

T H E

Western



Tanager

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FEATHERS

George T. Hastings

All birds have feathers, no other animal has, so in thinking of birds we unavoidably think of feathers. In fact when we see a bird we see little but feathers, but like so many common things we take for granted, we do not often appreciate or understand them.

Feathers are complicated structures, beautifully adapted to their uses, differing on different parts of the body and on different birds. They give the color, drab or brilliant, by which we recognize the species - more important, they give the warm covering necessary to maintain the very high body temperature, and equally important, they make flight possible.

All are constructed on a general plan, modified to suit the various uses. There is a central axis of two parts, a hollow, round quill extending into a solid more or less quadrangular shaft, from the sides of the shaft extend slender barbs on each side of which are tiny barbules. If we examine one of the larger wing feathers of a gull, hundreds of which may be picked up on the beach, we may first of all be struck by the light weight, "light as a feather!" If we trace an outline of our feather on a piece of paper such as The Tanager is printed on, then cut it out, we will find that the paper feather weighs more than the actual one. But what a difference in strength and rigidity!

The quill of the feather is hollow with a few delicate partitions and instead of ending abruptly where it joins the shaft, tapers down along the top of the latter for a short distance. At the bottom is an opening through which blood vessels entered to nourish the pulp which filled it while the feather was developing. The main part of the feather, the vane, is three times as broad on one side as the other. The narrower forward edge has shorter barbs that slope more sharply toward the tip than the ones on the other side. If you feel of them you will find that the barbs on this forward side are much stiffer than the others. In the wing the forward edge of one feather covers the broader rear side of the feather in front of it, so that on the down beat the feathers are pressed together so that no air comes through, but as the wing is raised the feathers separate a little.

The barbs are not slender rods but are several times as thick as wide, shaped much like a lath. Those on the forward side of the feather are two or three times as thick as those on the other side. The barbules grow out on each side of the upper part of the barb, The barbules on the side of the feather end in a flattened half a dozen or more microscopic fin-bicels, many

(Continued on Page 15)

Barb & Barbules

Barbule with

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE WESTERN TANAGER
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 Editor Emeritus.....George T. Hastings
 Editor.....Mrs. Fern Shelford
 3315 W. 41st St., L.A. 8.....AX 4-0410

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 National Audubon Society-in-
 cludes subscription to Audubon Magazine.
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 Supporting \$50; Student \$2.

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AUDUBON HOUSE is open

Wednesday 2-4 p.m.
 Thursday 1-4 p.m.
 Saturday 2-4 p.m.

Mrs. Kizler will have it open from now on
 one half hour before the Tuesday night
 meeting for members to get and return lib-
 rary books and purchase material which
 she has for sale.

Would any member with a little time
 be willing to help the Registrar of Mem-
 bers type both welcome and thank you let-
 ters? With a membership of over 800,
 there are many of these letters to be
 typed. Any help would be of great bene-
 fit to the Society. Call Webster 4-5946
 during the day and GRanite 8-1398 in the
 evening.

The past week the Coyotes came back.
 For three nights they came out of the
 hills and canyons in back of my home. I
 had a great sense of joy as I lay and
 listened to their distant cries and yips.

It has been a long time since we have
 either seen or heard our wild friends.
 Like the Coyote, my husband and I have
 retreated higher and farther into the
 hills as the buildings grew and grew a-
 round us. We considered this a last stand,
 and still the buildings crept up and be-
 yond us to the canyons in back. As this
 change took place our coyotes retreated
 and the fox is gone. The large coveys of
 Quail are not seen, as the adult birds
 found it increasingly difficult to raise
 their young. The thousands of Meadowlarks
 no longer have a place in which to nest.

I have worried and grieved because I
 know my big Hawks are doomed. This is the
 second year the Redtails have been unable
 to carry through a successful nesting.
 The Marsh Hawks will soon have no place
 to build a nest. Neither of the hawks
 will have hunting territory left, and yet
 the rodents will still be there multiplying
 and carrying on their destructive work.

So it was with a great deal of real
 joy that I heard the cries of the Coyotes.
 To be sure, they were no longer close, but
 at least they were still in the distance,
 and some of our wild life is still living
 around us.

We need our predators, and even if
 you can not feel a sense of love or liking
 for them, it is a wise thing to work for
 their protection, and to understand their
 place in the scheme of things. We cannot
 upset the ecology of Nature without paying
 for it in some way.

I have learned to both love and re-
 spect our predators, and I consider myself
 very fortunate to have been able to live
 among them and watch them for so many
 years. I believe it was Alexander Sprunt,
 Jr. who said, "It was a good thing for the
 robin that mankind was not in competition
 for that worm he just ate."

Charlotte McBride.

All calls and messages for the Presi-
 dent may be left with Bessie Pope, phone
 WE 4-5946.

FEATHERS (Continued)

of them are bent over at the tip to form tiny hooks. Barbicels on the opposite side of the barb end in slender projections curved toward the tip of the barb over which the hooks of the barbules from the adjoining barb are caught. Near the base of the feather twenty-five or more of the barbs are round in section with long slender barbules without hooks, forming a bit of soft down. Then follow a few barbs with long slender barbules near the tip, ordinary ones at base.

On the wing feather I hold there are about 500 barbs on each side (the primary feathers on the wing differ slightly in size and number of barbs from each other). On one inch of barb there are about 1000 barbules, or over 1,000,000 for the entire feather. As we have said on half the barbules there are from four to eight or more barbicels.

Intricate and elaborate as the feather is, it is used for but one year, then moulted, usually in the fall, and replaced by a new one growing out from the follicle where the other had been, and which retains the power to grow new feathers as long as the bird lives. In most birds feathers are lost in moulting a few at a time and symmetrically from the sides of the body. Of the flight feathers one on each side is lost before the next go, so flight is never hindered. New feathers after moulting grow very rapidly, so that in a comparatively few weeks the new coat of feathers has formed.

(This is #1 of a series on feathers)

With deep regret, we announce the passing of four of our members:

Miss Ezza Twyman
Miss Frances Heffley
Miss Christine Thomas
Miss Flora Groat

"Life is a leaf of paper white, upon which each one of us may write his word or two, and then comes night."

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Miss Monica Berg,
2911 Washington Blvd., Santa Monica
Mrs. Herbert Clarke,
1203 So. Arapahoe St., Los Angeles 6
Mrs. M. C. Delaney,
386 So. Burnside Ave., Los Angeles 36
Miss Jeanne Geoffrion,
829 Maltman, Los Angeles 26
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Box 26, Camp Colby, La Canada, Calif.
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10878 Louise Ave., Granada Hills, Cal.
Mrs. Harold Hayward,
10878 Louise Ave., Granada Hills, Cal.
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Hayward,
(No address given)
Mrs. Rolla G. Karshner,
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624 W. Corregidor, Compton, Calif.
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Dr. Herbert S. Adair,
5514 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles 36
Mr. Carl Moseley,
2979 Clarendon Ave., Huntington Park
Mr. Albert H. Wright,
7304 Forbes Ave., Van Nuys, Calif.

The Society has a small fund for purchasing books for the library and would welcome suggestions of names of good books to add to our collection.

Don't forget the November Screen Tour - "Cypress Kingdom" by Alexander Sprunt, Jr.

Virgil Jr. High School
Tuesday, November 27
John Burroughs Jr. High School
Saturday, December 1

CONSERVATION NOTES
Robert Blackstone

It is encouraging to note that an increasing number of individuals and organizations are becoming interested in the problem of litter. Companies, for instance, whose products are sold in bottles, cans, wrappers and paper boxes are beginning to realize that too frequent appearance of their names in the litter along roadsides and in public places is not the best advertising. They are backing "Keep America Beautiful Inc.", an organization formed to combat litter in public places, with headquarters in N. Y. City. Here in Los Angeles, the Times recently started a campaign against the litterbug. In some states laws have been proposed to levy a special tax against concerns which market their products in throw-away containers, with the tax money to be used for cleanup maintenance on the highways and in the parks. Vermont has passed a law forbidding the sale of beer in non-returnable bottles. Perhaps similar legislation should be urged for this state where enactment of a state law against littering the highways has seemed to have little effect.

You may recall the furor caused by Secretary McKay's issuance last December of new regulations governing oil and gas leasing on the National Wildlife Refuges. This furor caused hearings to be held before the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, and a highly critical report was issued by this Committee. However, the chairman of the Committee, Rep. Bohner of North Carolina, announced that an agreement had been reached with the Secretary of the Interior that any proposals for transfer or disposal of wildlife lands be submitted to the Committee for 60-day review. A recent development reported in the National Wildlife Federation's Conservation News reveals the shortcomings of this system. The Richfield Oil Co. and associated firms applied for a block of leases in the northern portion of the Kenai National Moose Range in Alaska. The National Wildlife Federation, the Wildlife Management Institute and the Wilderness Society, among others, opposed the granting of these leases, and presented convincing arguments for their stand. However, the persuasiveness of the Alaska

Representative and active lobbying by the oil companies led the Bonner Committee to approve the leases unanimously. So, it appears that there is no substitute for a federal law specifically protecting the Refuges against such invasion.

From Conservation News also we learn of a threat to the famous Primitive Area on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River in Montana - in the nature of a 350 foot dam at Spruce Park on the Middle Fork which would divert the river through a 7-mile tunnel to an existing impoundment. Although this dam would cost the taxpayers the sum of \$50,000,000 it would produce only 21,000 kilowatts compared to neighboring Hungry Horse dam which cost \$101,000,000 but produces 300,000 kilowatts. The Middle Fork country, part of the Flathead National Forest, is famous for its elk, moose, mule deer, mountain goat and other big game. In this region too and in the adjoining Bob Marshall Wilderness, the grizzly bear is staging his last stand in the U.S. The grizzly needs wilderness to survive; invasion of this Primitive Area as proposed would undoubtedly threaten the continued existence of this magnificent species in this country.

On September 23, with Mr. Jim Huffman as leader, a group of ten went to Maxton Brown Sanctuary. As usual, in and around this fine protected area a large count was taken, a total of 62 species. There were six kinds of Terns: Caspian, Elegant (not as many as last year), Forster's, Black and Least. Also 9 Wood Ibis - more than last year - and 2 Parasitic Jaegers. Mr. Huffman said the Ibis lined up then ate in unison - an odd sight.

Two weeks before this another group saw 30 Ibis in this same place.

Olive Alvey.

We wish to correct a typographical error in a recent issue. Mr. Dale Leever's name appeared as Miss Dale Leever and his address as Los Angeles instead of Montebello. Our apologies, Mr. Leever.

DEDICATION OF THE AUDUBON CENTER OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA--Sept. 30, 1956
Excerpts from an address by
Mr. John H. Baker, Pres. Nat'l Audubon.

"The official reports of the California Audubon Society disclose that, in January 1939, I met with officers of that and other local Audubon Societies and suggested, as a project, the finding of suitable wildlife sanctuary sites in Southern California, and the prices at which they could be obtained. Mrs. Harriet Williams Myers, then President of the California Audubon Society, appointed a Sanctuary Committee, of which Mrs. O. M. Stultz, now Director of the Audubon Center, was Chairman. Other members of the Committee were Mrs. J. H. Comby, representing the Whittier Nature Club; Miss Blanche Vignos, representing the Calif. Audubon Society; Mrs. Edwin Fuller, representing the California History and Landmarks Club; Miss Charlotte Hamilton, the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Soon there were added to the Committee Mrs. Theresa Patterson for the Pasadena Audubon Society, Mrs. Maud Murphy, for the L. A. Audubon Society and Mr. W. A. Kent, for the Southwest Bird Study Club. One of the many projects stimulated by this Sanctuary Committee was the establishment of the San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary. In this, Mrs. J. H. Comby took a leading part.

"In September 1939, the National Audubon leased 326 acres of river-bottom land for wildlife sanctuary purposes. It was in March 1948 that our Society appointed Mrs. O. M. Stultz as Director of what was then known as the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. The Society began actively in 1948 to enlarge and develop its educational conservation program, primarily designed to service children of Southern California.

"In April 1955 a devastating fire swept some 45 acres of lowland sanctuary.

"Our records show that in the past two years over 14,000 persons have visited the sanctuary. It is our confident belief that, with our present facilities and staff, we can adequately service annually not less than 15,000 children each year. The pressure on us to increase the staff, so as to service double that number of children is currently very great. All appointment dates for groups, based on present time allocations, have already been reserved to mid-June 1957."

Mr. Baker was generous in his praise and appreciation of the fine work being done by the Director, Mrs. Stultz and her staff - Mrs. Gertrude Woods, Mrs. Roberta Rumble, Mrs. Doris Bullion - all outstanding leaders and teachers of nature and conservation subjects, and Mrs. Kathleen Smith - energetic and efficient secretary. He expressed appreciation also to the many others who had helped in the establishment of the Center - Frank F. Pellissier & Sons and the Cate Ditch Co. from whom the land was leased; the five District Engineers, Colonels Moore, Putnam, Luplow, Shuler and Frye; The County Board of Supervisors; County Flood Control; County Dept. of Parks and Recreation; State Dept. of Natural Resources; Superintendent of County Schools, L. A. City Schools, Water Dept. of Whittier, Mr. Theodore Payne, Nurseryman, Mr. Arthur Barton and others. He also thanked the part-time workers - Mr. O. M. Stultz, Mr. Neil Bullion, Mr. Emory Rumble, Mr. Henry Smith and John and Lupe Zamudio for their assistance, which he labeled a "labor of love," and Mr. William N. Goodall, who serves as Director of Audubon Camp of Calif. at Norden.

"Now what is it, basically, that we are trying to accomplish here? Our Society's purpose is to arouse public understanding of the relation to human progress of intelligent treatment and wise use of soil, water, plants and wildlife; the renewable natural resources. We do believe that, through education, voting citizens may realize more and more that intelligent treatment and wise use of wildlife, plants, soil and water are in their own best interest.

"Effective conservation education depends on sound, intelligent public relations. The Society estimates that it reaches annually not less than 2,000,000 people. Education is, therefore, the life blood of the Society. We pump it through many arteries - publications, radio, TV, movies, lectures, art, guided tours, camps for adults and, most basic of all, our Audubon Junior Clubs and the educational centers for children.

"An adult often has prejudices to be overcome, but a child asks only to be told. He craves ideals high enough to give him the thrill of standing on tip-toe to reach them. If a child can be introduced to a mockingbird, a lupin, or a gopher - and led on to consider their living problems and

ultimately, his own dependency on his environment, we know from experience that he will think about taking care of that environment.

We strive to open the eyes and minds of both young and old to the wonders and beauties of the outdoor world, to make them aware of the steady stream of life going on around them, to help them realize that they are part of this exciting pageant of events.

To these purposes and programs the Audubon Center of Southern California is herewith dedicated."

BIRD ANTING

One of the strangest activities among wild birds is the practice of "anting." Clutching a live ant in its bill, the bird twists its body in odd contortions and strokes wing and tail feathers with the insect. Apparently this peculiar behavior has a hypnotic effect for he seems to lapse into an ecstatic trance. Quarrels with neighbors are forgotten as several songsters join him at the ant hill and the whole gathering is soon going through the giddy gyrations of anting.

It is still one of the outstanding enigmas of ornithology.

There is a very interesting article on Bird Anting in the July Nat'l. Geographic. In "Stray Feathers from a Bird Man's Desk" these excerpts:

"Birds sometimes rub foreign substances over their feathers - just why we don't know. Grackles have been known to use the acid juice of green walnuts in preening, a catbird anointing its feathers with a leaf and another grackle that found a mothball and, holding it in its bill, rubbed it against the underside of its spread wing and the side of its body. After several applications, the grackle dropped the mothball and preened its feathers then again picked it up and treated the other wing.

Recent experiments with tame Song Sparrows have shown that they may use beer, orange juice, vinegar and other things made available to them in dressing their plumage, and it appears that this may be correlated with a little understood type of activity known as anting."

OBSERVATIONS Caroline H. Daugherty

WHITE FACED GLOSSY IBIS-(red) KNOT: 1 each, Oxnard, Sept. 21, John Tramontano.
WHITE-TAILED KITE: 7 to 10, Garden Grove area, Oct. 3. J.T. notes-so far this year Kites have shown a definite increase in numbers on wintering grounds.
DUCKS: Baldpate, Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy-Hansen Dam, Oct. 6, (Daugherty)
OSPREY: 1, Audubon Center, El Monte, Sept. 21, migrating. (T)
PIGEON HAWK: Migrant, cruising through Whittier area, Oct. 7. (T)
POORWILL: 3, Oak Mt. Foothill area, on road, Oct. 13 (G.Ware)
SWIFT: VAUX'S: 30 circling low over Hansen Dam area, Oct. 6. (D)
HUMMINGBIRD-COSTA'S: 1 at (J.T.'s) Whittier home for past 2 months. Oct. 10
SWALLOWS-BARN: 10,000 in Garden Grove area Oct. 3, foraging over newly cut alfalfa fields represent largest number of Pac. Coast migrants for this species in many years. Most were still there Oct. 10, writes J. Tramontano.
BLUE GROSBEAK-1, HOODED ORIOLE-2: Audubon Center, El Monte, Sept. 22-Late (T)
AUDUBON CENTER, El Monte-Bird Report:
Colorado River water flowing through Flood Control Ditch in Sanctuary, forms small lake at head of ditch in San Gabriel River, resulting in increased number water birds in that area. American Egret, (A) Green Heron, Wilson's Snipe, Sept. 17; 11 Pintail Ducks, Sept. 21; 9 Cinnamon Teal, Sept. 24; 11 Greater Yellowlegs, Least & Western Sandpipers, 1 Kingfisher, Oct. 1. Land Birds; Road-runner, Sept. 1 & 2; Savannah Sparrows, Sept. 9; Flock Barn Swallows, Say's Phoebe, Sept. 21, Gambel's Sparrows first seen Sept. 21, increasing daily; Black-chinned Hummingbird left Sept. 29; White-throated Swifts, Oct. 2; Lincoln's Sparrow, Oct. 6; Ash-throated Flycatcher, Oct. 8 (Alma Stultz).

WATCH NOW FOR: Canada Geese, Black Brent, various species of wild ducks, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Pipit, Purple Finch, Oregon Junco, Chipping and Fox Sparrow.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
OFFICERS1956-1957

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Historian.....Mrs. Olive Alvey
Registrar of Members.....Miss Marjorie J. Moody, 1380 Veteran Ave., Los Angeles 24

CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER 1956

November 10, Saturday, FIELD TRIP to Joshua Tree National Monument. Meet at the Monument Headquarters in Twenty-nine Palms for study of Desert Birds and Plants at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. We will follow the marked trail at Headquarters. Pictures and talks by the Ranger will be announced there. Those wishing to stay over night will find motels near the Monument Headquarters in Twenty-nine Palms.

Ethel Craig, Leader

November 13, Tuesday, EVENING MEETING at 8:00 p.m. at the Poinsettia Playground, 7341 Willoughby, Hollywood. (This is three blocks south of Plummer Park between Poinsettia and Fuller on Willoughby).

MR. KENNETH STAGER of the Los Angeles County Museum, will present his program, "Birds of Central Brazil." Mr. Stager recently returned from an expedition in the Amazon country.

Arnold Small, Chairman

November 15, Thursday, FIELD TRIP to Griffith Park Zoo. Meet at Zoo Cafe, Vermont entrance, at 9:00 a.m. Take Los Angeles Transit Lines bus #86 marked Picnic Grounds or Field House, going north from Monroe and Vermont. Bring lunch.

Leader- Nurtha Dunn, Webster 9-7403

November 25, Sunday, FIELD TRIP to Lake Norconian to see the wintering ducks. Group will meet at 9:00 a.m. at entrance to Norco Naval Hospital in Norco, California, just north of Corona.

Leader, Jim Huffman

November 29, Thursday, STUDY CLASS at 10:00 a.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. This meeting, instead of being November 20th, as announced in the October Tanager, will be NOVEMBER 29TH - the Thursday after Thanksgiving. Mr. Jens Knudsen, from the Allan Hancock Foundation of the University of California, will show beautiful kodachrome pictures he took along the shores of the islands of Mexico. The pictures will show the life of animals and birds of this locale. As Mr. Knudsen is an expert photographer these studies will be well worth seeing. In January Mr. Knudsen will receive his Ph.D after which he will teach in his chosen field of Marine Invertebrate Zoology.

Olive Alvey, Chairman

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Except for the November meeting (which had to be changed because it fell on Election Day) the Tuesday Evening meetings will be held on the 1st Tuesday of the month, instead of the 2nd Tuesday, as stated in the Year Book.