

T H E

Western Tanager

Mrs. RAYMOND BRENNAN, *Editor*

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AIR - MAIL, SPECIAL DELIVERY

With the deafening tumult and the spectacular ceremonies which attended the arrival of the Normandie on her maiden voyage to New York in June, one would scarcely be aware of a few little pigeons alighting on the roof of the New York Evening Journal building, overlooking East River. But, by means of the tiny packages that each carried, the Journal was able to print the first shipboard pictures of the approach of the great French liner.

The use of carrier pigeons in the Orient is very ancient and was brought to the attention of Europe at the time of the First Crusade, when the Saracens were found to have the birds in regular use for the conveyance of information. Arabic writers attribute to the perfection of a system of pigeon posts elaborated by the Mohammedan

sovereign Nureddin a large part of his success in welding together the scattered parts of his broad Empire.

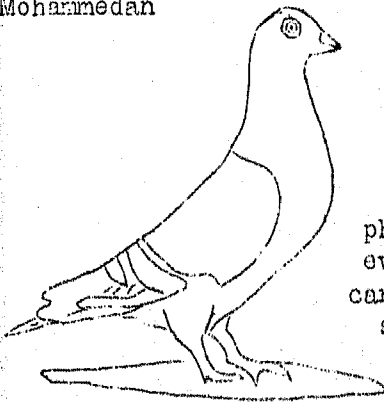
Although the use of pigeons continued from this time, it was not until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 that they were again of conspicuous public service. During the siege of Paris constant communication between that city and the outside world was obtained by this means, micro-photographs of military dispatches, private letters, and even newspapers, being printed upon films of collodion and carried by the birds--as much as 30,000 words in some instances. These were then enlarged by photography and made legible. Later the German, French, and other European governments established regular pigeon corps in the intelligence departments of their armies and navies,

and thousands of birds were trained.

Extensive experiments were made by the French in the employment of pigeons at sea. It was found that they bore voyages well, and that they would fly from a distance of more than 300 miles to shore stations with great accuracy, though they could not be depended upon to go from ship to ship.

In 1897 many trials were made in the United States navy, especially by Admiral Sicard, and considerable success was attained. A news service was attempted by certain newspapers in cooperation with some of the Atlantic steamship companies, but it was not long maintained.

The flight of one of these birds is steady, direct and rapid, but the speed has been exaggerated and is now known to be on the average only about 30 miles an hour. As soon as the bird is released it begins a spiral flight upward, which it continues to a sufficient height to enable it, by searching the horizon, to catch sight of some landmark with which it has previously been made familiar. Its memory in this respect is marvelous. The pigeon then directs its course straight towards that point, where it will sight another landmark and so proceed from known place to place until it reaches home.



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GRanite 3828

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 \$1.25 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?

November 7 -

FIELD TRIP. Special feature of the day -- seeing the cardinals, warblers, and other birds which abound in the old Woodland Park in Whittier. Here is how you get there. Follow Whittier Blvd. from Los Angeles until you come to the little town of Pico, near Whittier. Continue on Whittier Blvd. to Durfee Ave. There you will see a sign marked "Audubon." Follow the sign, going north on Durfee Avenue, past a second sign, until you reach the third sign, which points

NOVEMBER						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30

(BOARD MEETING. MRS. FARGO'S HOME. NOV.14)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This month we should like to bring to your attention a book that just came off the press in May of this year. It is entitled "California Cactus." The author is E. M. Baxter, president of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America.

We quote from the Introduction to the book, in which Mr. Baxter says: "Rather than a compilation of names and descriptions from other sources I have tried to put these things into the book:

"1. Something new. Some observations and discoveries that differ from the accepted classifications, but that are borne out by facts.

"2. Something interesting. Science isn't necessarily as dry as the deserts from where most of these plants come.

"3. Everything accurate. Field trips to the natural habitat of almost every plant described have been made. An effort to include every cactus in the state has, I believe, been successfully carried out."

If you would like to have a list and picture of every cactus native to California, and to know the story concerning each, you will find this book intensely interesting. You may secure it at the public library--unless you would like to have your own copy for your own library. The price is \$2.50.

to the Woodland Park Stables (Bloomer Bros)--Durfee at Lexington. Since Woodland Park has been closed, we are being allowed to enter only by special permit. Therefore, it is important that we all meet at the Riding Academy at nine o'clock so that our field chairman, Mrs. Eldridge, can guide us into the park. If you are coming by bus or streetcar, please call Mrs. Veatch for transportation arrangements.

November 21. PROGRAM MEETING. State Bldg., Exposition Park, 2 p.m. Lecture and movies on the life history of the Prairie Falcon. By Mr. Wright M. Pierce.

LOOKING BACK OVER MY SUMMER TRIP
by Mrs. Robert Fargo

While I was away last summer, one of my most delightful visits was at Milton Junction, Wisconsin, with my old time friends, Professor and Mrs. West.

Milton Junction is a small village, and, to me, like a summer resort set down on the wide prairies between the beautiful lakes for which that section is noted.

One day we motored to Lake Kaskakonong, which is the largest of the lakes, and Professor West took us far out on the lake in a row boat. We saw Terns flying low over the water, and Gulls--probably the Herring--in the air. But there were not many birds.

Not a day passed that I was not taken for a ride over this rolling dairy country with its acres of "corn-in-the-tassel," its broad meadows with their stacks of new-mown hay, and its rich pastures thickly dotted with cows.

One morning, on turning a corner, we heard a loud "whir" above us, and, looking up, we saw a flock of black birds in the air. Before they had time to alight another swarm arose. We were quite thrilled and slowed our pace as we followed that telegraph wire which, for more than a mile, was crowded with the birds. There were thousands of them, and they rose, circled, and returned to the wire, one group following another when we disturbed them by passing. The birds were smaller than our blackbirds and were white underneath. I had never seen them before, so on returning home I looked them up in "Bird Companions," by Angelia Kunlein Main, who is an authority in Wisconsin. I found them to be the "White-bellied or Tree Swallows. Underparts pure white. Upper parts burnished steel-blue. 5 to 6 inches. They are the only swallows to winter in the United States. In Wisconsin they are common summer residents, and our first swallows to arrive, often being here by the first week in April and remaining until late in October."

ATTENTION, HOLLYWOOD

Condensed from "Under the Apple-Trees" by John Burroughs

The breeding instinct has developed among the birds, especially among the ground-builders, some of the most surprising traits or practices to be found in all animate nature. These are the tricks and the make-believe to which birds will resort in order to decoy one away from their nests or their young--feigning lameness, paralysis, suffocation, anything to fix the attention of the intruder upon the mother and lure him away from her precious eggs or young. When faced with danger to her offspring, the bird will suddenly become a finished actress, playing a role she probably never played before. Her behavior will look like the outcome of a sudden process of reasoning. "This creature," it seems to say, "wants my brood, but I will make him want me, and forget the brood. To do so, I have only to throw myself in his way and offer him an easy victim. By my feigned disablement I can draw him on and on, while my young hide, or the clue to my nest is lost."

A woodcock, started at her nest, flew a few yards, at a height of ten feet or more, and then suddenly doubled up and fell fluttering to the ground, precisely as if she had been shot. It is highly probable that it was the first time she ever did the trick, but she did it to perfection.

FROM COVINA

Audubonite Estelle Strasburg of Covina writes that during the year she has more than twenty varieties of wild birds around her home. A pair of mockers (She thinks it is the same pair) nest in her backyard each year. A crock of fresh water every day and a well-laden dining table make them very tame and seemingly happy.

SPRING
by Mabel Fossler

(Editorial Note. As we sit in our study preparing the copy for this month's Western Tanager the cold north wind goes whistling through the surrounding trees, bangs the windows and doors, and, with a blast that almost lifts the rooftop, tells us that winter is nearly here. So it was with considerable longing that we read this poem contributed by one of our Audubon friends.)

Valleys, hills and canyons can be seen
Being covered with a mist-like sheen.
Acacia trees seem dipped in molten gold,
And every growing pine tree, Nature's
candles hold.

Joyously, at every morning's birth
The birds would split their throats in
mirth.

Oh such melodies, as from them start
Make faster beat the pulse rate of one's
heart.

Such air! It kindles love's warm fires
Into a flame of hopes and young desires.

Just as the Sun draws such wonders from the sod,
So we contribute to the great mosaic--God!

Spring, thus brooding on all space and
time,

Pregnates each thing with hope divine,
New ambitions, wishes long suppressed
Cause true excitement in one's beating
breast.

Exquisite ecstasy, the scent of Spring
Make words fly up like birds upon the
wing.

We dream new thoughts, forgetting what
is past

And at the feet of Spring, all our
fortune cast.

OUR MASCOTS

by Mrs. James M. Brennan

In a 4000-mile trip through the National Parks of California, Oregon and Washington, and down the coast, with 25 different camps, we felt we had our mascot, usually a bird, at each camp.

At Frazier Park it was the California Blue Jay, the robber of the species--of whom Dr. Dawson says: "The California Jay is the chief biological controlling factor of bird life in California, and alone destroys 100,000,000 birds' eggs." To offset this annual loss other birds have to nest two or three times in a season. The Jay also destroys nuts, grains, etc., for farmers. This damage is offset by the good he does in destroying harmful insects.

At Sequoia National Park we had the White-headed Woodpecker, who diligently searched up, down and around the great pine trees, and did his best, with the aid of the Sierra Creeper, to keep the tree clean.

At General Grant our great Douglas Fir did "wear a nest of robins in her hair," and for four days daddy and mamma robin fed worms to the four babies, not allowing the ubiquitous Stellar Jay, the Western Tanager, or any other bird around. We were sorry to leave them before the babies left the nest.

At Yosemite the Stellar Jay occupied the camp, and ate our nuts and toast time and again. We watched him bore a hole in the soft ground by a movement of his head from side to side, drop the food particles in the drilled hole, then cover it by placing sticks and leaves over it, making no apparent effort to mark the spot in any way. But we marked the spot, and, in an hour, he dropped down to the exact place, removed the leaves and covering, and had his feed. He did many other things in which it would seem there was thought.

At Crater Lake the little Nutcrackers were always with us, and very much like the Jays are they.

Around Mt. Olympus seemed all flowers, although the Water Ouzel at Lake Crescent bowed and dipped so gracefully to us.

So all the way home I could specialize, but will leave you to guess. I will only say that 125 land birds were seen, and a great number of different water birds on 2000 miles of coast.

400 species of flowers were identified, besides many trees, shrubs, butterflies, etc.

Three months with nature in an adorable tent for a home! Try it!!

