

Western Tanager



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SOME BIRD-BANDING EXPERIENCES

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By C. V. Duff

The mystery of bird migration has proved a fascinating subject for speculation and study from earliest times. Long ago it was noticed by bird observers that some species of birds disappeared in fall and reappeared in spring. Not knowing where they spent the intervening period, many fanciful theories were advanced to account for their disappearance, as, hibernation in hollow trees, in the mud of streams or ponds, or on some unknown island in the southern seas. In later years, however, through bird-banding and other studies, there has come a fuller knowledge of migration and more definite information in regard to the routes followed in the fall and spring journeys. It is also gratifying to learn that with increased knowledge of the movement of the birds there has come a greater interest in this subject. Mr. Frederick C. Lincoln, Chief Biologist, Fish and Wildlife Service, recently told the writer that even though myriads of ducks have been banded, there continue to flow into his office returns of banded birds which are of real scientific value. Having banded 101 species and sub-species of birds, I have enjoyed many and varied experiences. Perhaps a few of these are worth sharing with other members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

One winter I banded 42 Audubon warblers (*Dendroica auduboni auduboni*) in my yard in Hollywood. Without the banding experience I would have thought that two or three Audubon warblers spent the winter with me, as only two or three were to be seen at one time.

One of the charms of bird study is to have opportunity to add one's mite to the sum of knowledge; so there was a distinct satisfaction in being able to band an Eastern Brown thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*). Something had gone wrong with the bird's gyroscope and it came to Southern California, making one of the very few appearances of this species here that has been recorded. A few days after this bird was banded about twenty members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society were seated before the usual feeding place. They saw this beautiful bird come out and had a fine opportunity to study it closely.

Another unusual banding experience took place this fall when a Tennessee warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) was caught in my water trap. This made the fifth recorded appearance of this species in Southern California.

Last summer I had the unusual experience of banding a juvenile Wright flycatcher (*Empidonax wrighti*) in the nest. I am no caliologist, so to me it was a wonderful sight. The mother bird was sitting on the nest only two feet away from where I stood but was so completely blended into her surroundings that it took me several minutes to locate her, even though my friend pointed out the location.

These few experiences seem to me to prove that the ordinary Nature lover can observe and record information of scientific as well as popular interest, take pleasure in observing passing beauties, train the powers of observation, and acquire a knowledge that greatly increases his desire and capacity for appreciating Nature.

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MEMBERSHIP DUES: Student (12 to 18 yrs.), 75¢; Annual, \$1.50; Sustaining, \$5.00; Life, \$25 and Patron, \$100, in one payment. Joint membership with National Audubon Society, with subscription to "Audubon Magazine," \$5.00 (minimum).

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN BIG BEAR LAKE AREA..... By. J. H. Comby

Dec. 30, 1944. Area: Pine forest 30%, mountain lakes 22%, mountain meadows 2%; pinyons 1%; desert scrub 18%, desert willows and cottonwood 9%, alders, oaks and canyon stream 10%, chaparral 30. Weather, clear; wind, 8-20 mph; temperature, below freezing in lake area day and night; 2 ft. snow on ground; ice and snow in trees in area south of lakes; snow in patches on north side of lakes; most of Baldwin and 1/4 of Bear Lake frozen. Five observers, two parties. Hours, 16; miles, 15.

Great blue heron, 4; baldpate, 400; pintail, 500; cinnamon teal, 390; shoveller, 300; redhead, 100; canvas-back, 300; lesser scaup, 100; Amer. merganser, 100; red-breasted merganser, 10; Cooper's hawk, 1; red-tailed hawk, 6; ferruginous rough-leg, 1; golden eagle, 2; osprey, 2; Amer. coot, 30,000; killdeer, 5; Calif. gull, 4; red-shafted flicker, 1; red-naped sapsucker, 1; Williamson's sapsucker, 3; ladder-backed woodpecker, 4; Nuttall's woodpecker (north of Bear Lake; S.D.P.), 1; white-headed woodpecker, 2; Steller's (blue-fronted) jay, 6; Calif. jay, 6; Amer. raven, 2; Amer. crow, 1; pinyon jay, 3; Clarke's nutcracker, 6; mountain chickadee, 13; white-breasted nuthatch, 4; pygmy nuthatch, 30; brown creeper, 2; house wren, 1; Bewick's wren, 1; cactus wren, 1; rock wren, 1; Calif. thrasher, 1; Townsend's solitaire, 1; golden-crowned kinglet, 3; ruby-crowned kinglet, 4; loggerhead shrike, 1; Audubon's warbler, 1; English sparrow, 4; western meadowlark, 3; house finch, 9; Amer. (willow) goldfinch, 1; spotted towhee, 1; Oregon junco, 33; white-crowned sparrow, 50.
Total, 51 species; about 32,426 individuals.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT,--

- Erna Comby

As plans for post-war developments in our various communities come to our attention, we cannot keep from feeling a deep concern for the survival of those basic values which are the very heart of our country. To the thinking person the American scene has become more vital as the rest of the world is being despoiled., and he feels an individual responsibility toward its preservation.

By keeping ever alert as situations develop about us, we may have a part in the formulating of programs in which the future of our refuges, parks and forests and the wildlife will be beneficially affected. To put a shoulder to the wheel in a genuine effort to preserve, for the generations of tomorrow, our country as we see it today is an effort in which we may well prove our worthiness as soldiers on the home front.

Louis Bromfield, speaking at a meeting of "Friends of the Land," gives us a word of warning and strikes a responsive chord in our thoughts as he says that he "loves this country very deeply and does not want to see it betrayed by its own people and despoiled. We need a new type of pioneer, not to ruin this country,- to restore it. I call on all men and women of good will to join this movement. It is later than we think."

"PIONEERS," published by the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, will come to our library this year, through the thoughtfulness of Mrs. Thomas R. Shearer, who has presented us with a subscription. Our appreciation, Mrs. Shearer!

MRS. MARY BARROWS COLLINS, one of our shut-in members, recently sent us an interesting post-card picture of "Oakley," John James Audubon's first home in the Feliciana country in Louisiana. Here he painted much of his early bird work. Mrs. Collins writes: "Oakley was built about 1787. My great-grandfather was born there. I lived there as much as I did at 'Rosalie,' about three miles from there, where I was born."

CORPORAL FRANCISCO HOLGUIN, a member of our society now in the Army medical service, writes entertainingly from New Guinea jungles, which he thinks Audubonites would consider a paradise, because of the abundance of wildlife there. He has been especially interested in the butterflies, the colors of which he says "no painter could ever put on canvas." When in Australia, Francisco made friends with a parrot,- snow white with a streak of vivid yellow on the back of its head. He fed it radishes and carrots!

A BABY PIED-BILLED GREBE arrived recently at Echo Park lake. Its mother was found there October 21st last, incubating one egg, on a fully-built nest. From time to time the female changed places with the male. --C.H.D.

MRS. SALMON reports a Pileolated warbler in Plummer Park in January, and another which she thinks was a Dusky. These two, with the Audubons, make three warblers in the park within the past month. Mr. Arthur Berry calls attention to the unusual number of Golden-crowned kinglets.

OF TIMELY INTEREST, in view of our front-page story on bird-banding, by Mr. Duff, is an item in Nature Magazine (Jan. 1945. p.52) in which Frederick C. Lincoln, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bird migration expert, describes the report of 13 leg bands from chimney swifts, sent in through the American embassy at Lima, Peru, as "one of the most important ornithological discoveries in at least two decades." The Nature Magazine article says that where swifts spent their winters has been a riddle of bird migration; that these 13 bands solve the mystery. The birds were shot by Indians in the River Yanayaco area of Peru. "Chimney swifts are found over much of North America, east of the Rocky Mountains, during the summer months. In the fall they gather in the southern states in enormous numbers and in flocks. Suddenly they disappear, not to be seen until the following spring. Now we know that at least some of them go to Peru."

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, LOS ANGELES AREA.....By Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty

December 27, 1944. Territory same as preceding 7 years, taking in short stretches of seashore (15%), marsh (15%), campus and city parks (15%), canyons (25%), chaparral (20%), open country (5%), reservoirs (3%), river area (2%). 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fair a.m.; clouds light to completely overcast by 1 p.m.; temp. 49° to 57° F.; wind SE, 10-12 mph; ground fairly moist and covered with new grass growth in open. Thirty observers in 12 parties. Total hours, 80; total miles, 119.

- LOONS: Pacific, 8; red-throated, 2.
GREBES: Eared, 4; western, 253; pied-billed, 39.
PELICANS & CORMORANTS: Brown pelican, 65; Farallon cormorant, 29.
HERONS, Etc.: Great blue heron, 7; American egret, 27; snowy egret, 29; Anthony's green heron, 2; black-crowned night heron, 49; Amer. bittern, 3; white faced glossy ibis, 4.
DUCKS, GESE, Etc.: Mallard, 2; gadwall, 1; baldpate, 8; pintail, 79; green-winged teal, 5; shoveller, 4; redhead, 1; ring-necked, 1; canvas-back, 8; lesser scaup, 544; white-winged scoter, 4; surf scoter, 172; ruddy duck, 165; Amer. merganser, 1; red breasted merganser, 25.
VULTURES, HAWKS, EAGLES: Turkey vulture, 2; sharp-shinned hawk, 9; Cooper's hawk, 5; red-tailed hawk, 14; ferruginous rough-leg, 2; golden eagle, 1; marsh hawk, 3; duck hawk, 1; pigeon hawk, 1; sparrow hawk, 34.
QUAIL: Valley, 119.
RAILS, COOT: Light-footed rail, 1; coot, 668.
SHORT BIRDS: Semi-palmated plover, 17; killdeer, 188; black-bellied plover, 438; ruddy turnstone, 1; black turnstone, 4; Hudsonian curlew, 22; spotted sandpiper, 8; willet, 260; greater yellowlegs, 12; least sandpiper, 208; red-backed sandpiper, 1; long-billed dowitcher, 127; western sandpiper, 353; marbled godwit, 130; sanderling, 68; avocet, 1; glaucous winged gull, 88; western gull, 114; herring gull, 4; California gull, 80; ring-billed gull, 2335; Bonaparte's gull, 406; Heermann's gull, 39; Caspian tern, 2.
PIGEONS, DOVES, Etc.: Band-tailed pigeon, 6; mourning dove, 238; Chinese spotted dove, 137; ringed turtle dove, 8.
ROADRUNNERS: Road-runner, 2.
OWLS: Horned, 1; short-eared, 1.
SWIFTS & HUMMINGBIRDS: White-throated swift, 65; Anna's hummingbird, 119.
KINGFISHERS: Belted kingfisher, 7.
WOODPECKERS: Red-shafted flicker, 50; California woodpecker, 26; red-breasted sapsucker, 2; downy woodpecker, 3; Nuttall's woodpecker, 1.
FLYCATCHERS: Black phoebe, 48; Say's phoebe, 11; gray flycatcher, 1 (only "wintering" Empidonax; closely observed. A. S.).
LARKS: Horned, 50.
SWALLOWS: Tree, 20.
JAYS: California jay, 113.
TITMICE, BUSH-TITS, Etc.: Plain titmouse, 25; bush-tit, 296; wren-tit, 154; Bewick's wren, 31; long-billed marsh wren, 5; canyon wren, 1.
THRASHERS, THRUSHES, Etc.: Mockingbird, 63; California thrasher, 108; robin, 61; hermit thrush, 28; Western bluebird, 13.
KINGLETS, GNATCATCHERS, Etc.: Western gnatcatchers, 14; golden-crowned kinglet, 5 (rarely seen in this area; this year observed in many places); ruby-crowned kinglet, 63; American pipit, 25.
WAXWINGS, WARBLERS, Etc.: Cedar waxwing, 103; loggerhead shrike, 53; Hutton's vireo, 3; dusky warbler, 4; Audubon's warbler, 1599; black-throated gray warbler, 1; Townsend's warbler, 1; yellow-throat, 8.
ENGLISH SPARROWS: English sparrow, 153.
BLACKBIRDS, Etc.: Western meadowlark, 146; San Diego red-wing, 81; Brewer's blackbird, 1429.
FINCHES, SPARROWS, Etc.: Calif. purple finch, 32; Cassin's purple finch, 2; house finch, 1634; pine siskin, 9; willow goldfinch, 23; green-backed goldfinch, 237; spotted towhee, 34; Calif. towhee, 297; savannah sparrow, 12; Belding's sparrow, 25; large-billed sparrow, 3; rufous-crowned sparrow, 6; Thurber's junco, 74; chipping sparrow, 3; Gambel's sparrow, 236; golden-crowned sparrow, 52; fox sparrow, 7; song sparrow, 60.
TOTAL SPECIES AND SUB-SPECIES, ... 132
INDIVIDUALS, about..... 15,435

THURSDAY, Feb. 1 Field trip, Playa del Rey. Shore and back bay areas for shore birds. Take Redondo Motor Bus, via Playa del Rey, Olive St. deck, Subway Terminal Bldg., 423 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, 8 A.M. Get off at Playa del Rey stop and Vista del Mar St. Round trip fare, 40¢. wear warm clothing and take lunch. Meet at break-water at noon. Bird walks will start from bus stop at 9 o'clock. Los Angeles return bus leaves Playa del Rey at 1:13, 2:13 and 3:13 P.M. Check for possible motor bus changes by calling Information, TUCKER 7272. Leader, Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty.

THURSDAY, Feb. 8. 7 P.M., Central Library, first floor; Fifth St. and Grand Ave., Los Angeles. Mr. R. W. Julian presiding. Mr. Guy C. Caldwell will speak on "Wild-life in Color and Song." His pictures will include birds common in Southern California and in the area around the Gulf of Mexico. He will give his justly famous imitations of bird songs and calls.

SUNDAY, Feb. 11. Field trip, San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. In the 2500 block on Durfee Avenue, south of El Monte. From Los Angeles, take El Monte bus leaving P. E. station, 6th and Main, 7:15 A.M. Change at El Monte station to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:37. Get off at Temple School. Take lunch.

THURSDAY, Feb. 15. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Mrs. Warren J. Holden, program chairman, is happy to present Mr. Ed. N. Harrison and Mrs. Frances Roberts, of Encinitas, as guest speakers. Subject, "Desert Trails," with motion pictures, in color, which we know from past experience will combine exceptional beauty and interest with the most skillful photography. No member of the society will willingly miss this program.

SATURDAY, Feb. 17. 10 A.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. A program for young people under 18 years of age will be presented by the Committee on Youth Leadership, Miss Unterkercher, chairman. There will be an hour in the bird gallery, to study mounted specimens of birds likely to be seen on the next field trip; then a talk by Miss Helen S. Pratt entitled "Along the Bird Trail," illustrated by color movies showing "Birds in My Garden," birds and animals in Sequoia National Park, and a few exotics. Miss Pratt, who has traveled throughout the state in the interest of Junior Audubon Clubs, will be welcomed as an expert bird student.

THURSDAY, Feb. 22. Study Class, Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. 10 A.M. Mrs. Thomas R. Shearer, leader, announces: "Continuing study of winter bird visitors; loons, egrets and grebes, - Western, pied-billed, eared and horned." Bring lunch and spend the afternoon at our headquarters.

SATURDAY, Feb. 24. Field trip for student members and their leaders. Meet at 9 A.M. at entrance to Vermont Canyon Bird Sanctuary, in Griffith Park. Vermont Avenue entrance. Bring lunch. Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty, leader.

SUNDAY, Feb. 25. Field trip, Oak Grove Park, Pasadena. Entrance on Foothill Blvd. above Devil's Gate Dam. Leave Los Angeles on Pasadena Short Line, leaving 6th and Main, N.E. corner, at 8:17 A.M. In Pasadena, change at Fair Oaks and Colorado, N.E. corner, to Linda Vista bus leaving that corner at 9:10. Go to end of bus line (Inverness and Linda Vista, or "The Big Oak") and walk north along Arroyo Seco, approximately one mile, to Devil's Gate Dam. Entrance to park is one block north of dam. Take lunch. Bus returning to Pasadena leaves Inverness and Linda Vista at 1:05, 1:45, 2:25 and 3:05 P.M. Pasadena Short Line, returning to Los Angeles, leaves Fair Oaks and Colorado at 12, 32 and 52 minutes past the hour.