

T H E

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

PLUMMER PARK

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD.

LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

# Western Tanager



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## ROCKY MOUNTAINS AND BEYOND

By Herb Clarke

The idea of a birding trip through the Rocky Mountains had been a topic of conversation off and on for several years. This region, along with the western edge of the Great Plains was one of the few areas left in the United States where most new birds for us could be seen in the limited time that was available. So one evening my wife, Olga, Mimi and Arnold Small and I decided to make the long-discussed trip in the last two weeks of August, 1960. This is not the best time of year for such an expedition but, for various reasons, this was the only time all four of us would be free to go together.

After loading the station wagon with clothes, food, camping needs and last but not least, photographic equipment, we left about 3:00 P.M. Friday, August 14th, from Glendale. We were to drive all night only this one time as we felt we could not sleep anyway because of excited anticipation.

The bright lights of Las Vegas welcomed us as we drove northeastward, but resisting temptation we stopped only for gas. After an uneventful night we arrived at dawn in Salt Lake City. Here we breakfasted, took a few pictures and continued on. Our route took us across the southeast corner of Idaho into Wyoming and on to Jackson, where we spent our first night. We arrived fairly early so, after dinner, we walked about a block from our motel to the National Elk Refuge at the edge of town. To our delight we managed to spot a Trumpeter Swan adult and two young. So our first full day ended with a high note and whetted our appetites for the trip ahead.

Starting at dawn, which was to become standard operating procedure, we drove north through Grand Teton National Park. The spectacular scenery made wonderful subjects for our hard-working cameras. We drove on into Yellowstone National Park and camped at Old Faithful Campground. We were awakened that night by a bear raiding a garbage can. Thinking little of it we quickly went back to sleep. The next day nearby campers told us a Grizzly Bear had made the noise. This was one animal we wanted to see but never got another chance on the entire trip. All day we toured the park, taking many pictures of the geysers, canyons, and other wonderful scenery.

That night we stayed at Tower Falls Campground, in the northern part of the Park. Again we were disturbed by what we thought was a huge bear trying to get into, or under the car. The wagon was shaking violently, but I could see nothing with the flashlight. Someone nearby yelled "earthquake." I was relieved on hearing this and being from Southern California, felt that an earthquake was much to be preferred to fighting off a bear. None of us realized at the time how much damage

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### 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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cludes subscription to Audubon Magazine.  
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was done, although we felt after-shocks  
throughout the night. It seemed as though  
the weather was really plotting against  
us, for from then on we ran into heavy  
rains, hail, snow and even a tornado.

Anyway, the next day we were deter-  
mined not to let even an earthquake stop  
us, and continuing on schedule, we took  
a side trip to the Bear Tooth Pass Coun-  
try just outside the northeast entrance  
of the park. Here the road ascends to an  
altitude of over 10,000 feet through  
some of the most ruggedly beautiful coun-  
try in the Rockies. Black Rosy Finches  
were our goal and with good fortune we  
had them several times.

We drove west, back across the  
northern portion of Yellowstone and turned  
north toward Glacier National Park,  
Heavy rain began falling and this rain  
was to plague us for the next four or  
five days. Fortunately the earthquake  
had not caused any damage anywhere along  
our route and so we were not delayed any  
time, although some sections of the Park  
we had visited the day before had been  
closed off to visitors.

Even with the heavy rains, the Mon-  
tana countryside was very beautiful.  
Golden wheatfields stretched for miles  
along both sides of the highway. We spent  
the night in Helena and the next after-  
noon arrived at Glacier and were fortu-  
nate in getting one of the last cabins  
available. Glacier National Park is said  
to have some of the most breath-taking  
mountain scenery in the world but all we  
got were tempting glimpses of some of the  
views when the clouds parted occasional-  
ly. Promises to ourselves were made that  
some day we would come back and see what  
the Park was really like. Gritting our  
teeth, we started searching for birds.  
Birding was not entirely unrewarding as  
we added Boreal Chickadees to our grow-  
ing list. The highlight was when a young  
college student who had been studying  
the White-tailed Ptarmigan managed to  
show us an adult female and young. This  
certainly made the cold rain and sleet  
a lot more endurable.

(To be continued)

BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
by Arnold Small

The winter season commenced with an unexpected fury as a succession of storms swept through Southern California during January and February bringing heavy snowfalls to the mountains and more than 5 inches of rain to the lowlands. Although this still left the seasonal totals some 3 inches below normal, it was more than twice the total for last year at the same time. The Christmas Census was not as successful as in past years due to primarily two factors. The mildness and lateness of the winter season did not stimulate enough winter visitors to move into our area. This was especially true of the seabirds and the waterfowl. The draining and construction of Marina del Rey subtracted from the worthwhileness of that area. In addition, many of our former "regulars" were away from Los Angeles during the census and hence some areas were lightly surveyed or not censused at all. The Rock Sandpiper probably was not at Playa del Rey during the census, but a single bird was found there by Ernest Willoughby early in January. Phenomenal was the flight of Common Scoters during the winter and during one morning in early January, I counted more than 250 between Santa Monica and Point Mugu. Numbers of Glaucous-winged and Mew Gulls were far below normal. Loons were scarce to early January and thereafter Arctic and Red-throated Loons (but not Common Loons) were abundant in local waters. As many as 4 Red Phalaropes were at Playa del Rey Dec. 27 (Dale A. Zimmerman). Upper Newport Bay attracted more than 30,000 waterfowl (including 200+ Canada Geese and more than 12,000 each of Widgeon and Pintail). Waterfowl at the Salton Sea were down somewhat and fortunate were those who found the Sandhill Cranes on the Carrizo Plain, although more than 1500 were reported roosting in the middle of Soda Lake in late January. After the violent storms of January, Robins, and especially Cedar Waxwings, descended upon the lowlands in droves. Some Bohemian Waxwings were reported among the larger flocks of Cedar Waxwings (Ruth McCone) on Mt. Washington

It would be well to carefully survey all flocks of waxwings. Who can explain the 3 Barn Swallows at Pt. Mugu among a flight of more than 5,000 White-throated Swifts in early January? Or how can one account for the sudden appearance on Mt. Washington in early February of a single Black-billed Magpie which was attracted to a cage in which another Black-billed Magpie (recently trapped in the San Fernando Valley) was being kept? It is with regret that I must report on the great changes rendered in the Imperial Valley over past few years. The rising of the Salton Sea (due to the accumulation of irrigation water) and the resulting wave action has inundated or eroded away all but one remnant of the sandy nesting islands which formerly had supported colonies of Gull-billed and Caspian Terns, Laughing Gulls, White Pelicans, and the like. In fact, it is a virtual certainty that the only known nesting colony of Laughing Gulls in California is no longer extant. The White-faced Ibis no longer nest on the delta of the New River and almost no Sandhill Cranes winter in the Valley today. Numbers of Fulvous Tree-ducks were reduced from many hundreds breeding to but a few dozens, due to clearing of the marshes at Ramer Lake. Today, few Vermillion Flycatchers are to be found in the Valley. The White Pelicans were not known to nest there in 1959 and the colonies of Great Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets were small. Wood Ibis formerly appeared at the south end of the Salton Sea in the hundreds in late summer, but today only a few may venture to remain (or even arrive!!). Due to the drowning and clearing of the large cottonwoods the Harris Hawks (formerly a regular summer resident in small numbers) have not been seen in the Imperial Valley for more than 6 years - they are also disappearing from the lower Colorado River Valley. Clearing of the Screwbean Mesquite and the Atriplex from the dikes along the irrigation canals and from the farm lands has eliminated cover and habitat for a number of indigenous species. Formerly such species as Crissal Thrashers, Abert's Towhees, Cactus-wrens,

Phainopeplas, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, Gila Woodpeckers; Ladder-backed Woodpeckers and Gambel's Quail could be seen in large numbers and with regularity. Now they are scarce. For the Mourning Doves, however, all of this has been fortuitous, as literally swarms of doves can be seen everywhere. Even the little Ground Doves have prospered on the abundance of grain. Likewise, the ubiquitous blackbirds (now including the Starling) have found conditions to their liking, and swarm around the cattle pens. For those readers who can remember the Imperial Valley of but a few years ago, this will come as a startling revelation.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### JOSEPHINE V. WILLIS

Mrs. Fred Willis, a long-time member of L. A. Audubon, passed away February 10, at the age of 85. Born August 6, 1874, in Peru, Illinois, she died in Sun Valley, California, at the home of her devoted friend, Mrs. Marie Tibbal. Mrs. Willis, who spent much time, skill and love in nursing sick birds back to health, will be missed by her many friends, human and feathered.

Bessie Pope

#### THE CONDOR SANCTUARY

We sincerely appreciated the generous response last year received to our appeal for funds from members to help support the Sespe Wildlife Preserve. We hope the response this spring will be equally or even more generous. A contribution card and self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Marion Wilson

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

According to our constitution the Nominating Committee, which this year is composed of Mr. Robert Blackstone, Mr. Robert Sandmeyer and Mr. Arnold Small, will present the slate of candidates for elective offices at all meetings in April. Election will take place at the first regular meeting in May. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor at any meeting in April, provided such nominations are supported by written petitions signed by at least 15 members.

#### REPORTS ON TRIPS

##### 3rd Thursday Field Trip

18 members of the L. A. Audubon Society were on hand when the special bus, arranged for by Edna Burt, drove up to the Biltmore Hotel on Feb. 18 to take us to the Arboretum in Arcadia and Descanso Gardens in La Canada.

On the Arboretum tram trip, we saw many interesting plants, the most unusual of which were the silk floss tree, a native of Brazil, which bears large, pink flowers and has an oddly shaped trunk with thorny formations on its green bark, a desert pea from Australia, ablaze with brilliant red blossoms; and a most charming dwarf acacia tree, only a few feet high.

There were many peafowl about and the peacocks presented a most colorful and picturesque sight in their courting dances. At one time, four birds were performing within a small area. The huge fans of jewel-like feathers, 5 or 6 feet or more in diameter, make a spectacular sight! One strikingly beautiful cock was found on the other side of the lagoon with a flock of ducks. The guide told us they called him their "Psychopathic Peacock", because he was hatched by a duck and therefore considered himself to be one.

#### ANNUAL DINNER

The date of the Annual Dinner is Tuesday, June 7. The film of the Machris Expedition to India will be shown. Further details will be announced in the May Tanager.

We went on to Descanso Gardens to eat our lunches. Thousands of camellias, upwards of 600 varieties, were in bloom. Azaleas, daffodils, primroses, and other spring flowers were out. The rose gardens were beginning to show green and red foliage.

Birds were not forgotten at this feast of flowers, however, and a total of 30 species were seen, as follows: Brewer blackbirds, Bush-tit, Coot, Crow, Chinese Dove, Mourning Dove, Baldpate, Mallard, Redhead and Ruddy Ducks, House Finch, Red-shafted Flicker, Canada Goose, Lesser Gold Finch, Red-bellied Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Anna Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Scrub Jay, Oregon Junco, Killdeer, Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Plain Titmouse, Hermit Thrush, Brown Towhee, Hutton's Vireo Robin and Audubon's Warbler. GEP

#### Lincoln's Birthday Trip

The field trip to the Imperial Valley over the Lincoln's Birthday week-end was very pleasant and extremely interesting. 15 birders met at Finney Lake and spent Saturday covering the Ramer Lake area and the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge. We were very fortunate in having as our guest leader Bill Anderson of the California Dept. of Fish & Game. Bill is a fine field ornithologist and probably knows more about finding birds in the Imperial Valley than anyone else. Consequently our trip was a real success. Of particular interest was an immature Bald Eagle which soared over the party. Green-winged Teal were numerous and we were able to see them, as well as Cinnamon Teal and Pintails, close up as Bill Anderson banded them. White Pelicans were seen and Canada and Snow Geese were present in large numbers. White-fronted Geese were seen by some of the birders and Ross' Geese were reported by Jim Huffman and Arnold Small. At one point a diligent search turned up two Lesser Yellowlegs. Although most of the birding was done on Saturday and some people were present for only the one day, others spent 2 or 3 days in the area. This is a trip that is well worth repeating.

Bill Lehmann

Dodds and Peebles on Double Bill

Extraordinary birds seen on birding trips in Southern Florida was the subject of Mrs. Paul Dodds' talk at the Thursday morning, Feb. 25, meeting at Plummer Park. She described, with exactly the right combination of tact and enthusiasm, species rarely, if ever, found in California, such as the Man O'War Bird, Reddish Egret, Cattle Egret, Little Blue Heron, Great White Heron, Purple Gallinule and the amazing Anhinga.

Mr. John Peebles, L. A. Recreational Director, as well as director of Fern Dell Museum, presented a fine collection of colored slides of our numerous city parks, playgrounds and other recreational areas. Some are located in mountains at considerable distance from Los Angeles city limits and their facilities such as cabins may be limited. One should make reservations for these well in advance, he said. Both talks were surely appreciated.

Dorothy Lilly

#### Sunday, February 28, Trip

Unfortunately, the Pelagic Trip which was scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 28, had to be cancelled, because not enough people had signed up. Considering the way the weather turned out, it may have been just as well.

Some of us who had been planning to go had a somewhat impromptu trip to Malibu Lagoon and Tapia Park, and did see a few interesting birds before we were rained out. Over 170 Red-throated Loons were counted off shore as were over 40 Red-breasted Mergansers. One Black Brant was all by itself at Malibu Lagoon. Also of interest were one adult Glaucus-winged Gull, two Herring Gulls, four New Gulls and three Bonaparte's Gulls.

Bill Lehmann

#### Tuesday Evening Meeting - March 8

The evening's program was devoted to conservation themes: National Wildlife Week, March 20-26, "Water - Key to Survival" and California Conservation

Week, March 7-14, "Californians' Year of Decision." Two color films were shown: MOUNTAIN WATER, illustrating the importance of watershed and how to preserve it, and TWO YOSEMITES, a Sierra Club film showing one example of past exploitation of our National Parks as a warning for the future. The program was concluded with the showing of color slides depicting several wild areas in Southern California.

Bob Blackstone

#### SATURDAY, MARCH 12th FIELD TRIP

A group of 15 gathered at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens in Claremont for a walk which brought a good list of some 36 species observed and was notable for producing a number of Myrtle Warblers. In the early afternoon a small group went up San Dimas Canyon to the lake and observed 9 or so additional species. These have been indicated with an \*.

Pintail Duck\*, Cinnamon Teal\*, Canvas-back\*, Lesser Scaup Duck\*, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk\*, Kestrel, California Quail, Killdeer, Domestic Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Chinese Spotted Dove\*, White-throated Swift\*, Costa, Anna, Rufous and Allen Hummingbirds, Red-shafted Flicker, Acorn Woodpecker\*, Scrub Jay, Crow, Plain Titmouse, Bush-tit, Wren-tit, Bewick Wren, Mockingbird, California Thrasher, Western Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Loggerhead Shrike\*, Orange-crowned Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Audubon Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Brewer Blackbird, House Finch, Dark-backed Goldfinch, Spotted Towhee, Brown Towhee, Oregon Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.

Otis Wade

#### CONSERVATION

By Otis Wade

The Desert Protective Council proposes that a portion of the San Jacinto Santa Rosa Mountain Range of Southern California be set aside as a reserve for the protection of native animals and plants. The area would extend from the San Gorgonio Pass on the North to the Borrego Badlands on the south, rising from the floor of the desert to an elevation of

over 10,000 feet. This is one of the most varied and interesting mountain masses in the world. A great part of the area is already posted against hunting - Mount San Jacinto State Park, the University of California Desert Research Center, the Santa Rosa Indian Reservation, State Game Refuge 4-D and much privately owned land. For the benefit of sportsmen, however, the boundaries of the planned Reserve would exclude certain hunting areas not essential to the ecological integrity of the Reserve. This idea of protecting and fostering all plant and animal life of a vast area not contained within a state or national park is a new and bold concept. A real wildlife sanctuary in the San Jacinto-Santa Rosa Mountains may be too idealistic to be realized, the Council observes, but with an all-out effort on the part of interested organizations and individuals is not beyond hope of realization. The writing of individual letters to Assemblymen and State Senators endorsing the Reserve and urging their support in passing whatever legislation may be necessary to activate it will greatly assist in making this proposed Nature Reserve an actuality. For further information, write The Desert Protective Council, Inc. P.O. Box 716, Banning, Cal.

Proponents of the Palm Springs Tramway have requested the State Park Commission to reactivate their contract for the building of the tramway. The whole matter now rests on the shoulders of De Witt Nelson, Director of the Department of Natural Resources. If he follows the recommendations of the staff of the Division of Beaches and Parks and draws a contract which limits the Winter Park Authority to a right-of-way for the tramway and very reasonable terminal facilities he will be taking action that will be a sort of compromise not too difficult for the majority of conservationists to swallow. It is, therefore, urged that all interested in preserving the wilderness aspects of the San Jacinto high country write at once to Governor Edmund G. Brown urging that the Winter Park Authority be limited to terminal facilities at the top of the tramway to five acres or less.

T H E

W E S T E R N T A N A G E R

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, SEPTEMBER TO MAY  
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THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE  
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

President: Mr. James W. Huffman  
Registrar of Members: Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer

2912 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach  
355 Elm St., Burbank

CALENDAR FOR APRIL, 1960

April 7 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

April 9 SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary in Modjeska Canyon. Group will meet at 8:00 A. M. at entrance to Irvine Park. To get to Irvine Park go south on Santa Ana Freeway to Orange turnoff. Turn east and take Chapman Ave. through city of Orange. Continue on Chapman Ave. a few miles east of Orange to Irvine Park.

Leader - Betty Meyerfeld - PL 6-8740

April 12 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - 8:00 P.M. sharp in Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. MR. WARREN FLOCK will speak on "OUR SCENIC AND WILD AREAS - CAN WE SAVE THEM?" Illustrated with superb color slides showing our natural resources and plant communities and featuring many beautiful wildflower studies closeup.

Bob Blackstone, Chairman

April 21 THURSDAY FIELD TRIP TO SOLEDAD CAMP GROUNDS and BLUM RANCH. Bus will leave Grand Ave. entrance to Biltmore Hotel between 5th & 6th Sts. at 8:30 A.M. sharp. Fare \$3.00. Please have exact amount. We will go up Soledad Canyon through Acton to Blum Ranch. Cultivated lilacs here and orchard blossoms. Honey for sale. Make reservations during week before the trip.-

Leader - Edna Burt - PL 5-1044

April 23-4 FIELD TRIP TO THE DESERT - We will leave Sheppard's Restaurant at White Water Junction at 8:00 A.M. Saturday, April 23. This is about 2.3 miles past the Palm Springs turnoff on Highway 60-70. We will bird White Water Canyon, Thousand Palms Oasis and Don Bleitz's Ranch near Coachella. Some of us will camp at Finney Lake near the State Game Refuge near Calipatria on Saturday night. Good camp ground but no water supply. Excellent motels available in Brawley. Very early Sunday morning we will bird Ramer Lake and the south end of Salton Sea. For more information phone CHurchill 9-5537 (Herb Clarke) or VErmont 7-2272 (Arnold Small).

April 28 THURSDAY MORNING MEETING, Plummer Park, Long Hall, 10 to 12 o'clock. Mrs. Arthur Koehler will compare our birds with their counterparts of the Old World. There will be a collection of Old World Bird Stamps on display. Miss Leta Adams will review a book, the title to be announced. Plans will be made for the Christmas Bazaar. Bring lunch.

Olive Alvey, Chairman