

# Western Tanager

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## BIRDING IN SEQUOIA AND YOSEMITE By Clara Weedmark

On a bright, pleasant morning in June we settled back in our seats for a bus trip to General Grant, Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks. Wild flowers carpeted the roadsides and in the foothills chamise and yucca raised their creamy flower heads. Deerweed made great splashes of red and yellow on the hillsides, as did tall purple lupin and sage. Brewer Blackbirds were numerous and Red-winged Blackbirds in swampy spots between the hills, and Turkey Vultures tipped and glided over the scene.

At Fresno Dr. Allison met us with a car and we were soon on the road to King's Canyon, passing through level ranching country. Along the river many Swallows were flashing back and forth over the water and Meadowlarks were singing from field and fence-post. Here the foothill slopes were covered with dense growth including the lovely yellow-flowered Fremontia and California buckeye.

Beyond General Grant Village is a large mountain meadow at an elevation of 6000 feet and we were surprised to see flocks of Brewer's Blackbirds. Fox Sparrows sang sweetly from high perches and everywhere there were ruglike patches of wild-flowers--bleeding hearts, gillas, etc. In the evening we noted many Robins, Oregon Juncos and a White-headed Woodpecker. Next morning on our walk we heard Thrushes singing their "ethereal" or "spiral" songs, and sitting on an enormous fallen log - a Pileolated Woodpecker! His neck appeared very slender and he was marked lengthwise with stripes of black and white. The entire shape of this woodpecker reminds one of a grebe. He moved along the log and we had plenty of time to study him.

We drove to General Grant Tree and were attracted by a large, croaking, dark bird that swung out in a circle from the top of the tree. It was a Raven. Could it have a nest up there? An Olive-sided Flycatcher, working in the open space in front of us, kept chasing a Western Tanager away. In mid-morning we were on our way to General Sherman Tree and Sequoia Village where we stayed for the second night. We climbed Morro Rock to view the row of peaks - sharp, unforested and snow-covered--known as the Altai Peaks. Below in a narrow ravine we saw Violet-green Swallows, Olive-sided Flycatchers, and Western Tanagers. Back at the village again we found Redbreasted Nuthatches, White-headed Woodpeckers, Juncos, and Robins and also several brilliant red snow plants (*sarcodes sanguinea*). Blue Jays scolded and begged for food from the campers, Golden-mantled squirrels scampered about and Chickadees were a common sight.

Leaving Sequoia we returned to Fresno and then on to Yosemite. Kingbirds and a Phainopepla were added to our list of birds and everywhere carpets of wild-flowers. Chipping Sparrows were numerous and there were Black-headed Grosbeaks, Wood Pewees, Song-Sparrows, Cassin's Purple Finch, a Black Phoebe and an occasional Hummingbird.

At night we watched the impressive Fire Fall and Sunday morning -- church-Mirrow Lake was somewhat disappointing as the water was muddy but the waterfalls were very rewarding. Because of heavy snows during the winter, there was an

(continued on Page 11)

### 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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Groups by appointment.

### THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

October is here almost before  
we know it, or so at least it seems to me,  
and with it this society resumes its  
full schedule of activities. Our program  
and field trip committees have worked  
hard to make these better and more in-  
teresting than ever before. I am looking  
forward to seeing the familiar faces at  
our meetings and field trips, but I hope  
that I shall also see many new faces.  
If you have not been taking part in  
these, you owe it to yourself to come  
along and see how interesting and enjoy-  
able these activities can be.

By the time this issue of the  
TANAGER reaches you, programs and appli-  
cation blanks for your season tickets for  
the 1958-1959 Audubon Screen Tours, spon-  
sored jointly by the National Audubon  
Society and the Los Angeles Audubon So-  
ciety, will have been mailed to you. I  
think you cannot but agree that this  
year again we are fortunate in having  
an unusually excellent group of speakers  
and films. The Audubon Screen Tours, in  
addition to being of high educational  
value, are an outstanding bargain, in  
these days of high prices, in high quality  
entertainment.

In the face of continually  
rising costs and other difficulties con-  
nected with presenting the Screen Tours,  
it has become harder and harder to make  
them pay for themselves. When the time  
came to contract for this season's series,  
the executive board very seriously con-  
sidered dropping them. It was only be-  
cause we were so firmly convinced of  
their worth as conservation education  
as well as entertainment, that we deter-  
mined to continue them for at least one  
more season.

I believe we could fill up our  
auditorium and make the Tours an unquali-  
fied success financially, if we could only  
let more people know about them. An adver-  
tising campaign would be too expensive  
and might not reach the right people. You  
can help (more than you realize, perhaps),  
by telling everyone you can among your  
own friends, business associates and ac-  
quaintances about the Audubon Screen Tours.  
Additional programs & ticket applications  
can be obtained from our Screen Tours.

Chairman, Mrs. Donald L. Adams, or send her the names and addresses of any persons you think might be interested. I call upon all members to help us "sell" the Screen Tours this season. And of course don't neglect to get tickets for yourself and other members of your family.

---Robert E. Blackstone

CONSERVATION  
By Otis Wade

Although the Wilderness Bill failed to pass this last session, from the conservation point-of-view the 85th Congress was noteworthy for having enacted more important legislation than any other in recent history. We are indebted to Conservation News for a breakdown of successes and failures in the passing of what we have felt to be important pieces of legislation, and success would appear to outweigh failure, with the notable exception above-mentioned. The last revised version of the Wilderness Bill, which is designed to establish a national policy relating to wilderness areas in public lands, ran into a roadblock in the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs when field hearings on the measure were demanded.

Hearings will be scheduled eventually and it is safe to say that our efforts in promoting this program will succeed next year and receive presidential signature. Briefly, the conservationists saw positive accomplishments in the passage of measures favorable to wetlands acquisition; the planning of fish and wildlife value into water projects which was a revision of the Coordination Act; chemical pesticide research; military land grabs; coordinated planning upon recreational resources; acquisition of some 700,000 acres of Klamath Indian Reservation forest lands which prevents the loss of a 23,421 acres waterfowl marsh, for one thing - the marsh to become a part of the Fish and Wildlife Service's national refuge system; highway advertising, and several other lesser bills.

Locally, the Tujunga Basin project which is designed to establish a reservation type recreation park in the Sunland-Tujunga area has not been resolved as we go to press. Unfortunately, the decision of the City Planning Commission on August 21st was in approval of the application for a Gravel District. It has been sent to the Planning Committee of the City Council, Ernest R. Debs, Chairman. We have written Councilman Debs asking him to recommend to his committee, and the City Council, that the area be preserved as a recreation and desert-life reservation.

The California Roadside Council, main office in San Francisco, is promoting support for limitation of highway advertising in accordance with the Federal Highway Act of 1958. This Act allows a federal cost-sharing "bonus" to states which enact adequate billboard control legislation applying to interstate highways. In the case of California this "bonus" would amount to \$15,000,000! This offer is good only until 1961 and therefore, concerted action on the part of all conservation groups is most necessary. Our Society will, of course, be actively engaged in furthering billboard control legislation and details will be forthcoming as to how individually we may support any proposed regulatory measures.

"We firmly believe that travelers on highways should not be a captive audience, which is what they are when advertising is forced on their view; the natural beauty of the landscape is every American's heritage."

Mrs. Marion T. Weatherford  
Gen'l Federation of Women's Clubs.

"There is a lot more to the world than the places to sit and eat, or study, or lie down in; and I don't count wet ground wasted just because no one makes money on it -- I think we ought to save as many of our swamps as we can spare and should keep them wild, and let people contemplate them."

Robert Smith - Pittsfield, Mass.

Three baby Whooping Cranes have been spotted in the Northwestern Canadian breeding grounds of the nearly extinct bird, boosting known population of the rare species to 35.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

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Mr. Ray Smith,  
2415 Virginia, Santa Monica, Calif.

## CANARY-SINGING HOUSE FINCH

One afternoon in June, a House Finch on the window sill caught my attention. He was picking groats out of the mixture I had placed there. He had extensive color over his head, breast and on his rump - but the color was bronzy yellow, not red. I've seen color before in restricted areas on what I assumed to be young males developing their first color, but this was red, not yellow.

About an hour later I heard a canary's song in the walnut tree behind our house. Upon locating him, just a few feet above us - yes, the yellow house Finch. Later I heard him singing in a neighbor's yard. Just before dark he was back on the window sill eating his supper. Everything about his appearance, shape, markings, etc. were strictly house finch, no suggestion of hybrid. We did not see him again.

I have read that house finches in captivity lose their red coloring, becoming yellow instead. I believe this little fellow grew up in an aviary of canaries and learned their song instead of his own. It would seem to indicate that a house Finch's song is learned, not inherited.

- - - Zephyr Sheldon

## TWELVE RULES FOR OBSERVING WILD BIRDS AND ANIMALS IN THE FOREST

By Dr. William Beebe

1. Move only when the wind blows and moves the leaves.
2. When a wild creature is near, keep the eyes partly closed. Animals do not like to be stared at.
3. Hold hands high so that any movement is down, as leaves fall.
4. When listening to faint sounds, keep mouth slightly open.
5. Drab clothes are best, but a scarlet or blue shirt will do no harm if one keeps still. It is movement, not color, which frightens wildlife.
6. If sand flies or mosquitos are bad, do not be ashamed to use a repellent. A dozen mosquitos biting at once may disturb the toughest observer.
7. When approaching a singing bird, take a step during each song; many birds will not notice.
8. Learn to squat Indian fashion. It allows two slight shifts which alternately ease all muscles, and keeps you clear of wet surfaces.
9. When squatting, hold glasses close to nose, so that they can be shifted to eyes with a minimum of motion.
10. Don't trust your eyes or memory when you can check and recheck.
11. A sudden yell or gunshot flightens wild birds for a few seconds, but the effects of a cough or sneeze will last much longer.
12. A low monotone in speaking is less disturbing than a hissing whisper.

Reprinted courtesy the National Geographic Society.

A REMINDER -- AUDUBON TEA on Sunday October 19 - 2 to 4 o'clock, at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Dodds, 749 Longwood Ave., L. A. 5 (one block south of Wilshire and one block east of Highland). Have a cup of tea with friends and help make the new members welcome.

RSVP Call NO 1-8036, NO 2-9966 or WE 9-7403

## BIRDING IN SEQUOIA - continued

unusual amount of water cascading over the rocks and down into the valley. The hike to Vernal and Nevada Falls was everything we hoped it would be, and among others we saw the Black Swifts who nest under the edge of the falls. Then in the car once more and up to Glacier Point. Azaleas and dogwood lined the roadways and an occasional chinquapin. Here at 8000 ft. elev. we found Violet-green Swallows and White-throated Swifts and a breath-taking view of the whole Yosemite Valley with the snow-covered peaks beyond.

A visit to the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, through the famous Wawona tunnel tree and then out of the park and back to Fresno. Having lunch at a city park, we noted a group of Brewer Blackbirds and one who kept apart from the rest. It had a larger head, was streaked and had a short tail and turned out to be a Starling! - the first one we had seen in California.

## BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mid-summer birding in southern California is often not very exciting unless one is interested in nest-searching, bird photography, population studies, nesting censuses, behavior studies, and the like. The point is that even during the so-called "dull" birding season there is still much which can keep the birder happily engaged in his hobby without adding "life-birds".

Weather-wise, July and August were slightly cooler than normal and September had its usual hot spells. During the summer, many streams were still flowing in mountain and foothill canyons. Even during August many wildflowers were still blooming in mountain areas and the display of red Zauchnerias attracted large numbers of migrant Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds. A few patches of snow were still to be found on the north-facing slopes of the high San Bernardinos and on Mt. San Jacinto during the late summer. There was more than an ample supply of weed seeds for grumivorous species and insects of all types abounded, keeping the

insectivorous birds well supplied with food for nestlings. Nesting activities for most species of land birds was generally very successful notably among quail, doves, and passerines. This was due in part at least to the bountiful supplies of food and water resulting from last winter's near record rains.

Sea birds generally did not live up to expectations this summer for some species, but surpassed expectations for others. Only one Red-billed Tropic bird was reported, that being an individual near San Clemente Island in late July (Mal. J. Fink). No Skuas were reported. The results of a Labor Day pelagic trip to the waters south and west of San Clemente were very rewarding however. Those fortunate enough to go were treated to some excellent sea-birding which included life-birds for everyone on board, even for the Ross's who have recently surpassed the magical "600" mark.

We succeeded in luring large numbers of Shearwaters, Petrels, Jaegers, and Albatrosses around the boat. In fact, all three species of Jaegers (including a single Long-tailed Jaeger) could be seen diving for the fish which were thrown overboard as chum. Some 1700 Petrels of 4 species were estimated as being seen during the day. They included numerous Black Petrels, lesser numbers of Leach's and Ashy, and some 40-50 of the supposedly rare Least Petrel. It is now evident that this little petrel from the northern part of the Gulf of California and San Benitos Islands is probably quite regular in late summer to the waters off San Diego and San Clemente Island. It was estimated that some 24 Black-footed Albatrosses were seen, some coming very close to the boat in response to bait. In addition, many Sooty, Pink-footed and a few Manx Shearwaters were seen. The best bird of the day, however, was the Pale-footed Shearwater.

As if this weren't enough, the group was also treated to numerous Sabine's Gulls (many in stunning breeding plumage), about 40 Arctic Terns (some sitting on the drifting kelp and affording excellent views), numerous Xantus' Murrelets, as well as

Northern and Red Phalarope. Waldo Abbott of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History was off Santa Barbara in a small boat on that date and likewise noted a large flight of Petrels and other pelagic species. Among the petrels he noted were some 25 Fork-tailed. A return trip to the waters some 30 miles west of San Diego, Sept. 13, produced 6 more Least Petrels. (Ed. Ben King Jr.)

In general, shorebirds were low in number until the end of July when southbound migrants began to swell local populations. Elegant Terns appeared at coastal areas about mid-July after which time they literally flooded northward along the beaches in places numbering in the many hundreds.

Unusual was the report of a Marbled Murrelet in the surf near Newport June 28 (Michael Jacobson). A considerable stir was caused by the appearance of an American Flamingo at Bolsa Chica late in July. The bird was seen to fly, feed, appeared in good health, and was of good color. What probably was the same individual appeared at Lt. Maxton Brown Sanctuary near Carlsbad, Sept. 13. The curator at Marineland reported an American Flamingo escaped late in July.

Arnold Small,  
3028 Cavendish Dr., L. A. 64

#### SCREEN TOUR PROGRAM 1958-1959

"Ranch of the Purple Flowers"

Robert C. Hermes

Tues., Oct. 21 - Sat., Oct. 25

\* \* \*

"A Touch of the Tropics"

William H. Wagoner, Jr.

Tues., Nov. 18 - Sat., Nov. 22

\* \* \*

"Waterway Wildlife"

Leonard Hall

Tues., Feb. 3 - Sat., Feb. 7

\* \* \*

"Great Smoky Skyland"

G. Harrison Orians

Tues., Mar. 3 - Sat. Mar. 7

\* \* \*

"East and West of Hudson Bay"

Arthur A. Allen

Tues., April 7 - Sat., April 11

#### HORNED OWLS

During the past summer months a pair of Horned Owls have brought a single young owl onto our property each night. This pair has used our TV aerial for the past two years. July 29th was bright moonlight. For more than an hour I watched the young owl on the aerial. It cried with rather a harsh, screeching cry - like an off-key Barn Owl - every eighth count, except when an adult was approaching with food, then the cry was changed to every 2nd count and became more plaintive. Feeding took place on the aerial. The adult left the aerial and flew to an oak tree near my window. As it landed a second bird arose from the same oak and flew away. It had not made a sound so I judged it also was an adult. The Young owl joined the bird that had fed it, remained in the tree for a while then both flew to a hillside and sat side by side on the top bar of a children's swing.

July 30th the young owl arrived on aerial and started crying at 10:10. Took food from the ground and walked around like a big chicken. Two hours later it was still crying when I fell asleep. At this writing (Sept. 10th), this is still going on.

On August 27th he somehow became trapped on an outside porch where the bamboo blinds were rolled down. It finally found its way out after sitting on step leading into living room for about five minutes. Flew back and forth on porch and against blinds. I feel fortunate to have been able to observe them for so many nights and make notes on the actions and behavior of the three birds.

---Charlotte McBride

IN MEMORIAM - B. F. Tucker, known to all as the founder of the internationally known Modjeska Canyon Bird Sanctuary, and head of the Adelaide Tichenor Orthopedic Clinic for Children, died on Sept. 4. He had been a banker, investment counsellor, and served on the Board of many organizations. In 1940, after the death of his wife Dorothy May, Mr. Tucker gave the family home in Modjeska Canyon to the Audubon Society. It has served since as a sanctuary for hummingbirds and other birds native to California and has been visited by bird lovers from throughout the world.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

President . . . Mr. Robert E. Blackstone, 10363 Calvin Ave., Los Angeles 25

Registrar of Members . . . Miss Iola R. Moore, 278 Bronwood Ave., Los Angeles 49

CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER 1958

October 9, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 10363 Calvin Ave.

October 11, SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Playa del Rey for the study of shore and marsh birds. Take Metropolitan Coach Co. bus at 5th and Olive Sts. at 8:50 a.m. - arrive at Playa del Rey at 9:36. Meet at south end of lagoon. Bring binoculars and lunch. All welcome.

Leader -- Clara Splitter.

October 15, EVENING MEETING - Wednesday at 8:00 p.m. in Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. (Due to circumstances beyond our control we shall have to meet on Wednesday Evenings until the end of this year when we shall again revert to Tuesday). Mr. Robert E. Blackstone will show his colored slides on "Joshua Tree - Landscape and Wildlife" These are photographic gleanings from many excursions into the wonderland of Joshua Tree National Monument.

Chairman -- Arnold Small

October 16, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Cabrillo Beach. We will stop at Bixby Slough enroute where we may possibly see Red-wing Blackbirds, Wood Ducks, Cinnamon Teal, etc. Take Vermont bus #6 to 120th St. & South Vermont end of line. We will caravan from there, leaving at 9:15 a.m. Those who can take passengers call Miss Edna Burt, 10706 1/2 Budlong Ave., L. A. 44, PL 5-1044. Please make reservations one week before the trip. Mr. John Olguin, Manager of the Cabrillo Museum, will meet us there.

Leader -- Edna Burt

October 19, AUDUBON TEA - 2 to 4 p.m. at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Dodds, 749 Longwood Ave., L. A. 5 (one block south of Wilshire and one block east of Highland). Meet old friends and welcome new members.

October 23, THURSDAY MORNING MEETING at Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. at 9:45 a.m. Mr. Frank Gander will be speaker for this first meeting. His presentation, "A Visit to Kissing Rock Garden". Mr. Gander is well known to Audubon members for splendid pictures of his bird friends in this unusual garden. He is known, too, for his articles in Audubon Magazine, the last being about House Finches. Because of his popularity, we have obtained Great Hall so that all may find room. After the meeting, visit Audubon House and have lunch under the trees.

Chairman -- Olive Alvey

October 26, SUNDAY FIELD TRIP will be to the Condor Refuge in Sespe Canyon. Group will meet at 8 a.m. at Tip's Restaurant at the intersection of U. S. Highway 99 and State Road 126 (the Fillmore Road).

Leader -- Jim Huffman