrow displays his beautiful head markings, then another bird alights on the same bush; a Gambel Sparrow! We almost hold our breath.

Let's follow through with this genus; the White-crowned Sparrow breeds in the Hudsonian and Canadian zones of British Columbia, and from southern Oregon to central California, of their western habitat, and does not winter in California. The Gambel Sparrow breeds from tree limit Alaska to south-eastern British Columbia and we know it winters through California. The Puget Sound Sparrow now picks up the chain in south-western British Columbia to Mendocino County, Calif., spending the winter south to San Diego County. The Nuttall Sparrow jumps in to fill the space from Mendocino County south through San Francisco into Santa Barbara County. Now, then, all this would make us possessors of the Gambel and Puget Sound Sparrows during the winter. Scratch your head if you want to.

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PLUMMER PARK NOTES

The telephone pole containing the nest of the famous woodpeckers raised by Mr. Willis has been given to our curator for the interesting collection of nests in our museum. Other gifts include; from Mrs. Stultz, several nests given to her by Mr. Michael in Yosemite; National Geographic bird picture portfolio from Jane Weidell; 1940-41 scrap book from Mrs. Brown 1940 butterfly scrap book from Mrs. Meadows (to be finished by Miss Hamilton).

OWING to the rising price of materials it was considered necessary to increase the dues from \$1.25 to \$1.50. Put to a vote there was an overwhelming majority in favor - 107 Yes - 7 No.

NEW MEMBERS FOR NOVEMBER

Mrs. Ida J. Miller,
 237 Newport St., Long Beach
 Miss Marie Rutherford
 340 N. Comstock Ave., Whittier
 Mrs. George T. Hastings,
 842 - 19th St. Santa Monica
 Mrs. Frank C. Davis,
 1011 N. Louise St., Glendale
 Mrs. Jessie B. Bush,
 7637 W. Norton, West Hollywood
 Mr. Howard L. Cogswell,
 3807 Sierra Grande, Pasadena

PROGRAM MEETING - Thursday, December 4, 1941, 2:00 p.m. State Bldg. Exposition Park. Allan D. Cruickshank of the National Audubon Society and one of the outstanding speakers on wildlife subjects in the country, comes as a Christmas treat for our members. His lecture, "Wildlife Through the Lens" has been widely acclaimed. It is illustrated by a series of slides in color, including Loons on their northern breeding grounds, remarkable night studies of Barn Owls around their nest in the old deserted attic, Gannets by the thousands nesting on the sides of picturesque cliffs, some common local birds, remarks on the growing interest in birds and methods of attracting them. In addition, bird calls and spectacular motion pictures in natural color. Come early and bring a friend.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Our time-honored Christmas Party. Visit the headquarters, there are so many interesting things there. Lunch at noon in the Clubhouse followed by what promises to be a delightful program. Mrs. Bertha Caroline Stockwell in whistling solo, surprise number by Mrs. Florence Scott, Community Center Director of Plummer Park, "Stories of Christmas Plants," by Miss Charlotte Hamilton, kodachrome slides "Birds and Their Habitats" taken from our own collection (a preview for our members), with comments by Mrs. Shearer. Bring lunch as usual, remember guests are always welcome. Hostesses, Miss Martha C. Gilbert and Hospitality Committee, Mrs. Mary Barnes Salmon and House Committee. Do not fail to read Miss Hamilton's article in this issue on "Food for the Bird Table" and bring a Christmas gift for the birds.

Chatsworth Reservoir Grounds gave 95 Audubonites another happy field day on Thursday Nov. 6, various observers listing 71 species of birds within the Reservoir grounds. Outstanding species: Black-crowned Night Heron, Canvas-back, American Merganser, Ring-necked Pheasant, Southern Red-breasted Sapsucker, Barn Owl, Calaveras Warbler, Bullock's Oriole (pair evidently wintering over) and the seldom-seen Rufous-crowned Sparrow. We are always so happy to welcome back Mr. & Mrs. Charles Michael.

Caroline H. Daugherty



MICKEY AUDUBON BISHOP'S NEIGHBORS

The charm of Mickey's surroundings are part of his happiness. They inspire his joyous singing, his gay inquiring "tweet" of greeting, his dancing to the tune of a tiny music-box, sharing the dance with the sunbeams that shine into the room, listening to songs that come in the open window, -the mockingbird's, the song sparrow's, the killdeer's call. Linnets with their wash of red share his seeds on the window-sill, bringing their voices closer. Towhees and blackbirds are to be seen and the occasional gray form of a gull wings by, but dearest to Mickey's heart is Anna.

Springtime brings to the Ambassador gayawnings for the Patio Dining Room, which shelters, among other guests, Anna Hummingbird and her tiny nest in the olive tree. For years the services of a fine hotel have been Anna's. Her nest and eggs and her exquisite little self have been guarded tenderly. When the little ones grow and flourish a net is spread under the nest just in case the "rock-a-bye" babies should fall.

This year disaster overtook the precious eggs and the nest was damaged, but Anna of the brave heart decided to move the same nest to a loop of green and white ivy across the patio. Bit by bit it was moistened in the fountain and reshaped on the ivy. After a day's hard labor it was as good as new. Busy, happy weeks flew by and one morning Mickey heard "Buzz, Buzz" outside his window. The babies were grown and Anna was ready to donate her nest to Audubon House in Plummer Park.

Alma Stultz

FOOD FOR THE BIRD TABLES

The birds will appreciate the extra food provided for them. All the sparrows, linnets and towhees like the small grains, not to mention the doves and quail who delight in the regular pigeon grain which contains wheat, peas and cracked corn. The tit-mouse loves sunflower seed as do the grosbeaks in summer. The jay "dotes" on them but then he is partial to anything in the food line. The thrasher thinks nuts are pretty fine, and if they are wormy so much the better. If possible, crack the nuts. Don't forget raisins for the mockingbird and other soft-billed birds who are partial to fruit and berries. They like apples, too, but I find do not eat them as readily until later in the season when other fruits are gone. The Audubon warbler enjoys suet and if melted into a pudding containing seeds, raisins and nuts it will be eaten by many more birds. It helps when insects are scarce. Numbers of birds are fond of bread, cake and cheese crumbs, but are not advised to the exclusion of other foods, for you may attract more English sparrows than you wish. Above all, don't forget water. It is a "must have" all the year.

Charlotte A. Hamilton

OPENING OF AUDUBON HOUSE at the Dorothy May Tucker Bird Sanctuary in Modjeska Canyon, from Nov. 1 to 10 was a success, at least in the number of people who visited it. Nearly 1000 came to watch the hummingbirds and enjoy the display inside. It will be open on Saturdays and Sundays unless it is stormy, and at other times by appointment. All bird lovers are welcome.

Harriet Williams Meyers

Under our constitutional by-laws, anyone not renewing their membership by December shall become delinquent and it will not be possible to continue sending the TANGER.

If you are not keeping a file of the club paper, please return it to headquarters when through.

(Continued from first page)

We must not forget the Chickadees. The Oregon Chickadee is a subspecies of the eastern Black-capped Chickadee and ranges through the Transition Zone of the coastal region, British Columbia to California. The Chestnut-backed Chickadee, a type form, with a rufous back and dusky cap, covers the Canadian and Transition zones of our entire trip from just north of San Francisco. Our own Bailey's Chickadee, with the white line over the eye, is really different. We will follow it north into Monterey County, then place Barlow's Chickadee in the space south of Monterey to just north of San Francisco to meet the Chestnut-backed as we want some kind of a chickadee in their respective haunts everywhere. If some are left out, it is because all of this did get me down a little.

Now, after our case is proven, some fairly eminent bird enthusiast gets up and says, "It is all crazy! A song sparrow is the same song sparrow whether he is red, black or gray and I am not going to fool with that hair-splitting stuff." But the great preponderance of our ornithologists and the creators of the A.O.U. Check List have classified these subspecies in their respective haunts. So we look forward with new interest to a continuation of this fascinating study.

FOUND! a lunch kit at Chatsworth Lake - awaiting owner at headquarters.

A THREE-TIER BIRD OBSERVATION

In roaming through the mountains I have always been on the lookout for our "emblematic" bird, the Western Tanager - hoping to see several of them at a time but always grateful to glimpse even one. While vacationing this last summer far back in the High Sierras, about four o'clock one afternoon, I came up to a rushing mountain stream and - my wish was more than gratified. Looking up and down the stream, I saw Western Tanagers, everywhere, on both sides of the stream, insect catching, flying out over the water and back to their perches on rocks and branches. Their showy coloring was a glorious sight and there were numbers of them. About twenty feet above the water Pacific Nighthawks were cleaving the air and calling their note - "spec-ick," and high over them, sailing back and forth, were hundreds of Northern Violet Green Swallows. Surely, a special kind of juicy morsel was on the wing that late afternoon, for that performance was never repeated during the following ten days of our stay.

----- Caroline H. Daugherty

We are happy to add the name of Miss Ella Johns to our list of Life Members.

There is still time to enter the National Audubon Contest, "What does my Audubon Membership Mean to me Today?" by sending in a statement of not more than three hundred words. Entries must be received by Dec. 15, and winners will be announced in January 1942. Send your entry to National Audubon Society, 1006 Fifth Ave., New York.

"FOOD FOR FREEDOM" - let the birds help - by destroying harmful pests, eating weed seeds, etc. Migrating birds are credited by agriculturalists with destroying the red worm plague of the Atlantic Coast cotton crop.

Sympathy of the Society is extended to Mrs. Grace Brown in her bereavement over the loss of her mother.

CHRISTMAS GIFT SUGGESTIONS! A year's subscription to Nature Magazine, a copy of Hoffman's "Birds of the Pacific States," Peterson's "Field Guide to Western Birds," or Mrs. Hood's delightful book on California Wild Flowers. See Mrs. Shearer about the magazine or Miss Greely about the books.



A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Dear Father, hear and bless
Thy beasts and singing birds;
And guard with tenderness
Small things that have no words.

