

Western Tanager



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BIRDS ON THE BRANCH

Last fall the study class of the Los Angeles Audubon Society took for a general topic The Place of Birds in the Animal Kingdom. The picture of a tree is commonly used to illustrate the relation of animals or plants to each other. This figure may help as long as we remember that it is only a diagram and do not take it as a fact nor try to make it prove anything. And we should also remember that in a tree branches extend out on all sides, while in the diagram we make there can be only two dimensions.

Of this tree the lower part of the trunk with its great branches represent the invertebrate animals. In fact if we try to make the size of the branches correspond to the number of species in each group, our tree becomes an extremely irregular one with the branch on which all insects cling much greater than all the rest of the tree.

The upper part of the trunk with its branches represents the vertebrate animals. Close to the bottom of this part, just above where the branch of fishes extends out is the branch of reptiles, with many smaller branches. From rather low down on the branch there spring two quite large branches, one of birds, the other of mammals.

The branch of birds divides at first into two parts, one of which is a broken, dead branch on which were the primitive birds that became extinct millions of years ago. The other part divides into four smaller, but still large branches. Again two are dead branches as the birds that perched on them have also long been extinct. The other two divide into some twenty branches, each representing one order of living birds. These divide again and again till we reach the smallest twigs that bear the leaves, each one species. Or, since birds are so often brilliantly colored, we may think of the twigs as being covered with flowers, some 25,000 of them.

The figure also shows us that as the orders of birds are on separate branches, the birds at their tips can be related to those on other large branches only as we go back to the point where the branches are joined.

AORTIC ARCHES

An interesting bit of structural detail showing relationship between the classes of vertebrates is seen in the arches of the aorta, the great artery that carries the blood away from the heart. In Reptiles the aorta forks soon after leaving the heart, one arch turning to the left, the other to the right. In Birds there is but one arch of the aorta, a right one. In Mammals there is only a left arch. This is good evidence that birds and mammals have not been directly connected since they separated from the great reptilian trunk.

But in the development of the embryos all groups of vertebrates show a series of five pairs of aortic arches. In fish all these develop to become the arteries to the gills. In the other groups some of the arches disappear, others become changed into other blood vessels. One pair remains in the reptiles, only one arch each in birds and mammals.

George T. Hastings

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CHANGES IN THE LIST OF OFFICERS

Mrs. May Warrick has been compelled to resign as 2nd Vice-president and Mrs. Maude McKnight as Membership Chairman. Their resignations were accepted with regret and the following elected to take their places:
 2nd Vice-president, Mrs. Arthur Koehler.
 Mrs. Koehler will also serve as membership chairman.
 Chairman of Publications...Mrs. A. W. Knox
 To the list of officers printed last month add:
 Junior Past President.....Mrs. Mary Hood.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Student (12 to 18 yrs.) 75¢; Annual \$1.50;
 Life \$25; Patron \$100.
 Joint membership with the National Audubon Society \$5.00,- includes subscription to Audubon Magazine.
 Send membership applications to the Treasurer, with dues.

New books added to our library.
 Manual of the Flowering Plants of California. Jepson. Gift of Mrs. Neil Lewis.
 E. S. Clemens, Flowers of the Coast and Sierras. The gift of Misses Rose and Minnie Kahn.
 Ruth Wheeler, We Follow the Western Trail. The gift of Mrs. C. J. Parker.
 Life Histories of American Thrushes, Kinglets and their Allies.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. Vernon Barrett,
 714 W. Olympic Blvd., L.A. 15
 Mrs. Mabel Dunn,
 2366 Stanley Hill Dr., Hollywood 46
 Miss Katherine Haack,
 5237½ Stratford Rd., L.A. 42
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MOCKINGBIRDS IN TENNESSEE

Tennessee is one of the five states that has the mockingbird as state bird; the others being Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas.

For the past seventeen years I have been watching mockingbirds at my home. They are marked for sight identification with colored and aluminum leg bands.

Their most interesting behavior is when they are taking territory and during courtship. By September they have acquired new plumage. Groups move about feeding, singing, pursuing each other as they seek "territory," a piece of ground that is suitable to their needs and which they consider their own. Birds "defend" their ground by flying at intruding mockingbirds.

By October the territories are usually settled. Then one may see the "dance," Neighboring territory holders meet at their boundaries. Two mockingbirds face each other; they hop forward, backward, sideways (heads and tails held high). Occasionally the dance ends in a fight, and usually each bird suddenly turns, flies away from the other, each on his own territory. This is a boundary line demonstration and is never a part of courtship.

From an article by Mrs. F. C. Lasky in the Calendar of the Month, published by the Nashville Children's Museum.

Do our California mockingbirds behave like those of Tennessee? This is a good time to watch them for a few weeks to find out.

ONE WORLD OF NATURE

What we call nature is a manifestation of the Infinite Creative Mind, the great reality back of all material things. When we are studying nature we are learning the way in which that mind works through the physical universe and through the living things which inhabit it. Contact with nature brings health, happiness, and mental and spiritual uplift. Any form of nature study is good, but if we confine ourselves to just one branch of nature we shut ourselves off from the greater good that would come from a broader approach.

Nature is not an aggregation of units unrelated to each other. All make a harmonious whole; all the departments of nature are inter-dependent and inextricably woven together. The character of the rocks determines the character of the soil and its mineral content. The character of the soil and the prevailing climate determine the types of plants found in any given locality. These plants provide food for insects, birds, and other types of animal life. The insects fertilize the flowers and feed the birds, and they in turn protect the vegetation. The vegetation protects the soil and the rocks by preventing erosion. Everything is woven together as only an Infinite Mind could do.

When we study one department of nature and ignore the rest, we are like a person before whom is a beautiful painting, who throws a cloth over it, then lifts one corner to study and admire the tiny bit thus brought into view. We need to broaden our vision so that we can see more of the sublime picture that is in front of us, undreamed of by so many. We need to open our eyes to see the multitude of beautiful and interesting things that are all around us, not forgetting the clouds by day and the stars by night. Thus life will become fuller and richer and we will gain mental and spiritual wealth which we would not exchange for all the gold in the world.

-- W. Scott Lewis

"Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher."

OBSERVATIONS

The last week in August brought shore-birds returning in good numbers.

WATER BIRDS: Playa del Rey area, Sept. 9 Mr. Hastings and Mrs. Shearer reported, besides the usual shore-birds, 48 Avocets, 4 Black-necked Stilts, many Terns and on Ballona Creek 2 Bairds Cormorants and several Farralon, and hundreds of Northern Phalaropes. Stilts and Northern Phalaropes have been found abundant everywhere along our coast, also inland, - May Wait reporting 7 Stilts and many Phalaropes on Green Valley Lake, near Big Bear, on August 18.

On the Santa Margarita River, as it crosses under the highway bridge near Oceanside, Aug. 11 were many Egrets, 2 Wood Ibis, 25 White-faced Glossy Ibis, hundreds of Pintail Ducks, a few Cinnamon Teal and many shore-birds. That is a very good birding spot.

Bolsa Chica Area: Sept. 8. The Alma Stultz-Bob Pyle party observed at close range an unusual Tern grouping; Forster's, Royal, Elegant, Caspian & Black.

LAND BIRDS: Anna's Hummingbirds are reported numerous around most feeding stations as of Sept. 12. In Griffith Park June 26, Justin Russell observed from 20 to 30 Allen's Hummers, also Cassin's Vireos; and Lutescent, Calaveras and Pileolated Warblers from Aug. 21 to Sept. 4. Several House Wrens were noted going thru Burbank foothills area from Aug. 25 to Sept. 7 ... some singing (D).

RARETIES: On Ballona Creek Mr. Hastings observed at close range a male Old Squaw on May 5. Apparently it had oil on its feathers and spent much time preening, and in Playa del Rey area, Sept. 9, he found a rarely identified migrant, the Pectoral Sandpiper. In Bolsa Chica area Sept. 9, the Stultz-Pyle party found an Osprey, an occasional visitor there, also, an immature Jaeger.

WATCH NOW FOR: Wild Ducks, more shore-birds, Gulls, Terns, Hermit Thrush, Large-billed Sparrow, Juncos, Gambel's and Golden-crowned Sparrows.

-- Caroline H. Daugherty

ONCE IN A LIFETIME

One of the greatest thrills a birder can experience is to be in a new territory entirely surrounded by unfamiliar birds. This happened to me on a vacation trip across the country in the spring when birds were in their most colorful dress looking just like pictures in the books, - and in full and beautiful song.

It came with dramatic suddenness in the Lake of the Ozark country, with birds so numerous that a pair of binoculars focused on one bird would show three in the field. There were summer Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Cardinals, Tufted Titmice, Chickadees, Bewick and Carolina Wrens, Brown Thrashers, Thrushes, Wood Pewees, Phoebe, Field Sparrows, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Blackpoll Warblers, Purple Grackles, Blue Jays, and, finally a Yellow-billed cuckoo sitting on a telephone wire as unconcernedly as if he hadn't been the object of unsuccessful search for uncounted years. And in the night Whip-poor-wills came outside our cabin to wake us with their calling.

Some of these birds were easily recognized; some were familiar through literature, especially poetry; some were eastern counterparts of our California friends; and some had to be looked up in a book. Of course I came prepared. I had Peterson's Field Guide with me, but how hard it was to take one second away from the activity around me to leaf through the pages, and what a triumph when a bird was identified.

There were other birds in other places in 8300 miles of travel, like birds, too, but this concentration stands out as the most memorable experience.

-- Bess Hoffman

And this was a thrill too... One day this summer as Mr. Donald Woolley, in charge of the Botanical Garden at U.C. L.A. was going into his office he found a hummingbird struggling in the web of a large black spider which was watching from the side of the web. Mr. Woolley carefully removed the little bird from the web, cleaned its plumage with a soft cloth, and then took it outside and lifted

it on his finger to a branch. After perching there a moment it dropped to his shoulder as if to express its gratitude. Next morning as Mr. Woolley came to his office a hummingbird - the hummingbird - again lit on his shoulder.

THE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

During the past year 4,709 people registered at the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. In addition many young people and some adults came in without registering. Besides individual bird and nature lovers, there were groups from eight colleges and Universities; from Los Angeles, Alhambra, Whittier, Monte Vista and El Monte schools; from the curriculum office of the L. A. City Schools; from six different Audubon Societies, and a dozen or more nature and bird clubs. Six troops of Boy and Girl Scouts visited the Sanctuary. All the groups have been guided through the Sanctuary by Mrs. Stultz or Mrs. Woods.

Indications are that there will be an increased number of schools visiting this year. The curriculum office of the L.A. schools has made arrangements for classes from all grades from the elementary to the high school to come by school buses.

From Our Exchanges

In the August number of The Elapio publication of the Hawaii Audubon Society we note that there is a society, the Hui Manu, in Honolulu, the purpose of which is to import new birds, to protect them when introduced, and to teach children to appreciate them.

Our experience in the eastern states in spending many thousands of dollars in introducing English Sparrows and Starlings and other thousands in attempts to bring in nightengales and skylarks have not been happy ones. We hope that very careful consideration is being given in Hawaii to the possibility of increasing the numbers of native birds by the expenditure of sums equal to those planned for importations. At present visitors to Hawaii see few birds except Myna Birds from India, English Sparrows, Chinese Doves and Philippine Rice Birds.

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER, 1949

Thursday, October 6. Field Trip. Playa del Rey. To study Gulls, Terns, and Shore Birds. Take Playa del Rey Motor Bus, Subway Terminal Bldg., 423 S. Hill Street, Los Angeles at 8:35 A.M. Get off at Vista del Mar and Culver Blvd. Fare 30¢ each way. Bring lunch. Bird walk starts from the bus stop at 9:15 and 9:30. Check for possible motor bus schedule change by calling Information, TUCKer 7272.

Thursday, October 13. Evening Meeting at 7 p.m. at Echo Park Branch Library, 520 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles.

Take Temple Street Bus (Number 11) or red car on Glendale Blvd.

Use outside door to lecture room on north side of the building.

The first half hour, - announcements, reports, and a short study of the birds to be found at Playa del Rey.

At 7:30 Mrs. Hood will present "A Naturalist's Wandering in Yosemite," in which she follows Dr. Matthews' trail, telling what he found and what she found twenty years later. A thrilling talk illustrated with new and beautiful kodachrome slides.

Thursday, October 21. Afternoon Program Meeting at the Los Angeles County Museum at 1:30 p.m. Mr. Stager, Curator of Birds at the Museum will present the bird of the month.

An unusual and intensely interesting lecture by Mr. Gerald Baden, Ranger Naturalist at Glacier National Park. He will show kodachrome slides and describe the Geology of the park, the Forests and the Fauna.

Sunday, October 23. Field Trip to Playa del Rey. Take Playa del Rey bus at Subway Terminal, 423 S. Hill Street, Los Angeles at 8:15. Get off at Playa del Rey and Vista del Mar Street. Bring lunch. Bird walk starts from bus terminal about 9:15. Meet at 11:30 for lunch on the breakwater and discussion of birds seen. Check for possible bus change by calling TUCKer 7272.

Thursday, October 28. Study Class at Plummer Park at 10 a.m.

Take Pacific Electric Santa Monica-West Hollywood line, get off at Fuller Avenue, walk one block west.

A talk and discussion of "Balance in Nature," with diagrammatic illustrations. Illustrations of Food Chains in nature. This meeting is introductory to the topics to be taken up during the season. Mr. George T. Hastings in charge.

Bring lunch and spend the afternoon at the headquarters in "Audubon House."

THE SAN GABRIEL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

2594 South Durfee Ave., El Monte. Telephone FOrest 0-1872

Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Director Mrs. Gertrude Woods, Assistant Director

Mr. C. W. Hamilton, Warden

Maintained by the National Audubon Society with the cooperation of its Southern Californian affiliated societies and branches. Regularly scheduled Field Trip, the second Sunday of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 a.m.

Visitors are welcome but should make arrangements with the director by telephone.