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Western Tanager



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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 19

January 1953

Number 5

YOU ARE AN AUSPEX

Don't deny it, the fact that you are reading the Tanager proves it. In Ancient Greece an Avis spex or Auspex was a bird viewer. But his watching of birds was not for pleasure or sentiment, but in order to divine the future course of events by observing the flight and actions of birds. Of course if the divinations were favorable, they were auspicious. So we who are interested in watching and studying birds really belong to the clan - Auspex, though the term is not used in this country. And may the events of this New Year be truly auspicious for us as a Society and for each one individually.

BIRD'S CIVILIZATION AND MAN'S

Brooks Atkinson, Drama Critic for the New York Times (and an ardent Auspex) wrote under the title above in the Times Magazine of November 16 and article from which we make a few selections. "Startled by the spectacle of grown people looking through field glasses for birds in trees, the editor of this analytical journal requires an explanation. Why do people, otherwise blameless, inconvenience themselves by searching the beaches and countryside for birds? If they carried guns and shot the birds, no one would give a thought to their sanity. For killing is a recognized sport that testifies to man's prowess and grandeur. Thousands of courageous human beings in the autumn kill ducks, pheasants and grouse, thus earning the admiration of their fellows."

"Since bird watching is a hobby, and since bird watchers are not a single type of person, there is no simple way of explaining their taste. Bird watching is one aspect of the cult of nature. Since we are specimens of nature, human life is soundest and richest if it is lived as much as possible in harmony with nature. The cult of nature, commonest in civilizations that are farthest removed from nature is an instinctive attempt to preserve harmony in living. It is one of a great many ways to keep from going crazy."

"The cult has many forms - hunting and fishing, mountain climbing, camping, sailing, gardening, the study of trees and wild flowers, of insects and rocks. Bird watching is only one of the many. The farther we seem to be getting away from dependence on nature, the greater need we have for nature, since we are a part of it, though less essential to the well-being of nature than the birds and animals that help preserve the balance of nature. We are so versatile and learned that we are throwing nature out of balance all the time. Some day we may be held to account for the ruthlessness with which we have ravaged the world, nearly always for most advanced reasons."

"Every form of nature has its own particular fascination. Birds, for example, comprise a Civilization that is vivid and in many ways inscrutable. Although the birds are no more admirable than the folk of our civilization they are more ecstatic. They can hardly contain the magnetism and joy of being alive."

THE WESTERN Tanager

Published monthly, September-May, by the Los Angeles Audubon Society, Inc. \$1.00 per year, free to all members. Geo. T. Hastings, Editor, 517 Euclid St. Santa Monica. Phone: EXbrook 5-1137 Miss Lotti Fisher, Associate Editor

Los Angeles Audubon Society, Inc.
To promote the study and protection of birds and other wildlife, plants, soil, and water.

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We are happy to welcome the following new members:-

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2238 Sepulveda Blvd., L. A. 64
Mrs. Xenia Erickson,
5615 Harcross Drive, L. A. 43
Mrs. John F. Fraser,
4425-1/2 Moorepark Way, No. Hollywood
Mrs. Richard McGregor,
2115 W. 76th St., L. A. 47
Mrs. Pauline Olsen,
712 W. 46th St., L. A. 37
Mrs. Leigh J. Smith
5162 Sevens Circle, Culver City
Miss Florence E. Wilcox,
2921 Francis Ave., L. A. 5

The California office of the National Audubon Society has sent out the first number of a leaflet, The Codornices, to keep the various California branch societies in touch with each other and with the National Society. This number has a reference to our Audubon House in Plummer Park and to Mrs. Salmon who showed Mr. McCaughey our library and specimens.

FROM A SAINT LOUIS MEMBER

Mr. Arthur J. Bennett moved from Los Angeles last year to St. Louis. A letter from him encloses a copy of the Nature Notes, The Journal of the Webster Grove Nature Study Society, of which he is now a member. In this the main article describes a trip the Bennetts made early in the fall to Florida, sight seeing and, of course, birding. On the trip several birds were added to Mr. Bennett's life list. Near Tallahassee he saw "Five or six trees Christmas candled with over a hundred Wood Ibises." Among the ghostly trees draped with Spanish moss, Limpkins and Water Turkeys were tame enough to be studied without the aid of binoculars." To find the Reddish Egret we had to go after them in a boat. The most impressive sight was of about four hundred Man-O-War Birds, flushed by our approach, weaving endless and intricate patterns in the sky."

Mr. Bennett also reports discovering a Vermillion Flycatcher near St. Louis on Armistice Day, probably the first record of this bird in Missouri.

BIRDS IN THE RAIN

The rain is falling but I hear the chirp of the California and San Diego towhees outside on the patio. The Gambel and Golden-crowned sparrows come seeking food in the conch shell hanging in the elderberry tree and the fat in the suet feeder. The two sing more on rainy days as if to welcome the rain. The Gambel sings "I'm such a happy little bird!" The golden-crowned says "Oh, hear me!" The song sparrow, too, loudly proclaims his joy. The cedar waxwings sit snuggled close against one another on the telephone wires after feast on the pyracantha berries below. The feel of more rain is in the air, but what cares the robin? He sits on top of a pine tree and sings, "The rain is coming, the rain is coming!" And when his predictions come true and the rain is over and the sun about to set, the robins, their breasts on fire from the reflected rays, fly joyously across the sky, settling in the trees, as they chuckle with happiness.

Ruby Curry.

WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY

Grace Harvard Phillips

On the FIELD TRIP of November 20 to the San Gabriel River Wildlife Sanctuary forty one members and friends enjoyed a beautifully clear, warm day. Fresh snow on the mountains made a beautiful background to the sanctuary.

As Mrs. Stultz had unfortunately broken her ankle, Mrs. Enid Michael led the bird walk through trees and vines in autumn colors: blackberry bushes, wild tobacco, and a lot of groundsel, "baccharis", seeming to be in full bloom, glistening like silver with the pappus parachutes of the seeds. Abundant wild grapes for the birds and for those of us who sneaked a taste, remembering our childhood.

At the lunch table Mrs. Michael gave an interesting talk on the birds we had seen, 24 species identified on the walk, with comments on specimens of fruiting shrubs and mushrooms.

Mrs. M. Gertrude Woods introduced the new staff member, Mrs. Alice Kenninger.

STUDY CLASS of Friday, November 28. The group was well rewarded for coming out on the day after Thanksgiving by Mr. W. Scott Lewis as he talked on minerals, showing excellent and colorful slides, all illuminated by the violet-ray light of his manner of presenting the subject.

Mrs. Thomas Shearer, due to her husband's illness was unable to be with us to give the splendid talk on OWLS she had prepared, but sent the typed sheets to Mrs. Salmon, who read them, adding facts and anecdotes of her own.

Several members spoke of the Snowy Owl Mrs. Shearer had described, and of having seen it in Canada or in Northern parts of the Middle Western States in winter.

SUNDAY FIELD TRIP of November 23 to Playa del Rey. The trip was led by Miss Dorothy Groner. The day was sunny, having cleared after threatening clouds, but the tide was high and birds were not feeding along the beach in the usual numbers. However 39 birds were identified. The main attraction of the day was the Horned Grebe, first noticed by Mr. Julian.

The CHRISTMAS PARTY at Plummer Park on December 11 was attended by some seventy members. The hall was decorated with the traditional red and green, pointed up with the silvery Desert Holly and candles. Mrs. Stultz from the Sanctuary came on crutches and with her assistants displayed many books and gifts for sale on the tables at the back of the hall, solving Christmas gift problems for many. The Audubon Scrap Books were open and looking over past events was interesting.

Opening the program, Miss Pope, our efficient vice-president, spoke of the fitness of a Society devoted to ideals of Conservation celebrating the birthday of the "Saviour of the World"; and of Christ as an out-door teacher, who used things of nature to illustrate His parables and lessons. She paid tribute to friends and workers in the Society, and expressed the hope and belief that new comers to the Society would carry on the work in the same splendid way.

Miss Sarah Ellen Barnes played some charming selections from Schubert. Mrs. George Hansen gave Christmas readings: - Billy Peeble's Christmas, An Old Folks' Christmas, and for encore, Composition on a Goose by a Young Boy.

Our President, Mrs. Demay, arrived and greeted the group. Miss Barnes then played Christmas carols and songs and Miss Elsa Schwartz led the group in singing some of the songs. A new member, Mrs. Xenia Erickson, sang verses of Silent Night while the rest hummed the melody.

After the program tea and coffee were served by four former presidents of the Society, Mesdames Lewis and Hood, Stultz and Salmon, at tables beautifully decorated by Mrs. McCune, while Mrs. Wait dispensed goodies from the kitchen.

EVENING PARTY of December 12. Before reaching Miss Walther's home in San Fernando the large lighted Deodar in her yard could be seen. About twenty members enjoyed nature games, then divided into sides for a guessing game on birds. After partaking of doughnuts, coffee and cider, carols were sung, and with regret the members left for the drive home.

FROM THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Nature is always calling: in the night, in the midst of snow or rain, there is always something that makes you overlook bad weather and forge ahead into the excitement of Nature. A group of teachers, students and other interested people headed out on the monthly field trip even though the day was cold and foggy.

A great deal of the wildlife was inactive, but the exceptions found pleased everyone. A flock of Bush Tits actively hopped from bush to bush seeking out the dormant insects. A great number of fruit eating birds were seen, such as Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Thrashers and Cedar Waxwings.

Walking down the lanes of the Sanctuary one could hardly help but notice the great abundance of wild grapes that seemed to be everywhere. Berries of all kinds seemed to be abundant.

After a while the sun came out and with it came most of the insect eating birds, -Black Phoebe, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher and Audubon Warblers seemed very numerous.

The trip was rounded out by going down to the river which now has, in some places, as much as 6 feet of water and is running very rapidly.

The Sanctuary can now boast of having most of the winter birds in abundance, except Robins which have not shown up yet. This winter seems to promise a wonderful year for the wildlife.

Patrick Gould

In all excursions to the woods or to the shore, the student of ornithology has an advantage over his companions. He has one more resource, one more avenue of delight. He indeed kills two birds with one stone and sometimes three. If others wander, he can never go out of his way.

John Burroughs

Sing you a song in the garden of life
If only you gather a thistle.
Sing you a song as you travel along,
And-if you can't sing - just whistle.

F. Stanton

* * * * *

OBSERVATIONS

GREBES: Horned, and hundreds of Western, near Ballona Creek, Dec. 7 (Hastings)
HERONS: Anthony's Green, Hansen Dam, Dec. 7 (Mrs. Russell Wilson)

GEESE, DUCKS: Black Brant, Playa del Rey, Dec. 14 (Dorothy and Harold Baxter)
Greater Scaup, watched for some time and the green head reflections obvious in bright sunlight; Bufflehead, 2 females; American Golden-eye, 1 male, 2 females, Bolsa Chica, Dec. 14 (Baxters): 13 Buffle-heads, 12 Canvas-backs, 6 Ring-necks, 1 Mallard, many pintails and Ruddys, Hansen Dam, Dec. 7 (Mrs. Wilson)

RAIL: An Adult Clapper Rail in swamp by Coast Highway at Seal Beach, Dec. 14, (Baxters)

GULL: A Glaucous Gull in the pond at Playa del Rey, watched for some time, seen very clearly, Nov. 29 (Nurtha Dunn)

At Hansen Dam on Dec. 7 besides the Ducks, Mrs. Wilson reports a Belted Kingfisher, 3 Bewick's Wrens, 1 Yellowthroat, 2 Western Gnatcatchers, 1 Ashthroated Flycatcher, 1 Shrike, many Audubon Warblers, Gambel's Sparrows and House Finches and one Marsh Hawk.

At the Sanctuary in El Monte on Dec. 11, Patrick Gould reports 1 Black-throated Gray and 2 Orange-crowned Warblers, 1 Golden-crowned Sparrow and a flock of over 500 Cedar Waxwings.

A NEW SCHOOL OF CONSERVATION

A School of Conservation & Natural Science has been planned in connection with the School of Music and Arts at Idyllwild. Its purpose is primarily to train teachers in Conservation and Nature Study, but it will be open to all who are interested in nature.

There will be five weeks in which workshops in Nature Study, Living in the Open and the Teaching of Conservation will be featured. Field trips to the Primitive Area nearby, the largest wilderness area left in Southern California, comprising 50,000 acres of the higher back country, will be part of the course. The school will be on the 250 acre campus at Idyllwild. Further information can be secured from Mr. Max T. Krone, Idyllwild Arts Foundation, Idyllwild.

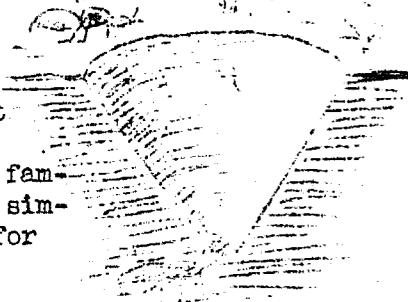
THE ANT LION
Bill Hawkins



Undoubtedly many of you have seen the cone-shaped pits of the ant lion larvae, very probably seeing them you have not recognized them for what they were. These little pits are by far one of the most ingenious traps to be found in nature.

These pits, usually in sandy soil, are wide at the top and slowly taper down to a point at the bottom, where a pair of formidable jaws awaits the unlucky ant that, passing by, slips down the steep sides of the trap. These jaws are equipped with a sucking device, which when imbedded in the body of an ant suck the animal dry of its body juices.

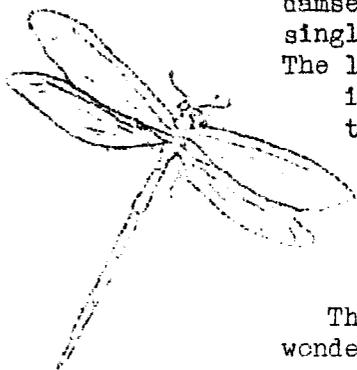
After the ant lion is finished with its victim it throws the empty body out of the pit with a flip of its head. When an ant steps over the edge of the pit it is assisted in its downfall by a shower of sand thrown up by the hidden "lion". Many species of this family as they do not make pits, but simply bury themselves up to the head in soil and wait for an insect to come within reach.



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The pupa stage is passed underground in a globe-lar-shaped silken cocoon which the larva spins.

The adults are nocturnal, but sometimes may be attracted to a light where they may be observed closely. They look very much like, and are sometimes mistaken for damselflies. The eggs are laid on the surface of the ground singly or in pairs.



The larva may be collected by digging under the pit and placing the sand in a box. If the larva was taken up with the sand it will be seen moving about, trying to bury itself. About half an inch long, or slightly smaller it will soon make a pit by pushing around in a circle, backward, and throwing out the sand with flips of its head. But it is so much the color of sand that unless it is moving you may not see it.

This interesting creature is only one of the myriad of wonders of the insect world to be discovered by the seeing eye and inquisitive mind.

OUR JANUARY WEEK-END FIELD TRIP
Robery Pyle

On this trip to the Salton Sea area we will see thousands of White-fronted, Canada and Snow Geese, tens of thousands of Ducks of at least ten species, White Pelicans, Glossy Ibis, Roadrunners, Burrowing Owls, Gila and Ladderback Woodpeckers, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Crissal Thrasher, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Albert Towhee, as well as shorebirds.

Saturday afternoon will be spent in the area west of Calipatria in the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, finishing near the Administration Headquarters. (Turn north from U.S. Highway 99 at Vendels gas station, about six miles west of Westmoreland, and continue to end of dirt road).

Sunday morning will be spent at Imperial State Refuge. Go south from Calipatria about 2-1/2 miles to a rather obscure Refuge sign on the left (east) side of the road. Turn left on dirt road to Headquarters building.

Those who have opportunity to do so are urged to visit Cecelia Foulkes, a member of our Society, in back of the hospital at Mecca. This is the only place away from the Colorado River where the Vermillion Flycatcher is regularly found. For details of the trip see the Calendar page.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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Vice President ... Miss Bessie Pope Secretary ... Miss Elizabeth Patterson
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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY, 1953

Visitors will be welcome at all Meetings and Field Trips

Thursday, January 8. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING. Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, 1:30. Mrs. Ruth McCune, our Conservation Chairman, will give a talk on Conservation. This will be followed by the splendid documentary film "THE RIVER," the great Mississippi and its tributaries, showing some of the effects of man's careless interference, resulting in erosion and floods.

Members who can will meet in the Museum Cafeteria for lunch at 12, then spend the time before the meeting in informal study in the Bird Hall.

Thursday, January 8. EVENING PROGRAM MEETING. A joint meeting with the Nature Study Workshop in the Museum basement; enter by door at the southeast corner. Mrs. Mary V. Hod will give an illustrated talk "Nature's Camouflage." There will be special exhibits and demonstrations. Meet at 7 to examine the exhibits, lecture will start at 7:30.

Thursday, January 15. FIELD TRIP to Temescal Canyon for birds and trees. Drive out Sunset Boulevard to a short distance beyond Pacific Palisades, turn right at sign Presbyterian Conference Grounds, where leader will meet party. By bus- take the Pacific Palisades bus at the Pacific Electric Terminal, between 4th and 5th on Olive Street, Los Angeles at 8:26 or 8:47 to end of line, walk down hill one block to Conference Grounds, fare 58¢ one way. Or take the bus to Santa Monica and at 4th Street and Santa Monica Boulevard take the Pacific Palisades bus at 9:22 or 10:22 to the entrance of the Conference Grounds. Leader, George T. Hastings.

Thursday, January 22. STUDY CLASS. Plummer Park, 10 to 12 A.M. Mr. W. Scott Lewis will give another of his interesting nature talks illustrated with his beautiful kodachrome pictures. The second hour Mrs. Alma Stultz will talk on birds of the Thrush Family and one of our members will whistle imitations of their songs.

Saturday and Sunday, January 24 and 25. WEEK END FIELD TRIP to the Imperial Valley at the south end of the Salton Sea. One of the finest birding areas in southern California. Meet at 1:00 P.M. Saturday in Calipatria, at the main intersection (Main Street and Imperial Ave.) Spend afternoon in the area west of Calipatria. Sunday morning will be spent at Imperial State Refuge. The night can be spent at a new motel just outside Niland or in the motel a block or two east of main intersection in Westmoreland, or the hotel in Brawley. Those leaving late Saturday, spend night in Indio and meet party Sunday morning. Bob Pyle, Leader

SAN GABRIEL RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

664 N. Durfee Ave., El Monte

Phone: FOrrest 0-1872

Regular guided field trips the second Sunday of each month, starting at the entrance at 9 A.M., led by Bill Hawkins and Pat Gould.