

Western Tanager



PUBLISHED MONTHLY, OCTOBER TO JUNE
BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol. XIII

ONE RAINY DAY

No 5

By Lillian G. Conklin, Member, Los Angeles Audubon Society

My family was taking off for daily duties in the city spread out below our canyon cabin. Echoes of "What a dismal day for you, Mom" floated back to me as they dashed off. Was it a dismal day? Truly, the rain was coming steadily down; the canyon was dark and overcast with storm clouds; little rivulets were running down to the stream rippling over the stones below; but dreary? I hadn't noticed.

Gazing out the window I discovered that Mr. and Mrs. Quail had brought all their friends and neighbors to breakfast on the chick feed scattered under the feeding tray. Such bobbing and scratching and gossiping as went on among the fallen leaves! I poured a cup of coffee and, with my wood fire all aglow, settled myself by the window for a better view of the outside world. Soon movement appeared in all directions. The brown towhee and its cousin, the San Diego Towhee, were busily scratching and eating. Nearby a thrasher joined in the search for breakfast. The rain almost stopped for a little while, and a hermit thrush and many juncos appeared around my doorstep, politely avoiding each other. A flicker's call caused me to raise my eyes to the oaks and sycamores towering over the cabin. The trees seemed alive with feathered folk. Bushtits were systematically combing the trees for food. They traveled on and for the first time this season mountain chickadees made themselves noticed by their antics. How they did enjoy this freshly washed canyon, as did the Audubon warblers with their constant "tchip-tchip" as they gleaned insects overlooked by the hurrying bushtits.

A California jay swooped down with a harsh cry. Suddenly even his domineering voice was stilled. A hush, ominous in its stillness, quieted the happy songs of the canyon birds. Even the ground squirrels across the stream flattened themselves on the ground. Old Ben, my bushy-tailed tree squirrel, halted his leaping from branch to branch, and little Peter Rabbit disappeared in the brush. All the canyon folk were stilled. I was not long in discovering that a Cooper hawk had descended into our glen and was watching for a morning meal for himself. I flapped my apron, interrupting his swift dash at some luckless canyon inhabitant. With a rush of wings he ascended and continued his ceaseless soaring high above us. It took a little while for the wild-life to resume its daily program.

I donned outdoor garments and sallied forth to enjoy the clean, sweet-smelling world at closer range. The canyon wren greeted me with its cheery song; Old Ben switched his tail and chattered above me; the wren-tit sent a melodious call from the chaparral; the thrasher perched on an old yucca with an "I-am-monarch-of-all-I-survey" attitude and burst into song.

I stepped along the trail, stopping now and then better to identify this sparrow or that warbler or finch and soon came to the area where the canyon spreads wider. I enjoyed the tapping of the California woodpecker, the clumsy alighting of the band-tailed pigeons, the alertness of the shrike, but missed the jewel-like hummingbird and the gaunt roadrunner which usually crossed my path at this point. It was glorious swinging along the way, with an occasional raindrop on my face. Old Sol tried his best to shine through a rift in the clouds, but I told him to take a vacation, as I liked the day just as it was. Mother Nature was doing alright on her wash day. With that for an excuse, he folded up his rays, sank behind a soft cloud and did not reappear.

I had been unmindful of the time but realized all perfect days must end and my family would be wending their way home by nightfall.

A dismal day, or dreary? No indeed!

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT -

Today we find ourselves faced with another scheme to make inroads into a Primitive Area as the Forest Service is petitioned to modify boundaries to permit the creating of a ski resort on top of glorious old San Gorgonio.

Not only is it unthinkable to the thousands of those who believe that natural areas, retained as such, are vital to the health and happiness of the Nation, but it is a serious matter also to violate the confidence of the people in the integrity of those departments in which assets that belong to succeeding generations have been placed. Primitive areas are of infinitely greater importance today than at the time they were set aside, for the dizzying pace by which we live requires the peace and quiet of places apart, where man may reassemble himself to a normal way of life. Here one may see a natural community in its pristine state, plotted by Nature, not planned by man. Strange to say, the harder man works to shape the world to his ends the greater is his need for Nature with her serene and healing ways.

The voices of those who decry the sacrilege that would be perpetrated upon one of our most beautiful wild areas by this act should be raised in a chorus the sound of which would be both deafening and convincing, a challenge we shall accept with pride in our responsibility.

---- ERNA COMBY.

A VISITOR GOES BIRDING

By Dr. Irston R. Barnes, President, Audubon Society of the District of Columbia.

When business required a trip to Los Angeles during the week of November 10, my friend, Roger Tory Peterson, suggested that I call on James Murdock and Howard Cogswell to learn of the best birding areas accessible from Los Angeles.

So, after birding along the Potomac on Saturday, I left Washington Sunday morning and at 9:45 that evening I was calling Jim Murdock from the airport asking advice. His reaction was typical of the generosity of all California Audubonites with a "visiting fireman". Plans were quickly made to have me go afield with several leaders of the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Then followed my most exciting week of birding, with the addition of some sixty new species to my life list. Afield with Jim Murdock on Monday, two early morning trips and two afternoon trips with Howard Cogswell, to the beach with Mrs. Mary V. Hood, at the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary with Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Comby, and a day with the Murdocks and Cogswells on Sunday before a 5:00 P.M. departure, - each brought opportunities for repeated and close observations of characteristic western birds. Two general impressions linger: the extraordinary success of my new friends in finding every promised bird as scheduled (I am not sure that prior appointments had not been made with individual birds); and the abundance and rich variety of birds in Southern California.

Each trip brought not only the scheduled species but some thrilling surprises. The first trip with Howard Cogswell produced an unexpected Black Oyster-catcher; another, some late Poorwills. The most pleasing experience came when he showed me my first Canyon Wren and Dipper (the bird I most wanted to observe) in the binocular field simultaneously in Santa Anita Canyon. Mrs. Hood, at Playa del Rey, showed me the richest concentration of shorebirds - over 100 Avocet, 2 Black-necked Stilt, 2 Long-billed Curlew, as well as hundreds of Hudsonian Curlew, Dowitcher, gulls, (7 species) and grebes. Mr. and Mrs. Comby produced the much-desired White-tailed Kite. And on the last day, Jim Murdock and Howard Cogswell topped off a wonderful day with a surprising Desert Sparrow.

My associations during the week yielded more than new bird acquaintances. I was greatly impressed with the work of the Los Angeles Audubon Society and I have brought back many new ideas for our own work.

It was hard to leave Southern California after such fine birding, but time had run out. The next morning at 7:30 I was watching duck and Whistling Swan on the Potomac, and before 9 I was at my desk.

OUR CHATSWORTH RESERVOIR field trip Jan. 2 really was rugged, a raw cold wind blowing all day - birding's worst type of weather. But the White-tailed Kite saved the day, soaring and hovering quite close to our group and giving many of the 55 persons present their first observation of a Kite. Other outstanding species: White Pelicans, Common and Lesser Canada geese, White-fronted Geese, the rare Wood Duck (seen by the Ecklers) American and Red-breasted Mergansers, Prairie Falcon, Ring-necked Pheasants and Cactus Wren. Altogether, 67 species. It was pleasant to have with us as a visitor Mr. Harold S. Gilbert, a member of the Portland, Oregon, Audubon Society.

---- CAROLINE H. DAUGHERTY

THE SANTA MONICA NATURE CLUB. Over two years ago several members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society living in Santa Monica called together a small group of Nature enthusiasts, led by Mr. Geo. T. Hastings. Thus the Santa Monica Nature Club came into being. Mr. Stanley Brode, professor of zoology at the City College, is vice-president. The club holds one evening meeting a month at the College and has one field trip each month. Most phases of Nature have been considered, - local rock formations, fossils, ocean life birds, shells, trees, etc. Each year members of the club have covered the Santa Monica area in the annual Christmas bird count conducted by the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

--- MAY WARRICK

RECENTLY, at the breakwater at Ballona Creek, 8 or 10 sanderlings were busily working in or on a clump of small mussels exposed by the tide. When one of the little fellows secured something worthwhile, he would fly a short distance, alighting at the water's edge, to devour his tidbit by himself. No sooner had he set foot on the shore than a Western or a Heermann gull, the big bullies, would start after him and his prize, skimming this way and that, until the smaller bird was spent and dropped the food.

--- DOROTHY E. GRONER

OBSERVATIONS: Our city park lakes are hosts to many unusual visitors this winter. Echo Park: an American Egret, a rare Wood Duck, a Cackling Goose and an immature Snow Goose, all observed Dec. 31 (Stultz). MacArthur Park: a Western Grebe, Gadwall, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup and a female Buffle-head. A rare Western Harlequin Duck, female, was found on Ballona Creek, and a Black-necked Stilt which failed to migrate, on Playa del Rey marsh Dec. 22 (the W. A. Kents). Bailey's Mountain Chickadees are becoming more numerous, but Western Robins are still scarce. Golden-crowned sparrows reported from many localities. WATCH NOW FOR Allen's Hummingbirds in early February and Rufous Hummingbirds in late February, migrants returning from the south.

---- CAROLINE H. DAUGHERTY

"JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT", writes member Robert L. Pyle, now with the AAF Weather Station in Japan, "I took a Christmas bird count here, with the help of a Japanese friend. We got 43 species and sent the list to Audubon Magazine.".

THE NATURE COURSE for youth leaders begins February 19 at the County Museum. For desired information, call Mrs. Mary V. Hood, HEmstead 0974.

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS desiring to have dinner together down town, prior to attending the next Screen Tour, Jan. 31, call Mrs. W. F. Willis, MOrningside 1-6350. Price, \$1.30.

THE FIELD TRIP March 6 will be a boat trip around the harbor, as guests of the Harbor Commission. Mrs. Morain, PArkway 0339, will take reservations after March 1.

OUR THANKS to member Charles C. Ayers, Jr., of Ottumwa, Iowa, for the delightful program he gave us at the library Jan. 9. His pictures were beautiful and most interesting.

THE NEWLY APPOINTED COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS:

Mrs. Helen M. Ackley, 351 N. Laurel Ave., Los Angeles 36. Telephone, WH 9625.

Miss Louise A. Luckan, 4801 Ambrose Ave., Los Angeles 27. Telephone, OL 1879.

Miss Martha C. Gilbert, 5609 S. Normandie Ave., Los Angeles 37. Telephone, TW 4449.

On behalf of the committee, Mrs. Ackley, chairman, earnestly requests suggestions for the important offices to be filled: President, two vice-presidents, recording secretary, executive secretary, treasurer, curator and historian. Please do not call Mrs. Ackley or Miss Luckan before 6:30 P.M.

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, Los Angeles AreaBy Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty

Dec. 22, 1946, 5:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Territory same as previous 9 years, taking in short stretch of ocean beach, salt and fresh water marsh, lagoons, canals, weedy and ploughed fields, roadsides, open country, brush-covered foothill slopes, oak and holly wooded canyon areas, city parks including park lakes, reservoirs and enclosed areas, golf courses, cemeteries, campus, city and suburban streets and yards. Sky heavily overcast nearly all day in all sections. Temp. 53°- 66°; 41 observers in 17 parties, representing Southwest Bird Study Club, Santa Monica Nature Club and the Pasadena and Los Angeles Audubon societies.

LOONS: Common, 2; Pacific, 8; red-throated, 3. GREBES: Horned, 2; eared, 5; western, 367; pied-billed, 51.

PELICANS & CORMORANTS: Brown pelican, 78; Farallon cormorant, 84; Brandt's cormorant, 1; Baird's cormorant, 1.

HERONS, Etc.: Great blue heron, 12; Amer. egret, 38; snowy egret, 42; Anthony's green heron, 3; black-crowned night heron, 32; Amer. bittern, 1.

GESE, DUCKS, Etc.: Cackling goose, 1; Gadwall, 4; baldpate, 12; pintail, 367; green-winged teal, 5; cinnamon teal, 1; shoveler, 247; wood duck, 1; redhead, 1; ring-necked duck, 1; canvas-back, 1; lesser scaup, 242; buffle-head, 1 (female, seen at 20 yds.; H.E. Ecklers); West'n harlequin duck, 1 (female; observed 20 min.); medium B&L binoc.; W.A. Kents); white-winged scoter, 6; surf scoter, 385; ruddy duck, 42; Amer. merganser, 12; red-breasted merganser, 38.

VULTURES, HAWKS, EAGLES: Turkey vulture, 3; sharp-shinned hawk, 7; Cooper's hawk, 3; red-tailed hawk, 18; golden eagle, 1; marsh hawk, 9; duck hawk, 1; sparrow hawk, 78.

QUAIL: Valley quail, 183.

RAILS, COOT: Lightfooted rail, 1; coot, 829.

SHORE BIRDS: Snowy plover, 8; semi-palmated plover, 1; killdeer, 465; black-bellied plover, 136; surf-bird, 7; ruddy turnstone, 4; black turnstone, 16; Wilson's snipe, 3; long-billed curlew, 4; Hudsonian curlew, 13; spotted sandpiper, 10; willet, 695; greater yellow-legs, 7; least sandpiper, 552; red-backed sandpiper, 20; long-billed dowitcher, 395; Western sandpiper, 200; marbled godwit, 331; sanderling, 145; avocet, 173; black-necked stilt, 1. GULLS: glaucous-winged, 242; Western, 152; herring, 25; California, 820; ring-billed, 1545; short-billed, 2; Bonaparte's, 386; Heermann's, 94. Forster's tern, 2.

PIGEONS, DOVES: Band-tailed pigeons, 48; mourning dove, 416; Chinese spotted dove, 141; ringed-turtle dove, 24.

ROADRUNNERS: Roadrunners, 4.

OWLS: Barn, 2; horned, 3; burrowing, 1.

SWIFTS & HUMMINGBIRDS: White-throated swift, 20; black-chinned hummingbird, 1 (wintering over); Anna's Hummingbird, 101.

KINGFISHERS: Belted kingfisher, 10.

WOODPECKERS: Red-shafted flicker, 149; Calif. woodpecker, 18; red-breasted sapsucker, 1; willow woodpecker, 2; Nuttall's woodpecker, 7.

FLYCATCHERS: Ash-throated, 1 (wintering over); black phoebe, 138; Say's phoebe, 16.

LARKS: Horned, 75.

JAYS, Etc.: Calif. jay, 125; raven, 4; crow, 5.

CHICKADEES, Etc.: Mountain chickadees, 8; plain titmouse, 33; bush-tit, 504; slender-billed nuthatch, 4; creeper, 1; wren-tit, 175; house wren, 6; Bewick's wren, 23; long-billed marsh wren, 6.

THRUSHES, Etc.: Mockingbird, 153; Calif. thrasher, 73; robin, 70; hermit thrush, 33; Western bluebird, 27.

OTHER PERCHING BIRDS: Western gnatcatcher, 23; ruby-crowned kinglet, 149; American pipit, 164; Cedar waxwing, 24; Calif. shrike, 77; Hutton's vireo, 5; dusky warbler, 4; Audubon's warbler, 4130; black-throated gray warbler, 1; yellow-throat, 17; English sparrow, 368; Western meadowlark, 297; San Diego red-wing, 570; tri-colored red-wing, 50; Brewer's black bird, 2617; cowbird, 3; California purple finch, 42; house finch, 7705; Cassin's purple finch, 1; willow goldfinch, 132; greenbacked goldfinch, 317; San Diego towhee, 42; brown towhee, 280;

SPARROWS: Savannah, 73; Belding's, 20; large-billed, 6; grasshopper, 1 (seen well, 8+ binoc. at 25 ft., getting all identification markings: Cogswell); lark, 5; rufous-crowned, 7; Oregon junco, 140; chipping, 8; Gambel's, 1179; golden crowned, 23; Fox, 8; Lincoln's, 6; song, 105.

TOTAL SPECIES AND SUB-SPECIES 151

INDIVIDUALS, approximately 30,713

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY MRS. J. H. COMBY, President
CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY, 1947

THURSDAY, Feb. 6. Field Trip, Griffith Park, Zoo side, Meet for bird-walk at 9:30 at picnic grounds near restaurant. Griffith Park bus (L. A. Motor Coach line) runs north on Vermont Ave., to Los Feliz to Griffith Park, starting at Monroe and Vermont (end of "V" car line) at 8:30, thence hourly on the half hour. Get off at Zoo picnic grounds. Take lunch. Meet at picnic tables near restaurant at 11:30.

Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty, Leader.

SATURDAY, Feb. 8. 9 A.M. to 12 Noon. San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. Student members and other young people are invited to meet with the Committee on Youth Leadership, to study birds. Chairman, Mrs. O. B. Pratt, 125 Beach St., Montebello; telephone, Union 1-4990. To reach Sanctuary, see directions below.

THURSDAY, Feb. 13. 7:00 P.M. Central Library, Fifth St. and Grand Ave., Los Angeles. First floor. R. W. Julian presiding. Speaker, Mrs. Mary V. Hood, First Vice-President of the Los Angeles Audubon Society; subject, "Nature Guards Her Own." Using her own kodachromes, Mrs. Hood will show the interesting devices by means of which plants and animals protect themselves.

THURSDAY, Feb. 20. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Mrs. J. H. Comby presiding. Guy C. Caldwell, the whistling naturalist, will present a program on bird life. Color reels and Kodachromes will be shown and bird and animal calls will be featured. Mr. Caldwell has "collected" bird songs on three continents, having lived in Europe for seven years prior to the first World War. In 1940 he "captured" the song of the Japanese "nightingale" on Mt. Hiea, Japan, and entertained thousands of children in Kyoto.

SUNDAY, Feb. 23. Field Trip: Coachella Valley and Salton Sea. A long trip recommended to be made with overnight stay Saturday at Indio, where accommodations can be had upon advance reservation at the Potter, the Indio or the Plaza hotels, or one of several motor courts. Conducted trip will start at 7:00 A.M. sharp from the Potter Hotel. Route will be via the east side of Salton Sea to Mullet Island (near mud pots, 6½ mi. west of Niland), where late comers can meet us from 9:00 to 10:30, thence to Calipatria (Main St. and Imperial Ave.) at 11:30, and 3 miles south to State Game Refuge on Alamo River for lunch and noon birding. We will cover creosote bush and mesquite deserts, below sea level alfalfa fields (with flocks of cranes?) and other spots in Imperial Valley, Southern California's greatest duck and goose concentration area. Mileages from Los Angeles: Indio, 127; Mullet Id., 185; Calipatria, 190; estimated total round trip, 420. Cooperation between car drivers who can take passengers and those who wish transportation can make this trip the year's best. Drivers and prospective passengers phone Mrs. C. L. Christianson, Hillside 5940, to make transportation arrangements. Leader, Howard L. Cogswell, Whittier 6-3748.

THURSDAY, Feb. 27. 10 A.M. to 12 Noon. Study Class: Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Santa Monica Blvd. - West Hollywood car. Get off at Fuller Ave., and continue on foot one block west to park entrance. Program will have emphasis upon botany and will be contributed largely by our Mr. George T. Hastings. Bring lunch. Leader, Walter Scott, Chairman Committee on Nature Study; ANgelus 2-4649.

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, operated by the National Audubon Society. Field trip, Sunday, Feb. 9, starting from the entrance, 2610 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte, at 9 A.M. The Pasadena-Long Beach bus, four trips each way daily, stops at Temple School, opposite Sanctuary. From downtown Los Angeles go to El Monte by P.E. bus or train and transfer to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:38. Telephone Information, TU 7272, for best schedule. If driving, go east on Third St., to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee Ave., thence north to Sanctuary. Mrs. J. H. Comby, chairman of Sanctuary Committee; telephone, Whittier 41-4236. Sanctuary telephone, Whittier 6-3748.

VISITORS WELCOME AT ALL MEETINGS

For desired information, telephone MOrningside 1-6350 or BLanchard 7-1849.