

THE WESTERN



TANAGER I

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CHRISTMAS TREES

--Grace S. Hall--

How fortunate that Christmas Trees are not confined to a single specie, for since they are not we can all have them no matter where we live. Each year throughout the land many varieties bring joy to the hearts of both young and old.

The Balsam Fir, whose needles are used to stuff pillows, is one of the favorites; while the Norway Spruce, though it did not come over until several years after the Mayflower, is also well established as a leader in Yule-tide activities. This latter is used in Europe and northern countries and is a close relative of the White Fir of our western United States. In country places White Pine is used, and the Douglas Fir, or Spruce, is common in the west. As a small potted Christmas Tree for table decoration, the Colorado Blue Spruce is quite to be desired.

In Los Angeles and neighboring cities the living Yule tree is most popular. Planted as a specimen tree the beautiful Deodar, or Himalayan Cedar, lends to decoration as does no other specie. Charles F. Saunders describes it as a "cone-bearing evergreen of striking aspect, with wide spreading, gracefully drooping branches, which touch the ground below and shorten gradually as the tree rises, until the spiry tips etch themselves against the sky."

The original home of the Deodar is northern India, where it forms noble forests at an elevation of six and ten thousand feet. Blanketed with snow for months at a time, it attains a height of 300 feet, a circumference of 44 feet, and is estimated often to be 900 years old.

The mile of living Deodar Christmas Trees in Altadena is well worth a visit. In this foothill town nearly fifty years ago Mr. T. L. Hoag planted 100 seedlings to border the entrance to a ranch owned by Captain Fred J. Woodbury. Later Fred C. Nash, a former president of the Pasadena Kiwanis Club, conceived the idea of stringing these trees during the holiday season with colored electric bulbs. Now each year at Christmas time hundreds of thousands of sightseers motor slowly down the avenue, while for three hours each evening squads of officers and companies of Boy Scouts assist in directing traffic.

One of our past presidents each year gives joy to many Audubonites and friends, who otherwise would not have the opportunity, by driving them over to see Christmas Tree Lane. Friends, take notice! "Go thou and do likewise."

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE

Those who were not present at the November program meeting missed something very fine. Two nature enthusiasts, Theresa Homet Patterson, a past president of the Pasadena Audubon Society, and J. Donald Erskine, naturalist from Sequoia National Park, gave us real instruction and entertainment.

Having just returned from Europe and "dear old Ireland," Mrs. Patterson delighted us with stories of Irish rookeries and jealous wrens. Mr. Erskine gave an interesting insight into the native life of one of our finest national parks by the use of a series of slides, which he supplemented with an excellent word description. Outstanding features of Mr. Erskine's talk: The antlers of the mule deer, and the philosophy of the water ouzel.

Surely Mrs. Veatch is to be complimented for bringing us these speakers.

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LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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The Los Angeles Audubon Society has regular meetings on the first and third Thursday of each month--the first being a field trip, and the next a program meeting which is held in the State Building at Exposition Park at two o'clock in the afternoon.

Dues for annual membership in the Society are \$1 per year, with life membership \$10, and Patron \$100.

If you are interested in studying and protecting your feathered friends, won't you identify yourself with us?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Why is the sky blue at noon-day when at sunset it is red? If all substance, such as dust and moisture, were taken from the sky, would color disappear? What sort of brush does Nature use on a hummingbird? How does she paint the metallic hues on a peacock's tail and set the rainbow on a pigeon's breast? By planting a seed in his garden how can a man get the white of the lily, the blue of the violet, and the damask of the rose? How can a rainbow hold its force in the midst of a steady drop of rain? Why are the leaves of the maple green in the spring-time, but all red and orange in the fall? Where does the green go, and was the red there all the time?

Charles D. Stewart has answered all of these questions, and many more, in his article on "The Colors of Nature," which appears in the November issue of THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY. Fascinatingly written, though rather technical in spots, it gives us a most excellent treatise on the subject of color. Every Audubonite should read this article.

CAL - N - DAR

| DECEMBER | | | | | | |
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- Dec. 6 - Field trip. Meet at the Vermont Avenue entrance to Griffith Park at 9:30 a. m. Bring your field glasses, a notebook and a pocket lunch.
- 13 - Board meeting. At Mrs. Fargo's. 1 p. m.
- 20 - Christmas Bird Festival. Bring a lunch both for yourself and the birds, and meet us at Westlake Park at 9:30 in the morning. (I overheard one of the little feathered fellows say-

ing that they were expecting berries, crumbs, nuts, popcorn, raisins, and "Oh, so many other dainty tidbits," on this festive day.) Mrs. Leon S. Griswold is chairman. This will take the place of the November program meeting.

PERSONALS

Recording secretary, Miss Charlotte Hamilton, has just returned from a 5-week trip through the eastern states. While gone she visited her brother in Montclair, New Jersey, and viewed A CENTURY OF PROGRESS.

Audubonite Mrs. Humphreys, and son Wendel, report having seen two Caspian Tern near the Santa Monica Canyon recently. These come but occasionally, and in winter.

BIRDS IN ALASKA
By Mary Barnes Salmon

The world's greatest travelers, the Arctic Tern, who are said to cover 20,000 miles each year, were often to be seen as I visited in Skagway, Alaska, this summer. Somewhat larger than, though very similar to, our Common Tern, they are most interesting because of their migratory habits, traveling all the way from the Arctic Circle to the Antarctic. Called Sea-swallows because of their long pointed wings and tails and very slender bodies, they are a beautiful sight as in large flocks they skim gracefully over the sea.

At Lake Bennett I found the Blue or Dusky Grouse, and the Ptarmigan--both game birds. In the latter we see the very best example of protection coloring that we have among birds, for in winter it is pure white, and in summer greenish and brown striped. Thus when standing against a snow bank or running about under the shrubbery it blends almost perfectly with the scenery. I saw many young Ptarmigan in flocks like Quail.

When we drove to the Mendenhall Glacier, a Hermit Thrush flew before our car. I searched for it for some time later, hoping to hear it sing.

In the deep woods along the Columbia River Highway in Oregon were many familiar birds. Robins, singing, as they do "back East"--and Russet Backed Thrushes, whistling cheerily.

Hoping to see an Eagle, I had an airplane ride over the icefields and glaciers in Alaska. I did not meet one, but I saw the world as the Eagle sees it.

Large flocks of black and white Sea Ducks settled down on the water at sunset, evidently to sleep there. The purser on our boat called them Indian or Siwash Ducks. They were new to me. I am told that farther over in the Yukon country there are many kinds of ducks that nest on the lakes.

At Klammath Lake there were many interesting water birds, but as I had to snatch glimpses from the train window, and often through trees, I could not identify many of them. However, I did recognize a large number of White Pelicans and many Grebes. The ever-present Gulls seemed to follow us the entire trip, watching with a friendly eye.

OUR SLOGAN

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Protect the birds | That produce the crops |
| That eat the insects | That supply the markets |
| That destroy the forests | That provide the foods |
| That preserve the waters | That nourish the people |
| That feed the streams | Who make the laws |
| That fill the reservoirs | That govern this nation of |
| That irrigate the lands | Peace-abiding, liberty-loving |
| (By Mrs. F. T. Bicknell) | Americans |

To imbue the juvenile mind with the above jingle is to impress on it the sequence of influence reaching out in all directions from an ordinary every day act. It will catch the fancy of young folk--of Boy Scouts, of Girl Scouts--requiring just enough mental effort to fasten the mind on the thought and make it fit into marches, exercises and games: thus, in time, to become a part of the consciousness of youth, which, of necessity, would have its results.

Simple distribution would not accomplish this. It would require the initial work of first implanting it, here, there and everywhere--joyously making it fit into the playtime of youth.

"Great oaks from tiny acorns grow." And what would be more dear to Mrs. Bicknell's heart than to have her work carried on, and on, and on?

A BEDTIME STORY FOR NATURE LOVERS

If you will just curl yourself up in that big armchair before the fire I'll tell you some strange tales about birds that you might have heard first hand had you lived in this great big old world many, many years ago.

Way over there in Arabia they thought your soul was a bird--that after you died it would at times hover around your body, screeching like an owl. This belief was shared by the Jews, who thought that all souls were gathered in a great treasure house in heaven, a columbarium--though probably not much like the ones we see today--which was called a "Guf." The Messiah could not come, they believed, until all the souls had been taken out of the Guf and had gone through human bodies. When a death occurred it was customary to open a window in order that the soul might fly away.

In the Greek Baruch Apocalypse, Baruch sees in the fourth heaven a lake full of birds, and is told that these are the souls of the righteous who continually sing the praises of God. Christian saints affirm having seen the souls of the righteous in the shape of doves in paradise.

According to Scandinavian tradition the sparrow hovered over the Cross of our Lord crying "Svala! svale!", which meant "Console! console!" So they called it "svalow," the bird of consolation. Aelian says that the swallow was sacred to the Penates, or household gods. It is still considered good luck if a swallow builds under the eaves of one's house.

Among the Catholics the eagle was a symbol of Christ and his divine nature. As it could gaze beyond the shining orb of the sun with steadfast eyes, so could Christ gaze undazzled upon the refulgent glory of God the Faith. It was a popular belief among the ancients that the eagle could renew its youth by plunging three times into a spring of water.

The pelican was a symbol of atonement and the Redeemer. It was supposed to wound itself in order to feed its young with its blood and to bring life to those who were dead.

The phoenix was a symbol of the Resurrection and of eternity. According to legend this mythical bird could never die. On attaining its five hundredth year it committed itself to the flames of a funeral pyre, only to rise reborn from its own ashes.

The peacock in Byzantine and early Romanesque was used to signify the Resurrection, because its flesh was thought to be incorruptible. It was also a symbol of pride.

The Raven, among the Jews, typified confession and penance. The cock was a symbol of vigilance; the vulture, of greed.

But strangest of all was the story they told of old Mr. Crow. In the mythologies of many countries he is said to have been originally white and to have fallen from his albino purity through personal or vicarious trespass. The Mahometans say that he gave away, by an ill-timed caw, the hiding place of the prophet, who cursed him and turned him black. But the original sin of the crow is said to have been that of carrying abroad the secrets of the councils of the gods, whereupon Indra "hurled him down through all the hundred stories of his heaven." According to Roman mythology he owes his black plumage to Aesculapius; for his mother, the nymph Coronis, had a quarrel with his father, Apollo, who so far lost his temper as to kill the unfortunate nymph. Sorry for his rash act, Apollo determined that the crow also should mourn, and so he changed his white feathers and made him "put on solemn black incontinent." (Sources of material: Jewish and Catholic Encyclopedias; 5000 New Answers to Questions by Haskin; Handy Book of Curious Information by Walsh)

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES WERE PAYABLE IN OCTOBER
ANNUAL DUES ARE \$1
LIFE MEMBERSHIP, \$10
PATRON, \$100