

Western Tanager



VOL. XI

March, 1945

NO. 6

FROM A LOOKOUT'S NOTEBOOK

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By Georgie Ware

It was a proud and thrilling moment for me when, on June 20th last, at the Newhall Ranger Station, I pinned the badge of United States Forest Guard to the left pocket of my shirt, and was assigned to duty at Los Pinetos Lookout, in the Angeles National Forest.

Proud of the fact that to me had fallen the task of helping to guard our marvelous "elfin forest" and the little creatures of the wild which dwell therein, from that most ruthless of all destroyers, - FIRE. And thrilled at the opportunity presented for better acquaintance with these various denizens of the chaparral.

With the car loaded with provisions, I headed upward to the mountain peak which was to be my home for the next two and one-half months.

The inevitable question is: "But doesn't it get dreadfully lonesome?" To the contrary, I found that there is "never a dull moment." By telephone and short-wave radio I soon became acquainted with some seven or eight of my neighboring Lookouts, miles distant on other mountain peaks. And what splendid folk they are, devoted to the Nth degree to the cause of forest protection.

The first and all-important word in a Lookout's existence is SMOKE. Adjustment in the routine of daily living is quickly made to the pattern of maintaining constant vigilance from daylight until dark. Los Pinetos is not high--about 3600 feet--but it commands a view of a magnificent portion of the elfin-forest. What fun to prepare and eat meals with such majestic scenes on every side, though often it is done with the binoculars in one hand, the while watching the progress of some smoke that has been spotted and reported in.

The forest-cover is dense on the surrounding slopes. I awoke at dawn, that first morning, to the lusty chorus of Black-headed grosbeak voices, and was soon to learn that the chaparral was fairly saturated with birds. Hummingbirds became my close companions, feeding on gnats that swarmed outside, close to the windows. Occasionally one would come humming into the room through the open door, become confused, and flutter at a window a moment before sinking exhausted to the sill. They hold very still when picked up, and are away with all speed when released again in the open. For many days a dainty Black-chinned sparrow would sing for hours at a time from a favorite perch on a near-by shrub, the short sweet phrase being repeated with great precision an average of five and one-half times a minute. On days when swarming termites filled the air, from out of nowhere came the White-throated swifts to enjoy the feast. Circling close to the tower in their erratic flight they might pass only an arm's length away as I watched, fascinated, from the cat-walk. A family of Mountain quail lived around the edge of the yard for a little time. A pair of Ash-throated flycatchers nested under the garage roof. Poorwills came out with the stars. Lifting my head cautiously from the pillow just as the first faint light appeared one morning, I looked out to see a Horned owl atop a near-by telephone pole, bobbing his head in a comical manner as he sang a last mournful song to the departing night.

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THE WESTERN Tanager

Published monthly, October to June, by THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY A Branch of the National Audubon Society 1006 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, N.Y.

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Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. From downtown Los Angeles take Santa Monica Blvd. car, Subway Terminal, or transfer to it on Sunset Blvd. Get off at Fuller Ave. Walk one block west. Open to members at all times. For appointment, telephone Mrs. Salmon, Granite 9312.

Membership Dues

Student (12 to 18 yrs. of age), 75¢; Annual, \$1.50; Sustaining, \$5; Life, \$25; Patron, \$100. All members receive the "Western Tanager." Joint membership with National Audubon Society, with subscription to "Audubon Magazine," \$5 (minimum).

OBSERVATIONS: Golden-crowned kinglets have been seen this winter in Griffith Park, Silver Lake, San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary and many other places, first time in many years.

WATCH NOW for migrating Black-chinned, Rufous and Allen hummingbirds, and for the Arizona hooded oriole, a summer visitor.

--Mrs. Daugherty

NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME!

- Mrs. Alfred A. Dove
Mrs. Newton Foster
Dr. Max Kreuger
Mrs. Gertrude C. Marsh
Miss Muriel Miller (Student)
Mrs. Opal File
Miss Grace V. Sharritt
Miss Marie E. Terheggen
Mrs. Lucy Verrill

ADDITIONS TO OUR LIBRARY. Besides books previously mentioned in THE Tanager, add these titles to your Catalogue: "One Day on Beetle Rock" (Carrighar) "Illustrated Encyclopedia of American Birds" (Hausman) "The Elfin Forest" (Fultz) "Murmur of Wings" (Dubkin) "Wings at My Window" (Gowan) "Trees of Santa Monica" (Hastings) "Outermost House" (Benson) "Mammals of Los Angeles County" (Willett)

Report of Proceedings, National Conservation Policy Conference, held in the chambers of Secretary of the Interior, Washington, Jan. 18-20, 1944. Sent us by the National Audubon Society.

PLUMMER PARK NOTES. Within a half hour there were seen at the Mickey Bishop bird-bath 4 Greenbacked goldfinches, 2 Audubon warblers, a Golden pileolated warbler, a Ruby-crowned kinglet, California jay, linnets, mockingbird, California brown towhee, song sparrow, Gambel sparrows and Chinese spotted doves. In a near-by tree, a Nuttall woodpecker and a flicker.

---Mrs. Salmon

GREETINGS to George R. Gollum, another member entering the service. Mr. Gollum is now stationed at the U.S. Naval Training School, San Diego.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT,-

"Perpetuation by wise use," the formula for conservation given to us by Theodore Roosevelt, is perhaps even more to be heeded today as we combat the abnormal strain upon our natural resources. Proper evaluation of the natural environment of our state, with its richness and variety, leads to a keen appreciation of the responsibility with which we serve as guardians of this great heritage. Can we bring to our own "Peace Table" these rich resources of nature, showing wise use, so that they may be perpetuated for tomorrow? Have we each in our own community guarded our natural heritage with wisdom and understanding? We ask ourselves these questions in this Conservation month, and perhaps thereby rededicate ourselves to the cause of preserving our beloved land.

-----ERNA COMBY

MRS. AGNES VAHL and other Manhattan Beach members are watching the burrowing owls in that vicinity with special interest. How those funny little creatures and their progeny attract attention,- and protection! Last year the city authorities had a certain storm drain curb painted red to keep automobiles from being parked there, and residents posted the following sign: "Please do not disturb the owls. There are baby owls under the sidewalk." Burrowing owls are good neighbors. Dawson says they require more than their own weight of animal food daily. They like rodents, lizards, frogs, snakes, grasshoppers and crickets, and they hunt day and night. They nest in burrows four to ten feet in length and have from five to eleven eggs. Nesting season, April 20 to May 20: one brood.

MR. AND MRS. R. N. SHUART, of Redondo Beach, keep yearly lists of the birds they see along South Redondo Beach and in Palos Verdes Hills. They report nine species seen there this year that were not observed in 1944. White-winged Scoters are more numerous than usual, several flocks of twelve or more, all males, having been seen flying close to shore. Fewer Spotted Sandpipers and Sanderlings than last year. Where last year they saw Sanderlings in groups of several hundreds in compact bodies, this year they have seen only two or three dozen in groups. Very few Hudsonian Curlews, usually fairly numerous. Black Turnstones about as numerous as usual. Apparently a goodly number winter in the vicinity of Malaga Cove every year. Eleven Marsh Hawks were observed in a small canyon in Palos Verdes. They were circling and lighting in groups of three or four, while up at the head of the canyon others were annoying two Western Red-tailed Hawks. Planes from a nearby airfield seem to have disturbed the hawks and kept them back in the hills. Formerly they came into the oil fields and flat country, the Redtails often perching on oil derricks.

JOHN H. BAKER, president of the National Audubon Society, addressing the Southern Governors' Conference, at Biloxi, Miss., Nov. 25, 1944, said, in part: "Our Society concentrates its efforts largely on educational activities. Both adults and children respond emotionally to beauty, and intellectually to curiosity. Through communion with nature one may maintain and attain peace of mind, spiritual comfort, good health, and sanity. What better forms of security? A hobby interest in the out-of-doors is a wonderful resource, whether in boom time or depression, in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, and will, we hope, through education, become in time part of the endowment of every man, woman and child throughout our nation. We are coming to recognize that the teaching of those things that make for good citizenship may well be of greater importance than schooling in mental gymnastics."

MRS. MARY BARNES SAIMON writes: "I have read with great interest and astonishment the story of 'Snobber' in Audubon Magazine. (November-December, 1944, p. 352.) It reminds me of Browning's lines:

'God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign that we and they are His children, one family here.' "

THURSDAY, March 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., 427 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, 8 A. M. Get off at Playa del Rey and Vista del Mar St. Round trip fare, 40¢. Wear warm clothing and take lunch. Meet at break-water at 11:30 A. M. 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. Daugherty.

THURSDAY, March 8. 7 P. M., Central Library, first floor; Fifth St. and Grand Ave. Throughout March there will be a one-man exhibition of the paintings and etchings of Dr. Henry Smith Williams in the gallery of the lecture room of the Los Angeles Central Library. The Los Angeles Audubon Society's collection of his bird nest paintings will be featured. At our meeting on March 8, Mrs. Williams will tell anecdotes of the personalities and human traits of these birds and of amusing incidents which occurred during this fifteen-year period of "cooperative nest-building." R.W. Julian will preside.

SUNDAY, March 11. Field trip, San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. #2610 South Durfee Avenue, El Monte. Take lunch. From Los Angeles take El Monte bus leaving P. E. Station, 6th and Main, at 7:15 A. M. Change at El Monte station to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:37. Get off at Temple School. OR, take Whittier bus, P. E. Station, 6th & Main, at 9 A. M. Arrive Pico station 9:33; change to Pasadena bus leaving at 9:50; arrive Temple School 9:57. Returning via Pico, leave Temple School at 3:46 P. M.; change to Whittier bus in Pico; arrive Los Angeles 4:48. Returning via El Monte, leave Temple School 4:57 P. M. Leaders, Pasadena Audubon Society.

THURSDAY, March 15. 1:30 P. M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Mrs. Holden, program chairman, announces an address, "Yosemite Artistry," with kodachrome illustrations, by Mr. Harold E. Perry, of Glendale. Mr. Perry speaks with first-hand knowledge of the beauty of Yosemite from experience there as a ranger-naturalist.

SATURDAY, March 17. 10:30 A. M. Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Student members and other young people under 18 years of age will meet in the Society's headquarters in the park. Mrs. Salmon, Curator, will show them the society's collection of mounted birds and other nature objects and will talk to them about the birds of the neighborhood. Take lunch. Miss Unterkercher, chairman of the Committee on Youth Leadership, will preside.

THURSDAY, March 22. 10 A. M. Study Class, Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Mrs. Thomas R. Shearer, leader. Program: Question Box. Short Review of February lesson. Study of Cormorants, Curlews, the Marbled Godwit, Sanderling and Sandpipers. Bring lunch and spend the afternoon at our headquarters.

SATURDAY, March 24. Field trip for student members and other young people under 18. Echo Park. Meet at 9 A. M. at Park Avenue and Glendale Blvd. Bring lunch. Leader, Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty.

SUNDAY, March 25. Field trip. Mr. & Mrs. Comby extend a cordial invitation to spend the day birding in the vicinity of their home, near Whittier. Leave P. E. station, 6th & Main Streets, Los Angeles, by Whittier bus, 9 A. M. Get off at Norwalk and Whittier Blvds., a few minutes ride east of Pico Station, where the bus arrives at 9:33 A. M. Will those going by automobile please meet the bus at Norwalk & Whittier Blvds. and assist in taking the group to destination? Take lunch. Coffee will be served. (Take your own cup and sugar!)