

# Western Tanager



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BY THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE  
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October, 1950

No. 2

## CLIFF SWALLOW

Came summer bringing June, and June her bird,  
I listened, watching, and both saw and heard,  
I saw the roving line she led away,  
Stooped to the pool and mounting tipped the spray,  
Riding her fancy to some lofty spot --  
Her wings half closed and gravity forgot --  
Twisting in air she hurtles swift away  
In oft rehearsal of her pretty play.  
I watched her as on morning wings she flew,  
And fluttering tipped her toes upon the sloop:  
As with what grace her load was lifted up  
To deftest masonry -- the swallow's cup,  
Then clung: and with the trowel of her bill  
Wrought the sure pattern of maternal will.  
With workman skill she lays her wetted line,  
With trip on trip erects the bright design;  
Waning her arches as each course is hung  
For hold and cradle to her callow young.  
With many a preening touch and many a glance,  
She makes of miry mud a sweet romance.  
Hardby her neighbors mimic or compete,  
The while they whisper gossip of the street.  
All day each shining hour must tell her stint,  
All day wing muscles work and feathers glint.  
From clay to cradle and to clay again,  
She weaves a cable -- as her fellow men --  
Till day is done and in her umbrous nest  
Tucks head in wing and seals it with her breast.

Sweet architect what filled thy tiny head?  
In all this hurrying hope what taught -- what led?  
It's in thy wings the lucid lamp is hid  
That lends all joy the lustrous air to thrid?  
Thy feet not made for running; but to cling;  
Thy voice for sweetest sounds, but ne'er to sing.  
Give me thy secret, till all purpose hold,  
All hope comes true and life her dreams enfold.

Fred Kline

"This much only can we say with surety; that every Fall and every Spring the woods and sky present us, for the looking and the listening, with a magic pagentry of beating wings, and with a reminder - not unwelcome in a time as bitterly confused as ours - that the ancient unknowable harmonies of the universe still endure."

From Alen Devoe, The Mystery of Migration.

### THE WESTERN Tanager

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Editor, Mr. G. T. Hastings, 517 Euclid St.  
Santa Monica..Phone EXbrook 51137

### THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Founded 1910, For the protection of Birds,  
Animals and Plant Life.

Membership dues, Student (12 to 18 yrs.)

75¢, Annual \$1.50, Life \$25., Patron..\$100.

Joint membership with the National Aud.Soc.

\$5.00, including Audubon Magazine.

Send membership applications to the  
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774 N. Heliotrope Dr., L.A. 27

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212 N. Wilton Pl., L.A. 4

Executive Secretary..Mrs. Bess Hoffman,  
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### OUR EMBLEMS---THE WESTERN Tanager

Tanagers belong to a family of some 500  
species of birds, all American, mostly  
tropical. Usually they are brightly colored  
in red, orange and yellow, that is the males.  
Our Western Tanager is the only one found in  
the west. It comes to us from its winter  
home in Central America and Mexico in April  
or early May, visits our area for some weeks,  
then seeks the mountains to nest. In late  
August or September it retraces its route to  
the south. At this time the male doffs his  
brilliant red and yellow suit, donning one  
of dull greenish, yellow and black, with  
scarcely a trace of red, much like the  
suit worn all year by his mate.

A Message from our Southern California  
Representative.

Summer vacations in forests, mountains  
and fields have reminded us that the  
program of our Society touches every  
field of nature. It is our beloved  
America that we see, and the sight can-  
not fail to instill enthusiasm into our  
efforts to help our fellow man to have  
eyes to see and ears to hear. Southern  
California has been busy this summer in  
defending the last stronghold of the  
California Condor, and fighting to pre-  
serve a waterfowl refuge in the Maxon  
Brown Sanctuary. The future is charged  
with a spark of activity - time is of  
the essence. We invite you to hurry to  
take part in the program.

Erma Comby

### WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

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According to an Arab legend, when the  
dove returned to Noah the second time  
there was red mud on its feet. Noah asked  
God to let the dove keep the red feet.  
And ever since all doves have had red  
feet.

### AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

#### Sixth Annual Series

Tuesday evenings at 7:45 at Virgil Junior High School Auditorium,  
152 North Vermont Avenue.

Saturday afternoons at 2:00 at John Burroughs Junior High School,  
600 South McCadden Place.

Karl H. Maslowski	"BENEATH BUCKEYE SKIES"	Sat. Oct. 21;	Tues. Oct. 24
G. Harrison Oriens	"BY ERIE'S CHANGING SHORE"	Tues. Nov. 28;	Sat. Dec. 2
Lucie Palmer	"UNDERWATER KINGDOM"	Tues. Feb. 6;	Sat. Feb. 10
Allan D. Cruickshank	"BELOW THE BIG BEND"	Tues. Mar. 13;	Sat. Mar. 17
Tom and Arlene Hadley	"AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL"	Tues. Apr. 10;	Sat. Apr. 14

Admission only by membership card in the Audubon Screen Tours Club.

Dues: Adult \$2.00 for the season, Junior \$1.00

Apply for membership to Mr. A. W. Hood, 138 S. Wilton Drive, Los Angeles 4

### The Riddle of Migration.

It has long been called that, but we have learned much of recent years; the result of many observations of studies of banded birds, and experiments of various kinds. All of our local birds are classified as residents, summer or winter visitors, or transients. The times of their coming and their destinations are known. In the Tanager Mrs. Daugherty has for a number of years listed each month the birds to "Watch for now;" migrants just arriving on their journeys. The speed at which migrants travel has been checked and maps made to show their progress from week to week across the United States. Is migration then still a riddle, or do we know all the answers? Let us make a very brief summary of what is known and suggest what is not yet known.

What? The fact that birds come and go according to the seasons has been known since early times. That is, in the northern hemisphere, -a glance at a map of the south polar regions shows so little land south of the Tropic of Capricorn that it is evident there can be little migration there. Over 2500 years ago it was written "the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time and the turtledove and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming." (Jeremiah 8:7)

Why? The reason for migration is usually considered to be the extreme cold and lack of food in the north in winter, and the return migration in spring to find a less crowded place with abundant food for breeding. It is thought that migration began with the beginning of the glacial period, the increasing cold and ice causing the birds to retreat from their homes further and further south in winter, permitting them to return a gradually shortening distance each spring. As thousands of years went by a habit was formed that became an inherited instinct. (Very good, only we do not understand how a habit can change to an instinct or be inherited). Also needing explanation is the fact that many birds leave the northern breeding grounds in August or September before cold weather begins or food becomes scarce. Birds need more food in cold than in warm weather, recent experiments show that some birds eat 1/6 their weight when the temperature is 90, but needed 1/3 their weight when the temperature was lowered to 12 degrees.

As days become both shorter and colder especially after the fall equinox (and the shortening proceeds more rapidly the further north one goes) there comes a time when daylight hours are too short for birds to eat enough to support their lives. Then they must leave for a region of longer light. Of course this cannot explain what is called vertical migration, up and down mountains. We may say then that birds respond to photo-periodism. (Using long words make it seem that we really know all about it). The impulse that starts migration in spring is known to be from hormones produced with the cyclic changes in the sex glands. Long days and increased activity resulting causes these glands to become active in spring, but what stimulates them in birds that winter in tropical lands where there is little or no change in the length of day is not known.

How? Migration routes have been mapped and broad flyways described. These chiefly follow the coast and large river valleys. It is generally believed that birds depend largely on sight and memory in following the major aspects of the landscape and as they approach their breeding grounds they fan out along smaller streams or ranges of hills. Studies of banded birds prove that many, probably most, birds return each year to the same area where they nested the year before, sometimes to the same tree or building or bank swallows to the same hole. But young birds that have not nested do not regularly return to the region where they were born. Also birds return to the same areas for the winter. But sight alone cannot explain how the birds find their way. It was suggested nearly a century ago and the idea has recently been revived (see Audubon Magazine for March-April 1949) that birds are guided by a sense not possessed by man that enables them to feel electro-magnetic lines of force which in general are north and south. There is no proof of this; but there does seem to be evidence that something besides sight guides them in their long flights.

It was accepted at one time that birds have an inherited "geographic instinct". Such a sense seemed necessary to explain the many cases where young birds start migration after the old birds have left and travel by themselves. Few believe in such a sense today, yet Frederick C. Lincoln in The Migration of North American Birds says "An inherited migratory instinct with a definite sense of

the goal to be reached and the route to be followed must be attributed to these birds". He was referring to young cowbirds brought up by foster parents, but if one bird has such a sense others must too.

When? Here we really know the answers. Tables have been made for many areas showing the times of arrival and leaving of each species. The times are usually remarkably constant, rarely varying more than a week or two, and not, except near the northern end of the migration, dependant on the weather. The cliff swallows do not always reach Capistrano on St. Joseph's day, March 19, nor leave on St. John's day, Oct. 23, but they do approximate these dates. We can answer part of the riddle - what and when, but much of the why and how wait for final answers.

George T. Hastings

#### Random Notes on Gulls

On a trip to the Northwest last summer we noted many sea-gulls. This was especially true along the Georgia Strait and the harbors of Seattle, Vancouver and Victoria. On the boat trip up the Inside Passage, large flocks of these beautiful birds trailed the boat awaiting handouts from the mess. We saw many California, Ring-billed and a few Western Gulls.

Dan McCowan, widely known Canadian naturalist author of several fascinating books on nature, writes that not only are the gulls to be found along the sea-coasts of Canada, but also far inland, hundreds of miles from the ebb and flow of tides. A vast multitude of these birds may be found each year nesting and rearing their young in the reedy sloughs of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Canada, bounded by three oceans, is the home of some thirty-five species of gulls. Mr. McCowan relates, "A few years ago, north-west of Regina, I saw an immense flock of Franklin Gulls clearing the wheat fields of grasshoppers, a vast assemblage, numbering at least one million birds. Never before have I seen such a spectacle, as these feathered creatures presented. I could compare it only to a whirling snowstorm with the myriads of gulls as snowflakes."

May Warrick

#### OBSERVATIONS

Shore and Water Birds: Many Bared Grebes at Playa del Rey, Sept. 15, 1 Western Grebe, Sept. 18; Great Blue Herons, 20 to 25 Snowy and American Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons, 2 immature Little Blue Herons (seen clearly and all characters noted) Sept. 15 (H); Least Bittern (Stultz). Most shore birds in usual winter numbers, but few avocets. Pintail Ducks numerous by Sept. 14.

TERNs: The Stultz party reported six species at Playa del Rey in second week of Sept.-- Forester's Common, Least, Royal, Caspian and 32 Elegant. The last also seen at Bolsa Chica on the 5th by Mr. and Mrs. Comby.

SWIFTS, HUMMINGBIRDS: 2 Black Swifts at the Sanctuary, Aug. 6, Vaux's on 16 & 17, many White-throated on the 11th. Allen's Hummingbirds abundant in Santa Monica late August visiting blossoms of Scarlet-flowered Eucalyptus, a few still around Sept. 15. Black-chinned Hummers abundant at Sanctuary up to Sept. 9, none after the 12th.

VIREOS AND OTHERS: Bell's Vireo at Whittier on Aug. 13 (Comby), at Sanctuary Sept. 17; Olive-sided Flycatcher at Whittier Aug. 20, at Sanctuary Sept. 16; Brown creeper at Sanctuary Sept. 14 (Salmon); Yellow-billed Cuckoo about the Comby's home in Whittier during Sept. Western Tanagers at Santa Monica Sept. 20, 22.

MIGRANTS AT THE SANCTUARY: Mrs. Stultz reports that from Sept. 10 to 16 small flycatchers were in every tree; Warblers very abundant from Sept. 8 to 17, mostly Pileolated and Black-throated Gray, but also Orange-crowned, Yellow, Hermit and the Chat. Hooded Orioles common up to Aug. 14, all gone by Aug. 23 (still in Santa Monica Sept. 20); Black-headed Grosbeaks common up to Aug. 14, all gone by the 29th.

WATCH NOW FOR: Western Grebes, Surf Scoters, Glaucous-winged and Bonaparte's Gulls at the coast; various Ducks in the marshes and sloughs; Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Audubon's Warbler, Chipping, Golden-crowned and Gambel's Sparrows.

(Send observations this month to George T. Hastings, 517 Euclid St. Santa Monica)

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Treasurer ..... Mrs. W. Scott Lewis, 2500 Beachwood Drive, Hollywood 28  
Membership Chairman..Miss Bonnie C. Green, 774 N. Heliotrope Dr., Los Angeles 27

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CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER, 1950

(Visitors will be welcome to the trips and meetings)

Thursday, Oct. 5. FIELD TRIP: Playa del Rey. Especially good area for study of Shore Birds, Gulls, and Terns. Take Playa del Rey Motor Bus, Subway Terminal Bldg., 423 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, 8:35 A.M. Get off at Vista del Mar and Culver Blvd. Fare 30¢ each way. Bring lunch. Bird walks start from bus stop at 9:15 and 9:30. Check for possible changes in bus schedule by calling Information, Tucker 7272.  
Leader Mr. George T. Hastings

Thursday, Oct. 12. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING: An illustrated lecture on The Insect World by Mr. W. Scott Lewis. Those of the members who have heard Mr. Lewis know that this will be a treat, others should come and find out. Room 10, Union Ave. School, 150 S. Burlington Ave., Los Angeles, 7 P.M. Take car on Beverly Boulevard to Burlington, walk south  $\frac{1}{2}$  block.

Thursday, Oct. 19. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING: Mr. Kenneth Stager. Curator of birds at the Museum will speak on An Ornithological Survey of the Barrance de Cobre. Mr. Stager has recently returned from a collecting trip to this seldom visited area of Mexico, with many small mammals and birds. His party took many pictures in the region which could be reached only by a 12 day trip by pack train from the end of the auto road.  
Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, 1:30 P.M.

Thursday, Oct. 20. STUDY CLASS: Plummer Park at 10 A.M.  
This year a study will be based on Peterson's How to Know the Birds. Chapters 1 and 2 this meeting. (Copies of the book will be on sale at 35¢ for those who wish them). The second hour an out door study of the more than 30 species of trees in the park. Bring a note book and make the class a real study class. Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line. Get off at Fuller Ave., walk one block west.

Sunday, Oct. 22. FIELD TRIP: San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary.  
Start from the entrance, 664 N. Durfee Ave. El Monte, at 9 A.M. Bring lunch. The Pasadena-Long Beach (P.E.) bus, four trips daily, stops at Temple School, opposite the Sanctuary entrance. From downtown Los Angeles take P.E. bus to El Monte and transfer to Long Beach bus leaving El Monte at 8:38. Telephone Information, Tucker 7272 for best schedule. If driving go east on Third Street to Beverly Blvd., continue on Beverly to Durfee Ave., then north to Sanctuary.

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THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

664 N. 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 trips the second Sundays of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 A.M.