

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

PLUMMER PARK

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD.
LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

T. H. E.

Western



Tanager

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, SEPTEMBER TO MAY
BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY INC.

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 23

APRIL 1957

Number 8

SOARING

Laure E. White

The soaring bird has been a source of mystery and of wonder for as long as man has raised his eyes to the sky. How could this creature possibly stay aloft for hours on end, sailing up as well as down, with no visible movement of the wings, no apparent reference to the wind? "Eagles may seem to sleep, wing-wide upon the air," wrote John Keats.

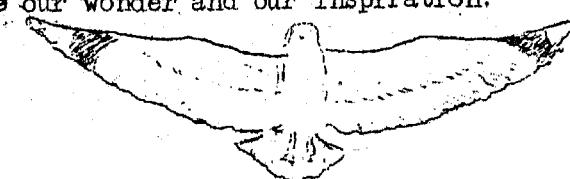
Only within the past half-century, since man himself took to the skies, was the riddle solved. The bird cannot float through the air, nor rest upon the wind; it must fly by moving through it, by maintaining a certain minimum speed in order to support itself. The soaring eagle, the sailing albatross, are, strange as it may seem, really coasting downhill on rising columns of air. The process has been compared to a person who descends the steps of an upward-moving escalator.

The soaring bird starts its flight with laboriously flapping wings until it finds air masses it can trust, then, extending its "sails," the hand section of the wing merges with that of the arm to form a united, sustaining surface and the bird can glide from one column of air into another. Soaring flight entails many fine adjustments and barely perceptible movements - a tilting of the wings, a bend of the wrist, a slight rotation at the shoulder. For every sort of bird there is a "gliding angle," the rate at which it normally loses altitude, a rate that depends upon the angle of the wings and their shape.

When man designed slots for an aircraft wing, to increase the lift at a certain angle, he copied the slotted tips of the wings of large, slow fliers such as eagles, cranes and pelicans. Air streams rush smoothly through these slots and through the feathers of the alula, that small "thumb" which plays an important part in the efficient functioning of the wings.

The fact that air currents over land are quite different from those over water explains why the wings of eagle and vulture bear little resemblance to those of gull and albatross. The deeply slotted wing-tips are absent from those birds that soar and glide over the ocean far from land. Air currents there are stronger, steadier and more dependable and the oceanic gliders have evolved narrow, flat and tapered wings adapted for speed and long distance flying.

The most spectacular flight, perhaps, is that of the pelagic albatross. However, we need not sigh for our inability to watch this superb spectacle; the common gull is a wonderful glider, unconsciously bringing into play this or that set of 10,000 flight muscles, soaring in circles, turning to his own account the varying conditions of wind and temperature. Truly, the more we can learn about bird flight, the more we observe it, the greater will be our wonder and our inspiration.



THE WESTERN TANAGER

Free to members....Others \$1.50 Annually
 Editor Emeritus.....George T. Hastings
 Editor.....Mrs. Fern Shelford
 3315 W. 41st St., L.A. 8.....AX 4-0410

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Several weeks ago I took time out for eight days of birding and general nature study with some friends from the East. We made the San Ysidro Ranch our headquarters and from there toured the mountain areas around Santa Barbara, Ojai, Ventura and Piru, even venturing out to Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands.

We went Condoring in a canyon back of Piru where we saw seven Condors in the air at one time. The wind was rather strong that day and they soared in the thermals for some time before disappearing.

We were able to watch a Golden Eagle at fairly close range as he flew back and forth both below and above us. A red-tailed Hawk made quite a prolonged attack on His Majesty and this gave us a very good comparison as to size. Later on in the day we were given the opportunity of watching the pair of Golden Eagles in nuptial flight. This is an exciting and beautiful exhibition of flight. While several in our party had seen Condors before, none except myself had seen a Golden Eagle.

This day was to yield a "first" for me also, for I saw my first Hawk migration. This is something I have desired to see for many years. We saw the first hawk flight quite suddenly. They circled in a thermal for some time and even though we had a "scope" trained on them it was impossible to determine the species. There was no mistaking they were Buteos--at least 200 plus in number. Probably Swainson's.

About an hour later the first of four large flights of Turkey Vultures moved thru. In the four flights we estimated the number to be 1,000 plus. It looked for all the world like the Freeways at 5:30 in the afternoon with six and eight lanes, bumper to bumper. We finally gave up as time was growing short and necks stiff. Yet they were still coming thru when we left the canyon.

The following day we had a wonderful trip to Anacapa and Santa Cruz. Not only was the bird life interesting but we were in, around and about the Great Grey Whales all day as they were in migration. It was exciting to watch the large tail and flukes as they came up into the air. The next day, as I was leaving Santa Barbara

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 includes subscription to Audubon Magazine. Regular \$5; Sustaining \$10; Active \$25; Supporting \$50; Student \$2.

OFFICERS - 1956-1957

President Emeritus...Mrs. Mary B. Salmon
 Jr. Past Pres....Mrs. Grace H. Phillips
 President.....Mrs. J. L. McBride
 1st Vice-President....Mr. Herbert Clarke
 2nd Vice-President....Mrs. Paul D. Dodds
 Exec. Sec'y.....Miss Elizabeth Patterson
 Record. Sec'y.....Miss Dorothy Goddard
 Treasurer.....Miss Esther Johnson
 Registrar.....Miss Marjorie J. Moody
 Curator.....Mrs. Russell E. Wilson
 Historian.....Mrs. Olive Alvey

AUDUBON HOUSE

Wednesday.....2-4 p.m.
 Thursday.....2-4 p.m.
 Saturday.....2-4 p.m.
 1st Tuesday.....7:30-8 p.m.
 4th Thursday (Members only)....1-4 p.m.
 Groups by appointment.....POplar 1-7635

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Miss Maryline Conrey,
 2533 Encinal Ave., Montrose, Calif.
 Mrs. William H. Holmes,
 1900 Senesac, Long Beach 15, Calif.
 Mrs. James Simpson,
 252 No. Almont Dr., Beverly Hills.
 Mr. A. Maxson Smith,
 411 W. Fifth St., Los Angeles 13.
 Dr. Richard P. Storrs,
 Dept. of Radiology, St. Vincent's Hospital, 2131 W. 3rd St., L.A. 57.

by air, our plane circled low over the water and I had a chance to see one Grey Whale from above.

Porpoises played close to the boat off and on all day. Murres, Murrelets and Auklets (The Rhinocerous Auklet in breeding plumage). All three Cormorants also in breeding plumage, a Bald Eagle and a pair of Duck Hawks but no Santa Cruz Jay.

All in all we had a wonderful time and each added a new experience.

Charlotte McBride

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS 1957-1958

President.....Mr. Robert Blackstone
 1st Vice-Pres.....Mr. James Huffman
 2nd Vice-Pres.....Mr. Dudley Ross
 Exec. Sec'y.....Miss Dorothy Goddard
 Record. Sec'y.....Mrs. Helen Sandmeyer
 Treasurer.....Miss Esther Johnson
 Registrar.....Mrs. Iola R. Moore
 Curator.....Mrs. Russell Wilson
 Historian.....Mrs. Olive Alvey

Additional candidates for any elective office may be nominated from the floor at any regular meeting in April provided such nominations are supported by written petitions signed by at least fifteen (15) members of the Society.

We wish to thank Frank's Garden Supplies, 1226 No. La Brea Ave., for their donation of bird seed to be used at Audubon House. They carry a fine wild bird mix in small and large sized seeds at 75¢ for ten pounds, \$3.75 for 50 pounds.

On Saturday, March 9th, Mr. Don Adams of Manhattan Beach delivered to Audubon House a large china cabinet which he and his wife donated in response to our request in the Tanager. May we express our sincere appreciation for this gift to our museum.

Anyone wishing to donate articles or to help at Audubon House, please contact Marion Wilson, 4548 Farmdale Ave., North Hollywood - POplar 1-7635.

PELICAN is a Greek word meaning "battle axe," given because of the bird's bill.

CORMORANT is from the Latin -Corvus Marinus - "Sea Crow."

SCREEN TOUR REVIEW

Would you like to know how the Screen Tours got their name? Well, this is the way I heard it. During the war when it was next to impossible to take a trip by any of the usual means of locomotion, the National Audubon Society conceived the idea of coming to the rescue of us poor stay-at-homers by taking us on tours via the silver screen. So we could sit in a comfortable auditorium and by means of a movie screen be carried across the country without using even one of our precious gasoline coupons. Hence the name "Screen Tours."

For fourteen years we have been privileged to see, with the help of the lecturers and their colored films, the many beauty spots and the wild life of our country and Canada.

Once again we have come to the last Tour for the season and in spite of "storms and head winds" we reached home port with flags flying, for which we have reason to be very proud.

I am sure that many of you will remember that just as the folders were going to print last summer we received word that for the first time in many years, because of a new state law, it would be necessary for us to pay rent for the use of the school auditoriums. Could we possibly make a go of it with all this extra expense? That was definitely the \$64,000 question. Now you and the community at large have given us the answer. I have included the community at large since of the more than one thousand who attended at least one lecture, less than two hundred were members of our Society. So it really is a community project.

How wonderful it would be if many of our Screen Tour friends would become Audubon members and also if more of our members could see fit to attend the lectures, but however that may be, the loyal support of all who bought a ticket put us over the top with a wee margin of profit - so wee, that you'll need your binoculars to find it but a profit, nevertheless.

So many of you have told us how much you enjoyed the programs that it makes us realize that the decision of the Board to continue them in both schools again next year was the right one. So with the coming of autumn we'll be back again with new pictures and lectures but with the same

Continued on page 46

high type of educational entertainment. So to all the Audubon branches and Nature organizations who helped us with publicity, to all who helped by buying tickets and gave unsparingly of their time and energy in doing the many, many seen and unseen tasks that must be done, we give our most heartfelt thanks and please stand by for next season.

Bessie Pope.

The FIELD TRIP of Feb. 23rd and 24th was attended by twenty-four persons. After some delay from flash floods the group finally got started from Taft about 10:00 a.m. Saturday. First stop was Buena Vista Lake where were seen large numbers of Pintails, some Egrets and Black-crowned night Herons. From Buena Vista the group proceeded to Carrizo Plain. After a prolonged search, during which some of the party became discouraged and gave up, a flock of 500 to 1000 Sandhill Cranes was spotted and stalked to within a few hundred feet. Excellent views of the birds dancing was obtained. Also seen on the plain were numerous Bell's Sparrows, Pipits, Horned Larks and Mountain Blue Birds.

A visit was made to the Painted Rocks which contain Indian paintings.

After spending the night in the vicinity of Morro Bay the group birded around Morro Rock. Excellent views were had of two Duck Hawks on the Rock. Several thousand Black Brants were counted in the bay, also 40 White Pelicans and a number of species of wintering ducks and shorebirds.

Driving home, several small flocks of Yellow Billed Magpies were seen in the vicinity of Buellton.

Jim Huffman.

On February 21st, eighteen members journeyed to Audubon Center at El Monte and had a very satisfying day. Among the birds seen were many crows, red-winged blackbirds, meadow larks, goldfinches, mockingbirds, towhees, white-tailed kites, red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures and kestrels, yellow-throats and blue-grey gnat catchers.

Olive Alvey.

OBSERVATIONS

Caroline H. Daugherty

CHINESE DUCKS: A flock of Snow Geese, 3,000 plus; Cinnamon Teal, 150, in south end Imperial Valley Salton Sea Area, Mar. 2-3. In Imperial Wild Life Refuge, a flock of 30 Fulvous Tree Ducks and among the 12 species of ducks found there, the common one, Baldpate, numbered more than 2,000. Near Mecca were 3 White-winged Scoters. (Pat Gould).

WHITE-TAILED KITE: Pair nesting, Mar. 10, Audubon Center, El Monte. (Alma Stultz).

RAILS: Clapper-2-South end Salton Sea. Several Virginia & Sora calling in IWL, Mar. 2-3. (PG).

SHOREBIRDS: Long-billed Curlew, 10, south end S. Sea, Mar. 3. (PG) In Santa Monica shore area, 1,000+ Willets, hundreds small Sandpipers, many Long-billed Dowitchers, several hundred Marbled Godwits, all getting ready for migrating, Mar. 16. (G. Hastings) Avocet, 35, south end S. Sea Mar. 2, (PG) and Santa Monica area, 12 in breeding plumage. (G.H.) Mar. 16.

TERN-Common: 1 found in IWL, Mar. 2. (PG).

ROADRUNNERS: 5 south end S. Sea, Mar. 2 (PG).

BURROWING OWLS: 5 found in Imperial Valley, some standing in pairs beside their holes in ditch banks. Mar. 2-3 (PG).

HUMMINGBIRDS: On Occidental College grounds. Pat Gould noted: Feb. 13, the first Rufous, male. On Mar. 4, 3 Allen's males, and on Mar. 14, the Allen's females arrived. Feb. 8, Anna's nest with 2 young being fed. In Monrovia Canyon, Mar. 23, Marge Parker found a Rufous, male, feeding among the gooseberry blooms.

SWALLOWS: Violet-green and Tree Swallows are back in numbers, Mar. 10, Audubon Center. (AS). Also Hansen Dam. (D).

WARBLERS: Mar. 2, south end S. Sea, Pat Gould found 1 Myrtle Warbler, and noted from Oct. 18/56 to Jan. 16/57 a wintering over Black-throated Gray Warbler in Eagle Rock area.

MEADOWLARKS: 12 in Eagle Rock yard, Feb. 21, some singing. (Eileen Creech).

ORIOLES: Hooded-2 males arrived Mar. 11, Audubon Center. (Alma Stultz).

BLACKBIRDS: Yellow-headed, 1,000 plus; Redwings coming up out of the marshes in clouds; 3 Tricolored Redwings, all in the IWL, Mar. 2-3. (PG).

47
GAMBEL SPARROWS

George T. Hastings.

In front of my house is a pittosporum tree with dense foliage. I call it my tree of music. Late every afternoon from before sunset till the last glow fades in the western sky there is a constant movement in the tree as the Gambel sparrows are settling down for the night, and such a variety of musical whistles, trills and chirps I never hear at any other time. There are also low calls constantly as if the birds are calling to each other from one side of the tree to the other. About sunrise the calls begin again, but for only a short time as apparently the birds, after a night's sleep, are eager for food.

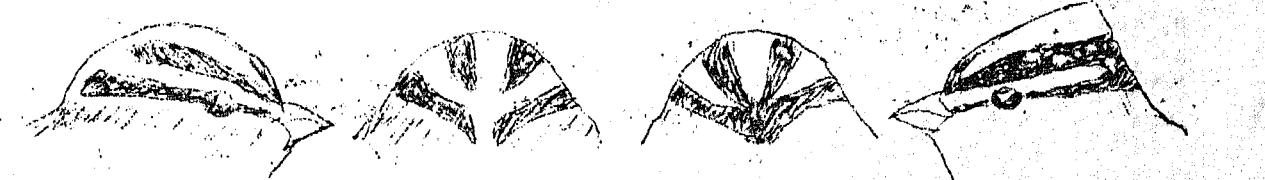
When the Gambels arrive in fall, less than half of them have the striking black and white crown stripes that make them one of the aristocrats of the sparrow tribe. The others have greyish brown and reddish brown stripes. At first I thought the latter must be females, but learned they were young birds wearing their first year's plumage. In my mistake I was in good company as Audubon in his plate of the White-Crowned sparrow labeled the immature a female. Now in March these immature birds are moulting the old feathers and acquiring the plumage of the adults. At first a few white feathers show among the grey stripes on the crown, when these are entirely white or nearly so, the black stripes begin to show. Why feather follicles that produced feathers of one color now form ones of a different color no one can tell, or for that matter we cannot explain why feathers are colored at all. By the time the birds leave for their breeding grounds in the north all will have the black and white stripes that are responsible for their scientific name, Zonotrichia leucophrys (the banded-haired one with white eyebrow).

When Linnaeus, the great Swedish naturalist, devised the binomial system of naming plants and animals, it marked one of the greatest advances in the study of living things. For him a species was a definite and unchangeable thing, directly

created. Now, with our general acceptance of evolution, the species is not such a definite thing nor as easily described, and the binomial system has become in many cases a trinomial one as varieties and sub-species are recognized and named.

When a form of the white-crown was found in the west by the naturalist Thomas Nuttal that differed in having the white bands on the sides of the head extend to the bill instead of ending just above the eyes, he named it for his young friend and protege - William Gambel - Fringilla gambelli, as a new species. Now it is considered a sub-species and carries the name Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelli. Later, another form was named for Nuttal and still later a third sub-species was called the Puget Sound sparrow. As these three sub-species have trinomial names, the original species name was also made a trinomial - Zonotrichia leucophrys leucophrys. This method of doubling the specific name is used for all species of birds where there are recognized sub-species. Aside from variations marked enough to form sub-species there are innumerable lesser variations. The Gambel sparrows show, for example, great variations in the bands on the head. In many the three white bands meet at the back of the head, but in others the side bands are cut off at the back by the black. In the sketches are shown two of the many patterns with a side view and a back view of each. One of the birds is shown with the feathers of the head erected as a crest as it is seen occasionally. Soon the numbers of Gambel sparrows will decrease as they move off a few at a time for the north. One or two may linger past the middle of April, but they too will leave. We will miss them and will watch and listen for them eagerly in late September.

* * * * *



CONSERVATION NOTES
Robert E. Blackstone

The Department of Agriculture decided recently to eliminate 53,000 acres of the Three Sisters Primitive Area in the Cascade mountains of Oregon when reclassifying the area as a wilderness area. This move, sought by lumbering and other commercial interests, was opposed by conservationists, including Oregon's Senators Neuberger and Morse and Rep. Porter. It serves to emphasize the need for the kind of safeguards provided by the Wilderness Preservation bills, Sen. Humphreys' S. 1176, and Rep. Saylor's H.R. 500. At present, a wilderness area can be eliminated by a simple administrative decision.

The Corps of Engineers has several times tried without success to get Congressional authorization for the Brunes Eddy Dam on the North Fork of the Clearwater in Idaho. Last year it got through Congress as part of the \$1.6 billion Omnibus Rivers and Harbors Bill. This, you may remember, was vetoed by Pres. Eisenhower, however. Now the same strategy is being used again as Brunes Eddy Dam is being included in the new Omnibus Rivers and Harbors Bill. This dam would flood thousands of acres of the North Fork of the Clearwater Canyon, destroying the wintering area of large numbers of deer and elk, and ending the steel-head trout and chinook salmon runs, as well as ruining the scenic beauty of the area.

Here are a few important bills having to do with conservation, which are now before Congress:

The Engle Bill, H.R. 627, requiring Congressional approval of military land withdrawals or reservations in excess of 5,000 acres from the public domain, and requiring compliance on military areas with state fish and game laws.

H.R. 347, introduced by Rep. Metcalf of Montana, and similar bills to earmark ten percent of National Forest receipts for recreation and wildlife in the National Forests, and implementing the Forest Service's five-year plan, "Operation Outdoors", which is the counterpart of Mission 66 of the National Park Service.

H.R. 1058, introduced by Rep. Charles E. Bennett (Fla.), and an identical measure, H.R. 1127, by Rep. Dante Fascell (Fla.), to establish a thousand-acre refuge for the Key deer.

S. 963, introduced by Sen. Neuberger (Ore.) directs the Secretary of Commerce to set standards of limitations on erection of billboards along Federal highways.

H.R. 935, by Rep. Saylor (Pa.) to convert Dinosaur National Monument into a National Park.

H.R. 783, introduced by Sen. Metcalf (Mont.) proposes an intensive research program by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine how chemical insecticides, herbicides and fungicides can and do effect wildlife and to point the way to adequate controls.

These all have to do with important issues in conservation, and they offer you an opportunity to DO something about conservation; pick up your pen and write your representatives in Congress NOW.

I would also like to remind you of two important bills in your State Legislature: A. B. 1361, repealing the Winter Park Authority Act, and S. B. 666, regulating the advertising along state highways designated as "scenic."

As a matter of record and possible future reference the Society is keeping on file at Audubon House a set of Western Tanagers dating from October, 1954 to December, 1956. A second set lacks only the following copies to be complete:

- 1935 - January, March, April, May, October.
- 1936 - February through November.
- 1937 - January.
- 1938 - January, February, June.
- 1939 - June.
- 1955 - January, February.
- 1956 - January.

Since it is felt that it might be desirable to have all copies of this second set, we should like to issue a call to any member who may be able to supply any or all of these Tanagers. In turn, should any member be interested in compiling his or her own personal set, there are a great many duplicates of assorted issues available. Mrs. Russell Wilson, Curator at Audubon House will be able to furnish any of these upon request.

Helen Sandmeyer.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
OFFICERS...1956-1957

President.....Mrs. J. L. McBride
1st Vice-President....Mr. Herbert Clarke
2nd Vice-President....Mrs. Paul D. Dodds
Treasurer.....Miss Esther Johnson
Historian.....Mrs. Olive Alvey
Registrar of Members.....Miss Marjorie J. Moody, 1380 Veteran Ave., Los Angeles 24

25441 Crescent Lane, Los Altos, Calif.
Exec. Sec'y.....Miss Elizabeth Patterson
Record. Sec'y.....Miss Dorothy Goddard
Curator.....Mrs. Russell E. Wilson

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 1957

April 3, EVENING MEETING, WEDNESDAY, at 8:00 p.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. A "Do-It-Yourself Nature Photography" talk by Herb Clarke and Bob Blackstone, illustrated with color slides.

Arnold Small, Chairman.

April 11, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 912 Victoria Ave.

April 13, SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary in Modjeska Canyon. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Drive to Orange, east on East 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 sanctuary. Bring lunch and binoculars. We will probably return to Irvine Park for lunch.

Ethel Craig, Leader.
AX 1-1514

April 18, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Soledad Canyon Camp Grounds, Columbo Lilac Ranch and 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 up Soledad Canyon to Columbo Lilac Ranch where we may see acres of cultivated lilacs in bloom. Back to and beyond Acton to the Blum Ranch for birding and apple cider. For bus reservations call Miss Edna Burt, 750-1/2 West 113th St., L.A. 44. Telephone PLymouth 5-1044. Trip will be cancelled in case of rain.

Murtha Dunn, Leader.
VVE 9-7403

April 25, THURSDAY STUDY CLASS, 10:00 a.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. This will be a return engagement for Dr. Howard Hill, Curator of Marine Zoology at the L.A. County Museum. His subject will be "Sea Life Along our Shores," about the usual and unusual things which are there for us to see when we walk along the beach.

Olive Alvey, Chairman.
NO 1-8036

April 27, SUNDAY FIELD TRIP to Yuma, Ariz. and Salton Sea. Group will meet " 28, in Yuma Sat. -27th at 8:30 a.m. at office of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (inquire in Yuma for address). Saturday will be spent in vicinity of Imperial Dam on the Colorado River. Camping facilities are available. After dawn birding at the dam on Sunday, group will drive to Ramer Lake near Salton Sea for lunch. Those who do not wish to go to Yuma may join group here. For further information, phone VERmont 7-2272.

Arnold Small, Leader.