

Western Tanager



VOL. XIII

October, 1946

NO. 1

NESTLINGS AND FLEDGLINGS OBSERVED IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK By Ruby Curry

The last two weeks in June were busy days for bird parents. Members of our party observed, from a respectful distance, the nesting activities of red-breasted sapsuckers, Cabanis's and white-headed woodpeckers, red-shafted flickers, robins, Audubon's warblers, black-headed and Western evening grosbeaks, Thurber's juncos, red-breasted nuthatches, ouzels and Western goshawks. In addition we saw many fledglings of other species already out of the nests, many Sierra creepers, slender-billed nuthatches and blue-fronted jays.

The red-breasted nuthatch had put black pitch around the entrance to the nest to keep ants away from the nestlings, but so accurately did the parents enter the hole that their feathers never touched the pitch. Not far from this a hen grouse with chicks was taking a walk. On our approach she sounded the warning, then she herself remained in plain sight under some trees, making soft reassuring sounds, accompanied by bobbing of her head. One chick remained immobile not three feet from us.

One day, high up in a great sequoia, a Western goshawk's nest was discovered. It was close to the trunk and was decorated with small fresh fir and pine branches. The owners of the nest saw us looking up at it and set up a shrill kak-kak-kak-kaking, flying around over our heads. We went a considerable distance beyond the tree and circled back to the log of a fallen sequoia, from which point and also from a more distant hillside we were able to observe the birds with a high-power spotoscope. There were two downy young. Occasionally they got up and walked around the edge of the nest or flapped their wings. The older one when flapping showed a distinct black and white pattern, but the younger one very little marking, just a grayish white fuzz. Once the older one seemed to be investigating his brother's feet and looked as if he were about to swallow yellow leg and all.

Another day we took our station on the log with the movie camera pointed toward the nest, through an opening between two big trees. The mother hawk spied us and made a fuss, but soon quieted down and fed the young. On leaving the nest she flew directly toward the camera, then changed her course and a little later perched for a long time, in full view, on the snag of a burned-out tree. Directly below her, in the same tree, a white-headed woodpecker had a nest, but paid no attention to the goshawk, or it to the woodpecker. We came to the conclusion that goshawks do not take small birds in the immediate vicinity of the nest. A little later she chased another hawk away from that area and returned with a red-breasted sapsucker, which she carried to a mossy stub almost directly overhead and proceeded to tear off the primaries and tail feathers, the softer white feathers floating downward in the breeze. Then she took the rest to the nest and fed it to the young birds. She left about 1:35 P.M., returned for a short time at 3:00, fed them again at 3:10 and left less than five minutes later. One of the young tried to call like the parent, but not so loudly.

The following afternoon the male parent was seen. He was hovering the young at 2:30 and for three-quarters of an hour continued to sit on the nest, which had been freshly camouflaged with fir and pine branches. He left unobtrusively from the rear. Then the fuzzy chicks got up, stretched their wings, preened, walked around the nest, sat on the edge and peered over the side, doing many amusing and interesting things. Neither parent had returned at 3:30 P.M.

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THE WESTERN Tanager

Published Monthly, October to June, by
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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 Socy., with "Audubon Magazine," \$5 (minimum). Membership Chairman, Mrs. Wm. T. Shelford, 3315 W. 41st St., Los Angeles 43. AX 0410.

OBSERVATIONS: One Macgillivray's and many pileolated warblers around Aug. 20 and another successful nesting season for the "Glendale" Western robins, reported by Miss Dorothy Getz. Few russet-backed thrush this summer. A provoking observation: two overworked wren-tits feeding an overgrown cowbird baby! Brewer's blackbirds slowly becoming more numerous locally, but flocks of thousands reported through Northern California valleys. Western robins nowhere reported numerous through mountain areas. Phainopepla nested again in the outskirts of Glendale.

WATCH NOW FOR: Returning migrants (Swainson hawks; Calaveras, lutescent, yellow, black-throated gray, Townsend's, hermit, Macgillivray's and pileolated warblers) and for winter residents (shorebirds and ducks; ruby-crowned kinglets; chipping, Gambel's and golden-crowned sparrows, and Audubon's warblers). --Caroline H. Daugherty

NEW MEMBERS, WELCOME !

- Mrs. W. M. Adams
Box 184, Lake Arrowhead
- Mr. Wm. S. Burchard
1548 Ridgeway Dr., Glendale 2
- Mr. and Mrs. Harlan A. Cate
450 N. Durfee Ave., Pico
- Mr. Carl N. Helmick
3388 Seventh St., Riverside
- Miss Dora Ingram
17 Fifty-fourth Place, Venice
- Mrs. Harry F. Kibler
1508 Valley Home, La Habra
- Mr. Wayne Loel
808 Subway Terminal Bldg., L. A. 13
- Pio Pico Woman's Club
665 S. Passons Blvd., Pico
- Dr. Joseph E. Pottenger
Monrovia
- Miss Sara Schoonover
1050 Winston Ave., San Marino 9
- Mrs. Geo. E. Webster
1301 Chavez Ravine Rd., Los Angeles 26
- Miss Edith S. Farrar
1411 N. Hayworth Ave., Hollywood 46
- Mr. James D. Findlater
3712 Meier St., Venice
- Miss Gene Montine
1165 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles 15

WELCOME, also, Mr. and Mrs. Dan J. McCarthy, 1928 Huntington Dr., S. Pasadena, former members who for the past few years have devoted themselves almost exclusively to the war effort.

IN MEMORIAM: In the death July 28, 1946 of Mrs. James M. Brennan, the Society suffered a great loss. Mrs. Brennan, a life member, was president in 1933 and 1934. She had served also as Corresponding Secretary, Program Chairman and First Vice-President. In her honor the Society planted a tree in Plummer Park March 29, 1940. To Mr. Brennan and the family the Society extends deepest sympathy.

WHEN YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES are payable (consult your card for the date), remember that our Treasurer now is Mrs. C. J. Parker, 821 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra. Please pay at the time of the meetings if convenient; otherwise, make check or money order payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society and mail to Mrs. Parker.

MEMBERSHIP June 30, 1946, - 482. New members received during the fiscal year, 130.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT,-

During the first peace-time summer since the war we have gone here and there to renew our acquaintance with well-loved scenes. Far-away places have called us; we have been refreshed by forest and stream, and in their quiet grandeur the mountains have spoken to us of eternal values. As Van Dyke has told us, we have discovered in the out-of-doors some of the guide posts on the foot-paths of peace. All around us the small things in Nature have gladdened us with the familiarity of her ways. Let us share in the enjoyment by recounting a few of the summer experiences before we stow them lingeringly away with the past, for they have fortified us with the strength and vigor that we need, to resume our program with enthusiasm.

--- ERNA COMBY

BIRDING FROM ALHAMBRA TO OREGON, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Parker identified 130 species, including more lazuli buntings and blue grosbeaks than they had ever before seen at one time, 82 yellow-billed magpies, etc., etc. In Yosemite they watched, for 20 minutes, while a pileolated woodpecker, not 30 feet away, preened his feathers; and they saw a pair of winter wrens feeding three young,- the first nesting record in Yosemite, according to Ranger-Naturalist Enid Michael.

MR. AND MRS. ARTHUR L. BERRY turned their home into a Nature Center the past summer, conducting once a week a nature class for neighborhood boys and girls, 10 to 13 years of age. More than 250 kinds of birds, mammals, plants, reptiles, and insects were illustrated, some accompanied by sound effects. Members of the class were encouraged to bring specimens, ask questions, and make report of their observations.

FOR THE PAST FOUR SUMMERS, Mrs. Mary B. Salmon, Curator of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, has conducted, with the help of other members, a nature and bird study course at our headquarters in Plummer Park during the encampment there of Girl Scouts. The project was started during the war when it was impossible for the children to go to vacation camps any distance from home. This summer an hour was spent with 12 different groups of girls, about 20 girls in each group, giving 20 minutes to a talk about birds, then 20 minutes in our museum, showing specimens and answering questions, and 20 minutes in a "field trip" about the grounds. Decided interest was shown by the Scouts, and the Camp leaders were grateful for the help given them.

"SOME OF OUR BIRD FRIENDS," writes Georgia Ware, returning from 5000 miles of roaming in far places, "hie themselves off to far regions with the approach of summer and build their nests in places so remote and inaccessible that it is given to but few of us to view them in situ. And so it was with feelings of mingled elation and surprise that - in one instance - good fortune included me among the favored few.

"On July 15, while crossing a snowfield on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains at about 7000 feet elevation and close to the crest of the Continental Divide, I became aware of Pipits voicing resentment of my presence. A few yards to one side a barren, rocky ledge arose free of the snow and paralleled my way. As I stopped and glanced about, a wisp of grass trailing down from a niche in the perpendicular face of the ledge caught my attention. Closer inspection revealed a neat and sturdy little nest just within the shelter of the niche. The snow had melted back about three feet from the face of the ledge, but by leaning, somewhat precariously, over the fissure, I could see the contents of the nest -- five tiny dark brown eggs. Not wishing to subject them long to exposure in the cold air, I did not linger. Returning with the camera a few days later I found I could no longer see the eggs, but by approaching quietly I observed the bird on the nest.

"It was interesting to note how cleverly the nesting site had been chosen. Protected by the ledge at the back from the cold west winds pouring over the Divide, it was open to the east and exposed to the full rays of the sun until midday. And, - giving we can only guess what measure of delight to the Anthusine heart -- the 'bird's eye' view encompassed scenes of grandeur not easily surpassed."

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For several years the ouzels, or dippers, have nested under the bridge at Lodgepole, in Sequoia National Park. Three years ago the nest was so placed that the parents, on arriving or leaving, made the characteristic dipping movement beside the nest. This year the nest was flush with the supporting girder so that the feeding of the four hungry young, with gaping, fishlike mouths, was done on the wing, the parent hovering in the air. Eleven days later, when we went to pay a farewell visit to the family, the babies were out of the nest, standing around on the rocks, dipping, winking and showing the white nictitating membrane, picking up insects, wading and finally swimming. The parent spent most of her time feeding the one under the bridge on the slippery wet rocks, while the other two out in the sun stayed rather close together, seeming to be able to take care of themselves very well, making short flights and going into the water. The fourth young one was not seen. Possibly the other parent was giving him lessons on how a young ouzel should act after leaving the nest.

The blue-fronted jays just out of the nest were very amusing also. One came to the edge of our garbage can lid, which had been transformed into a bird bath. He looked at the water solemnly for some time, took a tentative sup and finding it pleasant continued to sup, reaching out farther each time. After testing the bottom he got in, sat there, and drank and drank until we thought he might become water-logged. Spying his parent, he sat in the water and begged for food. He considered that water his property and objected vigorously when chipmunks and golden-mantled squirrels came to drink. However, he did allow his brothers and sisters to try the water, and all learned to take a bath!

FROM THE AUDUBON NATURE CAMP in Maine, Mr. and Mrs. Howard L. Cogswell wrote enthusiastically about the camp activities and their helpfulness to teachers and nature leaders in attendance. After two weeks in Maine, the Cogswells went to the Audubon Nature Center at Greenwich, Conn. Among many other exciting adventures, Howard tells of a visit to a sea-bird colony where he watched banding operations and actually held Leach's petrels in his hands, just out of their burrows, and got bitten by a young black-backed gull, as a souvenir! At the evening meeting October 10 we are to hear more about this feature of the National Audubon Society's program.

STUDENT MEMBER BILL MAULE spent part of his vacation with another Scout at Fallsvale, in the mountains back of Redlands. To their feeding station came a large variety of mountain birds, - juncos, chickadees, blue-fronted jays, Western tanagers, etc., and they saw white-headed woodpeckers and heard the song of the canyon wren. It amused them to watch the tanagers chasing away any blue-fronted jay that came too near. Their biggest adventure was the discovery of an ouzel's nest. Bill climbed up for a closer view and found four babies in it, very small, covered with down, and with very big mouths. He says, "I got drenched, but it was worth it!"

THE AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS. The Audubon Screen Tours program announcements for 1946-47 are now being mailed. Included will be an extra folder and several extra membership blanks, of which we hope good use will be made. Patriotic Hall, located at 1816 South Figueroa Street, where the programs are to be held, is in the opinion of the committee by far the best auditorium available to us. It is owned and operated by the County of Los Angeles and is a theatre type, with high roomy ceiling, sloping floor, comfortable stationary seats, and a public address system. It is easily reached by the U or W yellow cars, the Figueroa bus, or the Vineyard red car. Ample parking is available nearby. Admission, as before, is by membership card only. No one can be allowed to pay a single admission for any one program. We urge everyone to send in requests for memberships as early as possible, in order to eliminate a last-minute rush, such as was experienced last year. Mr. Walter Scott, 967 South Sydney Drive, Los Angeles 22, will have charge of the sale of memberships.

If further information on the AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS is desired, write or telephone Miss Laura Greely, 904 Kendall Avenue, South Pasadena; Telephone, Blanchard 7-1849.

---THE COMMITTEE ON AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS.

THURSDAY, Oct. 3. An out-standing field trip, to the Maxton Brown Sanctuary (formerly known as Buena Vista Lagoon), near Carlsbad, where we hope to see wood ibis, rare to us; flocks of white-faced glossy ibis, egrets, herons, thousands of ducks and shorebirds. En route we may check on the San Juan Capistrano swallows, look for white-tailed kite and observe shorebirds as we drive along the ocean. Our Tanner Motor Bus will leave 6th and Olive Sts. (park side), Los Angeles, at 8:00 A. M. Round trip fare \$2.65 (exact change, please). Dress warmly and take lunch. We will stop at Oceanside about 11:30 for lunch at the picnic grounds by the pier. About 12:30 we will drive on to the Sanctuary, where we will bird until about 3:30 then return to Los Angeles, arriving about 6 P. M. Please make reservation EARLY with Mrs. Jesse L. Morain, 1041 S. Gramercy Dr., Los Angeles 6; Telephone PA 0339. All reservations must be paid unless canceled with Mrs. Morain 24 hours in advance.

THURSDAY, Oct. 10. 7 P.M. Central Library, Fifth St. and Grand Ave., First floor, R. W. Julian presiding. Address, "Birding on the Road to Mandalay," by Kenneth E. Stager, Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Los Angeles County Museum; illustrated with Kodachrome slides taken by Mr. Stager during wartime birding experiences in Burma, India, and China. Howard L. Cogswell, recently returned from the National Audubon Nature Camps in Maine and Connecticut, will tell us some of his experiences there.

SATURDAY, Oct. 12. 9 A.M. to 12 Noon. San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. (See notice below for directions.) Illustrated talk on birds for Student Members and other young people, presented by the Committee on Youth Leadership.

THURSDAY, Oct. 17. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Mrs. Comby presiding; Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Program Chairman. Address, "Young Life among Ancient Trees," by Miss Ruby Curry; illustrated with motion pictures, taken the past summer by Miss Curry in Sequoia and Kings River National Parks. Address, "Once in a Life-Time," by C. V. Duff; a summer vacation experience.

THURSDAY, Oct. 24. Study Class. 10 A.M. Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. From downtown Los Angeles take Santa Monica Blvd. car, get off at Fuller Ave. and continue on foot one block west to the park entrance. Organization, planning, etc., followed by a brief study of ten of our most common birds for exemplification; start of a life list. At 11:30, colored moving pictures by Miss Ruby Curry (not the ones shown at the afternoon meeting). We shall close promptly at 12:00 Noon. Bring lunch and spend what time you like in the park and museum. Leader, Walter Scott. For information, call ANgelus 2-4649.

SUNDAY, Oct. 27. Field Trip: Upper Newport Bay, starting from Coast Highway (US 101 A) at the Balboa Island turnoff at 8:00 A.M., the exact route covered to be adjusted to the tide schedule, as this will be primarily a shorebird and waterfowl trip. Transportation by P.E. car to Balboa Beach, with transfer to Balboa Island by ferry, is also available, leaving Main St. Station, Los Angeles, 8:00 A.M., arriving at ferry at 9:30. Auto pick-up service at Balboa Island ferry terminal will be provided at the first ferry time after 9:30. Leader, Howard L. Cogswell; Sycamore 6-5563.

THURSDAY, Nov. 7. Field Trip: Playa del Rey, starting from bus stop at 9. Full directions in November issue of "The Western Tanager."

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY. Field Trip, Sunday, Oct. 13, 1946, starting from the entrance, 2610 S. Durfee Avenue, El Monte, at 9 A.M. Leader supplied by the California Audubon Society. Take lunch. The Pasadena-Long Beach (P. E.) bus, four trips each way daily, stops at Temple School, opposite the Sanctuary entrance. From downtown Los Angeles go to El Monte by P. E. bus or train and transfer to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:38 A. M. Telephone Information, Tucker 7272, for best schedule. If driving, go east on Third Street to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee Ave., thence north to Sanctuary. Sanctuary telephone, Whittier 6-3743.