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Western



Tanager

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WINTER BIRDING IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA

On December 22nd Christine Bleifeldt and I left home at 6 A.M., bound for southern Arizona. Our first intensive birding began on our second morning after we had left Tucson for Nogales, a distance of about 68 miles.

A stiff breeze was blowing, and everyone knows that windy weather is no time to look for birds, but this day was to be an exception. The ill wind lived up to its reputation, for the birds had left their weedy fields and filled many of the mesquite bushes lining the roadside. For most of the distance we drove on the shoulder of the road, stopping, backing up, and seeing birds and more birds!

Plowed fields were filled with the always beautiful mountain bluebirds, hovering or perched on clods. Our first sight of pyrrhuloxias, those gray and rosy-red, parrot-like, finches, was a group of 5 in a tiny shrub. A telephone wire full of plump, strip lark buntings in winter dress gave me the thrill of a life species. Lawrence goldfinches were everywhere in great numbers, as were lark and Gambel sparrows. On getting out of the car and crossing to the leeward side of the road to get a better light, we found the last three species were singing loudly.

In the patio garden of the museum of the Tumacacori Mission Christine discovered a foxsparrow scratching. Later we were told that this was within one mile of the southernmost record for this bird in Arizona.

Peña Blanca on the Ruby Road brought us gray-headed and pink-sided juncos, also the pert little bridled titmouse and Arizona woodpecker in the oak belt.

In the Huachuca Mountains, long a paradise for ornithologists, Mexican forms began to appear over our border. One of these, Mearns's quail, with 5 half-grown young "froze" beside our car, then stealthily crept away in the thick dry grass while we watched. They were said to be more numerous this year than they have been for the last 10 years.

Here also we saw a coati mundi, called by natives a chulu bear, a distant relative of the raccoon. Unknown so far north 50 years ago, it is becoming more common, and recently has been found in the Huachucas in groups of as many as 30 individuals.

On a Christmas Count, we accompanied Mrs. R.J. Thornburg, past president of the Tucson Audubon Society, and her husband; and were lucky to find 4 wintering beardless flycatchers.

Dorothy Groner.

On the last day of 1950 the Ecklers visited the Federal Wildlife Sanctuary near Westmoreland at the southern end of the Salton Sea.

In the fields they saw dozens of White-fronted Geese, several thousand Snow Geese, and many Canada Geese. In the water were scores of white pelicans and many thousand ducks. Lesser Scaup, Ruddy, Mallards, Baldpates, Pintails, Shovellers and Green-winged and Cinnamon Teals. Great-blue Herons were nesting in the trees at the edge of the sea and many vultures perching in the branches made them appear to be covered with great black blossoms. Also there were flocks of redwings with beautiful yellow-headed blackbirds among them. Egrets and Sora Rails were numerous, and Coots abundant.

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Note in the list of the Christmas count the following and other unusual records: Holboell's Grebe, Golden-eye, Western Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Warbler.

STARLINGS REACH THE LOS ANGELES AREA

Attempts have been made frequently to introduce foreign birds because of sentimental or supposedly practical reasons. First efforts to naturalize the English sparrow was unsuccessful, but later ones were all too much so. In 1890 a well-meaning gentlemen set 60 Starlings free in Central Park, New York City, and 40 more the following year. Gradually they spread about the city, to neighboring states, then westward, reaching Oregon and Washington a few years ago. Then they were found in northern California. On December 20th Pat Gould found a male starling in the San Gabriel River Sanctuary.

On the Christmas Bird Count this year Mrs. Comby and Miss Betty Holm found a starling near Whittier. An article in the Los Angeles Times says the starling is "wiley, cruel and dirty" and that "he travels in noisy, devastating flocks." The U.S. Biological Survey has said he is useful as a destroyer of insects, but may do damage as a fruit eater. It is to be deplored that starlings were introduced into the United States and we greatly regret their arrival in our state.

OBSERVATIONS

DUCKS AND GEESE: A Black Brant wintering in Westlake Park (Daugherty), at Playa del Rey, Jan. 5 (Hood), Jan. 8 (Hoffman); 2 White-fronted Geese, Point Mugu, Dec. 15 (Lasky); Old Squaw Duck (immature male) near Santa Monica pier, Jan. 14 (Bennet).

HAWKS AND OWLS: Pigeon Hawk in yard at Eagle Rock, Jan. 5 (Curry); Short-eared Owl suffering from botulism picked up at Point Mugu gun club, treated but did not recover (Wm. Lasky).

WOODPECKERS: Many Lewis Woodpeckers, in Lake Arrowhead area, Jan. 7 (Don Bleitz).

PERCHING BIRDS: 1 Phainopepla near Lake Arrowhead, Jan. 7; large flock of Robins feeding daily on Cotoneaster berries in Hollywood (W.S. Lewis); a male Prothonotary Warbler, San Gabriel Sanctuary, Jan. 13 (Pat Gould).

WATCH NOW FOR-- Avocets and Black-bellied Plovers in summer plumage, a few already show the change. Allen's and Rufus Hummingbirds, Band-tailed Pigeons, Varied Thrush and other migrants.

CHIPPER

One afternoon about four years ago my husband discovered a baby mockingbird under our tall evergreen trees. Fortified with a widebrimmed straw hat, as the parents did not want me around, I picked the little fellow up. One of his eyes was injured, we do not know whether hurt in its fall to the ground or pecked at by an enemy.

We tried to put him on a branch in the pine tree, but he could not hang on. So we took him into our service porch and gave him one of my husbands old felt hats for a nest. He refused to take anything to eat that day and did not move at all. The next morning he was full of life and calling for his mother before we were up. She was outside the window screen, very concerned about him. I put him out in an oleander bush, where she looked him over and fed him. Before long he was on the ground. She coaxed him over to a small apricot tree that had some limbs right near the ground and tried to encourage him to climb up. He made a number of tries but was unable to balance himself as he had no tail.

From then on the job of feeding him was mine. I gave him water and milk with a medicine dropper, and fed him bread and milk. I had to poke the food down his throat. As he grew older we dug everywhere we could for earthworms, and the few we found were certainly enjoyed. Since worms were so hard to find I decided to do the next best thing. I cut little slivers of raw, lean steak, moistened them with salad oil and rolled them in fine sand and grit. Chipper, as we had named him, had homemade earthworms. We also gave him mockingbird food purchased at a pet shop and bits of fresh fruit.

Our service porch was Chipper's cage. Each morning for a week or more I took him out to the oleander bush, then called his mother by imitating the "Check, Check" sound she made. She would come flying to him and look him all over. At first she even looked in his mouth to see what I had been feeding him.

I spent a good deal of time out doors with him, carrying him in and out on a little branch. He would hop around near me while I was weeding. Soon his tail began to grow and before long he was a good sized bird.

One morning the other young birds were in our neighbor's grapefruit tree. I put Chipper up with them and came back into our yard and sat down about 60 feet from where the birds were and began reading aloud to my husband. Much to our surprise little Chipper was down at our feet in a very short time. The little fellow wasn't able to fly yet, but he must have heard my voice and came to us, over a two foot retaining wall.

We had a little Boston Terrier. We told him not to touch the bird, and he proved very obedient, though the bird often hopped up on his back, or on his hind leg when he was sleeping.

Although Chipper did learn to fly, he did not have perfect balance, because of having only one eye. He would fly through the entire house, but not outdoors, as we did not dare free him as we had not been able to teach him to eat for himself.

After six months he still opened his mouth, which had lost its yellow baby look, and wanted me to feed him.

He liked to dance on the rug. He would hop a few steps one way, then back again, straighten himself up tall, pull his wings back, then take several sharp pecks at the rug, dance off a few steps and go through the routine again.

He would perch on our shoulders, arms, or fingers. Many times when I was reading he would perch on my finger, then let his little body down to roost. Till then I had thought birds put their heads under their wings. Chipper just laid his head over his shoulder and nestled his beak down in his feathers. Everyone was his friend. All one had to do was put their finger out and he would get on it. He knew his name and would come when called. One windy day the screen door blew open. When we discovered it a few minutes later Chipper was gone. Although we searched our yard and the neighborhood, we never saw him again.

Up until the time we found Chipper, the mockingbirds were very wild and would dive bomb at us when they were raising their families. They don't do that any more. Pearl Miller.

If dead or injured birds are found, please get in touch with Mr. William R. Lasky, 551 26th St., Santa Monica, phone EXbrook 3-1904. He will autopsy dead birds and will treat sick birds.

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT OF THE LOS ANGELES AREA ** 1950

This was the 13th Christmas Count for the Los Angeles Audubon Society, the 51st for the National Audubon.

The count was taken on December 26 by 54 observers working in 24 parties, representing the Los Angeles Audubon, the Pasadena Audubon, the Southwest Bird Study Club, and the Santa Monica Nature Club. The territory was the same as in past years, taking in a short stretch of sea shore, marshland, open country, golf courses, wooded canyons, chaparral slopes, parks and city. Early morning drizzle, most of the day with hazy sun.

LOONS: Pacific 3; Red-throated 3.

GREBES: Holboels 1; Horned 3; Eared 10; Western 157; Pied-billed 20.

PELICANS AND CORMORANTS: Brown Pelican 133; Farallon Cormorant 54; Bairds 1.

HERONS: Great Blue 7; American Egret 59; Snowy 32; Black-crowned Night Heron 16.

GEESE AND DUCKS: Black Brant 1; Geese (unidentified) 25; Baldpate 97; Pintail 72; Green-winged Teal 5; Shoveller 7; Ring-necked 16; Lesser Scaup 339; Golden-eye 2; White-winged Scoter 3; Surf Scoter 331; Ruddy 24; American Merganser 2; Red-breasted Merganser 55.

HAWKS: Turkey Vulture 2; Sharp-shinned Hawk 9; Coopers 3; Red-tailed 15; Red-bellied 1; Ferruginous Rough-leg 2; Marsh 7; Osprey 1; Prairie Falcon 1; Peregrine Falcon 1; Sparrow Hawk 76.

QUAIL: California 263; Ring-necked Pheasant 1.

COOT: American 411.

PLOVERS AND SANDPIPERs: Snowy Plover 17; Semi-palmated 1; Killdeer 57; Black-bellied Plover 128; Surf Bird 41; Ruddy Turnstone 4; Black Turnstone 1; Long-billed Curlew 6; Hudsonian 24; Spotted Sandpiper 6; Willet 784; Greater Yellowlegs 44; Least Sandpiper 150; Red-backed 128; Long-billed Dowitcher 80; Western Sandpiper 250; Godwit 298; Sanderling 407; Avocet 77.

GULLS AND TURNS: Glaucous-winged 47; Western 354; Herring 23; California 1531; Ring-billed 2710; Short-billed 430; Bonapartes 321; Heermanns 262; Forsters Tern 2.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Band-tailed Pigeon 8; Mourning Dove 320; Chinese Spotted 77; Ringed Turtle 264.

ROAD RUNNER: 1.

OWLS: Barn 1; Pacific Horned 5; Short-eared 1; Burrowing 3.

HUMMINGBIRDS: Annas 159.

KINGFISHER: 9.

WOODPECKERS: Red-shafted Flicker 147; California Woodpecker 5; Downy 2; Nuttalls 14; Red-naped Sapsucker 5.

FLYCATCHERS: Black Phoebe 125; Say's Phoebe 3; Western Flycatcher 2.

LARK: Horned 22.

JAY: California 157; Crow 3.

TITMOUSE: Plain 101; Bush Tit 633; Sleder-billed Nuthatch 3; Red-breasted Nuthatch 1.

WRENS: Wren-Tit 205; House Wren 7; Long-billed Marsh 1; Bewicks 23; Canon 5; Rock 1.

MOCKINGBIRD: Western 274; California Thrasher 98; Western Robin 120; Hermit Thrush 35; Western Bluebird 13; Mountain Bluebird 1.

GNATCATCHERS, ETC: Blue-gray 17; Golden-crowned Kinglet 8; Ruby-crowned 16; Pipit 25; Cedar Waxwing 124; Shrike 53.

VIREO: Huttons 7.

WARBLERS: Orange-crowned 4; Audubons 1533; Townsends 1; Yellow-throat 5; Wilsons 7.

ENGLISH SPARROW: 526.

MEADOWLARK, BLACKBIRDS: Western Meadowlark 406; Redwing Blackbird 66; Brewers Blackbird 1259.

FINCHES, SPARROWS: Purple Finch 48; Cassins 6; House 1705; Pine Siskin 5; American Goldfinch 38; Green-backed 343; Lawrence's 13; Spotted Towhee 98; Brown Towhee 574; Savannah Sparrow 33; Beldings 55; Large-billed 1; Grass-hopper 4; Vesper 25; Lark 35; Rufous-crowned 16; Oregon Junco 382; Gray-headed 2; Chipping Sparrow 427; Gambels 501; Golden-crowned 107; Fox 23; Lincolns 2; Song 139.

Total species 147 with 2 subspecies.

Total individuals 21,698.

Count directed by and results tabulated by Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty.

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers - 1950-1951

President.....Mrs. Neil H. Lewis, 212 N. Wilton Place, Los Angeles 4
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Treasurer.....Mrs. W. Scott Lewis, 2500 Beachwood Drive, Hollywood, 28
Membership Chairman..Miss Bonnie C. Green, 774 N. Heliotrope Dr., Los Angeles 27

Calendar for FEBRUARY, 1951

Thursday, Feb. 1 FIELD TRIP. Tapia Park and Malibu Lake. Birding in Tapia Park, lunch at 11:50. Then to Malibu Lake for more birding, water fowl of many species, also land birds.

As many as possible should go by the Tanner Motor Bus. Leave 6th and Olive Sts., L.A. (park side), 8:30. Bus will stop at Hollywood and Cahuenga Blvd. 8:40, Ventura Blvd. and Laurel Canyon 8:50.

Make reservations early with Miss Edith Crane, 492½ Cimarron St., L.A. 37, Phone AXminister 2-8458. Fare \$1.60, have exact change. Take lunch. Field Leader, Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty.

Thursday, Feb. 8. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING. An illustrated talk - I like to live in the Mountains by our member Ranger Leslie Cammack of Crystal Lake. His talks are always both entertaining and instructive.

7 P.M., Room 10, Union Avenue School, 150 S. Burlington Ave.
Take Beverly Boulevard Bus to Burlington, walk south 1/2 block.

Thursday, Feb. 15. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING. Mr. William Lasky will show the picture THE BOY AND THE EAGLE. A real nature film made by Mr. Lasky. A moving drama of an injured eagle and its recovery, with the Malibu hills and the ocean making a beautiful background.
1:30 P.M. at the Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park.

Thursday, Feb. 22. MORNING STUDY CLASS. First hour pages 33 to 36 of our text book, How to Know the Birds, - Ibises, Cranes, Herons, and their relatives. Second hour, - Trees of the city related to the pines. The use of a key in learning the names and characters of specimens of a few of these trees.

10 A.M. at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard. Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line, to Fuller Ave., Walk west one block. If you can, bring lunch and eat in Audubon House.

Sunday, Feb. 25. FIELD TRIP. Maxton Brown Sanctuary, Carlsbad. A wonderful place to see ducks and other water birds, often some rare ones. Birding will start when YOU get there. Drive south on Highway 101 three miles south of Oceanside, one mile north of Carlsbad. Best birding in the lagoons adjacent to the road. We will also cruise the south side of the main lagoon. Lunch at the picnic tables, if suitable, or return to beach at mouth of lagoon.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT THE MEETINGS AND TRIPS

THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

664 N. 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 trips the second Sundays of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 A.M.