

Western



Tanager

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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol. 16

March, 1950

No. 7

THE AUDUBON OF THE PACIFIC

Those who have seen the beautiful masterpieces of the brush of Colonel Andrew Jackson Grayson understand the reason he became rightly known as the "Audubon of the Pacific."

Born in the northwest corner of Louisiana on August 20, 1819, the early years of his childhood were spent roaming in the wilds. Here the early love of birds was developed that remained with him all his life. Quite unlike our modern educators, his teachers considered his drawing in school as a waste of time and this was concurred in by his father, who sent him to the College of St. Mary, Missouri, with instructions that Andrew was not to be allowed to waste his time on drawing. While at this school he heard glowing descriptions of the beautiful land of California and the abundance of wildlife there. He determined upon graduation to lead a party of emigrants to the Pacific. He married Miss Frances J. Timmons on July 21, 1842, and she became his constant companion in all his ventures. A son was born to the Graysons, but this did not deter them from leading a caravan that started in April 1846 on the long journey to the Pacific. At Fort Bridger, Wyoming, some of the party decided to take a short cut to California, - they became the ill-fated Donner party.

Arriving in California, Grayson left his family at General Vallejo's home in Sonoma while he fought in General Fremont's army with great distinction. After the war he engaged in business in San Francisco and Stockton, but his love of nature caused him to give little attention to business and his venture ended in failure.

In the Mercantile Library in San Francisco, Mrs. Grayson examined for the first time the magnificent work of Audubon, the "Birds of America." This proved the inspiration necessary for Grayson to resume his drawing. He determined to paint the Birds of the Pacific Slope. At the second annual State Fair at Sacramento in 1855 he won first prize for his paintings. With this encouragement he went to Maxatlan to begin painting. In 1866 in Mexico City he displayed his paintings to Emperor Maximilian and his wife Carlotta who were so impressed by the beauty of the bird pictures that they commissioned Grayson to complete his great undertaking. The revolution of 1867 put an end to this arrangement. At this time Grayson's son Edward was drowned. On August 17, 1869, after an attack of fever, Andrew Jackson Grayson died, three days before his fiftieth birthday. His last words to his wife were, "What a beautiful picture!"

Mrs. Grayson gave the 154 magnificent paintings to the Bancroft Library at the University of California where they have lain unpublished for nearly a century. Through the kindness of Dr. George P. Hammond, Director of the Bancroft Library, the Cooper Ornithological Club has been given permission to reproduce some of the outstanding paintings in color in its publication, "The Condor." They have created considerable interest all over the country in scientific, historic, and artistic circles. The reproduction of the Grayson paintings in color has been said by some to be one of the outstanding ornithological events of the century.

The reproductions so far published will be on display at the meeting of the Los Angeles Audubon Society on March 16.

C. F. Duff

 THE WESTERN Tanager

Published by the Los Angeles Audubon Soc'y
 Free to members, others 75¢ a year.
 Editor.....George T. Hastings
 517 Euclid Street, Santa Monica
 Phone.....Santa Monica 5-1137

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Miss Catherine C. R. Dengler,
 421 Westminster Ave., Alhambra
 Mr. Richard S. Moore,
 3441 Alsace Ave., Los Angeles 16
 Dr. Pietro Rotondi,
 1654 Winona Blvd., Hollywood 27

OUR EDUCATIONAL FUND used to further interest in nature study and conservation, especially among leaders of young people, is to be known as the Laura Greely Fund.

BOOKS WANTED. Both our own Audubon library and the library at the San Gabriel Sanctuary will be very glad to receive gifts of science or nature books. The Sanctuary library is especially in need of books.

A WILDFLOWER LANE. One of our members, Miss Harriet Cunningham, has sent us an editorial from a Bakersfield paper giving the suggestion made to the Kern County Chamber of Commerce that on Highway 99 the middle strip between the two lanes of traffic from Greenfield to the Grapevine be planted with wildflower seed to restore a little of the beauty formerly found in the fields of flowers on each side of the road.

STARLINGS IN OREGON. The February number of the Audubon Warbler, the attractive monthly publication of the Oregon Audubon Society, reports that the severe storms in January covered practically every natural source of bird food for some days. Birds flocked in great numbers wherever food was available. Many unusual birds were reported from members' feeding stations. From several came reports of starlings. These birds imported from Europe into the eastern states in 1890 have gradually spread over the country and have but recently reached the west coast.

IRRIGATED FARMS DECREASE THE DUCK POPULATION. In the January Audubon Warbler there is an interesting article by David B. Marshall who worked with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service last summer, making

a biological survey of the Stillwater Wildlife Management area in Nevada. Unlike other refuges, over half of this one is a public shooting ground during the open season for waterfowl. We quote a very small part of this article. In the marshes of the area are found over 25 species of marsh and aquatic plants. Cattails were most conspicuous, covering 3,800 acres. One of the main problems of the Service is to induce more desirable plants to grow in place of the cattails. Two of these are the Alkali Bulrush (Scirpus paludosus) which at present covers 1160 acres, and Hardstem Bulrush, our common Tule, (Scirpus acutus) which covers 480 acres. Alkali Bulrush attracts many thousands of ducks as the seeds are top-notch waterfowl feed. Just as important as the emergent plants are the submerged ones. Two of North America's finest waterfowl food plants, Sago Pondweed (Potamogeton pectinatus) and Widgeongrass (Ruppia maritima) were the principal submerged plants. Few of these grew at the southwest end of the area. Here water enters from surrounding irrigated farms. This water carries enough silt to make the water cloudy and prevent the growth of submerged plants. The silt gradually drops out, making excellent growth possible further north. The areas lacking submerged plants produce only a few ducks, while those with an abundance of such growth produced several thousand young ducks. One of the problems to be solved is to find a way to clear up the silt-laden water. (As the silt is valuable top soil, a double value will result if it can be kept on the land where it belongs. Ed.)

To explain bird migration, the Objibway Indians say that once, long ago, the bird folk played ball with the North Wind. The latter won the game. The birds that were on his side now stay in the north all winter, while those on the defeated side are obliged to flee southward every autumn as their ancestors did at the end of the ball game. From Birds in Legend, Fable and Folklore by Ernest Ingersoll.

"The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time, and the turtle (dove), and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming."

Jeremiah 8,7

Conservation Week, March 7-14, is an excellent time to summarize a few of our efforts in this field, as well as to take stock of the problems that face our future.

Shore line planning with light craft harbors at 35 mile intervals along the entire coast means invasion and often destruction of the few remaining shore bird habitats. Some of the commissions interested in this planning are completely unaware of the value, or even the presence of birdlife. What can be done about it?

More resting and feeding places for waterfowl are needed. Audubon Societies may be helpful by keeping alert to the wildlife planning that is going on through the state and federal agencies. It is worthy of note that Mr. Will J. Reid, well known in the interest of duck conservation, had advised the maintenance of water in the ponds after the hunting season is over, so that birds may rest and feed on the gun club grounds. He has practiced this himself, and we hope others have followed suit.

We are still on the firing line in the matter of the San Jacinto tramway and are now waiting the opportunity of voicing at a public hearing our opposition to this invasion of a primitive area.

Maxon Brown Sanctuary is still foremost in the minds of lovers of waterfowl. Plans for a new attempt for its preservation are being made.

The best efforts of our organization are going into the protection of the California Condor, and we hope before long to have a satisfactory report on the subject.

Our own San Gabriel River Wildlife Refuge is daily becoming better known. Many hundreds visit the Dorothy May Tucker Sanctuary in Mojeska Canyon. Warm Creek area in San Bernadino is increasing in value and importance as a Refuge. In Los Angeles every lake and city park as well as our headquarters in Plummer Park are centers of Conservation interest.

Erna Comby

Where are our Robins? So few have been reported and none at all in most of their usual winter habitats. Many other wintering species of land birds have decreased in number alarmingly. Hermit Thrush are almost rare in Los Angeles areas.

GEESE-DUCKS: On Feb. 6, Arnold Small found 60 White-fronted Geese in Balboa Bay area. The surface-feeding ducks-Baldpate, Pintail and Green-winged Teal are still around the Hollingsworth Drive Settling Basins as of Feb. 15 and the same species plus Cinnamon Teal and Shoveller and the diving ducks-Lesser Scaup Duck and little Buffleheads are all on Hansen Dam. The fish-eating ducks, The American and Red-breasted Mergansers were on Hansen Dam, Feb. 16, and a few Red-breasted on the Settling Basins.

BAND-TAILED PIGEONS: Mrs. Thos. Shearer reports a flock feeding on the acorns in the oak tree area near her Sunland home. The flock numbered 38 their last visit.

OWLS: On Feb. 4, Arnold Small reports 21 Short-eared Owls were observed in one flooded field, Gray Lodge, near Marysville. On the Sacramento Valley trip taken by the Taylor-Dunlap-Pyle-Mall-Small party, Whistling Swans, thousands each of Canada, White-fronted, and Lesser Snow Geese, thousands of several species of ducks, 300 Sandhill Cranes and many other species of birds were found.

HUMMINGBIRDS - GOLDFINCHES: Anna's Hummers are found in good numbers especially around home yards, where they can still find flowers and flowering shrubs, and I hope, sugar-water put out regularly for them. The Nicotiana, tree tobacco, whose long, yellow tubular flowers hold so much nectar, even through the winter months, for the Hummers, has never fully recovered from the 1949 January freeze. Feb. 17, a male Allen's Hummer was seen flying low over long rows of part dead chrysanthemums. The green parts of these plants were infested with aphids and hundreds of Goldfinches, Green-backed and Willow and a few Lawrences were feeding on them. This garden is just off Osborn Ave., on the road to Kagel Canyon.

WATCH NOW FOR: Returning Hummingbirds, Swallows, Warbling Vireos, Arizona Hooded and Bullock's Orioles. C. H. Daugherty

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers - 1949-1950

President.....Mrs. Neil H. Lewis, 212 N. Wilton Pl., L. A. 4
Secretary.....Mrs. Bess M. Hoffman, 1112½ S. Orange Dr., L. A. 35
Treasurer.....Mrs. C. J. Parker, 821 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra

MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY

Membership is open to any one interested in birds and conservation.

Dues: Student (12 to 18 years) 75¢, Annual \$1.50, Life \$25, Patron \$100.

Joint membership with the National Audubon Society, including subscription to the Audubon Magazine, \$5.00.

Send applications for membership to the treasurer, or to Mrs. Maybelle DeMay, membership chairman, 504 East Oak Ave., El Segundo, California.

CALENDAR FOR MARCH, 1950

THURSDAY, March 2. Field Trip to Rancho Santa Anita Arboretum, 303 Old Ranch Road, 9:30 a.m. Enter from East Colorado Blvd., just west of Santa Anita's north parking lot, and opposite old Santa Fe Ave. Station. By street car, take Glendora-Monrovia car, Pac. Electric Bldg., (inside), 6th and Main Sts., leaving 8:53 a.m. Get off at Golden West Ave. where transportation will be provided to the Arboretum grounds. (Also returning after the meeting.) Those wishing to arrive earlier may take the Glendora-Monrovia car at 8:07, from Golden West Ave. walk north ½ mile to Vaquero Road, turn right (east) to Arboretum entrance. Those wishing to go via Pasadena bus, call P.E. Information, Tucker 7272.

Mr. W. D. Quattlebaum will be our leader through these historic grounds with their many points of interest, plus the water and land birds we may find.

THURSDAY, March 9. Evening Program Meeting, 7 p.m., Echo Park Branch Library, 520 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles.

Take Temple St. bus (No. 11) or red car on Glendale Blvd. Use outside door to lecture room on north side of building.

"Our California Deserts," motion picture by Lloyd Mason Smith of Palm Springs.

THURSDAY, March 16. Afternoon Program Meeting, Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, at 1:30.

"Conservation and the Audubon Society," Mrs. Erna Comby. Our Southern California Representative of the National Audubon Society will tell of the Audubon Activities in this part of the state as they relate to Conservation. The talk will be illustrated with Kodachrome slides of some of the areas included in refuges and protected areas, with their plants and wildlife.

THURSDAY, March 23. Study Class at Plummer Park at 10 a.m.

Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line to Fuller Ave., walk one block east. Continuing the general topic of "Balance in Nature." Birds and the Fisherman and Hunter. Plants and Man - Plant Fibers. Miss Ruby Curry in charge.

SUNDAY, March 26. Annual Desert Field Trip.

Bird Walk start at 9:00 a.m. at Cottonwood Springs, 24 miles east of Indio on Highway 60-70. Turn north at sign and drive 7 miles into Joshua National Monument to road junction and follow sign to campground. Plan to leave Saturday and camp out at Cottonwood Springs or stay overnight at Indio and meet the group in the morning. Early lunch at camp ground and trip through beautiful Box Canyon to Mecca and Palm Springs. For further information call AT 4-6575. Arthur L. Berry, leader.

THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

2594 South Durfee Ave., El Monte - Telephone FOrest 0-1872

Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Director

Mrs. M. Gertrude Woods, Assistant Director

Maintained by the National Audubon Society, with the cooperation of its Southern California affiliated societies and branches. Regularly scheduled field trip, the second Sunday of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 a.m.