

T H E

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Western Tanager



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ENEMIES IN NATURE Irston R. Barnes

Many natural history books, in discussing predator-prey or food-chain relations, sometimes use a verbal short-hand referring to predators on a species as its natural enemies. The word enemy suggests the need for a critical scrutiny of our nature vocabulary, for words carry false connotations from other fields and influence both our own thinking and our ability to communicate with other people.

If the prey species is a desirable song or game bird and the Cooper hawk is its "enemy", then those who are for the song bird are against the hawk. Thus a semantics barrier is created to a popular understanding that both the song bird and hawk are equally good citizens of the woods-margin community.

When predator-prey or other natural interspecific relations are seen in true perspective, the enemy concept is clearly inaccurate. Naturalists using the enemy figure of speech mean only some form of life which is dependent in a particular way on the species in question. A robin may die of old age, starvation, disease or the strike of a hawk; yet only the last is casually designated as an enemy. The robin, if capable of a choice, might prefer the hawk. Nature knows no such preference, but finds opportunities in every form of life to support other life. From such interspecific relations or food-chains, come much of the infinite variety of life which we know.

The robin that eats the worm, the hawk that takes the robin, and the bob-cat that sometimes surprises the hawk are not severally the enemies of their respective food supplies. Neither the robin, the hawk nor the bob-cat, although it takes the life of an individual, poses any threat to the species. The hunter takes what is readily available, and when the abundance of one food diminishes, it turns to another food or moves to another hunting ground. In general, man is the only predator so relentless in his hunting that he exterminates a species.

The true enemies of a species are those life forms, or inanimate forces, which destroy the essential elements of its environment or that by competition drives it from its habitat or from access to food or shelter. Sometimes an introduced species, such as the rabbit in Australia, destroys the plant life and alters the nature of the habitat. Sometimes an introduced predator, as the mongoose in the Caribbean Islands, finds native species that are unprepared to withstand its attack. Sometimes introduced competitors usurp the place of native species, as has happened with Hawaiian birds. More often, however, it is the unchecked multiplication of a species in the absence of normal predation that creates the disastrous competition. The deer of the Kaibab Plateau were a prosperous population so long as mountain lion and wolf preyed on them, but when the predation was removed, the explosion of numbers destroyed the food resources and wholesale starvation resulted.

Man is the great destroyer of habitats, the great force which by changing the patterns of land use, has brought some species of wildlife to extinction and opened the way for explosive expansion by others. Man is the nearly omnipotent enemy of wildlife; yet even here the word is misleading. Much of the harm that man does is unnecessary, unintentional and unwanted, but this is another subject.

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THE WESTERN TANAGER

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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"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. Regular \$5.00; Sustaining \$10.00; Active \$25.00; Supporting \$50.00; Student \$2.00.

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We are happy to welcome as a member Mr. Alan Stensvold, 5141 Sophia Ave., Encino. Mrs. Stensvold has been a member, so membership is now a family affair.

With very deep regret we have to report the death of Miss Edith Newton on February 16th. Miss Newton was a member of the Society for many years. Until failing health prevented, she attended both meetings and field trips. She has taken part in many of our Study Classes, using illustrations from her large collection of mounted pictures of birds in her talks.

SPRING CAMP OUT

Again we call your attention to a weekend of fun, good birding and instruction. Friday evening, May 18 to Sunday afternoon, May 20, at Palomar Mountain.

If you can go - of course you want to - write to the National Audubon Society, 2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley and make your reservation for accomodations. When the registration form is mailed you, you can make the payment of \$6.50 to cover the two nights and six meals plus \$2.00 registration. Or, if you wish to camp out in the Palomar State Park, write to the State Park Superintendent, Palomar Mountain, Palomar, California, for information.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The final Screen Tour of the season was presented March 17; Dr. Harold M. Hill's "Wings and Talons." It seems to me the films and narration this year were the finest so far - how they can keep increasing in excellence, I don't know. Yet they do and probably will.

The first Tour was in the State of Kentucky, peaceful and smiling, with its blue grass, meadows, woods and mountains, its fine horses and wealth of wild life. The film closed showing one of the finest nature schools for youths in the States.

Tom and Arlene Hadley's trek into the north woods of Michigan was next. A spectacular forest fire was the most exciting point in their film, - the terrified animals trying, sometimes vainly, to escape before the flames.

Newfoundland was brought before us by Dick Bird, with humorous and pungent comment. The very considerable hardships and dangers when filming this, and the adventures of Dr. Hill, swinging over cliffs on ropes to reach eagles' nests were minimized; but try to put yourself in their places; Mr. and Mrs. Bird could not leave the island on which they landed one morning because of the storm that came up. They spent the night without food or shelter. From the comfort and safety of our seats, it made one shiver!

While the Audubon Society is a non-profit organization, it doesn't mean that we do not need funds to work with; and this necessary money is obtained in part from the sale of Screen Tour tickets. So help us - and pleasure yourselves - by subscribing to the new series next fall. The program looks as alluring as ever. Go with us on the Magic Carpet that will take off on certain Tuesday nights from Virgil Jr. High School, and will give a repeat performance the following Saturday afternoon. The trips will be well worth your while. See you then!

Grace H. Phillips

One goes to Nature only for hints and half truths. Her facts are crude until you have absorbed or translated them. Then the ideal steals in and lends a charm in spite of one. It is not so much what we see as what the thing seen suggests. We all see about the same: to one it means little, to another much.

From The Philosophy of John Burroughs

WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY
Olive Alvey

Field Trip to Cabrillo Beach, Feb. 16. In spite of a real cold wind, the 17 of us on this trip saw many interesting things. Mr. Olquin conducted us through the museum and along his just-started Nature Walk along the beach and around Point Fermin. We were the first adults to be taken on this walk and even in its beginnings we could see what a fine thing it will be when completed. According to present plans there will be a walk along the base of the cliffs as far as Cabrillo Fault. Geology of the district can then be studied as well as life as it is lived "on the edge of the sea."

In the museum we saw another of Mr. Olquin's new projects, a collection of ship models. There are nine so far, all perfect in every detail.

STUDY CLASS of February 23. We were taken - via pictures and lecture - down Mexico way by Mr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Ornithology of the County Museum. We went by plane and yacht to an interesting group of islands called Las Tres Marias.

This expedition which was very well equipped, was financed by Mr. Maurice Macris and his wife, both of whom accompanied the party.

The string of Tres Marias Islands on the west coast of Mexico has been known since the 16th Century, but not until last year when Mr. Stager and his party visited them has such extensive study and collecting been done there. One thing that makes the wild life there so interesting, especially to an ornithologist, is that once these islands were part of the mainland. During the long ages since they became separated from the mainland some of the birds there have changed, becoming different species from the ones on the mainland. Others were trapped there and no close relatives are found elsewhere. Yet others are common to both locations.

Many kinds of soil and vegetation are found on the islands, from sterile volcanic soil with cacti and thorny bushes to heavily forested tropical areas with bromeliads and orchids. Only one of the islands is inhabited, and that has a penal colony. In some places are fine colonies of nesting birds, such as terns, boobies,

and frigate birds, there being few enemies to disturb them.

Mr. Stager showed skins of some of the birds:--trogon, blue mocker, warblers, wrens, squirrel cuckoo, kingfisher, rose-breasted chat, flame tanager, hump-bill kite, several kinds of parrots, including a tiny thumb-sized one. Some of these had never been recorded from these islands before.

Following Mr. Stager's talk the group moved over to Audubon House where Mr. Hastings showed a few of his flower models, explaining the characteristics of some plant families as illustrated by the models.

PELAGIC TRIP of February 26 from Santa Barbara. Extremely rough weather coupled with high winds cut down on the time and birding. A surprising number of alcids were seen despite the rough seas. These included Common Murre, Marbled and Xanthus Murres, Ancient Murrelet and Rhinoceros Auklet. Excellent views were had of several Kittiwakes and Glaucous-winged Gulls which followed the boat for several miles. Another interesting bird which followed the ship and offered an excellent size and color comparison was a short-billed Gull.

Because this trip was so short, the regular May field trip will again be a pelagic one. Details will be announced in the next Tanager, but all those who were on this February trip should contact Jim Clements immediately if they desire passage on the May 20th trip. A special rate will be available to those people and it is important to know in advance how many February people plan to attend.

AFTERNOON MEETING of March 1 at Exposition Park Community House.

Bird songs and calls were given by Mrs. Roselynde Hutchinson, accompanied by Ruth Anderson. Mrs. Hutchinson analyzes a bird song, imitating it and adapting it to music. It has been said that bird song is the most glorious music this side of heaven, which we well believe, now that spring is in the air and all our friends, the birds, are trying to out-sing each other.

Two splendid book reviews were given by Mrs. Irene Schmitz, a one-time member and officer in Audubon. The books were

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WHAT'S GONE ON - Continued

"The Edge of the Sea" by Rachel Carson, and "Wild America" by Roger Torry Peterson and James Fisher. Mrs. Schmitz is most enthusiastic about both books and they should be in every home. The illustrations in "The Edge of the Sea" are beautiful and the prose is pure poetry. "Wild America" describes a trip across the country and back, a 30,000 mile trip, with Mr. Peterson showing his British companion many "life birds." The list for the trip was 600 species. Mr. Fisher was especially impressed with our park system and what has been done in conservation.

EVENING MEETING of March 6. This was a symposium on Rare and Endangered Birds. Mr. Dudley Ross was moderator. Talks were given by Jim Clements, Bob Sandmeyer, Warren Blazer, Bob Blackstone and Charlotte McBride. Then the meeting was open for general discussion by the thirty-five present.

PLANNING YOUR SUMMER VACATION?

Not too early. What better for any lover of nature than two weeks at the Audubon Camp at Sugar Bowl Lodge near Donner Pass, - 7,000 feet up in the Sierras? Five two-week sessions, the first June 24 to July 7, the last August 19 to September 1st. A wonderful location, comfortable housing, fine food, expert naturalists as leaders, delightful companionship with other nature lovers. What more can you ask for? Write to the National Audubon Society, 2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley 4, Calif. for further information and application blanks.

In the Los Angeles papers and over the radio we heard of a KILLDEER that made its nest in the center of a home building project. For some time the workmen carefully avoided the nest, but as houses were finished about it it was necessary to use the spot chosen by the killdeer. The eggs were taken and placed in an incubator with chicken eggs. We doubt if the eggs hatched, or if they did, if the baby killdeer could survive with the chicks. But at least we give the builders an A for effort.

JUNIOR AUDUBON

The Junior Club of which Mrs. Arnold Small is leader, attended as a group the Audubon Screen Tour of March 17, to hear Dr. Hill and see his pictures of hawks and eagles. Most of the members of the Club are Girl Scouts of Troop 278.

The Arroyo Seco Junior Club took seriously the phrase "Beautify your Community" on January 19th, when armed with hoes, rakes and plenty of enthusiasm, they attacked a barren and neglected area adjoining the Avenue 43 Bridge over the Arroyo-Seco Freeway at Homer Street, and planted the unsightly spot with California Poppy seeds, and now are waiting hopefully for rain. This is the first of similar projects planned for this lively group of young naturalists by the adult leaders of the Club, - Mrs. Lura Lowe, Mrs. Allen Hardt and Mrs. Napoleon Cordy.

Most of us have read the distressing story in the Jan.-Feb. Audubon Magazine - "Death In The Night," describing the great number of birds killed on migration over airfields. In the Tanager of March, 1955, we had a short article based on one in the Topeka Audubon News of the large numbers of birds, over 1000 of 68 species found dead below a new, very tall T.V. tower. The News (of Topeka, Kansas) in the last number reports that this past year fewer birds were killed, probably because the weather during the fall migration period was good and the birds kept high above the earth. On one day of bad weather in September, 230 dead birds were found below the tower. The total during the fall was 321 birds of 43 species, 9 of the species ones not found the previous year. Probably others were killed, but the bodies carried away by predators. As in the year before, warblers were the chief victims, 167 individuals of 15 species being recorded. The 4 flickers and 4 red-headed woodpeckers found indicate that they were migrating by night. Again all the specimens found by members of the Audubon Society who visited the tower every morning were sent to the Kansas University for study.

CONSERVATION NOTES

Robert Blackstone

As an alternative to Congressman Lee Metcalf's H.R. 1823, which would earmark 10% of National Forest Service receipts each year for recreation and wildlife, a bill introduced by Congressman McIntyre of Maine proposes a "partnership formula". This means to "encourage public and private agencies, corporations, firms, associations and individuals to contribute" to the development and maintenance of recreational facilities. This bill authorizes appropriations up to \$5,000,000 annually for the federal share of the program. Mighty few of us would care for this kind of development, I am sure. Instead of enjoying free access to national forest areas as now, choice areas would be taken over by organizations and individuals for furtherance of their own interests or for private gain. This McIntyre bill does not even mention wildlife. H. R. 1823, on the other hand, specifies "improvement and maintenance of wildlife habitat" as one of its purposes.

The Klamath River Compact, proposed to apportion the waters of the Klamath River between the States of California and Oregon, is regarded by conservationists as a potential threat to the important Tule Lake, Clear Lake and Upper and Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuges in that no assurance is given that the needs of these vital links in the Pacific flyway will be given adequate consideration. The compact must be approved by the legislatures of California and Oregon as well as by Congress, so we will have our opportunity to oppose it when it comes up.

During the last session of the California legislature, an attempt was made to have the state parks opened for hunting; this was unsuccessful, but the supporters of the proposal are persistent and it is expected that another attempt will be made in the coming session. We have been warned to be on the watch for it.

The herd of Tule Elk in the Owens Valley has grown from the original 56 animals planted there in 1933-34 to something over 300 by 1955. The species formerly ranged over the central and coastal valleys

of California. The cattlemen and farmers of the Owens Valley resent their presence there and would frankly like to see the herd wiped out. They range mostly on lands owned by the City of Los Angeles and on federal lands. However, the city leases land to ranchers for agricultural purposes and that is where the friction arises. Two special hunts had been held at their request up to 1955, to keep the numbers down. In December of last year a third hunt was held, with a quota of 150 animals. In a recent aerial survey by the Department of Fish and Game 154 elk were spotted, 46 bulls and 108 cows. This is a "threatened species" which is of especial concern to us: it would be a shame if they were allowed to become extinct. A number of organizations are interested in the fate of the Tule elk, and it is to be hoped that a scheme can be worked out to assure the continued existence of this last remaining herd of the species.

The disastrous floods in the northern part of the state this winter were also serious for wildlife. The State Department of Fish and Game, in cooperation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a local sportsmen's club fed 9,350 pounds of grain to pheasants stranded along the Sutter by-pass levee in December and January.

The state's annual census of waterfowl in January showed an increase of 23% over a year ago. Made by land counts and aerial photography a total of 6,547,000 ducks, geese and swans were listed. Officials believe that a decreased kill owing to flood conditions during the hunting season was responsible for the gain. This probably means that hunting regulations will be liberalized this fall to allow for a greater number of waterfowl being shot.

FOR SALE

Bausch and Lomb, 7 X 35 binoculars 1-1/2 years old. Guaranteed to be in new condition. \$95.00. Call Richmond 8-6733 after 6 P.M., or write Mr. Leslie Brothers, 633-1/2 W. 34th St., Los Angeles 7, Calif.

OFFICERS FOR 1956-1957

According to our Constitution the Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates at all meetings in April and election will take place at the first regular meeting in May. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor at any meeting in April, provided such nominations are supported by written petitions signed by at least fifteen members.

A Golden Eagle that had been shot and left for dead on the Mojave Desert was brought to William Lasky in Topanga Canyon and cared for till it had completely recovered. Bill had the bird on a leash in his yard and had applied to the State Fish and Game Commission for a permit to keep it. But the eagle took matters into its own hands - or wings - broke the leash and flew off.

SPARROWS

One day in late March we saw on the shelf by our kitchen window where we watch birds at arm's length, four kinds of sparrows within a space of ten minutes. First came several Gambel, then a Song followed by a Golden-crowned, and last the one most unusual for the city, a Lincoln. Of course there were some English but we do not count them. In the western hemisphere there are some 800 species and sub-species of the family Fringillidae to which sparrows, grosbeaks, towhees, juncos and finches belong. Peterson lists 27 sparrows in his Field Book of Western Birds. Our check list gives nineteen. How many can you recognize? Sparrows are doubtless the most difficult group of birds to study in our area. All are predominantly brown, small (from 5 to 7-1/2 inches long), usually seen on the ground where they quickly disappear in the grass or shrubs. They lack bright colors, though the chestnut crown patches of the Chipping, Rufous-crowned and the cheek patches of the Lark sparrows are bright for sparrows and the jet black of the Harris and Desert sparrows is striking. Some marks to look for in observing sparrows are stripes or central patches on the breast, stripes on the crown, white edges of the tail, the tail notched or rounded, white wing bars, and the comparative size.

OBSERVATIONS

CALIFORNIA MURRE, a bird not on our check list as it is usually an off-shore bird, has been seen almost every day in Santa Monica Bay, inside the breakwater during the past month (Eugene Anderson). RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD, Feb. 26, Sunland, feeding on red cestrum (Caroline Daugherty).

LEWIS WOODPECKER, 6 seen in Sand Canyon, (Clara Wiedmark). DOWNY WOODPECKER, Tapia Park, working on oak trunks, March 19 (Southwest Bird Club).

CLIFF SWALLOW, at Malibu Creek on St. Joseph's Day, the day they "return to Capistrano," March 19. The swallows returned in small numbers a week or more before this at Capistrano, but according to the papers and radio they came in large numbers on the accepted date. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS also at Malibu, March 19 (Southwest Club).

VARIED THRUSH, at Tapia Park, March 19, (Southwest Club).

ROBIN and CEDAR WAXWING, large flocks feeding together on pyracantha berries, Sunland, March 14 (C. Daugherty).

PINE SISKIN, on January 8 feeding on elm seeds, Sunland (C.D.); flock of 10 or 11, Santa Monica, March 17 (E. Anderson).

Our winter visitors, Audubon Warblers, Golden and White-crowned Sparrows are still with us but will be leaving soon. Keep a record of the last days you see these birds. Many of the Gambel Sparrow immature are showing white feathers in the crowns now.

Recently the Sea and Sage Audubon Society of Orange had an exhibit of native shrubs in the window of a building near the center of town and plan other similar exhibits later. This seems like good nature education, and publicity for the society. Their publication, "The Wandering Tatler" is a welcome addition to those received as exchanges.

A month ago a judge in Laguna Beach before whom a man was brought for violation of a game law fined the man two cents and lectured the game wardens for spying on the violater with binoculars!

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
OFFICERS - 1955-1956

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Calendar for APRIL 1956

April 3, Tuesday Evening, Meeting at 7:45 in Long Hall, Plummer Park.

Jim Huffman and Arnold Small will lead a discussion of The Spring Migration. This will be an excellent preparation for the field trip of the 22nd to the Santa Ana River to look for migrants.

April 5, Thursday Afternoon Meeting at 1:30 P.M. in Exposition Community House, 3990 Menlo Avenue, corner of Santa Barbara, in Exposition Park.

"Birds of Thailand," a talk by Miss Lucy Starling, who lived in the northern little developed part of Thailand for 40 years and became well acquainted with the bird life there.

An illustrated talk "Trees," by Dr. Tema Shultz Clare, Professor of Botany at U.S.C. We are fortunate in having this specialist in her field.

April 14, Saturday Field Trip to the TUCKER HUMMINGBIRD SANCTUARY in Modjeska Canyon. This is a bird paradise and many birds will be seen in addition to the four or five species of hummingbirds to be seen at close range.

Meet at the Sanctuary at 9 a.m. Drive to Orange, east on E. Chapman Ave. to Santiago Road, turn right and go 8 miles to Silverado Canyon Road, turn right and go 5 miles to Modjeska Canyon fork, turn left one mile to the Sanctuary. Bring lunch and of course your binoculars.

April 19, Thursday Field Trip to SOLEDAD CANYON CAMP GROUNDS, COLUMBO LILAC RANCH & BLUM RANCH. For birding, orchard and lilac blossoms.

Our Tanner Motor Bus will leave Los Angeles from the Grand Ave. entrance to the Biltmore Hotel, between 5th and 6th Streets at 8:30 sharp.

Round trip fare \$3.00. Please have exact amount. Bring lunch and binoculars. We travel via San Fernando Road "99" to Weldon Jct. Turn right on Palmdale Highway "6" to Solamint Jct. Right up Soledad Canyon to Soledad Public Camp Grounds just beyond Ranger Station for birding and lunch.

Then on up Soledad Canyon to Columbo Lilac Ranch where we may see acres of cultivated lilacs in bloom and wonderful mountain views. Back to and beyond Acton to the Blum Ranch for good birding and the best apple cider. For bus reservations call Miss Edna Burt, 705-1/2 W. 113th St., Los Angeles 44. Phone PLymouth 5-1044. Leader Caroline H. Daugherty.

April 22, Sunday Field Trip to Corona River Bottoms of the Santa Ana River. This trip will be to see migrating warblers, flycatchers and the Chat. In the evening Dr. Mellor will take us over the route where the Pygmy Owl is seen. Meet at the parking lot at the entrance to the Naval Hospital at Norco. From there we will proceed to Lake Norco for ducks and yellow-headed black-birds, thence to the river bottoms. Meeting time -- 9 a.m.

Leader -- Arnold Small

April 26, Study Class -- Long Hall, Plummer Park at 10 a.m.

Our President, Mrs. Grace Harvard Phillips will talk on the Birthday of John James Audubon.

The second hour Mrs. Charlotte McBride will talk on our native hawks, birds which she has studied and observed carefully for years.

Bring lunch to eat with the group under the trees after the meeting.