

T H E

Western



Tanager

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BIRD BANDING

By Paul Steele

Bird banding affords a positive method of identification which, in some branches of ornithological study is of utmost importance. Much of the information about birds today is a result of the work of hundreds of banders who in past years have placed aluminum bands on the legs of birds, each band having a different number and thus identifying the bird wherever it may be found - something like the license plate of a car. Records of wild birds banded in this country are kept by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Laurel, Maryland, where some 7 million records are extant.

Historically it is said that Audubon, about 1803, used silver wire to mark a brood of Phoebes. He was rewarded the following season by two of his marked birds returning to nest in the vicinity. We find a few widely scattered accounts of such things. For instance on faraway Easter Island for unknown generations up to about 1870 a bird cult flourished in which the Frigate bird and the Sooty Tern played prominent parts, particularly the latter. In the "Mystery of Easter Island" by Routledge it is said on page 265, "some of the manu tara (Sooty Tern) were kept in confinement till they were full grown, when a piece of red tape was tied around the leg and they were told 'Kaho ki te hiva' meaning 'Go to the world outside'".

Systematic and scientific banding dates back to 1899 and to a Danish schoolmaster named Mortensen who commenced to band Starlings, Teals, Storks and a few species of birds of prey. This attracted attention of European ornithologists and banding soon came into prominence. It is quite world-wide at the present time. In this country Dr. Paul Bartsch of Smithsonian Institution was the first to use numbered metal bands (1902). These were inscribed "Return to Smithsonian". In 1909 the American Bird Banding Association was organized and developed the program until 1920 when it was taken over by the U.S. Biological Survey (now the Fish and Wildlife Service) as an official research project. It was shortly after this (about 1922) that the writer banded his first bird, a House Finch, in Denver, Colorado, and at intermittent times since then has had the pleasure of banding birds in Michigan, Massachusetts and California. By far the most in number has been my part (with Kirsher and Mayhew) in the recent project with Cliff Swallows around Sacramento. Others have helped from time to time on this project also. Such banding of a colonial species has been on a "mass production" scale. Since its inception several years ago, 18,000 Cliff Swallows have been banded here.

Much information has been accumulated by the "back yard" bander who often considers 20 or 30 birds banded a day as outstanding. The average bander soon learns that a bird in the hand is not quite the same as a bird in the bush. Some perching birds whose identity in the field seems quite certain, may puzzle one when in the hand and a close study is made. This can be particularly true of some of the sparrows. Again, I shall never forget an experience years ago in southern California. The male Lawrence Goldfinch is attractive in the field. But when I first took one of these from a trap to band I was truly amazed and delighted with the beautiful contrast of colors this midget wears.

(Continued on Page 51)

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."

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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

A new telephone has been installed at Au-
dubon House - make a note of the number:
Hollywood 7-9495.

"The hours when the mind is absorbed
by beauty are the only hours when we real-
ly live, so that the longer we can stay
among such things so much more is snatched
from inevitable time. This is real life,
and all else is illusion, or mere endur-
ance."

Richard Jeffries, (1848-1887)
(From "Autumn Across America-Teale")

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It hardly seems possible that it is
May and time once again for the last is-
sue of the "Tanager," until we resume in
September.

I wish to thank each member of the
Board and every chairman for his or her
great help this year. Certainly each
one has pulled his own load. Thanks to
all who worked on various committees, and
helped with field trips and Screen Tours,

A special thanks is due Irma Hecht
for all her hard work. It was her idea
that the Children's Hospitals and wards
be given educational programs in nature
study. With the help of Elsa Schwartz,
and the volunteer work of a good number
of our members, plus a number of non-
members, this work was organized by Irma
Hecht and carried on with great success.

I also wish to thank Bessie Pope for
the use of her home for Board meetings
during the year when I have lived so far
away.

Last but not least, thanks to each
of you who turned out and pulled us
through our difficulties with "Screen
Tours," and made it possible for us to
continue with them this coming year.

THIS IS URGENT AND NEEDS YOUR ATTENTION NOW

Unless more interest is shown and
action taken, Assembly Bill No. 2831 is
to be tabled in committee. This is the
bill that provides for the protection of
all Hawks and Owls. In fact the only
birds outside the game-birds not on the
protected list are English Sparrows and
Starlings.

This bill also provides for changes
in the classification of certain mammals
and for their protection. This is cer-
tainly something we have worked toward
for years.

There is no time to lose. Please
write in support of this Bill to the
Assemblyman of your district and to Assem-
blyman Frank P. Belotti, Chairman, Assem-
bly Fish and Game Committee, Sacramento,
Calif. A letter from your conservation
chairman alone will not work. It is the
number of letters these men receive that
makes the difference.

Charlotte McBride.

BIRD BANDING (Continued)

Handling small birds sometimes teaches lessons the "hard way." The bite of a Shrike can really damage one's hand; and the power in the grip of a Grosbeak will not readily be forgotten. Even the Purple Finch can command attention and cause a sudden exclamation if he nips your finger unawares. For so small a bird as a Chickadee I have wondered just how he carries such a respectable bite.

Banding has taught us much about migration and rapidity of flight. For instance, on November 15, 1949 a weather observer at Penrhyn Island of the Northern Cook Islands took a Pintail Duck that had been banded in northern California just three months earlier and had flown over 4,500 miles across the Pacific Ocean. A knowledge of the tremendous annual flight of the Arctic Tern was made possible by banding. The winter range of Chimney Swifts - a puzzle for many years - was solved by banding. We now know some definite figures on longevity. Many small birds live as long as ten or twelve years. Ducks can live 15 or 20 years and one Caspian Tern lived a full 26 years.

The homing instinct of Cliff Swallows was clearly portrayed here in Sacramento. Banded birds taken to the Farallon Islands and released returned at once to their nests, as did birds released near Minden, Nev. These latter birds had to ascend to at least 7,000 ft. altitude in flying over the Sierra and were taken at their nests here near sea level again in a few days. All of which would be quite impossible to tell without some individual marking as furnished by banding. Again, banding is responsible for much of the life history we have of various species.

As I recall, 35 years ago the main reason for our banding birds was to shed definite light on the problems of migration. Since then banding has been and still is used in research that was but little dreamed of in those days.

(From the Sacramento Observer)

PROTECT YOUR BIRDS AND MAMMALS

Write in your support of Assembly Bill 2831 to your district Assemblyman and to Assemblyman Frank P. Belotti, Chairman, Assembly Fish and Game Committee, Sacramento, California.

(K) NOT NOTES

The last few days a great number of Knots have arrived at Cabrillo Beach. Densely massed flocks of 300 or more feeding at several grunion-egg spots can be observed in the morning hours. The birds are extremely "tame" this year and I have approached them several times to within 20 feet. As their migration time spent here advances, they become more restless, pick fights, tumble and soar over the beach more often, both as groups and individuals; their song, that soft flute-like coo-a-hee, coo-a-hee sounds almost mysterious. Well, a mysterious bird is the Knot. Very few people have ever seen their nesting grounds or their nests up in the High North.

Year after year they return in migration to Cabrillo Beach which seems to be one of their favored spots and their numbers have increased during the peak of the season which is around the middle of April and they usually stay until the end of the month.

To bird lovers the Knot is one of the most fascinating birds of the seashore during the few weeks we have the privilege of observing them and we would like to wander with them on their mysterious migration route to their nesting grounds.

-----Fred de Boer.

The earliest record of a banded bird is that of a heron captured in Germany in 1710. The metal bands on its leg had been placed there in Turkey several years before.

When in pursuit of prey a Duck Hawk may reach a speed of between 170 and 200 miles per hour.

The Tangara is a bird of Brazil, brown in color with a bright red bill. It is known as the Orchestra Bird because one of them, a self-appointed maestro would take his place on a limb alone. On a branch in front of him two or three other tangaras would line up. The maestro would flap his wings for attention. He would hop up and down, and then at some mute signal the chorus of tangaras would burst into song, keeping absolute time to the beating rhythm of the maestro's hopping.

CONSERVATION NOTES
By Robert Blackstone

You may remember that considerable space was devoted in this column a couple of months ago to legislation revising the current Fish and Game Code in its provisions relating to birds and mammals. I promised at that time to let you know when this bill came up in the legislature. Since then, this legislation has been assigned a number and has been referred to the Assembly Fish and Game Committee, of which Assemblyman Frank P. Belotti is chairman. No difficulty was anticipated here; however, now we are advised that this bill extends protection to all of the non-game birds except the English Sparrow, crow, black-billed magpie, California and Stellar's Jays and the starling. I urge you to write AT ONCE to Mr. Belotti and then to your own representative in the State Assembly in support of this bill - Assembly Bill 2831.

Perhaps you read in the papers recently of the failure of the bill to repeal the Mt. San Jacinto Winter Park Authority Act. This bill died in committee - without even reaching the floor of the Assembly. Since the assemblymen from Riverside County are, and have been in favor of the legislation, it would have required very strong support from all over the State to accomplish its repeal; this was apparently not forthcoming. The tramway, however, is a long way from being built; the contract between the State Park Commission and the Winter Park Authority expired in December and the Commission at that time denied a request for a further extension. We can still prevent construction of the tramway and preserve Mt. San Jacinto State Park as a primitive area.

The papers also recently featured accounts of the Senate's passing of the \$1.5 billion plus Rivers and Harbors and Flood Control Act of 1957 without adopting Sen. Neuberger's amendment to delete Bruce's Eddy dam on the Clearwater River in Idaho. The measure has been sent to the House for approval, where there is not much hope for conservationists since the House originated the almost identical bill which the President vetoed last year. Our only hope

is that the President will again veto it. A significant conservation victory was achieved in the dispute over lands of the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. The Secretary of the Interior, backed by conservationists from all over the country, has held firm in refusing to relinquish the 10,700 acres of refuge land demanded by the Army as an addition to the Fort Sill artillery ranges. The Army has finally withdrawn its demands in the face of public sentiment against it, and an agreement has been reached whereby a buffer, or safety zone, will be closed to the public. Public use facilities within the zone will be relocated elsewhere within the refuge at the Army's expense. None of the refuge land will be transferred to the Army, and the land will continue to be managed by the U.S.F.W.S. for wildlife purposes.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

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332 Calle Mayor, Redondo Beach

OBSERVATIONS

Caroline H. Daugherty

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON: A colony of 30-40 nesting in a eucalyptus grove and Mr. McQuown invites interested observers. 11940 Borwood Rd., El Monte. Phone Gilbert 8-1053.

CINNAMON TEAL-WOOD DUCKS: Mar. 2, Vermont Ave. slough near San Pedro. Nurtha Dunn and group found 5 pair, mating. Also a pair of Wood Ducks. A beautiful male Wood Duck wintered on McArthur Park Lake.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON & LINCOLN SPARROW: A real funny sight to see the big B-t Pigeon waddling along on the ground close to the pert Lincoln's Sparrow, both feeding on the fine chick scratch I serve to them. Both have wintered with us and still here - Apr. 14 (CHD)

HUMMINGBIRD-BLACK-CHINNED: Apr. 6, Audubon Center (Alma Stultz) Apr. 14, Big Tujunga Canyon (D).

FLICKER-BOREAL (Northern)

FLICKER-RED SHAFTED: Both found together in Forest Lawn, Glendale, by Nurtha Dunn. March 17. Close comparison.

MAGPIE-AMERICAN (Black-billed) Audubon Center, El Monte, March 19 (A.S.).

MAGPIE-YELLOW-BILLED: Apr. 7, E. Schwartz saw several between Santa Barbara and Solvang.

ROBINS: Sycamore Grove. Mar. 23, Leona Hoogenboom saw 5. Apr. 6, along June St. near Wilshire 8 were hunting over different lawns. (D).

BLUEBIRDS-WESTERN: March 17, in Forest Lawn, (N.D.) Big Tujunga Canyon, April 14. (D).

WAXWINGS-CEDAR: Apr. 6, Ruth McCune reports a flock of over 100, Mt. Washington. A few much larger she thinks possibly were Bohemians.

WARBLERS: April 13, Lutescent (Orange-crowned) and Calaveras (Nashville) Big Tujunga Canyon. (D).

ORIOLES-HOODED: Mar. 2, San Gabriel, male. (E. Wakeman) Mar. 9, Five Points, male. (Hazel Lewis) Audubon Center, Apr. 1, female Hooded Orioles arrived. (A. Stultz).

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK: Apr. 6, Ruth McCune reports a pair on her feeding tray, Mt. Washington.

SPARROWS: LARK & CHIPPING: Mar. 17 in Forest Lawn. (N.D.)

We wish to thank Mr. W. J. Sheffler for the donation of a large exhibit case for Audubon House. This will be used for our exhibit of common birds, a project on which we are now working. This exhibit will include another fine gift from Mr. Sheffler - a Belted Kingfisher.

Another 'thank you' to Girl Scout Troup 1773, the Globe Trotters of North Hollywood for their check to pay for the mounting of this Kingfisher. They had asked what they could do for Audubon House in appreciation for the help they had received there and this project has been taken on with enthusiasm.

Mr. Herman Beck has generously agreed to mount birds for us. If anyone wishes to contribute to a fund which can be used to mount birds as they are given to us please send checks made out to "Los Angeles Audubon Society" to Miss Esther Johnson, Treasurer, 1250-1/2 Holt Avenue, Los Angeles 35.

Mr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Ornithology at the L.A. County Museum, is helping us with the securing of birds, working with the Fish and Game Dept. and others who send in birds which we may be able to use. We wish to extend to him our thanks.

In a Los Angeles paper recently was an account of an 11 year old Alhambra girl standing guard over a bird's nest when a city weed removal crew started plowing the lot. The Alhambra paper also printed the story with a picture of Teddie Sue Naumschoff beside the nest. Teddie Sue writes, "It was a Killdeer. You can hardly see the nest because the eggs look like rocks. The eggs should hatch soon. Every time I go near her nest she acts like she had a broken wing to lead me away from the nest." We think it fine that Teddie Sue has such an interest in birds and the desire to protect them. It is encouraging, too, that the incident was considered noteworthy enough to be reported by the city paper.

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ASILOMAR - 1957

Those who went to Asilomar Audubon Convention say this was the best one yet. More than 450 attended. We thank Dr. Robert Parsons and his Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society for their hospitality. Even the weather was perfect so we saw that lovely country at its best. Mr. Goodall did an excellent job of planning the whole thing; besides being heart and soul of the meetings he was the life of the party as well. Our own Mrs. Alma Stultz labored long and well as also did our energetic President, Mrs. McBride.

The speakers, all authorities in their fields, spoke on "Life of the Sea and Shore and Sand and Surf." The film tour, "Behaviour Patterns of Calif. Sea Otter and Western Gull World" was a most excellent nature film. It was made by Richard Booloolian of Hopkins Marine Station.

The before-breakfast bird walk was very pleasant as was the visit to the tide pools where we saw many things we did not know existed.

During the day spent at Point Lobos we saw native shrubs, wild flowers, land and shore birds, pelagic birds, sea lions and miles of beautiful coastline. Birds seen included murres, turnstones, surf birds, Western gulls, oyster catchers, red breasted mergansers, cormorants, brown pelicans, Baird's cormorants, chickadees, magpies, crows, song sparrows, juncos, violet-green swallows, Belding's sparrows, white crowns, spotted towhees, meadow larks, flickers, several hawks, woodpeckers and a Calaveras warbler.

Most interesting was watching the sea otters. They make a game of living. Everything they do is fun. They gambol in the water or lie on their backs, napping, with paws folded on chests, occasionally flopping over and returning to the same position. Their eating habits are most interesting. Their favorite foods are sea urchins, abalone and mussels. If the shells are too hard to crack with their teeth they dive to the bottom and come up with a rock. Then lying on their backs they use one paw to hold the rock in place on their chest and with the other hold the shell and bang it repeatedly on the rock until it cracks open.

Olive Alvey.

Letter from a Toronto Nature Lover:
 "Last week we had our first bird jaunt of the season. We had read in the papers that the swans were at Kingsville (Ont.) on their way north. That is where Jack Miner's Sanctuary is located and as we had never been there thought this would be a good time to go and it was. There must have been several hundred swans in the bay. We weren't too close to them but with binoculars had a wonderful view of them as they sat resting and feeding. Up at the Sanctuary the Miner's still have four of the original nine swans brought in to them 33 years ago when they were rescued at Niagara Falls in the ice. They are quite tame and would feed out of the visitor's hands. Apparently no one knows the life span of a swan but around 70 years is suggested.

Quite as thrilling as our sight of the swans was watching the Canada geese come in to feed between 5:30 and dusk. We had seen lots of them on the bay, while watching the swans, but as dusk settled down they came back to Jack Miner's to feed. They have a lagoon and an island, perhaps half a mile deep behind the house where corn is scattered for them. They fly up from the south in waves - just thousands of them. There were at least five thousand. In the distance a faint pencil line appears, then another and another lower down, in various formations. It was fascinating to watch these faint lines grow larger and larger and heavier and heavier, also noisier and noisier as the flocks came in, circled over the house and down on to the island or lagoon behind. It fascinated us also to see scout birds who had come on ahead rise up from the field and join their own particular group and fly over with them to the feeding ground. When we left just at dusk there were three lone geese still waiting with heads turned to the south and necks outstretched. As we drove to town to eat we hoped they wouldn't have to wait too long for their own meal."

Marguerite Jordan.

The Public is becoming more and more aware of Audubon House. People passing by, and people coming to see the State Historical Landmark, come in, and many learn about the Audubon Society for the first time. Everyone seems pleased to learn how the old house is being used.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

CALENDAR for MAY 1957

May 7, TUESDAY EVENING MEETING at 8:00 p.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Dr. Thomas R. Howell, of Univ. of Calif. will talk on "Hibernation and Torpidity in Birds." Illustrated with Kodachrome slides.

Arnold Small, Chairman

May 11, SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Tapia Park. Meet at 9 a.m. Drive up Coast Highway past Malibu Lagoon, turn to right and follow Malibu Canyon Road to Tapia Park. Bring lunch, bird feed and binoculars. Birding at Malibu Lagoon on return.

Ethel Craig, Leader

May 16, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary in Modjeska Canyon and Irvine Park. We plan to visit the sanctuary about 9:30 a.m. to watch the morning feeding of the birds. From there we will proceed to Irvine Park, where we will bird and have lunch. Our Tanner Bus will leave Los Angeles from Grand Ave. entrance to the Biltmore Hotel between 5th and 6th Sts. at 8:30 sharp. Round trip fare \$2.50. Please have exact fare. Bring lunch and binoculars. If driving, take Santa Ana Freeway to Orange, east on Chapman Ave. to Santiago Rd. Right 8 miles to Silverado Canyon fork, right 5 miles Modjeska Canyon. For reservations call Miss Edna Burt, 750-1/2 W. 113th St., L.A. 43, Plymouth 5-1044.

Murtha Dunn, Leader

May 23, THURSDAY STUDY CLASS, 10:00 a.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Mr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Ornithology at L.A. County Museum will be the speaker. His subject, "Ecology of Birds" will be of interest to all. There will be pictures to illustrate his talk.

Oliver Alvey, Chairman

May 26, SUNDAY FIELD TRIP will be to Mount Pinos for mountain birding and Condors. Group will meet at Frazier Park off Route #99 on the Mt. Pinos Road at 8:00 a.m.

Leader, Jim Huffman, FRoutier 2-7124

June 4, EVENING MEETING at Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., 6:30 p.m. Dinner (see reservation blank below). Installation of officers. Also the Machris 1956 Brazilian Expedition film "Fantastico."

Arnold Small, Chairman

June 8, SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Charlton Flats - 9 a.m. Drive through Montrose east on Foothill Blvd. to Angeles Crest Highway, past Red Box to Charlton Flats Ranger Station. Turn left and then right at first road to parking area. Bring lunch, binoculars and bird feed.

Ethel Craig, Leader

June 20, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Charlton Flats. Regular birding trip replacing annual installation of officers. Tanner Motor bus will leave Los Angeles at 8:30 a.m. sharp from Grand Ave. entrance to Biltmore Hotel between 5th and 6th Sts. Round trip fare \$2.00. Please have exact fare. If driving, follow instructions in above notice. For reservations phone Miss Edna Burt, 750-1/2 West 113th Street, L.A. 43, Plymouth 5-1044.

Murtha Dunn, Leader

W 9-748

Please reserve _____ dinner at \$1.80 each for the Installation of Officers meeting, JUNE 4th, 6:30 p.m. at Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Money must accompany reservation blank and be received not later than

May 21st. Send to: Miss Esther Johnson,
1250-1/2 Holt Avenue,
Los Angeles 35, Telephone: Olympia 2-3653