

T H E

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Western Tanager

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EUROPEAN BIRDING

By James F. Clements

Barely a month has passed since I stood with Mary on our friend's farm in South England and watched thousands of Lapwings cautiously follow the slow moving tractor turn over the damp British soil.

Due to the large number of new species of birds one sees on a visit to another continent, relatively few incidents are worth repeating. Some impressions however, remain very fresh in our minds.

Primarily, our visit, like most Americans, was for sightseeing, and of course birding came in as purely a by-product if we had time and were somewhere in a good birding area. With the exception of Paris and Rome, we found birding quite good even in the big cities.

In Copenhagen, for example, a walk down to the docks was good for two or three new gulls. The local park produced several new and interesting finches, and of course on our endless bicycle ride from Copenhagen to Fredericksborg Castle (56 miles round trip) we passed through the beautiful Danish countryside and saw a host of new birds.

One thing about birding in Europe was the thrill of seeing birds we had known all our lives. I watched several birds that resembled our Horned Larks...and was thrilled to learn I was watching Shelly's immortal Skylark! Same with the Nightingale, and the Jackdaw recalled medieval times--especially those living in the old cathedrals and chateau in southern France.

Probably the bird we saw most of all through Europe was the Magpie. It, and its close relatives, the Hooded Crow, Carrion Crow and Rook, were in almost every field we passed. Surprisingly, we noticed very few Starlings in Europe - especially in relation to what we used to consider a large Starling flight in the eastern U. S.

One birding highlight came in the small town of Innsbruck, in Austria. Mary and I were walking across a bridge over the Inn River when I heard a familiar call. Two brightly colored European Dippers were performing for us right under the bridge. And in this quaint Tyrolean village we met a real ornithological character - the Wagtail! This fellow is a cross between a Killdeer with St. Vitus dance and a Vic Tanny push-up artist. We saw three species of Wagtail in our wanderings through Bavaria, Austria, Italy, Spain and England, and never tired of watching their teeter-totter performance.

We spent a week in Spain in the little Costa Brava fishing village of Tossa de Mar, and on one sunny day saw almost every Tit that occurs in Europe. The rare Marmora's Warbler was a good find, along with some Sardinian Warblers.

(Continued on Page 27)

THE WESTERN TANAGER

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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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Joint with National Audubon Society in-
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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are all sometimes guilty of taking
 ourselves too seriously; I am aware that I
 myself certainly am; - I am referring, of
 course, particularly to our Audubon Soci-
 ety activities. Concerned as we are with
 conservation, it is perhaps hard not to
 do so, since conservation IS a serious
 business. However, the other aspect of
 our Society's activities, "...the study
 ...of birds and other wildlife....", cer-
 tainly need not be regarded as a serious
 matter.

Indeed, it seems to me that few, if
 any, human activities offer such abundant
 and lasting enjoyment. Nature study may
 be intellectual, esthetic or physical in
 its appeal, or it may be just an enjoy-
 able pastime; it can be any one or all of
 these to any one individual. It can pro-
 vide one with lifelong enjoyment, and it
 is something a family can enjoy together.

The amateur naturalist, of course,
 particularly the "bird watcher", is the
 butt of endless jokes. Is it possible
 that there is a tinge of envy behind this?
 Most people seem to have a desire to get
 closer to the world of nature, at least
 occasionally, as witness the millions who
 annually visit our national parks and
 other nature reserves. Few of these, how-
 ever, know enough to derive the enjoyment
 they might from these visits. At any
 rate one should not be discouraged from
 nature study by the fear of being laughed
 at; one should learn to join in the
 laughter at the bird-watcher jokes (and
 at oneself).

To some of you the above may seem
 trite, or worse, and to those I offer my
 apologies. These reflections are not in-
 tended to be profound; it occurred to me
 that there might be many who, like myself,
 need occasionally to remind themselves of
 some of these things.

A Very Happy New Year to you all,
 and may you all have your full share of
 enjoyment pursuing your favorite nature
 interests.

Robert E. Blackstone

EUROPEAN BIRDING - continued.

Our last stop in Europe was at Newhaven, in Sussex, a picturesque spot overlooking the English Channel. We stayed four days with friends on their 340-acre farm. Lapwings, Skylarks, European Robins (a pint-sized version of our familiar Thrush) were everywhere. Most impressive about England are its wild Swans. They are everywhere where water occurs. It is fascinating to go down to the harbor and watch the stevedors unloading the merchant ships while a host of swans and their grey cygnets sail gracefully about the harbor.

On the flight from Glasgow to New York I got to thinking about how many European accidentals occur in Eastern U. S. When I think that we took 12 hours, flew at 20,000 feet (above any weather disturbance), and took the shortest route over the ocean at 300 miles an hour, it seems incredible that we ever have any accidentals at all.

After spending six weeks, covering 15,000 miles, I had a real thrill from the fishing boat off Catalina watching an Arctic Tern fly by. Imagine this bird regularly flying more in one year than my wife and I did on our whole trip without a bit of help from American Express or Scandinavian Airlines!

CONSERVATION
By Otis Wade

After months and months of discouraging effort, endless postponements and disheartening setbacks, victory was finally realized by the proponents of the Tujunga Wash Wilderness Area project. On December 10 at a hearing before the Los Angeles City Council a permit was denied the gravel interests for rezoning this region. The wilderness and conservation groups have won out at long last and great credit is due all those who worked so hard and long to crown efforts with success. This Society was ably represented by Mary Hood. The next problem is acquisition of the land. This will require more time and more money, but it

will eventually be accomplished.

An establishment of a southern California Chapter of Nature Conservancy with its principal office in Los Angeles is now under way. Nature Conservancy, organized in 1946, is a national organization whose purpose is to preserve illustrative examples of natural environments, such as the Tujunga Wash, for example, as "Living museums of primeval America". All interested are cordially invited to attend the next meeting on January 8, 7:30 p.m., Los Angeles County Museum. Further details may be had from Mr. E. C. Bower, 2116 Layton St., Pasadena 7, Calif. The organization of a southern California chapter is nearly consummated.

In the Bakersfield area some 4400 acres of land comprising the projected Pixley Wildlife Refuge is being transferred to the jurisdiction of the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service. This will permit Fish and Wildlife officials to proceed with necessary studies preliminary to establishment of the facility. Meanwhile, land which will make up the Kern Wildlife Refuge is being acquired from private owners. This refuge is to be located in North Kern County in the Lost Hills region.

The Southern Sierran brings us information regarding that very worthy conservation organization, the California Roadside Council. The campaign on the part of CRC to promote adequate restriction of billboards along new major highways in California is proceeding energetically.

From El Paisano, publication of the Desert Protective Council, we learn of a survey being made of desert areas in southern California which may prove suitable for a series of desert parks within reach of the citizens of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. One question to be answered in connection with county parks in desert areas is whether such parks should be developed as typical city playground parks or as sanctuaries where the natural scene is preserved as far as possible. We trust the latter approach

will govern. The Desert Protective Council also takes a firm stand on the question of how best to preserve and protect Rainbow Bridge now that Glen Canyon is under construction. As this is a matter of considerable controversy the DPC has listened to many arguments and consulted with many of its members who are familiar with Rainbow Bridge National Monument and who are concerned with preserving its scenic grandeur. This organization is to be highly commended for its active opposition in matters concerning threats to desert security.

On occasion of the recent Sunday Field trip to the Chatsworth Reservoir there was considerable speculation as to the future status of the property and lake. We had a talk with Mr. Burton S. Grant, Chief Water Engineer of the Department of Water and Power, and have been advised that the area will remain as it is for at least the next five years. What happens in the future depends on the Feather River Project as to what point the water will be brought in to Los Angeles. The thinking now is that the dam will be raised and the size of the lake-reservoir - greatly increased. In the event that its use as a reservoir, however, should be discontinued, the Department of Parks and Recreation would be given the first opportunity to bid for use of the site. All rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, we are assured that the status quo as of this date will continue for five more years.

As thoroughly delightful - and comprehensive - a book as we've come on in some time is Joseph Wood Krutch's Grand Canyon. We wish we could quote at length his lucid statement on conservation - what it really means, what it honestly accomplished in the past, and how its critics, who are many and moneyed and valuable, may be answered. The whole story of the Grand Canyon is told for the layman and scientist alike from prehistoric times to the present. and he writes of the animals - the birds, the dinosaurs and even of the mules which daily carry tourists to the bottom, with great good humor and information. Get it from your library - or buy it for your own!

"Whoopers have Whooping Production," headilnes Conservation News, and good news it is. The nine young of 1958 exceed production in any one year since records were begun in 1939. Credit may go to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in their efforts to protect the Whooping Crane along its migration route. The Service also reports that aerial surveys this fall indicate that the U. S. Trumpeter Swan population now is some 763 birds!

"Let us remember, also that conservation does not stop with the natural resources, but that the principle of making the best use of all we have requires with equal or greater insistence that we shall stop the waste of human life in industry and prevent the waste of human welfare which flows from the unfair use of concentrated power and wealth in the hands of men whose eagerness for profits blinds them to the cost of what they do."

Theodore Roosevelt

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

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BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By Arnold Small

Coastwise, birding was exciting and unpredictable during late November and early December. After the brief cold snap of mid-November, temperatures returned to above normal in southern California and the precipitation during this time was less than 50% of normal. Heat and low humidity combined to make this period one of the hottest on record with critical fire danger prevailing all the while. As a consequence of this, forest fires took an ugly toll of watershed chaparral and wildlife in the course of the great Malibu fire (which charred more than 18,000 acres in the Santa Monica mountains) in late November. Other small fires raged near Calabasas and Newhall with smaller brush fires flaring up in San Diego County. Meteorologists offered little hope of relief from the drought as they predicted a fairly dry December with precipitation well below normal. The prospects for the rest of the winter are not too bright in this respect.

For reasons as yet unclear, ocean conditions conducive to concentrations of fish and waterbirds have been nothing less than phenomenal. Local waters teemed with tiny baitfish (anchovies and the newly returned California sardines) and these great schools attracted hordes of waterbirds. Almost anywhere along the coast from Newport to Oxnard one could find thousands upon thousands of gulls, terns, pelicans, cormorants, grebes, scoters, loons, and the like, feeding close behind the breakers as the baitfish rose to the surface. Bonaparte Gulls were very numerous and the White-winged Scoters (together with a small number of Common Scoters) could be found among the thousands of Surf Scoters. Jaegers could be seen anywhere these aggregations assembled. Small numbers of Elegant Terns were still to be found early in December.

Careful conning of these waters often rewarded the observer with flocks of White-bellied Shearwaters (mostly Pink-footed with lesser numbers of Manx)

feeding among the other birds. No explanation can yet be offered to account for the large numbers of northern seabirds also present in our waters this fall. Kittiwakes could be found among almost any sizeable flock of gulls and terns (several being seen just off the Malibu pier) and dozens of Fulmars were seen off Point Dume and Playa del Rey. As many as five dead Fulmars were found along the Playa del Rey beach November 26 (Ben King, Jr.). Three Forked-tailed Petrels were seen with numerous Fulmars off Point Dume November 22 and as many as 6 Ancient Murrelets were there at the same time. Numerous small alcids could be seen flying up and down the coast well offshore. A single Red-necked Grebe was at Redondo Beach in late November.

By far the most exciting bird find in years was the pair of Rock Sandpipers on the jetty at Ballona Creek November 25 (A. Small). This is the first known record for this species in southern California and only one other record exists for this species south of Humboldt Bay area in northern California. At best this species is at home in the Bering Sea area, the Aleutian Islands and on the Arctic tundra of Alaska from where it rarely strays. It is well able to remain in the arctic throughout the year and only small numbers venture south along the rocky coasts of Washington, Oregon and rarely California where it is at best an irregular winter visitant. It frequents the habitat sought by the Surfbirds and Black Turnstones and indeed the Playa del Rey birds might be looked for among them. These birds were seen by many birders as news of them travelled fast. At this writing, they were last seen on the jetty at Bellona Creek on December 6 and may still be there when you read this. Birders should plan to spend much of their time coastwise this winter as all indications point to a banner season.

The Brown Booby was still to be seen at Martinez Lake north of Yuma, Ariz. on November 29 (Herb and Olga Clarke). Landbirding likewise was good during this period although somewhat overshadowed by the seabird spectacle.

The Gray-headed Junco returned to the Clarke's feeders again, for the second year.

An effort is being made to facilitate the dissemination of rare-bird information to all those interested. The Rare-Bird Alert is being revised and brought up to date. If you are not included and would like to be in touch with things of this nature, please phone the editor of this column at VE 7-2272. Another possible solution now being considered will be to have Audubon House act as a clearing center for all information of this sort. If plans crystallize in this direction, notification will be made in The Tanager. As of now, please call this editor with information on Rare Aves.

The regular SUNDAY FIELD TRIP for November was held at Chatsworth Reservoir under the most ideal circumstances - balmy weather, an abundance of birds and a congenial group of 29 people in 15 cars.

Seventy-seven species were identified, featured by 5 White-tailed Kites, four clustered on two small trees and one hovering overhead. Other species seen were 3 different Grebes, 4 Herons, about 230 Canada Geese, 10 Ducks including a female Buffle-head, 4 Hawks, 7 Sandpipers and shore birds, hundreds of Mourning Doves, Gnat-catcher and 5 Woodpeckers. Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Audubon Warblers were constantly seen in the wooded areas as were Savannah Sparrows in the fields and brush. A small flock of Lark Sparrows and a Red-breasted Sapsucker entertained the group at lunch time.

Not the least of the ideal conditions was the cordial attitude of our hosts, Mr. & Mrs. Herschy, who live at the reservoir and who are devoted conservationists.

Reg Julian - Leader

In a recent issue of the Los Feliz Woman's Club "Newsette" appeared an interesting article about our headquarters in Plummer Park by our historian - Olive Alvey.

MENTAL BLINDNESS

From W. Scott Lewis's Nature Bulletin.

"We were watching a beautiful sunset one evening when there were a lot of people around. They were all talking and no one seemed to be looking. The colors changed as the sun sank so low that only the longer wave lengths of the spectrum could get through. It was a quiet evening. The birds had gone to bed and all nature seemed at peace. The only note of inharmony came from the voices of human beings. One man was telling about all the money he could make on a real estate deal, - his mind was so centered on his money that he looked right at the sunset without being conscious of its existence. A woman was complaining at great length about the poor food served where she ate. Her thoughts were so concentrated on her stomach that she was quite unconscious of the sunset. Wherever we go we see the same thing. People look at flowers without seeing them. The dimpling of the hills across the valley where we live is very beautiful when the sun goes down but cars rush along and no one gives a look.

We live in a beautiful world and if you have never learned to see that beauty you have lost some of the best things in life. Man has grown away from nature and become used to artificial things. Nature offers him peaceful beauty but he demands excitement. Shall we go and watch the full moon come up over the distant mountain? No, there is a Western on TV which will be more exciting.

What we call nature is the Great Spirit who created all things at work through the physical world. Through nature we draw closer to the Great Reality of the Universe. Surely those are blessed who have felt the peace and seen the beauty that is all about us waiting to be recognized.

Mrs. Mary Hood is in need of discarded nature magazines for a collection of pictures and articles she is assembling. Anyone having some to offer please phone her at HO 3-0974 or leave them on the porch at 138 So. Wilton Drive.

A BRIGHT AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

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 JANUARY 1959

January 8, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 10363 Calvin Ave.

January 10, SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Fern Dell. Meet at Museum at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch and binoculars.

Leader -- Ethel Craig.

January 13, TUESDAY EVENING MEETING at 8:00 p.m. sharp at West Hollywood Playground (between Santa Monica and Melrose on San Vicente) (Note: our January meeting only will be held at the West Hollywood Playground since Great Hall in Plummer Park is being refinished. Our February 10 meeting will again be held in Plummer Park.)

We have been fortunate in obtaining from the National Audubon Society two excellent films of interest to birders and conservationists - "Cloud over Ohio" - shows the destruction of forests and wildlife in the upper Mississippi Valley and the subsequent attempts by conservation agencies to reclaim and reforest the damaged areas. "The Gray Gull" photographed on the bird islands off the coast of England. A beautiful new film illustrating the wealth of seabird life as it exists on the primitive bird rocks of the North Atlantic.

Chairman -- Arnold Small.

January 15, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Fern Dell in Griffith Park. Meet at parking lot in Fern Dell - Western Ave. entrance at 9:30 a.m. Take Western Ave. bus and get off at Russell St. (2 blocks north of Hollywood Blvd.) Those in cars please look for birders who need a lift. The Fern Dell section offers much in birds, wildflowers and wild shrubs for us to enjoy. At 1:45 p.m. we will go to the Fern Dell Museum to see three films - The Living Bird, Colorful Birds and the Mystery of the Wild. No reservations and no charge.

Leader - Edna Burt, 10706-1/2 Budlong Ave., L. A. 44, PL 5-1044

January 22, THURSDAY MORNING MEETING at Long Hall in Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. at 10:00 a.m. This is to be a study of Sparrows by Mrs. Clara Weedmark who will conduct a symposium with the help of several members so get out your Peterson and look up sparrows so as to be able to follow the discussion. Mrs. Weedmark, a retired teacher, has been a student of ornithology for many years, studying with Dr. Loye Miller and Dr. Adele Grant.

Chairman -- Olive Alvey.

January 25, SUNDAY FIELD TRIP will be an ocean trip to observe wintering pelagic birds. The boat "The Emerald" will leave Joe Martin's Landing near the east end of 22nd St. in San Pedro at 6:00 a.m. This early departure we hope will enable us to go all the way to Santa Barbara Island. Liquid refreshments will be available on board ship but you must bring your own breakfast and/or lunch. Cost per person will be \$6.00. Please send money for your reservations as soon as possible to James W. Huffman, 2912 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach, Calif. FRontier 2-7124.

Leader -- Jim Huffman.