



SPIDERS

Mary V. Hood

Altho' most people either actively dislike, loathe and despise or ignore spiders, they are to the initiated one of the most varied and interesting of all the multitude of earth's denizens. For proof of this the reader is referred to that most readable book, American Spiders, by William J. Gertach.

Living in the west, we have, in our wanderings met some of the more spectacular American spiders and have spent many hours taking portraits of them and their amazing habitations. Even the feared Black Widow, when housed between sheets of clear glass, is a creature of beauty, the contrast of glistening black and brilliant red, the long slender legs so expertly manipulated, all become reasons for study by any one interested in living things. Then, too, we sometimes find the homes of Tarantulas and Trapdoor artizans. In summer and fall the woodlands are strung with the great orb webs of the black and gold garden spider. One day while at work in the garden we found the curious little fellow that looks for all the world like a bird dropping.

Spiders are not only monstrous, curious or fascinating (as you choose) to look at, but they have some unique and strange ways of ensuring their survival. Some, spinning long strands of silk, go ballooning through the air when young, and so with the help of the wind are widely dispersed. There are more spiders in the world than most people imagine. Over 6,000 kinds have been named and probably even more remain to be discovered. Numbers of individuals are very great. It has been estimated that some meadows will average over 64,000, some woodlands over 11,000 spiders per acre. Since they eat flies and other insects, spiders must be considered the most important predators in many areas. Even more important than the much vaunted birds.

Spiders are not parasites, nor are any of them vectors of man's diseases. One of their ancient relatives was probably one of the first creatures to become adapted to live on land - at least it is the oldest in the fossil record to date.

Man has found that spiders help not only by killing flies, but a certain crab spider is effective in the control of bedbugs, others help in the cottonfields, and another specializes on the insects that attack stored grain. In northern Thailand, the natives eat certain spiders with relish. It is not so long ago that people wore a live spider in a nutshell hung about their necks to ward off contagious diseases. Still more recently the practice of slapping on a cobweb to stop bleeding was a common practice. A trick that achieved its immediate purpose, but more often than not introduced germs into the wound.

After reading this short article you should be interested in learning more about these interesting and useful animals. Besides the book Mrs. Hood refers to the following are excellent:--"The Life of the Spider." by Jean Henri Fabre. Every nature lover should be acquainted with this or others of Fabre's books. "The Spider Book," by John Henry Comstock, the standard text and reference book. "About Spiders", a small book of popular interest by Elaine V. Emerson. "The Life of the Spider", by John Crompton, the most recent of the books about spiders, and an interesting book.

G. T. H.

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Since the list of officers and committee chairmen was published last month, Mrs. Ruth McCune has resigned as Historian and will devote her time to the Conservation and Public Relations Committees. Mrs. Grace Phillips has been appointed to the position of Historian.

MUSIC IN NATURE

This popular talk by Dr. Loye Miller is again available on four 12 inch vinylite (non-breakable) phonograph records, with over 50 bird songs and animal sounds. Dr. Miller informally discusses the five elements of music - time, tone, timber, tune and touch in relation to bird songs and animal sounds. These are reproduced by Professor Miller's vocal and whistled imitations. Dr. Miller has made field studies of sounds in nature for over fifty years. As Professor of Biology at U.C.L.A. he has long been noted as a scientist, lecturer and a leader in nature study groups. The set of four disks, seven sides recorded, can be purchased for \$7.50 (plus 3% tax) from the Department of Zoology, University of California, Los Angeles 24. Make checks payable to the Cooper Ornithological Club.

THE NATURE LEADERS WORKSHOP

This has been one of the most successful undertakings of the Society for the past eight years. This year, instead of being held every week through January, February and March, meetings will be held on the second and fourth Thursday evenings from October through May, with no meeting in December. At each meeting besides the illustrated lecture there will be tables with exhibits of rocks, plants, sea-life, insects, birds, reptiles and mammals, and demonstrations of nature handicraft and game. Full announcements of the course can be obtained from Mrs. Mary V. Hood, 138 S. Wilton Dr., L. A. 4; or from Mrs. Dorothy Bush, 3631 W. 60th Street. L. A. 43.

ADDITIONS TO OUR HEADQUARTERS

The librarian has recently purchased a copy of the very beautiful Birds of Arizona. This, as well as the many other books on birds and nature, can be drawn out by members and kept for one month.

The Society has received from Mrs. Elizabeth Burell Smith a gift of 25 bird skins for our study collection. She has also given a large number of small mineral specimens to be used for the instruction of scouts in Rocks and Minerals.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY

The breeding grounds of the nearly extinct Whooping Cranes have been sought for years. Special air plane flights over areas where they were thought to meet have been made by trained observers, but without success until this summer. Two workers for the Fish and Wildlife Service of the national government flying over northern Canada in early July found two adult Cranes in the marshes north of Great Slave Lake. They circled over the birds at a low level to obtain photographs. Now it is hoped that studies can be made with a view of increasing the numbers of these rare birds, that once were so abundant.

SOME UNAPPRECIATED ALLIES

The Women's Section of the Committee on Bird Protection of the American Ornithologists Union has undertaken as a project the education of the general public on the need of hawk and owl protection. They point out that hawks are of infinitely greater value in rodent control than cats, yet a very large number of gunners, including many "sportsmen", feel that they are helping in the conservation of game birds by shooting all hawks they see. Also tho' most species of hawks are protected in all but a dozen states, the laws are often ignored, partly because game wardens are not informed on the value of these birds.

Mr. Richard Pough, Chairman of the Dept. of Conservation of the Museum of Natural History in New York, states that in relatively undisturbed wild areas both game birds and hawks are abundant. He explains: (1) In such a community, air, soil and water produce the plant material available for food. (2) This must feed all plant eaters--insects, rodents and other animals. (3) The flesh-eaters in turn live on the plant eaters. (4) There is an additional group of flesh eaters that live on others.

The plants in any area produce relatively the same amount of food each year--leaves, bark, wood, flowers, seeds. Important consumers of these are insects, rodents, birds. Without balancing factors, the insects would consume most of the available food and any left would fall first of all to rodents. Birds would have the last chance. The predators constitute the balancing factor and the success of the plant-eating groups will depend to some degree on their ability to escape predators. Birds with flight, speed and alertness have the best chance. They do prosper even with a relatively low reproduction rate. Man entering this picture destroys the balance. The game birds he wants he feels are also wanted by hawks and he destroys both. By this he reduces the pressure on rodents and insects. The increasing rodents may become predators and attack birds in their most vulnerable spot by destroying eggs of young in the nest. This means that protection of hawks -- all hawks -- will help restore a balance in which game birds as well as song birds will increase.

JACKIE

by

Leoti Fisher

He's a young California Jay (I object calling him a "Scrub" Jay). As I write this he is perched on my hand, pecking at the end of my pen. He was picked up as a baby some months ago and given to me when he proved too much of a bother for the lady who found him. He has a crippled foot but flies well and is now attaining his adult plumage. He object strenuously to being confined to a cage, even a large one, so has the freedom of my house. He sleeps on the curtain rod in my bedroom and the first thing in the morning flies down on my pillow and sings me a sweet little song. (He just now put a button in my ear). When I have my morning cup of coffee, I must put a glass of water on the table for him. He loves to sit on my hand while the water from the faucet runs into it and drink either from my hand or from the stream of water.

He - like all jays - likes to hide things. Peanuts, corn, cheese - anything he can find, are hidden under pillows, in the curtains, under the rug and in other places. But when I am home he prefers to put them in my hair, down my neck, or in my sleeve. He loves to listen to the radio, sitting on a chair back near it and singing with all his heart. And a beautiful little song it is, too. He is fond of cottage cheese and sits on the refrigerator to beg for it. Also he likes ice cream; one evening recently he helped a guest with what she was eating. He can drink cider from a gallon jug and milk from the carton. You should see him help me prepare string beans. He is about the busiest bird you could hope to see and has worked his way into my heart.

Members are urged to contribute observations of birds seen, brief accounts of unusual behavior, or other notes of interest for publication in the Tanager. These will be used as space allows.

REPORT FROM THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

The following is a report received from Mrs. Hazel Lewis in May.

Along Sanctuary trails, lush growth has produced a superabundance of aphids and the ladybugs are doing a good job on them. The winter's heavy rainfall has raised the water-level so that the springs again are filling the Sanctuary brooks, where many water-loving plants are growing, among them Golden Mimulus and Watercress. It is interesting to note the many shades of green in the vegetation bordering the trails.

At present in my little woodland sanctuary, the cafeteria for birdland diners is patronized by 22 resident and migrant species, and at least 8 more visit the yard and eat elsewhere. California Quail scurry across the orchard and pause for food en route to the Sanctuary, California Thrashers with hurried steps sense the arrival of mealtime. After flying into a tree near the large feeder, they hop higher and higher until the food is thrown out, then descend to the feeder. The Jays, always eager and hungry, stand aside or leave while a Thrasher is feeding. Other species have to do this when the Jay is around. Overhead sail Tree Swallows, Red-bellied Hawks, Crows and Turkey Vultures, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers call from the trees.

During the hours of early morning and late afternoon, the birds fill the air with their songs and calls: Cardinals whistle from their territories, the "witchity-witchity-witchity" of the Tule Yellow Throat is heard from the little brook, a gay song from a tree top announces the Black-headed Grosbeak, and the lovely Russet-backed Thrush calls "whit-whit".

How beautiful is the Sanctuary in Springtime!

Mrs. Alma Stultz reports on nesting birds in the Sanctuary.
"Probably due to the area being disturbed by the building of the Whittier Narrows

Dam and also to a fire across the river, more birds have nested in the Sanctuary proper than in the last two years. Cardinals, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Long-tailed Chats, Song Sparrows, Yellowthroats, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Hooded Orioles and Mockingbirds have increased greatly. A pair of Bullock's Orioles raised a family. One pair each of White-tailed Kites, Red-bellied Hawks and Yellow-billed Cuckoos nested. Last year there were five nests of Crows, this year only two (one pair raised its family chiefly on fish from the hatchery). Last year there were 8 nests of Tree Swallows, this year but 2."

OBSERVATIONS

Eared Grebes, Venice Marshes; a few Elegant Terns with a large number of Forester's; Sept. 19 (H)
Bonapart's Gulls, Black Turnstones and a Surf-bird, Balona Creek Jetty, Sept. 6 and 13 (Mrs. Dunn)
William Lasky reports that a pair of Western Tanagers nested in Griffith Park this summer, also a partially albino California Jay with broad white wing bats seen frequently.
Mrs. Wait had a male Hooded Oriole visiting her abutilon bush for several days in early September, the female more rarely.
Miss Georgia Ware reports Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Tapia Park, Sept. 1.
Man-o-War Bird over Manhattan Beach Pier July 17, Miss Marie Terheggen writes - "Dad and I had an excellent view of this bird for at least an hour, - it was very windy and overcast but the strong wind did not bother him in his beautiful flight and hovering. He was so close that we could see him scratch his head with his left foot while in flight. He was a beautiful and graceful bird, the spread of his narrow wings must have been about eight feet. People fishing on the pier said it was an albatross."

Watch now -- for returning Gambel's Golden-crowned and Chipping Sparrows, Audubon Warblers and Hermit Thrush. At the shore for Glaucous-winged Gulls, Wester Grebes and Surf Scoters.

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CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER, 1952

(Visitors are welcome at all meetings and trips)

Thursday, October 2. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, 1:30 P.M.

A fine nature moving picture, Alaska's Silver Millions, will be shown with the narrative given by Father Hubbard, the "Glacier Priest". Also a review of the National Geographic book. Stalking Birds with a Color Camera will be given by Miss Leta Adams. It is suggested that many members might like to come at 12 and have lunch in the museum cafeteria before the lecture.

Thursday, October 9. THURSDAY EVENING MEETING. Los Angeles County Museum, from 7 to 9. Joint meeting with the Workshop for Nature Leaders. Mrs. Maybelle DeMay will talk on "How to Appreciate Reptiles." There will also be a series of exhibits of nature objects with guides at each table, also demonstrations of nature handicraft. Use the south east corner entrance.

Thursday, October 16. THURSDAY FIELD TRIP. Playa del Rey for the study of marsh and water birds. We will greet many birds that have recently returned from the far north and see others that live with us all year. Take Playa del Rey bus at Subway Terminal, 423 So. Hill Street at 7:45 or 8:35, arriving at Playa del Rey at 8:33 or 9:33. Bird walks start from bus terminal at Playa del Rey. Miss Linnian Blind, Leader.

Thursday, October 23, STUDY CLASS. Plummer Park at 10 A.M. Mr. Scott Lewis will show more of his beautiful pictures, this time to show the effects of earthquakes, including the most recent ones, and will talk on Earthquakes and Man. During the second hour Mr. George Hastings will talk on the Red-shafted Flicker and other native woodpeckers. Take Pacific-Electric--Santa Monica-West Hollywood car to Fuller Ave., walk one block west.

Sunday, October 26. FIELD TRIP. To Irvine Park. For study of Chaparral and woodland birds. Meet at Park entrance at 9 A.M. Bring lunch. Take Highway 10 (Firestone Boulevard) or 101 to Orange, follow signs to Orange and Irvine Park. Leader Miss Dorothy Groner.

THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER-WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

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Regular field trips and the second Sunday of each month, starting from the entrance at 9 A.M. Come and bring your friends. For information call CRestview 6-1990