

T H E

Western Tanager



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By - Erna Comby

SAN GABRIEL RIVER BIRD SANCTUARY



A bird sanctuary comprising approximately 326 acres has been established in the San Gabriel River Valley, between the cities of Pico, Whittier and El Monte, by the Audubon and affiliated Societies. Twenty-six acres of this land is owned by the Cate Ditch Company, the other three hundred acres adjacent, and to the North along the River being the property of F. F. Pellisier and Sons.

This area is eminently desirable for a bird Sanctuary, as food, cover and water in abundance are present. In the arid and semi-arid condition of Southern California, where flood control has rendered the canyons bare and untenable for wildlife a spot such as the woodland along the San Gabriel River is a veritable paradise.

Tangles of brush, wild grapes, alders, willows, Baccharis (called Guatamate, by the Indians) wild berry vines, not to mention a clear stream of running water, fed by springs in the San Jose hills, as well as thick brushland along the river bank for several miles, and also several small Marsh areas, make up a general sketch of the area within the Sanctuary.

The San Gabriel River was formed during the flood of 1867, when a new channel was cut from the Rio Hondo which in the vicinity of the San Gabriel Bird Sanctuary, flows a mile and a half to the west. Rising in a vast water shed, in the San Gabriel mountains, this mighty river divides below the foothills and carries its waters via the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel, through the valley. It finds an outlet for its flood waters at Wilmington and Alamitos Bay respectively.

Reminiscences by pioneer residents draw an interesting picture of early days in this section of the valley. San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary in miniature is a replica of the valley, as it was, in appearance--a veritable thicket. Here and there, in a small clearing, a tiny shack, home of a Mexican family, might be found. Pio Pico the last Mexican Governor was in residence at his Ranchito, near where the town of Pico now stands. He was literally Monarch of all he surveyed for thousands of acres in the vicinity belonged to him, and the people who came to settle in the valley bought their land from him for a small sum.

In the level areas in the Nursery section near El Monte, where passersby may in the Spring and Summer feast their eyes, on fields of gorgeously colored flowers, Nature in early days maintained a vast marsh. Here waterfowl came in such large flocks that they darkened the sky. Wildlife was abundant everywhere. Food was plentiful and water abundant; what a picture of Nature's glory comes before us as we envisage the myriads of waterfowl, descending on this little valley for a short season before resuming their migration flight. At this time water could be obtained by drilling ten feet below the surface. Huge vineyards sprang up in the valley and corn and other cultivated crops followed suit. Perhaps Nature frowned upon this invasion. Whatever the cause, several successive years of drought failed to replenish the water supply, and before long the water level had receded to seventy feet below the surface.

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CALENDAR DECEMBER 1939
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AUDUBON HOUSE HEADQUARTERS

7377 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, California



MEETING NOTICES

HEAR YE! HEAR YE! HEAR YE! THE BIRDS' CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL!

Gather your suet cups, bread crumbs, raisins, and popcorn strings, in fact just any delicacy you can think of for the birds banquet and bring them to Plummer Park on the morning of December 7th.

On Saturday, December 9th, children will gather to enjoy and participate in a very interesting program. There will be a flag raising ceremony by a group of Boy Scouts. A motion picture will be shown in the Administration Building following a picnic lunch.

BOARD MEETING - Thursday, December 14th, at 10 a.m., at Plummer Park.

THERE WILL BE NO INDOOR MEETING NOR BIRD STUDY CLASS.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Mrs. Scott Brown -- Mrs. Rena Forbes
Mrs. J. R. Appleton
Miss Martha C. Gilbert

AUDUBON HOUSE NOTES

During November, so many interesting gifts have been received that we feel a real cause for celebration.

THEREFORE, OUR SINCERE THANKS TO:

The Cooper Ornithological Society which, through Mr. C. V. Duff, presented our Society with a four volume edition of Dawson's "Birds of America" profusely illustrated with color plates and photographs.

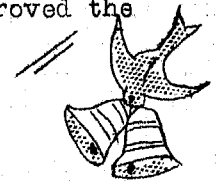
Mrs. George L. Veatch, for the book, "Love of a Lyre Bird", a delightful story about this interesting bird of Australia.

Miss Isabell Ames for the loveliest Hummingbird's nest.
Mr. James Brennan and Mrs. Mary N. Rose for electric stoves that will make our headquarters cozy for the winter.

Mrs. Foss for a beautiful picture of "Tweety", with his life history, and also two San Diego Wrens' nests.

Mrs. Thomas S. Shearer, hostess for November, entertained thirty Girl Scouts on Nov. 18th. She observed and listed a Valley Quail and Western Gnatcatcher, making a total of 54 birds seen in the Park.

Mrs. David Watkins has assisted the gardener in removing dead blossoms which has greatly improved the geraniums.



TREE DEDICATION

In the delightful recesses of Plummer Park, a Sequoia gigantea and a Persian Mulberry have been planted in honor of Mrs. O. M. Stultz and Mrs. Mary B. Salmon, former Audubon presidents. The dedication program, held November 24, 1939, which revives the happy custom of planting trees for those who have been active in the Society, was presided over by our tree chairman, Mrs. William T. Shelford.

Mr. W. A. Kent spoke of Mrs. Stultz's valuable association with the Society and how her coordinating activities were instrumental in enlarging the membership. In the dedication address, Mrs. Jesse L. Morain, former tree chairman, compared the leadership of the Sequoia among trees to the leadership of Mrs. Stultz. Those in attendance stood in a semi-circle as Mrs. Stultz turned the first shovelful of earth in the planting which took place near the south entrance of the Park. Mrs. Harriet W. Myers took a picture as a white marker was placed.

The Persian Mulberry may be found east of the Audubon house. Helen W. Shearer gave well chosen, informal remarks concerning Mrs. Salmon's activities which have included procuring a place to display the Societies' treasures. The Mulberry is appropriate for it will bear much fruit as have her accomplishments. Mrs. Morain, in dedicating the tree, referred to Mrs. Salmon as "the mother of our Audubon house." While helping in the planting, Mrs. Salmon expressed her appreciation of the cooperation given by Mrs. Florence Scott in making the Audubon House possible.

TO MY DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS:

I thank you all so much for your loving messages and for the wonderful gift I received from the Los Angeles Audubon Society. We lost many things that we treasured, but now have new treasures to cherish through the years to come.

Tuesday, December 12th, 1939, from 2 p.m., to 4 p.m., will be Open House for Audubon friends. I want you all to find the pathway to my door at 2223 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles.

Alma Stultz

SAN GABRIEL RIVER BIRD SANCTUARY

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A blight fell upon the vineyards, and the grape industry was destroyed. Then began the culture of citrus fruits. Gradually new and improved methods of water conservation developed, and the whole valley became a network of fertile ranches, irrigated with the stored waters of the gigantic San Gabriel river.

Wildlife has had a difficult time in these days, for no replacement has been made generally, for the habitat and food supply that has been destroyed by flood control, drainage, and agricultural development. So, a bit of woodland, such as the San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary, is a treasure of which the Audubon and Associate groups will be justly proud, and that they will protect for the best interests of those of Nature's creatures who may make this their home.

Erna Comby

AS WE ROLL ALONG AND HIKE THE TRAILS

From a Travel Diary - By Elsie Humphreys (Concluded from Nov. 1939 issue of THE WESTERN Tanager)

San Luis Valley-July 6-We drive to marshy meadows of natural springs to observe nesting birds. We find Snowy Egrets, Kildeer, over 100 Avocets, Wilson Phalaropes, a few pairs of Cliff Swallows, and several species of ducks, all but Green-winged Teal, too far away to be identified.

July 15-On the way to Estes Park, Colo., two Lewis Woodpeckers, foothill residents, are seen. Near the village Western Robins and Mountain Bluebirds are abundant. Our gratitude is deep for the helpful information and check-list which Mr. H.R. Gregg, Park Naturalist gives us.

July 16-On Trail Ridge Road to Museum-some sections over 12,000 feet-a Western Meadowlark sings and we hear White-crowned Sparrow songs. "In the scrubby growth at timber line on or near the ground, the White-crowned (Continued on Page - 12 -)



NOTICES OF THE CALIFORNIA AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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December Meetings

Meeting - December 14, 1939, 7:30 p.m., in the Los Angeles Central Library, 5th Street and Grand Avenue. Speaker, Mr. Joseph E. Burgess, George Washington High School, Naturalist Ranger of the Mt. Lassen National Volcanic Park, California, will talk on the "Duties of a Ranger Naturalist" and illustrate his lecture with films.

Field Day - December 23rd, at 8:30 a.m., to 10 a.m., Fern Dell, Griffith Park. Public invited.

The California Audubon Society is having published their thirty-third annual report which will soon be ready for distribution. They are also publishing a new leaflet, No. 13, on The California Quail, Our State Bird. Their new Field Checking List, naming 395 species of birds found in Southwestern California, may be obtained from Mrs. O. M. Stultz, 2223 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, or the President. They sell - 2 for 5¢ or 1¢ each for 25 copies or more.

JUNIOR AUDUBON BIRD CLUBS

Miss Helon S. Pratt, Representative for California, New Mexico and Arizona Junior Audubon Bird Clubs, for the National Association of Audubon Societies with headquarters in New York, reports well over 2000 Junior members in her territory. This interesting the youth of the land in knowing our wild birds and helping protect them, is one of our best pieces of educational work. Adults wishing color pictures of western birds may find many of them in the Junior Audubon leaflets which Miss Pratt carries. They are five cents for adults, while the Juniors get six for five cents and a bird button. Teachers take notice.

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AS WE ROLL ALONG AND HIKE THE TRAILS



Sparrow builds its nest. Perched nearby, the male sings a liquid melody to its nesting mate." (From notes in Museum) Evening-About the "Wright" cabin snuggled among tall pines, two first acquaintances are outstanding-American Crossbills at work on pine cones, and Black-eared Nuthatches searching low boughs. Hornell's Nighthawks are numerous at twilight time.

Evening-July 18-In Poudre Canyon, altitude 5,280 feet, Lazuli Buntings are singing, and seem in no way suspicious of folks with field glasses.

Morning-July 19-As we leave Fort Collins, Colo., we note that Mourning Doves, Barn Swallows and Meadowlarks outnumber other species. A male Western Martin "in appearance a big black Swallow with forked tail" and Lark Buntings, with their distinctive white and black plumage are given an especial mark for uncommon birds. As we drive along a high plateau in Wyoming, small birds fly near the highway. Horned Larks are easily identified, but the sparrows elude us. We arrive at "Little America" where the sun is up until 8 p.m. After sunset Nighthawks are skimming low over the highway. Silent flight and white spots near wing tips, place them in the Texas Nighthawk family.

July 20-Between Little America and Evanston, We especially note many Cliff Swallows and their nests under ledges of red sandstone. Driving south in Utah in the afternoon Kingbirds without white tail edges are abundant. What a treat to see even one Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher.

July 21-In a stream near Panguitch, Utah, we study two light blue Treganza Herons. July 22-3:30 a.m. at the outskirts of Las Vegas, Nevada, bats and Texas Nighthawks are flying around a service station. Near Barstow, California, two Red-tailed Hawks are gaining altitude as ravens, singly for the most part, fly toward the hills. Past San Bernardino, a Valley Quail and Roadrunner skip across the right-of-way. In Upland, Western Mourning Doves fly past, as if to confirm the answer to a query in our minds-"The predominant species of listed birds?" It is a suitable climax to our trip of over 3,000 miles in seven states.

OUR WISH IS THAT THIS JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON WILL BRING HAPPINESS TO EACH AND EVERY ONE!

