

Western Tanager

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HUMMINGBIRDS

Smallest of our birds, seemingly with unbounded vitality, they are always a source of joy and wonder. Joy in their beauty of color and form, in the rapidity with which they dash about or the blur of whirring wings as they hang suspended before a flower; wonder at the amount of energy displayed by such a tiny object, at the courage - or pugnacity - with which they attack and drive off larger birds, even crows and hawks, at the thought of a body scarcely larger than a thumb joint provided with all the organs found in our own bodies.

Hummingbirds are natives of the Americas. Most of the 750 or so species and subspecies are found in the Andean region of northern South America, but the Rufous Hummingbird may be found in Alaska in summer and some as far south as Patagonia for the southern hemisphere summer.

Naturally, in such a large family there will be found much variety in size, color and form. The smallest is a West Indian species only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long - the smallest bird in the world - the largest is an Andean one $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. The smallest weighs less than a penny. The bills are longest in proportion to the body of any birds, but vary from about one fourth of an inch to nearly five inches in a South American form called the Sword Bearer, in this latter case being much longer than the body. The tail may, as in our California species, make less than one third the length of the bird, or may be four times the length of the body. All feed largely on tiny insects, but take much nectar from flowers, probing not only into long tubular blossoms, but taking it also from the flat saucers of Eucalyptus flowers. It is a beautiful sight to see a scarlet-flowering Eucalyptus with a score of Allens, Rufous and Anna's Hummers hovering over the brilliant flower clusters or resting momentarily on a twig beside them.

The tongue of these birds is one of the most remarkable organs in nature. To begin with, the tip of the bill is notched on both top and bottom to allow the tongue to be protruded. The tongue itself is made of two thread-like tubes formed by the inrolling edges to suck nectar, but forked and fringed at the tip for the capture of insects. The supporting base of the tongue extends around the back of the head and over the top to be attached near the base of the bill. It is divided into two parts to allow the gullet and wind pipe to pass through. It can be extended far beyond the tip of the bill and withdrawn in the fraction of a second. The hummers visiting the little feeders in my yard reach down two inches to the bottom to get the last drop of the sugar and water, though their bills are only about an inch long. As I watch them one often dips its bill into the feeder, then moves backward a few inches, then dips in again, and repeats this for as many as twenty times. Again one perches on the edge of the feeder for a long drink.

The shining color of the hummingbirds has gained for them the name of living jewels. We have all seen the dark chin feathers of our Anna's Hummingbird suddenly burst into a blaze of scarlet, then as the head is turned slightly, become black again like a burnt out ember. The cause of this is that the barbules of the feathers have a dark pigment within and the surface is either smooth and polished to reflect light, or covered with minute lines to refract the light. The arrangement of these surfaces determine the color that is seen as light strikes the feathers.

Now, as species which winter in the south are returning to mingle with our Anna's for a time we can all enjoy the thrill afforded by the beauty and actions of these mites.

--George T. Hastings

 THE WESTERN MANAGER

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Founded 1910 - For the protection of Birds, other Animals and Plant Life. Membership- joint with the National Audubon Society \$5.00 including Audubon Magazine.

Local, (Student) (12 to 18 years) 75¢
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 212 N. Wilton Pl., L. A. 4
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 5641 Fountain Ave., L. A. 28

WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Arthur J. Bennett
 917 C 21st St., Santa Monica
 (Transferred from Golden Gate Audubon Society)
 Mr. George A. Mandeon
 2370 Edgewater Terrace, L. A. 39

The gift of wonder is a treasure safe with children and saints. To them all things from Creation's hand shine with a free luster. This is to see them as they are. Those of us who have grown gray in the world's service have dimmer eyes. Yet even to us appear sights so sudden, of such audacious and unwearied beauty, that we too are as children and are lifted by a quick reverence to a better state.

One such may come to you any summer day. It comes like a bomb, a bomb in feathers. You hear an insect-like thrumming, and see suspended in the air a metallic missile with propellers going at the rate of . . . seventy-five beats a second - too fast for the eye to see except as a blur. Suddenly rays of fire flash from its throat patch.

Hummingbirds - by Donald Culross Peattie from "A Cup of Sky"

 WITH OUR REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
 NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

It is wise to be ever alert to ways and means for the protection of our priceless natural heritage. The programs of the various branches and affiliates of the Audubon Society are keyed to the topic of CONSERVATION.

Major projects in this field receive our well deserved plaudits, but there are many significant achievements that are seldom heard of beyond their own small spheres. Let me mention one or two.

On a recent trip down Mecca way, a visit to the Myers Guest Ranch disclosed a small stream of water which is supplied the year round for birds and other wildlife by the proprietor of this interesting spot. "My father," said he, "knew all the birds here and looked after them for many years."

In the same general area we find the Jaynes Ranch, with water available for wildlife, and desert trees and shrubs for food and cover. Products of the Ranch are shared with the wild creatures, and here many species of birds find a happy home.

The Audubon educational program for youth is also productive in this field. A study of the materials, with helpful guidance, opens up a whole realm of fascinating interrelationships of nature which are the basis of conservation. It is good to know, then, that a new Audubon branch in Paso Robles has in a few months organized five Junior Audubon clubs and has more "coming up."

Here and there all over our state lovers of nature have set aside small areas to protect and encourage the perpetuation of native plants and animals.

As the whole is made of its component parts, no endeavor is too small to be unimportant in our nationwide program of conservation.

-Erna Comby

INJURED OR DEAD BIRDS

We wish again to ask all members to watch for such birds and to get them if possible to Mr. William Lasky, 551 - 26th Street, Santa Monica. Mr. Lasky will attempt to save the lives of sick or injured birds, perform autopsies on dead ones, then preserve the skins. If unable to get the birds to Mr. Lasky, phone him at EXbrook 3-1904.

BIRDING ... "AS SHE SHOULD BE DID"

The Los Angeles Audubon does not realize its own strength. With so many "eagle-eyes" available, constantly adding to the local information concerning our birds, the society is in a wonderful position to compile this information into readily available records for everyone to consult.

If we were a "weak" society, we might be pardoned for not building up a local "encyclopedia" of information about our birds. But we are one of the "strong" societies of the country. Why, then, do we not attempt the following things:--

1. Keep a card record, by birds, showing WHERE they may be found in our areas, arranged so that the rare birds are fully recorded and the common ones listed in localities where they are exceptionally plentiful.

2. Keep a card record by areas, showing WHAT birds may be found in the 25 or 30 major birding locations and WHEN.

3. Keep another card record by dates, showing the usual and unusual dates WHEN our local birds occur in our area.

There would have to be organization and cooperation in such a scheme. No one should be asked to do it alone. All of us should do our part in formulating the plans, not to mention carrying them out.

This would be a back-breaking task for any one individual. But if each of us would keep check lists or cards for each trip we make, then spend half a day in our headquarters in the library, adding our bit to the cards each year, it would not be long before we would have lists of some kind ... to be charitable, let us say, it would be a good basis for further work.

The work would have to be continued from these original entries. Perhaps this might be done by having ANOTHER committee ??

Or, perhaps, we might each do our share again. If the general plan were worked out right (and if everybody just loved it) perhaps each of us might take A BIRD, AN AREA, etc., and compile a briefer record from the original entry cards.

This could boil down into a little booklet - such as the one put out by the

Washington, D.C. bird society, which shows, in graph form a line across a series of vertical bars, each representing a month. One line represents a year's record for a species:- for example- the bird is not present in winter, arrives in May, nests in June, leaves in September, etc. The heaviness of the line may show when the bird is present in greatest numbers or performing certain functions, as nesting.

Our booklet might include a map, as theirs did, with major birding localities marked and described. But why limit ourselves to what others have done?

Our booklet might be revised over the years, so that it would become something in which we could take great pride. And, needless to say, it would be very useful to all of us, if done accurately.

But, before anything is printed, we might have a series of SUMMARY cards, checked for accuracy by our most expert members, revised during the years so that the unessential is eliminated. Who cares if there is an argument once in a while ... or even if all the time. Let us do it anyway.

But it is not a job for one person ... and I, personally, decline it. But IF... IF enough people are interested, and IF... IF enough will do their share, I certainly will find time enough to do mine.

- James Murdock

AT THE INTERNATIONAL FLOWER SHOW

Our Society was invited to participate in the California International Flower Show held from March 3 to 11.

Our exhibit was "Every Garden a Sanctuary." There were exhibits of what plants can be used to attract birds by providing food. Especially were native shrubs arranged as a garden both for beauty and for the use of birds. Members of the society were present each day as hostesses to explain the purposes of the exhibit and the uses of the different plants. Our sincere thanks go to Mr. Theodore Payne who brought from his nursery at 2969 Los Feliz Boulevard many native plants and assisted us in arranging them. Mrs. Mary Hood and Miss Clara Pflager helped in the planning and did most of the hard work.

A Peregrin Falcon (Duck Hawk) was seen by William Lasky at Point Mugu on the 4th of March to stoop into a small flock of Pheasants, knock over one, then turn and strike another. Both of these dropped to the ground, then ran towards cover, apparently unhurt. The Falcon then flew across a pond, seized a large duck and carried it across a field, where it dropped it. The Peregrin then circled back and attacked Mr. Lasky's tame Prairie Falcon which was perched on a pole, but the latter flew at the Peregrine and drove her away, then returned to Mr. Lasky.

TRIP TO BANNING-BEAUMONT REGION

On Washington's Birthday, Mrs. Bennet and I, while on our way to the Imperial Valley stopped at Banning to see Miss Belle Wilson, who is a reporter for Audubon Field Notes. The day had been dull, with dashes of rain, snow and hail. However, in the middle of the afternoon the weather changed and Miss Wilson kindly offered to show us several good local birding spots.

After such a poor day we were surprised to find good birding. Nearly forty species were identified in a short time.

First we went to the Gilman Ranch near Banning, where Lewis Woodpeckers, many Robins, House and Purple Finches, Oregon Juncos, White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Brown and Spotted Towhees and Western Bluebirds, as well as other varieties were seen.

Then we went to Fisherman's Paradise, a private fishing resort, and nearby Lake Casco, which are about ten miles northwest of Beaumont in San Timoteo Canyon. Ten species of ducks and a Sora Rail were seen here. This was the first time we had ever seen all three varieties of teal in one group. Canvas-back, Redhead and Ringneck Ducks were among those seen. Also identified were Violet-green and Rough-winged Swallows, Mountain Bluebirds, a Red-naped Sapsucker, and Black and Say's Phoebe.

Near the Gilman Ranch Miss Wilson showed us where she had recently witnessed the killing of a Red-tailed Hawk by two Ravens.

Arthur J. Bennett

To be scientific should not necessitate being abstruse. To be worth while a truth need not of necessity be unpleasant, nor need it lack beauty.

Loye Miller in Lifelong Boyhood

OBSERVATIONS

DUCKS AND WATER BIRDS

Black Brant, Playa del Rey, Feb. 21 (Lasky); White-fronted Goose, Sanctuary, Feb. 18 (Gould-Hawkins); Many Shovellers, a few Ruddys and Pintails, Carlsbad, Mar. 13, (Salmon); many Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Playa del Rey, Mar. 13 (H); Blue-winged Teal, Sanctuary, Feb. 18 (Gould-Hawkins); Solitary Sandpiper, Chatsworth Reservoir, Feb. 26 (Curry); Red-backed Sandpiper, Playa del Rey, Mar. 13 (H).

EAGLE, VULTURES

Flights of 50 and 100 Vultures passing over Sanctuary, Mar. 14 (S); Bald Eagle at Point Mugu sitting on top of a telephone pole, so tame that it did not leave when a car stopped directly below, Feb. 21 (Lasky).

YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER

2 observed almost daily at Sanctuary (S); Dusky Poorwill, Eagle Rock, Feb. 20 (C).

HUMMINGBIRDS

Allen's Sanctuary, Feb. 4 (S); Monrovia, Feb. 21 (Irma Rogers), Burbank Foothills, Mar. 3 (D); Rufous, Sanctuary Mar. 3 (S); Black-chinned, Sanct. Mar. 10 (S).

SWALLOWS - Violet-green, Sanctuary, Jan. 21 (Bill Hawkins); Chatsworth, Feb. 26 (H); Tree, Sanctuary, Jan. 27 (Pat Gould); Barn, Venice Marshes, Mar. 13 (H); Cliff, Sanct., Mar. 14 (S); - and the swallows returned to Capistrano on time, Mar. 19!

CEDAR WAXWING, THRUSHES

Mrs. Elizabeth Fallos reports a flock of over 500 Waxwings, feeding on pyracantha berries, then flying to wires above when disturbed; Alaska and Dwarf Hermit Thrush seen together at Eagle Rock, Feb. 22 (C) GROSSBEAK and SPARROWS - Black-headed Grossbeak, Tapia Park, Mar. 3 (Adams); Many Lawrence's Goldfinches, Eagle Rock (C); Rufous and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Temescal, Mar. 7 (H); Pine Siskins daily in early March, Sanct., (S); Mrs. Daugherty on Mar. 13, at the picnic grounds in Santa Anita Canyon saw, feeding together, Blue-fronted Jays, Wren Tit, Thurber's Junco, Purple Finch, Chipping, Gambel's and Bell's Sparrows.

WATCH NOW FOR ---Migration flights of Vultures, Swainson's Hawks, White Pelicans. Russet-backed Thrush, Cassin's Vireo Western Tanager and many Warblers. Most Audubon Warblers have left, the others will soon be gone; Gambel's Sparrows leave this month.

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Officers - 1960-1951

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Membership Chairman..Miss Bonnie C. Green, 774 N. Heliotrope Drive, Los Angeles 27

CALENDAR FOR APRIL, 1951

Thursday, April 5. FIELD TRIP ... Chantry Flats and Big Santa Anita Canyon (The Antelope Valley trip cancelled because it has been too dry, so few birds and flowers). Santa Anita Canyon is good birding territory, especially for Canyon Wrens, Ousels, Warblers and the usual mountain birds. Our Tanner Motor Bus will leave 603 So. Olive St., Los Angeles 9 A.M. Round trip fare \$1.60. Please have exact change. Make reservations with Miss Edith Crane, 4925½ Cimarron St. L.A. 37...AXminister 2-8458. Bring lunch. If driving - go out Foothill Blvd. to Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia, turn left, drive up to the picnic grounds.

Thursday, April 12. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING ...
Another page of a Nature Lovers Album. Mrs. Caroline Daugherty will show more of her lovely kodachrome slides. It is always a treat to hear Mrs. Daugherty tell of her experiences when birding and on nature trips. Come and hear her and see her fine pictures.
Room 10, Union Ave. School, 150 South Burlington Ave., 7 P.M.
Take Beverly Blvd. Bus to Burlington, walk south one-half block.

Thursday, April 19. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING ...
Experiences at Camp Norden. Mr. Charles Allen and Mr. Richard Moore will tell of the life and work of the camp last season, and of the plans for this year. The moving pictures taken last year by the camp director, Dr. Lloyd G. Ingles, will be shown.
1:30 P.M. at the Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park.

Sunday, April 22. FIELD TRIP ... Irvine Park and the Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary.
Go out Manchester Ave. to Chapman Ave., in Orange, turn left to County Park Road to Irvine Park. Meet in the Park about 10 A.M.

Thursday, April 26. MORNING STUDY CLASS ...
First hour a study of Shore Birds;-- Plovers, Sandpipers, Avocets, etc. Pages 62 to 67 in How To Know The Birds.
Second hour a study of trees of the Elm, Fig, Magnolia, Pittosporum and Sycamore Families.
10 A.M. at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard.
Take P.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line to Fuller Avenue, walk west one block.

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.