

Western Tanager

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BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY



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FIVE YEARS WITH THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY By ERNA COMBY

"Today is your day and mine, the only day we have, the day in which we play our part. What our part may signify in the great whole we may not understand, but we are here to play it, and now is our time. This we know: it is a part of action, not of whining; it is a part of love, not cynicism. It is for us to express that love in terms of human helpfulness."

----David Starr Jordan

With these words we opened our program in October, 1942, and today, as we turn the pages of "The Tanager," which have so faithfully recorded the events of these five years, we conclude that our Society has played its part in the great whole in a creditable way. Reduced to terms of human helpfulness, the activities and dreams of our busy days have yielded a rich harvest.

We ask the indulgence of our readers as we mention events with which many are familiar; but as they comprise the material with which we have builded, they must be taken into account as we check the soundness of our foundation. Moreover, we may derive from them a bit of inspiration for the building of tomorrow.

Our first regional Audubon conference, well attended by neighboring groups from Santa Barbara to San Diego, seems ancient history, but we are still enjoying some of the aftermath of this interesting endeavor.

Early in this period we became a branch of the National Audubon Society, a step that has carried us steadily forward on a broader program. It has brought into our membership many whose interest has strengthened our ranks and has established new contacts for us.

The Los Angeles County Museum has been an important ally in the success of our program. We have enjoyed its facilities for our meetings and for our nature courses. We have collaborated in several important issues, notably in securing the George Willlet collection of bird skins for the Museum, and in the recent showing of Audubon prints in conjunction with natural history exhibits, a venture which was the first of its kind in this area and which aroused a great deal of interest.

Conservation interest has woven in and out of our program like a shining silver thread in a piece of tapestry. We have been ever alert to situations that needed our support. Our attention has been constant on the matter of securing a bird refuge in the Playa del Rey area, and we have had an active part in the furthering of the beloved San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. For a joyous highlight we dedicated a boys' camp, the Bar V Ranch School and the beautiful Alma Stultz Bird Sanctuary on the Shearer's place, as sanctuaries. In the old courthouse yard known as Plaza de Justicia, in Los Angeles, stands a beautiful fountain, the gift of Mickey Bishop, and this too we were honored to present.

Many hundreds of boys and girls, as well as leaders of youth groups, enthusiastically praise our Society for the youth leadership from which they have benefitted. Courses given at the Museum and at Plummer Park, field trips, - all have played a part in this vital work.

We are proud of our programs as we look over the list of distinguished speakers who have honored us. We realize that their participation in our efforts has inspired us to strive for an even higher standard.

Christmas bird counts stepped up to a leading place in the Nation, and field trips

have built an ever-increasing interest. These are well established, and during the current year boat trips for the study of pelagic birds have furnished additional attraction.

The new departments of Youth Leadership and Evening Programs have been added to our program in this five-year period. The Evening Program at the Los Angeles Library is known as a "going concern" and is supplemented with a Sunday field trip.

Our headquarters at Plummer Park has become increasingly valuable to us, with its fine library and museum of specimens. Its facilities for Study Class and other meetings are available to us and the "homey" atmosphere fostered by our curator makes a trip to our Audubon home with its delightful old fashioned surroundings a real pleasure. As one browses in the Headquarters the paintings of birds and nests by Henry Smith Williams engage the attention, and upon inquiry the visitor learns that a fine traveling educational exhibit of these pictures is making the rounds of the public schools, under the sponsorship of our Society.

Screen Tour lectures have already become a well established part of our program. It was only two years ago that we undertook to sponsor this project, and we look upon its success with a good deal of satisfaction that our organization was the first to undertake this activity in our area. It would be interesting and enlightening to evaluate the results of this program in terms of human helpfulness.

The establishment of an "Educational Fund" has yielded rich results, for by this means we were able to accept the invitation of the National Audubon Society to send one of our members to the Eastern nature camps, as well as to underwrite educational projects. Currently we have established from this fund an annual scholarship, designed to send an interested person to a summer camp.

Our "Western Tanager" carries a monthly message to our membership. This is borne home to the writer emphatically as the highlights of the past few years are gleaned from its pages.

Our Society was represented by the President at the annual meeting of the National Audubon Society in New York on two successive years.

Touching hurriedly upon these few highlights, one recalls the trying years of the war and how we banded together in humble acknowledgement of our responsibility, forging ahead in activity, spurning cynicism, wondering often what our part in the great whole might signify, yet never stopping too long to ponder.

Such success as our Society has achieved in the carrying out of its program during these five years is due to the cooperation and loyalty of its officers and members and to the unselfish devotion to a program that has for its theme the whole wide world of Nature, and human helpfulness for a common denominator.

To our successors, - a rich day and a shining tomorrow!

OBSERVATIONS: Scarcity of wild ducks reported from all areas. Several species of shore birds seen along coast 5/2. Spotted sandpipers (wearing their spots) seen along city reservoir and river shores. They nest along high mountain streams. Warbler migration late and scattered. Thirteen species of warblers seen on their migration flight during a trip from Los Angeles to Tucson May 3 to 10. April 28, seven species of warblers seen in San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary, calaveras, golden pileolated and black-throated grays predominating. A birder's thrill: Numbers of Western tanagers, cedar waxwings and ash-throated flycatchers perched high in a cottonwood, all darting out to catch insects. Western tanagers seen everywhere. Mrs. W. C. Brown reports them in a Melrose Avenue, Hollywood yard. About 60 yellow-headed blackbirds seen along San Gabriel River 4/30; Mrs. Erna Comby. Phainopeplas trying to start nesting along Glendale and Burbank outskirts. Miss D. Getz, Glendale reports robins nesting nearby; parents carrying worms 5/12. The beautiful blue grosbeaks are back and nesting; 5/3. LISTEN NOW FOR the happy song of the black-headed grosbeak, heard from city dwelling to high mountain cabin. And all other bird songs. Try to identify them. All are beautiful and cheery, even the modest brown towhee's. And please do not forget to put out fresh water and some seed regularly. Rolled oats and yellow corn meal are favorites. This season will be dry and the birds will be grateful for your help.

---CAROLINE H. DAUGHERTY

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THE WESTERN TANAGER

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OFFICERS FOR 1947-48

Elected May 15, 1947, to assume office
July 1, 1947

President.....Mrs. Mary V. Hood
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2nd Vice-Pres., R. A. Powell
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821 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra
Curator.....Mrs. O. M. Stultz
2223 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 26
Historian,.....Thos. F. Parker
1717 Crest Dr., Los Angeles 35

WE WELCOME Mr. Ben F. Tucker, of Long Beach as a Patron Member. Mr. Tucker has long been an ardent advocate of Nature education as promoted by our Society, and has been known all over the United States through his successful experiments with hummingbirds at his home in Modjeska Canyon. An interesting sidelight is that news reels of this interesting project were seen in far-away places by men in the Service.

MEMBERSHIP DUES. The dues of a majority of our members are payable July 1. Your membership card will tell you if this applies to you. Why not surprise (and help) the Treasurer by paying in advance? Bring the money with you on the field trip June 5 at Farnsdall Park. If you are a "joint" member (National and Los Angeles), you will be notified by the National when your dues are payable. You may send them to New York, or hand them to our Treasurer, Mrs. C. J. Parker, 821 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra.

NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME !

Miss Helen M. Alexander
4208 Clinton St., Los Angeles 4
Mr. & Mrs. Edward P. Baker
417 S. Downey Ave., Downey
Mr. A. M. Breslau
2160 W. 20th St., Los Angeles 7
Mrs. Eleanore Clendenon
2430 Raymond Ave., Los Angeles 7
Mr. John R. Davis, Jr.
203 E. Elk Ave., Glendale 5
Miss Cecelia Foulkes
Mecca
Miss Cassia Gier
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Mr. Donald Kaiser
2323 Gunn Ave., Whittier
Mrs. Albert W. Knox
344 S. Kingsley Dr., Los Angeles 5
Mr. W. R. McConnell
3304 Hyde Park Blvd., Los Angeles 43
Mr. H. H. Peters
1229 Point View St., Los Angeles 35
Mrs. Irvine H. Shearer, Jr.
4085 Eighth Ave., Los Angeles 43
Mr. Harry H. Wetzel, Jr.
2407 La Mesa Dr., Santa Monica
Mrs. Effie G. Wheeler
4722 Coolidge Ave., Culver City
Mrs. Dorothy M. Wiseman
11050 Barman Ave., Culver City

IN MEMORIAM. We regret to report the death of Mrs. Irene Roselle, who passed away in April. She had been a member since 1935. Our sincere sympathy to her family.

A CORDIAL INVITATION comes from Mr. C. V. Duff, president of the Cooper Ornithological Club, Southern Division, to attend the annual meeting of the club, to be held in the lecture hall of the County Museum, Exposition Park, Friday and Saturday, May 30 and 31. There will be morning and afternoon sessions and, on Saturday afternoon, an informal tea, with Mrs. J. H. Comby as hostess. There will be luncheons and a banquet, reservations for which can be made through Mr. Duff, and a field trip Sunday in the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary.

OUR MEMBERSHIP has more than doubled in the past five years. It stands now (May 15) at 543. So far this fiscal year, which ends June 30, we have received 116 new members.

VACATIONING IN TUOLUMNE MEADOWS. Taking it a little easy at first, we roamed over the meadows enjoying the antics of the little picket pins as they bobbed up all about, giving their high-pitched whistle. And against a cobalt sky Swainson hawks sailed majestically about. At the soda springs we found crossbills feeding on the crusty deposit. They came within a few feet, so we had a fine chance to study and admire them.

Easy climbs took us to beautiful hidden lakes where all about were thrush, white-crowns and Hammond flycatchers. High in leafless trees an occasional prairie falcon was seen. Becoming more ambitious we climbed to Upper Gaylor lakes, hoping to see the rosy finch. From a precarious rocky perch about 11,000 feet altitude, with the wind whipping about us, we waited patiently (?), keeping our binoculars focused on a snow bank at the edge of the lake and some rocky formation just ahead. Hardly daring to believe our eyes - or glasses - we suddenly realized that those dainty but sturdy birds were all about. One perched on a ledge about ten feet away; others flew overhead. What excitement! We seemed never to want to leave, but the lateness of the hour forced us to scramble down the trail and wend our way back to the lodge. It was a humble and grateful group that gathered around the dinner table to recount the happy experiences of the day.

Of course, stopping at Siesta Lake was a must, so upon leaving the meadows for the valley, we allowed ourselves quite a bit of time for that birdy spot. Every tree in the vicinity that was charred and had suspicious-looking holes shuddered at the beating it received at our hands in our attempt to bring forth a curious pileated or Alaska three-toed woodpecker. While it is a favorite nesting spot, and many have seen them there, we were not so fortunate. Though our disappointment was keen, finding a Townsend solitaire, some Macgillivray warblers and brilliant pine grosbeaks high in the treetops, vivid against a clear blue sky, lifted our spirits completely. So now we have an excuse to return to that heavenly little lake, when I am sure we will be successful.

An all too brief trip to the valley, then on to Mariposa Grove for a peaceful night among the big trees, brought to an end a happy eight days of adventure. And the surprise on my return home that autumn day was a hearty welcome from the busiest chickadee ever. I am so hoping he will winter in my yard.

----MAUD MURPHY, Editor "The Western Tanager," 1936-1940

THE NATUR COURSES FOR YOUTH LEADERS, sponsored by the Youth Leadership Committee of the Los Angeles Audubon Society and arranged and conducted by Mrs. Mary V. Hood, at the Los Angeles County Museum, was successfully completed April 30 after a ten-week run starting February 19. Several organizations were represented, including Boy and Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Woodcraft Rangers, Boys Clubs and the Forest Service. Enrollment totaled 303, with an average attendance of more than 100 per meeting. Classes were held each Wednesday night for the ten weeks. They dealt with such subjects as birds, reptiles, insects, and seashore life.

As in last year's course, tables attended by members of the Society displayed specimens for study. At one meeting there was a display of campfire handicrafts, using materials readily found around any camp. Students passing from table to table chose the subjects of most interest to them and discussed their characteristics with the consultants. After a meeting or two, "students" and "teachers" became well acquainted with each other and the class took on a very "clubby" atmosphere.

Following the laboratory period the class went to the auditorium for a series of slides on the subject of the evening. Talks were given by Howard L. Cogswell on bird study; Dr. Wm. L. Lloyd on sea life; Mrs. J. H. Comby on conservation; Mr. W. Scott Lewis on insects; A. York Escalante on collecting and preserving specimens; Mrs. Hood on protection and a series of four on the ecology of desert, foothill and high mountains, all illustrated with a new set of Mrs. Hood's excellent slides.

Field trips were taken to Griffith Park, San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary, Cabrillo Beach and Charlton Flat. Audubon leaders were provided for these trips and many interesting birds and other subjects were studied.

Throughout the course emphasis was placed on accurate field identification as well as the interrelationship of living things.

---ARTHUR L. BERRY

EVENING PROGRAMS. With the lecture at the City Library May 8, by Howard L. Jones, illustrated with his own exceptionally beautiful pictures, the monthly Thursday evening programs closed for the current club year. The entire series has been on a high plane due to the untiring efforts of Mrs. O. M. Stultz, General Program Chairman. She wisely varied speakers and pictures so as to cover generally the field of natural history. Besides Mr. Jones, other speakers were Kenneth E. Stager, Howard L. Cogswell, Charles C. Ayres, Jr., Mrs. Mary V. Hood, and W. N. Jups, all members of the Society, and there was a series of motion pictures sent by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service. An important contribution to these programs was Howard Cogswell's colorful descriptions of pending Sunday field trips which he so skilfully organizes. The attendance approximated an average of seventy-five at each meeting.

---R. W. Julian, Chairman

THE EDUCATIONAL FUND. At the Program Meeting May 15 the following new By-Law was adopted: It is hereby ordered that any donations received by the Society, unless otherwise directed, shall be set aside as an Educational Fund and shall be used (1) as scholarships of \$100, more or less, as the individual case may require, to assist in the special training of nature leaders; or (2) to underwrite an unusual educational undertaking. The Executive Board is authorized to transfer to the Educational Fund from the general fund, at its discretion, any sums not needed for current expenses. For the purposes of this section the president is empowered to appoint a special committee of five members of the Society (three to constitute a quorum), to serve until the end of the current fiscal year. Thereafter appointments shall be for the term of one year, no member to serve consecutively more than two terms of one year each. The Executive Board shall adopt rules and regulations for the administration of the Educational Fund, and no expenditure shall be made from the Fund except as recommended by the Committee and approved by the Board.

THE AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS, until two years ago, was found only east of the Rockies. Not unlike certain of our avifauna it has expanded its habitat to the warm shores of the Pacific. It has proven to have been a wise decision on the part of our Society to inaugurate it as an annual event in the Los Angeles area. We might ask, What good is the Screen Tours? Does it sharpen one's appreciation of the out-of-doors? Does it make one conscious of the tragic result if efforts toward conservation fail? Does it help one to understand the vital balances in Nature and their importance to man? The answer is a definite "Yes."... Next year these programs will be given on a Saturday afternoon and duplicated the following Monday evening, beginning in October, 1947, thereby broadening the opportunity of attendance to include persons limited to daytime activities. Everyone can, and should, become a member of the Audubon Screen Tours Club. Full details will be in the mail at a later date.

---R. W. JULIAN, Chairman

OUT INTO THE BROAD COUNTRY, where spring flowers brighten the fields, I take my daily stroll. Today a pale-bodied bird in flight draws my eager interest. Is this a gull? No, this bird is a hawk. What a powerful flight! With free and careless motion he weaves a pattern against the sky. He leaps, then from a great height he dives, recovers, turns and again towers; then comes the plunge and dive. Higher, higher, over and over and over, faster and faster he scrolls his wild maneuver against the sky. His excitement seems to increase; he towers, somersaults and plunges with wild abandon. He seems like a bird gone mad with an over-charge of spring. Keck, keck, keck, he cries continually, whilst from high in the summer sky another bird answers, keck, keck, keck, in tones faint but distinct. White-tailed kites! And it is no idle fancy to assume this to be their nuptial flight!

--- ENID MICHAEL

HAVE YOU SEEN Mrs. Mary Barnes Salmon's ingenious device for keeping her life list in convenient form? It is on uniform pages, $7\frac{1}{4}$ x $9\frac{3}{4}$, designed for use in a loose-leaf binder, with the following printed headings: No., Name, Date, Place Observed, Comment. Mrs. Salmon, on request, will gladly explain how she uses the form, and will even share her supply (1¢ each). Address, 1117 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles 46.

FIELD TRIP, Thursday, June 5. Barnsdall Park, s.w. corner Vermont Ave. and Hollywood Blvd. Reached from the east by Hollywood Blvd. P. E. car going north on Hill St. every 10 minutes, and from the south by Vermont Ave. car to Monroe St. with transfer to Vermont Ave. bus. Those driving will find parking space inside the park. Meet at 9:30 near the picnic tables for bird walk led by Mrs. Daugherty. Bring lunch. After lunch the newly elected officers for 1947-48 will be installed.

"IT GIVES ME a great deal of pleasure," said Mr. C. V. Duff at the afternoon meeting May 15, "to pay tribute to our Program Chairman, Mrs. O. M. Stultz. We come here month after month to enjoy the fine program she has prepared, we are entertained and instructed, and perhaps we do not think of the responsibility that has rested on her shoulders. I know something of the anxieties of a program chairman. You are never sure your speaker will arrive until he begins to speak! Every one of Mrs. Stultz's speakers has arrived and they have been outstanding in their field. Mrs. Stultz has done a fine thing, too, in having Kenneth Stager, the Museum's ornithologist, come in at each meeting with a timely message concerning a particular bird. So I am happy to pay Mrs. Stultz this tribute for her remarkable success the past year." Mrs. Comby also spoke in high praise of Mrs. Stultz's unselfish devotion to the Society. Dr. John A. Comstock, Director of Science, Los Angeles County Museum, was the speaker of the afternoon. From his great fund of knowledge he spoke on the subject "Camouflage in Nature," illustrating with slides the remarkable ways in which animals and insects defend themselves through protective form, habits and coloration.

THE NATURE STUDY CLASS has been held this year under the efficient leadership of Walter Scott. Following the expressed desire of the members, most of the time was devoted to bird study, though plants, mammals and reptiles were not neglected. With the aid of mounted specimens and with charts prepared with infinite care by Mr. Scott, the class studied the large and difficult order of Passeriformes, each family being represented by a typical bird. Mr. Scott arranged also for programs, several illustrated with motion pictures or slides, which combined instruction with entertainment. Miss Ruby Curry, Mr. George T. Hastings, Mr. and Mrs. W. Scott Lewis have our special gratitude for their cooperation, and as this issue of "The Tanager" goes to press, we are looking forward to pictures to be shown May 22 by Mr. and Mrs. J. Burritt Smith. And we are intrigued by Mr. Scott's program for the "last day of school," when prizes are to be given for entries on nature subjects by the members of the class. It is difficult to express adequately our appreciation of Mr. Scott's leadership in this feature of the Society's program.

WE ARE DEEPLY INTERESTED in the recent acquisition of the "Lucky" Baldwin estate by the state and county, for development as an arboretum, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge indebtedness to Dr. Samuel Ayres, Jr., and his committee and to congratulate them on the fruition of many years of devotion to this cause.

THE SOCIETY has for sale: "Field Guide to Western Birds," Peterson, \$2.75; "Birds of the Pacific States," Hoffman, \$3.50; Check List of Birds of Southern California, by H. L. Cogswell and James Murdock, 2¢ each; Study List of Common Birds of Los Angeles County, by Mrs. Mary V. Hood, 2¢ each; Study Guide, illustrated with outline drawings of 25 resident birds, by the Committee on Youth Leadership, 52¢ each; Plain Study Guides, 2¢ each; "Wildflowers of California," illustrated by Mrs. Hood, a gift book, 50¢ each. See Miss Clara E. Pflager, 141 N. Berendo St., Los Angeles 4; telephone, FEderal 6127.

WITH THIS ISSUE "The Western Tanager" goes on vacation until next fall. Ye Editor is grateful for the helpful cooperation and the friendly consideration she has received during the year, and bespeaks for the Editor of 1947-48 the same encouragement.