

T H E

Western Tanager



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BIRDING FROM A DOORSTEP

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By Laura C. White

The doorstep, in this instance, looks over a wide, sandy beach. Beyond is the limitless ocean; nearby, a drinking fountain. This is constantly visited throughout the year by six species of gulls. One has a fine opportunity to observe their differing temperaments and raucous calls. Today a very immature Western cheeped loud and plaintively, while begging for food from his extremely unresponsive elders.

Identifying gulls by the underside of the wing is a doorstep challenge, and if you have ever seen a soaring gull nonchalantly scratching his head, you will watch every bird on the wing, hoping for a repeat performance.

The wide beach makes an ideal sunning and preening ground for the *Larus* congregation. During winter months they gather in scores, all facing into the wind, each species tend to occupy its own area. Ringbilled gulls seem the most playful. Some times one will drop a stick, over and over, from a considerable height, deftly catching it before it can touch ground. They are forever playing tag with some sanderling, darting and dodging madly through the air, until one or the other suddenly decides to call it quits.

Often a section of the beach seems to move, and binoculars disclose a large flock of snowy plover, scurrying about like little mice, or squatting motionless in tiny depressions. "Baby sea-gulls," an old sea-captain once informed us! On rainy days both snowies and sanderlings run far up the beach, the sanderlings, more venturesome, invading the sidewalks and even the narrow streets, bathing in infinitesimal pools. There is usually one little crosspatch among them, defending his own puddle against all comers. The semi-palmated plover is often seen, a solitary stranger, among the snowies.

Terns, slightly aloof, come to the gulls' sunning beach. One fall there were hundreds of Forsters, who lingered for several weeks. Royal terns appear less often, and in smaller numbers, their bold heads and heavy orange bills conspicuous for quite a distance. The piratical jaeger, who follows terns, usually stays rather far off shore, but recently, hearing an unfamiliar scream, we dashed to the doorstep in time to see him, a dark, hawklike figure, fly right over the wide beach and go beating out to sea on swift, powerful wings. Airy shouts and murmurs pose frequent doorstep challenges, what with curlew, willets, godwits and black-bellied plover flying over our heads to a neighboring slough.

It's a dull day that shows no pelican flap-flap-soaring past or hovering like a gigantic mosquito above the waves, ready to plunge suddenly beneath them. Did you ever analyze the different motions involved in that dive? There is a quarter-turn made, from right to left, just before the big bird hits the water. If ever he makes a turn in the opposite direction, this observer has yet to witness it. Heermann gulls hardly let him out of their sight. We have never yet seen one of them actually seize the fishy prize in its progress from pouch to bill and thence down the hatch, but, like the gulls, we are always hopeful!

Our next-door neighbor's doorstep is devoted to that *rara avis*, Ye English sparrow. Brought up in the mid-west, where we shot and trapped the little pests, to protect our elegant house-on-a-pole for purple martins, we were somewhat nonplussed by our neighbor's devoted cherishing. One must admit that the breeding female can produce a sweet, coaxing nuptial call and that the young are frolicksome. Other observations we hide behind closed lips, and meditate on the story of the man who wrote the

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Membership Dues

Student (12 to 18 yrs. of age), 75¢; Annual, \$1.50; Life, \$25; Patron, \$100. Joint membership with National Audubon Society, including "Audubon Magazine," \$5 (minimum). Annual dues payable now except for joint members, who will be notified at the proper time by the National Audubon Society. Membership Chairman, Miss Charlotte J. Fox, 5442 Monroe St., Los Angeles 38.

OBSERVATIONS: Shore birds returning in good numbers. Rarer species observed Sept. 15 to Oct. 10: Surf-birds, 5; Ruddy turnstones, 2; Black turnstones, 18; Wilson's snipe, 16; Long-billed curlew, 5; Wandering tattler, 3; American knot, 7; Pectoral sandpiper, 4. Sanderlings in great flocks. Oct. 8: White-tailed kite, 5; Myrtle warbler, 1. Audubon's warblers and Gambel's sparrows observed arriving Sept. 27. Ducks very late this season. Only a few pintail observed up to Oct. 10.

WATCH NOW FOR: Hermit and Varied thrush, Golden and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Waxwings, California purple finch, Pine siskin, Thurber's junco, Chipping, Golden-crowned, Fox and Lincoln's sparrows. --Caroline H. Daugherty

MRS. ROBERT FARGO

With sorrow we learn of the death of Mrs. Robert Fargo at the home of her nephew, Milton J. Lohr, in Wasco. Mrs. Fargo was a pioneer member of our society, - its corresponding secretary in 1913-14, president the next two years, then chairman of Education, Press and Program, respectively, until Oct. 18, 1934, when in recognition of her long and splendid service she was elected President-emerita. Ill health has prevented her active participation in the work of the society in recent years. Her memory will long be honored.

NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME!

- Mrs. C. L. Edmonston 1001 S. Passons Blvd., Rivera Jim Emory 2207 Linnington Ave., Los Angeles 25 Mrs. L. S. Enyeart 2633 E. 57th St., Huntington Park Miss Margaret Halstead 6122 Alcott St., Los Angeles 35 Miss Margaret S. Hosmer 946 S. Burlington Ave., Los Angeles 6 Mrs. Barbara McRoberts 216 Avenue E, Redondo Beach Mr. Kenneth Mitchel 2711 Rustic Lane, Glendale 8 Mrs. H. Palmer Sabin 1130 Shenandoah Rd., Pasadena 5 Mrs. Evelyn D. Stein 2733 Via Campesina, Palos Verdes Est. Mr. H. E. White 954 Keniston Ave., Los Angeles 6 Dr. O. W. Willits 2160 Ridgeview Ave., Los Angeles 41 Mrs. Rose Wilson 345 N. Friends Ave., Whittier Mrs. Charlotte Wishman 5219 Townsend Ave., Los Angeles 41

PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS?

James Alan Murdock, b. Feb. 8, 1945, to Mr. and Mrs. James Murdock, 311 Irving Avenue, Glendale 1. Rolland Gilbert Truman. Mr. and Mrs. Rolland Truman announce his arrival at 4540 Keever Avenue, Long Beach, July 7, and it is being whispered about that Mr. Truman has already purchased bird books for him. Marion Constance Lewis. Mr. and Mrs. W. Scott Lewis announce that she "landed (of all places! at 2500 Beachwood Dr., Hollywood, Sept. 25," and that she has been "exposed" to ornithology. Congratulations to the happy parents!

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As we enjoy the roadsides, gay with late sun flowers, and the deepening shades of rust and bronze in the foothills, we became conscious of the peace with which Nature invests her landscape in Autumn. In the ebb and flow of busy life it is reassuring to see all about us the fulfillment of her promise in rich harvest in field and wood. We hail the coming Thanksgiving with a feeling of gratitude akin to that which must have stirred those who so long ago were inspired to commemorate a day of thanksgiving in appreciation of Nature's bounty.

----ERNA COMBY

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Department of Agriculture, asking how to exterminate dandelions. He had tried every known method, but in vain. One could sit humbly at the feet of the unknown government employee who wrote back: "We suggest you learn to love them."

HOPE IS REVIVING for the establishment of a bird sanctuary near Playa Del Rey. We are indebted to E. H. Bowersock, a member who until recently lived at Venice but has now moved to San Diego, for a comprehensive account of developments in this connection. He himself has been actively interested the past fifteen years, and was instrumental in obtaining legislation which closed to hunting grounds (exclusive of the Recreation Gun Club) which have long been the nesting place of birds of many species, particularly the least tern and the black-necked stilt. When, recently, state and local authorities took under consideration an elaborate plan for the development of the shore line in that region, Mr. Bowersock renewed his efforts for wildlife protection there, and Mrs. Comby appointed him chairman of a committee to represent our society before interested authorities. This committee worked so effectively that there has now been set aside, in the Master Plan, as a bird sanctuary, a tract of 100 acres lying between Ballona Creek and Culver Boulevard. The plan, on file in the office of the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission, 205 South Broadway, Los Angeles, is still only a plan, but the prospect is hopeful. Mr. Bowersock says: "All those interested in wildlife conservation, especially members of Audubon societies, should see and study this plan from time to time and give encouragement."

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY was very fortunate in securing over 150 skins of birds from the Wyman-Burnell collection, with insect-proof case in which to keep them. These should be of great benefit to the leaders of our study groups, and we feel it is a valuable addition to our nature museum, at our headquarters in Flummer Park. The collection contains such specimens as rosy finch, crossbill, American redstart, some rare warblers, lazuli bunting, snow bunting, starling, a loon and a cormorant. Of special interest is the skin of an ancient murrelet, taken near Palos Verdes Estates in December, 1927, and a rhinoceros auklet, found the following month off Newport Beach. We sent a nice selection, which were duplicates, to the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary for use in the museum there.

---Mrs. Mary Barnes Salmon, Curator

THE FIRST TRIP of the current club year, at Playa Del Rey, brought out 55 members and friends. They were led, one group by Mrs. Daugherty, another by Mrs. Stultz, and the combined bird list netted 60 species. After lunch Mr. Hastings told of the prospects for a bird sanctuary in that region, and Mrs. Daugherty talked about the rarer species seen during the morning, - surf birds, wandering tattlers, turnstones and others.

A RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, usually a winter visitor here, was seen in San Marino Park Aug. 29, 1945, by Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Humphreys. On Sept. 25, on a trip to Ojai, Mrs. Parker saw an albino willett, in a flock of about fifteen other willetts. She watched it for ten minutes or more, noting that in flight it showed just a slight marking of black.

AUDUBON MAGAZINE, Sept-Oct. 1945, carries an interesting story by Howard L. Cogswell, a member of ours in the Navy. He calls it "Rainbow Island," and tells his birding experiences in Hawaii, - "a land of strange birds with strange names."

THURSDAY, Nov. 1. Field Trip. Sunland Park and surrounding area. Take Sunland bus in Pacific Electric Station, 6th and Main Streets, Los Angeles, 8:15 A.M. Round trip, 81¢. Walk starts at 9:30 from bus stop in Sunland Park. Take lunch, and meet at noon at picnic tables near the bus stop in the park. Program after lunch. Leader, Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty.

FRIDAY, Nov. 2. First Audubon Screen Tour. See Special Announcement.

THURSDAY, Nov. 8. 7 P.M. Los Angeles Central Library, Fifth Street and Grand Ave. First floor. Address, "Building a Life List," by Arthur Berry. R. W. Julian presiding.

THURSDAY, Nov. 15. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Assembly Hall on second floor. "Conservation and Other Organizations." Mrs. Carl P. Smith, Program Chairman. Colored motion pictures of birds of many species, loaned for the occasion by Ducks, Unlimited. Speaker, C. V. Duff. Mrs. J. H. Comby, President, will give highlights of the 1945 Convention of the National Audubon Society.

SUNDAY, Nov. 25. Field Trip, Sunland Park. Take Sunland bus, Pacific Electric station, 6th and Main Streets, Los Angeles, at 8:20 or 8:50 A.M. Bird walk will start from bus stop in Sunland Park. Leader, Arthur Berry. Take lunch and meet at noon at picnic tables at Lancaster Lake.

THURSDAY, Nov. 29. 10 A.M. Study Class. Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. From downtown Los Angeles take Santa Monica Blvd. car, get off at Fuller Ave., walk one block west to park entrance. Subject: "The Sparrows of Southern California." We shall not go into sub-species, but study the ten most ordinary types. See textbook for these. 2, Question Box. 3, The second half of the program will be in the hands of Mrs. Mary V. Hood. Topic to be announced. Leader, Mrs. Thomas R. Shearer, chairman, Committee on Nature Study. Bring lunch and spend the afternoon at headquarters.

FRIDAY, Nov. 30. Second Audubon Screen Tour. See Special Announcement.

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Entrance, 2610 S. Durfee Avenue, El Monte. Telephone, Whittier 6-3748. Maintained by the National Audubon Society and operated locally by a committee representing the Los Angeles, California and Pasadena Audubon societies and the Southwest Bird Study Club. Chairman, Mrs. J. H. Comby, Route 3, Box 378-F, Whittier. Telephone, Whittier 41-4236. Visitors are requested to register with Mrs. Ethel E. Richardson at the Sanctuary residence. -- The Pacific Electric Pasadena-Long Beach bus, four trips daily, week day and Sunday, stops at Temple School, opposite the Sanctuary entrance. From downtown Los Angeles, go by P.E. train or bus to El Monte and transfer to Long Beach bus going south; or, go by Whittier bus to Pico and transfer to Pasadena bus going north. Call Information, TUCKER 7272, for best schedule. If driving, go east on Third Street to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee, thence north to the Sanctuary. Regular monthly field trips on the second Sunday of the month, with leaders provided by the local committee.
