

## Western



## Tanager

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THIS IS A ROBIN YEAR

All of us have noticed unusual numbers of Robins this winter and have probably had to answer inquiries from our neighbors as to where they came from, and why. Local papers have had articles or letters about them, indicating a very general interest. One call was for information as to how to get rid of them because they were eating all the red berries! Mrs. Stultz reported over 2000 Robins bathing in a stream in the Sanctuary on October 31, and large numbers ever since. She has had so many 'phone calls that she kept a record of places from which they came and in two weeks listed twenty towns or cities of our area. The most reported to her were from Palos Verdes- several thousand.

But while this is noteworthy it is not without precedent. Our Christmas Count this year lists 3316 Robins, more than of any other bird except the Willet. But in 1945 when the total of all birds seen was only about half the number this year, there were 2649 Robins. That winter, as this, many people were greatly excited about the influx. In other years since a report of the Christmas Count has been published the numbers have usually been less than 100.

Dawson in his Birds of California says the Robin is resident in summer in cool mountain climates, - the Transition and Canadian Life Zones - up to the limit of tree growth. In winter it is an irregular visitor to lower areas, often excessively numerous, the numbers seeming to be dependent on the availability of berries and other food. He states that sometimes they invade orchards of ripening olives by tens of thousands and wreck havoc. "And of course Robins eat bugs, oodles of them, besides thousand-legs, sow bugs, snails and angle worms."

The Western Robin is the same species as the Eastern, but a subspecies, differing from the latter in slightly paler color and having no white tips to the outer tail feathers. Still another subspecies, the Northwest Robin is darker and often has some white on the ends of the tail feathers. The Eastern Robin is occasionally reported from California, but it is doubtful if such reports are correct. The eastern bird has a much wider range than ours, spreading across the eastern and central states, across Canada and up to north-western Alaska. In its migration southward, the birds that spent the summer in Alaska, travel east, then south along the Mississippi valley, to the Gulf. It is possible that at times some of these birds come south to western Washington and Oregon, where they have been reported. It may be that some of these may continue south into California, though this is not at all probable.

The changes in the scientific name of the Robin are interesting. Named by Linnaeus in 1766 Turdus migratorius - the migrating thrush,- the name was changed in 1844 to Merula migratoria, in 1910 this name was found to be untenable and the Robin became Planesticus migratorius. Recently the powers that be have decided that it must go back where it started, so again it is Turdus migratorius. Our Western Robin has a varietal name added and is Turdus migratorius propinquus, which apparently makes it the Near Migrating Thrush. And of course its common name is a mistake. Early settlers thought it resembled the English Robin Redbreast, so gave it that name, though the English Robin is a smaller and redder bird, also of the thrush family.

### THE WESTERN Tanager

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### THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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Miss Marilyn Montenegro,  
 585 N. Gower St., L.A. 4

The GULL of the Golden Gate Audubon Society reports that on a field trip to Lake Merritt they saw a male Pintail Duck in the rare waterfowl pen, that had been banded at the Lake in 1928 and recaptured this fall. That means the duck is at least 23 years old, a remarkable age for a bird subject to the dangers from hunters every winter as well as the common dangers all wild birds must face.

The MEADOWLARK of the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society reports that on January 1st five Wood Ducks were seen on Fairmont Lake.

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

This will be the first year that election of officers of the Society will be in accordance with the revised by-laws. Members should read these in the Yearbook. The Nominating Committee is appointed in January, reports in April, election will be in May, elected officers will be installed in June and assume office in July. One member of the nominating committee is to be elected by the Society at the program meeting, February 7.

Members are urged to send suggestions for officers to the chairman of the nominating committee, Mis Leoti Fisher, 3562 No. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 31, before April. Maybelle De May

#### REPORT OF THE SANCTUARY FOR 1951

The San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary has become an acknowledged resource for Conservation Education in Los Angeles Co. Observation of plants, animals, birds, insects and soil is a new and exciting experience to most adults as well as to children.

This past year 10,423 people have registered for a total of 178 conducted 2-3 hour field trips and 83 museum talks. Of this number 386 were teachers in In-Service-Training classes, 1,243 were Scouts, and elementary school children from city and country districts account for most of the rest.

The Nature Museum has grown to 26 living displays in addition to the still exhibits. Mammals, reptiles, insects, fresh-water and marine life are included.

Extension work by the Sanctuary staff included promotion of Screen Tours, and Audubon Camp and information on all Branch activities in the area. National Audubon displays have been set up for School Fairs, the Los Angeles County Recreational Conference, and the L. A. County District Science Teacher's Workshop.

As of January 1st, 1952, the Sanctuary will be closed Sundays and Mondays instead of Mondays and Thursdays. However, the second Sunday Field Trip for the public will be continued with Pat Gould and Bill Hawkins as leaders. All other field trips are by appointment only. The museum is open to the public from 2 to 5 P.M., except Sundays and Mondays and you are cordially invited to come.

### NIGHT SCHOOL CONSERVATION CLASSES

Two adult classes in Conservation of Natural Resources are scheduled for the spring semester; one at Pasadena City College, the other at Hollywood High School. Both classes will begin on February 6, at 7 P.M., and are open to anyone interested.

The Pasadena class will meet in Room 233, Center Building, Pasadena City College. The instructor will be Rodney Ellsworth. Thirteen sessions, ten in the classroom, three in the field are planned. The classes will run from 7 to 9 on Wednesdays.

The Class at Hollywood High will meet in room 135, Science Building, with a similar program. Mr. Moore will again be the teacher.

These classes are a result of the pioneer class last semester at Hollywood Evening School. With Richard Moore as instructor, this group began weekly sessions last October, devoting two hours each evening to commentary, motion pictures, and discussion of various phases of conservation. Two field trips were conducted.

### AN EXAMPLE OF SOIL AND WATER DEPLETION

In a recent publication of the National Park Service - A Survey of the Recreational Resources of the Colorado River Basin, are given many examples of the destruction of soil and wildlife due to careless exploitation. Here is one case... "Those who are familiar with the bare, dry, sandy bed of the present intermittent Santa Cruz River at Tucson, in the heart of the Arizona Desert, will find it hard to believe that prior to 1776, water there was so abundant that travellers sometimes had to wait six weeks before it was possible to get horses across its marshy expanse.... Tucson was established...because of the abundance of wood, water and meadowland at that time. Where there is now only powder-dry desert, the grass once grew as high as the head of a man on horseback. The river bottom then was densely forested with giant mesquites...The region teemed with quail and doves... About 1800 the valley was denuded of its mesquite forest. The beaver were trapped out and their dams destroyed. With the disappearance of the vegetation, the wildlife that depended on it also vanished." This has been repeated in nearly

every other mesquite valley of the Southwest.

The SANDERLING, bulletin of the Monterey Peninsula Society states that Whistling Swans appear each year in the Moss Landing district. This year they are in Jensen Slough, the mature birds pure white, the cygnets flecked and crowded with gray. They give an account of the swans' habits, then a note on the recent increase in the number of Trumpeter Swans. There is more about these latter birds in the January number of the BULLETIN OF THE MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SOCIETY, from which we quote - "The annual census reveals a national population of 535 Trumpeter Swans, the highest count in seventeen years, 159 more than last year and 462 more than in the low year of 1935. The Trumpeter Swan, like the American Bison was a victim of civilization encroaching upon its wilderness habitat. The restoration program which began in 1935 came barely in time to save the birds from destruction. Efforts in preserving this largest water-fowl in the United States have centered around Red Rock Lakes Wildlife Refuge in Montana, near Yellowstone National Park, established to preserve this bird. Birds have been transported from here to other refuges in Oregon and Nevada and to the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming. Increases were reported in all these flocks this year." Canada has also been active in protecting these swans and authorities estimate that there are now about 900 of them. "The Trumpeter Swan is a rugged bird, spending the rigorous Canada winters in areas where the only open water is that created by the swiftest rapids."

The WHITTIER OBSERVER in the January number gives some of the highlights of the Big Bear Christmas Bird Count, organized, as for years past, by Mr. J. H. Comby. A beautiful Bald Eagle was seen soaring over the lake. Later a Golden Eagle circled over the mountain tops, then winged his way to the valley where the observers were, and perched on the top of a tall tree. An American Rough-leg Hawk was seen, and one tiny Ruby-crowned Kinglet - at an altitude of 7000 feet, when the rest of his clan were wintering in a lower and milder area.

## WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY

Remember to save the first Thursday of the month for our program meetings in Exposition Park.

At the meeting on January 3, Mrs. DeMay gave a very interesting report of the National Convention in New York. At the convention she told the delegates of some of the outstanding work of our society. It is unfortunate that all of our members do not hear of the work done by other societies. Following Mrs. DeMay's report an unusual motion picture, illustrating an Indian legend - The Loon's Necklace - was shown. All the characters in the picture wore masks carved for ceremonial use by northern Indians. Mrs. Hood told us that Mr. Jean Delacour, one of the world's greatest ornithologists has been appointed director of the Los Angeles County Museum. This is good news to all interested in science.

The evening meeting of January 17 was the first joint meeting of the Society and the Nature Leaders' Workshop. Mr. Roland Ross chose for the topic of his address, "Let's Go Afield." He stressed the fact that we can get from our field trips only as much as we put into them. His fine kodachrome slides taken on his trips into the High Sierras and Rockies were selected to show the relation of clouds to crops, rivers and glaciers. And the associations of birds and mammals with plant habitats determined by the amount of water. Beyond the knowledge we gain on trips afield is an added joy in living.

After the address there was opportunity to study the special exhibits of sea-shore life, rocks, birds, nature handicraft, books and pamphlets and a living armadillo. Also an exhibit from the Aquarium Society.

Our two field trips for the month had to be cancelled because of rain.

On Friday, the 14th of December, our first evening Christmas party was held at Marjorie Walther's home in San Fernando. About twenty-five of our members enjoyed games and refreshments. There was carol singing with Mrs. Beebe at the piano and Leoti Fisher and Maybelle DeMay playing guitars.

## OBSERVATIONS

Grebes: Holboell's, Bolsa Chica, Dec. 13 (Stultz), 5 at Playa del Rey, Jan. 10. (Hastings); Eared, MacArthur Park, (Curry); Pied-billed, MacArthur Park, Jan. 5 (Pettit), near Sanctuary, (Gould, Hawkins)

Hérons: American Egret, MacArthur Park, Jan. 5 (P); American Bittern, Playa del Rey, Jan. 7, (Kent), near Sanctuary (G. & H.)

Ducks: Gadwall, near Sanctuary (G. & H.) Wood Duck, Lincoln Park (C.); American Golden-Eye, male and female, Upper Newport Bay, Jan. 2 (Arnold Small); Buffle-head, Bolsa Chica, Dec. 13 (S); Playa del Rey, Jan. 7 (K).

Florida Gallinule: Lake Land Fishing Ponds, near Sanctuary, (G. & H.) Sora and Virginia Rails, Fishing Ponds, also Wilson's Snipe (G. & H.)

Murrelet: from Huntington Park Pier, Arnold Small saw 1 Xantus, 1 Marbled, 5 Ancient.

Kite: White-tailed, Sanctuary, Dec. 27 (S), Playa del Rey, Jan. 7 (K)

Swift: White-throated, Sanctuary Dec. 27 (S); Horned Larks on same day (S).

Nuthatch: Slender-billed, Eagle Rock, Dec. 18, (C)

Oriole, Hooded, female, MacArthur Park, Jan. 2 (Hoffman).

Grossbeak: Evening, in Los Angeles yard, Dec. 16 (McCune).

Tanager; Cooper's a female caught in a water trap in Santa Monica and banded. (W. Lasky). A very rare find.

Sparrows: Lark and Lincoln's, Sanctuary Dec. 27 (S).

Shufeldt's Oregon Junco, on feeding shelf in city, Jan. 7 (McC).

Seen in Griffith Park, Dec. 15 to Jan. 15 Road Runner, Anna's Hummingbird, Calif. Woodpecker, Bush Tit, Plain Titmouse, Calif. Thrasher, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Oregon Junco. (William Lasky)

On Jan. 17 a huge Convair B-36 bomber cruising in for a landing on Lindberg. Field in San Diego ran into a large flock of gulls. After the pilot brought his big craft to a safe landing workers found 62 dead birds in large holes in the wings and in air vents.

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 THE LOS ANGELES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FOR 1951
 

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This was the 14th Christmas Count for the Los Angeles Audubon Society, the 52nd for the National Audubon Society.

The count was taken on Sunday, December 30 by 85 observers working in 35 parties, with 21 others counting in their home yards. The territory was the same circle with a fifteen mile diameter as in other years, including residential areas, bushy slopes, reservoir and golf club grounds, marshes and seashore. The day was rainy with short intervals of sunshine and moderate to strong winds.

The total party hours was 274; the party miles 114 on foot, 687 by car.

Mrs. Caroline Daugherty, who organized our first count and has taken charge in the past, was unable to take charge this year, but helped Mr. Robert Pyle plan the count.

- LOONS: Pacific 2; Red-throated 2; DOVES: Mourning 458; Chinese Spotted 241; unidentified 6. Ringed Turtle 139. ROAD RUNNER 1.
- GEEBES: Horned 13; Eared 84; Western OWLS: Barn 2; Horned 2; Short-eared 1. 164; Pied-billed 20. HUMMINGBIRDS: Black-chinned 1 (seen regularly at feeding station); Annas 125.
- SHEARWATER: 1-too far out to identify sp. KINGFISHER 6.
- PELICANS, ETC: Brown Pelican 51; Farallon WOODPECKERS: Red-shafted Flicker 163; California 1; Red-breasted Sapsucker 2; Cormorant 14; Brandt's 1; Bairds 1. Red-naped 2; Downy 2; Nuttall's 7.
- HERONS: Great Blue 18; American Egret 28; FLYCATCHERS: Black Phoebe 128; Say's 6. Snowy Egret 38; Green Heron 4; JAY, CROW: Stellar's 1; California 302; Black-crowned Night Heron 63. Crow 17.
- GEESE, DUCKS: Black Brant 1; Gadwall 2; TITMOUSE, TITS, ETC: Mountain Chickadee 1; Mallard 5; Baldpate 148; Pintail Plain Titmouse 42; Bush-tit 653; 744; Green-winged Teal 293; Cinnamon Teal 1; Shoveller 262; Redhead Creeper 1; Wren-tit 268; House Wren 10; 1; Ring-necked 11; Canvasback 42; Bewick's Wren 29; Cactus Wren 1; Marsh Wren 7; Canyon Wren 1; Rock Wren 1. Lesser Scaup 598; Bufflehead 8; MOCKINGBIRD, ETC: Western Mockingbird 399; White-winged Scoter 5; Surf Scoter California Thrasher 104; Robin 3316; Hooded Merganser 1; Hermit Thrush 110. American Merganser 4; Red-breasted Merganser 67.
- HAWKS: Turkey Vulture 5; White-tailed Kite GNATCATCHER, ETC: Blue-gray 17; Golden-crowned Kinglet 4; Ruby-crowned 61; 2; Sharp-shinned Hawk 8; Cooper's 8; Red-tailed 38; Marsh 4; Prairie Pipit 208; Cedar Waxwing 260; Shrike 45. Falcon 1; Peregrine Falcon 2; Sparrow Hawk 73; Falcon, unidentified 1. VIREO, WARBLERS: Hutton's Vireo 10; Orange-crowned Warbler 9; Audubon's 2145; Townsend's 6; Yellow-throat 7; Wilson's 1.
- QUAIL: California 277. ENGLISH SPARROW: 1146.
- COOT: American 1085. MEADOWLARK, ETC: Meadowlark 402; Red-winged Blackbird 184; Tricolored 2; Brewer's 1993; Cowbird 6; Oriole, Hooded (?) 1.
- SHORE BIRDS: Snowy Plover 7; Killdeer 50; Black-bellied Plover 854; Surf-bird 36; Ruddy Turnstone 1; Black Turnstone 32; Long-billed Curlew 2, Hudsonian Curlew 9; Spotted Sandpiper 4; Willet 6623; Greater Yellowlegs 1; Least Sandpiper 15; Red-backed Sandpiper 254; Dowitcher 365; Western Sandpiper 198; Godwit 287; Sanderling 416; Avocet 169; Black-necked Stilt 5.
- GULLS AND TERNS: Glaucous-winged 95; Western 234; Herring 30; California 3762; Ring-billed 1705; Short-billed 3; Bonapartes 2107; Heerman's 123; Unidentified 956; Forester's Tern 22.
- FINCHES, SPARROWS: Black-headed Grosbeak 1; Purple Finch 228; Cassin's Purple 4; House 2860; American Goldfinch 51; Green-backed 250; Unidentified 5; Green-tailed Towhee 1; Spotted 98; Brown 720; Savannah Sparrow 60; Grasshopper 12; Lark 51; Rufous-crowned 5; Slate-colored Junco 1; Oregon 401; Chipping Sparrow 199; Gambel's Sparrow 1515; Golden-crowned 302; Fox 35; Lincoln's 5; Song 219.

Total species 150 (3 additional subspecies), total individuals 43,295, the largest count to date.

Robert Pyle

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.  
Officers - 1951-1952

President..... Mrs. Maybelle DeMay, 504 E. Oak Street, El Segundo, El Segundo 317-J  
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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY, 1952

The public is invited to the following meetings and trips.  
Further information regarding any of them may be had by calling the numbers given.

- THURSDAY - February 7 - AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING - Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, 1:30 P.M. Two splendid moving pictures in color: - A Family Afoot in the Yukon; mother, father and children adventuring into the wilderness on foot; Water, the Source of Life; a conservation picture everyone should see. Whitney 5946
- WEDNESDAY- February 13 - EVENING PROGRAM MEETING - A joint meeting with the Nature Study Workshop, Los Angeles County Museum, south-east corner entrance. Door open at 7 for the study of the special exhibits, program begins at 7:30. Captain Benjamin Allen and Mr. Allen Berry will show a large number of rock specimens and talk on Romance of the Rocks. HEMPSTEAD 0974
- THURSDAY - February 21 - FIELD TRIP TO CABRILLO BEACH - A visit to the Marine Museum and a study of ocean and shore birds. Take Pacific Electric car leaving 6th and Main St. station at 8:19 or 8:37, for San Pedro. At the station there, take local bus to Cabrillo Beach, arriving about 10:00. Fare to San Pedro, one way 58 cents. Meet at the Museum. Bring lunch. Leader, Miss L. E. Blind. AXMINSTER 1-7855
- SUNDAY - February 24 - FIELD TRIP TO PLAYA DEL REY - For the study of shore and marsh birds. Take Pacific Electric bus marked Redondo Beach, via Playa del Rey, 423 South Hill Street station, 9:21, arrive at Playa del Rey at 10:07. Fare 30 cents one way. Get off at Vista del Mar and Culver Boulevard. If driving, go out Culver Blvd. Bring lunch - Leader Mr. Bob Pyle. AXMINSTER 1-7855
- THURSDAY - February 28 - STUDY CLASS - Plummer Park at 10:00 A.M. Take F.E. trolley, Santa Monica-West Hollywood line to Fuller Ave., walk west one block. First hour a study of more trees of California by Mr. W. Scott Lewis, illustrated with colored slides. Second hour, Mr. George T. Hastings, a talk on Orioles and their Relatives, illustrated with cardboard cut-outs and specimens. Books of our library and a review of a Biography of John Muir, Mr. John Wentz. GRANITE 9312

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SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

664 N. Durfee Ave., El Monte - Telephone FORREST 0-1872

Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Director Mrs. E. Gertrude Woods, Assistant Director  
Maintained by the National Audubon Society with the cooperation of the Southern California branches and affiliated societies.  
Regular field trips the second Sunday of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 A. M., led by Pat Gould and Bill Hawkins.

Come and bring your friends. For information, call CRESTVIEW 6-1990