

T H E

Western Tanager

Mrs. RAYMOND BRENNAN, *Editor*

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SANITARY BIRDS

Gonzalo A. Moreno

Quito-Ecuador, South America
(As translated by the editor)

Man is not the only one charged with giving security to the cities, nor is he the only one who is occupied with destroying the germs, microbes and insects dangerous to his better life. There exist also in the world birds which, feeding themselves from these micro-organisms, insects, etc., effect or contribute to the destruction, or, better said, to the security of the localities where these same birds live. Among these birds I am going to cite the swallows (*Hirundo urbica*), which in the summer reside in various parts of the city of Quito.

Well, there is not an inhabitant of Quito who has not seen, who has not had the pleasure of witnessing these small birds cross in rapid and broken flight the streets of the city, sometimes almost striking our heads, and, on other occasions, almost touching the surface of the ground, searching insects, mosquitoes, etc., for their livelihood. It is truly astonishing to think that in a flight so rapid and broken they can give hunt to thousands of small beings, thus contributing to the cleanliness and hygiene of the city.

The swallows of which I am speaking are some eight centimetres in length. Their brilliant plumage is of a perfect black, or azured on the back and wings with breast of white. The head is small, the beak short and fine, and the wings large. Their movements are nervous, fast and very sympathetic. They are very scrupulous about their hygiene, as they are of their dwelling place. They live in solitary and usually secret places, preferring the hollows of ramparts and walls, high towers, and the eaves of houses.

In a like manner these swallows show us a fine example of order and discipline in their community life, for, when they are found in large bands they fly under the direction or command of one of them who is made the leader. In order to be reunited, or to convey information of some danger or of some foreign thing, they utter short, sharp cries, which is their language.

Given their way of life and food, these swallows by preference appear in the city in large numbers at the beginning of the summer, remaining during the season and disappearing in the winter. They are, therefore, birds of great usefulness.

SOME QUEER BIRD WAYS

- Mrs. Thomas Squire -

"O happy life, to soar and sway
Above the life by mortals led!
And when the autumn comes, to flee,
Wherever sunshine beckons thee!"

A Frenchman, some years ago, said that every bird had a vocation. The robin, to inspire cheerfulness and contentment in man. The woodthrush, as evening shadows fall, bursts forth in his hymn of praise. The English sparrow is the brawler, delighting to get into scrimmages, but ready to help one of his kind when in trouble, if nothing more than by giving advice. He is a domestic tyrant brooking no

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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 \$1.25 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? * * * * *

MONTHLY CALENDAR

FEB. 6. FIELD TRIP. To Arroyo Glen (Near the Ostrich Farm. This is the day on which Mrs. Eldridge, field chairman, says that we may expect to see the Thrushes who are visiting here during the winter. In order that we may become better acquainted with them, Mrs. Eldridge is going to bring some Thrush skins for us to study. The meeting hour is 9:00 a. m. Pocket lunches, as usual.

FEB. 13. BOARD MEETING. At the home of Mrs. Robert Fargo. 2. p. m.

FEB. 20. PROGRAM MEETING. Mrs. Enid Michael will speak on "Yosemite," showing moving pictures of the birds, flowers, bears, deer and other interesting bits of nature that are found in this famous national park. The speaker and her husband have lived in Yosemite for fifteen years. They are not "professionals," ---just lovers of nature, and sincere in their efforts to bring to the world what they saw in Yosemite. Place: State Building, Exposition Park. Time: 2 p. m. President Salmon in charge.

MOSQUITO FIGHT HARMFUL TO WILD LIFE

On December 22, 1935, one newspaper contained the following article:

"One Federal bureau accused another today of working at cross purposes with it in the name of relief.

"In his annual report to Secretary Wallace, Jay N. Darling, retired chief of the Biological Survey, found the effects of mosquito control and drainage projects 'destructive' to wild life.

"In many instances, Darling said, 'the work was done without proper consideration of wild life interests or adequate supervision, and valuable forms of wild life have suffered. Some of the most destructive results have occurred where good waterfowl areas were needlessly drained under the guise of mosquito control!'"

NOT HORSEFEATHERS

How many feathers has a chicken? A schoolboy recently counted the feathers on a chicken he had killed and found it had 8537.

FEBRUARY						
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BIRD NOTES

Mrs. Grace Hall reports that the Mountain Plover is to be found in San Fernando Valley near Van Nuys.

The Bell Sparrow, many Varied Thrush, and over twenty-five Lewis Woodpeckers were seen near Sunland.

Mr. Keely says that a Rock Wren feasted on the insects caught in his radiator when he was driving near Coolidge Dam.

Charlotte Hamilton counted thirteen species of birds visiting her suet cups within ten minutes. Among them were Kinglets, a Savannah Sparrow, a Flicker, a Nuttall Woodpecker, Brown Towhees, California Jays, Spotted Doves, Mourning Doves and Meadow Larks.

A birding group led by Mrs. Eldridge at Chatsworth Reservoir listed fifty-five species of birds. An outstanding incident was a fight between a raven and a hawk which had a white tail and two white wing patches and was about the size of a Cooper Hawk. The fight lasted fully fifteen minutes before they flew off in different directions.

The birds appreciated the Christmas Tree trimmed for them by Mrs. Cobb and her neighborhood Junior Audubon Club, and it excited much comment in Hollywood.

Mrs. Eldridge secured from the Inglewood Humane Society a Brown Pelican which had been found seriously disabled, and she assisted in preparing it for mounting at the University of Southern California. She said it was interesting to note that it had no nostrils, nor did it have a tongue or gizzard, its food passing directly into the stomach. It had twenty-four tail-feathers and forty-two primaries, with a wing spread of nine feet from tip to tip. It stood five feet high, with up-turned head. This, Mrs. Eldridge believes, is the largest Brown Pelican to be found in this locality. It will soon be ready for exhibition at the University.

BIRDS AND THE BIBLE

-Mary Barnes Salmon, President-

Did you know that---

Birds were created on the fifth day and man on the sixth, showing they come next to the highest creation? Gen. 1:20

In the Mosaic law a mother bird, her nest and young, were not to be molested? Deut. 22:6

In the Mosaic law clean and unclean birds were listed for food, or to be avoided, and the same law prevails today? The eagle, vulture, raven, owl, pelican, cormorant, stork and heron were unclean. Deut. 14:11-20

A picture of utter desolation is drawn by using the raven, cormorant, owl and vulture? Isaiah 34:11

The migration of birds is referred to? Jer. 8:7

Wild fowl were hunted by means of nets, traps, snares and decoys in Bible times? Eccl. 9:12. Amos 3:5. Prov. 1:17

The phrase, "A little bird told it," is from the Bible? Eccl. 10:20

The announcement of the coming of spring? Songs of Solomon 2:12

The dove and raven were used by Noah to find out the condition of the world after the flood? Gen. 8:8-9

God's plan in creation for them is found in Ps. 104:17

A perfection description of the eagle is found in the Bible? Deut. 28:49. Jer. 49:16. Job 39:27. Deut. 32:11

That Christ used the sparrow to illustrate God's care for His own? Matt. 10:29

"Ye are of more value than many sparrows!"--

THINGS WHICH MAKE US HAPPY

That President Salmon has returned from the midwest -- That Audubonite Jennie Morton is recovering. -- That our library has received such a fine gift of poems from our Poet Laureate, Rebecca Farson McKay.

ROBIN RED BREAST
James M. Brennan--

High in a tree, a nest of four,
Came from eggs a bright bird bore,
'Twas a robin, with a golden breast,
Who placed up there this wonderous nest.

This home she built of twigs and twine
Is guarded well in rain or shine
By he and she the parent birds
Such duties not explained by words.

They labor on from dawn till dark
To bring to flame the smouldering spark,
That spark of life within the nest
That always shows on robin's breast.

The parents drop from nest to ground
And rush about where food is found,
For yawning mouths need flesh and blood
From worms that dwell beneath the sod.

The robins trot, then stiff they stand
Then feel in limbs the trembling land.
They burrow deep with sharpened beak
Then raise the worm they always seek.

The robin young has breast of gray
On leaving nest to fly away,
But soon that front takes on the flame
That makes us love the robin's name.

A glorious bird and friend of man
That God sent forth when earth began,
To work all day in rain or sun
Thus helping man by things he's done.

Touch not that nest where it be
In bush or vine or lofty tree,
You'll be well paid and highly blest
To guard that bird with golden breast.

SOME QUEER BIRD WAYS, Cont.

opposition, the hen being bullied all her days.

Of all wild life it seems the wild duck is the most snobbish. Wild ducks have divided the air into four air ways, and these are always as exclusive as if they were separated by a fence a mile high. During the summer three families of California ducks nested and hobnobbed in the same marsh in northern Canada with three families of Mississippi ducks. But when the southern migration started, the two groups separated, the Californians returning via their air route and the Mississippi ducks by theirs to the Mississippi swamps.

One of the most conspicuous examples of henpecking among birds is found in the female Wilson phalarope. The hen is larger, more trim and dainty, and a most dominant character. She it is who does the wooing, fighting off other females till all are vanquished, the male sitting by unmoved, seeming to admire her aggressiveness and later flying away with her. She at once cuts out his daily life. He must build the nest, brood and care for the young. She feels her duty done when the eggs are laid, and disappears never to return. One of the worst of flappers!

The male Sage grouse is a most ardent wooer, salaaming with outstretched wings, sliding on his breast, sometimes until it is bare. But he is also a most fickle one. Tiring of his mate when she begins to brood, he seeks other females, leaving to her the care of a dozen young.

The wild turkey, when courting, occasionally dances up in the air and comes down as a featherlike ball. Should the turkey hen refuse to pay attention, he stretches his wings, assumes a most commanding position, and, if the bronze hen deigns to notice him, he displays his plumage to the greatest advantage by spreading his massive tail, sweeping the ground with his quivering and expanded wings. Should a rival wooer appear, a battle ensues which ends in death or retreat.

The male yellow-headed blackbird rocks and sings while the female builds the nest. She broods for fourteen days, the male never once appearing until the brood is two weeks old. He then leads them out of the swamps to green pastures for food, seemingly very proud of his offspring.

The blue jay is a devoted husband and father, and, like some people, takes good care of his own but is not a good neighbor.

Birds are interested in others of their kind and generally help in fighting off an enemy. Robins rush in crowds to the assistance of their neighbors.