

# Western Tanager



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BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## STRANGERS IN OUR MIDST

There is a standing joke among bird people about the wonderful new species seen by the beginner who goes birding. However it does not do to ignore these claims; for the expert who is apt to see what he is expecting, might overlook something rare in his sweep of the binoculars, where the amateur, giving everything in sight his eager scrutiny, might after all, "see things." One has only to look over the authenticated records of the various states to see listed birds he would never have expected. Probably no section of America is more closely combed by bird glasses than New England, and the strangers listed as seen and "taken" is so comprehensive that hardly any species can be predicted as impossible.

We read that Audubon spent considerable time in Florida hunting for a "Painted Buzzard" reported to him by some natives. I, for one, do not believe those untrained eyes were just "seeing things," though nothing resembling such a stranger has ever been located.

Once, fishing at Rose Bay, Florida, a small dark bird swam right up to the side of the boat. I recognized it from pictures as a Little Auk or Covekie. In Mr. Street's book of Florida Birds I found a record made some years before I was born. Later, in Daytona, I called on Mr. Street, and he said yes, a recent storm had blown in some of these little strangers that normally never come south of New York.

Our Mr. Duff will recall an Eastern Brown Thrasher that he took in his banding trap, a stranger from across the mountains in Oregon, as the closest possibility. In fact, quite a number of the rarer visitors to California seem to hail from Oregon.

The Dickcissel, a common bird in central United States, does not seem to take advantage of territory he might occupy east and west of his present limited range; so this winter when he turns up in Tennessee, he is a stranger indeed, there being no previous record, I believe, from the state. (In The Western Tanager for December 1948 is a record of a Dickcissel caught at a feeding station in Santa Monica, the only record for California.)

Mrs. Amelia Laskey, a capable ornithologist in Nashville, Tennessee, reported this winter a Vermilion Flycatcher. I have saved this stranger for the last, as it (she in this case) is more or less rare, even to Californians, and I feel confident that no other state this far east has a record.

These strange wanderings usually occur, or often at least, at migration time, and various theories have been advanced to account for them, such as mingling with birds of other species and following them. But, taking the Vermilion Flycatcher (probably commoner in Mexico), there seems to be no migration route leading anywhere near Tennessee. Those who attribute the bird's more or less accurate air navigation to a sort of sixth sense of direction have wondered if these rare wrong direction cases did not come from having lost this sense, but more and more is being learned about birds taking advantage of air currents in long flights and a violent disturbance might take a small navigator of the upper air a good deal out of his accustomed route.

The Rose Bowl has a record of a brilliant football player who ran in the wrong direction because something started him that way. Last fall there were several violent hurricanes covering long distances eastward from far enough west to have picked up the little Flycatcher. Maybe, after getting a long start eastward in a bewildering conflict of forces, it just ran for the wrong goal.

Josiah Keely

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THE WESTERN TANAGER  
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 517 Euclid St., Santa Monica

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS  
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 120 Sinclair Ave., Glendale 6

IN MEMORIAM  
 Miss Gail Calmerton, a Life Member of our  
 society and of the National.  
 Miss Louise Friberg, a member of the Los  
 Angeles Audubon Society for over  
 twenty years.  
 Mrs. Arthur Koehler, coming to Los  
 Angeles only a year and a half ago,  
 she became active in our work and  
 was elected a vice-president. In  
 Madison, Wisconsin, she had been  
 prominent in the Audubon Society as  
 well as in civic and church work.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT  
 March is nationally known as Conserva-  
 tion month. Conservation programs receive  
 publicity in our papers and in the  
 schools. For years school children have  
 planted trees on Arbor Day.

This year a "Conference on Conservation,  
 The Peoples' Business" was called in  
 Pasadena by Mr. Roy E. Simpson, superin-  
 tendent of public instruction in the  
 State of California, and an excellent  
 program was presented by people in key  
 positions.

On the Audubon Society level the Con-  
 servation Pledge "I give my pledge as  
 an American to save and faithfully to  
 defend from waste the natural resources  
 of my country - its soil and minerals,  
 its forests, waters and wildlife," should  
 be just as important in April and the  
 rest of the year as in March. This  
 pledge should be so enthusiastically and  
 conscientiously carried out that people  
 take notice of our purposeful actions.  
 Our American essayist, Emerson, says, "  
 "Go put your creed into your deed, nor  
 speak with double tongue." William  
 Vogt, the author of "The Road to Survi-  
 val," writes, "If man will find a harmon-  
 ious adjustment with his environment, as  
 he surely can, this adjustment should  
 make possible a greater flowering of  
 human happiness and well-being than the  
 human race has ever known."

Alice Lewis

#### NOTES FROM OUR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Audiences of several hundred persons  
 listened gravely to the warnings of noted  
 speakers at the first Regional Conserva-  
 tion Conference held in Pasadena in Feb-  
 ruary. Mr. Goslin, Superintendent of  
 Pasadena schools, keynoted the conference,  
 and in stressing the basic principle of  
 conservation said, "the real place to  
 start conservation is with the small child  
 at home and at school; at our dinner  
 tables; save food, turn off lights when  
 possible, take care of possessions, build  
 into the fabric of America day by day the  
 saving habit." He made an unusual appli-  
 cation when he said it is neither fair  
 nor moral to carry on practices that de-  
 nude our hillsides and forests so that  
 floods and devastations overcome us and  
 human misery and poverty results.

Mr. Vogt, famous author of "The Road  
 to Survival," deplored man's inability  
 to comprehend the interdependence of re-  
 sources. Through this disregard and lack  
 of understanding he fails to make a  
 success of conservation.

Through the entire conference ran the thread of inter-relationships in the natural world, and that without man's disturbing influence Nature might maintain a fairly stable balance. But alas, again and again we are brought face to face with the fact that man is in the saddle and all too often doesn't know how to use the reins.

Through the interchange of ideas, the pooling of knowledge and the planning of such conferences as this, we may look hopefully toward a time when we can manage those things put into our trust wisely and with understanding.

Erna Comby

#### FESTIVAL OF THE HUMMINGBIRDS

To Southern California spring comes early. During February wild birds brighten their songs and wild flowers commence to bloom. March finds the Golden Currant blooming along the lower fringe of the stately Sierra Madre Mountains. The currant is a spreading shrub, 3 to 12 feet high, and along its leafy branches swarm bright yellow flowers. The shrubs usually form extensive colonies and as they all bloom about the same time, the display is beautiful.

The hummingbirds have discovered these gardens and their gleaming, fiery beauty adds splendor to the scene. A male Rufous Hummingbird has chosen a colony near the road, for his special domain. He sits upon a twig, at a vantage point, and watches for intruders. He is a truly red hummingbird for his back, sides and head are all of about the same bright shade, and in pursuit of intruders he dazzles the eyes like a burning coal. With the green-backed Allen, he has a tilt in mid-air, then hotly pursues his retreating form. A slim green hummingbird, feeding low, for a time eludes his watchful eye, but in the end gets the "bums 'rush." The doughty warriors, intent on keeping their chosen spots and grabbing territory of their neighbors, have little time to enjoy flower sweets. Meantime the more modestly clad of the clan, as the demure females and large green Anna, manage to get their full share of the nectar.

Enid A. Michael

Cliff Swallows were once Esquimo children who made play house igloos of mud on a cliff. Changed to birds they come back each year to fix their mud houses on the cliffs.

Publications of, and Material for sale, by the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Check List of the Birds of the L.A. area, 2¢ each; in lots of 50, 1¢.

Study Guide to Birds of L.A. County, according to habitat, 2¢ each.

Work Sheet for making notes on birds, 1¢ each.

Bird Study Notebook, 25 guide sheets with outline drawings of representative birds, 35¢.

California Native Plants, Desirable for Gardens and Bird Sanctuaries, 5¢.

Year Book of the L.A. Audubon Society, 1949-1950, 25¢.

Field Guide to Western Birds, Peterson, \$3.50.

Field Guide to Eastern Birds, \$3.50.

Birds of the Pacific States, Hoffmann, \$4.00.

Audubon Leaflets, double page of description with colored plate, 36 western birds, 5¢ each.

Poisonous Dwellers of the Desert, 50¢.

Games, - Western Wild Flowers, Mammals, Butterflies, Birds, each \$1.04.

These may be purchased at the Thursday meetings at Plummer Park or the Museum, or can be ordered from Miss Celia Christianson, 1065½ N. Oxford St., L. A. 27.

The only true development in American recreational resources is the development of the perceptive faculty in Americans. The weeds in a city lot convey the same lesson as the redwoods; the farmer may see in his cow-pasture what may not be vouchsafed to the scientist adventuring in the South Seas. Perception in short cannot be purchased with either learned degrees or dollars; it grows at home as well as abroad, and he who has a little may use it to as good advantage as he who has much.

Aldo Leopold

A Sand County Almanac

"God has lent us the earth for our life. It is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who are to come after us as to us, and we have no right by anything we do or neglect, to enslave them in unnecessary penalities, or to deprive them of the benefits which were in our power to bequeath."

John Ruskin

## NATURE'S LAWS

How many thousands of earthworms are devoured by a single bird in its lifetime, thus making them a part of its body? How many dead birds, are in their turn eaten by insects? How many worms, birds moulder on the ground and feed trees, becoming absorbed into them? Millions of years later when the trees have become coal, can you not picture Jonnell Eyebrows allowing some of it to be mined to supply energy to propel locomotives?

What is the law behind all this ceaseless interchange of particles within the same body and between different bodies? One law is that Nothing can claim as its very own a single particle of its body. Each particle has been a part of something else and will merge into still other things. What forms of life the particles of your body and mine have been incorporated in at one time or another is a deep secret, but every particle really belongs to them all. We do not own exclusively a single one. Rather humiliating isn't it to realize that we have been mixed up with nobody knows who or what?

Nature destroys only to create, and there is no visible beginning or ending to this universal stream of life. All things are continually "becoming," never stable or permanent. We can readily agree with the ancient Chinese philosopher who advised: "Do not nurture the unreasonable wish that the changeful shall become unalterable."

Of all earthly creatures man alone has tried to alter Nature. He has leveled mountains, altered the course of streams, made great lakes, exterminated species of plants and animals. But what lasting good has he accomplished? Where now are the Medes and Persians and their mighty works? Where are the powers that once were Egypt, Greece, and Rome? Amid ancient ruins in India, a crumbling tomb bears the inscription: "Here lies Jehangir, Conqueror of the World." What world? Who was Jehangir?

But who will be alive to erect a monument to our boys when or if they conquer the world? The situation is alarming, but with the diligent cooperation of all Audubon and similar societies, we may yet swing the world to sanity. Knowledge of Nature is the paramount need. Pieces of gold cannot save us. We must make a special study of Nature's laws-we must teach them adequately. Will we measure up to the responsibility?

Thomas F. Parker

## OBSERVATIONS

DUCKS: Feb. 25, R. Julian reports Bald-pates, Cinnamon Teal and Canvas-back on Hollingsworth Drive Settling Basins, and they are still there. Mch. 17-(D). March 2 on Devil's Gate Dam were 20 Cinnamon Teal, 50 Canvas-backs (D). Pat Gould on Feb. 19 reports finding 10 Cinnamon Teal, the rare Blue-winged Teal, 1 male, and 8 Canvas-backs on San Gabriel River ponds near the Sanctuary.

WHITE PELICANS: Mr. & Mrs. Russell Wilson, Mch. 12 observed over 300 flying low over Mt. Wilson territory in V-formations, then milling around, finally V-ing off toward the north.

BAND-TAILED PIGEONS: Flocks 8-9 feeding on peanut hearts, with Mourning Doves, every morning in Frank Boynton's Pasadena yard from March 6 to date.

HUMMINGBIRDS: Mrs. Ray Rogers, Monrovia, recorded Hummers along Fish Canyon wild currant area; Jan.-Feb.-Anna's abundant; Feb. 16-1 Allen's; Feb. 20-Allen's numerous; Feb. 26-Rufous and Allen's numerous, plus Anna's and 1 Black-chinned; Feb. 28 and Mch 2-Rufous and Allen's numerous; Mch. 5-Rufous, Allen's numerous, plus 2 Costa's. On Mch. 12-Pat Gould found all above species still there. On Mch. 12, Pop's Willow Lake area, Bob Pyle-Ralph Mall found Rufous Hummers very numerous.

ROBINS-WAXWINGS: Helen W. Shearer, Sunland, reports-at longlast-15 Robins arrived-Feb. 20 looking very fit; also a great flock Cedar Waxwings (over 100) feeding on their plentiful berries. During Feb., on one of her mountain walks above Pasadena, Mrs. Enid Michael found flocks of Robins.

ARIZONA HOODED ORIOLES: Ruby Curry Mch. 10 found a male Oriole bathing in her Eagle Rock yard fountain. Mch. 16, Georgia Ware, San Fernando, reports a male Oriole in her yard. The male Hooded Orioles seem to appear weeks ahead of the females, stake out preferred territory, then await the females.

FISH CANYON: Early morning birding, Mch. 12 produced for Pat Gould: 1 West. Flycatcher, numerous Canyon Wrens, 2 Warbling Vireos, and 1 Yellow Warbler-with other common species.

WATCH NOW FOR: Migration flights: Vulture Swainson's Hawks, White Pelicans, Geese, Ducks, Flycatchers, Wood Pewee, Russet-backed Thrush, Phainopepla, Cassin's Vireo, Warblers, West. Tanagers, Grosbeaks.

Caroline H. Daugherty

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY

Membership is open to anyone interested in birds and conservation.

Dues: Student (12 to 18 years) 75¢, Annual \$1.50, Life \$25, Patron \$100.

Joint membership with the National Audubon Society, including subscription to the Audubon Magazine, \$5.00.

Send applications for membership to the treasurer.

CALENDAR FOR APRIL, 1950

Thursday, April 6. FIELD TRIP to Irvine Park (near Orange) and Newport back-bay area, returning via Ocean Highway 101-A. Birding and lunch in Irvine Park, and birding stops will be made along the way. We shall find wildflowers and both land and water birds, including--White-tailed Kites, Hummingbirds, Warblers, Orioles, and possibly both Grossbeaks. Bring lunch.

Our Tanner Motor Bus will leave Los Angeles, 6th and Olive (park side) 8:30 a.m. Returning around 4 p.m. Round trip fare \$1.75... please have exact change. Route - Los Angeles via Manchester Ave. to Chapman Ave. in Orange; turn left to County Park Road to Irvine Park. Return trip to Newport Bay, where birding stops will be made, also along the shore highway.

Make reservations early with Miss Edith Crane, 4925½ Cimarron St., L.A. 37, AXminster 2-9458. Leader Caroline H. Daugherty, Charlston 6-1747. (The Mojave Desert trip scheduled in the yearbook is postponed.

Thursday, April 13. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING. 7 p.m. Echo Park Branch Library, 520 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles. Take Temple St. bus (No. 11) or red car on Glendale Blvd. Use outside door to lecture hall on north side of building. "ALASKA" a talk by Mr. W. A. Kent, illustrated with kodachrome slides taken on his last summer's trip.

Thursday, April 20. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park at 1:30. Natural Science of Death Valley, moving pictures showing the geological formations, plant life, and some of the animal life of this weird region. Mr. W. Scott Lewis.

Sunday, April 23. FIELD TRIP. To Santa Barbara. Meet at Andree Clark Bird Refuge at 10:00 a.m. Drive up U.S. 101 north to the junction of Hot Springs Road, take next turn left under S.P. tracks at junction of 101 and Old Coast Highway. Lunch at first picnic tables on beach at end of Milpas. Spend afternoon in Botanical Garden and Museum. Leader, Arthur L. Berry

Thursday, April 23. STUDY CLASS. Plummer Park, 10 a.m. Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line to Fuller Ave. Walk one block west. Continuing the general topic of Balance in Nature. Domesticated Birds, Trees and Forests. Attracting Wild Birds.

THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

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

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

Maintained by the National Audubon Society, with the cooperation of its Southern California affiliated societies and branches.

Regularly scheduled field trip, the second Sunday of April, starting at the entrance at 9 a.m.