

T H E

Western Tanager



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A LOCAL CONSERVATION PROJECT

By W. Dan Quattlebaum

The success and popularity of the San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary indicate that bird sanctuaries are feasible and useful. This area was set aside to protect a colony of Cardinals which had established itself there. The Cardinals are thriving and seem to be increasing.

It is also a haven for other land and water birds, some of which - Green Heron - Nuttall and Willow Woodpecker particularly - are hard pressed for favorable territory. The sanctuary is one of the few local places where the California Cuckoo may be seen. It is the summer home of Tree Swallows, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Russet-backed Thrushes and Chats, and the winter home of Egrets, Sora and Virginia Rails, Killdeer, Pipits, Hermit Thrushes and Gambel Sparrows.

Red-bellied Hawks, Quail, Flickers, Thrashers, Wrens, Bushtits, Red-wings, Yellow-throats, Towhees and Song Sparrows live and sing there the year around. In the fall, flocks of Cedar Waxwings feast on the wild grapes. And surely its woods and marshes give cover to many wee, winsome creatures, which we seldom, if ever, see. One hundred and twenty-three species (Cogswell) of birds have been observed there.

This strip of woods and river are also a habitat for uncommon flora, as alder, creek dogwood, willow, tules, horsetail (*equisetum*), watercress and yerba mansa.

Except for midsummer, the sanctuary is a mecca for nature lovers. In fact, during the nesting season there are rather too many visitors. (While there alone last spring, Mr. & Mrs. Cardinal remarked to me that they were surprised at the way we slashed through their sanctuary.) These visitors include local Audubon Societies, Bird Clubs, school teachers and Boy Scouts. Among the visitors last year were Mr. Guy Emerson, president of the National Audubon Society and Mr. C. A. Harwell, their California representative.

We here present a red rose tribute to those whose dreams and deeds have made the sanctuary a haven for our feathered friends. Prominent among these are the Stultzs, Combys, Cates, Pellissiers, National, California and Los Angeles Audubon Societies. We also express appreciation to those who have promoted the welfare of the sanctuary, with special mention of Mr. George Dowker, and of the Messrs. H. L. Cogswell and A. L. Berry, who have regularly conducted field trips.

The last time I was in the sanctuary a Cardinal, Thrasher, Gambel Sparrow and several crickets voiced to me in song their appreciation for the sanctuary, and I am sorry that space forbids, else I would gladly tell you all they said.

FIELD GROUP - Active birding trips the second and fourth Sundays of the month.

March 14, - Start at dawn (7:15) at Santa Monica beach and pier; from Los Angeles take Venice Short Line to Ocean and Colorado Aves. at base of pier. We will cover the beach until 9 a.m. then leave for other spots down the coast as far as Playa del Rey.

March 28, - San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary - Early arrivals will go farthest afield and likely see the most birds, but everyone meet near the entrance at noon for lunch and discussion. Howard L. Cogswell, leader.

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WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Los Angeles:
Mr. Gerald F. Austin, 8590 Rosewood Ave.
Mrs. Ruth J. McCune, 4915 Glen Albyn Dr.
Mrs. Miss Ruth Lohr, 3392 Bennett Dr.

Called to their attention by Miss Georgie Ware, several members had the rare pleasure of seeing a Painted Redstart at a private estate in Altadena. It had been banded on a previous visit.

* * *

A letter of grateful appreciation has been received from the Children's Hospital for scrap books prepared by Mrs. W. Willis. A similar scrap book has just been completed for the same institution by Miss Dorothy Croft.

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. H. H. McMillan Mrs. Margaret Dowker
Jan. 15, 1943 (Mother of Mr. G. Dowker)

MARCH CALENDAR

FIELD TRIP: Thursday, March 4, - Huntington Library, San Marino. Take Sierra Madre Line, Gate 10, Pacific Electric Sta., 6th and Main Sts. L.A. at 8:52 a.m. arriving at Library Station at 9:27 a.m. (Because of constantly changing schedules it would be wise to check with the P. E. Co. before starting). Fare 25¢ each way. Beautiful 10 min. walk up San Marino Ave. and Stratford Road to entrance. No admission after 10 a.m. Conducted tour through Desert Plant Garden (where Cactus Wrens nest), the Palm collection and the Oriental Garden. Leave grounds at 12 noon. Cars leave for Los Angeles at 12:28. Those wishing to remain for the afternoon bring light lunch and return to the grounds at 1 p.m.

BOARD MEETING: Tuesday, March 16, - 10 a.m. at the beach home of Miss Bonnie C. Green, 2424 Silverstrand Ave., Hermosa Beach. Bring picnic lunch. Take Redondo Beach bus leaving Subway Terminal Bus Deck at 8:50 a.m. Get off at 22nd St. Hermosa Beach, walk back to 24th St. then three blocks up the hill to Silverstrand, then one half block north.

PROGRAM MEETING: Thursday, March 18 - 1:30 p.m. State Bldg. Exposition Park. Since Arbor Day comes in March we are especially favored in having Dr. J. C. Merriam speak on "The Human Value of the Redwoods." Dr. Merriam is president and one of the founders of the Save-the-Redwoods League and president emeritus of Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C. He is known for his writings on historic geology, paleontology and the problems of scientific research. He is an authoritative writer on the interpretation of nature, as in "The Living Past," and in a new book soon to appear. His articles and addresses have emphasized the inspirational and educational values of State Parks and National Parks.

Charles A. Harwell will be present to outline plans for a spring conference of the Southern California societies affiliated with the National Audubon Society.

STUDY CLASSES: Thursday, March 25, at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. L. A.

Nature Study - 10 a.m. - Subject: "Palms Growing in California." Speakers will be Miss Charlotte Fox and Mrs. Grace Crawford.

Birds - 11 a.m. - Subject: "Birds in Fable and Folklore," by Mrs. May Warren and others. Also, "Birds Among the Constellations," by Miss Laura Greely.

Immediately after the program there will be a tree planting ceremony in the garden honoring our past president, Miss Laura Greely.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT:

Refuges and sanctuaries maintained by groups or individuals all indicate that there are many who realize the importance of preserving our natural heritage. This is not enough. Every individual in the land should know the value of his natural environment and strive through that understanding to lend his effort to its protection and preservation. It is not only for their utility that we need the forests, wildlife, mountains, and all the natural resources that are fundamentals of our country, but we need their beauty for our uplift and inspiration. Beauty and utility go hand in hand in a true aesthetic appreciation.

This is the strategic time for nature groups to make conservation the leading activity of their programs. With careful and wise planning now, we may preserve much for the future of our country and for those of whom John Muir has said, "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home, that wilderness is a necessity."

One February morning in 1942, a neighbor greeted me with these words, "The red-bird is back." Late in October 1941, Mr. Cardinal (my particular friend) had discontinued his frequent visits to the feeding tray near the house and to the fence-posts in the little picnic woods adjoining the San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary. His mate always more timid, came for a week longer, late each afternoon, chirped and ate the nutmeats which were put out there for her, then she was seen no more. Believing that the birds had migrated, I did not look for them during the period from October 1941 to February 1942, so I was glad to hear that they had been seen again.

Since his reappearance on February 2, 1942 I have kept a record of Mr. Cardinal's visits during the year. On 296 days he has been here to feed, at least once a day. During midsummer he and his mate came to the house and to the little woods many times daily. Late, on summer afternoons, when the feeding tray was crowded with English sparrows and competition was too keen, Mr. Cardinal wisely waited until about 7:15 each evening after the other birds had retired, then he appeared and ate leisurely, with enjoyment. Sometimes Mrs. Cardinal accompanied him but if not he always flew away with a morsel in his bill for her. Often during the day he came to coax me down to the little woods to feed him and I always promptly complied with his request.

During the last of October or early November, I wondered whether I should have to bid the birds good-bye. Mr. Cardinal stayed away from the fence-posts for a week at one period and again for two weeks, although I continued to call him and put out food twice daily. No doubt he was near checking up on my promise to provide nutmeats regularly for him. So long as he knew that I was faithful he did not bother to be seen. Sometime had I returned to the woods a few minutes after leaving, he might have been seen eating. Now I am sure that he and the other cardinals were in the sanctuary during the period that he was missed but I did not realize it.

Joining the Los Angeles Audubon Society has given me a new interest in my enthusiasm for birding. I have kept my pact of friendship with the cardinal and my reward has been to continue to see the flash of red through the trees as this gorgeous bird wings his way toward the fence-posts of the little picnic woods in answer to my call.

My concern for these beautiful cardinals and the many other bird friends is that they may be spared for years to come. I shall strive as much as possible to promote the conservation of wildlife and hope that others may do likewise.

---Hazel Lewis

The January program meeting was one long to be remembered. Mrs. Charles Michael, Ranger Naturalist of Yosemite Nat'l Park and an honorary member of our society, in her charming way told of experiences with the wildlife there. Her colored motion pictures brought to many of us, who rarely have the privilege to visit it, the breath-taking beauty of the Yosemite seen through the eyes of an artist.

The February program meeting was equally interesting. Mr. W. Scott Lewis talked to us about the "Insect World" and as always held his audience in rapt attention. His insect pictures are gems of artistic arrangement. To anyone who missed either of these programs we can only say, "we are sorry."

On the Echo Park field trip February 4, thirty members and guests circled the lake, personally conducted by groups of hopeful coot which had quickly discovered that several members carried bread crumbs. The morning bird list, 24 species, included two Baldpate ducks and a Cackling Goose. The Mickey Audubon Bishop bird fountain was visited, Mr. Frank Davis pointed out interesting trees and Mr. Frank Becherer read a fine list of birds seen on a recent trip to Tennessee.

Nineteen members, including Mr. George Willett, gathered for the more strenuous field trip at Recreation Gun Club to study shore and water birds. Sixty-six species was their reward which included a White-fronted Goose and a Duck Hawk.

During a recent storm I had a chance to observe the action of gulls and other birds. While it rained so hard a large flock of gulls huddled together on the inner beach where they were somewhat protected. The following day with the wind still high and the seas lashing furiously they ventured out seeking food.

The gulls arose and were held almost stationery by the wind until they would slip down suddenly and fly some distance before being forced to repeat the maneuver. It seemed as though they flew against a solid wall until they found an open window and slipped through. They would fly over the wild ocean, dropping down through the spindrift to snatch tidbits from the very jaws of the combers which seemed determined to engulf them. Often they escaped by inches only.

There was a large flock of sanderlings feeding along the beach. How they escaped the wild surf seemed a miracle. Often they would be forced to use wings as well as legs in order to escape.

The Cabrillo Marine Museum has just completed a number of bird habitat groups which the Audubon Society and its friends are cordially invited to see. There are thirty groups including a large cliff containing twenty-eight birds.

--Dr. William L. Lloyd, Director Marine Museum

Those who read the Audubon Magazine supplements, containing the "Season" reports will find out from this bi-monthly account of the seasonal occurrences of birds throughout the country. Our Southern California region report, edited by Howard L. Cogswell (assisted by Don Eckelberry) is sponsored by the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

In the "Season" we give a summary of general conditions in the bird world as affected by the weather, man's activities, etc.; then, in the check-list order, accounts of the migration and nesting of separate groups or species with special mention of rarities and names of the observers reporting them.

The area which our local report covers is the southern third of California, from the Mexican line north to and including San Luis Obispo and Kern Counties. Within those limits are some of the best and most varied birding areas in the world, many of which we cannot now, of course, go to; but we can give more detailed attention to the birds around the metropolitan areas and gather what information we can from observers in the desert and mountain regions from time to time. So, we would like to hear of interesting observations from those who are afield at all, anywhere in Southern California. Dates, places and numbers of birds seen are all important; rarities should be accompanied by details of the conditions of observation. Send all notes for the "Season" to Howard L. Cogswell, 3807 Sierra Grande St., Pasadena, Calif. (Tel. SY 6-5563).

The Extension Department has started a series of five lectures on birds for the Girl Scouts of John Burroughs Jr. High School. They are taking place in the L. A. County Museum, Exposition Park on Saturday mornings (10:15 sharp).
Feb. 20, "The Bird and How to Study Him" March 13, "Other Los Angeles Birds"
Feb. 27, "Attracting Birds to Your Yard" March 20, "Birds from Sea to Sierra"
March 6, "Conservation" ...C. A. Harwell

The first four talks will be confined to birds of L.A. County and at each meeting we will show how to identify in the field, the birds most adaptable to the title of the talk. Mrs. Hood will need six assistants at each meeting who will come prepared to answer questions about any one bird. If you can spare a few moments to join in this grand opportunity to help the Scouts, at one or more meetings, please phone Mrs. Hood at HEMPSTEAD 0974.

Anyone who would like to brush up on their bird study is most welcome.