

Western Tanager



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THE TOWHEES

By Mrs. Mary Barnes Salmon, Curator and Librarian, Los Angeles Audubon Society

There are four members of the Towhee family that should be familiar to bird students here in Southern California.

The California Brown Towhee is one of the commonest of our birds, loving door yards and living on intimate terms with those who give it protection. About nine to ten inches in length, it has no identifying mark except a bright cinnamon or reddish brown spot near the base of its tail. Its song is a series of chirps and churrs. Like all towhees, it scratches for food in grass and leaves, jumping backward with both feet. Brown Towhees seem always to keep in pairs, for they go two together through the entire year.

If you have observed a Towhee very similar to this at Palm Springs or in the South, it is the Abert Towhee. The only difference is a black area around the base of the bill.

The Spotted (San Diego) Towhee lives in thickets and brushy hillsides. It is a handsome bird,-- head and breast black, underparts white. The sides are bright reddish brown with flecks and bars of white in a pattern over the black wings,-- a striking bird in appearance, with fiery red eyes. In comparison with the slow-moving Brown Towhee, the Spotted is very active. It disappears in the brush before you have had a good look at it. Its song is not important, but its call is continuous in the spring.

One of our most beautiful birds is the Green-tailed Towhee, found in the mountains and high altitudes. The writer had an interesting experience at Snow Valley, near Big Bear Lake, watching the beautiful, highly colored male at the nesting place and listening to its song. The body, wings and tail are a lovely bronze green, the throat is white and the crown a bright chestnut brown. These birds love the undergrowths. They dash in and out of deer brush, mounting to the top to sing and diving down into its depths to the nest. The song reminds one of the Fox Sparrow and the wrens. The Green-tailed Towhee is by far the handsomest and the finest singer among the Towhees.

The birds of this family commit no crimes; they have no bad habits. They destroy no fruit or vegetables, only harmful insects. Those of us who miss the Robin about our door can take the Brown Towhee to our hearts and love it for its homely, friendly ways.



DOORYARD VISITORS

Compiled by the Editor from the Records of Eighteen Members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, of Birds Seen in Their Own Dooryards, or Flying Over, October, 1939, to November, 1940.

Our own dooryards, if equipped with bird baths and feeding trays, offer a fine opportunity to study the more common birds of the region, with all of which we should be familiar. Occasionally one has the joy of seeing a rare visitor. The eighteen members whose records are compiled here, report a total of 102 species identified during the year. The localities from which the reports come vary from busy downtown thoroughfares to streets having little traffic, and from homes near the arroyos and foothills to those near the ocean. All, however, are within Los Angeles County.

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THE SOUTHWEST BIRD STUDY CLUB has printed a valuable four-page leaflet on "Trees, Shrubs and Flowers which Attract Birds." Mrs. Alma W. Mason, president (CA 3441), has a limited number for distribution among interested persons.

MR. ARTHUR L. BERRY found a Black and White Warbler and two Varied Thrushes in the San Gabriel River Bird Sanctuary recently.

MRS. VEATH AND MRS. HUMPHREYS will serve as hostesses at the Los Angeles Museum Bird Section December 31.

NATURE MAGAZINE. By arrangement with the American Nature Association, the Los Angeles Audubon Society will take subscriptions or renewals to NATURE MAGAZINE at the regular price of \$3.00 per year, and will be allowed a generous commission for its treasury. Please consult Mrs. O. L. Wait, Treasurer.

JANUARY MEETINGS

THURSDAY, Jan. 2. Start the New Year with a trip to one of our "birdiest" haunts,-- Chatsworth Lake Sanctuary and Glover Park. Our fine Tanner bus, Mr. Richards in charge, will leave 544 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, 8 A.M. sharp; also, Hollywood and Cahuenga Blvds., 8:15 A.M. Fare, 80¢ round trip. Bring your lunch. Make reservations PLEASE, by December 31 with Mrs. J. L. Morain, 1041 S. Gramercy Dr., Los Angeles Telephone Parkway 0339. Those driving own cars, go Ventura Blvd. to Topanga Canyon Ave., turn right, go to Roscoe St., turn left, go to first road opening to right leading to buildings near Reservoir Gate. Leave Chatsworth grounds 3 P.M. If it rains hard, trip will be postponed to JANUARY 9. -- If the trip is postponed, all are cordially invited by Mrs. Mary V. Hood to bring their lunches and spend the day (January 2) at her home, 138 South Wilson Drive, looking over her fine collection of pictures and specimens.

TUESDAY, Jan. 7, 7:30 P.M. Plummer Park. Mrs. Hood's illustrated lecture on the Sierra Nevada Slope. Bakersfield to Owens Lake to Whitney's summit. Admission 20¢.

SUNDAY, Jan. 12. Bird walk in Griffith Park; leader, Mr. Arthur L. Berry. Meet in front of Greek Theater, Vermont Avenue entrance, 8:30 A.M. Bird until noon. Picnic lunch at tables near the Sanctuary entrance will be followed by short program.

THURSDAY, Jan. 16. State Building, Exposition Park. Board meeting at 10 A.M.

THURSDAY, Jan. 16, 2 P.M. State Building, Exposition Park. Speaker, Mr. C. A. Harwell, California representative of the National Audubon Society. Subject, "Birding Experiences." The speaker will whistle songs of familiar California birds, and will show two reels of motion pictures in color, one of Roseate Spoonbills and other nesting birds of the Coastal Lagoons of Texas, the other of the National Audubon Society's Nature Camp. Visitors welcome.

TUESDAY, Jan. 21. 7:30 P.M. Plummer Park. Mrs. Hood's illustrated lecture on Yosemite and the shrubs, flowers and conifers of that region. Admission 20¢.

FRIDAY, Jan. 31. STUDY CLASSES, L.A.A.S. headquarters in Plummer Park. Bring text books, note books and any pictures you may have illustrating the subjects:

9:30 A.M. Botany. Leader, Miss Ruby Curry. Subject, "The Family Tree of the Flower."
10:30 A.M. Birds. Leader, Mrs. Thos. R. Shearer. "When the swallows homeward fly".

Let's be prepared to greet them by name. With this in mind, we have chosen the Swallow Family for our study topic. Each species will be introduced by a member of the Society; general discussion will follow.

(continued from front page)

Space limitations forbid listing all the birds reported. Only the most common and a few of the least common can be mentioned. The 18 lists range from 16 to 61 in the number of birds identified; average, 35. The Anna Hummingbird, Black Phoebe and Western Mockingbird appear on every list. These, with the Red-shafted Flicker, California Jay, Audubon Warbler, House Finch, California Brown Towhee, Gambel Sparrow, Chinese Spotted Dove, Arizona Hooded Oriole, Brewer Blackbird and San Diego song Sparrow; the Coast Bush-Tit, English Sparrow and Cedar Waxwing; Green-backed Goldfinch, Dwarf Cowbird, Desert Sparrow Hawk, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and California Shrike; the Black-headed Grosbeak and Western Robin,-- these 23 species, in the order named, appear most frequently in the lists received. All are common residents or visitors.

Special interest attaches to the birds less frequently listed. Miss Hamilton reports an Anthony Green Heron and a Cardinal; Mrs. Smith a California Blue Heron and a Pipit. A flock of Canada Geese flew over Mrs. Mason's yard. A Desert Sparrow Hawk caused commotion in Mrs. Daugherty's yard, and Miss Hamilton reports a Sharp-shinned killed by flying against a neighbor's window.

Mrs. Wait found a Ring-billed Gull resting on the roof of her garage. Mrs. Sheldford reports a Burrowing Owl; several saw the Barn, Pasadena Screech and Horned varieties. Mrs. Stultz found a Valley Quail in her yard on busy Sunset Boulevard. Of the hummingbirds of this region, only four are listed: Allen, Anna, Black-chinned and Rufous.

A Traill Flycatcher raised its family in Mrs. Yost's yard; Mrs. Mason reports a Wright, Mrs. Salmon an Ash-throated, Mrs. Mix a Say's Phoebe. Miss Ames lists a White-throated Swift, Mrs. Bickel a Barn Swallow. Blue-fronted Jays came down from the mountains to visit both Mrs. Mix and Mr. George Dowker. San Diego Titmice, Bailey Mountain Chickadees, House and San Diego Wrens, the Phainopepla, California Thrasher, Western Tanager and Russet-backed and Alaska Hermit Thrushes were seen. Miss Hamilton reports two San Diego Towhees raised in her yard. Several list the Western Warbling Vireo. Eleven of the warblers are given, including Miss Hamilton's window-tapping Audubon, about which she contributed such an interesting story to the January, 1940, Tanager. It was given Mrs. Mason to be visited by the elusive Little Wren-Tit, which Hoffman says is "heard a hundred times before it is seen once." Thrill of thrills, Mrs. Yost held a Long-tailed Chat in her hand!

One regrets having to omit many interesting identifications, but space is limited. These notes will have served their purpose if they inspire more encouragement and study of dooryard visitors.

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THE CHRISTMAS PARTY in Plummer Park December 3 was a festive occasion. Mrs. Salmon and her assistants "received" at Headquarters throughout the morning. Lunch time found the tables in the Community Club House beautifully decorated by Mrs. Brown and her committee. The afternoon program, arranged by Mrs. Stultz, opened appropriately with Christmas carols. Mrs. Florence Lewis Scott told interesting stories of Christmas celebrations in early California. Two groups of bird songs were sung by Mr. Francisco Holguin, accompanied by Mr. Edward Beanes, and Mr. Beanes gave two piano numbers. There were whistling solos by Miss Betty Bealls, Mrs. Bertha Caroline Stockwell accompanying her. The program closed with the showing, by Mrs. Mary V. Hood, of beautiful Kodachromes of birds and their habitats, Mrs. Stockwell imitating the songs of a number of birds as they appeared on the screen.

Several gifts to the Society added to the Christmas atmosphere. They included an artistic hand-decorated calendar from Miss Morton, and pictures in color of the Society's four emblems from the committees on Birds, Butterflies, Wildflowers and Trees, respectively. From Mr. E. C. Bacon came a long leaf from the banana tree growing in his yard, from the underside of which hung three Oriole nests. All three nests were built this past summer, two families being raised at the same time. These gifts are greatly appreciated.



THE CALIFORNIA AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc.

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JANUARY MEETINGS

THURSDAY, Jan. 9, 7:30 P.M. Central Library, Fifth and Grand Streets, Los Angeles.
Speaker, Mr. C. A. Harwell, California Representative of the National Audubon Society.
Subject: "Birds of Yosemite National Park." Illustrated.
SATURDAY, Jan. 25, 8 A.M. Field Day. Fern Dell, Western Avenue entrance to Griffith
Park. Leader, Miss Blanche Vignos. Visitors welcome.

MASSACRED FOR MILLINERY. During the thirty-sixth annual meeting of the National Audubon Society in New York last October, an "Indignation Meeting" was held, which brought out the fact that our present importation law is being evaded and that feathers of wild birds are being sold illegally by wholesale milliners of New York and Philadelphia. The National Audubon Society has found that forty wild birds are affected, among them such United States birds as the Condor, Golden and Bald Eagles, the Whistling Swan, Osprey and Great Blue Heron.

We are asked to let our women know that the feathers they buy, thinking them feathers of domestic fowls, may be, instead, those of some wild bird. Also, on this account, not to buy a hat trimmed with feathers. The State Federation of Women's Clubs, through their State Chairman, Mrs. J. H. Comby, have voted their disapproval of the wearing of wild bird feathers. Other organizations are asked to take a like stand, in an effort to stamp out this illegal traffic. You can do your part by telling your local milliner, your clubs and friends of this serious matter. Let us all take a personal interest in making feathers unpopular.

..... MRS. HARRIET WILLIAMS MYERS.

IMPORTANT REQUEST. Senate Bill 4404 and House Bill 10,632, now pending in Congress, authorize the President temporarily to transfer jurisdiction over certain national-forest and national-park lands to the War Department or the Navy Department during the effectiveness of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. Mr. Harwell, reminding us of the great damage done to Yosemite and other national parks during World War I, resulting from the relinquishment of grazing rights, says these bills deserve strong protest from us and from others we can enlist. Will L.A.A.S. members therefore please write their representatives in Congress, urging them to vote No?

The Izaak Walton League, commenting on these bills, says: "We certainly do not propose to obstruct legitimate defense measures, but do question the wisdom of including national parks in the purpose of the bills...We vehemently oppose their inclusion for military use, inasmuch as such proposal is incompatible with all accepted park standards, which are predicated upon their preservation in the natural state 'for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people.' In the opinion of the League, the use program called for in the bills would leave permanent scars which not even time could obliterate. It is conceivable that in providing recreation for army and navy recruits the wildlife which has long found sanctuary in national parks would be sacrificed to recreational use."

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS: Miss Julianne G. Bayliss, Mr. Grant Mitchell.

THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY'S CALIFORNIA PROGRAM.- "Cooperation with state and Federal officials on all matters relating to wildlife conservation; formation of Audubon societies throughout the state; promotion of more Junior Audubon clubs; presentation of radio talks and lectures on conservation; establishment of new wildlife sanctuaries under competent supervision; organization of conducted wildlife tours; establishment of a west-coast Audubon Nature Camp."- Bird-Lore, Sept.-Oct., 1940, p. 437. This is a program to which the Los Angeles Audubon Society can subscribe with whole-hearted enthusiasm. It augurs a HAPPY NEW YEAR to Audubon work here.