

Los Angeles Audubon Society

# The Western Tanager

VOLUME 29

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NUMBER 5



## Florida

### TRAVELOGUE

In the spring of 1962 I achieved a long held ambition to make a birding trip through southern Florida. Florida was not at its best that spring. A severe drought made some of the most famous areas, such as the Everglades, somewhat depressing. And yet, it was all very beautiful as I thought it would be, and I want to go back. If I could rearrange things my way, Florida, southern Texas, and California would be a contiguous Tri-state area.

My most vivid ornithological impression in Florida was that the Cattle Egret had taken over the state. Wherever there were cattle there were egrets. For mile after mile in the Kissimmee Prairie region I observed each cattle lot. None was without some Cattle Egrets and many had fair sized flocks.

I found Fred Shultz, the Audubon Warden in the Tampa Bay, expecting my telephone call on my arrival in Tampa on Sunday, April 22. When we met as arranged on Monday morning, Fred took me out into Tampa Bay to view the bird islands which he patrols for the National Audubon Society.

These island colonies are worthy of some statistics to illustrate the extremely important work performed by the Society in protecting endangered bird species.

Three islands in Tampa Bay are leased or owned by the National Audubon Society - Green Key (key=island from the Spanish "cayo"), Whiskey Stump and the Alafia Banks. Alafia Banks, which is the largest and most important of the three, is twenty acres in extent, about twelve of

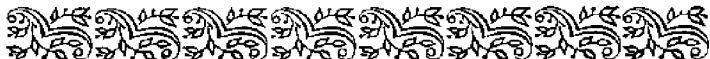


LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

PLUMMER PARK

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD.  
LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

By JAMES W. HUFFMAN



which are the rookery. During the normal nesting season, from about April to September, there are about 20,000 nests in the Alafia Banks rookery at any one time. This means that there may be in the order of 100,000 new nests made there during each season.

White Ibis nests are the most numerous (about one-half the total) on Alafia Banks, but the Cattle Egret is second in number and is rapidly increasing. The increase in this species is believed not to be entirely natural, but due in part to a continued movement of the Cattle Egret in from South America. Birds nesting in smaller numbers on Alafia Banks are the Brown Pelican, Glossy Ibis, Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, and Black-crowned Night Heron.

## The President Reports

# 1962 AUDUBON CONVENTION IN TEXAS

By ARNOLD SMALL, President  
Los Angeles Audubon Society

The National Audubon Society held its 1962 Annual Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas from Nov. 10-14 this year. This was an historic move away from New York. Now that the die has been cast, we can look forward to future National Conventions to be held near some of the best birding areas in the U. S., commencing with Miami, Florida, in 1963. This, no doubt, accounted for the overflow crowd of more than 1200 who attended this year. While Texas had the largest group in attendance, with almost 500 people, California ranked second with more than 100. Last year, when the convention was held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, California mustered only a dozen or so representatives, and if anything testifies to the approval of the new convention policy, this does.

Our local Los Angeles Audubon Society sent the President as official representative, but a number of other members attended as well--while Jim Lane pedalled his bicycle all the way there from his home in Santa Ana, California. The staff of the Robert Driscoll Hotel was overwhelmed by the overflow crowds, but did a first rate job of handling all the details. They remarked that they were quite surprised at the tempo of the convention, in that they did not have to put party-goers to bed in the early hours of the day. Actually, there was no time for this sort of thing since most of us were getting ready for field trips each morning at 5 A. M.

Scheduled field trips were offered to the Welder Wildlife Refuge, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and the King Ranch. The Aransas trip for the Whooping Cranes was a marvel in that more than 800 people were transported by boat and all aboard the fleet saw more than 20 of the birds. Unhappily, by the time we had left Texas, no more than 30 cranes had arrived at the refuge--and among them, no young birds. A bus caravan of more than twenty buses followed by an equal number of automobiles toured the King Ranch and witnessed the good works of brush control and range management. Our host was Robert Kleberg, director of the almost 900,000 acre ranch.

If the field trips were interesting, the papers, workshops, and programs were even more so. This was attested to by the capacity crowds at almost all of the meetings. The emphasis of several of the papers was directed towards problems of the pest control and predator control of the federal government. Senator Ralph W. Yarborough, of Texas delivered a stirring speech on the need for better and more effective conservation programs. Sandhill Crane Research reports were presented and they were especially interesting because of the recent hunting seasons opened on

## THE WESTERN TANAGER OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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FREE TO MEMBERS ..... OTHERS \$1.50 ANNUALLY

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## GETTING OUT THE TANAGER

On Monday evening, December 3, a group of 19 members met at Audubon House--purpose to fold your WESTERN TANAGER, stuff it in the envelopes and get it into the mail at the earliest possible date after receiving it from the printers. The work was accomplished quickly and efficiently with time to visit while working and time for coffee and cookies while exchanging information on all interesting aspects of the Society and birding.

This evening was the culmination of work that had been done during the month. Laura Jenner types up all the labels, which is no small task. Catherine Mangold and her daughter Stefanie have the responsibility of placing the labels on the envelopes, stamping on the return

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these birds. Sandy Sprunt related the Society's current research project on the Bald Eagle. While it is too early to draw conclusions, there is some evidence that pesticides have been directly and indirectly responsible for the decline of this bird in Florida.

President Buchheister reported on the programs and goals of the National Audubon Society. Allan Cruickshank followed with a superb color film showing the work of the Society's sanctuaries, notably those in Florida and Texas. John Henry Dick's illustrated program in the Galapagos Islands was one of the highlights of the Convention. Other workshops followed the Whooping Crane trip and the Convention dinner was notable for its program "Village Beneath the Sea"--a most unusual color film which eventually will be seen on the Wildlife Film circuit. Some two hundred people boarded buses on Wednesday morning for a post convention trip to the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Mexico. Now is the time to start making plans for Miami in 1963.



# BIRDING IN THE SOUTHWEST



## ANZA BORREGO STATE PARK

by RUSSELL WILSON

When winter comes and your favorite camping spots in the mountains are much too cold or even buried under snow do you ever think of the deserts of Southern California? For the camper, these dry, sun-drenched expanses offer a convenient supplement to our high, cool mountain forests and make camping a year-round pleasure. Birding should not be one's principal reason for going to the desert, rather it becomes an interesting extension of one's outing activities, the frosting on one's favorite cake.

The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park comprises over four hundred thousand acres in our southern desert and offers to those looking for it the brightest, warmest sunshine to be found in California from November to March, at a time when even the Mojave Desert and Joshua Tree National Monument have only a few warm hours in the middle of the day, followed by freezing temperatures at night. This park lies about one hundred sixty miles from Los Angeles and is reached by highway 71 from a point near Temecula to its junction with highway 79, east and south on highway 79 past Warner's Hot Springs to the junction with S 2, left on S 2 to its junction with highway 78, left on highway 78 down San Felipe Canyon until the State Park signs provide directions to the Park Headquarters.

Various provisions have been made for the park visitor. The campgrounds at Park Headquarters and Tamarisk Grove have modern toilets and hot showers, tables, stoves, and sun shelters. Primitive camp spots, to which one must bring his own water, are located at Yaqui Pass, Peg Leg Smith, Blair Valley, Bow Willow and Fish Creek.

Because of its low carrying capacity, it takes many acres of desert to support a few birds, although this sweeping statement also has its exceptions. We have seen flocks of from two hundred fifty to three hundred Lark Sparrows as well as good flocks of gold finches and Mountain Bluebirds. But when looking for birds, certain places have notable advantages over others. At Yaqui Well, an open water hole is surrounded by an unusually good stand of ironwood trees, mesquite, cat's claw acacia and other desert low-growing

shrubs. The area has been fenced and is closed to camping and provides a suitable habitat for many of the usual desert birds: Phainopepla, Verdins, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, Black-throated Sparrows, Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Say's Phoebe and Gambel's Quail. This spot is at the base of the mountain range, with the open desert extending eastward to the Salton Sea and so Gambel's Quail mingle with California Quail and possibly even hybridize. I have always considered the distinctive calls of these two quail definitive but recently I found one perched in an ocotillo and clearly identifiable as a Gambel's Quail. It was part of a covey which seemed to consist mostly of California Quail and while I watched it kept repeating the call of the latter species. Twice, however, it gave the clearly recognizable call of the Gambel's Quail.

We like to take long walks in the dry washes, just because we like to walk, but this brings us to another of the better birding areas. Here are found the best stands of smoke tree, desert cat-alpa, ironwood and mesquite, desert indigo and desert lavender. We always find Rock Wrens and Cactus Wrens, frequently a Crissal Thrasher, twice have found the rare LeConte's Thrasher and once flushed a Barn Owl.

Although springtime is blossom time on the desert, some things start blooming as early as mid November: chuparosa, desert lavender, smoke trees, ocotillo, and so one finds Anna's and Costa Hummingbirds throughout the winter.

The center of Borrego Valley consists of privately owned land that is now devoted to agriculture or is being developed as home sites while park lands surround it on all sides. Such crops as grapes, dates, cotton, alfalfa and Kaffir corn are cultivated. Over the years we have found this to be a good place to look for hawks, especially where cultivated fields lie close to mesquite thickets and other native growth, as they do along the north-south road that leads to the public school and the east-west road that passes the airport. One is sure to see Red-tailed Hawks, and for many years now we have found a Ferruginous Hawk here. Birding from the car with the top down we have been able to approach very close to the pole on which he has perched and to examine him closely. Twice we have found a Rough-legged Hawk and have observed him perched and also as he hovered over a field as this species so frequently does when hunting.

Part of the excitement of birding is the ever present possibility that one will see something quite good or something out of season. Thanksgiving Day we were surprised to flush a covey of eighteen or twenty Mountain Quail, which one would certainly not expect in this low desert location. November 22, 1961, we had a very late Scott's Oriole. One morning as we were finishing breakfast a Summer Tanager perched not more than twenty feet from our table and gave us our first sighting of this bird in California.

Over the years we have listed seventy-four species from November to February, but perhaps more important, we have enjoyed many hours tramping over the desert in a nature preserve expansive enough to provide real silence and solitude. ■



# FLORIDA TRAVELOGUE

CONTINUED

distance off of the reef and wade ashore. Passing through Cochran Pass in the reef, mostly by slogging in mud, we saw Limpkins, Purple Gallinules, and Spoonbills. Finally, we came out to the edge of Moonshine Bay on the west side of the reef. There were Turkey Vultures and Marsh Hawks hunting over the tall water grass. One of the "hawks" came close and we saw it was a female kite. She lit on some grass about 100 yards away. I waded over and got a close look before she flew off again. Later, I thought I saw a male kite at some distance.

Chandler and Stem believe the kite population is now down to about six birds. Contributing factors to the decrease, they think, may be the low water level of the lake, which makes it difficult for the snail, *Pomacea Caliginosa*, to reach grass to deposit its eggs, and to the increasingly large number of Limpkins who deplete the young snails. This snail is the kite's sole source of food.

Tuesday afternoon I drove south and west to Corkscrew Swamp where I was received with great hospitality by Warden Charles Hutchinson and his wife.

Corkscrew Swamp, a 6,080 acre tract, is a late addition to the Audubon sanctuaries in Florida. It contains the last great stand of merchantable virgin bald cypress and in ordinary years the largest Wood Stork rookery in the U.S. (6000 nests in 1961). This year the Swamp was almost devoid of surface water and the storks were not nesting. In some respects the low water level contributed to the Swamp's beauty. Certain plants, for example the Moon Vine, which are held in restraint by the water, were extraordinarily luxuriant in the drier habitat.

A famous feature of the Swamp is the boardwalk which, starting from the pine flatwoods bordering the entrance, penetrates into the Swamp two-thirds of a mile. Passing first through pond cypress, which are merely young bald cypress, the boardwalk crosses ponds covered with water lettuce and custard apple and terminates in the midst of the magnificent stand of bald cypress.

I spent all day Wednesday and part of that night in the Swamp or at the Hutchinson's cabin. Great interest was shown by Hutch and his boys in my projects -- one lending me his high top boots for protection from rattlers when I tramped through the saw palmetto around the edge of the Swamp, searching for Bachman's Sparrow (which I did not find). Hutch was hospitality itself, making me feel very much like one of the family and showing the Swamp off with great pride.

My luck with birds in the Swamp was good. I saw my first Swallow-tailed Kite, Brown-headed

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The concentration of nests is very high. In the most congested areas there is, on the average, less than one square foot of space for each nest. Each pair of birds builds a new nest each year, so that the accumulated nest debris is, as you might imagine, rather considerable. If space is not available in the mangrove trees, the birds nest on the ground. A practice indulged in by some species, of which I was not aware, is the habitual eating of nestling birds. The Black-crowned Night Heron is a notable offender in this respect.

Warden Fred Shultz and an assistant patrol the rookeries daily during the nesting season, primarily to prevent disturbance of the birds by fisherman, picnickers, or the curious. Fred is a typical dedicated conservation warden, having been in the Fish and Wildlife Service for twenty-two years.

Following Fred Shultz's helpful directions, I drove that Monday afternoon eastward across the Kissimmee Prairie to the town of Okeechobee at the north end of Lake Okeechobee. The Prairie is a vast reach of open grassland, dotted with oak, cabbage palm, cypress, and saw palmetto and containing vast cattle herds with the attendant Cattle Egrets, which were noted above.

Tuesday morning I met Glenn Chandler, the Audubon Warden at Lake Okeechobee, at Stem's Fishing Camp about halfway down the west side of the lake. Glenn I found to be a rugged individualist, sincere, likeable, capable, and obviously dedicated to his work. Somewhat like Edgar Kincaid of Texas, but less sophisticated and pungent. His patrol in this area includes some portions of the Kissimmee Prairie where Sandhill Cranes nest as well as a reef of small islands in the lake containing wading bird rookeries.

Glenn and Mr. Stem, a professional guide, took me out in one of Mr. Stem's boats. I was very fortunate in being in the company of these two since they probably know the birds of the lake better than any others. We were in quest of the Everglade Kite. The only remaining population of this bird in the United States is a few individuals in Lake Okeechobee, generally to be found in the vicinity of the island reef.

We went directly to the area where the Everglade Kites are most frequently found - not entirely by boat, however. The lake was very low and it was necessary to anchor the boat some



ARNOLD SMALL, *President*  
MRS. RUSSELL WILSON, *Executive Secretary*

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JANUARY 1969						
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- Jan. 3 THURSDAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 7:30 P.M., Audubon House.
- Jan. 5 SATURDAY JUNIOR NATURALISTS - 9:45 - 11:15 A.M., Meet at Echo Park Lake to study "Water Birds" For further information call John Peebles: HO 7-1661.  
Leader: Bill Watson
- Jan. 10 THURSDAY EVENING MEETING 8:00 P.M. Auditorium at West Hollywood Park, 647 N. San Vicente Blvd., between Santa Monica Blvd. and Melrose Ave. Parking lot on San Vicente. NOTE CHANGE OF DATE AND PLACE FOR JANUARY ONLY. Mr. Herbert Clarke will present "Holiday in Mexico", which will include his trip to San Jorge Island in the Gulf of California to photograph oceanic birds during the nesting season.  
Chairman: Russ Wilson PO 1-7635
- Jan. 12 SATURDAY - FIELD TRIP 8:00 A.M. in Maricopa at the junction of state highway 166 with U.S. 399. (Take U.S. 99 north from Los Angeles to junction with California 166 four miles north of Wheeler Ridge, west on 166 twenty-five miles to Maricopa). Birding in the vicinity of Maricopa for LeConte's Thrasher, Chukar, Sage Sparrow, etc. Blackwell's Corner for Mountain Plover and arrive at the Carrizo Plain in late afternoon to see the Sandhill Cranes.  
Leader: Jim Huffman FR 2-7124
- Jan. 24 THURSDAY MORNING MEETING 10:00 A.M. Long Hall, Plummer Park. "Identification of Birds by Roadside, Shore, Water and Sky Silhouettes", a round table discussion led by members of the Southwest Bird Study Club. There will also be a "spelldown" with "1001 questions about our local birds"  
Chairman: Catherine Freeman CL 7-7038
- Jan. 27 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP - PELAGIC TRIP TO VICINITY OF THE SANTA BARBARA ISLANDS for wintering alcids and other sea birds. "Corsair" will leave from 22nd. Street Landing, San Pedro at 7:30 A.M. Fare \$8.00. For additional details see announcement on page 42.  
Leader: Arnold Small VE 7-2272
- Jan. 31 THURSDAY - AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM 7:45 P.M. John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 S. McCadden Place, Los Angeles. "NOVA SCOTIA, LAND OF THE SEA", by Robert C. Hermes, explores the heart of the majestic spruce and hemlock primeval forests of the lovely Canadian province of Nova Scotia.  
Chairman: Laura Lou Jenner RI 8-7510
- Feb. 2 SATURDAY JUNIOR NATURALISTS 9:45 11:15 A.M. Meet at Griffith Park Zoo. "Kelkies, Training and Obedience" For further information call John Peebles: HO 7-1661.  
Leader: George Ray
- Feb. 7 THURSDAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING -- 7:30 P.M. Audubon House.

— CALENDAR CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE —

# Calendar

CONTINUED

Feb. 9 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. Ducks, shorebirds, rails, herons, etc. Bring lunch and binoculars.

Leader: Frank Little GL 4-4875.

Feb. 12 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING 8:00 P.M. Great Hall, Plummer Park. Program will be announced in February WESTERN TANAGER.

★ Good news for coffee drinkers. The necessary MJB bands have been donated by too many members to list here. Seven dollars and fifty cents cash has been donated by Lynne Jasik, a visitor here for a year, now returned to New York and Douglas Dick who makes name plates for binoculars selling them to the members for \$.25 and donating the money to the Society for one project or another. It was felt that immediate coffee was needed for morale at mailing parties and board meetings so the smaller number of bands with some cash was voted. Come and have a cup with us. ■

## CONSERVATION NEWS from FRANK LITTLE

Buena Vista Lagoon, one of the precious few fresh water areas in Southern California, is seriously threatened by a proposed real estate development. The Bird Island Development Co. has purchased 72 acres of land in and directly adjacent to the lagoon with the intention of creating a housing tract. Part of the plan calls for filling in some 30 acres of the lagoon and building residences on the fill. The plan in its entirety is a huge thing and would eventually pack the area with population - an outcome that would be disastrous to the Merton Brown Sanctuary which is on part of the lagoon.

The plan calls for rezoning the land from R1 to RT, and a public announcement of this rezoning in a local newspaper was the first that any of us had even heard of the matter. The City Council of Oceanside, it was reported, as to meet on November 14 to consider the change. Time was short. The conservationists quickly mobilized their forces, with the Nature Conservancy, which owns a portion of the lagoon, spearheading the attack. The immediate plan was to attempt to defeat the zoning change and thus frustrate, or at least dilute, the development. An appeal went out to many conservation organizations requesting that letters and telegrams be sent to the City Council protesting the change; the response was prompt. We of the Los Angeles Audubon Society inserted a notice in last month's TANAGER requesting such communications, and many of our members wrote to the Council (even President Carl Buchheister!).

On the evening of the 14th a small but determined band of conservationists composed of Don Kelley, western regional director of the Nature

## Pelagic Trip Planned

A pelagic trip is planned for Sunday, January 27, to the vicinity of the Santa Barbara Islands for wintering seabirds and alcids. The boat "Corsair" will leave from 22nd Street landing, San Pedro at 7:30 A.M. and will return to port before 6:00 P.M. This is a large, roomy, modern boat with an ample galley. The galley will be open to serve coffee, cold drinks and food. Lunches may be brought along.

The fare will be \$8.00 if we get 30 people; \$7.50 if we get 40 people. Reservations will be on a paid, first come basis, and will be limited to 40. Send check to Arnold Small, 3028 Cavendish Dr., Los Angeles 64 (VE 7-2272) before January 1, 1963. Make checks for \$8.00; \$.50 will be refunded if warranted. ■

Conservancy, Elna and Gerhard Bakker, John Tyler, Herley Gamon, and Frank Little journeyed to Oceanside to testify at the Council meeting. There they met a large number of property holders and citizens of Oceanside who also opposed the development and thus the zoning change. Impassioned pleas were made beseeching the Council to save the pristine nature of the lagoon. Sheaves of letters and telegrams were introduced--all opposing the change. Petitions were submitted. But all for nought. Almost as though they had rehearsed the scene, the Council members solemnly granted the zoning change by a vote of 4 to 1.

Things now look dark. Although this zoning change only affects about 10 acres, it would seem probable that the Council would follow its own precedent and grant a change for some 12 to 15 acres yet to be requested. The balance of the project, some 40 acres, is in the city of Carlsbad. The planning Commission of Carlsbad is meeting this month to study the matter. The tireless conservationists (John Tyler, Don Kelley, and others) plan to be on hand to testify at this meeting in the hopes of blocking the Carlsbad portion of the development.

It is still too early to predict the final outcome in this matter, but it seems that this is just one more demonstration of the axiom that to most people a marsh is for filling. Application of this axiom has led with disgusting regularity to the destruction of marsh after marsh, lagoon after lagoon. Of all of the natural habitats that we seek to preserve, the wetlands is the most difficult. We are hard pressed to convince the general public of the values in saving such "wastelands". ■



# FLORIDA TRAVELOGUE

CONTINUED...

Nuthatch, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. I felt especially good about the last when Dr. Sprunt, who was there leading an Audubon Tour that day, told me that he had not seen one on any trip there that season. There were migrating birds too, for example, Cape May and Worm-eating Warblers. An interesting feature was an otter that frequented the lettuce lake, "diving" beneath the mud into the subsurface water and bringing up large fish.

Wednesday night before I left Hutch showed a film of the early days of exploration and construction in Corkscrew. Some aerial views illustrating the commercial encroachment showed the actual felling of cypress containing active Wood Stork nests!

On Thursday I drove through to Miami. The first stop on the way was the Caribbean Gardens in Naples. California, of course, has its own fine botanical gardens, but I thought Florida's Gardens more exciting, probably because the vegetation was strange to me and so lush. Later I visited the Fairchild Tropical Gardens in Miami which I preferred to the Caribbean, principally because of its less commercial aspect.

The Caribbean was worth the fee charged for admission, however. In addition to the exotic vegetation, a variety of captive exotic ducks, geese, cranes and other birds roved the Gardens. At intervals along the paths were perched beautiful macaws. There was a sizeable lake at which was featured, at scheduled times, some sort of act performed by trained ducks. I did not stay to see the show.

South from Naples is Marco Island which is considered a "birdy" spot. I found it rather unproductive in the heat of mid-day. I did add the Black-whiskered Vireo to my list on Marco, however. In Florida if a typical vireo song is heard in the mangrove, a Black-whiskered is indicated. If it is heard outside the mangrove, it is probably made by a Red-eyed Vireo.

The Tamiami Trail which traverses Florida west and east, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic, along the northern edge of the Everglades, was also relatively unproductive, owing to the severe drought. The Everglades, ordinarily a continuous sheet of fresh water flowing slowly through a vast expanse of saw grass, now appeared as a grassy field threaded by a few muddy ditches.

Along the Trail I got one of the big thrills of the trip from about twenty (!!) Swallow-tailed Kites in one group. They remained close to the road, hawking over the field for many minutes and affording a wonderful view of their aerial evolutions.

Considerable time and tramping in the Ochobee area did not produce the advertised Cape Sable Sparrow. Later, Sandy Sprunt, the Audubon Research Director, told me that the sparrow had moved from this area during the drought.

I met Charlie Brookfield, the National Audubon's Florida Representative, and his Audubon Tour group by arrangement at the Anhinga Trail in the Everglades on Friday morning. Because of the generally low water level, water had been pumped into the Trail area. We had good viewings of alligators and Purple Gallinule there, and some miscellaneous migrating land birds. New for me were the Gray Kingbird and the Great White Heron. I proceeded with the group to Flamingo and spent most of the day in the Park. Generally, birding in the Park was not particularly good although we did see the Bald Eagle, Anhinga, and flocks of White Ibis.

After spending the night at Tavernier in the Keys I accompanied the Tour group into Florida Bay where we viewed several bird islands leased by the Audubon Society. From the boat we observed a rookery of White Pelicans and some young Bald Eagles, which had left the nest but had not gained sufficient confidence to roam beyond the islands. Man-o-war Birds accompanied our boat as we crossed Florida Bay. Later, after returning from the Bay trip, I had a pleasant talk with Audubon Research Director Sandy Sprunt, who was then living on Tavernier Key. Following Sandy's directions I found my first White-crowned Pigeons on a nearby Key. These were a few individuals that wintered in the Keys. The large flocks of these pigeons that migrate in for the summer season had not yet arrived.

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## ►►► 'ABOUT THE AUTHOR ...

James W. Huffman, Sr., is a birder of many years experience, having become interested in birds during his boyhood in Evansville, Indiana. He has made his home in Southern California since 1945, and has been active in the Los Angeles Audubon Society for several of these years. Jim is devoted to wildlife conservation, and undoubtedly it is this devotion which is responsible for his giving so much of his valuable time to Audubon work. He served as field trip chairman before and during his term as Vice President, and served as President of the Society from 1959-1962. During Jim's term as president, the Society made a great deal of progress; a more businesslike financial setup and a "new" WESTERN TANAGER are only two among many accomplishments during this time. He is now serving as Chairman of the Finance Committee. By profession he is a Materials Engineer in the aircraft industry. Time left over after professional and Audubon activities, Jim indulges in the appreciation of fine music. He is known as an excellent birder and a good companion, and has a great many friends in the Society.

# Audubon Activities

BY ELIZABETH ROSE



Modern methods of communication came to "birding" when a "walkie-talkie" set was used by Leader Laura Jenner and Arnold Small on the November 25th field trip at Upper Newport Bay and inland fields. The group that Sunday was small but they were able to experiment with the "walkie-talkie" to see if it could be used when an unusually large group might need to be divided. It was particularly successful when communicating out on the lagoon. Those who missed this trip, though, will be most envious when they learn that a bird, not common in this area, the Hooded Merganser, was seen. Four White Pelicans were also seen and a Black Brant at Bolsa Chica. One inland field had an unusual yield of at least five immature Red-tailed Hawks and three White-tailed Kites. Seven Red-tails could be seen standing in this field at one time. Remarkable in itself, nine people, five of them members, observed a total of eighty-two species.

To have gone on the December 1st field trip with Russ and Marion Wilson just to view the beautiful golden trees and to enjoy the tingling, clear air would have been reward enough but, in addition to this pleasure, twenty-five birders saw an average of two birds apiece. First of all, everyone ate a hearty breakfast at Tips, then went off to explore the river bottom where the reedy gurgling of the elusive Long-billed Marsh Wren alternated with the croaking of frogs. Here, too, there was a good view of the Sapsucker and a chance to study a variation of the species popularly known as the "Red-breasted" Sapsucker.

Enroute to Elizabeth Canyon and lunch there was much excitement engendered as first one, then two Golden Eagles flew over a hill. On the return trip, California Quail and several Rock Wrens were seen at this same roadside spot. Finally, at Cottonwood Campground, an excellent spot to keep in mind for spring birding, one thicket yielded many birds, among them the White-throated Sparrow. Pauline Cole, a new member, helped identify much of the "flora". Also of importance, Russ and Marion sighted a tree with twenty-one Turkey Vultures probably migrating southward.

The report of the December 8th Christmas Bazaar must begin with the awarding of "gold stars" to the workers who contributed many hours of time to the making of such items as the Christmas wreaths, tree ornaments, corsages, toys, and bakery goods. They were: Chairman Olive Alvey, Louise White, Frances Kohn, Effie Mahaffie, Juanita Castator, Rose Bussey, Gudrun Pepke, Alice Lewis, Ruth McCune, and Elsa Schwartz. Next, "thank-yous" for contributions from Mary Sterling of

Sterling of California Co., packages of sun-dried fruit; and to Hannah Walker, meat platters, casseroles, and coffee servers. All this added up to a money intake of around \$225.00 for exhibit funds. In addition, Sales Chairman Gene Rose sold the gross amount of \$120.00 in Audubon materials.

Only recently innovated, an Ecology Field Trip, Sunday, December 9th to the tide pools at Corona del Mar got off to a slow start because of the illness of Co-leader Mae Wilson but Bill Watson and the small group in attendance joined up with John Hopper, President of the San Fernando Society, and friends, and a wealth of marine life was seen and identified. A chance to look closely at a very large octopus "made" the day.

Did you know that Audubon Librarian Bill Watson was a judge in the "Name the Baby Gibbon" contest conducted by the City? The contest was for boys and girls 12 years of age and under. The contest ended Jan. 5th. There was only one catch, they couldn't tell if the gibbon needed a boy or a girl's name!

Refreshments and the presence of many members who are also friends, gave the December 11th Evening Meeting the aura of a party. President Arnold Small "wore many hats". First of all, he reported on his trip to the National Audubon Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas where he had been sent as a delegate. The account of taking 800 people out in small boats to see the Whooping Cranes was most fascinating. Frank Little, who had been delegated to take charge for Arnold, then called for observations and reports. Herb Clarke told the very amusing story of the search south of San Diego for the Black Rail which, because of its reluctance to fly, must be sought in cold marshy waters at high tide. No, the group found Clapper, Sora, and Virginia Rails but no Black Rails. Dave Duval then reported on another of the hard-to-see birds, the Condor. After the photographers had left, his group saw several Condors at close range in Sespe Canyon!

Arnold Small then showed his colored pictures which brought to life the article in the November TANGER, "North and South from Mackinac", an account of his nature studies last summer in Michigan. Several of his pictures were so beautiful they brought a spontaneous round of applause from the audience. Because of his depth of knowledge, he is able to show the trees, the landscape, the water, the flowers, and their relationships to one another and to his "first love", the birds. The study shown of the Kirtland's Warbler, its breeding ground, the import-

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## GETTING OUT THE TANAGER

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address and maintaining the mailing file. This gain is no small task but a very important one needing accuracy and promptness. Contacting the printer, seeing that the paper arrives on time and setting the mailing party date as well as calling those who have expressed a desire to help with this activity is the responsibility of Marion Wilson. Bill Watson opens the house so that early arrivals do not have to wait out in the cold night air; sees that people take boxes of envelopes to place in mail boxes and locks the doors. He may be called on to do any of the other tasks in an emergency and he always comes through.

Of course, all the above depends on two very important people--Bob Blackstone, our able Editor, and Bob Sandmeyer, our able Art Editor. The staff of writers are invaluable and make possible the editors' success for a well founded publication.

At this last mailing party we had three tables of six persons each and an expeditor. At the one in the library was Bob Blackstone, Christine Hayden, Dorothy Holland, Dorothy Harris, Larry Sansone, and Mimi Small. At the tables in the center room were Lee and Edith Eppler, Martha Edens, Russ Wilson, Jon Adams, and Bill Watson. The third table was manned by Ruth and Les Wood, Louise White, Iola Moore, Otto Widmann, and Caroline Adams. The Busseys, the Mahaffees, the Jenners, the Alpers, Virginia Lee, and the other half of the Blackstones and Smalls along with the Herb Clarkes, Jim Clements, Sandmeyers and others have helped with this important activity. With eleven issues each year many people may have the opportunity to help. All that is necessary is to register your name, address, telephone and the nights you are available (since it may be any night of the week) at Audubon House. A typed or well handwritten card sent by mail could be slipped into our file with little more work for the committee. Come out and join us sometime soon.

The expeditor, Marion Wilson. ■

## Audubon Activities

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CONTINUED

relation of the stands of Jack Pine, which must under 12 feet, was very well done. The series the Osprey and its nestlings represented the immense amount of time and effort Arnold expends gathering his pictures. Add to these the Bobolink, the Pitcher Plant, the Eastern Phoebe, and the Lady's-slipper and the picture story grows more wonderful. The pictures brought to everyone the atmosphere of the area and one could almost share the unique experience of jumping up and down on a spruce bog to make even the big trees dance.



## FLORIDA TRAVELOGUE CONTINUED

The next day, Sunday, turned out to be something of a farce, primarily through my own stupidity. Sandy had suggested that Noddy and Sooty Terns could be seen from boats out toward the Gulf Stream. Following this lead I arranged to take a party fishing boat out from Islamorada Key. I am subject to motion sickness, but the skipper assured me that it would be unnecessary to take Dramamine. The sea did appear very calm. Well, we fished by drifting, which means that the boat (and I) was at the mercy of the swells. Oddly, I caught the first fish of the day a few minutes after we began to drift. My second fish, a tuna, caught a few minutes after the first, was the largest fish of the day. And then it hit me. I was prostrate on the deck from about 10 o'clock until we returned about 5:00 p.m. Maddeningly, I saw a number of dark terns over the water at a distance, before my seizure, and I am certain that if I could have stayed upright, I would have identified one or both terns. However, when I tried, as I did several times, to get up from the deck, I became completely "unglued" and could not even hold my binoculars to my eyes.

By following Charlie Brookfield's helpful directions, I readily found the Smooth-billed Ani at Allapatah Gardens near Miami and the Spotted-breasted Oriole at the Miami Fairchild Tropical Gardens. The Oriole put on a fine show when I squeaked it up, singing and displaying itself beautifully.

The Fairchild Tropical Garden was entrancing. I visited it on two days while in Miami and highly recommend it as a "must" spot in that area. The varieties of vegetation are grouped very artfully. For example, the various palms are placed together in one grove, another area features the bromeliads (pineapple family), and a tremendously long arbor displays a vast collection of flowering vines. A tropical flavor is added to the Gardens by Macaws from the Parrot Jungle (a nearby commercial establishment) which occasionally wing by noisily overhead.

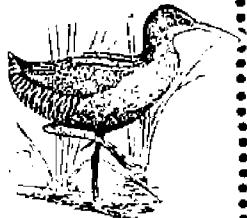
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## NOTICE

The County Park Department is refinishing the floor of Great Hall during the period of our January Evening Meeting. So, for this month only, the Evening Meeting will be held on Thursday (January 10) in West Hollywood Park. Consult the Calendar page for additional details.

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



## BIRDS

BY ARNOLD SMALL

Dry weather continued through November in southern California, although considerable coastal low clouds and fog kept temperatures at about normal levels. Fortunately, Santa Ana conditions did not often prevail and there were no major fires in the chaparral areas during this time. Many observers volunteered the comment that small land-birds seemed scarcer than usual this fall and I wonder how significant this statement is. Certainly, this information coupled with similar observations made during the spring migration and the nesting season in 1962 may give some cause for alarm. Numbers of individuals of small land-bird species should be accounted during this winter and throughout next year.

Coastal birding was rather poor during November, but several large flocks of scoters were noted. Cormorants and loons were not abundant, but Bonaparte's Gulls were very numerous close to shore during late fall. The flight of shore-birds was about normal, but Surf-birds and Black Turnstones have virtually deserted the three breakwaters at Playa del Rey. No explanation is offered other than the increasing foot and boat traffic in this area. Dunlin built up good numbers in November, especially at Upper Newport Bay, Bolsa Chica, and South San Diego Bay. Malibu Lagoon is virtually devoid of shorebirds now since there is far too much water for good mud flats. Apparently this condition is not just temporary since the new water-main which crosses the lagoon is periodically flushed, and the effluence spills into the lagoon. The waterfowl flight has been spotty--probably because of continued mild weather to the north of us. The Ruddy Shelduck returned to Malibu Lagoon in early November, after apparently having migrated somewhere. Ducks at Upper Newport were far down, but a male Hooded Merganser was there Nov. 25 together with four White Pelicans. The European Widgeon which was found last year at the San Diego River Flood Control Channel had returned also. Blue-winged Teal were not uncommon near Bonita in San Diego County. Large numbers of raptures (Red-tailed Hawks, White-tailed Kites, and others) were seen in the cultivated fields of Orange County near Upper Newport Bay Nov. 25. About 8000 Snow Geese with at least one Ross' Goose were at the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, but no Blue Geese were seen.

A hunt for Black Rails in the promising-looking marshes near Imperial Beach (where this species had been noted in years past) was instituted on Dec. 9. Thirteen of us waded into waters up to armpits at the height of the high tide, but we succeeded only in flushing dozens

of Soras, Clappers, and a few Virginia Rails. Three hours were spent in this endeavor while startled police watched from shore. Most of the rails were gathered in the deeper grasses beyond the Salicornia, and if the Black Rail were there we had a good chance of finding it. However, many of the rails took flight only after almost being stepped upon, and they were virtually invisible even while almost underfoot. Surely, the Black Rail must be one of the most difficult birds to see because of its undoubted rarity, reluctance to fly, and very small size. Although we were soaked to the armpits by the end of the day, we had a surprising amount of fun--mostly at each other's expense while we doubled over with laughter as one after another of us would sink out of sight while bravely holding binoculars aloft at all costs. A Louisiana Heron nearby greatly elevated our spirits when we realized how rare it was. McCaskie had located an American Redstart and a Swamp Sparrow near Bonita the week earlier, but we could find only a Vermillion Flycatcher there.

This winter, take care to note any significant changes from the usual in the populations of Robins, Cedar Waxwings, White-crowned Sparrows, and other winter birds. ■

## Florida Travelogue

CONTINUED

I was also impressed by the luxuriant flora throughout the residential area of Miami. A bizarre flavor (to the stranger, at least) is rendered by the Ficus trees that are common in lawns of Miami. They are so entirely different (sort of spooky, one Californian remarked) from anything on the West Coast. A variety of fig, sometimes referred to as the Banyan tree in Miami, the Ficus's long horizontally positioned limbs send down thin tendrils that, upon reaching the ground, take root and grow to become auxiliary trunks. I saw one in the backyard of a Miami house that must have had a thousand such trunks, ranging from lead pencil size to a girth equal to the tree's central trunk. Incredibly, it had a cook-out stove in the midst of the trunks which could not be seen from the periphery.

My Florida travels came to a close on Tuesday, May 1, when I left Miami to fly to Evansville, Indiana, to again cover the spring migration in Audubon Park, Kentucky. I felt very satisfied with the new birds I had seen in Florida. I missed a few "possibles," notably the Mangrove Cuckoo, the Short-tailed Hawk, and those birds found in or near the Dry Tortugas, the Sooty and Noddy Terns and the Blue-faced and the Brown Boobies.

These plus one or two others will give me further reasons to return to Florida. ■