



LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Western TANAGER

VOL. 28

OCTOBER, 1961

NO. 2

PRAIRIE BIRDING

BY ROBERT BLACKSTONE

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

PLUMMER PARK

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD.

LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

The above title might more accurately read "Some Experiences Birding in the Foothills, Parklands and Prairies of Alberta, Canada, or some such thing. At any rate I hope I have conveyed the impression that I disclaim any pretensions of being an expert on this region. However, since my wife's family lives in Calgary, we have visited there several times, and I feel that I know the country and its birdlife more intimately than the majority of visitors. I should like to share some of my experiences with you and perhaps make you feel that you would like to know the region better yourself.

Most of the visitors to Alberta seem to head for the mountain parks, Banff and Jasper, and I shall be among the first to admit that for scenery they are pretty hard to beat. However, if you are interested in birds, you will find them more numerous and varied in the region of which I write.

Naturally I am most familiar with the area around Calgary. Many of the birds I found there are old friends. But even some of these, such as the Spotted Sandpiper and the Cedar Waxwing, familiar to me as winter visitors here in the southland, I enjoyed seeing for the first time at their nesting activities. One interesting little bird whose acquaintance I made here for the first time was the Clay-colored Sparrow, which is common here. Once only, along the Bow River very near downtown Calgary, I saw a LeConte's Sparrow, which reaches the southern limits of its range here.

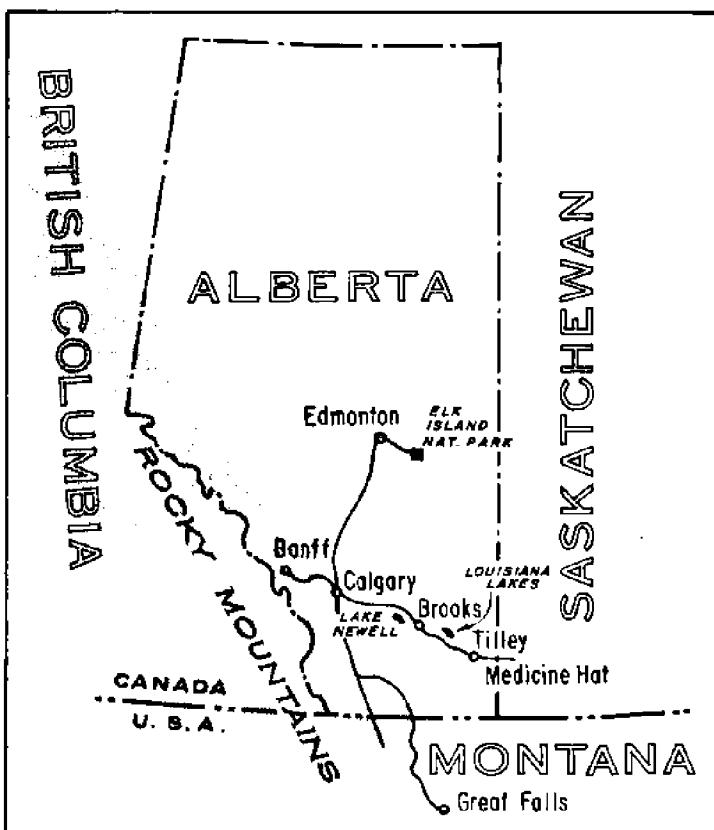
Here the most common, or at least the most conspicuous, flycatcher is the Eastern Kingbird and the Flicker is the Yellow-shafted, although this is the region where one finds many of those interesting hybrids between the red and the yellow-shafted species. One of the greatest thrills for me was when I found a family of Upland Plovers only a few miles west of the city. I stalked them on foot and in the car on several occasions in the hopes of getting pictures, but with only moderate success. Later I found another family a few miles farther west, and again another near Brooks.

A few miles north of Calgary I have a favorite farm pond where, already in late July, I have

seen large gatherings of shorebirds on their way south. Among these are Dowitchers still in their resplendent breeding plumage, many Baird's Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs - the common yellow-legs in this region -, Solitary Sandpipers and the uncommon (in Alberta) White-rumped Sandpiper.

One summer a few years ago I spent a weekend at Elk Island National Park, which is some thirty miles east of Edmonton in the central Alberta parklands. The "parklands" are prairie interspersed with scattered groves of trees. This park is a fenced preserve of some 75 square miles area which provides a sanctuary for a sizable herd of bison, as well as elk, moose and mule deer. There are several small lakes, of which the largest and most accessible is Lake Astotin. Several species of ducks nest here; I found nests of Lesser Scaup, Canvasback and

(Continued on page 10)



LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 46
Hollywood 7-9495

WESTERN TANAGER



Staff

Editor.....Arnold Small
3028 Cavendish Drive, Los Angeles 64
Ass't Editor & Art Editor.....Robert Sandmeyer
Typing.....Helen Sandmeyer
Conservation.....Frank Little
Field Notes.....Arnold Small
Audubon Activities.....Russell Wilson
Calendar.....Douglas Dick
Mailing.....Mimi Small



LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY



Officers 1961-1962

President.....Mr. James W. Huffman
First Vice President.....Mr. Arnold Small
Second Vice President.....Mrs. Maurice Alvey
Executive Secretary.....Mrs. Russell E. Wilson
Treasurer.....Mr. Hubert Weiser
Recording Secretary.....Mrs. Donald Adams
Registrar of Members.....Mrs. Rose Bussey
Curator.....Mrs. Mary V. Hood

Contributions Solicited For the Tanager

The editorial staff of the Western Tanager solicits your help in making this paper a useful and interesting facet of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. All members of the Society are invited to submit articles for publication herein following the general guide of this issue. Copy is invited for a lead article and it should be sent to the Editor. For ease of typing and lay-out, we urge that all items submitted for publication be typed in a column not exceeding four inches in width.

AUDUBON

WILDLIFE FILMS

Alfred M. Bailey

Subantarctic Isle

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1961

presented by

Los Angeles Audubon Society,

Incorporated

and the

National Audubon Society

"SUBANTARCTIC ISLE", the first Audubon Wildlife Film of the 1961-62 season, takes us to Campbell Island, a tiny, remote weather station, located 400 miles south of the South Island of New Zealand. Because of the remoteness of Campbell Island, only a few naturalists have been privileged to visit the great colonies of penguins or to photograph the sea lions, fur seals or huge elephant seals that live there.

Dr. Alfred M. Bailey, Director of the Denver Museum of Natural History, will show us these -- and more.

We will see three species of small albatrosses nesting on almost inaccessible ledges and we will get a good look at two of the largest flying birds in the world -- the Wandering and Royal Albatrosses, breeding on the tussock-clad slopes.

REMEMBER! October 12 at 7:45 p.m. in the John Burroughs Junior High School auditorium.

Welcome!

Decorative line of black squares

We are happy to announce the membership of the following people, and hope that they will avail themselves of the activities and services of the Los Angeles Audubon Society:

Mr. & Mrs. S. A. Leshin
120 S. Woodburn Dr., L. A. 49
Miss Ruth Miller

1537 S. Dunsmuir Ave., L. A. 19

Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd J. Moss
771 San Lorenzo St., Santa Monica

Mr. & Mrs. Bill O'Hallaren
3491 Wonder View Pl., L. A. 28

Miss Geraldine Robinson
1537 S. Dunsmuir Ave., L. A. 19

Dr. & Mrs. Wm. E. Daywalt
362 Entrada Dr., Santa Monica
Miss Mary E. Sterling
2356 W. Washington Blvd., L. A. 18

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Calendar

Headquarters, Nature Museum and Library located at Audubon House, Plummer Park
7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 46 - HO 7-9495.
Telephone hours: Mon., Wed., Thurs., 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
President: James W. Huffman Registrar of Members: Mrs. James Bussey
2912 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach 3507 Hollydale Dr., Los Angeles

CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER 1961

October 1 - SUNDAY, ANNUAL TEA, 2-5 p.m. at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Hood, 138 South Wilton Drive., Los Angeles. Members and friends are cordially invited to attend.

October 5 THURSDAY, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, 7:30 p.m., Audubon House.

October 7 - SATURDAY, JUNIOR NATURALISTS, 9:45-11:15 a.m., Griffith Park. Meet at the Seal Show area, which is just before the entrance to the zoo in Griffith Park. For further information telephone the leader, John Peebles: HO 7-1661.

October 10 - TUESDAY, EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m., Great Hall, Plummer Park. Catherine and Dick Freeman will present their "Avian Dwellers of the Gaspe", describing a trip to New England and the Maritime Provinces of Canada, illustrated with color slides. Program Chairman: Robert Blackstone, CR 6-3879.

October 12 - THURSDAY, AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM: "SUBANTARCTIC ISLE" by Alfred M. Bailey, 7:45 p.m., John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 McCadden Pl., Los Angeles. This is the first of a series of five film-and-lecture programs (formerly known as "Screen Tours") scheduled for the 1961-1962 season. This time we will see and hear about one of the more remote regions of the earth, guided by the fine photographer and lecturer, Dr. Alfred M. Bailey. Tickets are available at the door. Come and bring friends. Chairman: Dr. William C. Lehmann, FR 7-2635.

October 14 - SATURDAY, FIELD TRIP, 8:00 a.m., Harbor Park (Bixby Slough) Drive south on Vermont Avenue to Pacific Coast Highway, cross the highway and go about one block, turn left into the parking lot. Bring lunch and binoculars--there will be several spotting 'scopes to share. Leader: David Robison, PO 1-0217.

October 22 - SUNDAY, FIELD TRIP, 8:00 a.m., Upper Newport Bay. Meet on Highway 101 just south of the Traffic Circle in Long Beach. Don't forget to bring lunch and binoculars, the shore birds and wintering ducks make this one of the more spectacular trips of the year. Leaders: Don and Caroline Adams, FR 2-5536.

October 26 - THURSDAY, MORNING STUDY CLASS, 10:00 a.m., Long Hall, Plummer Park. Catherine Freeman will show her beautiful slides of wild flowers and we will have a review of what we have seen. If your memory of flowers sometimes fails you, come and see what you can do. One bird will be studied. Guests are always welcome. Chairman: Effie Mahaffie, NO 4-4543.

TIPS FOR FIELD TRIPS: Always take binoculars and lunch. Never take pets of any kind as they are not allowed on any field trip scheduled by the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Prairie Birding

(Continued from page 7)

Blue-winged Teal (the last with the drake keeping his mate company at the nest). Having seen the Red-necked Grebe on only two or three previous occasions, I was delighted to find them nesting commonly here. It was here too that I saw my first Catbird and my first Baltimore Oriole, two of the many "eastern" birds that are to be seen in increasing numbers as you go north in Alberta.

On later visits I spent some time in southeastern Alberta in the vicinity of Brooks. This is the real prairie country; quite a lot of it is still open range, though irrigation is bringing more and more of it into cultivation. On the open prairie, of course, bird life is somewhat thinly spread. The Chestnut-collared Longspur and the Horned Lark are about the only birds that are numerous here. The former is something of a favorite of mine; I spent most of a morning photographing a pair at their nest under a tiny shrub out on the bare prairie this last summer. The McCown's Longspur and Sprague's Pipit are also supposed to occur here, this being near the western limit of their ranges, but I looked in vain for them.

Of course where shrubbery and trees occur, many more birds appear, including some typically "eastern" species; I saw my first Brown Thrashers here. Where groves of trees occur, as in the vicinity of irrigated farms and the like, the number of species and individuals again increases many times. Most of these would be familiar to a southern California birder, but some, as the Catbird and the Brown Thrasher, for instance, would likely be new.

One sees few snakes in Alberta, even in the southern part, and no doubt this led me to forget my usual caution when I investigated a hole some seven or eight feet up in a tree, and in which a Yellow-shafted Flicker was showing a great deal of interest. I put my hand over the edge of the hole to pull myself up so I could peer in, when I found myself gazing at the coils of a four foot rattlesnake from a range of only a few inches. Needless to say, I retreated hastily. He appeared to be lethargic from a recent meal, which was most fortunate for me.

Wherever there is water on the prairie, one sees Franklin's Gulls and Black Terns, and wherever it occurs in sufficient quantity there may be large concentrations of waterfowl. A few miles northeast of Brooks is a project of Ducks Unlimited known as the Louisiana Lakes. Here, even in a dry year such as this has been, one finds waterfowl by the thousands. Ten or a dozen species of ducks are known to nest here, as well as grebes, Avocets, Marbled Godwits, Willets, Long-billed Curlews and many others. I saw a flock of several hundred Canada Geese here too.

South of Brooks a few miles is a large artificial lake, Lake Newell. Conditions here are far less ideal than at Louisiana Lakes, but a few ducks evidently breed here. I saw quite a few Franklin's Gulls and Common Terns in addition to the everpresent Black Terns. A small number of White Pelicans apparently breeds here.

This area seems to be somewhat of a center of abundance of the pronghorn antelope. I saw little bands of them several times when traveling the secondary roads, but had little luck in getting close enough to photograph them. Photographing another mammal at Lake Newell almost brought me to grief. I found a muskrat one morning lying on top of its dome-shaped nest some 40 or 50 feet from the shore. Since it seemed quite unalarmed by my approach, I decided to try wading closer to take some pictures. I was able to wade to within a few feet of the nest without alarming the animals. I was delighted and started to move in for a real closeup, when I suddenly found myself sinking deeper and deeper into the seemingly bottomless ooze of the lakebed. I had a few anxious moments, since I was all by myself, before I was able to make my way cautiously back to a firm footing. All this time the muskrat just lay, apparently dozing, on top of its nest, so that I began to suspect it was not in good health. Later, however, it had a scrap with another muskrat which disturbed it at its slumbers, so I imagine it just wasn't afraid of photographers.

For the dedicated birder who is intent exclusively on adding to his "life list," there are undoubtedly more profitable places to go than Alberta. However, I hope I have convinced my readers that there is much of interest there, in the prairies as well as in the mountains. Birders who travel there will find helpful "The Birds of Alberta," by W. Ray Salt and A.L. Wilk, published by the provincial government. It will not replace your Peterson for identification purposes, but it has much valuable information on occurrence and distribution.

A great sense of spaciousness is the feeling I associate with these prairies of Alberta. The birds I think of in connection with them are the Chestnut-collared Longspur, the Vesper Sparrow, the Eastern Kingbird, the Franklin's Gull, the Black Tern and the Upland Plover, the last not for its numbers but because it seems peculiarly at home there. I have been disappointed to find birds of prey to be scarce in this region. The Marsh Hawk was the only one I found to be at all common, and I saw several Short-eared Owls. Otherwise only an occasional Red-tailed Hawk was seen and, of course, the little Sparrow Hawk. I had hoped to see the Ferruginous Hawk but was disappointed, though I looked hard for it. However, I plan to go back there again another year and find some birds I missed and stalk the pronghorns. ■

Audubon Activities

by RUSSELL WILSON

The summer's activities continued on August 26 with a trip to Buena Vista Lagoon at Oceanside. Fourteen of us listed thirty birds and as the lagoon was dotted with thousands of Northern Phalaropes among which were a mere sprinkling of Wilson's Phalaropes, Jim Huffman, who led the trip, had a fine opportunity to give us some good instruction in the differentiation of these species as seen by us in their fall plumage.

A visit to Buena Vista Lagoon always begins with hope of seeing some Wood Ibises, however they seem not to have been observed here in several years. The last sighting by your reporter was Sept. 7, 1954, when five were seen.

The day ended with a swim and picnic dinner at San Clemente State Park. Preparation for dinner was spiced by lively competition between two schools of thought on the subject of how to make a fire. One of us is a firm supporter of the Boy Scout approach, while Don Adams is an advocate of the most modern product of the petrochemical industry.

Arnold Small led the final summer trip on Saturday, Sept. 9, to Malibu Lagoon and Point Dume. It was gratifying to have twenty-six eager birders with us and especially so to have such old friends of Audubon Society as Mr. and Mrs. Mangold and daughter Stephanie and Margaret Spalty, who haven't been with us for several years.

Our composite list added up to seventy-two birds. Perhaps our best shorebird was a Wandering Tattler which remained in fine view at close range until everyone had had a satisfactory look. During lunch at Tapia Park we all had a good look at a Golden Eagle, which displayed clearly all of the field marks of an immature bird.



You have noticed, of course, the changes that have been made in the Tanager. There has been talk for several years of getting away from a mimeographed publication in favor of something with more eye-appeal. This summer President Jim Huffman got together a committee composed of Arnold Small, Chairman, Bob Blackstone, Arnold and Mary Larson, Bob Sandmeyer and Marion Wilson which met several times and explored all significant aspects of the problem. When Helen and Bob Sandmeyer agreed to do the final typing and to make up the final lay-out, respectively, for the lithographer, it was apparent that a major breakthrough had been made. Soon Arnold Small agreed to assume the responsibilities of editor providing he could have the assistance of an editorial staff.



In order to offset some of the anticipated additional cost, it was decided to discontinue the professional mailing service which the Society has used for many years and to invite the membership at large to volunteer to perform this routine but essential chore. Mimi Small agreed to head the mailing service and the response by the members has been most gratifying.

And so the Tanager has become a co-operative endeavor in a way that it has never been before. The copies which you have received were typed in their final form by Carolyn Adams and Helen Sandmeyer. Bob Sandmeyer has done the final layout and has handled all contacts with the lithographers. Laura Jenner and her mother Betty have addressed the envelopes. Castella Fisher has corrected the return address on all envelopes. (The Society wished to use up, for reasons of economy, a supply of envelopes which had a printed return address which was no longer correct.) On the last Monday in August Olive Alvey, Christine Hayden, Betty and Laura Jenner, Esther Johnson, Effie and Earl Mahaffee, Bob Robitaille, Bill Watson, Hugh Weiser, Marion and Russ Wilson met at Audubon House and made short work of folding Tanagers and stuffing envelopes. This was followed by pleasant conversation over delicious refreshments provided by Effie and Olive.

I'm sure the Society would want to say "Thank you!" to all those mentioned above and to wish them well in their new undertakings.



Fall activities commenced with the Tuesday Evening meeting, Sept. 12, and in spite of a late change of venue to Poinsettia Playground, attendance was excellent. The program featured reports of summer travel and birding by members. Bob Blackstone presented some fine slides which resulted from a month-long trip through Glacier-Waterton International Park, Calgary and the Peace River country of northern Alberta. The latter area was virgin country to almost all of us and of especial interest were slides of Franklin's Gulls, Bonaparte's Gulls and Chestnut-collared Longspurs in fine breeding plumage. Arnold Small reported trips to the Tucson area, the Chiricahuas in southern Arizona, to Boulder, Colorado, and the near-by front range of the Rockies. His always outstanding close-ups of birds and mammals in their natural habitat were delight to all, especially those of javelinas and coati-mundi, of Blue-throated, Rivoli's and Broad-billed Hummingbirds and White-tailed Ptarmigans.

Refreshments were served by Melba Blackstone, Helen Sandmeyer, Mimi Small and Caroline Adams.

You should have been there!



CONSERVATION NEWS

from FRANK LITTLE



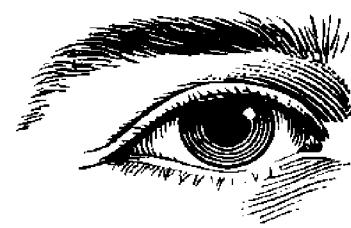
For those of us interested in preserving some of our unspoiled coastline there is good news: the Cape Cod National Seashore bill was signed into law last month. This action creates our second National Seashore Area (after Congress votes the funds), the first being Cape Hatteras which was established in 1937. It also raises hopes for two similar measures to establish National Seashore Areas on Padre Island in Texas and at Point Reyes in northern California. A National Seashore Area is a portion of coastal land administered by the Department of Interior with a status slightly less than that of a National Park, the accent being more on recreation than on preservation, but with preservation still important.

In contrast, however, a Crash Program to Save Wetlands—Congressman Dingell's H.R. 7391 received a serious setback when the Senate Commerce Committee lopped \$100 million from the \$150 million bill. The House had passed the bill with scarcely any opposition; now the Senate Committee emasculated it with a two-thirds cut! There is still an outside chance that the measure can be saved by an amendment from the floor of the Senate.



While discussing the topic of our critical wetlands shortage, a galling inconsistency of federal policy immediately comes to mind. On one hand, the Department of Interior is desperately trying to acquire some of the rapidly disappearing marshes, financed with revenues collected by its Fish and Wildlife Service from sale of Duck Stamps; on the other hand, the Department of Agriculture is subsidizing farmers for draining wetlands through the so-called "Agricultural Conservation Program". Thus aided by funds collected from U. S. taxpayers the government drainage program has blotted out marshes far faster than another branch of the same government, also with public funds, acquires other marshes. Make sense?

Our government is not always inconsistent: it is with pleasure, and a touch of provincial pride perhaps, that we note the appointment of Charles H. Callison, assistant to the president of the National Audubon Society, to the Water Pollution Control Advisory Board. The two-year appointment was made by President Kennedy.



Looking Ahead...



Audubon WILDLIFE FILMS



■ ■ ■

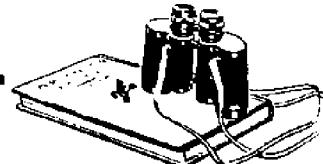
Fran William Hall

Land of the Sky Blue Waters

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1961

Perhaps no other section of North America surpasses in stories and Indian lore the fabled lake country of the upper midwest. Fran William Hall of Northfield, Minnesota, expert photographer-naturalist, has produced an exciting chronicle in all-color film of the many birds, insects and animals about whose lives the Indians spun their legends.

Roger Peterson Says—



"The new checklist of the Birds of Southern California published by the Los Angeles Audubon Society is one of the handiest, most up-to-date, and well-organized regional publication I have ever seen. No one who goes out birding in southern California can ignore this important booklet. It will make your birding doubly effective."

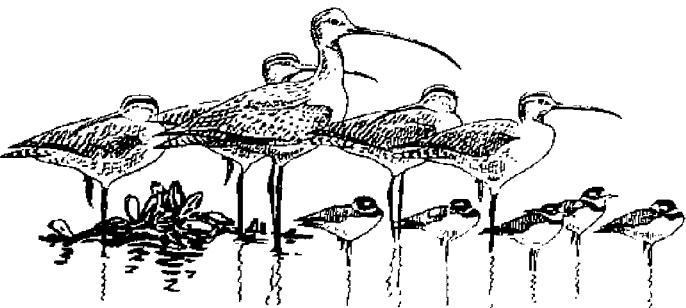
Order yours from Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., L. A. 47.... \$1.15 postpaid.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Birds

BY ARNOLD SMALL

As is usually the case in late summer in Southern California, attention focuses on oceanic birds. Don Bleitz reported seeing Brown Booby on Prince Islet (off San Miguel Island) July 25. No one is certain of the status of this bird, but Bleitz has reported seeing this species there on several prior occasions in the years past. In the hope of finding some interesting pelagic species near San Clemente Island on Aug. 12 I boarded an "albacore special" at midnight. At 4:30 a.m. we were drifting about 10 miles west of San Clemente Island when we saw dozens of little black and white birds hovering over the lights of the boat and sitting in the waters around us. They were uttering a twittering noise and obviously were attracted by the lights. We finally made them out to be Xantus' Murrelets and estimated there to be more than 300 of them. Although the nesting season was well over for this species, and they are not nocturnal birds, they seemed to be heading out to sea from the vicinity of San Clemente Island. Normally young Xantus' Murrelets leave the nest within three days of hatching and take to the sea, and during incubation the adults leave the nest to feed before dawn and return just after dark. On no prior occasion have we ever seen more than a dozen or so of these birds during a single day, and during this particular trip we saw no Xantus' Murrelets during daylight. There were not a great many pelagic birds to be seen during the rest of this day although several Black-footed Albatrosses flew by, and only one each of Black and Ashy Petrels were seen. A single Skua made the day well worthwhile. We were probably too early for good flights of Shearwaters and Sabine's Gulls as only a few of each were seen.



About 18 Wood Ibis visited the several coastal lagoons near Oceanside and Solano Beach during late August, but did not remain for long. The Elegant Tern flight during August was one of the poorest as only two birds were seen away from South San Diego Bay and those were at Malibu, Aug. 28. At Solano Beach Aug. 29 Guy McCaskie found 1 Solitary Sandpiper and 20 Lesser Yellowlegs while at Oceanside on this date he found 1 White-faced Ibis, 20 Knots, and 30 Lesser Yellowlegs. A single Osprey was at Newport Bay Aug. 28.



The shorebird migration gathered momentum during the last week in August as thousands of phalaropes gathered on coastal lagoons of San Diego and Orange Counties. An Eastern Kingbird was found near Oceanside Aug. 29 by McCaskie and is one of the very few records for this region. Flocks of migrating swallows began to appear near the coast and in the inland valleys during late August and the first White-crowned Sparrow was reported from Montecito Aug. 18. A Northern Waterthrush was collected at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley Aug. 18.

During October look for increasing numbers of Elegant Terns and perhaps jaegers along the coast pirating the terns and Bonaparte's Gulls. Watch also for the early arriving Pintails and other waterfowl, as well as migrating grebes, loons, and hawks. The first southbound juncos, Hermit Thrushes, and White-crowned Sparrows should be seen during the month also. Remember, the Los Angeles Audubon Society maintains a Rare Bird Alert, and rarities should be phoned in to the Editor or Audubon House as soon as possible.

HELP



The Tanager

In response to the call by mailing editor, Mimi Small, more than a dozen people appeared at Audubon House on Aug. 28. In about an hour and a half they stuffed and stamped more than 700 Western Tanager envelopes thereby saving your society more than \$20 for this service. Punch, cookies, and good conversation rounded out the evening. Many thanks to those who helped. If you are willing to help out for just one evening (or more), phone Mimi Small at VE 7-2272. Next mailing party is Monday, October 30.



BIRDING in the Southwest

by Carolyn Adams

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

Big Bend National Park, Texas, is an exciting place for the birder, offering in its 1107 square miles of mountain-canyon-desert complex an opportunity to see a variety of birds in a setting of strange splendor. The park lies along the border of the United States and Mexico. It is bounded by the Rio Grande for 107 miles along its southwest and southeast sides, and takes its name from the huge bend that the river makes as its course runs alternately through the hot sandy lowlands and cuts through 1500 feet-deep canyons.

From U.S. highway 90 one may take either the road from Alpine or from Marathon to reach the park. As the road makes the slow ascent from the desert, watch for Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, White-necked Raven, Black-throated Sparrow, and Road Runner. A stop at one of the numerous washes that cross the road may produce Curved-bill Thrasher, Inca Dove, Say's Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Phainopepla, and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. Leaving the mesquite and creosote bush of the desert, the road climbs steadily toward the Chisos Mountains, passing through Green Gulch where the vegetation changes to Pinyon Pine, oak, and juniper. Reaching Panther Pass at 5800 feet it descends abruptly to The Basin where the campground and cabins are located. One may stay in a modest cottage, luxurious stone cabin, or camp in comfort here where each campsite has its own ramada - a cement floor sheltered by a sloping roof which shades the table and provides shelter from a sudden shower.

In summer Scaled Quail are abundant in The Basin, and the fluid song of Scott's Oriole is the morning "alarm clock." A Varied Bunting is even likely to be found among the more common crowd of birds that move through the golden agaves of the campground - Brown Towhee, Mockingbird, Blue Grosbeak, House Finch, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-eared Bushtit, and Common Bush-tit. The whispered whistle of the Elf Owl is often heard in the dusk and pre-dawn hours, and a sighting may be had if one is patient and searches in the canyon just below the camp. An all day trip to the high country is a "must," for it is only by climbing six miles (on foot or by horseback) to Boot Spring (6,500 feet) that the Colima Warbler

may be found. Its only known United States nesting place is located here in the Chisos, and the bird is quite easy to find. Even if it were not, the trip would be worth the climb for it is rich in other treats. Magnificent views are to be had from the trail as it switches back and forth up the mountain. Band-tailed Pigeon, Mexican Jay, Black-crested Titmouse, Rock Wren, are among the birds seen as one reaches the richness of Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, Arizona Cypress, Alligator Juniper, and the rare Drooping Juniper, resident of Mexico and Central America. In the area near Boot Spring the Colima Warbler nests regularly, and in mid-summer may be seen feeding young in the low growth beside the stream. If one goes on beyond the spring, following the trail beside the stream up to a little canyon where abundant flowers attract innumerable hummingbirds, the reward may be a sight of the Lucifer, and possibly even a White-eared, among the Broad-tailed, Blue-throated, Rufous, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds which are a certainty.

The hardy hiker (or rider) may continue to the South Rim for a lunch rest and a spectacular view of Mexico spread out far below and beyond the muddy Rio Grande. Check the Turkey Vultures, Common Ravens, and hawks soaring on the air currents here. An Aplomado falcon could be found.



To explore the other habitats Big Bend has to offer one must drive down from The Basin to the two canyons. At Santa Elena Canyon, 35 miles to the west, wade across Terlingua Creek, climb a short rocky trail, and walk a short distance into the mouth of the canyon whose sheer walls rise so precipitously they seem to lean over and block out the light. Here the silence is occasionally broken by the cascading song of a Canyon Wren or the shrill cries of the White-throated Swifts as they veer steeply down over the river. Boquillas Canyon, equally distant to the east, is more open. Rio Grande Village Campground is located nearby. It is much too hot to camp here in summer, but birding in the early morning or evening may provide more desert species including Vermillion Flycatcher, Verdin, Bell's Vireo, Summer Tanager, Cardinal, Pyrrhuloxia, Painted Bunting, and the rarer Varied Bunting. The desert Poorwill and Lesser Nighthawk are commonly seen at dusk along the roads from the canyons back to the cool comfort of The Basin. ■