

## The Western Tanager

VOLUME 28

APRIL 1962

NUMBER 8

## BIRDING HINTS AND HELPS

By R. DUDLEY ROSS

## PART ONE

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

PLUMMER PARK

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD.

LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

2,500 species represents a much smaller proportion of the world's birds than a U.S. list of 500 species represents of the birds to be seen in this country. By this I do not mean to belittle the desirability of birding in other areas or the pleasure to be had in doing so. The important thing to remember is that the compiling of a list is not the be-all and end-all of birding, even though there are those who appear to think so. The birder who will not exert himself to see an interesting bird because it is one he has already recorded, is like the man who wouldn't read a book because he had already read one.

## Keeping a list

There are several ways of keeping a life-list. In my own case, I began with a loose-leaf ring binder, with sheets size 5 1/2 x 8 1/2". In the front of the binder I started with No. 1 and listed each bird in numerical order with the date it was first seen. Thus you have a running total. However, I headed another sheet with the name of the species and placed on this page such notes as I wanted to keep, adding to these notes each time I again saw the bird. These notes include not only the date of the observation but the place, number seen, circumstances unusual behavior and, in fact, anything which I felt I wanted to record. These individual sheets are kept in proper AOU check-list order and I thus have a list in the front of the binder in numerical order, as well as a sort of ledger in check-list order and complete with pertinent notes. My own notes have now expanded to the point where I have four such notebooks. For people who do not wish to keep voluminous notes, there is a publication, in spirally-bound form, called "Birder's Life-list and Diary" by Ray and Betty Dietert. This contains a list of nearly all U.S. species in check-list order, with space for very brief notes about each. Such a binder can be used for recording each species seen, with date of observation, but it does not provide a life-list in numerical order, nor is there sufficient space for lengthy or continued notes. My own notebooks, in addition to details of each observation, also contain data concerning good birding localities, with detailed directions for reaching them, including exact mileage from the nearest town, with route numbers, places to stay and local contacts. This makes it possible not only to return easily to such a place but also enables one to pass valuable informa-

(Continued on Page 58)

Birding as a hobby has much to offer its devotees. Almost everyone concedes its esthetic appeal. To the tired businessman, the busy housewife, the harassed parent and, in fact, to all those whose business, profession or normal routine places them under frequent strain, it offers a welcome change of pace - an opportunity for relaxation. It gives to all an appreciation nature. It provides healthful exercise, which may be as strenuous or as mild as one may wish. It sharpens one's powers of observation and thus increases his awareness of the things about him. It is a hobby the cost of which can be controlled to fit each individual's circumstances or desires. One which can be a source of pleasure after many other hobbies must be given.

After sufficient knowledge and experience has been gained, the amateur ornithologist (I prefer the term "birder") can then make some contribution to science.

## Identifying the "Life-Bird"

When one sees a bird for the first time, is called a life-bird or a "lifer." Sooner later, the active birder begins to record the species he has seen and thus is born the life-list. The keeping of a life-list is a very personal and variable thing. I know people who place on their list birds they've heard but not seen, and I even know a few who will put a dead bird on their life (?) list. Others will add a bird seen too briefly at too great a distance for them to identify it, based on someone else's identification. I consider all these practices to be dubious, say the least. Unless you see a bird a few times and see it well enough to identify it satisfactorily, you delude no one but yourself when you add it to your list. I know this is a very controversial statement but I joy feeling that I need apologize for nothing on my own life-list. Moreover, a large list is not necessarily a measure of one's ability in the field or of one's knowledge of the birds seen. In some instances, a large list simply indicates the owner has had the time, money, and desire to travel extensively.

I know several people with U.S. life-lists of over 500 species who, unaided, did not have found or identified every bird on their lists. More than once, I have had an exasperating experience of seeing a flash of blue or of hearing a call or song, though being able to make a definite identification. I heard one of my jinx birds three different occasions, once had the rest glimpse of it, without feeling justified in adding it to my list. Finally, more in four years from the first encounter, I

## Exotic Birds

Occasionally, exotic birds from other lands are seen in the field. In most cases these have escaped from a zoo, a private collection or a cage. It is often difficult or impossible to determine whether one is dealing with an escape. I do not count such birds, for instance, as Red-breasted Goose or Shelduck, interesting as it was to see them. It is true that birds from other countries have been introduced and have become established; such birds as the House Sparrow, Starling, Pheasant, Chukar, etc. Others have appeared under their own power possibly aided by storms, and some of these have bred and have become fixtures, such as Cattle Egret, Smooth-billed Ani and Spotted-breasted Oriole. At present there is a flock of six Flamingos, living in a wild state in southern Florida. Many birders have rushed to see them. However, they have not bred and are generally considered to be escapes from the much-publicized flock at the Hialeah Race Track. In the Pasadena area there are Peafowl which live and breed in a wild state but I know of no one who counts them as they were formerly pet birds, and were abandoned by their owners. There is no hard and fast rule for some of these cases; your conscience must be your guide.

Most serious birders keep a life-list of birds seen in the U.S. and for years a much sought-after goal was to bring one's list up to 600 species, there being approximately 650 species in this country. Now that Alaska and Hawaii have achieved statehood, this situation has become more complicated but 600 species is still a good mark to shoot at in the "48 states." I say this because most birders will probably not get to either Alaska or Hawaii. Some people keep an all-inclusive list of all species seen within the AOU check-list area. This includes all of North America north of the Mexican border, plus Bermuda, Greenland, and Baja California. On more than one occasion I have noted that when a birder first adds new species in a foreign area, he begins to talk about his world list. There is nothing wrong with this but, when lists are being compared, there must be a common basis for comparison. A world list of say

# The Western Tanager

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
7373 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 16  
HOLlywood 7-9495

Editor	Arnold Small
	3028 Cavendish Drive., Los Angeles 64
Asst. Editor & Art Editor	Robert Sandmeyer
Conservation	Frank Little
Field Notes	Arnold Small
Audubon Activities	Russell Wilson
Calendar	Douglas Dick
Typing	Helen Sandmeyer
Mailing	Caroline Adams Mimi Small

## CONSERVATION news

FROM FRANK LITTLE

The plight of the rare Tule Elk has long been of concern to the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Many of our members have written letters protesting the special Tule Elk hunts that have from time to time been proposed in order to reduce the herd size. Several years ago we devoted one of our Tuesday evening meetings to the problem. And just last week the Executive Board voted to contribute \$10 to the Committee for the Preservation of the Tule Elk. It might, therefore, be of interest to our members to have a quick glance at the current developments in this matter.

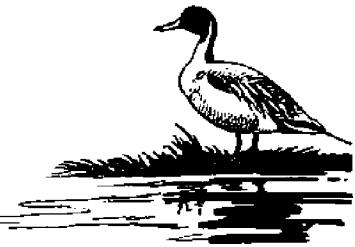
First, however, for the benefit of our many new members, it might be well to recap the situation. The Tule Elk in Owens Valley represent the last remnants of this unique species in a wild, free-roaming state. Originally inhabiting the Great Central Valley of California, this "pint-sized" species of elk has been dispossessed by agriculture and urban development.

The National Park Service fenced in a band of Tule Elk on the floor of Yosemite Valley with the intention of preserving the species, but the band did not prosper. Under agreements between the Los Angeles Bureau of Water and Power (owner of most of the Owens Valley) and the National Park Service (protector of the elk), a second transplant was tried: this time in Owens Valley under supervision of the California Fish and Game Commission. Here for over twenty years the band has bred and increased.

This "plant" promised no competition with crops or domestic animals because the farmers and cattlemen had been removed earlier to protect the watershed of the City of Los Angeles. During World War II the Water Board reversed its exclusion policy and, as a war emergency measure, allowed cattlemen to graze herds on Owens Valley watershed. Here the present problem begins. When the war ended, the cattlemen -- recognizing a good deal when they saw one -- petitioned to have their permits extended. The permits were extended; the cattlemen are still there. As a matter of fact, these same cattlemen are now protesting the competition they are getting from our little band of elk which has, in the meanwhile, quietly increased its size to about 300 members.

## AUDUBON JUNIOR PROGRAM

INTRODUCES BOYS AND GIRLS  
TO THE WONDERS OF THE  
WORLD AROUND THEM



The study of birds has many values for boys and girls. It satisfies their urge for adventure -- for exploration and discovery. It helps acquaint them with their environment, and establishes basic attitudes for protecting and conserving the natural resources of this environment. It provides stimulus for learning about other parts of the world, and the relationship of all life on this planet. It helps a child gain a better understanding of himself -- of his skills and abilities. It also helps him recognize his responsibilities as a citizen of his country.

The materials included in this bird program are easily and effectively integrated with all areas of the school curriculum, as well as with the programs of many other youth groups. They provide a lively and meaningful activity for Audubon Junior Clubs. They establish a focal point for a wide variety of natural science learnings, and lay a solid foundation for more advanced scientific study in many fields. Most important of all, they arouse a child's appreciation of the beauty and values of the world around him, and encourage his desire to protect and conserve these values.

A PROGRAM OF THE  
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
1130 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, N.Y.

SOMETHING NEW  
Botany Field Trip  
To Topia Park  
Saturday, April 7th.  
See Schedule



At one time (1949), the herd numbered almost 500 at which time a "hunt" was scheduled in order to reduce its size. This "hunt", as attested by many a seasoned hunter, was a revolting spectacle involving no sport, only slaughter. Many were shot from jeeps, others were paraded on to a firing line where they were riddled by wholesale volleys, still others were carelessly wounded and left to die painfully from their wounds. When the smoke settled, 119 elk remained. Several subsequent "hunts" have been proposed but, largely through the efforts of conservationists, have been denied.

Thus the present conflict: the cattlemen feel that the maximum number of elk should be about 125; the conservationists, heeding the advice of many renowned biologists, feel that at least 300 are needed.

(Continued on Page 62)

Welcome

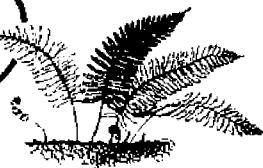
Mr. & Mrs. Milton Alpern  
1403 N. Vista St., Hollywood 46  
Miss Grace Black  
6609 1/2 Orange St., L. A. 48  
Mr. James R. Coates  
4565 Coronado Ave., San Diego 7  
Mr. Robert F. Conner  
8342 W. Manchester Ave., Playa Del  
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Cooley  
11457 Venice Blvd., Apt. 4, L. A. 8  
Mr. & Mrs. Leon J. Corbey  
4906 Rosewood Ave., L. A. 4  
Mr. & Mrs. Leon Dall  
11747 Kiowa Ave., L. A. 49  
Miss Mary L. De Wolf  
1386 Kelton Ave., L. A. 24  
Miss Mathilde Ferro  
532 Spoleto Dr., Santa Monica  
Mr. Jack B. Kemmerer  
4407 W. 61st Street, L. A. 43  
Mr. John M. Snider  
1956 Myra Ave., L. A. 27  
Miss Gwendolyn Timmons  
4530 W. Avenue 41, L. A. 65  
Mr. Richard C. Wightman  
224 E. Floral Ave., Arcadia

PRINTERS OF THE TANAGER  
George Reproductive Company  
935 South Olive St., Los Angeles, Ca.

April 1962

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

## APRIL 1962



Mrs. Russell Wilson, Executive Secretary

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

April 5      THURSDAY      EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING      7:30 P.M. - Audubon House.

April 7      SATURDAY      JUNIOR NATURALISTS      9:45 - 11:15 A.M. - Los Angeles City  
Nursery in Griffith Park, 2650 No. Commonwealth. The program  
will be on the propagation and importance of our native chaparral plants. Meet by  
the nursery gate.  
Chairman: John Peebles - HO 7-1661

April           SATURDAY      BOTANY TRIP - 10:00 A.M. - Tapia Park parking lot in Malibu  
Canyon. Road reached either from Ventura Fwy. or Coast Highway.  
Bring picnic lunch and enjoy a new Audubon activity. Watch for others to  
come.  
Leader: Jack Clarke

April 10       TUESDAY      EVENING MEETING      8:00 P.M. - Great Hall, Plummer Park,  
Hollywood. "Between the Tides", a trio of films in 16 mm, color  
and sound, depicting, in time-lapse and closeup photography and under-water  
sequences, the ecology of that fascinating world of the seashore.  
Chairman: Bob Blackstone - CR 6-3879

April 14       SATURDAY      FIELD TRIP - 8:30 A.M. - Chantry Flats. Take the San Ber-  
nardino Freeway to Rosemead Blvd., turn north to Foothill Blvd.,  
turn right to Santa Anita Ave., turn north to the end of Santa Anita Canyon Rd. Fine  
birding at Chantry Flats and with a mile hike down to the stream. Dippers, Canyon  
Wrens and possibly a Lazuli Bunting. Bring lunch and binoculars.  
Leader: Dave Robison - PO 1-0217

April 20       FRIDAY      BAZAAR WORKSHOP - 10:00 A.M. - Audubon House, Plummer  
Park. Items made to sell at annual Christmas Bazaar.  
Chairman: Olive Alvey - NO 1-8036

April 26       THURSDAY      MORNING MEETING - 10:00 A.M. - Long Hall, Plummer Park.  
Five sound-and-color films: "The Living Bird", "Five Colorful  
Birds", "Journey into Spring", "Bushland Fantasy", and "Wild Fowl in Slow Motion".  
Mrs. Catherine Freeman will be the projectionist. One bird will be discussed in  
detail.  
Chairman: Olive Alvey - NO 1-8036

April 26       THURSDAY      MAILING PARTY      7:45 A.M. - Audubon House, Plummer Park.  
Mailing of Tanagers, conversation and refreshments.  
Chairman: Mimi Small - VE 7-2272

April 28       SATURDAY      WEEK-END FIELD TRIP - DESERT - 7:00 A.M. - Meet in  
Covington Park, Morongo Valley (about 10 mi. north of U. S.  
60-70-99 on the 29 Palms Highway). From here to 1000 Palms  
Oasis, Mecca north end of Salton Sea. Group will camp Saturday night at Finney  
Lake (about 3 mi. south of Calipatria on Calif. 111; turn left into State Refuge). Dry  
camp; insect repellent. Desert birding should be excellent with migration in full  
flight.  
Leader: Arnold Small - VE 7-2272

May 3           THURSDAY      EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - 7:30 P.M. - Audubon House

May 5           SATURDAY      JUNIOR NATURALISTS - 9:45 - 11:15 A.M. - Griffith Park Boys  
Camp. Annual Pet Show and Nature Collections contest. For  
further information call:  
Chairman: John Peebles - HO 7-1661

May 13       SUNDAY      PELAGIC TRIP - ANACAPA and SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS -  
7:30 A.M. - Height of Shearwater migration. Limited to first  
35 people who call leader for reservation. Fare: \$7.00. Boat Cinnamon Bear  
will leave from Port Hueneme Sportfishing Dock; bring lunch, motion pills, sun  
lotion, sweater.  
Leader: Arnold Small - VE 7-2272

# BIRDING

(Continued)

## HINTS and HELPS

tion along to other interested birders. The next best thing to seeing a new bird yourself, is to show one to someone else or to be able to help them see it on their own.

### Special lists

Many birders like to keep a special list of those species seen in their home state. If they travel a good deal or do a considerable amount of birding in other states, they may even keep more than one state list. If one lives in the country or in some place favorable for bird observation, it is often interesting to keep a garden list. A list of this latter type may properly include any bird seen flying over. For example, I would count on my garden list a flock of Canada Geese or a migrating Turkey Vulture, provided I were on my own property when I saw them. Some such lists reach surprising proportions.

Still another form of record-keeping, indulged in by many birders, is to keep a year's list. This may be, at your own discretion, a list of all the species seen in a calendar year in your own state, county, city or town. Another type of year's list is one which includes all birds seen anywhere at all during the year. For many of us this last kind of list will mean birds seen in the U.S. However, when I visited Mexico in 1957, I kept a year list of all birds seen in the U.S. and a separate list of those seen in Mexico.

### Selecting Binoculars

I am assuming that everyone really interested in bird study has a pair of binoculars. Some of you will, at some future time, wish to change the glass you now have for one which you feel will better meet your needs. Most people find the 7 x 35 glass a fine all-around binocular for birding. Such a glass combines a reasonable degree of magnification, plus good light-gathering power. The statement has often been made that a 7 or 8 power glass is the maximum which can be held steadily enough by most persons to be of use in the field. While this may well be true, many birders use 9 or 10 power binoculars with good results and I have even seen glasses of 16 and 20 power similarly used. This is something which you yourself will have to determine, bearing in mind that the higher the power, the smaller the field of view, unless the objective lens is correspondingly larger. Another point of personal preference is whether to have a lightweight or a regular weight glass. Some people do not mind carrying a fairly heavy glass, such as a 7 x 50, around their necks all day long, while others would find this burdensome. A new binocular may cost as little as \$20 or \$30, but those of the finest precision and workmanship can run as high as \$200 or \$250. All things considered, one of the best binocular values today is the Bushnell, which will cost between \$70 and \$125, depending upon the model. These glasses, while of Japanese manufacture, are made to Bushnell's rigid standards. One

thing to bear in mind is that a good glass will, with reasonable care, last for many years and it is therefore not extravagant to invest in one which will stand up well under constant or frequent use.

### And Telescopes

Eventually, the desirability of owning a telescope will become obvious. The Balscope, made by Bausch & Lomb, is the standard by which all others are judged. This 'scope, with one eye-piece, costs \$115. For scanning purposes, most people use the 20 power eyepiece, because of its larger field. Useful auxiliary lenses are the 30 and 40 power eyepieces. A turret is available which can be fastened to the 'scope with a couple of screws and it is quite reasonable in cost - about \$15. This makes it possible to have three or four eyepieces of different power available for instant use merely by revolving the turret. For studying waterbirds, wildfowl, hawks, or shorebirds a 'scope is a very helpful piece of equipment, and there are many other instances where it will come into use as well.

Due to the limitations of space, it is not possible, in an article such as this, to do more than make a few suggestions in the hope they will help birders get the most out of their chosen hobby. In the next and concluding article I shall deal with the subject of building an ornithological library and also with the fascinating project of planning extensive birding trips.

## RESIDENT BIRD AND WILDLIFE STUDY BEGUN

The latest issue of Audubon Field Notes laments the "aversion of westerners" to population studies. An examination of the 1961 Breeding Bird Censuses indicates the editors have grounds for complaint. Central America contributed more census than the entire western half of the United States -- and more came from British Honduras than from California.

We in California have several distinctive habitats; the chaparral is one of the most interesting, and we have acres of it within the Los Angeles city limits. To show those editors we can do population studies, and to develop the interest of Audubon members, Hugh Kingery, with the aid of several Audubon members and two non-birding friends, has staked out a 13 acre study area in Griffith Park. Anyone who wants to help or learn or inspect may contact Hugh at DU 3-6282 or Marion Wilson at Audubon House for directions.

Identification of plants and animals, according to Aldo Leopold, comprises only an incidental part of modern natural history. Relationships between each other, between them and other plants and animals, and between them and man constitute broad fields for fuller studies. To broaden its bird study, the National Audubon Society sponsors and publishes Breeding Bird and Winter Bird Censuses. Join us at Griffith Park.

## EMINENT AUTHORITIES USUALLY AGREE... (well, sometimes)

### SOME BIRDS LOOK PRETTY MUCH ALIKE...



A big help to you in solving this problem is

## THE NEW BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ANNOTATED FIELD LIST

by Robert Pyle, revised by Arnold Small

available for \$1.15 at Audubon House  
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles 16



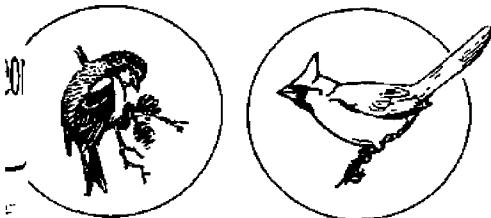
# Audubon Activities

by RUSSELL WILSON

After a period of prolonged, intermittent rain that has made this one of the wettest Februaries of recent record, Sunday, the 25th, dawned bright and clear, but cold. Among the thirty birders who met field trip leaders Irving Goldhaber andannah Walker at the Los Angeles County Arboretum were new members Ethel Higan, George Rigby and son Marty, and an it-of-towner, May Sherman, from Sky-nd, North Carolina.

Among the fifty-four birds observed were all three goldfinches, a Slate-colored Junco, an early Rufous Hummingbird, Canada and Snow Geese, and a Red-shouldered Hawk. With steady onshore breezes producing strong up-drafts along the front of the Sierra Madre Mountains, it was a good day for the spring migration of Turkey Vultures and we watched groups of tens, twenties, and fifties soar effortlessly northward--probably several hundred in

Since picnicking is not permitted at the arboretum, those of us who came with lunches drove to the Wilderness Park at the mouth of Big Santa Anita Canyon to fish off a very pleasant half-day of bird-



March provided us an extra field trip when a number of the Audubon societies of Southern California were invited to the National Audubon Society's Center at El Monte on March 3. San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles, Pasadena and San Diego were represented and after being welcomed by Bill Howard and introduced to the staff of the Center, we were divided into two groups and conducted on a tour of the Center by Miss Bullion and John Bornean.



Of interest was the new water-table lake, which has recently been excavated and which will add to the variety of birds attracted to the Center once it has been planted and stocked. Our bird list totaled forty-two species and the best bird here is always the Cardinal, which is limited in Southern California to this very restricted area.

Hot soup provided by our host supplemented what each of us had brought and we enjoyed a pleasant lunch hour while getting better acquainted with a wider circle of birders and conservationists. All members of National Audubon can be proud of the outstanding educational program at the Center, which reaches upward of forty thousand young people each year.

It was nice to have Ethel Craig out for a field trip again, and also to greet new members and friends Louise Vann and Dr. and Mrs. G. A. Green.



Field trip chairman Dave Robison personally conducted the March 10 trip to the Tujunga Wash and, as promised, showed us the Cactus Wren, which is a good bird when one realizes how little of its needed habitat remains close to our great metropolitan spread. On our way to the appointed meeting place Marion and I found a flock of 28 Tri-colored Blackbirds in a field at the corner of Sheldon and Glenoaks but were unable to find them again as the trip came around that way two hours later. Our list of fifty-one species included seven ducks, four swallows, three wrens, three

blackbirds, the Green Heron, Mountain Bluebird, and, I am sorry to say, several Starlings.

Each field trip this year has attracted some of our new members or a birder from out-of-town. This is good and indicates growth for the society. Saturday we welcomed new members Mr. and Mrs. Beals, and Margaret Halliday from Toronto, Canada, for whom Irwin Woldman obligingly provided transportation. A special word of thanks to Al Ryan, member of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society and of the Sierra Club, who has been making a personal crusade for the preservation of the Wash. Mr. Ryan met us at our starting point, briefed us on efforts to prevent the development of gravel operations and helped with the identification of plants and shrubs.

After lunch at the Hanson Dam picnic area, three or four cars went up the Tujunga Canyon, while Dave led the rest of us to Descanso Gardens, where we finished out the day.



The Thursday Morning Meeting in February fell on the 22nd, and, due to the holiday, many members who are not ordinarily free in the morning were in attendance. When Mrs. Samuel Ayers, Jr., was unable to provide the program as announced, due to serious injury in an accident, Catherine Freeman showed pictures and conducted a bird recognition test of thirty to forty birds, using slides.

When Alice Lewis alone posted a perfect score, it was agreed that more study of this kind would be profitable. The meeting of March 22 will continue this theme with emphasis on the recognition of bird calls.

Many thanks to Catherine for her fine performance in an emergency and on short notice.



Program for the Tuesday Evening Meeting, March 13, was provided by Mr. William N. Goodall, Western Representative of National Audubon Society. Mr. Goodall related the story of the organization of the Society and its early history and growth, until it now ranks as second-largest among private conservation organizations. He reviewed the major activities of the Society, its early concentration on the acquisition of sanctuaries, its later campaign for protective legislation, and its present emphasis on education. The announcement that there would be no camp program in the west this year and the veiled suggestion that the camp program, when resumed, might not be in California came as bad news to all of us.

In connection with the present "Save the Bald Eagle" campaign, Mr. Goodall presented the film "The Bald Eagle, Our National Bird" photographed by Bayard Reed and Arthur Allen for the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology.

(Continued on page 60)

# Birding in the SOUTHWEST

By Robert Blackstone

## SAGE GROUSE COUNTRY

We were traveling along U.S. Highway 395 north of Sherwin Summit, peering into the night so as not to miss the sign marking the road where we were to turn off. Reaching it we turned eastward, following the written directions Arnold had gotten from one of his correspondents. After one wrong turn at the very first, we found the right track and wound through the sagebrush of this seven thousand foot high valley for several miles; over the bridge, past the old deserted ranch house, until we arrived at our destination--the ancestral "strutting ground" of the Sage Grouse in this area.

It was between two and three in the morning, and we could see very little of our surroundings even when the moon occasionally came out from behind the clouds. We rolled out our sleeping bags in the rear of the station wagon to catch two or three hours sleep. Before the first light of dawn we were up again, and were able to see that we were on the edge of a very large level field bare of sagebrush and bounded north and south by very low hills, while to the east the fourteen thousand foot high White Mountains towered above the low hills in the nearer distance, and to the west rose the Sierra Nevada.

Already with the first light of day, we could see a score or more of Cock Sage grouse in position. Each seemed to have chosen a spot perhaps only a few inches higher than the surrounding ground as the place to proclaim his territory. Here he would strut in display, tail spread fanwise,

chest thrown out, head back, wings partly spread and the feathers of his neck and chest raised to form a conspicuous ruff around the neck and extending down to his belly. He would shake his wings and ruff two or three times while inhaling and inflating the air sacs on his throat, and would then exhale from these with a "plopping" sound which is audible for a considerable distance. These air sacs were visible as conspicuous round, orange colored protuberances extending beyond the white feathers of the ruff just below his neck.

We watched this performance from the car windows for over two hours, in utter fascination, and even took some photographs, though the distance was a little too great (we were some thirty feet distant from the nearest cock). By this time all but a few of the grouse had left the arena, the dispersal taking place gradually as the excitement appeared to wear off. No hens were present at first, but when the display was at its height there were some thirty-five to forty, while the number of cocks had increased to over a hundred. This fantastic courtship display



on the great frozen field, which still, in late March, had patches of snow on it, and with the towering White Mountains in the background, was a never-to-be-forgotten sight. No description could do it justice.

The range of the Sage Grouse is very nearly coextensive with the sagebrush areas of the west. This is not surprising, since nearly three-fourths of the food of this grouse has been found to consist of the leaves and flowers of the various kinds of sagebrush, and their nesting and other habits are peculiarly adapted to this habitat. In California the Sage Grouse occurs only in the northeast corner of the state and down east of the Sierra as far south as northern Inyo County. The courtship display is performed from late March into early June; the height of their mating season being in mid-April. The purpose of all this is undoubtedly selective; it is said that only a relatively small percentage of the males succeed in mating--the strongest. These "arena displays" are performed by the Prairie Chickens and by the Sharp-tailed Grouse as well. However, the range of the former is more easterly, while the latter, though formerly occurring in California, is no longer to be found here.

For any birder who is interested in more than merely adding to his "life list", it would be well worth the trip, at the proper time of the year, just to see this display. This area is otherwise unspectacular in an ornithological way. We saw the common birds to be expected in this habitat: Horned Larks, Sage Sparrows, and the like. In the creeks and near the Owens River were a few ducks and a small flock of Canada Geese. Golden Eagles and a Rough-legged hawk we more or less expected, but the sight of a splendid adult

## Audubon Activities

(Continued from page 59)

The film has magnificent shots of the birds in flight, plucking their prey from the edge of a lake, close-ups of activities at the nest, the exercising of the young before their first flight, the almost incredible banding activities of Mr. Charles Brode, and the great concentration of eagles in Alaska. Certainly this film deserves to be given the widest showing possible.

During preliminaries the report of the nominating committee was made and the slate of elective officers for the coming year read. The amendments to the by-laws, which had previously been read and published, were formally adopted.

Attendance was over seventy and we were happy to welcome Mrs. Virginia M. Martin, who introduced her daughter Peggy Buckey, a new member, and Mr. A. K. Waerker and his sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. O. C. K. Hutchins of Alton, Ill.

## \* TANGER FOLDING and MAILING PARTY \*

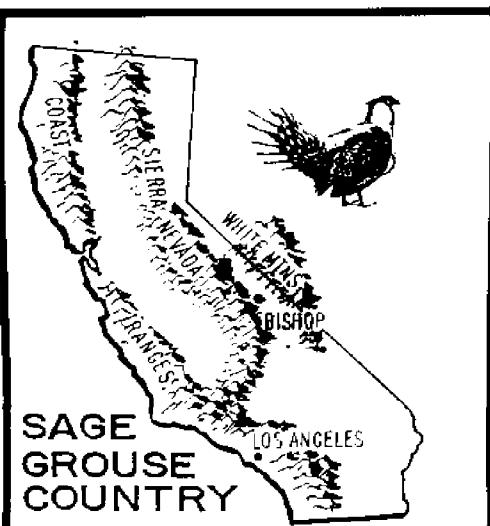
Thursday, April 26th.

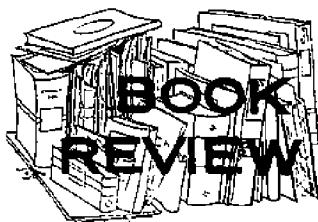
Call Mimi Small  
VE 7-2272



Bald Eagle we felt was a bonus.

It has been suggested that an official Los Angeles Audubon Society field trip be made to this area during the "strutting season". It would make an interesting, and different, sort of field trip for those hardy souls who would be willing to get up in the middle of the night--literally--and go out to wait for a chilly dawn at the edge of the strutting ground. These, however, would be rewarded by one of the remarkable shows nature has to offer.





BY BILL WATSON

Two books recently acquired by our library are "Travels and Traditions of Waterfowl" by H. Albert Hochbaum, and "Penguin Summer" by Eleanor Rice Pettingill.

TRAVELS AND TRADITIONS  
OF WATERFOWL  
H. ALBERT HOCHBAUM

H. Albert Hochbaum may be familiar to readers of Natural History Magazine. He has had two articles in the magazine in the past few years: "The Spring Passage" and "The Brood Season". The first is about migration; the second is about Canvasback Ducks. His second book, "Travels and Traditions of Waterfowl", originally published in 1955, is about migration. Mr. Hochbaum does not hold with the "instinct" theory of migration. Rather, he most reasonably presents his ideas of "tradition" to explain migration. In his book, his informative and convincing theories are based upon his experience of many years as the director of the Delta

Waterfowl Research Station in Manitoba, Canada. Readers of "Migration of Birds", Fish and Wildlife Service Circular 1b, by Frederick C. Lincoln will find Hochbaum's theories on migration often quite opposed to Lincoln's. However, Hochbaum has carefully reasoned out his ideas and has definitely made an important contribution to our knowledge of bird migration in this book. The book is also interesting in that it gives an excellent description of the life of waterfowl during the season that they are away from us breeding in the north.



PENGUIN SUMMER  
ELEANOR RICE PETTINGILL

"Penguin Summer" was also the title of a Walt Disney movie production, which was exhibited several years ago. Eleanor Rice Pettingill is the wife of Olin Sewall Pettingill. Dr. Pettingill was commissioned by Disney to go to the Falkland Islands to study and photograph three dif-



ferent species of penguins that are found there. Mrs. Pettingill, who accompanied and assisted him, wrote this book herself with a great deal of intelligent good humor. She not only gives an excellent picture of the birds they saw, studied, and photographed there, but she also explains and describes the people and the life they lead on those dreary islands. The three penguins the Pettingills studied were the Gentoo Penguin, the Jackass Penguin (named for its braying call) and the Rockhopper Penguin. In addition to these, a number of other birds are mentioned along with the native flora of the Falkland Islands. The book, "Birds of the World", to be reviewed here at a later date, does not mention the Jackass Penguin as one of the burrowing penguins, but Mrs. Pettingill leaves no doubt that the bird does nest in burrows. "Penguin Summer" is illustrated by many black and white photographs.

## Brentwood Birdwatchers Attend Audubon Meeting

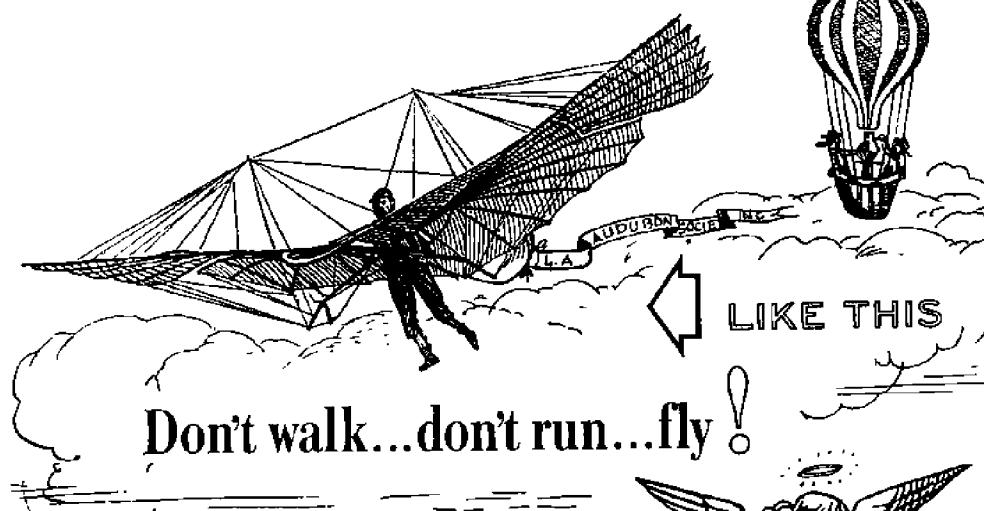
"Brentwood Birdwatchers Attend Audubon Meeting" reported James Tucker, associate editor of the Brentwood Beat (published at the Veterans Administration in West Los Angeles under the auspices of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service, Recreation Section, Neuropsychiatric Hospital) following his visit to the November meeting of our executive board. With Mr. Tucker were Charles Steffano, assistant chief of Volunteers, who explained to our board the operation of the volunteer program at the Brentwood hospital, and Bob Herrick, Recreation Section, who told us about the organizational set-up. The purpose of their visit was to interest the Los Angeles Audubon Society in sponsoring a birdwatchers club for the patients in the psychiatric ward who had requested the establishment of this club after reading a facetious article on bird watchers written by Mr. Tucker in the Beat.

Our sponsorship of such a club would involve sending a representative to their meetings, sending someone to help patients with bird identification on the hospital grounds, and eventually organizing field trips for patients advanced enough in their treatment to be permitted to take part in this type of activity.

Since the November meeting Mr. Tucker's Nature Notes in the Beat have included tips on birding and suggestions for organizing a club (sent him by Marion Wilson), a list of birding books available in the hospital library, and recently an announcement that membership cards are now available for patients. At the last meeting of our executive board a motion was passed "appropriating \$15 for an affiliate membership in National Audubon Society for the Brentwood Birdwatchers Club." This will entitle them to a copy of Audubon Magazine and a Conservation Leaders Guide.

## \* Astute Sagacity for April Birders \*

Advice: Go where the birds are.



NOT LIKE THIS  
(We hate to lose members)

Can you help us reach 1000?

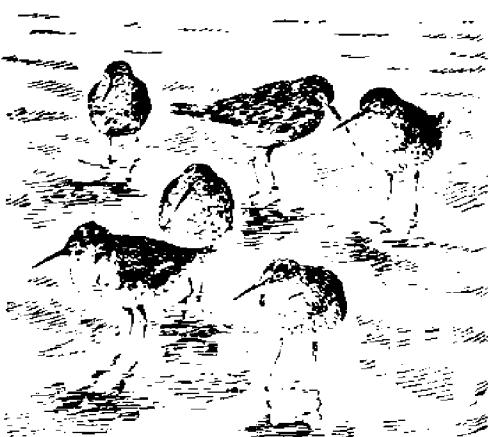
# Southern California

BY ARNOLD SMALL

## Birds

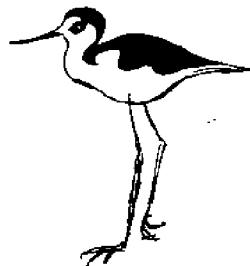


By early March reports were already being received of excellent wildflower displays in the lower deserts. The foothills surrounding the Los Angeles basin were carpeted with luxuriant greenery by the end of February and large fields of wild mustard added to the beauty of the scene. The Coast Coreopsis-flowering along the base of the Santa Monica Mountains and on the Channel Islands reached its peak in early March. All of this bodes well for the nesting season to come. There should be an abundance of herbs, seeds, and insects for all forms of wildlife concerned, and the effects upon the entire ecosystem should be greatly beneficial. By the end of February more than 18 inches of rain had been recorded in Los Angeles, and some outlying regions (such as Topanga Canyon) had received more than 30 inches. Many reservoirs had filled to overflowing and the mountains were clothed in more than 5 feet of snow above 6000 feet. When I flew over the San Bernardino Mountains on February 18 I noted that Big Bear Lake was almost full, and Baldwin Lake had much water in it. Both of these were virtually dry at Christmas. Many streams were still flowing by mid-March, Malibu Creek had washed a channel through to the sea and the lagoon had received a much needed irrigating. Duck-hunting clubs, which normally are drained of water shortly after the shooting season, still contained much water and attracted thousands of migrating ducks, shorebirds, and swallows.



Coastal birds such as loons, grets, scoters, and cormorants continued to be scarce throughout the winter, and the rock-loving shorebirds (Surfbirds and Black Turnstones) were not present at the Playa del Rey Breakwaters although dozens of the latter congregated at Malibu during the low tides there. Shorebirding was excellent at the inland marshes, with Common Snipe being very numerous. Northbound waterfowl began leaving the area in late February, but hundreds of ducks could still be seen at Upper Newport Bay, and some of the shooting clubs in early March. A lone Black Brant was at Point Mugu Marshes Feb. 24 and another was at Malibu Lagoon at the same

time. A fine migration of Turkey Vultures moved northwest along the south face of the San Gabriel Mountains during the last two weeks of February. Two Bald Eagles and a Rough-legged Hawk were seen near Port Hueneme Feb. 22, 24, and March 10. Migrating Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds were present in very good numbers during the first week in March. A few Black-chinned Hummingbirds were also present. A great migration of thousands of swallows (mostly Tree, with a scattering of Rough-wings, Violet-greens, and Cliffs) together with an almost equal number of White-throated Swifts appeared along the coast Feb. 22. On March 10 Barn Swallows and a single Purple Martin were added to this group - but most of the swifts had departed. A few warblers were reported in early March and the White-crowned and Golden-crowned numbers began to diminish. A Harris Sparrow was reported by Barbara and John Hopper as coming to their feeder in late February. They live in Woodland Hills.



April should bring a flood of migrants - especially in the interior lowland deserts. This is the best month to visit the Imperial, Borrego, and Coachella Valleys. Often at this time of year strong north winds blow down the desert valleys and pin the migrants down. It is possible on such occasions to witness remarkable throngs of birds, somewhat reminiscent of south Texas in spring. The very best places to bird in April are the many desert oases. So, coupled with a superb wildflower display, this should be the month of the deserts.

## Conservation NEWS

(CONTINUED)

to tide over possible natural disasters and thus keep the species from becoming extinct.

The Committee for the Preservation of the Tule Elk, numbering among its members many foremost naturalists, has been studying the problem for several years. It has come up with a plan (not really new) to create a natural park in the southern part of Owens Valley, thereby giving permanent protection to the endangered elk. At the same time, of course, a "living museum" of all forms of wildlife would be established. The proposed park would comprise some 240 square miles (90% of which is owned by Los Angeles) and would extend the width of the valley from about Lone Pine north to near Big Pine. Seems like a good solution to us; how about you? If you wish to get further information, to comment on this proposal, or to contribute \$2 (or more) for membership in the Committee for the Preservation of the Tule Elk, write to Buelo Edmiston, Secretary 5502 Markland Drive, Los Angeles 22.

## No more Norden

## AUDUBON CAMP OF CALIFORNIA SEEKS NEW SITE

Bill Goodall, West Coast Representative of the National Audubon Society announced that the scheduled Audubon Camp of California would not convene in the summer of 1962. Instead, Bill will devote his efforts to finding a new home for the "Audubon Camp of the West". If you have a lead on a desirable homesite, write to him at 1000 North Durfee Ave., El Monte Calif. The Audubon Camp program is one of the Society's finest and most far-reaching activities, and it is with regret that we cannot look forward to another successful season this year.

### Location:

"Accessible isolation" This means an area where transportation facilities for trains, planes, busses, are not too far removed. Reasonable access roads for autos; power; adequate water supply; PRIVACY in the immediate area of the Camp. In other words, 10 acres in tent offering suitable buffer controls, is as good as 100 acres in a flat, open area.

### Elevation:

Not above 7,500 - 8,000 feet. Sea level is possible, if not bothered by summer

### Natural History:

The area, particularly adjacent to Camp and within short driving distances, should have as rich a variety of wildlife and plant life as possible. Lakes, streams, forest meadows would add to the teaching potentials.

### Utilities:

Power-telephone service and sufficient heating equipment to meet the weather conditions of the area.

### Housing:

Should provide for 85-90 persons in a variety of combinations including:

Staff (with their families)  
Campers (married couples (4 to 6) in private rooms--3)  
Single persons (either sex) in combinations of 2-4 or 5 to a room.  
Lounge, Library and Dining Room facilities and furniture.

### Kitchen:

With equipment and storage (food, perishables, etc.) facilities to handle 100 persons per meal.

### Climate:

Suitable to an all outdoor program of field trips.