

Western Tanager



VOL. XII

March, 1946

NO. 7

FROM A LOOKOUT'S NOTEBOOK

.....

By GEORGIE WARE

Taking up the duties of Lookout on beautiful Liebre Mountain I found myself in the domain of a pair of golden eagles. To have eagles soaring past my windows at frequent intervals throughout the day was a delightful new experience. And in the weeks that followed, as I gained an insight into their habits and personalities, I became very fond of the great birds.

Near the tower lived a colony of California ground squirrels. Growing sleek and fat and delectable on myriads of ripening wildflower seeds and juicy grasshoppers they were much in demand by the hungry youngsters at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Eagle. Dozens of times a day the air-raid warning, in the form of a sharp, high-pitched note from a watchful sentry, sent them diving into their shelters brief seconds - with good fortune - ahead of the eagle's talons. That they recognized their enemy on sight was evident from the fact that they ignored approaching ravens. Favorite aquiline strategy was to soar in low and swiftly behind a screen of scrub-oak, hedge-hopping it neatly in hopes of surprising the intended victim. After the young eagles were in the air the raids on this colony were for the most part discontinued, wisely conserving such convenient resources for a future need, and the parents now sought more distant hunting grounds.

The young eagles were playful fellows always ready to welcome a companion for a game of tag in the air. This the ravens thoroughly approved of and many were the lively skirmishes which resulted. The eagle might get nipped occasionally, but the raven, never! Once a young eagle was seen to sail out and join a party of three condors circling slowly as they approached the mountain. The splendid size of the proud beauty dwindled in comparison with the sedate old monarchs. And after a turn or two he departed, sans enthusiasm, as they showed no interest in his company.

From their homes in the mountains off to the southwest condors frequently passed near the tower on their way to or from hunting expeditions out over the desert. Usually they traveled alone. Once a group of four was seen.

One day a fine young bird paid me quite a visit. For nearly half an hour he soared about searching every foot of ground in the vicinity. He came close and circled the tower several times, pausing briefly in the strong wind to investigate the possibilities of the garbage pit. I, an enthusiastic welcoming committee of one, was out on the cat-walk, and he eyed me as much as to say he did not approve of the Forest Service rules which forbid throwing garbage in the yard. Neither did I at the moment. Nice white wing-patches he had, and head and neck all black. To see at such close range - perhaps fifty feet -- the action of those great wings as he rode the wind so beautifully was an opportunity for which I was very grateful to my giant visitor. Once an example of tremendous speed was shown. It was very late afternoon when a condor came by soaring in wide circles as he passed over the mountain, home-ward-bound from the desert. As I watched with high-powered glasses he abruptly ceased circling and lit out in a bee line for home, disappearing in the distance - still soaring - with astonishing rapidity.

THE WESTERN TANAGER

Published Monthly, October to June, by

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Los Angeles Branch of the
National Audubon Society

Headquarters: Plummer Park, 7377 Santa
Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 46

President Mrs. J. H. Comby
Route 3, Box 378-F, Whittier
Telephone: Whittier 41-4236

Executive Secretary . . Miss I. M. Wilson
4314 Los Feliz Blvd., Los Angeles 27
Telephone: Normandy 1-4279

Treasurer Miss Bonnie C. Green
774 N. Heliotrope Dr., Los Angeles 27
Telephone: Morningside 1-5537

Curator-Librarian Mrs. Mary B. Salmon
1117 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles 46
Telephone: Granite 9312

Field Leader . . Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty
Telephone: Citrus 2-2437

Evening Program Chairman . . R. W. Julian
Telephone: Walnut 7853

Editor Miss Laura Greely
904 Kendall Ave., South Pasadena
Telephone: Blanchard 7-1849

Membership Dues

Student (12 to 18 yrs. of age), 75¢., Annual, \$1.50; Life, \$25; Patron, \$100. Joint membership with National Audubon Society, with "Audubon Magazine, \$5 (minimum). Annual dues payable July 1; delinquent Dec. 31. Membership Chairman, Miss Charlotte J. Fox, 5442 Monroe St., Los Angeles 38. Telephone: HI 2433

CBSEVATIONS: Unusually numerous this year throughout Los Angeles territory: Western robin, Alaska hermit thrush and mountain bluebird. Three white pelicans have been dividing their time between Echo Park and Silver Lake reservoir. Could they be the same three seen there the last two years? A male and a female hooded merganser staying the winter on Lincoln Park lake. A 100-mile rainy day's birding trip Feb. 3 was rewarded with a long list of species, topped with 69 mountain plover, 2 golden eagles (watched diving to ground level) and 300-plus mountain bluebirds. Baird's cormorant observed in several localities.

WATCH NOW FOR migrating hummingbirds, - black-chinned, costa, rufous and Allen's; western flycatcher, swallows, western warbling vireo, Arizona hooded and Bullock's orioles.

....Caroline H. Daugherty

NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME!

Mrs. Tula L. Copening
1411 Oak St., South Pasadena
Dr. Dewey Q. Gregory
1814-A Orchard Ave., Glendale 6
Mrs. G. D. Grupe
701 Marigold Ave., Corona del Mar
Miss Mary L. James
302 Alvarado St., Redlands
Mrs. Jason S. Joy
630 Warner Ave., Los Angeles 24
Dr. Geo. O. MacGregor
320 E. Broadway, Glendale 5
Miss Gladys M. Murray
5957 West 8th St., Los Angeles 36
Bert Pack
14324 Roblar PI., Sherman Oaks
Don Pack
14916 Greenleaf St., Van Nuys
87] Don Wilmot
14535½ Gilmore, Van Nuys

WITH DEEP REGRET we announce the death of Mrs. Carl Schmitt Jan. 31, and of Mrs. Charlotte McKay Edwards, Feb. 16.

READ, in "Audubon Magazine", January, February, 1946, the tribute to - Dr. Frank M. Chapman, who died Nov. 15, 1945. One of the great ornithologists of the world, he was Honorary President of the National Audubon Society.

NEEDED: Back numbers of "The Western Tanager." If you have any for which you have no further use, please send them to Mrs. Salmon or Miss Greely.

MRS. WM. CLARK BROWN has changed her membership status from "Annual" to "Life." An excellent example!

"MODERN BIRD STUDY," by Ludlow Griscom, chairman of the Board, National Audubon Society, has been added to our library in Plummer Park.

MARK KERR writes from Pearl City, T.H. "The bird walks here are interesting, but I surely miss the California walks."

"WILL THE TIME COME when all the marsh lands will be made into bird sanctuaries by the state? Why not?" asks Mrs. Enid Michael. "Let us do whatever we can do to secure a sanctuary at Playa del Rey," Mr. Bowersock reminds us.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT -

Our conservation problems become more complex as the area in which we live develops. There are fewer places for our water birds, more commercialization of our natural areas in forests and parks, and greater changing of natural habitats everywhere as plans to conform nature to a man-made program are evolved. The importance of this situation is keenly felt by the thousands who have learned to appreciate Nature in her various fields, and it is to those individuals and groups that we must look for an intelligent approach to the solving of these problems. Whether or not our small part of the world will be able to maintain a balance in this development of our country will depend in large measure upon how much of our wishful thinking we can transform into action.

-----ERNA COMBY

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS. By the time this reaches you there will have been given three of the five lectures which were on this initial schedule for the Pacific Coast. The committee feels that, as an educational project, it has been a success. Financially it has carried itself. However, the committee wants to know how the society as a whole feels about having the Audubon Screen Tours in the future. Let the committee have the benefit of your opinion; at the same time, without obligating yourself, indicate the number of memberships which you will probably take. In all probability the fee will be \$2, the same as in the past. Please send your reply on the enclosed postal card.

-----R. W. JULIAN, Chairman.

THE NATURE COURSE. The opening session of the Nature Course being presented at the County Museum by the society under the direction of Mrs. Mary V. Hood got off to a fine start Tuesday, Feb. 19, with approximately 125 persons in attendance, representing numerous organizations. The topic, "Life Zones in California," brought out the importance of habitat and elevation in identification, and was illustrated by Mrs. Hood with her own excellent kodachromes of wildlife peculiar to each altitude. Some twenty members of the society assisted at the tables on which mounted specimens were displayed. The course is being given in the Educational Division and there were no empty seats in the lecture room. The demand for just such a course among organizations working with young people is evident, and the society is gratified to be able to give it. The course will continue until the end of March, the Tuesday evening lecture being repeated the following Thursday evening. While the different programs are correlated, each meeting is independent in itself, and leaders and their assistants are welcome to join at any time.

BIRDS SEEN IN PLUMMER PARK. In three hours' time, Jan. 13, twenty-three different kinds of birds were seen at the food tray and bath by Harriet Damert and Mrs. Mary E. Salmon. Besides the regular ones was a white-throated sparrow (extremely rare in this area), robin, San Diego towhee, hermit thrush, flicker (taking a bath), western gnatcatcher, bushtits, ruby-crowned kinglet, song sparrow, Anna's hummingbird, green-backed goldfinch, titmouse. Some time before this a pair of wrentits spent several days here. This brings our list up to 60 for the years we have been observing and recording birds in Plummer Park. . . One enjoys what Edwin Way Teale says in "The Lost Woods" about "the clear ethereal song of a white-throated sparrow singing at dawn."

-----M.B.S.

THE WESTERN TANAGER has received a letter from Ensign Gilbert G. Benjamin, a member in U.S.N.R., giving an account of a three-day visit to the Hawaiian Islands. He writes of flying over the crater of Diamond Head on Oahu and looking down into it at the military installations there; of a muleback ride over a mountain trail just wide enough for one mule to pick his way along, between walls which reminded one of Zion Canyon; of all kinds of ferns, from tree ferns down to the small, delicately leafed maidenhair variety; of orchids and gardenias growing wild; of fascinating folklore and legends told by their guide, a native Hawaiian; of a visit to the "City of Refuge," an ancient walled city where violators of tabus, fleeing from justice, could seek safety; of interesting maritime creatures found along the beach. The entire trip a "wonderful experience."

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY CALENDAR FOR MARCH, 1946..

FRIDAY, MARCH 1. Audubon Screen Tour. See special Screen Tour Announcement.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7. Field Trip in Arroyo Seco Park, directly south of Pasadena Ave. bridge, Highland Park. Take "W" car going north on Broadway, to junction of Figueroa St., York Blvd. and Pasadena Ave., a ride of from 30 to 40 minutes. Walk four blocks east on Pasadena Avenue, cross the bridge, thence one block south to park. Those not caring to walk may take Monterey Park (P.E.) bus leaving Figueroa St. and Pasadena Ave. at approximately 9:05 and every half hour thereafter. Fare, 5¢. Get off at east end of bridge. Those driving up Speedway, leave Speedway at sign "Avenue 64-South Pasadena." Bird walk starts at 9:30 A.M. Bring lunch and return to picnic tables at 11:30. After lunch, we shall hear from two distinguished guests, Mr. Theodore Payne and Mr. Donald H. Fry, who will tell us about hopes and plans to restore to the Arroyo some of its former beauty and value. Mr. Payne, noted authority on native planting, will discuss trees, shrubs and wildflowers which should be planted there, and Mr. Fry, chairman of the Beautification Committee of South Pasadena, Inc., will tell of plans to establish a bird sanctuary.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9. 9 A.M. to 12 Noon. San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary museum. (See notice below for directions.) An illustrated talk on birds for Student Members and other young people, presented by the Committee on Youth Leadership, Mrs. O. B. Pratt, chairman.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14. 7 P.M. Central Library, Fifth St. and Grand Ave. First floor.

Mr. R. W. Julian presiding. Speaker, Mr. W. Scott Lewis; subject, "Wildflowers of Southern California," shown in natural color. Mr. Howard L. Cogswell, leader of the field trip Sunday, March 24, will tell what birds are likely to be seen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 21. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Second floor. Mr. Guy C. Caldwell, a much traveled man with wide experience will talk and will imitate many birds and animals. Adventures with a candid camera will be shown in color. The conservation of trees and birds will be stressed. Mrs. Carl Smith, Program Chairman.

SUNDAY, MARCH 24. Field Trip; Mill Creek Marsh (old Chino Gun Club), 12 miles s.e. of Pomona. An excellent inland tule marsh with nearby boggy meadow and border of willows, and surrounded by open farm land rich in bird life. Rails, gallinules, Wilson's snipe, nesting marsh hawks and mallards, and vesper and grasshopper sparrows have been highlights of trips there in former years. Special permission has been obtained for us to visit this area. It is desired that all going will meet at Holt Ave. (U.S. Highway 70, 99) and Garey Ave. in Pomona at 8:30 A.M., whence it is a half-hour auto trip to the marsh. Howard L. Cogswell, leader. Those driving who can take a passenger, and those needing transportation, telephone Mrs. Julian, Walnut 7853.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28. 10 A.M. Study Class, Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. From downtown Los Angeles take Santa Monica Blvd. car to Fuller Ave. Walk one block west. Discussion subject, the Wren family, their distribution in this area and their odd nesting habits. Various members will lead the discussion on species, but all members are urged to study the text on this family as given in Hoffman's "Birds of the Pacific States." Mrs. Thomas R. Shearer, leader. Bring lunch and spend the afternoon at headquarters.

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Owned and operated by the National Audubon Society

SUNDAY, MARCH 10. Field trip, starting from the entrance, 2610 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte, at 9 A.M. Leader supplied by the local committee, Mrs. J. H. Comby, chairman. Telephone, Whittier 41-4236. Sanctuary telephone, Whittier 6-3748. Take lunch. Pasadena-Long Beach (P.E.) bus, four trips daily each way, stops at Temple School, opposite Sanctuary. From downtown Los Angeles go to El Monte by bus or train and transfer to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:38 A.M. (Telephone Tucker 7272 for best schedule.) If driving, go east on Third St. to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee Ave., thence north to sanctuary.