

# Western Tanager



VOL. XI

November, 1944

No. 2

## THE NEW AUDUBON NATURE CENTER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By W. Scott Lewis

It would be hard to overestimate the possibilities that have been opened up for nature students through the purchase by the National Audubon Society of a  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acre ranch adjoining the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. This sanctuary, which is located beside the San Gabriel River between El Monte and Whittier, is already noted for its beauty as well as for the abundance of bird and other animal life to be found there. People seeing the place for the first time say they never dreamed such a spot existed within fifteen miles of the Los Angeles city hall.

Here are dense jungles that remind one of the South Pacific, trails that wind under alders and cottonwoods draped with long festoons of vines, grassy meadows where cottontail rabbits play, and streams where the kingfishers keep watch. Here is Cardinal Glen where those brilliant birds are nearly always displaying their beauty, and Grapevine Lane where the long-tailed chat is heard more often than seen. Overhead the shrill scream of the red-bellied hawk brings a medley of protests from dozens of crows, although the herons and egrets scarcely bother to cock an eye skyward.

At night the bird voices are still, but as the moon comes up a multitude of little creatures slip out of the dense jungle where they have been hidden. Foxes and raccoons head for the pond where the bullfrogs promptly vanish with alarmed croaks. Weasles stalk the timid rabbits, and opossums clumsily hunt for anything edible. Skunks and muskrats are abroad, and the balances of nature swing even, undisturbed by the ignorance of man.

Valuable as the sanctuary is to students and nature lovers, its importance has been greatly increased by the purchase of an adjoining ranch with buildings that will provide a real Western headquarters, with an office, a museum and a place for classes. This property is located directly opposite the Temple School on Durfee Avenue, and the new "Sanctuary Lane" is practically an extension of Lexington, which ends at Durfee.

We are apt to measure the value of such a place by the pleasure we derive from it, but a far better guide would be its influence for good in the community. In this respect the new Western headquarters of the National Audubon Society has wonderful possibilities if only we have the initiative and imagination to make full use of it. Here there can be a Nature Center on a par with the one in Greenwich, Connecticut, which is accomplishing important work in the East. Here teachers and youth leaders can be trained so they will return to their classes far more competent to instill a love of nature and a feeling of kindness for wild creatures than they would have been without this contact with Audubon work.

If anyone thinks that instructors will not avail themselves of this opportunity he should see the response that has already been made. Local teachers could not wait for buildings to be repaired, a museum established, and a course of lessons outlined. They begged for immediate help, and it has been a pleasure to see as many as thirty children with their teacher going through the sanctuary at one time, learning basic facts about conservation and the balance in nature, as well as making a friendly contact with the birds and trees. Requests are already coming in for class talks to be given in the schools, and once the place is fully established and given publicity, the response will certainly justify all efforts.

THE WESTERN Tanager

Published monthly, October to June, by  
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President.....Mrs. J. H. Comby  
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AN ANNUAL MEMBER who desires to remain  
anonymous has changed her status to that  
of "Patron," the fourth in that group of  
members. May their tribe increase!

AUDUBON FOLKS visiting Palm Springs  
should not fail to go to the Desert Muse-  
um. Our friends, Dr. and Mrs. Cockerell  
are in charge. Last season they had  
13,395 visitors. An exhibit, "Evolution  
of the Bird," with probable ancestors  
represented by carved colored figures,  
attracted much attention.

MRS. ENID MICHAEL, Yosemite ranger-  
naturalist of many years' experience,  
writes (Oct. 4): "The days are very love-  
ly here now, clear and warm with cold  
nights and the charm of autumn coming on.  
The water ouzel has moved back to the  
main river; almost every day I hear his  
lovely song. At this season the pileated  
woodpecker feasts on dogwood fruit. Hang-  
ing head downward like a chickadee, he  
presents a wild picture."

DON'T MISS seeing Mrs. Comby's picture in AUDUBON MAGAZINE (Sept.-Oct. p. 307), as  
"guiding spirit of the new Nature Center," and Mr. Comby's exceptionally interest-  
ing Season Report for Southern California, Supplement, p. 12.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT (en route to the N.A.S. annual meeting),-

Just about two hours from Chicago. The trees are ablaze with color, a tang of frost is in the air. Cornfields are standing in the rich perfection of their fulfillment. Oaks are shedding their leaves, preparing to face the winds of winter in their magnificent physique. V's of ducks are flying under the clear autumn skies. Newspaper headlines seem unreal to me, and as I look and enjoy the landscape I am filled with pride in our land of liberty.

--Erna Comby

#### WE VOTE TO BECOME A BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

At a special business meeting October 19, our society voted to accept the invitation of the National Audubon Society to become a branch of that organization and work with it in promoting "public recognition of the value of and the need of protecting wild birds and other animals, plants, soil and water," a conservation program to which every one of us will without doubt heartily subscribe. Mrs. Comby had explained the plan at two previous meetings, our Executive Board approves it and it asks the cooperation of our members in carrying it out.

The plan contemplates though does not require that our members become members of the National Audubon Society. The National will shortly send us its application blank with full information. Meanwhile it may be said that the minimum annual dues of \$5 provides for membership in both societies and include subscription to "Audubon Magazine" as well as our own "Western Tanager." Those who do not take out this joint membership will continue paying the regular dues of our own society. On the other hand, any member who has already paid dues for the current fiscal year may take advantage of the joint membership plan by sending by December first an additional \$3.50 to our treasurer, Miss Bonnie C. Green, 774 N. Heliotrope Drive, Los Angeles 27. Proper adjustment with the treasurer of the National society will be made promptly. The plan refers to annual dues only and has no bearing on our life or patron memberships.

Mrs. Comby says: "In becoming a branch of the National Society we will have the strength of an established organization, nation-wide in experience, to support efforts of local importance. In turn we may lend our support to those measures advocated by the National Society which may affect the welfare of the nation. We should derive mutual benefit from a harmonious coordination of our efforts. Striving to keep step with a broad national program will vitalize our own society to a stronger individuality."

#### VACATION IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK. By May E. Wait

It is soul-inspiring to be awakened at dawn by a symphony of bird-songs, to live for a time with the oldest living things, to see the shadows or pools of light on the lovely bark of the Sequoias, to find beautiful ferns, snow-plants and wild-flowers on the trails and in the meadows, to watch the creatures, feathered and furred, of the High Sierra. It is seeing Nature at her best.

The thrills of our two weeks were many. We saw the nuptial flight of Townsend's Solitaire; we heard its song; we found its nest. The Sierra grouse called from a tree near our cabin; we saw the female with young near the trails. We had a close study of a goshawk. He came into our camp to help himself to a baby jay. We heard green-tailed towhees singing; western tanagers fed from our hands. Never shall we forget the rapid, tinkling song of the western winter wren, nor the matchless vesper anthem of the Sierra hermit thrush. We heard them on every trip, and we found a thrush's nest with four hungry babies being fed. We saw all six hummingbirds of this region, golden eagles, pileated woodpeckers, and many, many other species.

The sunset hours on Beetle Rock were a revelation. Here, Mr. C. A. Harwell, Western Representative of the National Audubon, entertained us with stories of the Indians, the geology of the Sierra Range, the history of the Sequoia Gigantea. He whistled the "Indian Love-call" as the sun sank behind the mountains, and in the after-glow his bird calls were answered from nearby trees. Then the moon appeared and there came, several times, the call of the poorwill,--my first time to hear it.

Thursday, Nov. 2. Field Trip, Sunland Park and Alma Stultz Bird Sanctuary. Take Sunland bus in P.E. station, 6th & Main, Los Angeles, Gate #2, 8:15 A.M. Round trip fare, 81¢. Walk starts at 9:30 from bus stop in Sunland Park. Meet at noon at the Alma Stultz Bird Sanctuary, 8231 Chapin way. TAKE LUNCH. Coffee will be served by our hosts, Mr. & Mrs. Shearer. Those desiring to go directly to the sanctuary, disembark at McVine St. and walk three blocks south. A birthday party for the sanctuary. It was dedicated two years ago this month.

Thursday, Nov. 9, 7 P.M. Central Library, 5th and Grand, Los Angeles. Illustrated address by our president, Mrs. J. H. Comby: "Keeping Step with the Times: Latest Developments in Sanctuaries."

Sunday, Nov. 12. Field trip, San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary, Durfee Ave. and Lexington, opposite Temple School. 9 A.M. Go by P.E. bus or car leaving P.E. station, 6th & Main, in time to connect at El Monte with Long Beach bus leaving there at 8:37. Call Information, TUCKER 7272, for best time to leave Los Angeles

Thursday, Nov. 16. Program Meeting, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, 1:30 P.M. Mrs. Comby will give highlights of the annual meeting of the National Audubon Society in New York, which she attended as an official delegate. Mr. W. Scott Lewis, whom the National Audubon has just appointed official lecturer for the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary, will tell us, with kodachromes, of his and Mrs. Lewis' experiences and impressions of the sanctuary, after two months of camping there.

Saturday, Nov. 18. Program for Student Members at Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park. Review of birds previously identified and study of those probably to be found on the next trip. 10 A.M.

Saturday, Nov. 25. Field Trip for Student Members. Meet at 9 A.M. at southern entrance to Fern Dell, Western Avenue entrance to Griffith Park. Bring lunch. Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty, leader.

Sunday, Nov. 26. Field trip, Cabrillo Beach. Take San Pedro car in P.E. station, 6th & Main, Los Angeles, 7:55 A.M., arriving in San Pedro 9:05. Transfer to Point Fermin bus; get off at Cabrillo Beach. Those desiring to go later may take the 8:15 car, arriving in San Pedro 9:25. Take lunch. The group will be shown through the Marine Museum by the Director, Dr. Wm. L. Lloyd. Birding along the shore and on the breakwater.

Thursday, Nov. 30. Study Class, Plummer Park, 10 A.M. A close-up study of some of our common owls, - pygmy, burrowing, screech and the long-eared and short-eared. Also, a short excursion into botany, to discuss what exotics we have adopted until they seem almost native. Finally, the question-box. Bring lunch and spend the afternoon in our headquarters.

MICKEY AUDUBON BISHOP has presented a fountain and bath to the birds of Plaza de la Justicia. It was installed August 2, 1944, this making the twelfth time Mickey's consideration for his fellow creatures has been expressed in this happy fashion. Mrs. Comby presided at the dedication and the gift was accepted for the county by John Anson Ford, Supervisor, and J. R. Wimmer, Superintendent of County Parks. Mr. Ford said that this generous gift symbolized our close relation to the bird world and was especially appropriate in this park through which thousands of citizens pass on their way to work and where children and their pets come for recreation. The gift would be a permanent reminder, he said, of the rich bird life about us even in the midst of a great city.