

Western



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THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

On some day between December 24 and January 1 (each locality will pick one day) several thousand bird enthusiasts will start out at daybreak in over 250 localities throughout the United States for the annual Audubon bird count. Of recent years some 40 of our local members have gone out in 20 or so parties to count the birds in the same area we have been covering for the past 12 years. This year the count will be taken on Tuesday, Dec. 26.

To suggest something of the importance of this count we reprint part of an article by Mrs. Marie Beals, Librarian of the National Audubon Society, printed in the Tanager of February, 1946. "Dr. Frank Chapman was the founder of this custom. The first census (now called count) was taken in 1900, and since that date the game of counting birds has attained the dignity of a contribution to ornithology. Since the first Christmas count over 8,000 (now over 9,000) reports have come from every state north of the Rio Grande, including Hawaii and Alaska, Cuba and Puerto Rico." "It is a thrill, of course, to discover the presence of a rare species, but an accurate count of the regular winter birds is of greater scientific value than a list of rare or accidental visitors. Bird counts taken over the same routes Christmas after Christmas, are of highest value, and each succeeding year increases their value. The bird count is to indicate the bird population of the locality, rather than to build up a long list." "Today many counts go over the 100 mark each year. (Our Los Angeles count is usually around 150). Inland, especially in the north the counts are smaller; perhaps only 4 or 5 species; but no matter how many birds are observed each count is important as it reveals the distribution and numbers of our species, and changes in numbers from year to year."

In our local count we have found strange and interesting variations in the numbers of some birds, while others have shown nearly the same numbers from year to year. Over the past ten years, for example, the numbers of Robins reported by years has been 300, 8, 147, 57, 61, 2649 (in 1945), 70, 311, 622, and 42. Audubon's Warblers have been abundant each year, but the numbers have varied from last year's low of 1115 to the high of 4130 in 1946. The variations may be explained in part by weather conditions, more intensive work by the counters or more of them in some years, but there must be other reasons for many of the differences.

"Time was when biologists somewhat overworked the evidence that these creatures (predators) preserved the health of game by killing weaklings or that they controlled rodents for the farmer, or that they prey only on "worthless" species. Here again, the evidence had to be economic in order to be valid. It is only in recent years that we hear the more honest argument that predators are members of the community, and that no special interest has the right to exterminate them for the sake of a benefit, real or fancied to itself. Unfortunately this enlightened view is still in the talk stage."

Aldo Leopold . . . A Sand County Almanac.

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Membership dues- Student (12 to 18 years)
75¢, Annual \$1.50, Life \$25, Patron \$100.
Joint membership with the National Audubon
Society \$5.00, including Audubon Magazine.
Membership Chairman, Miss Bonnie C. Green,
774 N. Heliotrope Dr., L. A. 27
Phone- Normandy 1-5537

OFFICERS FOR 1950-1951

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212 N. Wilton Place, L. A. 4
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OUR EMBLEMS -- CALIFORNIA LIVE OAK

Oaks have always been symbols of strength,
in classical times the oak was the tree of
Jupiter. Of the 200 or more species, our
tree belongs to the evergreen group as its
name live indicates. Its dark green, oval
leaves usually have a few sharp teeth on
the edges, are convex on the upper surface,
a characteristic that distinguishes them
from all other California Oaks. The acorn
is rather slender, about one and a half
inches long, the basal third being set in
the scaly cup. The trees are found near
the coast at low levels in southern Cali-
fornia.

There is a peculiar virtue in the music
of elusive birds. Songsters that sing
from top-most boughs are easily seen and
as easily forgotten; they have the medio-
crity of the obvious. What one remembers
is the invisible hermit thrush pouring
silver chords from impenetrable shadows;
the soaring crane trumpeting from behind
a cloud; the quails Ave Maria in the hush
of dawn.

Aldo Leopold
A Sand County Almanac

GIVING VERSUS RECEIVING

Perhaps one of the outstanding character-
istics of an Audubon member is his altru-
ism. He is a public benefactor. In a
very real sense he is interested in mem-
bership in the Society, not so much for
what it can do for him personally, but
for what he, through such membership,
can do for others. He is a forward-look-
ing citizen who recognizes the need of
active participation if the cause in
which he believes is to prosper.

From the Bulletin of the
Massachusetts Audubon Soc.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Charles H. Allen,
Griffith Park Zoo, Box 284, L.A. 27
Miss Ethel M. Bass,
326 S. Normandie, L.A. 5
Mrs. F. E. Berry,
1811 N. Whitley Ave., Hollywood 28
Miss Rosalie M. Burnham,
8160 San Juan Ave., South Gate
Mr. E. M. Coleman,
6609 Bellingham Ave., No. Hollywood
Miss Adelaide Duke,
3810 Eagle Rock Blvd. L. A. 65
Mrs. Helen E. Gray,
Route L, Box 77B, Topanga
Miss Henrietta M. Heimberger,
4622 Greenwood Pl., L. A. 27
Miss Cora Pearl Kidd,
4330 Normal Ave., L. A. 27
Mr. Walter C. Lawshe,
4647 Crenshaw Blvd., L. A. 43
Mrs. Helen Messerer,
759 W. 99th St., L. A. 44
Miss Lucille Grace Mitchell,
1133 Elden Ave., L. A. 6
Mrs. Kay Ragland,
1825 W. 67th St., L. A. 47
Miss Helen C. Sanderson,
942 Elden Ave., L. A. 6
Mr. Orville E. Sellers,
333 W. Palmer, Glendale 4
Mrs. Gladys L. Snider
318 Kenneth Road, Glendale 2
Mrs. Emilie M. Todd,
9055 Krueger St., Culver City
Mrs. M. G. Walters,
542 S. Normandie, L. A. 5

And a special greeting to an old member
who has become a LIFE MEMBER,
Mrs. Jesse L. Morain.

CONSERVATION IN THE EYES OF A SPORTSMAN

When white men landed in America there were, of course no roads, fences nor cities, but there was a balance of Nature favoring non-predators.

Today if a deer or young pheasant gets across a highway it is lucky, and Los Angeles takes also a human toll weekly. In the face of this we talk about not disturbing the balance of nature, but it is already so unbalanced that man must regulate it for his own interest. That is where the Fish and Game Commission comes in.

The rancher knows the number of cattle and poultry he needs to maintain his breeding stock, the surplus must be sold for America's food supply.

The Fish and Game Commission must count and manage the wild animals and game birds of the nation and states. The predator must be controlled, not exterminated, for due to autos, wire fences, large cities, and humans wild game is almost cornered. I have lived where cougars and coyotes had to be controlled that colts and lambs on the range could survive. Evidently the same conditions exist regarding wild game, so that bounties are put on some predators when deemed necessary.

The number of game birds and animals taken must be figured in ratio to the breeding stock needed to maintain what the range will support. The rancher thinks he has to figure carefully; imagine the job of the Fish and Game Commission with the nation's wildlife to regulate satisfactorily. We had better not kick over any small mistakes- they are good teachers.

Wild game individuals have a sporting chance for survival,- but the rancher's surplus does not. Individual predators for lack of their conventional natural food, may at times turn to other foods, such as birds when they usually take mammals. It becomes necessary occasionally to form a special policy to fit the case when such a point is proved. A tiger sometimes turns man eater, the individual, not the species, is eliminated.

As in all games of life, there is the sportsmanlike sportsman who takes birds on the wing, does not take over the limit of trout, and in fact adheres to all the rules.

-- W. A. Kent

GAME MANAGEMENT AND NON-GAME SPECIES

(From an article in the May, 1950, number of the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society).

One of the criticisms directed at wildlife management programs by bird and garden club members has been that game animals receive practically all the consideration. It must be admitted that State and Federal agencies generally place emphasis on game birds and animals, but this fact alone should not cause concern to conservationists at large.

Song birds may not be the recipients of many management programs, but they share the benefits in almost every game management project that is conducted. On all Federal refuges, song birds and non-game animals receive full protection.

The sportsman must recognize the fact that simply because he does not like a hawk or a kingfisher, this does not mean the hawk and kingfisher have no right to live and give pleasure to people who do not care for hunting. By the same reasoning the bird lover must realize that if, through management adequate populations of game species are built up, then the hunter has a full right to enjoy wildlife according to his particular desires.

All groups of individuals interested in wild birds and mammals are working together in closer harmony than ever before. This is as it should be and must be if each enthusiast in the out-of-doors is to have an abundance of wildlife for enjoyment - each in his own way.

FOR SPORT -- SHOOT PREDATORS

In the California Farmer, March 25, 1950, is an article by the Fish and Game Commission which suggests the hunting of predatory birds as an "off-season sport." "Hunters can be of valuable assistance to farmers, get good target practice, make sure of better game bird hunting in the future by killing predators, and even pick up some bounty money by killing crows and magpies."

The suggestion apparently is for the shooting of hawks, of which only three are on the predator list,- the duck hawk, Coopers and sharp-shinned. But how many gunners know the hawks apart?

CHRISTMAS PARTY

The annual Christmas party will be held in Plummer Park at 1:30, Thursday, December 7. Mr. J. Burritt Smith will show kodachrome pictures of a Florida Holiday. Miss Sarah Ellen Barnes will give musical selections, and lead in singing Christmas songs. Come and share in the good time we always have on this occasion.

WORK OF OUR EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE

This committee, of which Mrs. Alma Stultz is chairman, looks for specific ways to further conservation and nature education. It arranges each year for scholarships at the Audubon Camp at Norden, using interest on the Laura Greely Educational Fund.

At its first meeting this fall the committee decided to recommend that an anonymous gift of \$100 be set aside for nature work at the Hansen Dam area. A committee of our society is working with the City Park Commission toward making part of the area a Bird Sanctuary with a Nature Trail and Trailside Museum.

The committee has also received a gift of \$25 from Mrs. Dorothy Dean Sheldon Scott. She wrote with her gift - "You are doing a wonderful work in the educational field and are an inspiration to the rest of us".

There are ways in which you may help. Give a Christmas gift to the fund; mention it in your will. Be assured that any gift will be used only for projects approved by your Executive Board.

IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS

The October number of the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society tells of a visit made to an extensive swamp area in northern Florida this summer by their field research agent in search of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. Two, and probably three, of the birds were found feeding in the swamp.

These rarest of all living North American birds were also found in north west Florida (probably the same area and birds reported above) by Whitney Eastman of Minneapolis. The National Audubon Society has received the cooperation of the owners of the area where the birds were found, and where they apparently nest, in having the area made the Chipola River Wildlife Sanctuary. The Florida Game and Fresh-water Fish Commission has closed the area to all hunting. It is hoped the Ivory-bills may long survive in this wilderness sanctuary.

OBSERVATIONS

IN UNEXPECTED PLACES: A blue-fronted Jay in Mrs. Salmon's yard in L.A., Oct. 30, very tame and takes food from her hand. Comes every day.

A Clark's Nutcracker in Beverly Hills, Oct. 25, eating seeds from pine cones beside the street. Miss Rose Kahn watched it for over half an hour.

A Red-breasted Nuthatch and a Tule Yellow-throat in his yard in Santa Monica Nov. 1, William Lasky.

WHITE PELICANS: A flock of over 200 above Flintridge, Nov. 2 (Merritt Dunlop); 1 at Bolsa Chica Nov. 11 (Gertrude Woods).

HERONS: American and Snowy Egrets, few at Playa del Rey; both at Hansen Dam, Nov. 14 (Daugherty); American Egrets, Great Blue Herons, 7 Black-crowned Night Herons, 2 American Bitterns at Sanctuary (Stultz).

DUCKS: Mrs. Daugherty reports, Nov. 14, at Hansen Dam Green-winged Teal, Buffle-head, Redhead, Canvas-back, Ruddy, Ring-necked, Baldpate, and Shoveller.

GREAT HORNED OWL: Sanctuary, Oct. 22 and 28.

ROBINS, BLUEBIRDS: Eagle Rock Oct. 21; more than 100 Robins feeding on wild grape at Sanctuary daily; Hermit Thrush, Eagle Rock, Oct. 28 (Curry); Mountain Blue-birds Hansen Dam, Nov. 14 (D).

WAXWINGS, PIPITS, ETC: Waxwings at Eagle Rock, Oct. 28; large flocks at Sanctuary feeding on wild grapes; Pipits, Playa del Rey, Oct. 14; Hansen Dam, Nov. 14; Western Gnatcatcher, Hansen Dam; 2 Phainopeplas at Sanctuary.

VIREO, WARBLERS: Hutton's Vireo, Sanctuary; Townsend's Warbler, Santa Monica, Nov. 1 (Lasky, Hastings); Hermit Warbler, Sanctuary, Oct. 28.

SPARROWS, ETC: Foothills of San Gabriel Canyon, Nov. 5, Gould Hawkins report Pine Siskins, 10 Lark Sparrows, 4 Rufous-crowned, 1 Golden-crowned, 40 or 50 Oregon Juncos; Lincoln's Sparrow, Hansen Dam, Nov. 14 (D); Juncos, Eagle Rock, Oct. 17 (C); Golden-crowned Sparrows, Santa Monica, Oct. 17 (Lasky).

NATURE-LEADERS WORKSHOP

The seventh annual Nature-Leaders Workshop will open January 24th, and continue every Wednesday evening up to and including April 18th. (There will be no meeting Easter Week, March 21st). A program similar to that of last year will be given. (See page 13 of this year's Year Book). If you desire the full program write to Mr. Wm. K. Depue, 6055 Fair Ave., North Hollywood.

CATALINA QUAIL

The Citizen-Shopping News of Oct. 26 says that the Fish and Game Commission estimates there are about 20,000 quail on Catalina. The operator of a guest ranch on the island says there should be easy hunting this year. "A man could almost shoot them from an easy chair beside an open window". The quail on Catalina are a variety of the California quail and should be called Catalina Quail.

DUCKS AND DISEASE

In the November, 1950, number of the Scientific Monthly there is an article on Duck Botulism, a disease similar to one which humans get from eating spoiled canned food. With the ducks the poison comes from the action of bacteria on decaying vegetation in shallow water. In one outbreak at Malheur Lake in 1925 at least 1,000,000 ducks died. And there have been many other outbreaks. Last year a duck hospital was established on Tule Lake. The sick ducks were given antitoxin. But many ducks died without being treated so that, considering the expense, the treating of the ducks is almost futile. Due to disease, hunting, loss of breeding grounds and other causes, the number of ducks and geese in the United States has decreased in a few short years from an estimated 250,000,000 to 54,000,000.

Have any of our members copies of Audubon Magazine they are willing to dispose of? Mrs. Wait says, to complete our files we need the following:

1940 - July, Aug. Sept., Oct.; 1944- Jan. Feb., July, Aug.; 1947- March, Apr., May June, July, August, Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. 1948- Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.; 1949- Jan. Feb.

Also copies of the Christmas count for 1942, '45, '46, '47, '48 and '49.

WITH OUR REPRESENTATIVE

It was a keen pleasure to participate in dedication of Southern California's newest wildlife refuge, when San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society invited friends for this purpose on October 20th.

City and County officials expressed their appreciation and promised the cooperation of their offices, and the good wishes of land owners of the area was emphasized by the warmth and generosity of their assistance. A note of faith in the future was expressed by the President, Dr. Harold Hill, as he called to mind the early magnificence of the valley and to the fact that several of those in the group had known that wealth of nature and were present to add their approval to the preservation of something of the natural environment.

The refuge is called the Warm Creek Wild-life Refuge. A walk through its 300 acres of varying habitats, from flowing stream associations to open spaces, semi-desert spots with clumps of cactus, grapevine tangles and cattail marshes, is an inspiration to everyone who loves the outdoors. An ORCHID to this one of the youngest of our branches for its vision and courage.

A new branch of the National Audubon Society came into being a few weeks ago with Carlsbad as the central city. With the lagoon as a prime attraction, the sea shore on one hand, the rolling hills and valleys of the San Marcos area on the other, this society has tremendous possibilities of developing an interest in nature.

It is good to learn that the Oasis at 29 Palms has at last reached what seems a haven of safety. The area has been presented to the Federal Government for a headquarters site by the owners and it is planned to encourage the growth of the original number of palms and to construct a museum to house relics of the area and, we hope, become an indoor laboratory to supplement the study of the plant and animal life of that interesting region.

Erna Comby

If any members do not keep the back numbers of the Tanager we would be glad to have copies of the November issue. Return to editor at meeting, or mail them in.