

Western Tanager



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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 26

December, 1959

Number 4

CALIFORNIA AUDUBON CAMP

by Patrick Bennett

(Continued)

The lodge area itself is in a pleasant locale. Belding ground squirrels chirp, bird-like, in the meadow right out in front across the lively little stream. A short stroll places one in the midst of their flower-strewn home. There wild-flowers of all types and colors bloom at your feet. Perhaps the most charming of all would be the little pink elephant's heads that blossom there in abundance. They look just like what their name implies, with broad ears and curled trunk all in proportion. On the steep hillside beyond the meadow, many trees have been removed to provide for ski runs but yet there remain separated groves untouched. Just behind the Lodge there stands a marvelous forest of firs with intermingled pines. The stream between the meadow and the Lodge is filled with willows and other water-loving plants, and if one looks closely one sees the scouring rushes, vigorous little survivors of the once great order of horsetail giants that helped make up the swampy forest of old, now preserved as vast coal beds.

The bird life is quite varied due to the varying habitats. As the instructor one day was explaining to us about the High Sierran sediments, found at a hillside spot near the camp, the remarkable beauty of a hermit thrush's song came tumbling repeatedly through the breezy air. Located not far from camp, this most beautiful of bird calls was heard often during our stay. Robins were all around and one kept herself busy on the front lawn hunting food for her nest at the corner of the lodge roof. Cassin's finches, pinker than lowland house finches, were the "sparrows" of the area. Beautiful Western Tanagers were often seen and heard. Oregon Junco's, Mountain Chickadees, Fox Sparrows, Wilson's and Audubon Warblers, Steller's Jays, Evening Grosbeaks, and White-Crowned Sparrows round out the list of the Lodge area's most common birds.

As for the other wildlife, besides the Belding Ground Squirrels, there were the Chickarees or Douglas Tree Squirrels and the fascinating Chipmunks, so often seen in the tree branches or heard chattering there. At night, the familiar California Toads could occasionally be found hopping about near the building. And then there were the mosquitoes, clouds of them, especially among the trees at dusk. Confident little insects that, once landed, were oblivious of an approaching hand as they probed for an opening. Repellent was a necessity of life and, by the way, was quite effective in discouraging their visits.

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 THE WESTERN Tanager

Free to members...Others \$1.50 annually
 Editor Emeritus.....George T. Hastings
 Editor.....Hubert H. Weiser
 3749 Shannon Road, L.A. 27....NO 4-2753

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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 by appointment. Open for members and
 guests before and after each meeting.

This is high country (7,000-8,000
 ft.) and the temperature ranges widely
 between night and day. Shirtsleeves
 may be fine at noon but by evening warm
 jackets are the thing to have. Then
 again between June and August, while
 the camp is open, the seasons may fluc-
 tuate from year to year. This year the
 first session, beginning in late June,
 was ideal. Last year snow still pre-
 vailed at the Lodge at this first ses-
 sion and scarcely a wildflower was to
 be found. Some years have frequent
 thunderstorms, other years have clear,
 warm weather. One year even had a
 light snowfall in August! Usually,
 however, the summers are quite satis-
 factory, according to the fine weather
 chart, kept there since the opening of
 the camp.

One of the more interesting of the
 daily trips was the visit to a pond.
 There we all waded and dipped and came
 up with an amazing assortment of fierce
 little beasts that only need magnifica-
 tion to star in a horror movie. These
 were all the larvae of aquatic insects,
 found in ponds everywhere. Long scimi-
 tar jaws and fierce dispositions well
 equip the little monsters for their
 "jungle" home, in which predation and
 cannibalism, too, are the ordinary
 thing.

Then there was the insect collect-
 ing trips with nets and all, during
 which every one was required to catch
 at least one bee and transfer it from
 net to jar! Every one succeeded, too,
 and not one case of bee-sting!

The all-day trip is a big feature of
 the second week of camp. Off to Reno
 and then south through the barren Nevada
 hills to Little Washoe Lake. A visit to
 the intriguing Steamboat Springs on the
 way, and then back home up the side of
 Mt. Rose and down again past Tahoe.

It was cottonwood time in Reno when
 we arrived and a real "snowstorm" of
 fluffy cottonwood seeds swirled con-
 stantly through the air, piling up in
 drifts in favorable places.

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At Steamboat Springs there were a number of cracks in the ground from whence foul-smelling sulphur steam continuously drifted out. You could stand above a crack and plainly hear the rumble of the boiling water below. The area was sterile and barren of plant life but yet there was a touch of beauty in the delicate sulphur "flowers" formed by the fume deposits.

Avocets were the feature at Little Washoe Lake. They were quite a sight with their upturned bills and elegant breeding plumage of black and white wings and reddish brown heads. Busily, they ran about feeding in a broad, shallow puddle.

Fine long-distance views were featured on the trip over the high mountains. First the Nevada ranges stretched away to eastward. On the west side, beautiful Tahoe, nestled down among the trees, provided a picture of great beauty.

The last day came and a hike up to the Crow's Nest, overlooking Sugar Bowl Valley and the summit of the Sierra, was a fitting climax to two great weeks. It featured a walk through the hemlocks, sporting new growth on their finely-needled branches. Along the path their classic small cones were generously scattered. Snow patches were an occasional delightful diversion along the way.

Finally, into the car and off for home again, off to the haze and noise and crowds of civilization and the familiar old songs of the mockingbird.

FISH IN THE SALTON SEA

By George T. Hastings

In a past issue of Outdoor California, published by the California Department of Fish and Game, is an article describing attempts to stock the Salton Sea with game fish. When in 1905 the Colorado River broke into the Salton Sea all the forms of living things found in the river were carried into

the sea, but nearly all of these fresh water forms disappeared soon after the river was confined in its channel and the Sea became salt due to evaporation which removed water but left the dissolved salts and minerals. For a time mullet, a salt water fish, were abundant, coming up the Colorado River and through irrigating canals, and a commercial fishery developed. After the Imperial Dam was built the entrance of mullet was blocked and they gradually disappeared from the Sea.

Since 1929 the Department of Fish and Game has been making efforts to establish game fish in the Sea. Early plantings of striped bass, salmon and other fish were unsuccessful but ghost shrimp, pile worms and mud suckers introduced as food for the bass have become established. Pile worms are now present in the Sea in billions and form a most important link in the food chain; in fact, without the worms the Salton Sea fish food chain would collapse. In 1950 corvina were introduced and became the first salt water fish to become successfully established. With other kinds of fish they were brought from the Gulf of California by tank trucks. The little gulf croaker, a bait-sized fish, also became established and provides food needed by the corvina. By the end of 1951 the Department had transplanted some 34,000 fish of thirty-five species from the Gulf, more corvina were transplanted and by 1956 over 2000 had been introduced. At that time they were found to be reproducing in the Sea and none have been introduced since. It is estimated that there are over 1,000,000 corvina of catchable size, four pounds or over, now in the Sea. Last year anglers began taking considerable numbers. In winter and spring the large fish are found in shallow water near the shore, at the beginning of summer they move into deeper water near the middle of the Sea. By August and continuing through September the bottom water becomes deficient in oxygen due to the decay of organic matter, as a result the pile worms and croakers in the deep water die

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in large numbers, though sufficient numbers survive to make an adequate supply for the larger fish. At this time the corvina return to the shallower water.

As more and more salts and mineral matter are carried into the Sea by excess irrigation and leach water, their concentration in the Sea becomes greater and the time may come when the water will be too salty for fish to live. But at present the fish are there in large numbers, there is no closed season, and the Salton Sea has become popular for anglers.

MIRIAM S. FADDIS AS I KNEW HER

By Alma Stultz

Miriam Faddis loved life, her birds, her poetry and her friends. She firmly believed that whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. All of us who were privileged to know her, found her zest for life contagious. She had a vast sense of humor and could hold an audience spellbound with her knowledge and her eloquence. One time she said, if anyone got up to leave while she was speaking, she would immediately stand on her head and at least startle them into sitting down again.

An illustration of her thoroughness in preparing a speech was a one hour talk on feathers which was of absorbing interest. This was prepared for a study class and because of its excellence was repeated at a State Convention. It was a revelation of what can be done on any subject with sufficient preparation. Miss Faddis would surround herself with books, even to the Oxford Dictionary, and check every statement for accuracy and informative value. Because of her training as a teacher of elocution and languages in the Los Angeles High School, public speaking was her long forte.

Sometime in her eighties she fell and broke her leg. The doctors said

she would never walk again, but they had not counted on her indomitable spirit, as she walked again without even a limp. She loved to tell about the old German neighbor who, greatly astonished, said "What, again, you walk the hill up!" Miss Faddis lived on a hilltop near Elysian Park, where her home commanded views of the distant ocean and the mountains. This she delighted to share with her friends. She was always ready at a minute's notice to take a trip to see the birds and her quick answer was invariably "delighted", and so were the people fortunate enough to have her companionship.

She was deeply interested in civic affairs and was very active in the Elysian Civic Heights Civic Club. Her knowledge and study of national politics and strong support of worthwhile developments in California made her a power in her community.

On her 100th birthday, June 3, 1959, Ex-Governor Goodwin Knight and his wife came to pay tribute to his former teacher. Miss Faddis numbered many other famous people in different fields among her former pupils. When she retired from school work she still continued as a teacher. Her brilliant mind became absorbed in the study of ornithology in its various phases, but chiefly it was her abiding interest and love for the birds that made her outstanding in that field. She was always helpful and contributed much knowledge to the study classes of the Los Angeles Audubon Society and the Southwest Bird Study Club, two organizations most dear to her heart.

On April 23, 1959 I had my last visit with Miss Faddis. It was evening and she had just retired, but she immediately sat up in bed and talked with animation about a number of things. She stated with conviction "Sister, I am now certain I will live to be one hundred" and she smiled and squeezed my hand.

She always had some famous passage from Shakespeare to recite for me, a poem or a verse from the Bible, as she knew I

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loved and expected to hear them. I am glad my last memory of Miriam Faddis was her reciting the 23rd Psalm and I am also glad she waved gaily and said "Good-night" instead of "Goodbye" as I departed.

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PLAN NOW for a HIGH SIERRA ADVENTURE in 1960. Bring a friend and attend the Audubon Camp of California. Five two-week sessions between June 19 and August 27. Descriptive information available through Audubon Camp, 2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley 4, California.

Seeking the unusual gift for the outdoor enthusiast? Send for SPECIAL gift lists from the Conservation Resource Center, 2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley 4, California. REMEMBER, any purchase helps support the wide conservation programs of the National Audubon Society.

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HOLIDAY SHOW! A feature of the Christmas party, December 3, will be a display of Holiday Decorations - wreaths, table arrangements, corsages, novelties, etc., a Share-Your-Ideas Exhibit. Bring one or more of your Christmas ideas to add to the show, and see what other members have made. Some materials found out-of-doors, such as cones and pods, will be used in some of the pieces, examples of Outdoor Handicraft.

OLIVE ALVEY, Chairman

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CONSERVATION

By Otis Wade

The First Session of the 86th Congress labored mightily but never got to the Wilderness Bill, in which all of us have so much interest. As a matter of fact, it hasn't even been voted on by committees in either house so, of course, it is held over until the Second Session.

Also to be acted upon next session is the bill to establish the huge Arctic Wildlife Range in Alaska - a mammoth project of far-reaching importance.

A long-overdue bill that did pass both houses and was signed into law was that to protect wild horses and burros from inhumane slaughter on public lands. Its provisions should be extended to prevent aerial hunting of coyotes and wolves also.

The official word from the Navy as regards the wholesale killing of albatrosses on Sand Island in the Midway Atoll is that Phase #2, as recommended by the Fish and Wildlife Service, is going to be given a fair try. This involves removing by bulldozing the vegetation along the sides of the runways and making the nesting areas flat. Experts feel that by removing the vegetation and sand dunes the updrafts of air upon which the birds depend for soaring will be eliminated. If this plan succeeds the Navy has given assurance that Phase #3, namely, the planned killing of many thousands of albatrosses, will be abandoned.

Consequently, the stand of the National Audubon Society is not to make further protests until such a time should Phase #2 prove unsuccessful.

Authored by Robert Porter Allen, Research Director of the National Audubon Society, the article in the November National Geographic, "Whooping Cranes Fight for Survival" details the struggle to preserve a bird as rare as the albatrosses are abundant. Frederick Kent Truslow contributes his usually fine photographs which in this instance are unquestionable the best pictures of the whooping crane ever taken. The pictures and the story of the effort it took to achieve success in photographing the birds on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge is indeed "an inspiration to the millions of Americans who believe that wildlife and our remaining wilderness areas such as Aransas have a vital place in our way of life, valuable beyond all price."

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BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
by Arnold Small

Long awaited relief from the prolonged drought during which Los Angeles recorded its fourth driest year (by the end of the weather-year-Sept. 30) in more than 50 years. The inevitable brush fires seemed to have been circumvented until the disastrous week of October 12, at which time the largest of the numerous fires in our area claimed almost 15,000 acres of invaluable watershed near Arroyo Seco and Big Tujunga Canyons in the western San Gabriel Mountains. Except for a few brisk days in late September, summer smog with Santa Ana winds prevailed throughout most of October bringing heat waves. During this time, coastal birding was inviting albeit somewhat dull. Small numbers of scoters (including a few Whitewings) were to be seen all along the coast. The southward flight of most ducks was sparse and delayed. Small flights of Pintails began moving through our area in early September. Reports received from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the reduced hunting bag-limit showed that duck and goose populations were at a low level due to the drought which extended into the duck-factory marshes of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana and North Dakota. Many Surf-birds and Black Turnstones had arrived at the Playa del Rey breakwater (part of which is now restricted to entry) by mid-September. Two each of Knot and Pectoral Sandpipers were at Malibu Lagoon through September. The Elegant Tern Flight was moderate and most birds had departed by mid-October. Six Black-legged Kittiwakes (which had probably spent the summer nearby) were seen almost daily at Malibu Lagoon through October. By this time they had assumed sub-adult plumage. The September field trip to the Lower Colorado River Valley near Yuma, Arizona yielded the omnipresent Brown Booby (on Martinez Lake), superb views of Ospreys, Least Bitterns, Rails, as well as a fine flight of hundreds of White Pelicans. Migrant Swallows by the hundreds of thousands, including all species of the west, blossomed in the trees at West Pond early in the morning. Other birds of more than usual interest were the Vermillion Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, and Wood Ibis. Our stop at the south end

of the Salton Sea early Sunday morning rewarded us with thousands of shore-birds and dozens of White-faced Ibis. Many dozens of Jaegers were seen pirating the Gulls, Terns and Pelicans feeding on baitfish at the Horseshoe Kelp early in October. A single Prairie Falcon plus 3 Lapland Longspurs were found by Reg. Denham on Carrizo Plain late in October but no Small Cranes were seen.

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At the Tuesday Evening Meeting of the 13th of October, a small but very interested audience heard David Duval's talk on "Turtles and Tortoises". Mr. Duval showed himself to be a master of his subject. His talk was well illustrated with color slides and he had an array of interesting exhibits, including several live specimens. His audience obviously found the talk extremely interesting, as evidenced by the lively question-and-answer session which followed it.

Ernest Willoughby was the speaker at the Evening Meeting of the 10th of November, which was devoted to "Birds of the Southern California Coast and How to Know Them", Mr. Willoughby prefaced his talk by reviewing the history of the shorebirds, and gulls and terns in relation to man before launching into the main part of his talk, which was devoted to points of identification of the species likely to be found along our coast in the Winter. He had 40 study skins which he used to point out field marks. Several in the audience were seen busily taking notes.

Proceedings at this latter meeting were further enlivened by the presence of Mr. John Scheiner, a professional dog handler, with part of his 'family', a cat, a huge Irish wolfhound and a young red-tailed hawk. He told how he had obtained the hawk, very much the worse for wear, from some children and how he had nursed it back to health.

Bob Blackstone

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President: Mr. James W. Huffman 2912 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach
Registrar of Members: Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer 355 Elm St., Burbank

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER, 1959

- December 3 COME TO THE CHRISTMAS PARTY! December 3, 1 to 4 o'clock, Plummer Park, Great Hall. The annual Christmas party given by Los Angeles Audubon Society for its members and friends. There will be musical entertainment and the singing of Christmas carols. Coffee and cake will be served by the program committee. Remember to bring gifts of food for the birds of Audubon House. Audubon Society publications of books and other materials, useful and beautiful gifts for your friends will be on sale.
- December 5-6 SATURDAY FIELD TRIP, postponed from November 21-22, will be to Buena Vista Lake, Taft and Carrizo Plain. This trip is excellent for Sandhill Cranes, Golden Eagles, Waterfowl, LeConte's Thrasher, White Pelicans and Black Brant. Group will meet at 8:00 a.m. Saturday, December 5, at the junction of California State Highway 166, 33 and U. S. 399 at Maricopa. Although there will be no leader, those who desire may go on to Morro Bay State Park, where there are camping facilities and motels nearby. Leader: Jim Huffman, FR 2-7124.
- December 8 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - 8:00 p.m. in Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. The program feature will be "Birding in the Rockies and Western Plains" presented jointly by Herb Clarke and Arnold Small. Their talk will be illustrated by color slides in a trip in search of birds. Light refreshments will be served in celebration of the season. Chairman: Robert E. Blackstone.
- December 10 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING.
- December 12 SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Hansen Dam Lake. Meet at 7:00 a.m. sharp. Go north on San Fernando Road or Glen Oaks Blvd. Turn right on Osborne and turn into the gate at Hansen Dam; look for Audubon Society sign. Birding between 7 and 9. Stoves available for preparing breakfast. Bring necessary food. Leaders: Russ & Marian Wilson, PO 1-7635.
- December 17 THURSDAY FIELD TRIP cancelled on account of holiday season.
- December 27 Christmas Bird Count. Details furnished at Tuesday Evening Meeting December 8.