

T H E

Western Tanager



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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume XVII

March 1951

Number 7

ONE WORLD OF NATURE

Nature study is more than learning the names of birds, flowers and trees, though some never seem to get beyond this elementary stage and are content with a superficial knowledge of the world about them. Others like to study the lives of nature's children to learn something of their instincts, habits and their relation to their environment. But even this barely penetrates the surface of the vast realm of nature, on beyond is that little understood region where all the natural sciences are interwoven so that one cannot be separated from the others. Here the student draws close to the very heart of nature and finds that what seem to be unrelated things are actually connected and part of a great plan that includes all life and physical matter.

We often find that what seem to be entirely distinct phenomena are actually closely related. For instance there would seem to be no connection between the phosphorescence which we admire in a breaking wave and the famous Biblical plagues of Egypt, or the sudden extinction of a tribe of Indians on our West Coast. And yet we find them closely related; for the phosphorescence is due to a one-celled plant, a species of *Gonyaulax*, one of the dinoflagellates, which at certain times synthesizes a poison 10 times as potent as strychnine. Shellfish concentrate this poison and the Indian band was killed by eating such mollusks. At other times *Gonyaulax* causes the "red tides" when the fish all die, and such tides are believed to have caused the plagues when the water turned to blood and there was an unbearable stench and swarms of flies.

Almost everyone knows the eelgrass that grows along both shores of the United States. Of course it is not a grass as it belongs to the Pondweed Family, but it is grass like and very abundant in places. In 1931 a certain slime mould became virulent on the eastern seaboard and the eelgrass began to die. Only then did the conservationists begin to realize its true importance. Suddenly rivers polluted with sewage, their waters no longer filtered by the eelgrass, swept their poisons into the sea, killing plant and animal life. The Brant died till their numbers were reduced by 80 per cent. The wave of destruction spread ever wider as the eelgrass is a link in a food chain that extends far. The catch of cod and other fish decreased and finally the lives and livelihood of millions of people were affected by the epidemic. Fortunately the plants seem to be coming back at the present time. In some places their leaves are again filtering the sewage from the water and if men will only give them a chance, the Brant may increase in numbers, and ultimately the fishing industry will benefit from the restoration of an important food chain.

These are but two out of a great number of possible illustrations of the complexity of nature. The presence or absence of certain elements in the rocks, or events in the lives of creatures so small we cannot see them with the unaided eye may affect the lives of millions of people, to say nothing of bird and other animal populations. Truly nature is far more wonderful than most of us dream, and its study is not only worth while but fascinating.

- W. Scott Lewis

 THE WESTERN Tanager

Published monthly, September through May by the Los Angeles Audubon Society. \$1.00 per year, free to members.
 Editor: George T. Hastings, 517 Euclid St., Santa Monica. Phone EXbrook 5-1137

 THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Founded 1910 - For the protection of Birds, Animals and Plant Life.
 Membership - Joint with the National Society \$5.00, including Audubon Magazine. Local, Student (12 to 18 years) 75¢; Annual \$1.50; Life \$25; Patron \$100.
 Membership Chairman, Miss Bonnie C. Green, 774 N. Heliotrope Dr., L. A. 27.
 Phone, Normandie 1-5537

 OFFICERS FOR 1950-1951

President.....Mrs. Neil H. Lewis
 212 N. Wilton Pl., L. A. 4
 Executive Secretary...Mrs. Bess Hoffman
 1112½ S. Orange Dr., L. A. 19
 Treasurer.....Miss Treva M. Russell
 5641 Fountain Ave., L. A. 28

 WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. Allen M. Hardt,
 212 E. Avenue 42, L.A. 42
 Miss Ethel Lewis,
 143 S. Rowland Ave., Temple City
 Miss Elizabeth C. Patterson,
 6040 W. 76th St., L. A. 45
 Miss Catherine D. Shaw,
 7142 Marshfield Way, Hollywood 46

The Los Angeles Audubon Society will have an exhibit of a Bird Sanctuary in the "Gardens Clubs on Parade" section of the 1951 California International Flower Show at Hollywood Park, 1050 Prairie Avenue, Inglewood from March 3 through the 11th.

A new book, AUDUBON BIRD GUIDE, edited by Richard Pough and beautifully illustrated with over 400 colored plates by our former member, Don Eckelberry, has been added to our library. This was a Christmas gift from Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Beebee.

This is a good time to remind our members that we have a very fine selection books, not only on birds but on many phases of nature, that members may draw out either at the time of the study classes, or by phoning or writing to our Librarian Mrs. Merr D. Selman

 A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We feel that the program of our Society is one that brings information and inspiration to all our members who avail themselves of what is prepared for them in our meetings and trips. But it is a constant source of regret that many who might do so fail to attend the meetings. But our interests go far beyond our own meetings. Some of our members will attend the 1951 Convention of the Audubon Branches and Affiliates of the Pacific Coast States at Asilomar from March 17 through the 20th. Among the subjects for discussion will be some conservation subjects that are controversial, giving opportunity to become acquainted with the pros and cons of timely subjects. Field trips will be liberally sprinkled throughout the program. As soon as they are printed programs will be available at our meetings. Won't you plan to attend the convention this year?

To commemorate the centennial of the death of John James Audubon in January of 1851 the National Society has issued a series of 24 full color reproductions of Audubon's paintings in the form of stamps about 2½ x 3¼ inches. These will be attractive mementos of the Centennial or may be used on letters and envelopes to help attract attention to Audubon's great work. We have ordered sets of these to be sold, two sets for \$1.00 at our meetings, or they may be ordered from our Chairman of Sales, Mrs. Celia Christianson, 1065½ N. Oxford St., Los Angeles 27.

We greatly regret that illness has made it necessary for Mrs. W. Scott Lewis to resign her position of Treasurer. Miss Treva Russell has been appointed to fill the position of treasurer for the remainder of the club year. Our sympathy and best wishes for complete recovery to Mrs. Lewis.

Alice Lewis

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
 There is society, where none intrudes,
 By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
 I love not man the less, but Nature more,
 For these our interviews, in which I steal
 From all I may be, or have been before,
 To mingle with the universe, and feel
 What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all
 conceal.

Lord Byron

A SENSE OF WONDER

The late Anna Botsford Comstock, the "Mother of Nature Study," said that every child should be taught some astronomy as it was almost the only subject which, in these days, would develop a sense of wonder. But even with astronomy the modern child may say ...Twinkle, twinkle little star

I didn't wonder what you are,
I know more of you, you see
Than you'll ever know of me.

But should not everything in nature fill all of us with a sense of awe and wonder? Every leaf with its complicated cellular structure carrying on the only partially understood process of photosynthesis which provides the basic food for all living things. Every tiny insect with the inherited instincts that fit it marvellously for its way of life. Every bird with its abundant vitality, its mastery of flight; the migrants return over hundreds of uncharted miles of sea and land to the very spot it left half a year before.

"By the courage of wild birds' wings
on the long migration,
Teach me how to confide, and live
my life and rest."

Every form of life and the great diversity of life forms, life itself, present unanswered problems. No one wonders about what he knows or thinks he knows, nor about things in which he takes no interest. Interest in nature, then, and a realization of how little we really understand, should fill all of us with a sense of wonder. We should humbly admit that even as we learn more and more of nature and science the basic facts are still beyond our understanding.

- G.T.H.

Many a time I experience the sensuous beauty of the infinitely varied forms and colors of nature with a quality and measure of satisfaction that I have no words to describe fully. This satisfaction is enlarged and intensified by my feeling of wonder at it all, not only at its beauty, but at its magnitude, its grandeur, its sublimity.

William Emerson Ritter - The
California Woodpecker and I

WITH OUR REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

The new year is teeming with activity. First our Southern California Workshop, with the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society as host club and representatives from a dozen societies, convened at the Mission Inn in Riverside on Jan. 15. A stimulating program of ideas and plans used by various groups held attention throughout the day. Everyone participated in some way in this workshop and each took home some ideas to present to his own group.

On January 20 our first camp reunion was celebrated with a chicken dinner and a program of varied interest at Rancho Golf Course, a City Recreation Center in Los Angeles. Over 100 guests from San Diego to Santa Barbara attended. Old friendships were renewed, camp slides were shown and the new film of the camp, which will be circulated in this area. It is hoped that this will become an annual event.

Audubon Centennial year presents many possibilities of bringing the name of this never-to-be-forgotten painter and naturalist to public attention. It will be a challenge to all fields of endeavor to develop unique methods of doing this. Not only the fruits of his labor, his paintings and writings, impress us with their unusual qualities, but the attributes which made him stand out among his fellows with enduring charm and which made him a world renowned figure. From the simple story of his life to an elaborate exhibition of his works, no presentation of Audubon can fail to attract attention and interest.

Conservation interests have won another round in their ceaseless struggle in the granting of protection to the nesting area of our California Condor. Many individuals and groups interested themselves in this arduous campaign. Great credit is due the President of our National Society, Mr. John Baker, for his untiring vigilance, without which it is doubtful that we could have achieved this success. We shall look forward with hope that the California Condor will long survive.

The threat to the area in Mission Bay in San Diego, where ducks and geese, particularly the Black Brant, come has been averted thru the strong opposition of conservation groups. A number of citizens had made a strenuous effort to have this area filled in to make a golf course.

- Erna Comby

MIGRATION RECORDS OF THE WANDERING
TATTLER

In a few weeks the spring migration of many birds will be in full swing and it is probable that few of us stop to consider the short period some of our shore birds spend in going to their nesting grounds in the far north, raising their brood, and returning again as far south as southern California on their fall migration.

Taking the date of the largest count as peak of the spring and fall migration of the Wandering Tattler, a five year record (1946-1950) shows an average of 91 days for this round trip from southern California to Alaska, for nesting and raising young. The year 1946 shows the longest period, - 100 days; 1948 the shortest, 78 days; from my records as taken at Malaga Cove in the Palos Verdes. A record of only five years is not very long, but it does begin to give an idea of the nesting period.

These same Tattlers, some of them at least, may have nested in Mount McKinley Park, and though the Tattler is streamlined and has a powerful driving flight, it has to be a very busy bird to accomplish all that in three months.

-R. N. Shuart

FROM OUR EXCHANGES

In the WHITTIER OBSERVER Mr. J. H. Comby reports as high lights of the Christmas Count in the Big Bear area 8000 Coots, 100 Pinyon Jays, 25 Clark's Nutcrackers, 6 Golden Eagles, 4 Bald Eagles and 2000 Robins feeding in the juniper trees. Also 11 Evening Crossbeaks, 36 Cassin's Finches and 3 Williamson's Sapsuckers.

The Gull, published by the Golden Gate Society reports that on a field trip in November to Los Banjos over 1000 Sandhill Cranes were seen.

In the Christmas count of 110 species and 17,112 individual birds the largest numbers were 3022 California Gulls, 1351 Brewer's Blackbirds, 1002 White-crowned Sparrows, 996 Western Gulls and 993 Double-crested Cormorants.

The Gull also refers to their Society keeping a Life List, recording all birds seen on their field trips; the list to date totalling 263 birds.

OBSERVATIONS

WATER BIRDS: A Red-throated Loon in the pool at the Venice marshes, with a large patch of black oil on one side of its breast. The bird was repeatedly turning on its side and trying to clean the feathers with its bill. (H)

The Berrys report 2 White-fronted Geese with a flock of 20 Canvasbacks, a dozen Ringnecks and 1 Green-winged Teal at Devil's Gate Dam on Feb. 11. Mrs. Dunn reports a Bufflehead seen on a trip with the Southwest Bird Study Club near Bolsa Chica on February 12.

TURKEY VULTURES: about 300 coming in to roost in tall Eucalyptus trees far from buildings, near Piru, Feb. 3. (Daugherty)

VERMILLION FLYCATCHER: a brilliant male watched for 20 minutes as it darted after insects at the Point Magu gun club grounds Feb. 7. The party approached to within less than 100 feet. (Hoffman)

ROBINS AND BLUEBIRDS: Many feeding on lawns and on berries along the Burbank Foothills, also many Thurber's Juncos (D). An unusual number of Robins in Santa Monica (H).

Miss Ruby Curry reports Lawrence's Goldfinches and a Gray-headed Junco the latter part of Jan. & early Feb., Eagle Rock.

WATCH NOW FOR:--Returning Hummingbirds of all species, Swallows, Warbling Vireos, Arizona Hooded and Bullock's Orioles.

The Elepaio, of the Hawaiian Audubon Society reports on their Christmas Count 28 species and 4750 individual birds. It is interesting to note that 10 species and 1826 of the individuals were introduced birds that have become naturalized. Among these were English Sparrows, Chinese Dove, Chinese Thrush, Brazilian and Kentucky Cardinals, our House Finch, Philippine Ricebird, and the Mynah Bird from India. It may be pertinent to quote from the Bird Study Merit Badge requirements of the Boy Scouts --"It is impossible to meet the requirements as...the number of birds is not to be found in the islands," and "Produce a list of introduced birds."

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers - 1950-1951

President.....Mrs. Neil H. Lewis, 212 N. Wilton Place, Los Angeles 4
Secretary.....Mrs. Bess M. Hoffman, 1112 $\frac{1}{2}$ S. Orange Drive, Los Angeles 35
Treasurer.....Miss Treva M. Russell, 5641 Fountain Avenue, Los Angeles 28
Membership Chairman.Miss Bonnie C. Green, 774 N. Heliotrope Drive, Los Angeles 27

CALENDAR FOR MARCH, 1951

Thursday, March 1. FIELD TRIP ... Chatsworth Reservoir Grounds.

Water and land birds: Geese, Ducks, White-tailed Kite, Band-tailed Pigeon, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western and Mountain Bluebirds, and others.

Our Tanner Motor Bus will leave Los Angeles, Grand Avenue, between 5th and 6th Sts., in front of Biltmore Hotel, 9 a.m. Will stop for passengers, corner Hollywood & Cahuenga Blvds. 9:15; Laurel Canyon & Ventura Blvd. 9:25. Round trip fare \$1.60. Please have exact change. Make reservations early with Miss Edith Crane, 4925 $\frac{1}{2}$ Cimarron St., AXminster 2-8458. Bring lunch. If driving, go out Ventura Blvd. to Topanga Canyon Blvd., right to Roscoe Blvd., left to Fallbrook St., right to the Reservoir gate, which will be open at 9:45. Leave via same gate about 3 p.m. Lunch at 11:45 at picnic grounds.

Thursday, March 8. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING ... COME WITH US.

An illustrated talk by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sullivan at 7 p.m., room 10, Union Avenue School, 150 South Burlington Avenue.

Take Beverly Boulevard bus to Burlington, walk south one-half block.

Thursday, March 15. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING.

Mr. W. Scott Lewis will give an illustrated lecture, -- "The Natural History of the Mount Whitney Region." As Mr. Lewis is a fine all-round naturalist with a special knowledge of geology and an excellent photographer this will be a program of real enjoyment and profit.

1:30 p.m. at the Los Angeles County Museum in Exposition Park.

Thursday, March 22. MORNING STUDY CLASS.

First hour; Orders to which belong Quails, Coots and Rails. Pages 58 to 61 in How to Know Birds.

Second hour; Ament-bearing trees of our cities, - Willows, Birches, Alders, Oaks. 10 a.m. at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard. Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line to Fuller Ave., walk west one block. If you can, bring your lunch and eat under the trees or in Audubon House.

Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1. OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP.

This is a change from the announced date, to avoid conflict with Easter. Our second overnight trip to Cottonwood Springs; a joint meeting with the Sierra Club. Through the courtesy of Mrs. DeMay we are invited to attend the Sierra Club campfire Saturday night and go with them on an optional hike in the morning. Take U.S. 60 just south of Indio and drive 23.7 miles east to road to Cottonwood Springs. Turn left 8.5 miles on gravel road and follow signs to springs. Bring food, sleeping bags and fire wood if you are camping. Or plan to stay in Indio Saturday night and get an early start in the morning.

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 Sunday of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 a.m.