

Western Tanager



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A LIVING CHRISTMAS TREE

By Erna Comby, President, Los Angeles Audubon Society

As we look over the records for the past year and glean from them accomplishments which have highlighted the program, fancy teases us to paint a Christmas picture.

Our Los Angeles Audubon Society is like a living Christmas tree. We may trim it this Yuletide season with achievements that have enriched our program and that will cause our tree to sparkle and gleam. Tall and sturdy is this tree, well tended by the efforts of our Publicity Committee. Its roots are deep, for they are in good soil, made rich with the elements of interest in various phases of nature and devotion to the cause of conservation. As it grows, the branches have become vigorous with many activities. The trunk is encased in a healthy coat of bark well nourished by our treasury which, while never affluent, nevertheless seems flexible enough to maintain ordinary standards of life. The needles are rich and spicy with the kindly wishes and interest of all who know this tree.

On the tip is a shining silver star to represent the fervent thankfulness we feel that the shadow of war is lifted from our country and that we have been able to conduct our efforts on a high note of building for the future. It is gratifying to know that some of the projects that fit well into a peacetime program had their inception during war years, with their difficulties and handicaps, and we feel a great deal of pride that our efforts to see ahead are justified by the manner in which our program has adapted itself with little variation to the tempo of the times.

Five hundred golden bells of membership encircle the upper branches. Nearly half of them have a deeper tone for theirs is the added pleasure of belonging to the National Society. On the branch to the left is a beautiful ship in full sail. It is our publication, "The Western Tanager," one of the most far-reaching of our attractions. It is prized wherever it goes for its brief but interesting contents and its friendly spirit. Though small, it is our ship of state, and this year it has sailed farther and more gallantly than ever before aided by a gift of \$200 from our warmhearted friend, Mickey Audubon Bishop.

To the right is a blue and gold airplane. It is there by the eloquent thanks of those who have enjoyed carefully planned field trips, both near and far, some for week days, others on Sundays. Field, marsh, mountain, - all have contributed to our knowledge and pleasure.

Our efforts to assist boy and girl Scouts, to help leaders of Youth groups, and to establish Junior Audubon Clubs are indicated by the chain of glistening adornment that winds in and out among the verdent branches. It trims the tree beautifully and yet it is a modest symbol of the accomplishments of the Youth Leadership Committee which has developed outstanding material for use in this work.

Soft snow interspersed with glistening globules rests upon the branches here and there. It symbolizes our meetings, both evening and afternoon, the former at the Los Angeles City Library, the latter at the County Museum. Many highlights from these programs of nature pictures and lectures will remain in our memory.

Among the white and green there is room for a beautiful red bell. It points up the work of our Study Class at Plummer Park, that has grown in interest and attendance and has opened the door to many an exciting vista in nature in the field of plants and animals.

Here and there from the branches hang lovely crystal balls. They are vibrant

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THE WESTERN TANAGER

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Headquarters in 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. Mrs. C. J. Parker
821 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra
Telephone: ATLantic 1-2490

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

Field Leader. Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty
Telephone: CHarleston 6-1747

Sunday Field Leader. . . . H. L. Cogswell
Telephone: WHittier 6-3748

Program Chairman. . . . Mrs. O. M. Stultz
Telephone: FItzroy 7537

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 Soc'y., including "Audubon Magazine," \$5 (minimum). Membership Chairman, Mrs. Wm. T. Shelford, 3315 W. 41st St., Los Angeles 43. AXminster 0410.

OBSERVATIONS: Two wild Mallard Ducks and flock of 35 Greater Yellow-legs Oct. 21, Griffith Park, and 1 Wilson's Snipe Nov. 9. Fifty Western Grebe, 5 White Pelicans, 5 White-fronted Geese, 300 Ring-necked Duck, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, Chatsworth Reservoir Nov. 1. White-tailed kites: 2 near Piru, 2 in Chatsworth area. One Slender-billed Nuthatch, Griffith Park, Nov. 9. Thurber's Juncos commonly seen since Oct. 17. Mrs. Ruth McCune reports a flock feeding in school yard, Mt. Washington. Flock of 25 in Burbank yard, with Gambel's Sparrows, Golden-crowned Sparrows and Valley Quail, all feeding together. Chickadees in many areas. Ruby-crowned Kinglets every where. G. Ware reports flocks of Western Bluebirds in San Fernando Valley.

WATCH NOW FOR: Wild ducks and Mergansers, Western Robins, Varied Thrush, Western Bluebirds, Golden-crowned Kinglets (perhaps!), Cedar Waxwings and Fox Sparrows.

...CAROLINE H. DAUGHERTY

NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME !

• A. Balascas
1011 W. 2nd St., Los Angeles 12

• Miss Christine Billifeldt
924 W. 55th St., Los Angeles 37

• Mr. & Mrs. Armond D. Brattland, and
Armond Brattland, Jr.,
2610 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte

• Miss Mabel Grace Brown
4021 W. 2nd St., Los Angeles 4

• Miss Estelle E. Cameron
1314 S. Hoover St., Los Angeles 6

• Mr. Harvey R. Cheeseman
535 E. Lomita Ave., Glendale 5

• Mrs. J. W. Gelhardt
5503 Tampa Ave., Tarzana

• Mrs. Lyman C. Hill
6869 Pacific View Dr., Hollywood 28

• Misses Ella, Ethel & Kate Hostetter
4422 Victoria Park Dr., Los Angeles 6

• Mrs. Florence H. Karge
1934 See Drive, Whittier

• Miss Helen Klockgatter
907-B S. Marguerita Ave., Alhambra

• Mr. Richard E. Leist
1367 Virginia Ave., Glendale 2

• Mrs. John P. Massena
P.O. Box 382, Laguna Beach

• Dr. Loyal Holmes Miller (Honorary)
10333 Louisiana Ave., Los Angeles 25

• Mr. Allen H. Morgan
Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine

• Mrs. Lydia Richardson
420 N. Avenue 6/, Los Angeles 42

• Mrs. Helen G. Roberts
4413 Clarissa Ave., Hollywood 27

• Mrs. Horace Singleton, Miss Sandra F.
Singleton and Wm. J. Singleton
509 S. Alhambra Ave., Monterey Park

• Miss Calla Smith
4167 Elmer Ave., North Hollywood

• Miss Isabel A. Swenson
55 Fremont Place, Los Angeles 5

• Mr. E. P. Terry
2586 Aberdeen Ave., Los Angeles 27

• Mrs. Hilda M. Thomas
1514 Bryn Mawr Ave., Santa Monica

• Miss Myra Anna Wilmot
4861 Lemon Grove Ave., Los Angeles 27

DO YOU NOTICE, in the above list, that Audubon activities have become a center of interest to the entire family circle in some homes, - the Brattlands, the Hostetters and the Singletons?

WANTED: Copies of "The Tanager" for October and November, 1946, - provided you have no further use for yours.

("A Living Christmas Tree" Continued from front page)

with life and color, for they remind us of the dedication of the Bar V. Ranch School for Boys as a Los Angeles Audubon Sanctuary. It has become a refuge for birds and other wildlife and is a center for nature interest. The bells call attention also to our participation in interesting the county and regional Planning Commissions in plan for a bird sanctuary at Playa del Rey, and to the fact that we have kept in close contact with the War Department and its plans for the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary area. Perhaps some day these plans may become actualities, and we keep these hopes before us as we look with pleasure upon the tree.

There are many stars on this Christmas Tree and each tells a story. The headquarters at Plummer Park, with its fine library and its new collection of bird skins; the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary of the National Audubon Society, which has developed a program of interest to a variety of groups; the sale of books and other material to interested people; the Educational Fund, by means of which we have purchased around \$500 worth of material for youth work, and which enabled us to help send a member to the Audubon Nature Camp schools this summer.

We place with pleasure a token of our pride that for the second time we have been first in the Nation's Christmas bird count, and another for our Christmas party that brought the Yuletide close to us in cordial hospitality. Somewhere among the gleaming branches we place a star to commemorate participation in the annual meeting in New York as a branch of the National Audubon Society. Your president was proud to share some of the highlights of our society's program with other leaders and to accept congratulations on achieving the highest percentage of gain in membership in the first year in the role of a branch of the National Society.

We have left to the last a tiny figure that represents courage, resourcefulness and vision, and we place it very near the top, for it reminds us that our society launched the Audubon Screen Tours in our area and made of the venture an unqualified success.

The tree is loaded, and as we press the button it becomes sparkling and gleaming with joyous Christmas spirit created by those whose wholehearted efforts furnished the adornments with which it is trimmed. It is a beautiful tree, for it represents united effort, loyalty, cooperation and harmony, and a combination of these is the motif of our Christmas message.

OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thursday, December 5, at 2 P.M., in the clubhouse in Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. From downtown Los Angeles take Santa Monica Blvd.-West Hollywood car, get off at Fuller Avenue and walk one block west to park entrance. The Program, House and Hospitality Committees, Mrs. Stultz, Mrs. Salmon and Miss Blind, chairmen, respectively, have joined forces in plans for what promises to be an occasion of Christmas cheer and good fellowship. Members may bring friends as guests.

There will be Christmas carols, with Miss Sarah Ellen Barnes at the piano. Our president, Mrs. Comby, will tell a Christmas story. A program of songs will follow. Mr. William Spencer Clarke, soloist for All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, will sing "The Redwood Trees" and "River"; words and melody by George Cossitt White, with musical arrangement by Mary Scott White. Mr. Clarke will be accompanied at the piano by Mrs. White.

At the close of the program tea will be served by the Hospitality Committee, after which the House Committee invites everyone present to visit our headquarters, one of the historical landmarks of Hollywood.

Do not forget to bring a Christmas present for the birds of Plummer Park! Mrs. Salmon says she has an ample supply of peanut hearts, but thinks a change of diet might be appreciated. How about raisins, cornmeal, nuts, seeds?

THE NEXT FIELD TRIP

Chatsworth Reservoir, January 2, 1947. A complete notice will appear in the January "Tanager"; this is just a bit of advance information. A Tanner motor bus will be chartered, and reservations will be taken by Mrs. Morain, who as vice-chairman of the Committee on Birds, is in charge of transportation for the field trips.

A CORRECTION. At the October Program Meeting Mr. C. V. Duff was inadvertently introduced as the first leader of the L.A.A.S. Study Class. He was, in fact, the second to hold that position. The first class was held Nov. 26, 1937; its leader for the year 1937-38 was Mrs. Grace Hall, of beloved memory.

-- Mrs. O. M. STULTZ, Program Chairman

THE AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS. The first "tour" this season, held November 8 under the guidance of Dr. Olin S. Pettingill, Jr., was most enjoyable, with the hall well filled. So well filled, in fact, that the Committee announces memberships for the 1946-47 season are no longer available; the hall will not accommodate more people than we now have in the Club. All members are urged to emphasize this fact to any one who might feel like coming to the next meeting (Dec. 13), expecting to take out a membership at that time. We repeat -- memberships are closed, and no one but those who present cards already obtained can be admitted to future meetings for the year ending June 30, 1947.

WE ANNOUNCE with pleasure that Dr. Loye Holmes Miller has been elected to Honorary Membership in our Society. Dr. Miller has led a rich and full life in the pursuit of Nature interests. During his years as an educator he opened the door to an understanding of natural phenomena for many thousands of people, whose lives have been enriched by their contacts with him. He has devoted much time to the advancement of Science, but has never become too absorbed to lose his interest in people, as is shown by the scores who know him as a friend. We wish for Dr. Miller many more years for the enjoyment of his interests and look forward to our association with him.

-- ERNA COMBY

"DID MR. AUDUBON start the Audubon Society?" "No." "Did Mrs. Audubon, then?" "No." This question from a Boy Scout set me hunting for facts about who started the Audubon Society. Thinking others besides this Boy Scout and myself might be interested, I submit my findings, in a few sentences following:

Dr. George Bird Grinnell coined the term "Audubon Society" in 1886, and under this title the organization was begun. In a year's time the membership reached 50,000 persons. As no fees were collected, the entire effort was dropped for lack of financial support. But nine years later, 1895, Audubon Societies were organized in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and in the next few years bird lovers from many other states followed their example. These scattered groups were organized into a National Committee of Audubon Societies, in Washington, D. C., in November, 1902. Under the direction of Wm. Dutcher, this committee did much work in securing legislation for the protection of non-game birds and employing wardens to guard breeding colonies of seabirds on the coast.

In January, 1905, "the National Association of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals" was formed. Wm. Dutcher was elected president and T. Gilbert Pearson was made secretary and financial agent. Wealthy people became interested enough to give large sums of money to this cause, among them being Mrs. Russell Sage, Mr. Albert Wilcox and others. Dr. Frank M. Chapman began editing "Bird Lore" (now "Audubon Magazine") (1910) a magazine which expressed their views on the sale of feathers of our native birds, by the millinery trade, prohibition of sale of game birds, enacting state legislation for game commissioners, game wardens and general bird protection. In 1914 the Department of Applied Ornithology was added, with Herbert K. Job in charge...This sums up the early history of the National Audubon Society.

--MARY BARNES SALMON

ELSA SCHWARTZ wonders if glaucous-winged gulls have been given the full measure of credit due them for intelligence. Recently at the beach she watched one wrestling with a discarded paper bag which evidently contained food. He nudged it, pushed it about, grabbed it in his bill and shook it vigorously. Nothing happened. He dropped it and began pecking at it, trying to tear a hole in it. Still nothing happened. Undaunted, he picked it up and flew with it to the water's edge and let incoming waves wash over it. It worked! The softened paper gave way, and the gull enjoyed his meal with gusto.

ON OCTOBER 20 thirty-seven members and guests of the Los Angeles Audubon Society sailed from Cabrillo Beach on a long -awaited pelagic bird trip aboard a chartered 65-foot fishing boat. Through dense fog our captain groped his way out of the harbor and past the breakwater, with our birding mostly a matter of ghostly shapes flying past in the fog. As we approached the western tip of Catalina Island, however, we came suddenly out of the fog in time to see an adult Bald Eagle perched majestically on a high rocky crag, and a little later two whales spouted to the westward of the sea lion colony. On the fishing banks where our skipper said birds (as well as fish) were usually plentiful we had very poor luck - a few flying fish and the ever-present Western and Heermann gulls being all that were located until we neared Santa Barbara Island, some 25 miles west of Catalina. There several Sooty Shearwaters and a total of five single Pink-footed Shearwaters were seen flying at a distance, and on the return trip those who kept a sharp lookout in the bow were rewarded with a close view of a Leach's Petrel (ssp.?) which zipped past us. Evidence of a large breeding colony of sea birds was given by guano deposits on the cliffs of Santa Barbara Island. Not many species (17) were listed for an all-day trip, but the boat ride was perfect, and all agreed we should try again, perhaps next time from Santa Barbara, where deep ocean waters closer in to shore might more likely get us the albatross we hoped for this time.

---HOWARD L. COGSWELL

AFTER A MORNING'S WORK attending to weekend chores, I placed a garden chair where I could relax and look at the mountains to the north and enjoy a cigarette. Two brown towhees, too intent upon towhee business to be bothered by me, hopped across the lawn and scratched in the dead leaves under the viburnums. A California jay sailed into the Chinese elm and perched upon a small, low-hanging branch that swayed with his momentum. As he swung he shouted at me as though I was an intruder. Two doves perched in the Jacaranda tree. They looked longingly at the bird-bath at the foot of the tree, but also they looked at me with alarm, and after some moments of indecision they seemed to decide that discretion was the better part of valor and flew away. A mockingbird on a nearby telephone pole sang mockingbird melodies and then tried to flirt with the jay. "Jaybird, jaybird, jaybird," she sang rapidly, and then, "Pret-ty bird, pret-ty bird, pret-ty bird." The jay wasn't impressed. A black phoebe perched on a neighbor's fence made occasional forays to snap up individual insects and return to his post. Two well-dressed white-crowned sparrows came up to the feed trays and sampled the seeds provided for such visitors. In a nearby tree a shrike shrieked - not because he was annoyed, but just to keep his voice in condition, I judged. High overhead soared a hawk, obviously one of the Buteos, gradually becoming invisible in the distance...I finished my cigarette and went inside. Ten minutes birding, eight species, seven families and three orders. Very good, I concluded.

---LESLIE H. YOUNG

MR. & MRS. GEORGE COSSITT WHITE were in New York at the time of the 42nd annual convention of the National Audubon Society, and they took advantage of the opportunity to attend some of the meetings. Mrs. White reports that one of the outstanding features of the program was the wildlife motion picture "South Along the Suwanee," by Allen D. Cruickshank. It will be remembered that this is to be shown here as one of the Screen Tours Monday, March 17, 1947.

A SMALL GROUP, but active and deeply interested, is the South Bay Bird Study Group. Miss Florence Archer, Hermosa Beach, is chairman, and Mrs. Lura D. Watson, Redondo Beach, is secretary-treasurer. Meeting once a month, one member reports: "We are finding that the more we study, the more we enjoy our vacation trips." The members are prominent in the club life of the South Bay district, and many are members of both the Los Angeles and the National Audubon societies.

NOW READY for distribution among the members is the official scrap book covering the past few years, arranged (so nicely!) by Miss Martha Gilbert, retiring Historian of the Society. The book is in our library in Plummer Park.

---M.B.S.