

# Western Tanager



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## OCTOBER ON THE PALACE MOAT

Robert L. Pyle, 9th AAF Weather Station, Tokyo. Member, Los Angeles Audubon Society.

It was a typical day in early October. The air was cool and refreshing and of course it was cloudy, because Tokyo has only one clear day on the average in this, the rainiest month of the year. It was noontime, and I stood at one of the busiest street corners in the city, watching the Japanese policeman and the American Army MP on their little pedestals in the center of the intersection. They were wildly waving their arms and blowing whistles, trying to keep order among the trolley cars, jeeps, automobiles, bicycles, oxcarts, rumbling army trucks, native trucks of every description, and the herds of people converging on them from all four directions. Finally my chance came and I crossed over and started up the boulevard along the Imperial Palace moat. Across sixty feet of water stood the massive grey stone walls surrounding the grounds and castle of Japan's Emperor, erstwhile "son of heaven." The moss covered stones were topped by gnarled old pines in sharp contrast with the spindly radar antennae on the modern streamlined Dai-Ichi building across the street. Dai-Ichi means "highest order" or "number one," and is now appropriately used by General MacArthur as his headquarters.

Out on the moat little dabchicks were bobbing around like corks, diving down for a bite of lunch and then suddenly reappearing for a look around to make sure all was well. With their heavy conical bills and their little round heads, they looked to Americans for all the world like miniature pied-billed grebes. In breeding plumage their cheeks and neck turn a beautiful dark crimson, but on this October day only an occasional bird showed traces of his springtime beauty. It was fun trying to count them. The little rascals appeared and disappeared so continually that one could never be sure the four he saw now would not suddenly become two or six!

Proceeding along the moat I passed a bridge crossing with a little Japanese style blockhouse. The native policeman barred the crossing to Americans and Japanese alike, for the sacred grounds have been "off limits" for generations. Beyond the crossing the boulevard climbs gradually higher and higher, until finally the water below me was as far away as the wooded bank standing above the wall on the opposite side. By then I had rounded a curve and the din of the city had subsided a little, although dinky trolleys and charcoal-burning trucks still clattered up and down the boulevard. Here, resting on the moat among the dabchicks were a few large ducks the size, shape and general color of female mallards. These were spot-billed ducks, eight of them, but only the vanguard of the hundreds which would arrive on the moat before Christmas. Their black bills with brilliant yellow tips left no doubt that I had added a new duck to my list.

A little farther along I passed a few cormorants sunning themselves on an old limb at the edge of the moat. Occasionally one would flop into the water and glide along with head held high. He reminded military men of a tiny sub-marine, looking this way and that with its little periscope.

Leaving the boulevard I wandered on along the moat listening to the chatter of the tree sparrows. These are closer relatives of the common English sparrow of America and Europe, and take the place of this nuisance in the cities of Japan. Occasionally a meadow bunting would fly up and then disappear into the weeds, waving goodbye to me with his flashing white outer tail feathers. (Continued on next page.)

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT,-

The address by President John H. Baker before the Wildlife Conference in San Antonio February 3 and his article in the March-April issue of Audubon Magazine leave us in no doubt about the precarious situation of the waterfowl. The National Audubon Society advocates that the hunting of migratory waterfowl be discontinued for one year with the understanding that during that time basic revision of management and regulation policies be worked out and adopted. California is in a strategic place in the Pacific flyway, and the problem concerns us. How can we best accept our responsibility? The National Society suggests: "Let's go right on buying Duck Stamps during the proposed halt in the kill. Let's encourage public participation in this. Let's call it the 1947 DUCK RESTORATION STAMP!" We say: "Let's join in presenting a united front, for this is a crucial time in the history of our American waterfowl."

---ERNA COMBY

EXHIBIT OF AUDUBON PLATES AT THE COUNTY MUSEUM ..... By George T. Hastings

From April 11 to 30 the Los Angeles County Museum devoted one of the art galleries to a display of Audubon bird pictures. These were not from the first edition of Audubon's Birds, but from the edition published by one of Audubon's sons in 1860, more than twenty years after the first edition was completed. For the original edition the copper plates were engraved in England from the original paintings and less than 200 complete sets were made. The plates for the edition shown at the Museum were engraved in New York from the same paintings, and as in the first sets, were all hand colored. Nearly sixty of the over 400 plates were displayed. In cases in the gallery were mounted specimens of most of the birds shown in the engravings, taken from the Museum collections.

In one case was the set of three volumes of Alexander Wilson's Birds of the United States, published in 1828, at the time the first of Audubon's plates were appearing. One volume was opened to show a plate where a half dozen birds were shown. Like all bird pictures made before Audubon's time, and unfortunately many even today, Wilson's birds are stiff and formal, as if drawn, as they probably were, from stuffed specimens. In contrast, Audubon's birds are alive and in action. Plants shown with the birds are as carefully drawn as the birds themselves and named with the scientific names. The arrangement of plants and birds proves that Audubon was a real artist, aside from being a great painter of birds.

If some critics compare Audubon's work unfavorably with the best of modern bird artists, it must be remembered that he was a pioneer in the field, the first artist to show birds as if really alive, and that modern painters of birds are inheritors of the methods that Audubon originated.

The Museum and in particular Dr. Wm. Valentiner, Mr. Henry Wild and Mr. Kenneth Stager, of the Museum staff, are to be congratulated on the very fine piece of work done in arranging this exhibit, combining art and science in an effective and instructive way.

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OCTOBER ON THE PALACE MOAT (Continued from preceding page)

Glancing down on the moat I was startled by a vision that seemed too beautiful to be real. Its stubby little bill was bright red, its face white, merging into green on its forehead and purple on the crown. There was a coppery red crest flowing out behind, with tinges of white and purple and green towards the tip. It had a patch of glossy metallic blue on its grayish white wings, and a fan-shaped group of bright orange wing-feathers sticking straight up like little flags. Its throat and breast were a warm rufous, with prominent white stripings, and its sides and flanks were a rich purple blue. I forgot everything else, -dabchicks, spot-bills, cormorants and waving policemen not a half-mile away. For this was the climax of the day, the thrill of thrills for my whole visit in Japan. I had seen my first wild Mandarin duck!

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GOOD READING! Howard L. Cogswell's "Chaparral Country," Audubon Magazine, March-April, 1947, p. 75.  
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NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

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Mr. J. Alden Lane
6122 S. Victoria Ave., Los Angeles 43
Miss Martha A. Lengeman
1422 Veteran Ave., Los Angeles 24
Mrs. George Mandeem
2370 Edgewater Terrace, Los Angeles 26
Mr. Clifford L. Pool
7025-B Otis Ave., Bell
Miss Eva G. Ryder
1231 W. 49th St., Los Angeles 37

OBSERVATIONS: Turkey vulture migration flights interesting to observe during high winds. The wise birds sail in single file formation close to the ground (where wind resistance is less), barely missing house tops and chaparral growth. Warbler migration very erratic and low in numbers so far. Mrs. Helen Shearer reports seeing in her grounds 6 rufous hummingbirds 3/31; her season's first black-headed grosbeak 4/6; a Tolmie warbler 4/7; a lazuli bunting 4/11. In Glendale a Costa hummer was seen around last year's nesting site 3/27 and a male western tanager paused 3/28, to find our loquots still green. He was a very early arrival, usually coming up late in April. The C. J. Parkers report on a day's birding 3/30 sixty species, including canvas-backs (75), red-heads (10), shovellers (20) on Elizabeth Lake; 14 Lewis woodpeckers, Sand Canyon, and one phainopepla. Numbers of band-tailed pigeons, some nesting and a flock of 50 flying, Sand Canyon 3/31. In Griffith Park 3/25 I found an almost all white western robin. A very queer-looking and lonely robin, - but Albino birds do occur. WATCH NOW FOR: Along the shore, wandering tattler, knot, phalaropes, least and black tern. Among land birds: Black-chinned and Costa hummingbirds, ash-throated flycatcher, russet-backed thrush, long-tailed chat.

---CAROLINE H. DAUGHERTY

A COMMITTEE has been organized to send food and clothing to suffering European ornithologists and families. Thirty pounds of basic rations can be sent for \$10. If you can contribute, please send the money to Dr. Hildegard Howard, Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles 7. If you have old clothing to spare, write Miss Dorothy E. Groner, Room 701-C, Hall of Justice, Los Angeles 12, giving her sizes of the articles. She will then send you necessary instructions for mailing it to the proper address in Europe.

AT THE PROGRAM MEETING May 15 the members will be asked to vote on the proposed new by-law, read at the April meeting, which has in view the establishment of an "Educational Fund," for use as a scholarship to assist in the training of nature leaders or to underwrite some unusual opportunity to further the Audubon cause. As many know, the Board several years ago began setting aside certain sums for some such purpose. The Board now recommends that the plan be formally incorporated in the By-laws.

THE DR. HENRY SMITH WILLIAMS pictures have been divided into two exhibits. One is located more or less permanently in the Society's headquarters in Plummer Park; the other has circulated among schools during the past year. Last fall the school exhibit went for a month to the Bar V. Ranch School for Boys, at Nuevo. It has since been at Montebello Senior High School, Montebello, and the following schools in Los Angeles: Garfield Senior High School, Ford Boulevard Elementary School, Irving Junior High School and Burbank Junior High School. During May it will be in Huntington Park. It will then return to our headquarters for the summer. The schools exhibit has been well received everywhere and good use of it has been made by both pupils and teachers, especially in the junior high schools. The exhibit has been in good demand throughout the year. ---WALTER SCOTT, Chairman, Pictures Committee

REMEMBER ELECTION OF OFFICERS for 1947-48 at Program Meeting in Museum May 15!

## CALENDAR for May, 1947

THURSDAY, May 1. Field Trip: Tapia Park. Good birding; many species nesting; wild-flowers. Take our Tanner Motor Bus 6th & Olive Sts., Los Angeles (Park side), 8:30 A.M. Fare \$1.60 (exact change, please). Bus will stop at Hollywood and Cahuenga Bl. 8:40; Ventura Bl. at Laurel Canyon 8:50. Take lunch. Make reservation EARLY with Mrs. Morain, 1041 S. Gramercy Dr., Los Angeles 6; Parkway 0339. If driving, go Ventura Bl. to Brent's Junction; turn left. Program after lunch under the oaks in the beautiful picnic grounds. Bus will leave for Los Angeles about 3 P.M.

THURSDAY, May 8. 7:00 P.M. Central Library, Fifth St. and Grand Ave., Los Angeles. First floor. R. W. Julian presiding. Address, "Outdoor Life," by Howard L. Jones, noted for his outdoor color photography. Motion pictures, in color, of California wildflowers and the California gull, and Kodachrome slides of animal life.

SATURDAY, May 10. 9 A.M. to 12 Noon. San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary. Student members and other young people are invited to meet with the Committee on Youth Leadership, to study birds. To reach the Sanctuary, see directions below.

THURSDAY, May 15. 1:30 P.M. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park. Mrs. Comby presiding; Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Program Chairman. Address, "Camouflage in Nature," by Dr. John A. Comstock, Director of Science, Los Angeles County Museum. Illustrated with colored slides, many of which are of birds, insects and fishes, which have been found to be the best examples of this highly interesting subject.

THURSDAY, May 22. 10 to 12 Noon. Study Class. Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. (Santa Monica Blvd.-West Hollywood car; get off at Fuller and walk one block west.) "Last Day" of school! Bring your entry of picture, drawing, sketch or painting of bird, tree, flower, landscape or other nature study subject and win a copy of our Mr. Hastings' "Trees of Santa Monica." Bring your entry of bird list, elaborated or otherwise, and win a copy of Miss Mary Coble's "Ornithological Nomenclature." Bring your entry of a literary effort on a nature subject,--poem, narrative, description or other prose, and win a copy of Mrs. Harriet Williams Myers' "Burnished Hill-sides." All will be judged and returned to you by noon. There will be a review-summary of the year's work and some instructive entertainment.

---WALTER SCOTT, Chairman, Committee on Nature Study; Angelus 2-4649

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, May 24-25. Field Trip: Big Bear Lake and vicinity, with pine forests, meadows, lake shores and a corner of the desert included,--such a varied area that we are starting the day before to do it justice. Birds will include the olive-sided fly-catcher and western tanager, nesting nuthatches, chickadees, bluebirds, etc., migrant shorebirds still on the lakes, Brewer's sparrow and green-tailed towhee in the sage, and Scott's oriole and desert sparrow on the desert slope. Chartered motor bus will leave Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. at 2:00 P.M., Saturday, and Sierra Vista parking lot, Main and Huntington, Alhambra, at 2:45 P.M., arriving at Big Bear in time for dinner. After a tour of Bear Valley on Sunday, return will be via the desert to Los Angeles about 6:00 P.M. Round trip fare, \$4.25. Make bus reservation by May 10 with Mrs. C. L. Christensen, 1065½ No. Oxford St., Los Angeles 27; Hillside 5940. If driving, meet at Big Bear Lake Post Office (center of town) at 6 A.M. Sunday. For information on camping or overnight accommodations, call or write Howard L. Cogswell, Leader of the trip, 2610 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte; telephone Whittier 6-3748.

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY. Operated by the National Audubon Society. Sunday, May 11, Field Trip, starting from the entrance, 2610 S. Durfee Ave., El Monte, at 9 A.M. Leader, Howard L. Cogswell. The Pasadena-Long Beach bus, four trips each way daily, stops at Temple School, opposite Sanctuary entrance. From downtown Los Angeles go to El Monte by P.E. bus or train in time to transfer to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:39. Telephone Information, TUCKER 7272, for best schedule. If driving, go east on Third St. to Beverly Bl., continue on Beverly to Durfee Ave., thence north to Sanctuary. Sanctuary telephone, Whittier 6-3748

VISITORS WELCOME AT ALL MEETINGS

For desired information, telephone Morningside 1-6350 or Blanchard 7-1849

# Introducing the Stars

*A Course of Eight Planetarium Lectures for Youth Leaders*

*Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:15 P.M. Beginning May 1 and Ending June 19*



Because of the success of last year's series of sky shows, the Southern California Camping Association is sponsoring a similar course at the Griffith Observatory this year. It offers the public a chance to learn everyday astronomy in eight weekly planetarium shows. The primary purpose is to enable teachers, leaders of youth, parents, and other interested adults to help young people in becoming better acquainted with the heavens.

These talks will be illustrated with lantern slides and with the planetarium projector, which reproduces the appearance and motions of all the naked-eye stars and planets, as well as the sun and moon. The following topics will be covered with emphasis on the identifying of the principal stars and constellations:

May 1—The appearance and daily motion of the sky at our latitude; the north circumpolar constellations.

May 8—How the sky appears at the north pole, the south pole, and the equator; identifying constellations.

May 15—The annual motion of the earth around the sun; the seasons; the constellations of the zodiac.

May 22—The moon and its motions; eclipses; tides.

May 29—The planets and their motions.

June 5—Comets; meteors; time; the calendar.

June 12—The stars compared to the sun; double stars; variable stars.

June 19—The telescope and what it reveals; star clusters; nebulae; the Milky Way system and other galaxies.

## *Prices per lecture:*

50 cents for adults

25 cents for students under 18 and service men in uniform

## *Observatory busses*

running on Vermont Avenue leave the north end of the "V" car line at Monroe and Vermont at 6:30 P.M., arriving in time for the lectures at 7:00 P.M. They leave the Observatory after the lectures at 8:30 P.M. and again at 10:00 P.M.

GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY

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