

T H E

# Western Tanager

VOL. XII

January, 1946

NO. 5

## EAST COAST VERSUS WEST COAST BIRDING

Lt. Allen H. Morgan, United States Marine Corps, Camp Pendleton, Oceanside

An ardent ornithologist in New England for most of my life, I had always wanted to see, in reality, those birds of southern and western species which I had hitherto seen only in books. My chance finally came in a completely different manner than any I had ever expected: I joined the Marine Corps! Of course time was very limited but this lack of time and the hard work made all the more enjoyable those bits of birding I could work in.

Many birds and scenes are indelibly etched in my memory, - prothonotary warblers, blue-gray gnatcatchers, pygmy nuthatches and clapper rails in the Carolinas; the unforgettable panorama of herons and ibises along the Tamiami Trail in Florida.

Now the latest chapter is, at this writing, in the process of being added; California, land of avocets, stilts, cinnamon teal, burrowing owls and myriad others. You cannot imagine what a thrill it gives a person from the East to come from a part of the country where the marbled godwit is a rare migrant (I saw it once in eight years!), to find them by the dozens along any California beach.

To give you some idea of how strange the bird life was to me, my life list increased by well over 100 species after four trips into the field. In trying to enumerate the different species I have enjoyed especially, I find myself overwhelmed. Certainly the California condor, beautifully seen flying and perched on a cliff, deserves a high priority. But then, so does the white-tailed kite and many other more common species such as the Lewis' and white-headed woodpeckers, yellow-billed magpie and fulvous tree duck. It is really impossible, though, to pick out any favorites, and perhaps it would be better to point out some of the differences between birding on the East coast and birding on the West coast.

In winter, Massachusetts bird life is at its lowest ebb. In January, away from the sea coast, you have to work hard all day to see thirty species of birds. If you cover several hundred miles visiting the best spots on the coast you will perhaps see sixty species in a day. Spring migration gets under way usually in March and builds up faster and faster to a grand climax in the middle of May, when a good day will produce 120 species, with perhaps fifteen or twenty different kinds of warblers alone. Then follows the summer lull and a less spectacular - repetition of the migration in the fall.

Never, of course, can you see as many species in a day as you can here on the West coast, but more than making up for this loss are the great waves of birds which sweep across the countryside, leaving every tree and bush teeming with warblers, thrushes and sparrows, all moving north rapidly through the trees.

THE WESTERN Tanager

Published Monthly, October to June, by THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY Los Angeles Branch of the National Audubon Society Headquarters: Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 46

- President..... Mrs. J. H. Comby Route 3, Fox 378-F, Whittier Telephone: Whittier 41-4236 Executive Secretary...Miss I. M. Wilson 4314 Los Feliz Blvd., Los Angeles 27 Telephone: Normandy 1-4279 Treasurer.....Miss Bonnie C. Green 774 N. Heliotrope Dr., Los Angeles 27 Telephone: Morningside 1-5537 Curator-Librarian...Mrs. Mary B. Salmon 1117 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles 46 Telephone: Granite 9312 Field Leader.Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty Telephone: Citrus 2-2437 Evening Program.....R. W. Julian Telephone: Walnut 7853 Editor..... Miss Laura Greely 904 Fendall Ave., South Pasadena Telephone: Blanchard 7-1894

Membership Dues

Student (12 to 18 yrs. of age), 75¢; Annual, \$1.50, Life, \$25; Patron, \$100. Joint membership with National Audubon Society, with "Audubon Magazine," \$5 (minimum). Annual dues payable July 1; delinquent Dec. 31. Membership Ch'm, Miss Charlotte J. Fox, 5442 Monroe St., Los Angeles 38. Telephone: HI 2433.

OBSERVATIONS. Nov. 25: Gadwall, ring-necked duck and a female canvas-back in General MacArthur Park; rare wood duck, male, along Los Angeles River; Townsend's warbler and slate-colored juncos in Sunland Park; red-naped sapsucker in Fig Tujungua.... Dec. 9: Great flocks of Western robins and cedar waxwings, Townsend's warbler, gray flycatcher, in San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. Large flocks of Western robins and cedar waxwings reported from many localities the past month. WATCH NOW FOR: all our usual winter visitors are back, but again look especially hard for Lewis' woodpecker, varied thrush, golden-crowned kinglet, slate-colored juncos and Fox sparrows.

...Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY Dec. 6 was a most enjoyable occasion, thanks to the untiring efforts of Mrs. Barnes and Mrs. Smith, co-chairmen, and their respective committees. Mr. Richard C. Craven, guest speaker, described the methods taken to safeguard birds and animals used in motion pictures; Mr. Ralph Platt whistled remarkable accurate imitations of bird songs; Mr. and Mrs. Harlan E. Eckler showed beautiful kodachromes of shore and mountain birds. Mrs. Salmon was delighted with the generous response to the request for food for the birds of Plummer Park. The attendance of members and guests numbered about 125.

A NEW BOOK in our library,—"Sugar Down the Wind," by Margaret M. Cary. A story of adventures in wilderness areas of this country. Mrs. Salmon recommends it highly for field trips.

RICHARD LINSLEY, a student member, recently found a wounded black brant. He cared for it for several weeks until it seemed well enough to be released. Then Mr. Duff banded it (the first brant on Mr. Duff's banding list), and it was set free on Ballona Creek.

CATS

By James Warnack (In The Los Angeles Times)

There was a time When I liked cats Fetter than dogs; But once I saw A beautiful kitty Spring from a tree And thrust her claws In the warm throat Of a lovely song -- And since that time I have not heard Much music in The purr of a cat.

"Wildlife is an important factor in our whole economy of living. Conserving wildlife is promoting the best possible world for ourselves."

---Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT,-

Plans for a greater world for the future propose in many instances such changes as to cause real concern for the inevitable result in relation to the welfare of the natural assets of our country. Highly developed as our land already is, we can but wonder how much farther we can go and yet retain a normal semblance of balanced nature in the measure to which our country is entitled, with its early history of abundance. Can we serve in our capacity as citizens in any better way than to keep alert and interested in these developments? Is it not worth while to promote protection for even one bird's nest or to interest your community in the preservation of one brushy spot if that is a fundamental part of the nature community in your area? When it is necessary to change the natural scene where plants and wildlife have formed a satisfactory biota, is it not reasonable to ask that a comparable situation be provided in order that a valuable asset may not be lost? These things must be a part of a country in which we may feel pride, and in the building of it we may all have a part if we look and listen and push when a little strength is needed. Shall we make it a slogan for the New Year?

----ERNA COMBY

WE REGRET to report the death, in September, of Mrs. C. J. Gans, a member living at Laguna Beach. The society extends sympathy to Mr. Gans and the family.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE. Our By-laws require the appointment, in January, of a nominating committee of three members, selected, one by the President, one by the Executive Board, one by the society from the floor. Be ready at the Program Meeting, Jan. 17 with your choice for this important committee.

MISS NORA PREISKER, an Inglewood member traveling in Mexico and Central America, writes of one birding "thrill" after another in these tropical regions. On one trip, she writes, "suddenly the air was full of egrets, blue herons, white pelicans and flamingos." At other times and other places she saw: "Thousands of snowy egrets perched in trees or wading...All shades and sizes of blue and green herons...Ten man-o'-war birds sailing high overhead... Long, pocket-like oriole nests hanging from trees... A mot-mot which strips the two long feathers in its tail until it leaves just a paddle-shaped bit at the end of the mid-rib...A cloud of small green parrots, probably a thousand...So many vermilion flycatchers they have almost ceased to be thrilling... A canyon wren singing not ten feet away; it even came into her room one day!... Golden-fronted woodpeckers; many kinds of hawks, many hummingbirds whose colors I have never seen before; many familiar migrants. With it all there is a tragic note in Miss Preisker's letter: "There seems to be no protection for birds in either Mexico or Guatemala. They like them only in cages. It makes me heartsick to see mockingbirds with their tail feathers broken, still trying to sing a little. The only wild, or free, mockingbirds I have seen were on the Yucatan peninsular. I have seen black-headed grosbeaks and hooded orioles in cages. Here at Patzcuaro (Mexico) I expected to find many birds, but have been disappointed. Every man and every boy's hand is raised against them."

"NO ONE REALLY knows a bird until he has seen it in flight," writes Henry Beston in "Outermost House," a book in our library. "Since my year upon the dunes (Cape Cod) spent in a world of magnificent fliers, I have been tempted to believe that the relation of the living bird with its wings folded to the living bird in flight is almost that of the living bird to the same bird stuffed. In certain cases the difference between the bird on the wing and the bird at rest is so great that one might be watching two creatures. Not only do colours and new arrangements of colors appear in flight; there is also a revelation of personality. Study birds on the ground as you will, but once you have thus observed them and studied their loveliness, do not be afraid to clap your hands and send them off into the air. They will take no real alarm and will soon forgive you. Watch birds flying!"

THURSDAY, Jan. 3. Field Trip, Griffith Park, Zoo side. Meet at 9:15 A.M. at picnic grounds near restaurant. Los Angeles Motor Coach line, Griffith Park bus, runs north on Vermont Avenue to Los Feliz to Griffith Park, starting from City College, Monroe Street and Vermont Avenue (end of "V" car line) at 8:30, thence hourly on the half hour. Get off at Zoo picnic grounds. Take lunch and meet at picnic tables at 11:30. Leader, Mrs. Caroline H. Daugherty.

THURSDAY, Jan. 10. 7 P.M. Los Angeles Central Library, Fifth Street and Grand Avenue, First Floor. Mr. R. W. Julian presiding. Speaker, Mr. Howard L. Cogswell, who has just returned from the war in the Pacific. He will tell us about birds of the north-central Pacific as seen from an ocean steamer. This will be our opportunity to welcome Mr. Cogswell home, and at the same time learn much about birds which, if we see them at all off the California coast, we think of as "casual" or "accidental."

SUNDAY, Jan. 13. 2 to 4 P.M. San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary museum. (See notice below for directions.) An illustrated talk on birds for Student Members and other young people under 18 years of age. Presented by the Committee on Youth Leadership, Mrs. O. B. Pratt, chairman.

THURSDAY, Jan. 17. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Second floor. Mrs. Carl P. Smith, Program Chairman, will present Mr. W. Scott Lewis, scientist, mineralogist, and a member of our society, who will talk on "California Birds." With Mrs. Lewis at the projector, Mr. Lewis will illustrate his talk with his own kodachromes, telling us why he thinks birds are interesting and entertaining, and proving it with fascinating bits of information about their lives and habits.

FRIDAY, Jan. 25. 10 A.M. Study Class, Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, third floor. (Note change from the usual time and place.) Special lecture by Dr. W. Dwight Pierce, head of the Department of Entomology, of the Museum, on the subject of SPIDERS, the families, habits and distribution in this area. The talk will be illustrated with specimens from the large collection in the Museum. After lunch there will be a short study session in the bird gallery, conducted by one of our field leaders. Mrs. Thomas R. Shearer, Chairman, Committee on Nature Study.

FRIDAY, Jan. 25. 8 P.M. Third Screen Tour. See special Screen Tour announcement.

SUNDAY, Jan. 27. Field Trip, Playa del Rey. A fine opportunity to study shore birds, which have returned in great numbers. Take Redondo Motor Bus via Playa del Rey. Olive Street deck, Subway Terminal Building, 423 S. Hill Street, Los Angeles, 8:50 A.M. Get off at Vista del Mar. Bird walk will start from there on arrival of bus (about 9:36 A.M.). Take lunch. Meet at 11:30 on bridge near the shore, south of restaurant. Check with Information, Tucker 7272, for possible bus changes. Leader, Howard L. Cogswell.

---

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

SUNDAY, Jan. 13. Field Trip, starting from the entrance, 2610 S. Durfee Avenue, El Monte, at 9 A.M. Leader, Mrs. L. H. Young, president of the Pasadena Audubon Society. Take lunch, and meet at picnic tables at 11:30 to hear the bird list and discuss the morning's observations. The Pasadena-Long Beach (P.E.) bus, four trips daily, stops at Temple School, opposite sanctuary entrance. From downtown L.A., go by P. E. train or bus to El Monte and transfer to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:38 A.M. Returning busses leave Temple School at 4:57 for El Monte and at 3:46 for Pico. If driving, go east on Third Street to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee Ave., thence north to the sanctuary.