

Western Tanager



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SEA LIONS AND OTTERS BIRDS AND FORESTS SNOW AND DESERTS
Ruby Curry

Those made a vacation full of variety for Dorothy Groner and myself between June 14 and July 5 this summer. North along the Coast Route, which was edged with wild flowers of many hues, the thrill of observing a school of about thirty sea otters frolicking among the kelp beds and rocks off shore near Carmel, stands out. At Point Lobos State Park on the bird rocks were downy baby gulls, young cormorants, while a black oystercatcher sat on her nest under a cotyledon plant on a steep cliff. Of especial interest botanically along the Mt. Tamalpais highway were the large shrubs of chaparral pea, Pickeringia montana, full of rose-purple pea-like blossoms. This shrub is a xerophyte, being able to subsist with a very limited supply of water. Huge California buckeyes were in full bloom in many places in this part of the state. After crossing the California-Oregon state line beautiful rosy-pink rhododendrons blossomed under the larger forest trees. Near Brookings hedges of azaleas bordered the road leading to Azalea State Park. There the hill-sides were covered with acres of azaleas of many shades.

A stop at Sea Lion Point and a walk down to the cave, a rookery for hundreds of sealions, gave us a chance to watch the guillemots, whose bright red feet and large white shoulder patches stood out against the black breeding plumage, and to see them carrying food to their nests in notches of the basaltic cliffs. At Crescent Lake on the Olympic Peninsula from the firs and hemlocks and the western red cedars with flat branches resembling huge fern fronds, came the voices of russet-backed thrushes singing in the mist of early morning. A side trip to Olympic Hot Springs was well worth while for the vista of snow-topped Mt. Olympus, browsing deer, rushing mountain streams, and the glimpse of a pileated woodpecker as it flew across the road. Here too were ouzels, Canada jays, Stellar jays, a varied thrush, and others - a birdy place.

From there our route took us to the sunrise side of Mt. Ranier, and then going over the Chinook Pass, where under the trees on the snow covered hillside, there came to us the varied thrush's song. I quote Dawson's description of this song which is just as we heard it - "A single long drawn note of brooding melancholy and exalted beauty, a voice stranger than the sound of any instrument, a waif echo standing on the shores of time. Suggestive, elusive and whimsically baffling. It may be fairly reproduced by a high pitched whistle combined with vocal undertones." In the banks and cliffs below Yakima hundreds of bank swallows were nesting, Canada geese swam in the upper reaches of the Columbia River.

Going over the Blue Mountains of Oregon we saw flowers of many hues, gillas, white and purple penstemons, yellow sulphur flowers and balsam root, fireweed, luxuriant deep pink wild geraniums and many more. One which intrigued us most, proved to be "Pink Fairies", Clarkia pulchella, with three-lobed petals, which was growing in patches near the road. The Grande Ronde River is well named and we crossed it many times. On the slopes above it were masses of white syringa. In the Wallowa Mountains rain prevented our going on the trails to the lakes, higher

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Sealions and Otters, Birds and Forests, Snow and Deserts

up, but we birded sitting in the car and had varied thrushes, Townsend's solitaires, Wright's flycatchers, robins and others within a few feet of us, while Audubon hermit thrushes sang in the distance.

On the way down to Lassen National Park, Lake Abert, twenty miles long, had much of interest - marvellous cloud reflections in the lake on our right and the impressive sheer precipices of the Abert Rim, which is one of the largest exposed earthquake faults in the world, on our left.

The night of our arrival at Lassen, June 28, snow fell covering ground, trees, autos, wires, Lassen Peak and Chaos Crags. After five days of excellent birding, rowing on the lake, trips to the lava caves or tubes, and lovely Burney Falls, over which darted black swifts, we left in the morning for the 9:30 control with a pilot car to take us and others to the other side of the park through ten miles of snow banks, in many places twice the height of the cars. While waiting for the pilot car to come from the other side we had the unusual experience of seeing a California Blue Heron fly up the canyon over the snow.

The next night at Carson City and on through Lone Pine and the desert it was hard to believe that a few hours before we had been through all that snow.

THE FULVOUS TREE DUCK

In the report of our Field Trip this duck is mentioned as a "life bird" for most of the members who saw it. In the September Tanager Bill Hawkins and Pat Gould report 100 of them near the Salton Sea. So it is not a rare bird in its proper range. With its long legs and slender neck it is more like a goose than a duck. Its scientific name - *Dendrocygna* - means "tree swan". It is said to have "the most extraordinary range of any bird, being found in five widely separated 'colonies': India, eastern Africa, southeastern South America, northern South America, and Mexico to southern California and southwestern Texas."

WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY

The AFTERNOON PROGRAM meeting of October 2, the first meeting of the fall, was attended by nearly 60 members. Several met for lunch in the Museum Cafeteria before the meeting. It is planned to use the time between lunch and the meeting in visiting one of the museum halls, getting better acquainted with the splendid material in our museum.

Miss Leta Adams gave an interesting review of the new book, "Stalking Birds with Color Camera".

Our new sound projector was used for the first time in showing Alaska's Silver Millions, the story of Salmon from the time they go up the rivers to spawn, till some end up in a can.

EVENING MEETING AND WORKSHOP, October 9. Mrs. DeMay gave a talk, "How to Appreciate Reptiles". Live snakes were brought by Charles Allen of the Griffith Park Zoo. Mrs. Genovieve Walmsley showed a small king snake, loaned by one of her pupils. David Gray of the Fern Dell Museum spoke on Native Trees.

There were tables with special exhibits: shells of our beaches, by Mr. and Mrs. Chace of Lomita; geodes, cut and polished, by Mr. and Mrs. Farmer; nature games, by Mrs. Dorothy Bush; and art objects made of nature material, - necklaces, bracelets, etc., by Ed. Baker.

FIELD TRIP, October 15, to Playa del Rey. The 35 members present saw on the Ballona Creek jetty a flock of some 25 Surf Birds, with Black and a few Ruddy Turnstones. Forester's Terns, Western, California, Ring-billed and Herrmann's Gulls were on the jetty and beach. A large flock of Sanderlings with a few Least Sandpipers seemed out of place on the rocks of the jetty. Two Eared Grebes and a Loon were swimming in the creek, while on the banks were hundreds of Willets, and many Godwits and Hudsonian Curlews. Near where we ate lunch were Avocets.

The real thrill of the day was when Don Thomas Parker discovered a bird new to nearly all the group, - a Fulvous Tree Duck. It stayed near the creek edge till all the party had gathered to watch it. Some 36 species of birds were seen by the group.

IN AND NEAR THE SANCTUARY

Hazel Lewis

Autumn has come to the Sanctuary. Foggy mornings and hazy afternoons prevail but the birds are singing and eating wild grapes. In the river-bed, burr marigolds, native thistles and golden minulus are in bloom. Here and there, away from the trails, bright red splotches warn of the presence of poison oak. In the corn-field beyond the museum building, two beautiful Chinese pheasants have been seen. All through the day, two young cardinals (a male and a female) are coming to the feeding table at the north side of the greenhouse. On October 8, during his postponed summer vacation, a male Costa's hummingbird, its throat flashing a gorgeous purple, paused on a tree tobacco, near our driveway. On October 13, at our future location, two and one-half "bird miles" from here, a young female cardinal was seen among the fruit trees. Is this an answer to my prayers that I may still have the joy of seeing cardinals come to the feeding trays in our new yard? After November, our little picnic woods where, for so many years, the cardinals and other birds have been fed, will be under the protection of the Sanctuary and the birds will be assured of one meal a day. We hope that our fondness for the little woods and our feathered friends, has been shared by many bird lovers to such an extent that they will continue to be bird watchers here.

BLOOMS FROM ANCIENT SEEDS.

In a city park in Washington a lotus plant bloomed this summer, grown from "seeds tens of thousands of years old, found in a geological formation". So read a recent newspaper article. Well any part of the earth's surface is a geological formation and is not necessarily ancient. Stories of "Mummy Wheat" growing and yielding crops have been told for years, but scientists do not credit them. But this story is probably true. Lotus seeds were dug from dry soil where there had once been a lake, no one knows how long ago, but possibly a thousand years. The seed coats were so hard that no water could soak in, but after filing holes through them a few seeds germinated in Yonkers, N. Y. about twenty years ago. These Washington plants may be of this same lot.

OBSERVATIONS

SEA and SHORE BIRDS: Bill Hawkins and Gould report a Western Grebe, Elegant, Forester's and Caspian Terns, -Bolsa Chica, Oct. 5; Clapper Rail, 2 Northern Phalaropes, 30 Avocets, 3 Stilts, a Red-backed Sandpiper, and many ducks, - Buena Vista Lagoon, Oct. 5. Bob Pyle saw a flock of Surfbirds, with Black Turnstones, - Ballona Creek jetty over 300 Elegant Terns, - Playa del Rey, and a White-tailed Kite, Oct. 5; 13 Northern Phalaropes at Newport Beach, 12 Lesser and 6 Greater Yellowlegs at Bolsa Chica on the same day.

QUAIL and other birds: Miss Ruby Curry, at Eagle Rock, a cover of quail every day in her yard, Poorwill calling on moonlight nights from the hills, Gambel's Sparrows first on Sept. 27. On Sept. 16 and 17 at Wrightwood and Big Pines, Western Bluebirds, Robins, Slender-billed and Red-breasted Nut-hatches, Sierra Creeper, Chipping Sparrows and at Jackson Lake, Lutescent, California Yellow, Audubon's and Pileolated Warblers.

AMERICAN REDSTART: Mrs. Hazel Lewis reports that on Sept. 24 an immature male American Redstart was discovered in the Sanctuary by Sandy Sprunt on his first visit. It was seen then and later by many others. The White Finch, after an absence of months appeared in her orchard Sept. 7 and has been there frequently since. Undoubtedly the same bird reported in the Tanager last November. Gambel's Sparrows first on Sept. 24. Hooded Oriole not seen since Sept. 6, Black-headed Grosbeak since Sept. 9, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Sept. 15. Mrs. May Wait had Hooded Orioles in her yard in Hollywood up to Sept. 22.

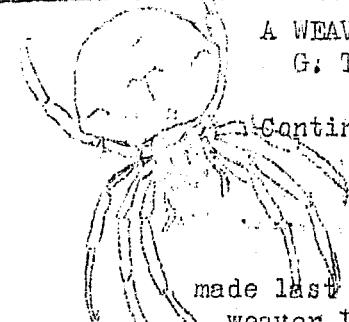
WAXWINGS AND REDWINGS: One Waxwing was seen by itself near outlet of Santa Ana River, Oct. 5 (Hawkins, Gould), a small flock in Los Angeles yard, Sept. 29 (McCune). 75 Tricolored Redwings with many San Diego Redwings and Cowbirds, near Nigger Slough, Oct. 5 (Pyle)

WARBLERS: Audubon's Warbler, Hollywood, Sept. 28 (W. Scott Lewis); Orange-crowned Warbler, Hutton's Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Sanctuary, Oct. 12 (Hawkins)

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A WEAVER AT WORK

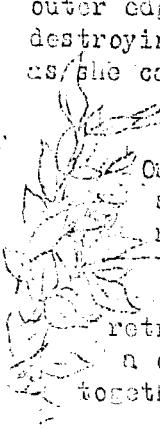
G. T. Hastings



Continuing the subject of spiders begun by Mrs. Hood last month, here are a few observations

made last summer on a fat orb-weaver I watched on the privet by my front porch. It was not one of the beautiful golden garden weavers. This, Aranea, had a yellowish brown, nearly round abdomen as large as the end of one's thumb. She must have lived in the privet for some months while growing to the large size she showed when I found her by running into part of her web one evening. As she ventured out on to her web only after dark her eight eyes could have been of very little use.

The first thing she did when she came out each evening was to run to whatever insects had been caught during the day, swathe them in silk and carry them, one at a time to the center of the web where she macerated them with her fangs and sucked out the juices. Then, starting at the lower edge of the web she proceeded to demolish the whole structure, except the outer framework, rolling the silk into little balls and eating it. Then a new web was woven. Starting at the upper edge she dropped on a line to the bottom, attached the line, fastened a thread about two inches to one side, carried it up to the middle, fastened it there, then back on that to the edge with a new line, and so on back and forth till there were from 12 to 19 threads radiating from the center. Starting at the center she next spun a rather coarse spiral, fastened to all the radii to within two inches of the outer framework. This was a temporary foundation spiral to strengthen the radii. Mrs. Aranea then started a fine spiral from the outer edge, working towards the center, destroying the foundation spiral as she came to it.



The web was completed each night about 11 o'clock. Only this last spiral was of sticky threads. She remained near the center of the web, unless an insect was caught, then about 5 in the morning, when she retreated to her hiding place beneath a canopy of three leaves held together by threads of silk. For nearly

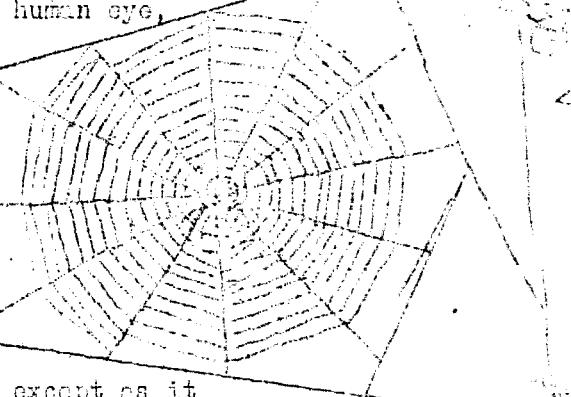
six weeks I watched her every night and the routine was the same every time except on two nights when no web was spun. The first was the night of the feed when four large flies, a moth and a June beetle were in the web; the other time was when she made a ball of brown silk nearly an inch in diameter which was filled with eggs. The next night her abdomen was shrunk to less than half its former size, and only a small web was spun. But a few nights later she had regained her original plumpness.

One morning in September she was not in her retreat; the same fate that had overtaken the flies, wasps, moths and other insects captured in her snare had befallen the spinner, - furnishing a meal for some other creature.

SPIDER SILK

Spiders spin from a group of four to six spinnerets at the end of the abdomen. The fluid secreted by a number of glands is shot out through many tiny openings in the tips of the spinnerets, hardens and unites into a thread of silk. Half a dozen or more kinds of silk may be spun. A hard dry silk for the drag line; all spiders make wherever they go; a for the framework of the webs of the web-making spiders; sticky threads for the snare; a broad ribbon of silk to swathe captured insects; soft, cotton masses to surround the eggs; a tough, parchment-like material to cover the sac; and others.

A strand from a drag line may be twenty thousandths of an inch in diameter, but a single strand may be only a tenth as thick, while the silk spun by tiny spiderlings is even thinner. Quite invisible to the human eye,



except as it may reflect a ray of light. During the season an orb-weaver may spin over a mile of silk.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Officers -- 1952-1953

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Secretary Miss Elizabeth Patterson, 6040 W. 78th Pl., L.A. 45, Oregon 8-451
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CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER 1952

(Visitors are welcome at all meetings and trips)

Thursday, November 6. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING. Los Angeles County Museum. Exposition Park, 1:30. Mr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Ornithology will explain the museum's Bird Exhibits, then take the Society into the Bird Hall for further study. This will be followed by a showing of the film REALM OF THE WILD, showing birds and mammals in some of the Nazi Forests, and explaining how they are protected. Members who can are invited to meet for lunch at 12 in the cafeteria in the basement of the museum, then spend half to three quarters of an hour in informal study in the Bird Hall, before the meeting.

Thursday, November 13. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING. County Museum, 7 to 9. A joint meeting with the Nature Study Workshop. There will be Kodachrome pictures and a lecture -THIS CHANGING EARTH- by W. Scott Lewis. This will be followed by an illustrated talk on THE WORLD'S TREES AT YOUR DOORSTEP, by George T. Hastings.

Thursday, November 20. FIELD TRIP TO THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY. Meet at the Sanctuary entrance at 9:30. Our Tanner bus will leave 603 So. Olive St., Los Angeles, promptly at 8:30. Fare \$1.60. Please have exact fare. Bring lunch. Leader Mrs. Alma Stultz. If driving go east on Third St. to Beverly Blvd. continue on Beverly to Durfee Rd., then north to the Sanctuary, number 664. Make reservations early with Miss Edith Crane, 4925½ Cimarron St., L. 62, Phone AXminster 2-8458.

Sunday, November 23. FIELD TRIP TO PLAYA DEL REY. For study of marsh and water birds. Take bus marked Redondo Beach, via Playa del Rey at subway terminal, 423 S. Hill St., Los Angeles at 9:21. Get off at Vista del Mar and Culver Blvd., Fare 35¢ one way. Bird walk will start at bus terminal about 10:15. If driving go out Culver Blvd. Bring lunch. Leader, Miss Dorothy Groner, NO 3-1012.

Friday, November 28. STUDY CLASS. Plummer Park, 10 to 12 A.M. Mr. W. Scott Lewis will show another series of his beautiful pictures with a talk emphasizing conservation. Mrs. Lewis will give an illustrated talk on Bird Migration. Take Pacific Electric, Santa Monica West Hollywood car to Fuller Ave., walk one block west.

THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

664 N. Durfee Ave., El Monte ... Phone Forrest 0-1872
Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Director Mrs. E. Gertrude Woods, Assistant Director
Maintained by the National Audubon Society, with the cooperation of the Southern California branches and affiliated societies.

Regular guided field trips the second Sunday of each month, starting at the entrance at 9 A.M. Come and bring your friends. For information call Crestview 6-1990