

T H E

# Western



# Tanager

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## Notes From Honolulu

Bob Pyle

Today we went out to check the shorebird migration, and wonder of wonders we found a new bird for our Hawaii list. It was none other than a greater yellowlegs. It was feeding right along with golden plovers and a black-bellied plover for good comparisons. Actually the black-bellies are quite scarce here, and we had the two together today. Getting a black-belly and a golden together, there is all the difference in the world in size and coloration. But separately it isn't so easy. Later in the day we came to a pond where gallinules had been reported and found 6 of them, which is more than I've ever seen in one place before. There's no danger of their ever outnumbering coots, however, as we saw hundreds of coots today. Both of these birds are Hawaiian subspecies you know.

I had a chance to go on a very interesting boat trip early this week. We went out from near Kaneohe where the booby colony is, out past the bird islands (Moku Manu) and on to 15 miles off-shore. It was a special trip of the University of Hawaii boat to get samples of sea water from various spots off-shore. I was the only person along who was interested in birds, and actually we didn't see any new or exciting species. But there were lots of booby birds out there, especially the young birds of the year.

As is always the case with any small boats that go out to sea for any reason, there were a couple of fishing poles up with lures out trolling for fish as we went along. The lures of course were up near the surface of the water where the boobies could see them easily. In no time there was a flock of boobies following along, exactly like the flocks of gulls that follow ships back by the California coast. Soon one would get enough nerve to dive at a lure, then all would start diving at it. In due course the inevitable happened and we had hooked a booby. It had to be brought to the boat, unhooked and released. This happened four times on our trip, and is evidently a common thing. Of course I grabbed the opportunity to band the birds, so the next time an immature booby sits himself down on Foothill Boulevard, take a good look to see if he has one of my bands.

The interesting thing about this is that the great majority of the birds following the ship were immature red-footed boobies. Only occasionally did we see an adult, and then he would only follow along for a few minutes before going off. We always had a few adult brown boobies with us, diving at the lures just like the others, but never getting hooked. Evidently the adult red-footed are smart enough to know that the trolling lure affords nothing that could satisfy their appetite.

Incidentally, the trolling also produced a couple of fish for us. One was a beauty, three and a half feet long, and was cut up into eight good chunks. Our chunk gave the three of us fish steaks for two meals.

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Organized 1910      Incorporated 1951  
"To promote the study and protection of  
birds and other wildlife, plants, soil  
and water."

#### MEMBERSHIP

Joint with the National Audubon Society,  
Includes subscription to Audubon Magazine,  
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\$25.00; Supporting \$50.00.

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CHRISTMAS -- Less than two months!  
What about a season ticket for the next  
4 Screen Tours for your friends?

#### THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There are two meetings a month at Plummer Park, when members can get books from our library in Audubon House; - works of reference, biography (three fine ones on John James Audubon), travel, and nature books. We have a presentation copy of Mary V. Hood's "Outdoor Hazards", just published and getting fine notices. Our President Emeritus recently gave a generous gift of money "to purchase new books".

"There is no frigate like a book  
to take us worlds away...."

Avail yourselves of transport into the world of nature; travel in Alaska, Hawaii, South America, etc. By striking away non-essentials, the naturalists present the kernel, the high-lights of an experience. Wallace Grange packs a wealth of detail and vivid description into his account of animals and birds in "Those of the Forest". So does Sally Carrigher in her books. A book I'd recommend for reading during a hot spell such as we had recently, is her "Icebound Summer". Her insistence on snow and ice can be guaranteed to reduce the temperature around one by several degrees; and in cold weather read of heat in "The Gobi Desert".

Many writers, like D. C. Peattie give one a feeling of space and leisure, a lessening of tension. John Burroughs tells of walking some days in the south of England in a vain hunt for a nightingale singing over a late brood. He wasn't on any schedule and time did not worry him till he realized he had loitered too long in Scotland, and nesting and song were over. We are fortunate that we do not have to stalk our best songsters, the mockingbirds, that sing nearly the year around, with a few weeks out for moulting.

Grace Harvard Phillips

#### WITH DEEP REGRET

we record the passing of two of our long-time members, both at one time on our Executive Board.  
Miss Charlotte Fox served splendidly as Membership Chairman. She was always a lover of nature in all its aspects and deeply interested in our Society.  
Miss Alberta Hodge served as Publicity Chairman, putting her experience as a newspaper woman on the Kansas City Star to effective use. She interested many others in our Society and in Audubon ideals.  
We are poorer because of the loss of these members.

## WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY

## Field Trip of September 25.

This first regularly scheduled trip for the season was a tremendous success. Thirteen birders met at Long Beach and birded the coast from Bolsa Chica to Oceanside, recording 63 species.

The first highlight of the trip was at Huntington Beach State Park where four Parasitic Jaegers were pillaging the Elegant Terns, stealing their fish. The Jaegers at times flew right over the coast highway in pursuit of the terns. Apparently this was the height of the tern migration as we observed the same actions at Oceanside later in the day, with four more Jaegers. We also saw one Sooty Shearwater about 100 yards off shore at Oceanside.

One Wood Ibis was all that was left of the flock observed this fall at Maxton-Brown Sanctuary. However, this individual put on a real show for us, rising slowly in the air on motionless wings until he was almost out of sight.

Elegant Terns were everywhere. We saw at least 1000. In many of the back bays they were sitting next to Forsters and Caspian Terns, making excellent comparisons possible.

Other interesting birds recorded were two White-tailed Kites at Bolsa Chica, Tree Swallows and Vaux Swifts at Carlsbad and Red-headed Ducks. We estimated that we saw 3000 Northern Phalaropes.

Leader of the trip was Jim Huffman.  
James Clements, Chairman.

## Afternoon Meeting of October 6.

This first meeting held in the new location was attended by 42 members and friends. Three members told of summer vacations. Mrs. Paul Dodds was in beautiful Hawaii, where she saw birds new to her. Mrs. Mary Hood told of experiences photographing birds in Yosemite. Miss Bessie Pope and Miss Patterson spent some time in the historically famous Mother Lode country.

Next, a film - "The Living Bird" was shown, with Mr. Merl Deusing narrating his film. The bird is the only feathered animal. Compared with man, its heart beats faster, it breathes faster and needs more food, -from one-fifth to one-half its weight daily. To help obtain this food

it has very keen eyesight and efficient wing structure. If sufficient food cannot be found at certain seasons, it migrates to find food elsewhere.

Each kind of bird has its own individual way of doing things. No two have the same way of building a nest nor the same manner of courtship. Eggs are laid at different times and their time of incubation differs. Some birds are hatched bare and helpless, others are covered with down and can walk almost at once. Mr. Deusing also told of the economic importance of birds and of how man may and should attract them to his homes.

Miss Lura Lowe told about the Junior Audubon Society at Arroyo Seco Playground. Starting with but five members, the group now has twenty-eight members, ranging from eight to thirteen years in age. These boys and girls learn nature arts and crafts at their weekly meetings, and learn to know and love nature on their field trips.

## Field Trip of Saturday, October 8.

Some 40 members of the Society with a number of children in addition met at the pool south of Ballona Creek at Playa del Rey. It was a good day for birding. One little Northern Phalarope was seen in the pool, apparently left behind when others had gone on further south. Three Grebes, the Eared, Pied-billed and Western. On the jetty were many Surfbirds and Black-Turnstones. A few Ruddy Turnstones were with the others and along the creek one Wandering Tattler was seen. On the beach were flocks of Western, Ring-billed, California and Heermann Gulls; with them a few Caspian Terns and 100 or more Elegant Terns. Several times a tern was seen to bring a small fish and feed another, probably a young bird. Once a tern settled beside another in the water and fed it there. Several of the group watched a Parasitic Jaeger robbing a tern of a fish.

Following lunch at the picnic area at the end of the pool a list was compiled of the birds seen and comments made on some of them. Specimens of Salicornia were shown and described by Mr. Hastings. Forty-four species of birds were listed. Due to the illness of the leader, Miss Ethel Craig, Mr. James Huffman and George Hastings acted as leaders.

## CONSERVATION NOTES

Robert Blackstone

Our national wildlife refuges, in common with other reserved areas, are constantly being threatened by one group or another wishing to take over or use them in furtherance of some special interest. There has never, however, been anything to equal the onslaught currently being waged by the the Military against the refuges. The Armed Services already control many hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the U.S. and Territories for various purposes, but they want still more. The Army recently induced Congress to authorize a military appropriations bill including transfer of 10,700 acres of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma to enlarge the Fort Sill artillery range, Secretary of the Interior, McKay, has stated that he has no intention of reducing any of the national wildlife refuges; let us hope he can hold his own in this controversy.

The Air Force, which has for some time been using part of the Desert Game Refuge in Nevada for bombing practice, has asked for 100,000 acres more of the same refuge, and the Army, again, has asked for about three quarters of the Kofa N. W. R. in Arizona for practice in the use of poison gas! Granted, the needs of national defense must be met, but, to this taxpayer at least, the demands of the Military are quite out of reason. "Why do they pick on the wildlife areas?" Quoting from the National Wildlife Federation's Conservation News, "Well, the land looks cheap and easy to get; it is already owned by Uncle Sam. Many of the top Officers also are ardent hunters. It is well known that many of the top "brass" have regarded military reservations as their personal hunting preserves."

These Military plans for land acquisition are usually made in secret, and the public doesn't learn of them in time to organize effective protest. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Wichita Mountains N. W. R. To guard against this sort of thing H. R. 5306 has been introduced by Congressman Lee Metcalf (Montana); H. R. 6723 by Congressman Henry S. Reuse (Wisconsin); and S. 2101 by Senator Hubert S. Humphrey (Minnesota). These three bills forbid

the Secretary of the Interior to dispose of any part of a national Wildlife refuge without the prior approval of Congress. They have been referred to the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, and to the Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce respectively. Letters expressing your views should be sent to these Committees.

The National Wildlife Federation recently quoted figures showing that public use of national wildlife refuges reached an all time high during 1953, when 4,686,909 people visited the 272 areas administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Of these, over one-third, or 1,433,445 were fishermen, 347,988 were hunters, but the remainder, an overwhelming majority of 2,905,476 people, listed as their objectives principally: picnicing, swimming and nature study opportunities. Elsewhere, the N.W.F. says, "It appears that the Fish and Wildlife Service has moral as well as legal obligations to two groups of conservationists: (1) Those who are primarily interested in complete protection of all forms of wildlife and (2) those who, through the purchase of duck stamps, contribute funds for the perpetuation of the resource to provide reasonable opportunities for hunting. In attempting to meet these joint responsibilities, a considerable acreage of national wildlife refuge land is, and always should be, closed to the hunting of waterfowl." Your conservation chairman has long felt that the rights of the former group, to which, I imagine, a majority of Audubon members belong, have not been as well recognized as they should be, due to the greater zeal of sportsmen's groups in demanding what they consider to be their rights. So, perhaps it behooves us to be more zealous in seeking recognition of our rights. The figures quoted above indicate that a far greater number of non-sportsmen have a stake in these refuges than sportsmen, whereas the popular impression seems to be that they are maintained exclusively for the sporting fraternity.

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HELP! CRY THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
WATERBIRDS

Berthat H. Fuller

When we came here in 1906 it was a very different land from that of today. And even then wildlife had taken a terrific beating with some species entirely gone or threatened with extermination. The deer were not plentiful, and it was a rare thing to see any of the geese except at the larger lowland ponds, such as Playa del Rey, Nigger Slough (Laguna Dominguez) and Bixby Slough.

There were few roads, but many delightful trails ending up in nowhere. Hundreds of little "eyes of water" as Crespi called springs, thousands of acres of swamp-land and all streams and rivers ran in their own banks, not in concrete lined ditches.

J. A. Graves, writing of the 1870's and up to 1900, told of the vast flocks of quail, geese, snipe, curlews, plovers and larks he and others shot. Jacksnipe were shot by the thousands, one famous gunner killed 87 jacksnipe on one trip to the Cienega marsh.

Cold winters bandtailed pigeons came down by thousands and were shot on Buena Vista Street (North Broadway) not a stone's throw from our Hall of Justice.

The Playa del Rey swamp extended to Culver City, between the high cliff and into parts of what is now Venice - in fact almost overlapping the Cienega Rancho ... marshes along Ballona Creek. Ballona had no mouth but spread out over the marshes thousands of acres for birds--and gunning.

When the Ballona Creek ditch was being planned, with the Army Engineers in charge, we attended meetings and we wrote letters begging that the great sum to be spent on the ditch be spent partly to buy land to allow the Ballona Creek drainage to flow out onto it, as it always had, to work up a great aquatic development - a boat harbor, wild bird refuge, recreation spots, but no, the money of the PEOPLE, Federal Funds, must be spent according to engineering ideas, and could not be spent for the full benefit of the PEOPLE.

George Willet, formerly curator of ornithology at the County Museum in Exposition Park, knew our birdlife as few others. He had been an ardent gunner when he was on the Los Angeles police

force, but when he studied birdlife he changed his opinion of gunning and never shot another bird, except for scientific work in the museum. He stood with a little group of us one misty morning at Playa del Rey and said, "Unless some of these lowlands are saved, we shall have many species exterminated, so far as this county is concerned. And it is a pity, too, because the birds have earned the right to full protection by the sport they have given us and the food they gave those before us, - a thousand acres at least should be saved."

We asked how many species and he promptly replied, "Oh, the Willet, the Godwit, the long-billed Curlew; the small Plovers, Ducks and Geese, the Sandpipers, the Stilts, the Avocet, the Ibis, - fully 25 species. A few gulls will survive, some phalaropes--but the marsh wrens, the various swamp-loving sparrows, the yellow-throat - where can they stay?"

Bixby Slough still has water in it -- the only natural lake the men of the county have left. It would be the easiest place to save.

Today, in the whole nation, there is no more serious conservation problem than to get bird refuges in Los Angeles County for the protection of migratory water birds and other birds that love wet land.

#### DEPIGMENTATION

Eileen A. Creech

In Eagle Rock a California thrasher has gradually changed color. Last June a thrasher was noticed that had white on one-half of his bill. Later the bill became all white and white feathers appeared in the wings and on the head. To date the bird is nearly all white, with the exception of several dark feathers in the tail and one in a wing. His legs lightened but his eyes remain dark.

It was interesting to watch the change of color and to observe how the thrasher and his kind reacted to the change. His condition is called "depigmentation" and there is a possibility that he might change back to his natural color. The bird was trapped and banded. Pictures were taken of him and if he survives, his progress will be carefully watched.

## OBSERVATIONS

On a trip to Cottonwood Springs at Joshua Tree National Monument, on the 12th and 13th of October, Robert Blackstone saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch working among the dead leaves of a California fan palm. This bird is not on the list that has been kept of birds seen in the area. Besides the usual desert birds, Bob also saw a Townsend Solitaire, Hutton Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend Warbler, Fox and Lincoln Sparrow.

Mrs. Clara Splitter at Playa del Rey on October 15th and 16th saw a White Pelican on the lagoon and in flight over it. Besides many of the birds seen on the trips of September 25th and October 8th, including the Elegant Terns and Parasitic Jaeger, she saw 300 Pintails; 3 Ruddy Ducks, 13 Avocets, 18 Red-backed Sandpipers and in tree tobacco near the marsh, 20 Audubon Warblers.

Mr. Reginald Julian reports that hundreds of White-throated Swifts swarmed over the Los Angeles River in the Studio City area for two days, then all were gone. In the same area he saw a Green Heron, Yellowlegs and Western Sandpipers.

White-breasted Nuthatch. Mr. S. Paul Lindau watched a nuthatch early this month working up and down the trunk of a jacaranda in his yard. For some reason it seemed unpopular with other birds. First a pair of House Wrens began chattering and diving at it; next a Pileolated Warbler and two Black Phoebes joined in the attack. When the Nuthatch flew to another tree a Song Sparrow joined the chase. A couple of Hummingbirds in the yard paid no attention to the Nuthatch or the disturbance caused by the other birds.

Robins. Mrs. Caroline Daugherty says several flocks of 50 or more have been feeding on Burbank lawns since the last week in September. A half dozen or more come every day to feed on avocados on the ground in Santa Monica. (George Hastings).

## DO BIRDS OBJECT TO SMOG?

Mrs. Jesse Morain reports that this summer a pair of California Jays were in her yard every day. Frequently they made a terrible fuss outside the kitchen window and kept it up till she or Mr. Morain

went out. After some days of this she discovered that the birds began calling and scolding as soon as smoke began coming from the neighbor's incinerator. They quieted when anyone went out to the yard. She wondered if they were calling attention to a violation of the burning ordinance, or did they object to the polluted air.

We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate in having taken forms so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move, finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear.

From *The Outermost House*, Henry Beston

## THE LAST OF THE CURLEWS

This little book is one every member of our Society should read. You will learn from it--but that will be incidental to the enjoyment you will have in reading this story of a fictitious Esquimo Curlew on its long flight from the Barren Lands of Northern Canada to Patagonia. The facts given are accurate and the explanations up to date. You will struggle and perhaps suffer with the gallant bird. This bird is either on the verge of extinction or actually extinct. The illustrations are beautifully done to add to one's pleasure. Written by Fred Bodsworth, the book is published by Dodd, Mead and Company.

AN EXCELLENT OPENING  
FOR A BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER

Wanted, a young man for a permanent position as assistant to bird photographer. Duties include photo lab work, field work, some typing desirable for indexing, etc. Will teach necessary photographic technique to qualified applicant. Bleitz Wildlife Foundation, 1001 No. McCadden Place, Los Angeles 38.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
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Calendar for November, 1955

Tuesday, November 1. EVENING MEETING, Long Hall, Plummer Park, 8 P.M., 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. BIRD FINDING IN MEXICO by Mr. Arnold Small.

Thursday, November 3. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING, Exposition Community House, 1:30 P.M. The Community House is at 3990 Menlo Avenue, corner of Santa Barbara Ave. on Exposition Park grounds, reached by #5 and #6 buses. NESTING-LIFE OF GOLDEN AND BALD EAGLES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Mr. James Fassera, President of the Pasadena Audubon Society will show the film he made of these birds with running comment. This film has received very high praise from those who have seen it.

Saturday, November 12. FIELD TRIP to Joshua Tree National Monument. Meet at the Monument Headquarters at 9 A.M. for the study of desert birds and plants. Those wishing to go on Friday and meet the group Saturday morning will find accommodations in the motels near the Monument. Leader, Miss Ethel Craig.

Thursday, November 17. FIELD TRIP to Playa del Rey, for the study of shore and water birds. Elegant Terns and Parasitic Jaegers and a White Pelican have been seen in the area recently.

Take Metropolitan Coach Company bus at 5th and Olive Streets at 8:50, arriving at Playa del Rey at 9:36. Bus goes south on Olive and west on Venice Blvd. Meet at south end of lagoon. Leader, Mr. George Hastings.

Sunday, November 20. FIELD TRIP to Buckhorn Flat. Meet at Chilao at 9 A.M. Proceed to Buckhorn Flat. Leader, Mr. Reginald Julian.

Tuesday, November 22. STUDY CLASS, at 10 A.M. in Long Hall, Plummer Park. The meeting will be from 10 until 11:30. From then till 12 there will be a social time in Audubon House. Members will have opportunity to look over our library and take out books and see the publications on sale there. If the weather is bad, lunches may be eaten in the house, otherwise those who wish can eat at the tables outside.

Mr. C. V. Duff will talk on 'The Magpie and Its Tale', the first period. Mrs. Paul Dodds will talk on Hummingbirds, the second period.

Note change of date from Thursday to Tuesday because of Thanksgiving.

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

Tuesday, November 29. Virgil Junior High School, 152 No. Vermont Avenue, 7:45 P.M. Tom and Arlene Hadley will present "Into the North Woods", an adventure story of Hiawatha's country,--an action color film of great beauty and deep significance.

Saturday, December 3. John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 So. McCadden Place, 2:00 P.M.