

THE
Western Tanager



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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH, OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 24

January 1958

Number 5

MR. KIRTLAND'S SPECIAL WARBLER

The Kirtland Warbler, named in 1851 for Jared P. Kirtland, a noted naturalist, is known by bird watchers far and wide as something extra special in the warbler galaxy. Of our five North American warblers, *Dendroica kirtlandi* is the rarest. They muster only about a thousand, full count.

The five-and-a-half-inch bird, with lemon yellow breast, blue-gray cap and cape, white "spectacles" and dusky back spends its winters generally throughout the Bahamas - a nice place to be in snow-time. Since the Bahamas range along over six hundred miles, you might think that the Kirtland's warbler's nesting area would be broad, too. It is for most other birds - but not the Kirtland, and this plus its relative scarcity is what makes it a most unusual bird. Returning each spring from the Bahamas and vicinity, the Kirtland's zero is on a virtual pinpoint in eastern Michigan, and nest annually within about thirty miles of this point in Oscoda, Crawford and Roscommon counties, and nowhere else! Another unique feature of this warbler is his tail wagging - in fact, he is generally described as the "tail-wagging Kirtland".

The Kirtland's have specific and extremely exacting housing standards, which may account for their rarity. They insist on an open stand of jack pines, measuring six to twelve feet in height. The guess is that where jack pines are shorter or taller than the six-to-twelve size, the Kirtland finds the ground cover not to his liking. He's a ground nester and demands wintergreen, blueberry, sheep laurel and sweet fern in his dooryard landscaping. If there's a sprig of arbutus blooming on his arrival from the Bahamas, he doesn't seem to mind.

Some authorities specify "burned-over" jack pine barrens. This gave rise to an unusual statement in the Audubon Bird Guide, as follows: "It is therefore (because of the six-to-twelve foot jack pine specifications) not likely to find an area suitable for more than a few years. Here we seem to have a species so dependent on recurring fires for creation of suitable habitat that it might conceivably be exterminated by rigid fire suppression over its very limited range".

The female Kirtland, cheered on by her mate, builds the nest. Dr. Joessly Van Tyne, of the University of Michigan has watched through four days while a little hen made 203 flights for the fibers and white deer hair she uses. Why white? Ask the bird. When Norman A. Wood discovered the first Kirtland nests back in 1903, horse hair gave them the finishing touch. Why the hair of a deer instead of a horse? The auto companies have the answer to that.

The household established, the Kirtlands are trusting and even mischievous. Dr. Van Tyne reports having to push an incubating mother aside to count her eggs. Once, when he spread his kit on the ground near a nest, a venturesome male swooped down, filched a skein of tiny celluloid leg bands and carried them in triumph to a high branch.

(Continued on page 27)

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

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cludes subscription to Audubon Magazine.
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AUDUBON HOUSE

Headquarters of L. A. Audubon Society,
7377 Santa Monica Blvd....HO 7-9495

Open: Wednesday, Thursday and
Saturday - 2-4 p.m.

3rd Wednesday - 7:30-8 p.m.

4th Thursday (members only)
9-10 a.m., 1-4 p.m.

Groups by appointment

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I sincerely wish all of the mem-
bers and friends of the Los Angeles Audi-
bon Society a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR.

I suppose the making of New
Year's resolutions is considered old-fash-
ioned any more. However, I wonder if
others have, as I have, resolved anew to
be more conscientious about keeping re-
cords of their natural history observa-
tions.

Most of us are members of the
Audubon Society because we have an inter-
est in birds or some form of nature study,
and for many of us this is our principal
means of recreation. If it becomes too
involved it gets to be work, and ceases to
be recreation. However, it seems to me
that we don't get the most out of our na-
ture study unless we have a certain amount
of system to it.

Membership in an organization
such as ours offers decided advantages to
the amateur naturalist over being a "lone
wolf." One has the opportunity of sharing
one's experiences with others having simi-
lar interests, at our meetings or in the
pages of the TANAGER. Also our library is
available for the use of members. This
contains many excellent and useful books
which are often not readily obtainable at
public libraries.

The possibility of adding even a
small amount to scientific knowledge is a
further incentive to careful observation.
In the study of birds even, where it some-
times seems that everything has already
been done, there are gaps in our knowledge
that enthusiastic amateurs can help fill.
Members whose observations appear in our
Field Notes in the TANAGER and in AUDUBON
FIELD NOTES are playing a part in this.

Eugene Anderson and Ernest Wil-
loughby, two young members who live in
Santa Monica, have made a study of the
birds occurring at Will Rogers State Park,
and Mrs. Betty Meyerfeld and her son Alan
are making a similar study of the Bixby
Slough area. The former is now available
for reference at the library in Plummer
Park. I would like to see more such stud-
ies made of limited areas; they can be use-
ful as a guide to other birders, and may
be of interest historically in the future
as conditions inevitably change.

So here's wishing you many en-
joyable and rewarding days in the field
during the coming year of 1958.

Robert E. Blackstone

MR. KIRTLAND'S WARBLER - continued.

The Kirtland's two-second-long song is loud and clear. On a still day, the note carries a good half mile. This helped the Kirtland census-takers who, under the organization of Harold Mayfield, came up in 1951-the Kirtland's centenary, with a count of 452 singing males. It is this figure that indicates a total of about a thousand Kirtlands, both sexes.

At Mio, Michigan, in effect the Kirtland capital, where Kirtland fanciers come from all parts of the nation to get an eye and earful of the gay songster, Conservation Officer Verne Dockham figures the special warblers are holding their own. "But the Kirtland warbler watchers," he adds, "are something else again. Mister, their numbers pyramid!"

---Harold Titus in Ford Times

AUDUBON HOUSE

THANKS

Mr. & Mrs. Bill Hood for work done on exhibit case and for making the chest for our shells.
Mr. Hiram Beebe for money to pay for material to make chest and for two books for the Library.

Mr. McCune for offering to help with cabinet work.

Mr. Baker and Mrs. Baker for helping with youth groups.

Mr. Jim Murdock and Miss Harriet Cunningham for ideas on feeding birds.
 All those who brought gifts to the Christmas party. The birds at Audubon House will be well cared for for several months.

NEEDS

Large flat-top desk with file drawers.
Typewriter in good condition.
Money for material to build sales counter and bookcases.
Recent books for our Library.
Sign Painter to make weather-proof sign for Audubon House.
Painter to help paint exhibit case.
Someone to answer telephone and do typing at Audubon House Tuesdays 2-4 p.m.

On December 8, we made our first trip to Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary and needless to say, had a wonderful time. We were there primarily to help Mr. & Mrs. McComb, whom we found most charming, with the visitors who pour into the Sanctuary on a Sunday afternoon. We arrived about eleven in the morning and had a few minutes to observe the hummers and eighteen other species as they came to the various feeders before beginning the work of explaining the birds seen, the food used in the bottles and trays and answering questions which the visitors wished answered. There must have been between two and three hundred children and adults who saw some of the following species: Anna's Hummingbirds, Valley Quail, Nut-tall Woodpecker, Scrub Jays, Plain Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Bewick Wrens, Calif. Thrashers, Hermit Thrushes, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warblers, House Finches, Spotted Towhees, Brown Towhees, Oregon Juncos, White-crowned Sparrows, Song Sparrows and Mourning Doves.

We were fortunate in meeting Mr. B. F. Tucker and Mr. & Mrs. Paul Colburn, learned much from them and hope to meet them there again. We plan to go down another week-end in the spring and urge all those who can to do so. It is a most worthwhile trip just to observe and learn and lots of fun to be of help.

---Marian Wilson

NATURE MAGAZINES WANTED. Mrs. Mary Hood is assembling a collection of nature pictures and articles. For this she needs any copies you plan to discard of such magazines as Audubon, Arizona Highways, Natural History, Desert, Pacific Discovery, Sunset, Westways, etc.

Magazines may be left on the porch at 138 So. Wilton Drive, or if you have several years, Mrs. Hood will arrange to pick them up, in which case please phone

HO 3-0974

We regret to announce the passing of:

Miss Cora Leard

Miss Christine M. Thomas

BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The mild fall weather of mid and late November made for very pleasant birding in southern California, but for those birders who seek the more interesting winter visitants from the north, late fall and early winter was clearly a disappointment. The relatively rainless month from mid-November to about mid-December saw bluebird weather prevailing with air temperatures in the daytime reaching 85 in the Los Angeles basin and even higher in the desert areas. A great high pressure system in the Great Basin brought Santa Ana winds sweeping through mountain passes from the deserts to the north and east.

The expected flight of waterfowl was at first light and even at the end of the period was low. Very few geese were seen in southern California and even at the Salton Sea, Lesser Snow, White-fronted and Canadian Geese numbers were down. Black Brant, however, arrived at Mission Bay by the hundreds in November. For those who sought the more interesting seabirds (gulls, alcids) this period was a failure. No alcids of any type were reported and no Kittiwakes sighted. Small numbers of Short-billed and Glaucous-winged Gulls together with a larger number of Bonaparte Gulls could be seen along the beaches and lagoons. The shorebird flight became more interesting as November progressed but no rarities were noted.

The land bird migration was fairly good and because of the mild weather species such as Black-throated Gray Warblers, MacGillivray Warblers, Wilson Warblers, Western Tanagers and Bullock Orioles were perhaps induced to linger longer in certain areas. There was an excellent flight of Robins into southern California while the flight of Cedar Waxwings, while substantial, was not extraordinary. Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported from Numerous areas during this time. None of the more interesting winter visitants were as yet reported.

Remember the Rare Bird Alert. Call Arnold Small at VE 7-2272 or R. Dudley Ross at GL 4-2332 concerning rare or unusual birds so that the information may be quickly forwarded to those interested.

---Arnold Small

LIBRARY NOTES

Two books have been added to the library at Audubon House- "Our Familiar Island Trees" by Mary Dillingham Frear and "Forest Friends" by Hubert R. Evans.

Thanks to Mr. Hiram Beebe who responded very generously to the recent plea for additions to the library collection. It is through such support that the library service is able to grow and function. Requests for new or used books or financial aid, if a member prefers to give money, have been made before. This is being repeated since the need is always present and membership support is urged.

---Helen Sandmeyer, Librarian

- - - - - IDENTIFICATION

Any effort put into raising ones standard of recognition will not be wasted. You must be able to know a bird whenever you meet it. The sooner you accurately identify a bird, giving it its proper name, the sooner you may seek information in past and present records and the sooner your own records will have a permanence.

Identification is a broad term of which some parts are out of most of our scope in field work and pleasure. We leave the identification by skins, measurements, and having the bird in the hand to those trained in that portion of the field. This leaves field identification for you and me. Field identification is the composite picture of the bird in its environment. This includes plumage, size, shape, typical attitude, manner of movement, voice, mode of feeding, haunts, and associations. It is the study of the live bird and its habits.

This kind of information is not often obtained from a dead bird. It is in this category we can be of service to our Society, scientists and to ourselves.

Birds do not pose for the observer, even when unalarmed, and will frequently fly off without revealing the whole of their feathering. It is therefore a question of seeing as much as one can on each occasion and gradually building up to the full picture. Even after a number of observations it is often found

that some particular diagnostic feature has escaped notice. This should not discourage us but serve to sharpen our senses of observation.

Check back on your notes regularly to find gaps to be filled in. Mistakes and discrepancies can creep in no matter how careful one tries to be. Field descriptions should always be made on the spot, not when you get home.

Sketches are a great help.

They need only be a simple outline. Colors are many times difficult to be sure about with changing light and different backgrounds. Another factor is the observers presence and conduct, which can influence behavior and attitudes.

You observers of today are much better fitted to know your birds than say those of twenty-five years ago.

Make sure of your library at Audubon House in Plummer Park. They have the books and want you to read them. It is their service to you. Make use of it.

--Betty Meyerfeld

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Miss Eleanor Childers,
1617 Angelus Ave., Los Angeles 26
Mr. Stanley B. Hare,
2505 Canyon Oak Dr., Hollywood 28
Mr. W. W. Orchard,
320 W. Arbor Vitae St., Inglewood
Mrs. Carl E. Scott,
3431 Mt. Vernon Drive, Los Angeles
Mr. Harold F. Young,
3829 Weston Place, Long Beach 7

ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE

Secretary of the Interior Seaton announced November 20 that he had approved temporary withdrawal of nine million acres in northeastern Alaska as an Arctic Wildlife Range. This has long been desired by conservationists. Upon final establishment it will become the largest area in North America dedicated to wildlife purposes, and one of the largest in the world, not excluding the great wildlife parks of southeastern Africa.

CONSERVATION IN CONGRESS

H.R. 500 (Saylor), H.R. 1960 (Metcalf) and S. 1176 (Humphrey et al.) are familiar to you, no doubt, as the bills designed to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System on public lands of the United States. Opposition to this legislation comes, as might be expected, from lumber, cattle, mining interests, etc., as well as from resort and motorboat people. However, some opposition is coming unexpectedly from the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, who apparently feel that it deprives them of some administrative prerogatives. The Department of Agriculture has offered a substitute bill which, while recognizing wilderness use of National Forests by Congress, does not provide the safeguards written into the original bill.

H.R. 5538 (Engle) and S. 557 (Bible) and related bills provide that withdrawals or reservations of more than 5000 acres of public lands for the use of the Department of Defense shall not become effective until approved by act of Congress, and that federal and state hunting and conservation regulations be observed on any military reservation.

S. 2489 (Neuberger and others) requires the use of humane methods of trapping animals and birds on lands and waterways under the jurisdiction of the federal government. This legislation is before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

WILDFLOWER PRESERVES

Theodore Payne, writing in "GOLDEN GARDENS," September 1957, warns that unless something is done soon to save some of the State's few remaining wildflower areas, they will be lost to us forever. Mr. Payne, a life member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, is a long time champion of wildflowers and native landscapes, and knows whereof he speaks. He was instrumental, many years ago, in securing the passage of legislation protecting wildflowers.

The disappearance of the large wildflower fields, he points out, is due to progress, to the land's being taken over for agriculture or other development. "What is needed," he says, "is the establish-

ing of a number of 'Wild Flower Preserves' or 'Sanctuaries' in different parts of the state...These areas could be made National Monuments, State Parks, County Parks, or anything else by which they would be preserved for all time."

REPORT ON PAST EVENTS

Field trip to Lake Norcomian on Sunday, Nov. 11, was attended by some 20 birders. The lake was fairly covered with ducks totaling about 2300 birds including 900 Pintail, 500 est. Baldpate, 100 est. Mallards, 450 est. Shovellers, 100 est. Ruddies, 51 Green-winged Teal, 43 Canvas-backs, 25 Ring-necks, 20 Redheads, 11 Scaup, 6 Gadwall, 3 Cinnamon Teal, 3 Buffleheads, 5 Western Grebes, 10 American Egrets, 5 Green Herons, 23 Black-crowned Night Herons, 5 Great Blue Herons. A single Pigeon Hawk was seen near the lake. In the afternoon some of the party went to Lake Mathews and met other members of the group later in the day at Mill Creek Canyon to look for the Painted Redstart. In this search the group was unsuccessful.

Thursday Morning Meeting on Nov. 21, Dr. Richard Boolootian, zoologist at UCLA, showed his beautiful Sea Otter pictures. These movies are the result of several year's study, by air, on the water and under it, by Dr. Boolootian.

This interesting and amusing sea mammal, once so abundant, then hunted almost to extinction, is making a wonderful comeback in the waters in the vicinity of Monterey. Thanks to a law to protect it from 1912 and to the watchful interest of conservationists in the neighborhood, this has been accomplished.

Sea otters live their lives in kelp beds-- never on the land-- almost entirely on their backs, their only enemy the killer whales, or an occasional misguided man.

Their food consists of sea urchins, abalones, black mussels and clams. To crack bivalve shells, the otter brings up a rock from the ocean's bottom, lays over on its back, then placing the rock on the fat pad on its chest (grown there for that purpose) and grasping the mussel in its front paws, bangs away on the rock until

the shell is cracked.

Otters, though they have two front paws and two back flippers, do not use these in swimming. Instead they move through the water by muscular undulation. Baby sea otters spend many months cradled on mamma's broad bosom, comfortable and secure.

The Audubon Christmas party was a bright spot in the midst of a dark and rainy day. Fifty people braved the elements, some who do not often get out to the regular meetings during the year but who look forward to this opportunity to visit with friends.

Mrs. Joseph Dunn, Chairman, and her committee made the party a real success. Miss Bessie Pope, pinch-hitting for Mrs. Alma Stultz who was ill, gave a bright and timely talk. Mr. & Mrs. Glissman, choir director and soloist, respectively, of the Westwood Methodist Church, made up the musical program. We were so happy to have the Glissmans back for a return visit after having been so charmed last year by their lovely voices. They led the audience in the singing of Christmas carols that seem fresh and new each year no matter how many times they are sung. After the program we enjoyed cake and hot spiced punch, made by Beth Patterson.

As usual, the birds of Audubon House benefited by the party as guests left gifts of food for them under the Christmas tree.

--Olive Alvey

Have you completed your 1957 Birder's Individual Questionnaire? If so please send to the Secretary, Miss Dorothy Goddard, 1216 N. Bronson Ave., L.A. 38. It is hoped that some worthwhile information of the economic value to California of our hobby can be developed and utilized for the best interests of us all.

ATTENTION! Circle and Save this date for the REUNION of Audubon Campers (1948 thru 1957), their families and friends. For Southern California, SUNDAY, April 27. Full information and details later.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Historian. . . . Mrs. Olive Alvey
Registrar of Members. Miss Iola R. Moore, 278 Brownwood Avenue, L.A. 49

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 1958

January 7 - SCREEN TOUR, Tuesday, January 7 at Virgil Junior High School and
and 11 Saturday, January 11 at John Burroughs Junior High. Subject, "Yukon
Indian Summer" by Cleveland P. Grant. An expedition into the wilder-
ness Yukon Territory via color motion pictures - led by famed wildlife
photographer of Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Summer scenery breath-
taking in magnitude and wild beauty. Along the way - antelope, hoary
marmots, deer, badgers, moose, caribou and grizzly bears. A perceptive
account of the Yukon's Indian culture makes the trip complete.

January 9 - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 912 Victoria Avenue.

January 11 - SATURDAY, FIELD TRIP to Fern Dell. Meet at Museum at 9:00 a.m. This
is the same day as the Screen Tour but we will adjourn early.
---Catherine Shaw, Leader

January 15 - WEDNESDAY EVENING MEETING, at 8:00 p.m. sharp, Great Hall in Plummer
Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Dr. Richard I. Boolootian of the Zoology
Dept. of U.C.L.A. will present his color motion picture "The California
Sea Otter."

January 23 - THURSDAY MORNING MEETING - 10:00 a.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377
Santa Monica Blvd. A Round Robin is being planned for this meeting, the
subject - "Warblers." Miss Beth Peterson will be moderator of the
discussion, aided and abetted by Mrs. Murtha Dunn, Mrs. Shearer, Mrs.
Paul Dodds, Mrs. Bess Hoffman and others. As spring and the warbler
migrations are not too far away, this is a good time to become more fam-
iliar with these birds. Skins and mounted specimens will be used and a
discussion of flyways will be conducted to help birders in their field
trips, so brush up on warblers. We hope to have the loud speaker in
working order so the folks in the back of the room will hear the speakers.
Mr. William Goodall, our West Coast Representative will attend this meet-
ing.

January 25 - SUNDAY FIELD TRIP will be to Buena Vista Lake, Taft and Carrizo Plain
26 (Saturday) and Morro Bay (Sunday). This trip is excellent for Sandhill
Cranes, Golden Eagles, Waterfowl, LeConte's Thrasher, White Pelicans
and Black Brant. The group will meet at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 25,
1958 at the junction of California State Highway 166, 33 and U.S. 399 in
Mari copa.