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Western Tanager

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Number 8

SEA BIRD COLONIES IN NORTHWEST ALASKA
Ernest J. Willoughby

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

PLUMMER PARK

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD.
LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

During the summer of 1960, while observing and collecting birds for the University of Alaska and the Arctic Health Research Center, I was fortunate to visit the three known cliff-nesting sea bird colonies of the northwest coast of Alaska, namely Puffin Island in Kotzebue Sound, and Cape Thompson and Cape Lisburne farther north. I observed them from the oceanographic vessel Brown Bear of the University of Washington, and spent about a month ashore at Cape Thompson. I shall describe these sea-fowl colonies as I found them in July and August.

Puffin Island is little more than a large rock with steep, whitewashed cliffs situated a few hundred feet from one end of Chamisso Island in the southeast end of Kotzebue Sound. Many Black-legged Kittiwakes (*Rissa tridactyla*) were nesting on the cliffs, and scores of Horned Puffins (*Fratercula corniculata*) were flying about and undoubtedly were breeding on the rock. A few Common Murres (*Uria aalge*) were flying about near the island, but I saw no Thick-billed Murres (*Uria lomvia*) which are abundant on the ocean outside the sound.

The cliffs at Cape Thompson and at Cape Lisburne are the sites of the two most spectacular bird concentrations on the northwest coast of Alaska. The several miles of sheer, sedimentary cliffs at each site supply breeding ledges for hundreds of thousands of murres of both species and many thousands of Kittiwakes. In addition, hundreds of Horned Puffins, a lesser number of Tufted Puffins (*Lunda cirrhata*), a few pairs of Pelagic Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*), and even occasional Black Guillemots (*Cephus grylle*) and Pigeon Guillemots (*C. columba*) live there. Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*) nest at the cliffs, making a fine living by preying upon the murres' eggs and chicks and consuming the many dead and injured birds they find below the cliffs. The Least Auks (*Aethia pusilla*) has been reported to breed at Cape Lisburne, but it does not occur at Cape Thompson.

The most conspicuous birds at these cliffs, because of their immense numbers, are the murres and kittiwakes. These birds feed at sea, the murres especially flying many miles out to sea to forage. There is a constant movement of murres leaving and arriving at the cliffs, and they tend to radiate in all directions out to sea, with each major colony being the focal point of the movement. Thus from the sea one can easily locate the position of the colonies by watching the direction of flight of the murres. At forty miles out from the cliffs one or two murres passed the ship every few minutes, often taking a turn around the Brown Bear for a careful look, then beating on their way in a general direction toward or away from land. As we moved closer to land murres passed more and more frequently, so that about 25 miles from a colony there would be flocks of 3 to 10 or more birds passing frequently and flying directly to or from the point where the charts indicated the cliffs were. Drawing still nearer, the flocks grew ever bigger and passed the ship with still greater frequency, as if the incoming small flocks were coalescing as they converged and the outbound flocks were fragmenting and dispersing (Continued on next page).

THE WESTERN TANAGER

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 birds and other wildlife, plants, soil
 and water."

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 guests before and after each meeting.

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(Continued from 1st page)

as they moved away from the cliffs. At
 about 10 to 15 miles out, now within plain
 sight of the cliffs, many inbound birds
 were beginning to climb slowly to bring
 themselves up to the level of their nest-
 ing ledges, often located hundreds of
 feet above the water. Outbound birds re-
 mained close to the water.

All this time kittiwakes were ap-
 pearing more and more often, and Horned
 Puffins began to appear more frequently,
 often flying in company with murres. Fi-
 nally at the cliffs thousands of murres
 could be seen flying to and fro in all
 directions at sea; thousands were on the
 water, resting and diving and sometimes
 fighting. Murres whirred and scaled a-
 bout the faces of the cliffs in such num-
 bers as to resemble at a mile's distance
 a swarm of gnats. Kittiwakes by the
 thousands glided and hovered about the
 cliffs and skimmed over the water nearby;
 and the white-winged Glaucus Gulls soared
 along the cliffs or stood idly about on
 prominences along the cliff tops. Occa-
 sionally a Pelagic Cormorant flapped busi-
 ly along near shore.

At Cape Thompson the cliffs rising
 from 100 ft. up to about 600 ft. extend
 for about 7 miles along the coast. They
 consist of crumbling sedimentary rocks
 (largely limestone). Rocks dislodged by
 the birds fall frequently on the narrow
 gravel beaches; and during rain showers
 loose rocks tumble down constantly, kill-
 ing and injuring scores of murres and
 kittiwakes. At the top of the cliffs,
 along the brink, grass grows luxuriantly,
 fertilized by the nitrogen-rich feces
 dropped by the thousands of birds which
 fly along the cliff-tops every day. Ex-
 tending inland from the cliffs is the
 treeless Tundra, with its surprising ar-
 ray of low-growing flowering annuals, min-
 iature willows and birches and grasses.

The murres, mostly Thick-billed but
 with a good admixture of Commons, crowd on
 to those ledges big enough to give a foot-
 hold and a place to balance the single egg
 per pair. The Black-legged Kittiwakes
 place their nests which are made of mud
 and plant materials gathered on the Tundra
 back of the cliffs, on ledges throughout
 the cliffs. They often choose ledges clos-
 er to the beach than do the murres.

(To be continued)

NATIONAL SEASHORE AREAS

A CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE PARK. At the first press conference held by Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, he urged quick action by Congress to establish the park. Bills for this purpose have been introduced by several Massachusetts Congressmen, led off by Rep. Edward P. Boland's H.R. 66, which authorized acquisition of an extensive area in the northern and largely undeveloped end of the Cape. Except for facilities at selected sites for "camping, horseback riding, boating, sailing, hunting, fishing and other recreational activities of similar nature," the Boland bill declares the park "shall be permanently reserved as a primitive wilderness and no development...shall be undertaken which would be incompatible with the preservation of the unique flora and fauna or the physiographic conditions now prevailing." H.R. 66 and other Cape Cod Park bills are pending in the House Committee on Insular Affairs, Chairman of which is Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall (Colo.).

PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE would be authorized by S. 4, introduced by Senator Ralph Yarborough (Texas) and now awaiting action by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. This proposed National Seashore would encompass an 85 mile reach of the great, wild, barrier island which lies along the coast of Texas southerly from the vicinity of Corpus Christi.

POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE bills have been introduced by Congressman Clem Miller, H.R. 2775, and Senators Clair Engle and Thomas H. Kuchel jointly, S. 476. These identical measures would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire up to 53,000 acres for the park on the Point Reyes peninsula in Marin County north of San Francisco. The Miller bill is before the House Interior Committee; the Engle-Kuchel bill, before the similar Senate Committee.

OREGON DUNES NATIONAL SEASHORE would be established by legislation now being drafted by Senator Maurine Neuberger. When introduced, we will report the bill number. It will go to the Senate Interior Committee.

Omnibus seashore bills, undertaking to authorize the Cape Cod, Padre Island,

Point Reyes and Oregon Dunes areas in one piece of legislation have been introduced by Senator Gordon Allott (Colo.), S. 209, and others. Congressman John Dingell (Mich.), proposes in H.R. 1763 to authorize "National Shoreline Recreational areas" at the four previously listed sites and also at Indiana Dunes; Cumberland Island, Georgia; Huron Mountains, Michigan; Channel Islands, California; Pictured Rocks-Grand Sable Dunes and Sleeping Bear Dunes, Michigan. Mr. Dingell's bill would further authorize Federal financial aid and cooperation with the states in the acquisition and preservation of suitable shoreline areas for public use. Experienced observers believe Congress is more likely to enact separate bills, instead of an "omnibus" measure, to establish each of the major proposed seashore parks.

* * * * *

Letters urging a hearing, recommending a favorable committee report or otherwise commenting on a bill should be addressed to the Chairman of the Committee. Copies or similar letters to the other members are all to the good, and it is helpful to send copies to your own representatives and Senators. Address them House Office Building, or Senate Office Building, Washington 25, D.C.

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Wayne N. Aspinall (Colo.), Chairman

As this is written, the roster of this and other House Committees had not been fully determined pending the outcome of a proposal to enlarge the Rules Committee.

THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR

This marvelous soarer is one of the world's largest flying birds, 4 ft. 2 in. long with a wing span of 9 ft. and a weight of 20 lbs. The species has 6 long-established roosts from which the birds range during the day for 30 miles or more in search of food. They must have freedom from human molestation. Roosts and nest sites are often abandoned if they are frightened by human intrusion.

The present California law protects the condor as a non-game bird and it is excepted from scientific collectors' permits.

In 1937, an area of about 1200 acres surrounding Sisquoc Falls, Santa Barbara County, was closed by the United States Forest Service to all public travel and use. This closure was in large measure due to the efforts of Robert E. Easton and the National Audubon Society.

A start toward Federal protection was made in 1942 when the "Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere," sometimes known as the "Natural Resources Treaty," became effective. In the annex to this convention, the California Condor was designated a "Nature Monument." Under Article VIII of the Convention, Nature Monuments "shall be protected as completely as possible." In practice, this treaty provides no legal protection because laws have not been passed to implement it with respect to Nature Monuments. However, the Convention has had a beneficial effect in that the persons who live in the range of the condors have received official national recognition.

In 1947 the Forest Service closed to public travel and use a large area around the lower Sespe River. Access corridors were provided for fishermen, ranchers and oil operators. The Forest Service provides a special condor patrolman for eight months of the year, the National Audubon Society contributing the cost of the first four months, and the Forest Service that of the last four months. The area is closed in summer because, of the

fire hazard. The Sespe Wildlife Preserve includes most of the condor nesting sites and the principal winter roosts.

In 1949, The International Technical Conference on the Protection of Nature at Lake Success included the condor on a list of thirteen birds of the world which are "in need of emergency action if they are to be saved from extinction."

With the protection given by the Forestry Department and the National Audubon Society the population seems to have stabilized at 60 individuals. The condors have been reported over the Greenhorn Mountain area and over the Charlton Flats on the Angeles Crest Highway during 1959-1960.

Last year the Los Angeles Audubon Society, through the generosity of its members was able to send to the National Audubon Society \$350.00 for the Condor Sanctuary Fund. This year we hope this amount will be increased substantially to show that Southern Californians are interested in helping to preserve their one endangered species, the California Condor, whose beauty is in its magnificent soaring flight.

A CALIFORNIA CONDOR SANCTUARY FUND card and self-addressed envelope is enclosed with this WESTERN TANAGER for your convenience.

* * * * *

TREE PLANTING IN PLUMMER PARK

On Saturday, March 11, the Los Angeles Audubon Society joined the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department and the Blue Birds in planting a coral tree (*Erythrina reticulata*) in honor of Mr. Hastings, Editor Emeritus of the Western Tanager. The tree was secured through Dr. Samuel Ayres, Jr., the L.A. County Arboretum and the L.A. County Parks and Recreation Department. It is the first one of this species to be planted here outside the County Arboretum. The two Blue Bird groups, the Hilltoppers and the Hummingbirds gave the program. Mr. James Huffman paid a tribute to Mr. Hastings and dedicated the tree to him. We hope to place a label to mark the honoring of Mr. Hastings and the Camp-Fire Girls' Golden Jubilee sometime in the future.

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WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

MISS BETTIE A. BROCKMAN
4440 Ambrose Ave., Los Angeles 27
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MR. & MRS. G. H. SUPPLIE
3504 Crestwold Ave., Los Angeles 43
MAJOR ROSAMOND E. WESTWORTH
2405 Denison Ave., Apt. 7, San Pedro
* * * * *

REMEMBER THE DATES

THE TEA - 2 to 5 o'clock - 1st Sunday in October. At the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Hood, 138 So. Wilton Drive. Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer, Tea Chairman--TH 2-9328. Donations of cookies gladly accepted.

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CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Saturday, December 2nd, 1 to 4 o'clock. Great Hall, Plummer Park. Mrs. Rose Bussey, Bazaar Chairman--NO 2-6523.

Donations of things to be sold solicited.

* * * * *

The ANNOTATED FIELD LIST OF THE BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA will again be available at Audubon House after the first of April. It has been revised by Arnold Small, printed through the generosity of Otis Wade. It will sell for \$1.00, the proceeds to be placed in the educational fund.

CAMP DENALI

For those interested in the nature lore of the Arctic-Alpine Environment of the new State of Alaska, Camp Denali, located on the north boundary of McKinley Park, will again conduct their "Wilderness Workshop" to explore, enjoy and understand the tundra world of the north. After nine years of operation as a wilderness resort, Camp Denali last summer began to feature special sessions to attract the Alaskan visitor looking for more than the conventional tourist approach to a vacation. Not attempting to be as academic as the Audubon camps, the Wilderness Workshop program is informal, unregimented and flexible to meet the special interests of the participants.

In addition to the Wilderness Workshop, two other special sessions will be featured by Camp Denali this coming summer. They are the "Tundra Treks," to explore the back country of McKinley Park by foot from base camps, and the "Shutter Safari" for the serious wildlife photographer willing and capable of leaving the road to "capture" the spectacular wildlife of this region on film. Further information can be obtained by writing Camp Denali, Box 526, College, Alaska. (Brochures at Audubon House)

* * * * *

TEACHING STAFF, AUDUBON CAMP, 1961

Bruce H. Carpenter, former Instructor of Biological Science; Long Beach State, now attending graduate school U.C.L.A. James E. Crouch, Professor of Zoology, San Diego State College.

H. Thomas Harvey, Associate Professor in Biology, San Jose State College.

Harold G. Higgins, Instructor in Biology and Life Science; Granger High School, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Rolf F. Lotz, Assistant Instructor, San Diego State College.

Samuel R. Smoker, teach, Fred Martin Elementary School, Instructor in Biology, San Jose Junior College.

Franklin W. Sturges, Assistant Professor in Science, Southern Oregon College, Ashland, Oregon.

These men have all had experience in the natural history field either with Audubon Camps, Natural History Museums, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, State Beaches and Parks, etc.

THURSDAY MORNING MEETING
FEBRUARY 23

Consternation! The morning before the meeting and the speaker is too ill to come! What good kind soul would not mind a last minute call?

Then Mr. Paul Lindau came to mind. An Audubon member, who once before had shown his unusually beautiful pictures for this group. Yes, he would be happy to save the day for us. Most of his film was at RCA being made into a long nature story for their Visual Education department, but he had enough at home to show us something. Then Marion Wilson, always our strong right arm in a crisis, agreed to tell something of her Texas trip, to fill in some time.

Mr. Lindau's pictures are taken here, there and everywhere; many in his own backyard. A marvelous sequence, and one done in his yard, is of a female hooded oriole building a nest, sewing it, with palm fibres, to the leaf of a banana tree. Punching holes in the leaf with her bill, she stitched the nest on to the leaf. Papa oriole, not being adept at these women's jobs, but knowing how it should be done, made regular inspection trips, sometimes hanging by his heels, the better to see.

Next season we will see the film as put together by RCA, a fine treat to look forward to. We do thank these good friends of Audubon at this time.

Olive Alvey

FEBRUARY 26TH FIELD TRIP

On February 26 a group of about 35 members and guests left Port Hueneme, Oxnard, on the "Cinnamon Bear" for Anacapa Island boat trip at 8:30 a.m. Despite the rolling seas and strong westerly wind a total of 30 species of birds were seen (a rather disappointing number). Seen around the boat was a Kittiwake, Brown Pelicans, Surf and White-winged Scoters, and various types of Gulls.

Approaching Anacapa Island, Double-creasted Baird's and Brandt's Cormorants could be seen on the rocks. Also observ-

ed were Black Oyster Catchers, Eared Grebes, Ravens, House Finches, White-throated Swifts, a Sparrow Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and a Santa Cruz Jay.

It was amazingly calm on the western side of Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands where most of us had lunch. On Santa Cruz, a Meadowlark could be heard while in the coves a Wandering Tattler and a Great Blue Heron were seen. En route home through Anacapa Passage, two Cassins Auklets and a California Murre were observed at a distance.

We all hope the next pelagic trip will be a better one.

Larry Sansone

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GROWTH OF HUMAN POPULATION AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION

From an address by George Seymour of the Dept. of Fish and Game of the State of California.

It is becoming increasingly important that all the people of California take a more positive part in making sure that natural resources are properly managed. They must be managed in such a manner that the growth in human population does not destroy all the habitat of fish and game or spoil the whole of California's great outdoors, because the outdoors means so much to so many people. History tells us that the rise and fall of nearly every civilization could be attributed to the squandering of its natural resources. Thoughtful men have stated that any country that expects to remain a power in the world today must not exhaust its renewable resources. But there is more than an economic or recreational value. There is a spiritual value in living things.

California still has her renowned beauty. There is still an abundance of wildlife, enough for everyone to enjoy. It must be kept this way, for if our countryside continues to be thoughtlessly stripped to make room for more "civilization" our future race will surely be impoverished.

George T. Hastings

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY a branch of the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, New York
Headquarters, Nature Museum, Library located in Audubon House in Plummer Park
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President: James W. Huffman Registrar of Members: Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer
2912 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach 355 W. Elm Ave., Burbank

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 1961

April 1 - SATURDAY, JUNIOR NATURALISTS, 9:45-11:15 A.M. Field trip to a city park for bird observations. Call Fern Dell Museum for place of meeting. Audubon members will be co-sponsoring this trip. Fern Dell Museum-HO 7-1661.

April 6 - THURSDAY, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 7:30 P.M., Audubon House.

April 8 - SATURDAY FIELD TRIP. A new trip to Chantry Flats where we will meet at 8:30 A.M. San Bernardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd., north to Foothill Blvd., right to Santa Anita Ave., north to end of Santa Anita Canyon Road. Fine birding at Chantry Flats, mile hike down to stream. We will be looking for dippers and Canyon Wrens. Lazuli Bunting is a possibility. Bring lunch and binoculars. Leader: Dave Robison, PO 1-0217.

April 11 - TUESDAY EVENING MEETING, 8:00 P.M., Great Hall, Plummer Park. Dick and Catherine Freeman, members of L.A. Audubon and Sierra Club, experienced travelers and photographers will provide the program feature, a unique presentation of the Grand Canyon with their own beautiful color slides accompanied by the music of Ferdi Grofe's "Grand Canyon Suite." Mrs. Joe Funk, Jr., recipient of one of our half scholarships to camp last summer, will show pictures taken at camp and give a few experiences and impressions gained during two weeks there. Chairman: Bob Blackstone, CR 6-3879.

April 20 - THURSDAY BUS FIELD TRIP to beautiful Ojai Valley. Bus leaves Grand Ave. entrance of Biltmore Hotel at 8:00 A.M. sharp. Fare \$3.00. Make reservations April 17th, 18th and 19th. Leader: Edna Burt, PL 5-1044.

April 22-23 - WEEK-END FIELD TRIP TO DESERT. Meet at White Water Junction, at 8:00 A.M., Saturday, April 22, about 2.3 mi. past Palm Springs turnoff on Highway 60-70. We will bird White Water Canyon and Thousand Palms Oasis. Those camping will meet at Finney Lake south of Calipatria, near Ramer Lake in the Imperial Waterfowl Management Area, Saturday night. Motels available in Brawley. Very early Sunday morning we will bird Ramer Lake and the south end of Salton Sea. For further information call leader, Herb Clarke, CH 9-5537, Arnold Small, VE 7-2272 or Headquarters, HO 7-9495.

April 27 - THURSDAY MORNING STUDY CLASS, 9:45 A.M. sharp, in Long Hall, Plummer Park, Mrs. Mary V. Hood will continue her series on "The Life Zone Concept," taking us through forests of coast and sierra with colored slides and information from her wide experiences in these areas. Youth leaders are invited to attend this meeting. Chairman: Olive Alvey, NO 1-8036.

April 27 - THURSDAY, SCREEN TOUR--"KANGAROO CONTINENT," Patricia B. Witherspoon, 7:45 P.M., John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 So. McCadden Pl., L.A. Patricia Witherspoon, of Denver, presents astonishing color motion pictures of Australian wildlife. Animals that lay eggs--duck-billed platypus and the spiny echidna; koalas, Australian "teddy bears" come to life; bounding kangaroos; emu of cross-word puzzle fame; all share the spot-light in this story of the continent "down under" where even the ordinary is picturesque and the extraordinary unbelievable. This is the last of a very fine Screen Tour series. Tickets will be available at the door.