

T H E
Western Tanager



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THE CALIFORNIA QUAIL

In Spring the valley quail of California *LOPHORTYX CALIFORNIA* have paired and are now ready for raising their young. These birds are gregarious except after mating and raising their young.

There is little rivalry at this season and what little occurs is confined to a few pecks and some chasing on the part of the males. Not much time is taken in building a nest, usually a depression in the ground, lined with grasses and under a bush. I have never seen more than 16 eggs in a nest. They are creamy white spotted with light golden brown and arranged pointed ends down thus making them very compact in the nest. Not more than 12 eggs usually hatch, the remaining ones are fertile but were laid after incubation began. This means the mother bird becomes impatient or frightened and leaves the nest before incubation is complete. All the little chicks leave the nest at the same time. They are downy, striped, and are not blind when hatched. The little ones are dry enough to run about soon after leaving their shells.

The nesting period of California quail is from April to July which is after heavy rains so that the newly hatched young are exempt from what is usually the greatest threat to young birds. While adults often range over areas of considerable distance from water they must make their nests near enough water so that the young can quickly reach it, especially when the weather is hot, or they will perish.

In the Fall the coveys unite and may then number several hundred where suitable food and water are available. The population of Southern California is increasing so rapidly that bird population is being pushed farther back and suitable birding areas are becoming increasingly difficult to locate.

I live in a residential area in the City of Los Angeles adjoining a large park. Adjacent to my home is a small, undeveloped canyon, which is the habitat of a covey of quail numbering about 50. This canyon makes a well defined territory for both nesting and feeding for quail. This covey is fed daily by scattering at least a quart of finely cracked corn on the driveway. This affords an excellent opportunity for extended observation. I buy the corn in 100 pound sacks and find it less expensive than mixed small grains.

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."

MEMBERSHIP

Joint with National Audubon Society in-
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 nesday, Thursday and Saturday. Groups
 by appointment. Open for members and
 guests before and after each meeting.

(Continued from 1st page)

Twenty feet is about as close as
 one can get to a covey. Quail are much
 more susceptible to motion than to
 noise, possibly due to close proximity
 to a large city.

Quail are extremely alert and ac-
 tive. Whenever disturbed all of them
 will either run for shelter on strong
 legs or rise abruptly on their short
 rounded wings, scattering in all direc-
 tions. They usually fly a little dis-
 tance above the chaparral then alight
 either on the ground or with feet
 drawn up ready to grasp a branch.

Wardens have noted that quail hunt-
 ing is becoming more difficult, that
 the birds are scattered, and wherever
 there are coveys they run in heavy
 brush areas. The birds are wild and
 hard to find when shot, which helps
 lead to the conclusion that the Cali-
 fornia quail is going to be our State
 bird for a long time to come.

Edward P. Terry

HOOTS, COOTS & GALLINULES

On October 31 the White-faced Glos-
 sy Ibis was still at Malibu Lagoon.
 Also present were two Black Brants, and
 in the ocean, a Red-throated Loon.

The male Wood Duck which has been
 wintering at Johnson Lake in Pasadena
 for the past two years, is back again,
 this time with a mate. Johnson Lake is
 a small, privately-owned lake one block
 east of Ave. 64 on Laguna. It is west
 of the Arroyo Seco. An immature Green
 Heron was seen there recently, also.

Mae Wilson

Good Neighbors

Committees have been formed by
 Canada and the U.S. to establish a
 common policy for the protection of the
 wilderness area in Northern Minnesota
 and Western Ontario. Steps leading to
 this were first taken by Theodore Roose-
 velt in 1909. Here lie 10,000,000
 acres of lakes, rivers and forests.

"Avocet" for October

ALLEN HUMMINGBIRDS

By Dorothy L. Lilly

(Continued from last month)

I could see no difference in the appearance of the two young. What reason could she have for preferring, as she did, to spend most of her time with the one in the Guava? Finally, the lonesome one in the Pine disobediently came over. The mother was plainly angry. She tapped it with her bill, sideways. Then she flew in a tight circle over its head. Hypnotized with fear, perhaps, it followed her back to the Pine. Next day it tried again and gradually the mother became accustomed to her baby's new personality.

Feedings continued until July 11, by which time the youngsters had been on many short foraging trips. Two days later they departed for that season.

On examination of the two nests, the one from the Cypress appeared to be a two storied affair. It is my guess that the under layer was her first nest of the season and that for some unusual reason she put another layer on top for her third.

The following year, 1956, on approximately the same schedule, but always a week later by the calendar, a female Allen used my yard with equally satisfactory results. Her behavior was so similar that it is hard not to think it was the same female both years. Possibly the 1956 female was one of the young of the year before, and therefore thoroughly familiar with the area.

I was watching for the first arrival and on February 28 sighted a female Allen starting a nest in a Toyon shrub at the west end of the previous year's nursery lawn area. The redwood grape-stake fence back of it gave good wind and color protection, but three feet, eight inches above ground level seemed perilously low. Late on March 7, the first white egg was laid; second, March 9. They hatched on March 24

and the new crop of hummers ate, slept and grew. The mother's brooding time, between feedings, constant at first, gradually lessened until the twelfth day after hatching, at which time all brooding ceased.

That day I happened on two occasions to see her with a male making an exploration around a vine over a northeast window of the house. A few days later she began constructing a nest in that location, ten feet above ground. It was possible for me to stand at the corner of the house and see her feed the young, rest on the Guava a minute, then slip around to the new nest to work.

The two young would be ready to leave their nest in the Toyon shrub in a couple of days. The new nest was nearing completion when calamity struck. Something, evidence pointed to a Scrub Jay, pulled the whole interior out of the new nest and made off with it. I noticed that all the birds in the vicinity seemed excited. That site was obviously too exposed. There was not time enough to find one more suitable and then rebuild. The mother fed her offspring but did no other work. On April 18, the day after her young left the nest, she fed them, then went over to their empty nest, looked at it a minute and slipped into it. In ten minutes she was off. I looked, She had laid an egg. Next day another, and she was right back into the old routine. And her friends had another forty days to worry because that nest was still within reach of a high jumping cat.

All went well, however, with a third nest finished in time for the fifth and sixth eggs of 1956. This one hung a sensible six feet above ground in the Cryptomeria, not very far from the nest that had been torn apart. These were successfully reared, and all departed for a land of warmer winters.

(To be continued)

BIRDING IN TEXAS

By Arnold Small

(Continued from last month)

The waters of the Gulf swarmed with Portugese Men-o'-War and porpoises but the combination of 105° and 96% humidity made us flee for the nearest air-conditioned ice cream parlor.

The sun was already down when we headed east for a brief stop at Bentsen State Park (14 miles east of Pharr) for a look at the Elf Owl only just now returning as a resident bird to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This park with its campgrounds is a wonderful birding area and much like the Santa Ana, but we were determined to use the night to make the long drive to Del Rio. There we found another Green Kingfisher along San Felipe Creek, which flows through a pretty golf course. The daylight drive on U. S. 90 to Marathon was made in hopes of seeing the ultra-rare Aplomado Falcon. Just ten years before we had seen a pair of these exotic falcons between Valentine and Marfa, but this time we were not in luck. In fact, today there is no certain place in this country where one may expect to see this bird, with the possible exception of certain wild areas in Big Bend National Park.

With this thought in mind, well fortified with ice, gasoline and fruit juices and oblivious of the heat, we turned the big station wagon south at Marathon and pointed it toward the Chisos Mountains in Big Bend National Park, some hundred miles away. The temperature rose but so did our spirits as we thought of the unexplored country (to us) that lay ahead. Air temperature climbed to 115° by the time we reached park headquarters at Panther Junction to find a message from our friends who had been there just the day before. We had, it seemed, sped past each other just west of Del Rio, but armed with their information, we found the Lucifer Hummingbirds easily. A brief visit to Boquillas Canyon on the Rio Grande was all we could endure, for in

this furnace where our thermometer could no longer register, the Zone-tailed Hawks, Vermilion Flycatchers and even the prospect of a Varied Bunting could not induce us to remain. With the temperature gauge on the dashboard close to boiling point, we topped out in Panther Pass of the Chisos and made a grateful descent into the Basin, a natural amphitheater set in the heart of the Chisos at a cool 5400 feet.

Before the sun had crested Mt. Emory the following morning we were well along the six mile trail to Boot Springs. Horses could be rented but we felt sure of more birds by walking. The switch-backed trail led us to the rim of the Basin and over to the Rio Grande side. Black-chinned and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds were at every stately agave, then in superb bloom. The Spring, named for an odd, boot-shaped rock, was the home of one of America's rarest birds, the Colima Warbler, for it is only here, north of Mexico, that one may encounter this species. However, the only birds to greet us at Boot Spring were the Black-crested Titmice and a lone Blue-throated Hummingbird. Continuing along the trail toward the South Rim we stopped in a likely ravine and acting on the advice of our friends of the previous day's visit, we hooted like the Pygmy Owl. Within minutes we were surrounded by scolding Rock Wrens, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Painted Redstarts, Black-eared Bush-tits, and finally a lovely pair of Colima Warblers. Actually we had heard several en route but they were singing their Chipping Sparrow-like songs from a considerable distance. The hike back to the Basin was enlivened by a few more Colimas and another Lucifer Hummingbird.

Later that day we attempted to visit beautiful Santa Elena Canyon but decided against it when confronted by 26 miles of dusty gravel road and mid-day temperatures which hovered near 115°. Instead, we turned the car north towards Alpine and ice. Our next stop was to be in southeastern Arizona, but that is another story.

THE END

NEW THREAT TO THE TULE ELK

By Elna Bakker

Not many people know that California is the original home of one of the rarest mammals on earth. This is the Tule Elk, Cervus nannodes, established as a species in its own right by C. Hart Merriam in 1904. All other North American elk are sub-species of Cervus canadensis. For countless centuries these magnificent animals roamed at peace in the Great Valley, their only predators being bands of Indians and an occasional mountain lion. Bears and coyotes took their toll of the young, but for the most part the great stretches of grassy plain and willow bottom provided an undisturbed home.

That is, until the white man in his insatiable hunger for the possession and control of land came on the scene. Cattle ranges and cotton fields, apricot trees and alfalfa are no places for bands of wild elk. They steadily diminished in number until, as one report has it, they were reduced to a handful. Luckily, a few friendly souls realized their plight and soon after the first World War a place was made for one small herd in Yosemite National Park. Here they were corraled and fed, though not in accordance with their real habitat or habits.

In the late twenties Park policy was changed with respect to "captive" animals. It was then decided that the herd should be moved elsewhere as soon as it was possible to do so. Mr. G. Walter Dow of Lone Pine, California, volunteered to make a home for them in the Owens Valley. After much consideration on the part of many interested groups the move was made. Mr. Dow stood the cost of crating the animals and was in charge of the transfer.

This was accomplished in 1934 when a total of 54 elk were safely established on land owned by the City of Los Angeles. Twenty-seven of the original number came from Buttonwillow, a small reserve near Bakersfield. Incidentally, this reserve is still in existence. It barely supports 33 animals, and as the herd is semi-domesticated it must be fed and cared for.

The Tule Elk in the Owens Valley have done very well. Here the habitat is very similar to that of their original home. There are stretches of tules and willow trees where they can seek shelter or find bedding grounds. They have learned to migrate to considerably higher altitudes in the summer, going as high as 8,000 to 9,000 feet on the east face of the Sierra.

However, their happy existence is not assured. The City of Los Angeles has leased these bottom lands to cattlemen. They complain, and perhaps rightly so, that the elk tear down their fences and ruin their alfalfa beds. In good years when the city can release surplus water to the stockmen for growing feed, the damage is less severe. In times of drought a large amount of their alfalfa acreage is curtailed and what crops they can grow is subject to serious damage by the elk.

Therefore, the stockmen have asked for and been granted permission to have public hunts for the elk in order to control their numbers. The last of the hunts was a real disgrace. The herd was run down with jeeps. Many animals were simply gutted and allowed to rot unused. No attempt was made to kill the elk most annoying to the stockmen nor to harvest the old or unfit animals.

This year another hunt was requested. The California Fish and Game Dept. recommended that a total of 150 permits be issued. Since the herd was officially counted as being 285 in number, conservationists all over the country were very disturbed about what seemed to be an excessive and dangerous amount scheduled for killing. At a hearing in Independence, those who spoke in behalf of the Tule Elk were scientists, naturalists and conservationists who gathered from all over:

(To be continued)

L. A. AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Monday, January 2, 1961

If you were not contacted for 1959 count you are not on list of people who will receive information. To get on list, call Hannah Walker evenings, at HO 3-1078. We need experts but also non-experts to work with the experts. Evening of the count, all counters will assemble for dinner at Ontra Cafeteria on south Crenshaw Blvd. A fine way to put a period to the Holiday Season.

DECEMBER SCREEN TOUR"Design for Survival"

You will be entranced by William A. Anderson of "Monarch Butterfly Story" fame. See Angler Fish, the Osprey family and the Glowworm of the Sea. 7:45 P.M. Thursday, Dec. 8th, John Burroughs, Jr. High School, 600 So. McCadden Place.

ACTIVITIES

The theme of the Audubon Societies' display at the Los Angeles County Fair last Sept. 16 to Oct. 2 this year was "Attracting Birds to Your Garden". Examples of different types of feeders were shown as were various kinds of feeds. Plants which could be grown to attract birds were exhibited and there was a display of books on birds. Members passed out leaflets on what birds eat and what to plant to attract birds. The booth was excellently prepared by Mr. James Fassero of the Pasadena Audubon Society - aided by Mrs. Fassero and Barbara and John Hopper of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. The following members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society served in the booth from Sept. 21 through Sept. 24: Russ and Marion Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. McCune, Mrs. Neil Lewis, Mrs. Maurice Alvey, Mrs. Earl Mahaffie, Mrs. Alice White, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Blackstone.

* * * * *

The September Tuesday Evening Meeting was devoted to the showing of color slides of vacation trips by members. However, we were quite unexpectedly honored by the presence of Mr. Carl Buchheister, president of the National Audubon Society, who gave a fine talk

to our group, including William Goodall, west coast representative. Refreshments were served as has become customary at this first meeting of the season. Punch was most welcome, as it was a warm night, delicious cookies were donated by Effie Mahaffie, Helen Sandmeyer, Mimi Small, Caroline Adams and Melba Blackstone.

Our fellow member, Ernest Willoughby, gave a very interesting talk at the Tuesday Evening Meeting of October about his experiences last summer as a member of a team of biologists engaged in an ecological survey of the vicinity of Cape Thomson in northwest Alaska.

Our speaker at the Tuesday Evening Meeting this month, Mr. Merritt Sigsby Dunlap, has been a member of the Los Angeles and National Audubon Societies for many years. A general contractor by profession, he has made birdwatching his hobby since his boyhood days. Mr. Dunlap's family shares his hobby and their home on Chevy Chase Drive in Glendale was designed to enable them to enjoy this hobby to the full. He has photographed most of the approximately 80 species he has recorded at his home. Mr. Dunlap, his family and their hobby of birdwatching were featured in an article in the Los Angeles Times last January.

Bob Blackstone

* * * * *

Adding to the pleasure of visitors to the Los Angeles County Museum is a California Tanager found by Mrs. Lewis M. Kellogg, of 60th St. West in her yard. Just how the bird died or what kind it was, she did not know but picked it up and placed it in her freezer until her sister, Miss Dorothy Croft, came for a visit. On returning to Los Angeles, Miss Croft took the bird and showed it to a fellow member of L. A. Audubon Society, who in turn telephoned the Curator of the Museum. The latter immediately called and was delighted to have a specimen so perfectly preserved to add to the museum collection. The California Tanager is the mascot of the L. A. Audubon Society.

Antelope Valley Ledger
Gazette, Aug. 5, 1960

President
Registrar of Members

Mr. James W. Huffman
Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer

2912 Manhattan Ave. Manhattan Beach
355 Elm Street, Burbank

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER, 1960

- December 1 Christmas Party and Bazaar - 1-4 P.M. Great Hall, Plummer Park
- December 1 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 7:30 P.M. Audubon House
- December 3 Saturday Junior Zoological Society Exotic Birds Meet at largest bird cage, Griffith Park Zoo, 9:45 A.M. John Peebles, Leader
- December 8 Thursday, 7:45 P.M. Screen Tour, William Anderson "Design for Survival" John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 South McCadden Place
- December 10 Saturday Field Trip - Hanson Dam - Leaders: Marion and Russ Wilson 8:00 A.M. sharp. Bring lunch. At San Fernando Road or Glen Oaks Blvd. and Osborne St., turn North to the Hanson Dam entrance. Look for Audubon Field Trip sign. We will bird for two hours at the main pond then drive to the east side of the area on Wentworth, north of Glen Oaks Blvd. Wentworth is an extension of Sheldon Ave. Those wishing to make breakfast in the park may come at 7:00 A.M. We will eat breakfast before birding the main pond.
- December 13 Tuesday Evening Meeting 8:00 P.M. Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Merritt Sigsby Dunlap speaking on Backyard Birding with colored slides. Light refreshments. Bob Blackstone, Chairman
- December 15 Third Thursday Field Trip cancelled on account of Holiday Season

Monday

January 2, 1961 Christmas Bird Count. For details call Hannah Walker evenings, HO 3-1078. (See Page 24)

WALDEN POND

"The Supreme Court of Massachusetts has handed down a decision ordering that 'the pond area should remain free from artificial intrusion', and ruled that changes made around it violate the deed of trust under which the Emerson and Heywood families conveyed the property to the Commonwealth in 1922 - - ordering the restoration of Walden Pond to a state approximating that of 115 years ago, when Thoreau walked the pine slopes on its shores - - Victory for the Thoreau Society's Save Walden Committee and the citizens of Concord who brought suit to compel the Middlesex County Commissioners to maintain the area in its natural beauty". (Natl. Wildlands News)

TORREY PINES

The State Division of Beaches and Parks has temporarily tabled action to build several hundred campsites in the marsh area just north of Torrey Pines. This marsh area is still a part of the State Park, and as such is protected from commercial exploitation. It is one of the few remaining marsh areas along the Southern California coast where shore birds can find refuge. It is suggested that your support of the effort to preserve this natural areas be encouraged. You can help by writing letters requesting changes be made in the marsh area which will enhance it as a bird reserve, rather than destroy it as such. With the dwindling numbers of birds in Mission Bay area and in the Imperial Beach marshes due to commercial development, the urgency of preservation of the Torrey Pines marsh is increasing. This area is already Park land - let's keep it in its natural state for a bird refuge. Write to:

Mr. DeWitt Nelson, Director
Department of Natural Resources
Sacramento, California

From "Sketches" for October
(over)

SUMMER AROUND PEORIA, WITH CODA ON ST. LOUIS

By Clara Weedmark

Going to the heart of Illinois via the famous Zephyr train, through majestically picturesque country between Salt Lake and Denver is to a nature enthusiast most gratifying, and, believe it or not, one can bird from the train. In Las Vegas, of all places, a whole family of Cassin's Kingbirds were putting on a show in a cottonwood near the tracks. Four funny, fuzzy stub-tailed juveniles hardly able to fly were being refueled and harshly cajoled by both parents.

In the next place of great interest, Salt Lake City, gulls were sweeping overhead as the bus crawled from one depot to the other. From the Zephyr's wide window and dome vistas we see water, precious cooling water in streams and ponds. Here a Spotted Sandpiper, there an Eared Grebe, and Terns flying and diving. The Lake banks or dikes are covered with gulls. A few very large white birds, swanlike in appearance catch the eye.

The train hostess tells us that the Wasatch Mts. are the first great range we see, comprised of many snow covered sky-reaching peaks above dark blue slopes. Cliff swallows, veering, twisting and turning emerge from under a river bridge. Violet-green Swallows appear among the trees. From the breakfast table we glimpse groups of Aspens, with their myriad dancing leaves. Now we are in a narrow gorge where the rocks and the walls of the canyon have slid away at perpendicular angles, leaving "chimneys" in some places. We cross Green River which comes down out of Wyoming through Dinosaur National Monument to join the Colorado River. Soon we reach the upper Colorado and for 238 miles the train tracks parallel the River. Here is Ruby Canyon with its reddish cliffs and awesome pinnacles. We make a left turn through a tunnel and out into a widening valley. Cattle and sheep are grazing here on cultivated fenced pastures. This modern method is being adopted by cattle and sheep men. Unknowingly they become conservationists. This wide upper valley is where Grand Junction is located. Soon Swallows are hawking over the river, among them a few Martins and the conspicuous black-billed magpies glide from trees to shrubs. Glenwood Springs and Hanging Lake Resorts, alpine in appearance, are lovely spots across the river from the tracks. Now we see two dozen or more peaks surrounding us. Where does the train go? Right through the Rocky Mountain by way of the famous Moffat Tunnel which is six miles long and takes about nine minutes to traverse. A water pipe, also goes through a tunnel here and pours down in a dashing stream to a grand reservoir. Water for Denver!

Now it is late evening. After all this sight-seeing I slept so well I did not know our train was held up for four hours because of the wreck of a freight train ahead. Crossing the prairie country next day with its green, green fields and its water, water everywhere was something for a San Fernando Valley dweller to feast his eyes on. Soon I reached my destination -- Galesburg, Illinois. Here Edgar Lee Masters met the people he pictures in Spoon River Anthology. Here Carl Sandburg was born.

Peoria is about an hour's ride away by automobile through country still retaining landmarks of 60 years ago but with encroachments of the ultra-modern. On the morning of June 14th from the farmhouse yard the real Bluejays of the East greeted me. Chimney Swifts were whirling and twittering above the house, a Dickcissel was singing his name in a field beyond the old barn and the exquisite Indigo Bunting sang vibrantly from the very tip of the dead elm just east of the house. At first glance this dead elm was a sad, disheartening sort of thing, but it became a veritable stage of delightful bird action. The Indigo Bunting spent literally hours each day singing from the top of this tree; the Cardinal often came there to whistle his rousing, ringing, far-reaching, "What cheer, wheet, wheet, wheet." Once a few starlings and house sparrows perched near the singing Cardinal. They were very quiet, as if in awe of this exquisite creature. The only time I saw the striking Red-bellied Woodpecker this summer was in this dead elm. This bird's name is another misnomer as the field observer does not see the underbody, but no red is more beautiful than that on the male's head and the vivid zebra stripes across the back are startling. Downy and Redheaded Woodpeckers also came to this dead elm. One day the belligerent Eastern Kingbird came and drove away all the perched starlings. Let's have more Kingbirds.

(To be continued next month)