

# Western Tanager



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## BIRDING BY HABITAT

Among the many aspects of bird study which interests the amateur, one of the first is usually the keeping of records of birds identified. The "life list" of species is an ever expanding accomplishment for the beginner; but after a few years of building it up, additions come with difficulty. Those who continue looking primarily for new "life birds" have to go farther and farther afield, often passing by the many species already identified without learning more about them than their names and field marks. Others turn to more detailed studies of particular species, to censuses of birds on sample areas of particular habitats (see "How to Take a Breeding Bird Census," Audubon Magazine, Sept.-Oct. 1947), or to watching for migrants at a particular location, etc. Such studies offer unlimited opportunities for contributing to the scientific knowledge of the behavior and population characteristics of the birds watched -- fields in which there is little known as yet even for many of our common species.

The "lure of the list" is still strong in many of us, however, and the chances of seeing new species or of finding again those we seldom locate, leads us to varied localities during the year. As a device for continuing in this "bird finding for fun," and at the same time gaining a better knowledge of the ecological status of the species which we meet repeatedly, it is recommended that the field list of birds seen or heard, (which most of us keep anyway) be tallied by habitats. It is a simple, yet effective way of becoming really aware of the fact that most bird species are rather restricted to certain habitats, and that they can survive indefinitely only in places where the climate, vegetation, and other animals are present in a combination to which they are adjusted. As Allan Cruickshank puts it, "Birds are particular people" and are not found just anywhere.

But you may ask, "How do I recognize all the different habitats? Do I have to learn the complicated terminology for ecological communities?" Certainly not; no matter whether life zones, biomes, or some other broad classification system appeals most to you when you have learned the necessary biogeography to judge them, you may start right now with the units which are fundamental to all -- i.e., the plant association and land forms. In most places the species of plants which are exposed to the sky (indicating their dominance) can be used to name the association and thereby the habitat. Thus if a strip of riparian woodland such as is found in the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary is recognized as being dominated by Black Cottonwood and various willows, the association could be named a cottonwood-willow woodland association. Over a large region the understory shrubs and herbs will be much the same wherever this association is found, and birds which are dependent upon the understory will be there as well as those dependent chiefly upon the trees, e.g., Song Sparrows and Yellow-throats as well as Flickers and Black-headed Grosbeaks.

Even if you don't know the names of the dominant plants, as will be the case even with experienced persons when away from their home areas, the major habitats of coniferous forest, deciduous forest, woodland (trees of short or medium height, spaced well apart), grassland, etc., can be recognized at a glance and any birds found within can be so tallied. Other birds will, of course, be found in greatest abundance where two of these types are adjacent to each other, since their

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WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS  
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On the 19th of April our Laura Greely died. For eleven years she served the Society continuously as President, Secretary, Editor. Only when illness made it impossible for her to continue did she relinquish her work as Editor a year ago. With quiet efficiency she gave us of her best, winning the high regard of all by her friendliness and fine character. We shall remember her with admiration and affection.

#### WITH OUR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Through the convention at Asilomar early this month ran the thread of an earnest desire to enlarge the Audubon program of activities and implement it with good tools sharpened with a better understanding of the problems which face us. Interchange of ideas provided the answers to questions that had lurked in the minds of officials and members of the various societies, as an excellent attendance showed up at all sessions.

Our President, Mr. John H. Baker, impressed his audience at the banquet as he told of the nationwide activities of the Society, and showed a film of the special efforts that are made where rare birds are found along the Texas coast.

In an easy, informal way, Mr. E. P. Rickel, Superintendent of the Los Padres National Forest told of his introduction to the Audubon field of interest when he became acquainted with the Condor. Mr. Ed. Dolder convinced his audience that he is sincerely seeking the answer to an all round, effective program of conservation education, to which we all may make worthwhile contributions.

The enthusiasm and vigor which characterized the convention is a good omen for future efforts in this direction.

Erna Comby

#### SALTON SEA WILDLIFE REFUGE

Within the last two years the federal government has leased 4,500 acres of land on the shores of the Salton Sea, 3,000 acres to be an inviolate sanctuary, the rest to be open to hunting - when and if the wild fowl become too numerous.

To reach the refuge one drives out Route 99 to a date stand "Vendles," then turns and drives about a mile toward the Sea. The ground has been planted to grains attractive to ducks and geese.

When we visited the refuge in early March, there were thousands of ducks of many species, scores of Snow and Canada geese, many white Pelicans and shore birds too numerous to count.

The refuge is some five miles north of Westmoreland. Mr. O'Neil, the warden, is very pleasant and will do all he can to make one's visit worth while.

Ruth Eckler

## BIRDING BY HABITAT Cont'd

particular requirements include both. If you really get interested in ecological matters, you will want to find out WHAT lives in every habitat you encounter - and WHY.

On long trips, where many associations are encountered, it is convenient to mark off a column for each on the note book page or check-list, and list the number of birds found in each. If a record is also kept of the time spent or miles travelled in each association, the list can indicate the relative abundance of birds, either in comparing species or the same one at different times, or the same area at different times.

For bird listing in Southern California I would like to suggest the following major habitats: 1) seashore (rocky or sandy); 2) tidal lagoon and mud flat; 3) salt marsh; 4) fresh-water marsh (specify if cattail or tule); 5) lakes and river beds (qualify as to amount of open water, altitude, bordering vegetation, etc.); 6) grassland (wet or dry); 7) sagebrush (sparse shrubs on low hills and in washes); 8) chaparral (usually denser, stiffer-twiggled shrubs on mountainsides); 9) oak woodland; 10) valley riparian woodland (willow-cottonwood, sometimes sycamore); 11) canyon riparian woodland (including live oaks, alders and maples); 12) Bigcone Spruce-Golden-cup Oak forest; 13) Yellow Pine forest; 14) Lodgepole Pine forest (high altitudes); 15) Pinyon Pine-Juniper woodland (desert side of mountains); 16) Creosote Bush desert; 17) Salt Bush desert; 18) low shrub and cactus desert; 19) Mesquite-Arrowweed desert; 20) Sagebrush desert (bits here and there at high altitudes, widespread further north); 21) cliffs and rocky areas; 22) sand dunes; 23) barren alkali land; 24) the many man-made habitats, such as urban, residential, golf courses, and various types of farmland.

Southern California is unique in the great variety of habitats and bird finding is fun in each and every one of them. How many have you visited?

Howard L. Cogswell

## OBSERVATIONS

WHITE PELICANS; Howard Cogswell reports an estimated 2500 migrating westward over the San Gabriel Mts. on March 28. HARLEQUIN DUCK; A male seen Mar. 19 (H. C.) in Santa Monica Yacht Harbor diving with Surf Scoters. This is a resident in the state, mostly in the northern part, but nowhere numerous.

WHITE-TAILED KITES; Edward and Irene Baker observed 3, Mar. 25, hovering over a meadow in Anza State Park Desert area and next day another near Temecula. On Apr. 8 Bill Hawkins closely observed a Kite in the Fresno area. Reports from this desert area surely show some recovery for this fine species.

BALD EAGLES; On Jan. 7 Fern Shelford saw two adults in the Gaviota area. On Jan. 30, near Point Mugu the Stultz party watched two wheeling around directly overhead.

SHOREBIRDS- PIPITS; In the Recreation Gun Club area G.T. Hastings reports Black-bellied Plover, Least Sandpipers, Avocets and Bonaparte's Gulls all in breeding plumage. About 50 American Pipits, probably flocking up ready to leave for their high mountain breeding grounds. This on April 12.

SWIFTS- HUMMINGBIRDS; Vaux's Swift seen San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary, Apr. 4, by Bill Hawkins. Mar. 22 Allen's, Rufous, and Black-chinned Hummers feeding from sugarwater containers (Stultz). Apr. 12, several costa's Hummers in Burbank foothill yard (D).

WARBLERS; Apr. 16 Arnold Small found the rarely identified Tennessee Warbler in the Sanctuary. On Apr. 17 several other warblers and on the 8th, many Long-tailed Chats(S).

ORIOLES; If you put out small glasses with sugar-water syrup, you may find Arizona Hooded Orioles drinking along with the Hummers. Bullock's Orioles seen in the Sanctuary, March 31.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK; In Ruth McCune's Mt. Washington yard, Mar. 29.

WATCH NOW FOR:--Wandering Tattlers, Knots, Phalaropes and the Least Tern, the only Tern which nests along our coast. Ash-throated Flycatchers, Russet-backed Thrush, Long-tailed Chats and Western Tanagers.

Caroline H. Daugherty

This is the last number of the Tanager until September. Our thanks to all who have helped by contributions or otherwise, to Mrs. Daugherty especially for the column of Observations. And to every member - good birding and a happy time through the summer.

## CALENDAR OF THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY FOR MAY, 1950

Visitors are welcome at all meetings.

Those interested in Nature and in Conservation are invited to join the Society.

THURSDAY, MAY 4. FIELD TRIP: Tapia State Park. Out Ventura Blvd. turning left at Brent's Junction. Good birding and wild flowers in bloom. Returning via the highway through the mountains and back along the ocean where we should see many water birds. Our Tanner Motor Bus, 6th and Olive Streets, Los Angeles (park side), 8:30 a.m. Fare \$1.60. Please have exact change. Bus will stop for passengers at Hollywood and Cahuenga Blvd., 8:40; Ventura Blvd. and Laurel Canyon, 8:50. Bring lunch. Make reservations early with Miss Edith Crane, 4925½ Cimarron St., L.A. 37, phone AXminster 2-8458. Returning leave for Los Angeles about 2 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 11. 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.

LIFE IN THE TIDEWATER POOLS - Mrs. Edith Lindsley. Some of the teeming forms of animal and plant life found in the pools along our coast and their manners of life. Why not bring picnic supper and join us on the island in Echo Park at 6 p.m., then go to the meeting with us.

THURSDAY, MAY 18. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING: 1:30 in Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. BIRDS OF PREY AND SOME OTHERS FROM THE DESERT - Mr. Norman Jupe of the Palm Springs Museum will tell of his experiences with the Great Gray Owl, Pacific Horned Owl, Red-tailed Hawk and Prairie Falcon; also of other birds. This interesting talk will be illustrated with kodachrome slides,

THURSDAY, MAY 25. STUDY CLASS. 10 a.m. at Plummer Park. Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line to Fuller Ave. Walk west one block to park entrance. The last of our topics on Balance in Nature. Man Upsetting the Balance. Introduced birds and mammals, insect pests. The use of D.D.T. and other poisons for control and some biological consequences.

Our 40th BIRTHDAY will be celebrated by a tea and special program beginning at 2 p.m. We expect to have some of our charter members present to honor the occasion. Bring lunch, enjoy Open House in our headquarters building, visit with friends, - then attend the birthday celebration.

If you cannot come for the Study Class, at least come for the Birthday Party.

SUNDAY, MAY 28. FIELD TRIP to Charlton Flat. Drive up Angeles Crest Highway from La Canada to the flat -- do not turn off left to the desert, or right to Mt. Wilson. Meet at Charlton Flat Ranger Station at 8:30. Bring lunch. One of our best spots for mountain birds.

THURSDAY, JUNE 1. FIELD TRIP to Charlton Flat. Our Tanner Bus will leave Los Angeles from 6th and Olive at 8:30, stopping on Glendale Blvd. (Angelus Temple stop) 8:35; cor. Los Feliz Blvd. and Glendale Ave. 8:45; Broadway and Glendale Ave. in Glendale, 8:47; Angeles Crest Highway and Foothill Blvd. in La Canada, 8:50. Fare \$1.60, please have exact fare. Make reservations early with Miss Edith Crane, 4925½ Cimarron St., L.A. 37, phone AXminster 2-8458. Return about 2 p.m. Many wild flowers in bloom along the way, good birding in Charlton Flat area. After lunch our officers for 1950-1951 will be installed. Leader Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty ... Charlton 6-1747. Our last field trip until October.