

Western



Tanager

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, SEPTEMBER TO MAY
BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol. 16

December, 1949

No. 4

A VISIT TO THE MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

On the 4th of July of this past summer Miss Dorothy Groner and I arrived at the old cattle town of Burns, Oregon, which is thirty-five miles north of the 175,000 acre Malheur Refuge. On the way from there to the Refuge, almost within the limits of Burns, a flash of black and white across the highway proved to be a Bobolink, which we considered a good omen for further delightful birding experiences. Over a none-to-good dirt road we saw in marshy fields Willets, Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, most of them young of the year, rather fuzzy still, Wilson Phalaropes, Wilson Snipe, Soras, while black Terns in full breeding plumage flew by. In a large pond were ruddy Ducks, Bald Pates, Cinnamon Teal, and Lesser Scaup. Mallards and Gadwells were taking tiny young out for a swim. American Magpies by the score, yellow-headed Blackbirds in huge flocks, and in a small meadow Sage Hens feeding, made a fine introduction to the Refuge.

At the attractive headquarters of the Refuge where we birded next day, the manager, Mr. John Scharf, made us very welcome. The rare Trumpeter Swans transplanted from the Red Rock Lakes Refuge in Montana ten years ago have now become an extensive established unit, the Cygnets protected till they mate for breeding. We were told we might eat our lunch where we could watch a flock swimming in a fence-enclosed pond. They not only swam in a large group, but to our delight, one or two actually trumpeted.

On the way to the marshland Pacific Nighthawks sat along the fences, Marsh Hawks were helping keep down the rodent population, aided by the short-eared Owls, two of which sat on a small hummock near the road. A long-billed Curlew kept just ahead of the car, catching beetles and grasshoppers in the salt grass. In the marshes, the western Grebes with downy young riding on their backs, white Pelicans taking off, Cormorants, Egrets, Treganza Herons, white-faced Glossy Ibis, and many species of Ducks, of which the Gadwell families were most numerous, were all a delight.

Returning to headquarters, Mr. Scharf then took us over more distant parts of the refuge to see new developments and more recent additions to the refuge. At one spot the car was stopped and our host remarked that "sandhill Cranes are usually seen from this point -- and there are some now." We piled out excitedly and climbed on top of the hood of the car to see them better with our binoculars. There across the river bed were over a hundred of them, walking sedately, flying with great wings spread, necks outstretched and long legs trailing, calling in a deep rolling "Crronk." A few of the younger males were practicing their dance as they often did at this time of the year, he said. They jumped into the air with wings spread and legs dangling, seeming to both bow and hop. This is one of their most important nesting grounds.

We rode around Saddle Butte, a well-known landmark and to the top of another butte from which were marvelous views for miles over the sage country and marshland, where in October the sky is said to be filled with snow Geese. Deer, prong-horned antelopes, muskrats, and other mammals are here. Even the cottontail rabbits fascinated us, for at 6:00 p.m. it seems that all the rabbits in the west were gathered for a convention, for there seemed not a foot of ground in all the grain fields without its rabbit.

Eighty-five of the two hundred species of birds which have been listed on the refuge were seen on our all-to-short visit.

Ruby Curry

 THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

President...Mrs. Neil E. Lewis
 212 N. Wilton Pl., L. A. 4
 Secretary...Mrs. Bess Hoffman
 1112½ S. Orange Dr., L. A. 35
 Treasurer...Mrs. C. J. Parker
 821 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra
 Editor of the Western Tanager...
 George T. Hastings
 517 Euclid St., Santa Monica

NEW MEMBERS, Continued

Miss Lucile Folger
 1933 Pinehurst Rd., Hollywood 28
 Miss Barbara Ellen Huber
 230 Carolwood Dr., L. A. 24
 Miss Ruth H. Kirkland
 755 Elm Ave., Long Beach 13
 Miss Isabel M. Lowe
 6123 W. 75th Place, L. A.
 Mr. Don McGillivray
 4241 Rowland Ave., Burbank
 Mr. W. E. Pennington
 120 S. Grand Ave., L. A. 12
 Mrs. C. A. Rife
 1501 E. Market St., Long Beach 5
 Miss Nellie S. Spencer
 1137 5th St., Santa Monica
 Miss Irene Surola
 2108 Lyric Ave., L. A. 27
 Mrs. Helen J. Thurman
 1933 W. 84th St., L. A. 47
 Mr. Dale B. Trowbridge
 2482 Loy Lane, L. A. 41
 Miss Dorothea S. Vent
 2417 B 34th St., Santa Monica
 Miss Alice M. Walker
 133 N. Kenmore Ave., L. A. 4

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Student (12 to 18 years) 75¢, Annual
 \$1.50, Life \$25, Patron \$100. Joint
 membership with the National Audubon
 Society \$5.00. Send applications for
 membership to the treasurer.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. H. Armitage
 840 S. Hobart Blvd, L. A. 5
 Mrs. L. S. Barksdale
 6006 S. Mansfield, L. A. 43
 Mrs. E. B. Boylan
 8259 Grand View Dr., Hollywood 46
 Mrs. Muriel DeKriv
 2324 Miramar St., L. A. 4
 Mrs. LaPrelle Edens
 4415 West 5th St., L. A. 5
 Mrs. Kathleen Fife
 2331 6th Ave., L. A. 16
 Mrs. W. Leoti Fisher
 947 Francisco St., L. A. 15

With deep regret we announce the death
 of Miss Margaret DeGarmo of Redondo Beach,
 Miss Zulema L. Parcell of Los Angeles,
 one of our life members, and Miss Alma
 Wamsler of Los Angeles.

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER

- December 13, Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. December 17, Saturday at 2:00 p.m.
 AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR ---- SOUNDS OF THE SAGELAND ---- Alice and Harold Allen
 Virgil Junior High School, 152 N. Vermont Ave.
 If you missed the first of the tours, last month, you missed something exceed-
 ingly fine -- do not miss the other four tours. You may join at Plummer Park
 after our Christmas Party, or at Virgil School on the afternoon or evening of
 the next tour.
- December 15, Thursday at 1:30, the annual CHRISTMAS PARTY
 Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard. All old members know what a good
 time we have at our parties, new members should come and find out.
 A talk on BIRDS IN THE GARDEN AND GARDEN PHILOSOPHY by "Mirandy" of radio fame.
 Musical selections by Sarah Ellen Barnes. Other good things.
 The Hospitality Committee will serve refreshments. Mrs. Waite of the House
 Committee will welcome you to Audubon House before or after the party to
 receive any gifts for the Plummer Park birds, - nuts, raisins, grain, dried
 bread, etc. Come and bring a friend.
- December 26, Monday, CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
 This is the day selected for the Los Angeles area count. We hope that all the
 regular observers will reserve that day to help. Others who can help should
 notify Mrs. Caroline Daugherty.

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

A roaring TWA airplane carried me across mountain ranges, vast stretches of desert and brown earth until we reached checker-boarded green fields and woodlands to land in Detroit for the 45th annual convention of the National Audubon Society. The gracious hospitality of the Detroit Society with its 1800 members, alert leaders, and 40 hostesses gave from 400 to 500 delegates the opportunity to share in four full days of Audubon activities. "The expanding outlook of the Society" was developed as the theme of the convention.

Mr. Roger Tory Peterson, in telling about the writing of the Field Guides, concluded with the statement that nature study in the end always leads down the avenue of conservation. Dr. George M. Sutton, artist naturalist, with his Mexican pictures, challenged us to analyze what basic forms of living cause men to use resources unwisely. Our National Audubon President, Mr. John H. Baker, made everyone feel the importance of being a member of the Audubon Society when he stated that our society was the first organization in the country to alert the people of America to the need of conservation, by accomplishing the protection of the Egret.

Our program not only had stimulating lecturers, but it was also a photographer's paradise for we had pictures for visual education morning, noon, and night. Mr. John H. Storer showed "Living Forests" as the best example of a conservation picture. Fifteen Screen Tour lecturers were introduced with hilarious humor, then Mr. Karl Maslowski's picture "Beneath Buckeye Skies" was shown as being the perfect Screen Tour picture and a demonstration of what conservation means to the animal world. We were taken by pictures on Wildlife Tours in Florida, and to all four Audubon Nature Camps. Those attending the summer camps dispense a lot of conservation education throughout the country.

Mr. Ludlow Griscom spoke on the significant trends in ornithology and traced the rise of ecology, emphasizing that man is only one member in a community of living things.

Eight big busses took 300 or 400 Audubonites on a field trip to visit the Jack Miner Sanctuary. The following day at 10

4000 honking Canada Geese was a real thrill.

The fitting close to the Convention was the annual banquet, after which we parted with new friends, not only surfeited with food, but with the many new ideas given us by the best professional experts interested in the Audubon Society.

Alice Lewis

NOTES FROM OUR REPRESENTATIVE

"First nights" are over and we know that Screen Tour lectures in eleven clubs in Southern California are gratifyingly successful. This is the first step, the full measure of achievement can be gauged only by the use that is made of the opportunities for development which these splendid lectures suggest. Contribution to Community betterment, ideas for Nature education, desire for branch societies, plans for conservation - these are some of the suggestions that have been stimulated by our first Screen Tour program. With the continuation of this enthusiasm we may really know success in the fullest sense.

We note that church programs for youth show increasing consciousness of the value of Nature education. Audubon Societies have a real opportunity to assist in the promoting of more nature work in the church camping program, as well as in the religious training of youth.

A suggestion has been made that we become better acquainted with Audubon the man, the woodsman, the explorer, the raconteur, as well as the Naturalist. It is not uncommon to find folks, apparently well informed on many subjects, completely at sea about this versatile character, and wondering about the significance of the word Audubon in our program.

Erma Comby

Because of the habit of the Pelican of sitting with the long beak resting on the breast, a legend developed in ancient days that the Pelican pressed the hooked tip of its bill, which is red in color, against its breast to tear the flesh so that the young could feed on its blood. The Pelican thus became the symbol of self-sacrificing devotion to its young. In ancient religious art the Pelican is often shown with blood flowing from its breast into the mouths of the young.

* * * * *

* * * * *

FROM OUR EXCHANGES

In the Elapio, bulletin of the Hawaiian Audubon Society, for October, there is an article by Mr. George C. Munro on the Bristle-thighed Curlew. Referring to the article in the National Geographic by Dr. Arthur Allen on the finding of a nest of this bird in Alaska, the first ever found, Dr. Munro says these Curlews have been known in Hawaii as winter birds for a long time, and it was reported that its nest had been found there some years ago. So perhaps Dr. Allen's nest was not the first one found. Dr. Allen comments on this, "There are a number of published reports of the Curlew remaining in the South Pacific throughout the summer, just as there are of the Hudsonian Curlews staying in South America, but there has never been an authentic case of either species breeding outside of its normal range, so I think the reports of the natives must be doubtful."

Predatory Birds

In the Gull, bulletin of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, there is a note regarding the killing of hundreds of Finches by an orchardist. When the society protested, they found the orchardist was within his rights as the Finch is on the list of predatory birds published by the State Division of Fish and Game.

In the Audubon Warbler, published by the Oregon Society, a member in describing a summer trip, says, "Near Fallon, Nevada, a thousand or more white faced glossy Ibis were feeding in an alfalfa field. These birds have become such a pest in that region that the farmers are permitted to kill them."

There is an old Persian fable that the Pelican nests in the wilderness far from water. It makes the nest in a hollow tree, lining the cavity with clay, or it makes the nest a deep cup-shaped structure entirely of clay. Daily while the young are in the nest the parent birds bring water and fish in their bills, filling the nest so that the young may drink and bathe. Wild beasts come daily to the nest to quench their thirst and repay the Pelicans by guarding the nest.

OBSERVATIONS

As winter days set in, meaning fewer blossoms, the Hummingbirds have to work harder nectar-gleaning. Now, especially, be constant in keeping fresh sugar water in your feeders at all times...your Hummers are depending upon you.

WHITE PELICANS: Mr. & Mrs. Fred Blunt observed 5 on Nov. 6 at Bolsa Chica.

HARLEQUIN DUCK: Near the mouth of Ballona Creek, on the ocean in company with Scoters, Bob Pyle has seen a beautiful male Harlequin Duck various times from Oct. 23 on. Grinell & Miller tell us this is an uncommon species, breeding along mountain streams on western slope of Sierra Nevada, wintering along central seacoast where they obtain their food by diving and by hunting along rocky shores.

VULTURES-HAWKS: Mr. Wm. Lasky, who produced the film "The Boy and the Eagle" reports that on Nov. 6 at Point Mugu, between dawn and 11 a.m. he saw: 10 Vultures, 6 White-tailed Kites, 2 Cooper's-2 Red-tailed-40 Marsh Hawks, 1 Osprey, 1 Peregrin Falcon (Duck Hawk), 2 Pigeon Hawks, 20 Sparrow Hawks. Remarkable observations for both species and numbers.

EASTERN PHOEBE: Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Doner, Escondido, and Mrs. Eleanor Beemer, Pala, all ardent bird students, have this rare observation to offer: the bird was found along Lake Hensaw on Nov. 29 and various times since in same area. Mrs. Doner writes, "hours were spent in close observations and in careful checking through bird books and talks with naturalists, and the final consensus is - the strange bird must be an Eastern Phoebe." They would like some Eastern Phoebe experts to check with them.

PINE GROSBEEK: On Nov. 8, Mrs. Elsie Humphreys in Alhambra observed with binoculars at close range, a female Pine Grosbeak; heavy conical bill and white wing bars were noticeable marks. Mrs. Humphreys has made several observations of Pine Grosbeaks in Colorado, in their native habitats.

WATCH NOW FOR: Lewis's Woodpecker, Slender-billed Nuthatch, Varied Thrush, Black-throated & Townsend's Warblers, Pine Siskin, Fox Sparrows.

Caroline H. Daugherty