

# Western Tanager

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A PAGE OF ENGLISH SPARROW HISTORY  
By Loya Holmes Miller, Professor of Biology, U.C.L.A.

In the fall of 1904 I began my teaching assignment in Los Angeles. I began also at that time a delightful and profitable acquaintance with the natural history of the coastal area, a garden walled off more or less completely from the remainder of the state by fairly high mountains, with a "moat" of forbidding desert to the east and northeast. Into this "Garden of Eden" the English sparrow had not yet penetrated. Only a year or two later, however, some members of the Cooper Club reported a small colony of the birds that had become established at the Southern Pacific R.R. station at Newhall where, we assumed, they had arrived like feathered tramps by "station hopping" along the railroad.

There were three gateways through the garden wall that afforded ingress in those days, i.e., Newhall, Cajon' and San Gorgonio passes. I assumed that the sparrows would not cross the desert and mountain barriers except at these points. Why not then meet them at the gate, so to speak, and discourage their movements? I appealed to the authorities of Los Angeles and Riverside Counties and to the U. S. Biological Survey with some small success. The Riverside County authorities furnished me a railway ticket to Mecca, with stop-overs at all stations, so that I could make a survey to the eastward. In August of 1908 I worked all the way out to Mecca without finding any sparrows.

In November of 1908, under authority of the Biological Survey, the Cajon' Pass was surveyed from San Bernardino to Barstow and a colony of sparrows was discovered at Victorville. So! There were colonies of birds at two of the three gateways. Not until about three years later, however, were they reported inside the garden. Then I found a few birds at the site of the present Examiner Building on South Broadway in Los Angeles. There they found sanctuary in the fine old trees and shrubbery of a vacant residence property. The Los Angeles Co. Game Warden became excited, obtained a grant of \$250, bought a number of small shot guns and went to war, with a company of deputies as shock troops. They slew about sixty female linnets and retired in good order, reporting the colony exterminated.

Not a great while later sparrows were reported at Riverside, San Diego, Pomona, etc. The weeds were coming up all through the garden! I have learned more about the sparrows since those days and now see the futility of my schemes of forty years ago. I have seen sparrows arrive at my desert camps, far from any settlement, dropping down from the sky to look us over. I have seen them in the arid mountains of southern Arizona and in the remote Indian villages of southern Sonora in Mexico. They are too highly adaptable to be held in check at the passes of "Thermopylae." Gamin though he may be, he has my respect for his energy and versatility; nevertheless, I don't really love him.

Just last week I heard that a flock of starlings was lodged at a small desert station 60 miles east of Blythe. They too will soon be in the garden and I fear they will be even less desirable weeds than the English sparrows. What a clumsy blunderer man can be at times! I didn't stop the sparrows 40 years ago. I shall not try to block the starlings. I may even complain at times over the blunders that man has made, but I've sort of gotten used to the sparrows, so perhaps I'll get used to the starlings. As for the blunderer, I've lived with him for three score and thirteen years and I do love him in spite of his blunders.

#### AFIELD WITH THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

The simultaneous opening of two nature camps, one in California, the other in Texas, is of tremendous interest to a great many who have looked forward to a development of this kind as the natural result of years of accumulative endeavor. The summer's effort of concentrated attention to the basic values and important relationships to be found in Nature is destined to have a far-reaching influence on the Audubon program in our area.

The ready response from leaders in education, the enthusiastic approval of youth counselors, and the eager interest of Nature lovers, all confirm our conviction that this is the opportune time to launch this enterprise.

Each one of us has a stake in this undertaking. We look to those who have enjoyed the sessions in camp, with its stimulating environment, in a gorgeous mountain setting, to extend their enthusiasm and disseminate the knowledge they have gained in Nature's laboratory, in school room, in organized groups, or in projects of general community interests. Neither is the home overlooked, for who has a wider sphere of influence than the parent who creates a center of community interest in the back yard?

In promoting attendance at the Nature Camp, we are hopeful that each session will be comprised of representatives from the various fields of leadership; and that in the delightful camaraderie of congenial associations, the future of our first California camp will be firmly established.

-----ERNA COMBY

Southern California Representative

#### OBSERVATIONS

The outlook for the world of nature in the coming months is now much brighter. The recent rains, even though far short of normal, have been priceless in their showery downfall. How the birds loved them, voicing their gratitude in song during and after the showers!

DUCKS, WATERBIRDS: Along the intake bank of the Los Angeles River Settling Basins, now being dredged, April 8, were 8 snowy and 4 American egrets, wearing their beautiful "aigrette" plumes and putting on their nuptial dances, all taking part.

R. W. Julian reports 200 shovellers and 90 ruddy ducks (some in breeding plumage), Fairmont Park, Riverside, April 4. In MacArthur Park, April 2, Mrs. Woods noted 100 lesser scaup ducks (apparently a visiting flock and very wary) take off at dusk, circle the lake twice to gain elevation, then fly north.

BAND-TAILED PIGEONS: Flocks of from 20 to 30 feeding in olive trees, Burbank foothill yards, March 20 to April 10 (D).

HUMMINGBIRDS: Rufous hummers common February to April, both male and female (Parker-D). One black-chinned in Burbank yard April 5 (D).

PURPLE MARTIN: One male seen in Pasadena March 27 (Parker).

WRENS: San Diego and cactus wrens singing, Tujunga Wash, April 4 (D), where the new coral colored flower stalks of Yucca are rapidly bursting into creamy bloom.

WARBLERS: April 5, an invasion of lutescents, doing a grand job consuming aphids on roses, citrus, etc., in Burbank. April 10 another invasion, Calaveras with a few lutescents. April 5, one myrtle warbler, carefully observed. All warblers are invaluable to mankind, as their careful searchings of bark and leaves of trees and shrubs discover insect and insect eggs so often overlooked by larger birds. Also, great quantities of insects are devoured, on the wing.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS: Back March 21, Burbank, and reported from various areas since.

LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCHES reported in Hollywood yard by Mrs. W. C. Brown.

ORIOLES: Numbers of Bullock's orioles, April 3, Burbank and Tujunga Wash.

RED CROSSBILLS: A great rarity, but it happened in Ruth McCune's Mt. Washington (Los Angeles) yard. Six were carefully observed on her feeding tray ten feet from window. Distinctly noted: crossed mandibles and all-red bodies.

WATCH NOW FOR: Wandering tattler, knot phalaropes and Caspian, least and black terns along the shore. Land birds: Black-chinned hummingbirds, ash-throated flycatcher, russet-backed thrush, long-tailed chat and Western tanager.

-----CAROLINE H. DAUGHERTY

Field Leader

THE WESTERN TANAGER

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NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME !

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Mrs. Sidney S. Doner  
R. 2, Box 249-B, Escondido  
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560 Villa Zanita, Altadena  
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Election, May 20, 1948

MRS. WARREN J. HOLDEN, our beloved past-president, passed away April 15, 1948, at Tucson, Arizona. She had been a member of the Society for the past twenty-five years. Elected president in 1924, she served two years in that capacity, and as a member of the Executive Board thereafter she filled many important offices, serving loyally and well. In her memory the Society will place a book in its library, one that will bring to others the Nature she loved and served so well. Sympathy is extended to her sister, Mrs. Mabel Brattland and her family.

SYMPATHY is extended also to Mrs. May Wait, whose mother passed away in April, after a long illness.

MR. THEODORE PAYNE, outstanding horticulturist and champion of the right use of native plants, has prepared for the Los Angeles Audubon Society a list of shrubs and trees suitable for gardens and sanctuaries. At his suggestion, the Committee on Birds has added notes of birds likely to be attracted to them. The list is being printed.

NEWS OF SPECIAL INTEREST to teachers has just been received by Mr. Floyd J. Brown, director of the California Nature Camp, at Norden. He reports that the in-service training section of the Los Angeles city schools has recognized the camp as an activity for teachers for the summer. Mr. Brown says applications are coming in rapidly and that the first two-week session, beginning June 20, will soon be filled. As previously stated in The Western Tanager (March, 1948), enrollments are taken care of by Mrs. Ethel E. Richardson, 887 Indian Rock Avenue, Berkeley 7, California. Information concerning the camp and application forms may also be obtained from Mrs. O. M. Stultz, 2594 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte.

"CLIMB THE MOUNTAINS and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn."

--JOHN MUIR

THE NATURE LEADERS' WORKSHOP. Final examinations for the Nature Leaders' Workshop were held Wednesday night, March 17, terminating a series of ten weekly lessons on birds, plants and animals of Southern California. Mrs. Alice Lewis came forward with the best score of the evening, identifying 89 of the 100 specimens on the tables. Miss Christine Bielfeldt took second honors in the bird test by identifying 59 out of 65, and Wallace Ernst captured the prize for the best plant list, with 25 of the 26 specimens named correctly. Ronald M. Miller and Bill M. Colyer tied for first on shells, naming all twelve specimens exhibited.

The course covered common birds and plants of several habitats, ranging from the seashore to high mountains. Bird specimens, as in previous years, were displayed on tables, accompanied by suitable plants, generously provided by M. L. Cammack, of the U. S. Forest Service, and Mr. Walter Scott. Popular speakers, aided by some of Mrs. Hood's beautiful slides, discussed the subject of the evening. Several Sunday field trips to nearby places were taken. A highlight of the course was the "Nature-craft Table" conducted by Mrs. George Shepphird, Woodcraft Ranger and Campfire leader. Attendance at the course averaged over 100.

-----ARTHUR L. BERRY

THE AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS of 1947-48 were an outstanding success, and without a dissenting voice the Los Angeles Audubon Society, at the close of the series, voted to sponsor the tours of 1948-49. Membership in the Screen Tours Club this past year reached 825, a striking increase over the preceding year. The National Audubon Society sent excellent speakers and exceptionally fine pictures. For what was accomplished locally very special thanks are due C. V. Duff, chairman of the committee, Walter Scott, treasurer, and Wm. K. DePue, in charge of publicity and the thousand and one details connected with such an undertaking. The other members of the committee were Mrs. Mary V. Hood, ex-officio, Mrs. O. M. Stultz and Miss Laura Greely.

From the National Audubon Society comes the list of speakers who will probably be assigned to the West for the next series. They are Karl H. Maslowski, of Cincinnati, who gave us our first tour, - "Our Heritage in the Rockies". His new subject, "Sugaroland", is a story of Arizona. He is expected to come in October, 1948. Next we expect to hear William Ferguson, a Kansas farmer boy who turned scientist, writer, educator and artist. He will tell us about "The Curious World of Nature", explaining many puzzling hows and whys. "Wildlife Down East", showing birds, mammals, flowers, sea and stream life of New England, will be presented in February by Carl W. Buchheister, vice-president of the National Audubon Society. Allen D. Cruickshank will come in March; his subject, "Trails for the Millions". Remember how we enjoyed his "South Along the Suwanee" last year, and his delightful bird-song imitations? The last program of the series will be given in April by the Rev. George M. Link, of St. Louis, one of America's leading amateur naturalists, with an extensive acquaintance with wildlife. All these lectures will be presented with motion pictures in color.

Local arrangements, which involve a vast amount of detail, have not been completed. The Society is happy to announce that Kenneth E. Stager, Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Los Angeles County Museum, will be the presiding officer, and Wm. K. DePue will again serve as business manager. During the coming summer Mr. DePue will build up a mailing list for the 1948-49 announcements. Help him by sending him the names and addresses of persons you think should have one. Let him know, too, if you will undertake to sell some tickets. Why not double that 825? Mr. DePue's address: 4517 Ambrose Avenue, Los Angeles 27.

AUDUBON MAGAZINE, March-April, 1948, p. 124, reports figures released by Director Day, of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on the number of hunting licenses sold in the 48 states during the 1946-47 season, - 12,066,763, an increase in one year of 2,212,450. Mr. Day adds: "Maintaining a supply of game birds and animals to withstand this heavy drain is the chief problem that confronts the country's wildlife administrators today."

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

President ..... Mrs. Mary V. Hood  
Executive Secy., Mrs. Bess M. Hoffman, 1112½ S. Orange Dr., Los Angeles 35. WA 8937

CALENDAR FOR MAY, 1948

THURSDAY, May 6. Field Trip to the Dorothy May Tucker Memorial Sanctuary, in Santiago Canyon. Long known as a hummingbirds' paradise. We hope to find many other species of birds including the white-tailed kite, both orioles, Western tanagers, blue gros-beak. An added attraction for that day, - our member Mr. Theodore Payne and Mrs. Payne will be special guests and it is just possible that Mr. Payne will take us through Madam Modjeska's home and gardens, which adjoin the Tucker Sanctuary. As a young man Mr. Payne had much to do with landscaping those beautiful grounds. Our Tanner Motor bus will leave Los Angeles, 6th and Olive Sts. (park side) at 8 A.M., returning around 4:30 in Los Angeles. Bus will run via Whittier, Fullerton, Anaheim, Orange and El Modena. Special round trip fare \$1.75. Have exact change ready. Take lunch. PLEASE make reservation early with Miss Christine Kemp, 4964 Hartwick St., Los Angeles 41; telephone, CLeveland 6-2526. Leader, Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty; CHARleston 6-1747.

THURSDAY, May 13. 7:00 P.M. Central Library, Fifth St. and Grand Ave., Los Angeles. First floor. Howard L. Cogswell presiding. W. Scott Lewis will show his new motion pictures, in color, featuring close-up views of insects, the life history of many of the small animals of the woods, and some excellent studies of shore birds. To many of the evening group, this may be also the first introduction to little Marion Constance Lewis, who is shown feeding some of the birds. Study Subject: Birds of the pine forests.

THURSDAY, May 20. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Mrs. Hood presiding. Mr. Hastings, Program Chairman, will present Floyd J. Brown, Vice-principal of the Thomas Starr King Junior High School in Los Angeles, and director of the new Audubon Nature Camp near Norden, California. During the past twelve years Mr. Brown served as Ranger-Naturalist in Sequoia National Park, and it is of the beautiful scenery and the interesting wildlife of the park that he will speak, illustrating his talk with his own slides. Kenneth E. Stager will present "the bird of the month". Officers for the club year 1948-49 will be elected.

SUNDAY, May 23. Field Trip. Buckhorn Flats, 7000 feet alt., in the heart of the San Gabriel Mountains. Home of Clark's nutcracker, green-tailed towhee and pygmy owl. Drive Angelus Crest Highway to ski-lift, on right side of highway six miles beyond Newcomb's Ranch. Meet there at 10 A.M. Bring lunch, or something to warm up on camp stoves. Fire permits may be obtained at Ranger Stations en route.

Leader, Howard L. Cogswell; Whittier 6-3748

THURSDAY, May 27. 10 to 12 Noon. Study Class. Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Take Santa Monica-West Hollywood car; get off at Fuller and continue on foot one block west to park entrance. Bring your Peterson or Hoffman or both. Program will comprise: First hour, general review of the work of the past year, in which your books will be a great help; Second hour, short exercises and perhaps slides or pictures. Bring your lunch and eat it with us. Take time to visit headquarters.

Leader, Walter Scott, Chairman, Nature Study Committee; ANgelus 2-4649

THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Operated by the National Audubon Society. Telephone: Whittier 6-3748  
Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Director. Howard L. Cogswell, Warden.

SUNDAY, May 9. Field trip, starting from the entrance, 2594 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte, at 9 A.M. The Pasadena-Long Beach bus, four trips each way daily, stops at Temple School, opposite the Sanctuary entrance, on signal. From downtown Los Angeles go to El Monte by bus or train. (Telephone Information Tucker 7272, for best schedule.) At El Monte P.E. station, change to Long Beach bus leaving there at 8:39. If driving go east on Third Street to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee, thence north to Sanctuary.