

OFFSHORE BIRDING: PACIFIC COAST

By R. Dudley Ross

When one speaks of offshore birding, two rather different types of birding come immediately to mind. There is, first, what some prefer to call pelagic birding. This generally takes the form of cruising about in a boat a number of miles offshore, often with no specific destination and usually without making any landing until returning to the original point of departure. Sometimes a course is taken to the vicinity of an island or a group of islands where a landing may or may not be made, depending on various factors such as ownership of the island, weather conditions or restrictions preventing a landing, such as on San Clemente Island off the southern California coast. The object of such a trip is, for the most part, to find oceanic birds. The second kind of trip is one undertaken by boat with a landing as a specific objective. This kind of journey is usually for the purpose of seeing birds which either nest on the islands or which frequent the vicinity of the islands because of favorable feeding grounds nearby. Such a trip may include a certain amount of land birding on the islands, if a landing is made, and, depending on their distance from shore, may also produce interesting pelagic species on the trip out and back.

Apart from a limited amount of land birding which may be found on some islands, the term "offshore birding," refers to the true oceanic species which seldom venture upon land except for breeding purposes and which normally do not closely approach the shore. Loons, grebes, pelicans, cormorants, gulls, and terns are not really oceanic but coastal birds. Two exceptions to this general statement are Sabine's Gull and the Arctic Tern, both of which are seen as migrants, usually well offshore. In general, the true oceanic or pel-

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agic birds of the Pacific coast are albatrosses, fulmar, shearwaters, petrels, phalaropes, jaegers, and alcids. These groups include approximately 25 species plus another half dozen species which can be considered unusual to very rare.

I have taken many sea trips off both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, at times merely to cruise the ocean and again to visit islands. The difficulties of obtaining a boat and the high cost of doing so, unless a sizeable group is involved, tend to limit the number of places which are visited with any degree of regularity. The localities mentioned in this article are some of the best known, most productive, and most frequently visited spots, but there must be many others. Detailed information concerning some of these areas will be found in Dr. O.S. Pettingill's two invaluable books, "A Guide to Bird Finding East of the Mississippi" and "Guide to Bird Finding West of the Mississippi." I cannot recommend them too highly.



Vancouver Island This large island may be reached by ferry from Port Angeles, Washington, in 1 hour and 40 minutes, or from Seattle in about 4 hours. Both of these ferries operate to Victoria at the southern tip of the island. If one prefers to drive to the busy and attractive city of Vancouver, British Columbia, there is a ferry which goes to Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island (1 hour and 45 minutes), from which point it is an interesting 70-mile drive to Victoria. All three ferries carry automobiles. Birding on the island is somewhat limited with the skylarks, easily seen in Victoria, being the main attraction for birders, but the Boreal Chickadee and the Northwestern Crow may

also be seen on the drive from Nanaimo to Victoria. On any of the ferry trips many Glaucous-winged Gulls will be seen and probably Pigeon Guillemots and Marbled Murrelets. We were fortunate enough to have a good look at a Fork-tailed Petrel between Victoria and Port Angeles. Incidentally, on this ferry trip one can obtain an inspiring view of the Olympic range when approaching the Washington coast.

Destruction Island - To visit this island is a major project and, even if a boat is secured, Coast Guard permission must be obtained for a landing. The island has fine breeding colonies of Rhinoceros Auklets and Tufted Puffins and it is often possible to have very satisfactory views of them, through a telescope, from the mainland as they gather on the water in small flocks fairly close in. Even from the shore, this is a good area for Common Murres, Marbled Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots and, possibly, a Black-footed Albatross. Destruction Island is off Washington's northwest coast.

Three Arch Rocks - These three small rocky islands enjoy the status of a national wildlife refuge and are located off the northern Oregon coast opposite the town of Tillamook. A small fishing boat can be chartered at either Garibaldi or at Netarts for the one-hour trip, and Kirk's Oceanside Cottages at nearby Oceanside is a good place to spend the night. The entire trip requires but a half day and the myriads of birds on and around the islands are one of the great ornithological spectacles in North America. There are swarms of many thousands of Common Murres, with many Tufted Puffins and Pigeon Guillemots, all of which fly very close to the boat, permitting close-up views. Often there are goodly numbers of Sooty Shearwaters in the vicinity.

Farallon Islands This is another national wildlife refuge, the islands being located about 30 miles west and slightly south of San Francisco. The Golden Gate Audubon Society sponsors one or two trips a year to this region, at a nominal cost per person. The first half of October is probably the best time of year for seeing the uncommon, but regular, New Zealand Shearwater. At this time of year, in addition to a few of these distinctively marked birds, one usually sees good numbers of Pink-footed Shearwaters and many Sooties, with an occasional Manx for a dividend. Both Red and Northern Phalaropes are often seen on the trip and Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers are likely species. Cassin's Auklet nests on Southeast Farallon Island and many are seen flying about or resting on the water. Ashy Petrels also have nesting burrows on this island and are oc-

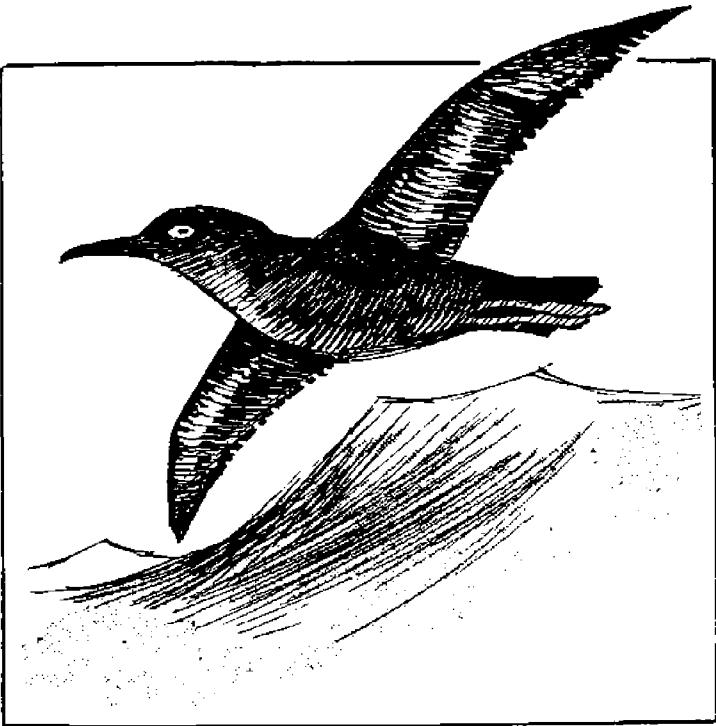
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OFFSHORE BIRDING

Continued.

asionally seen, as is also the case with the Tufted Puffin and Marbled Murrelet. In October the Common Murre is usually seen in some numbers and the Pigeon Guillemot is also common at times. Always a possibility, and to be looked for, is the Black-footed Albatross.

In winter, the Pink-footed Shearwater is still present, while Rhinoceros Auklets and Ancient Murrelets are usually seen and the Fulmar is a fairly good possibility.



Monterey - This picturesque small city some 120 miles south of San Francisco is a good departure point for half-day sea trips. Small fishing boats can usually be chartered for half-day trips. While a trip in April will be rewarding, it is in early October that one will see a greater number of oceanic species, and it is at this time of year that the New Zealand Shearwater occurs most regularly and in the greatest numbers. Two intriguing possibilities in October are Sabine's Gull and the Skua. On such a trip in early October of 1957 the day's list included Black-footed Albatross, New Zealand, Sooty and Slender-billed Shearwaters; Leach's, Ashy and Black Petrels; Red and Northern Phalaropes; Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Cassin's Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet; Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers; Sabine's Gull, and no less than 6 Skuas! This is another trip which the Los Angeles Audubon Society sponsors each year.

Channel Islands - These islands are a national monument and the trip there is one of the most popular sea trips among southern California birders. While one cannot land on the islands, the trip there is short and pleasant and cruising about in the vicinity of the islands nearly always produces worthwhile results. The islands are most easily reached from Port Hueneme (Oxnard) but it is also possible to engage a boat in Santa Barbara, although from this point the trip is somewhat longer. Most trips to the Channel Islands are sponsored by the Los Angeles Audubon Society at a modest cost. One of the fascinating things about sea trips is that one never knows what is going to be seen and that is equally true of the Channel Islands voyage. I have experienced good trips there in January and February but, usually the greatest number of species has been in September. Nevertheless, I recall one September trip which produced two species of shearwater, two of jaegers and one species of phalarope, but no alcids. I also remember a February trip when we had no less than 5 species of alcids and no other oceanic birds at all. Offhand, I would say that from January through March and anytime during September and October would be the best times, with winter trips producing more species of alcids.

San Clemente Island - This island is situated off the southern California coast, some 25 miles south of Santa Catalina Island and about 55 miles southwest of Newport Beach. There is a military reservation on the island and unauthorized vessels are not permitted within one mile of its shores. Nevertheless, in late August or early September this can be one of the most exciting sea trips to be found anywhere. Such a trip, on a memorable day in early September of 1958, produced 4 species of petrels and an equal number of shearwaters, all 3 jaegers (1 Long-tail collected), with about 30 Sabine's Gulls, 40 Arctic Terns, 24 Black-footed Albatrosses and 15 Zantus' Murrelets for good measure. In addition to the Long-tailed Jaeger, other rarities that day were the Pale-footed Shearwater and Least Petrel, although the latter by now may have proven to be rather regular at that time of year. Not all trips will be as productive as that one, but the possibilities are numerous and exciting. The Los Angeles Audubon Society has made the late summer trip an annual affair for the past several years, and an interesting and informative picture is gradually emerging. Because of the island's distance from the mainland, the boat usually leaves Newport at about 2:00 a.m. (sleeping accommodations for all) so as to reach the vicinity of San Clemente by daylight. Cruising around the island and to the west and south of it, one must expect the unexpected. Even the Red-billed Tropicbird is occasionally recorded from this area.

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Welcome!

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



BY ARNOLD SMALL

Birds

The author of this column is still absent on safari in Africa. We are looking forward to having him with us again with the October issue.

THE WESTERN TANAGER
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA

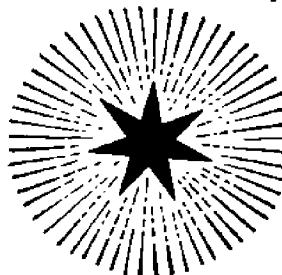
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*There may be a heatwave today
but tomorrow is Christmas!*



Can you spare a Blue Chip?

The Society wishes to acquire Blue Chip Stamps to provide chairs for the library. Any and all donations will be greatly appreciated.

Audubon Activities

This column will also reappear in the October issue and will cover the summer's activities as well. Kit Adams, our new editor of this column, had an opportunity unexpectedly materialize to take a trip to Europe, where he now is.



LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

CALENDAR



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september 1963

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September

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

Sept. 7 SATURDAY JUNIOR NATURALISTS 9:45-11:15 A.M. Fern Dell Nature Museum. Fossils in the local area.

For information call: Ed Anacker HO 7-1661

Sept. 10 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - 8:00 P.M. Great Hall, Plummer Park. Dr. Richard Boolootian of the Dept. of Zoology, U.C.L.A. will give an illustrated talk: "Sea Urchins - Past, Present and Future"

Program Chairman: Don Adams FR 2-5536

Sept. 14 SATURDAY FIELD TRIP 7:30 A.M. Malibu Lagoon for gulls, terns and returning shorebirds. Take Pacific Coast Highway past Malibu Pier to the bridge over Malibu Lagoon. Park on ocean side of the highway north of the bridge. From here we will work north along the coast. Bring lunch.

Leader: Bob Blackstone CR 6-3879

Sept. 22 SUNDAY - FIELD TRIP Cabrillo Beach and Harbor Park. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Cabrillo Beach Museum, 3720 Stephen M. White Dr., San Pedro. Take Harbor Freeway to San Pedro, go south on Pacific Ave. to 36th Street, turn left and follow signs to the museum. Last year this trip produced a good display of terns and jaegers. Bring lunch.

For information call: Audubon House 876-0202

Sept. 29 SUNDAY OPEN HOUSE 2:00-5:00 P.M. Audubon House. Refreshments.

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

Oct. 5 SATURDAY SPECIAL PELAGIC TRIP from Monterey aboard the "Grey Ghost" in cooperation with the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The fare will be \$4.50 per person. Make checks payable to the Golden Gate Audubon Society and mail reservations to:

Mr. Harold G. Peterson
3548 65th Avenue
Oakland 5, California

For additional information see announcement elsewhere in this issue.

Oct. 8 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING Program will be announced in the next TANAGER.

AUDUBON HOUSE

OPEN HOUSE
SEPTEMBER 29



AN EDITORIAL

Audubon Wildlife Film Series

By BILL WATSON

At our final Wildlife Film last season, our fine Wildlife Film Chairman, Laura Jenner, mentioned to me that we had an audience that evening of only something over three hundred persons. She felt that this was a very poor showing, and wondered what could be done to improve this situation.

Frankly, I found it disgraceful. I have been attending Audubon Wildlife Films for the past three seasons. From the very first, I have been greatly impressed by the fine quality of these films. The color films shown are every bit as good as those you have seen in Disney's nature movies. The educational content and entertainment value of these Wildlife Films are immeasurably better than Disney's productions. Indeed, Disney uses the same nature photographers who bring us their films for our Wildlife Film Series. When he wants the best for his movies, he has to go to National Audubon Society nature photographers for suitable material.

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How good are these programs? Personally, I have yet to notice the absence of Dr. Wesley Young, the Director of our Griffith Park Zoo. I have heard him publicly urge utter strangers to the Los Angeles Audubon Society to attend these films. And Dr. Young is not a member of our Society.

Rose Bussey, our Registrar, is also active in the Sierra Club. She says that about one half of those who attend the Sierra Club's Friday evening meetings buy season tickets to our Wildlife Films.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen Ryan attend our films regularly. Al Ryan is Chairman of the Natural Science Section of the Sierra Club, and he is presently the President of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. I have seen many of our friends in that branch at our Wildlife Films.

I am pretty active in our Society, and I personally know many of our members. I can honestly say that I see many in the audiences that I do not recognize as Los Angeles Audubon Society members. I would estimate that more than half of those in attendance are not Los Angeles members.

This year, to try to fill our 1100 seat auditorium, we are resorting to newspaper advertising. We are turning to the public at large. But here we have a branch of the National Audubon Society with a membership of over 900. Agreed that some of us are pensioners or do not have transportation. But what of you others? If the rest of us bought season tickets for ourselves and brought others, we could easily fill the auditorium ourselves.

These programs are not put together by the Los Angeles Audubon Society. They are produced by the National Audubon Society, the largest conservation organization in the country, to be shown all over the United States. They are big, wonder-

ful, educational, entertaining, beautiful, high quality, professional nature films, introduced, shown and narrated in person by the greatest nature photographers and lecturers in the country.

The series of five Wildlife Films presented each year by the Los Angeles Audubon Society are only shown once each season in Los Angeles, the third largest city in the nation. What sort of organization are we that we can only get three hundred people out with an auditorium of 1100 seats to fill at each program?

Our Wildlife Films series are presented in Los Angeles by us so that we may use the proceeds to give scholarships to worthy youth leaders and teachers so that they may attend Audubon Camp of the West. After a session at Audubon Camp, these youth leaders can only come home with a new enthusiasm and knowledge of nature and all its processes which they can then share with the youth of our community.

Conservation education is vitally important to the conservation efforts put forth in this country. The National Audubon Society is dedicated to conservation education. We, as branch of the National Audubon Society, are supposed to be dedicated to the same philosophies and policies of our parent organization. Whether or not we presented these films to finance these scholarships, the rewarding experience of attending these programs is worth every cent we spend on our season tickets.

If we were all really and truly dedicated to our local Society, our National Society, to conservation and our own intelligent education and rewarding entertainment, we would faithfully attend every Wildlife Film this season and pay \$4.00 for a season ticket to five Wildlife Films.

If you have never attended one of our Wildlife Films, do so this year. You would be pretty unusual if you did not think afterwards that you had gotten your money's worth and had enjoyed yourself thoroughly in the bargain. Come on out and attend your Society's program of Wildlife Films this year. Why not? There just isn't any reason why not! We can fill the auditorium ourselves. Let's do it!

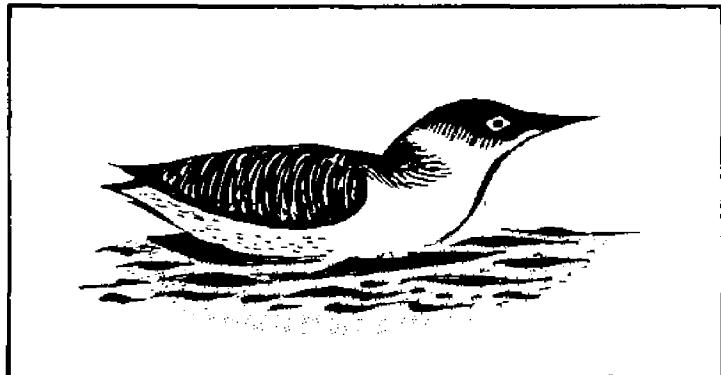
LOS ANGELES COUNTY FAIR SEPTEMBER 13th. to 19th.

If you are planning to go to the Los Angeles County Fair, September 13-29th, don't fail to visit the Audubon booth in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Building. This booth is maintained, as in the past, by the five Audubon Societies in the Los Angeles County and this year features the Nature Centers Program of the National Audubon Society and Nature Centers in southern California.

OFFSHORE BIRDING

CONTINUED

Los Coronados Islands - These small islands are actually a part of Mexico. Located just below the international border, seven miles off the coast of Baja California, they are easily reached by boat from San Diego, a trip of about 20 miles. The San Diego Audubon Society has sponsored a number of such trips, usually in the spring, and they have been successful in securing permission from the Mexican government for a landing on the northernmost of the five islands. This island is uninhabited except for birds and mammals. In addition to such breeding birds as Black Petrel, Xantus' Murrelet and Cassin's Auklet, one may also see there Brown Pelican, Western Gull, Rock Wren and Song Sparrow. The photographic opportunities are excellent. Among the birds which may be seen en route are Black-footed Albatross, Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwater and Xantus' Murrelet. California Sea Lions breed on the island and there are occasionally a few Elephant Seals there. Searching for the burrows of the Black Petrel and Xantus' Murrelet is pleasurable and downright challenging.



We have now covered a long chain of offshore birding areas, stretching more than 1500 miles, from just north of the Canadian boundary to slightly south of the Mexican border. Offshore birding on the Pacific coast is very enjoyable as one can nearly always count on reasonably good weather, at least in the southern region, and these trips almost invariably produce several interesting species of sea-birds, most of which would not otherwise be encountered.

In another similar article, to follow soon, I'll try to provide a comparison with offshore birding on the Atlantic coast, from Canada to the southern tip of Florida.

GOOD SEA BIRDING AND DON'T FORGET THE DRAMAMINE!

MONTEREY PELAGIC TRIP SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5th.

The Los Angeles Audubon Society has again been invited by the Golden Gate Audubon Society to participate with them in a pelagic birding trip out of Monterey. For the possibilities afforded by this trip, we refer you to Mr. Ross' article in this issue.

Possibly because the continental shelf here extends only a short distance from shore, Monterey appears to be the best place on the west coast to see some of the truly oceanic birds such as the Albatross, Skua and some of the rarer shearwaters.

Mr. Harold G. Peterson of the Golden Gate Audubon Society has chartered the "Grey Ghost" for this trip. Reservations will be taken in the order in which they are received. For further details consult the Calendar page of this issue.

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About the Author...

R. Dudley Ross and his wife Vivian will be remembered by many members, as they were active in the Los Angeles Audubon Society before moving to Pennsylvania some four years ago. He served as Field Trip Chairman and Screen Tours Chairman, and was First Vice-President at the time they left us. This is not the first article to appear above his name in the TANGER ("Birding in Mexico"--Sept. 1957 and "Birding Hints and Helps"--April and May 1962).

Dudley has made a fine science of bird-finding. The Rosses are two of that very select few who have a "Life List" for the continental United States of over 600 birds. They were featured in the column Scorecard of the magazine, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED in its issue of May 6, 1963. It was related there how the Rosses had added the Blue-faced Booby to their lists on a visit to the Dry Tortugas, to bring their total to 630. They have just recently returned from a trip to Panama where they saw 304 species, of which 215 were "life birds". Of the 967 species of birds listed by Blake as occurring in Mexico, the Rosses have seen 702!

Though born in England, Dudley has spent most of his life on this side of the Atlantic. Several years residence in Cuba gave him a command of Spanish which has stood him in good stead in their travels in Mexico and Central America. The Rosses have two married daughters who also live in the east.

By coincidence Dudley is guest columnist in "Bird Finding With Olin Sewall Pettingill" in the current (July-August 1963) issue of AUDUBON MAGAZINE, where he writes of birding in the Bahamas. Many of our readers will have read this, so we have avoided repeating what was written there in Mr. Pettingill's introductory remarks. If by chance you have not read it as yet, we refer you thereto for more on the Rosses.

conservation

NEWS

By NORMAN McGARY

Have you ever visited a roadside zoo or jungle garden? If you have you know that more often than not these exhibitors render an educational disservice to the public and shock the sensibilities of their patrons.

The unsanitary conditions in which the animals are kept and, in time, allowed to die is a nasty business and the importation of these animals needs more regulation, not less.

There are more ramifications and more potential dangers involved in the bill H.R. 1839 than meet the eye. The bill calls for removing the import tax on wild birds and animals shipped to the United States for commercial exhibit purposes.



One of the chief supporters of this bill is a man who makes a profitable business supplying animals to the motion picture industry for "jungle adventure" films. This same man owns a roadside zoo in Thousand Oaks, California.

Under present law if the animals are shipped to public zoological gardens, the payment of import duty is not required.

The National Audubon Society does not object to animals being shipped to these public zoos where they are displayed for scientific or educational purposes. These institutions are generally well staffed with competent people and serve a legitimate educational purpose.

In the future, however, it may become necessary to impose a quota even on the zoo trade, if their competition for rare species threatens the total removal of some wild animals from their natural habitat.

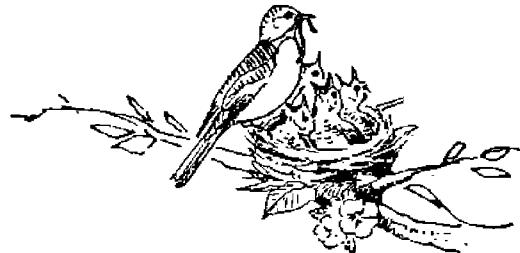
decline. Mr. Van Fleet spent part of every day from October of 1962 into January of this year counting and cataloging common migrants along the west coast of California.

Here are a few figures from his census: bluebirds were down 60%, robins 95%, warblers, kinglets, vireos, flycatchers, etc., 50%, and cedar waxwings 50%.

Most noticeable among these was the Robin. Earthworms, somewhat resistant to chlorinated hydrocarbons themselves, store these poisons in their fatty tissue, hence, when fledgling Robins are fed nice fat earthworms, during the nesting season, they are vulnerable to these poisons and are almost completely exterminated.

Perhaps this is a sign of things to come and may herald a string of events which may backfire on humanity with disastrous results.

In the warm morning sky a small insectivorous bird, perhaps a swallow, darts and soars taking an insect every fifth of a second. A small warbler may eat 10,000 worms, egg cases, nymphs or larvae in a single hour of foraging.



These events are small in themselves but were numbers of these birds to be drastically cut down the events which happened in Modesto might well occur all over the country. Modesto is a spick and span little community of prosperous citizens which was suddenly invaded by a heavy infestation of house flies. They drove house-holders crazy. Millions of flies were swept out daily only to be replaced by millions more. Dogs, cats and livestock were driven frantic. Flies crawled on the ground, covered the porches and were smashed underfoot. People couldn't drink, eat or even sleep in comfort. Could all this have been the result of our tampering with nature by using these "marvelous" creations of man, the insecticides?

Prompt action should be taken to put the control of these lethal poisons in the hands of competent people, otherwise the "merchants of death" who manufacture these poisons will have their way, animal and birds alike will be eradicated by this overwhelming policy of overkill.

During the summer, we lost the companionship of one of our field-trippers. Austin A. Innes, member of our Society for years, passed away suddenly. He was with us on our July Field Trip to Tucker Bird Sanctuary and we will miss him greatly.

In 1961 nearly 750 million pounds of insecticides were sold in the United States--of this 40% was sold in California. These astounding figures relate to the noticeable decline in bird-life along our pacific coast.

In a census taken by Mr. Clark C. Van Fleet, a noted conservationist, we can clearly see this