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IMPRESSIONS OF A NATURE HOBBYIST

A BIRD SANCTUARY

William L. Lloyd

As a boy and young man I lived in the outskirts of Westfield, New Jersey. A private lane to the house terminated in an oval the shape of a tear-drop. My father decided to turn this into a wild garden and make the whole place a bird sanctuary.

We gathered plants and shrubs and placed them in this oval until we had truly a jungle which provided a fine nesting habitat. We made bird boxes from sections of hollow tree trunks and gourds for house wrens and other small birds. We had feeding trays and suet baskets and other devices to attract the birds.

The birds responded thankfully; we never had less than four nesting house wrens, several robins, catbirds and thrashers. There were orioles, vireos, bluebirds, and a kingbird. A yellow-breasted chat nested in the orchard, a rose-breasted grosbeak and one or more oven birds made nests in the woodland, and song sparrows, a woodcock and other birds raised their families in the meadow.

The hollow tree trunks made permanent homes for a downy woodpecker and a screech owl. A red squirrel lived in the hickory nut tree and a flying squirrel lived nearby. The woodpecker and flying squirrel became quite tame and were very obliging. When we had visitors we would tap on the tree and out would come the woodpecker, run up the trunk, tap a few times and then return home. The flying squirrel would obligingly glide to a nearby tree, climb it and glide back to its hole.

In the spring the early mornings were a riot of song. Then I would pitch my tent in the edge of the woods to get in full the orchestral music. Often my father would come out at daybreak and we would enter the woods to watch the birds as they sang.

It was on the whole a happy feathered community, only occasionally was a visitor unwanted. One time a blue jay decided to nest in one of the elm trees. Knowing their fondness for bird eggs, we watched the effect on the other birds with much concern. Before long several birds left their nest building and looked elsewhere. One catbird left a nest and an egg rather than stay near the jay. After much debate, we decided to destroy the jay's nest, which hint the jay took and departed.

The English sparrows were an arrogant set of bullies which gave us a lot of trouble. They would descend from a neighbor's barnyard, drive our birds from the feeding trays and strip them clean in no time. My patience ended, when upon hearing an uproar one day I found a flock of sparrows tearing to pieces a Phoebe's nest under the eaves of the front porch where the bird had nested for several years. They had killed the young birds by throwing them on the porch floor.

I decided to put a stop to this for all time so I put out a handful of grain and shot into the flock as they fed. It was years before an English sparrow was seen on the place again.

You may be sure the sanctuary attracted many bird lovers. Almost every week-end we had visitors. Among them were Howard Cleaves and Clinton Abbot and his brother Leonard. Mr. Cleaves later became director of the San Diego Museum as did Mr. Abbot at a later time. Another friend was Mr. John Burroughs.

For years we took a Christmas bird census for Bird Lore.

These were pleasures that few boys ever had, pleasures that I only now fully appreciate.

THE WESTERN Tanager

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LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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"To promote the study and protection of birds and other wildlife, plants, soil and water."

Membership

Joint with the National Audubon Society, including subscription to Audubon Magazine:--Regular \$5.00, Sustaining \$10.00
Active \$25.00, Supporting \$50.00.

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I heard a bird sing in the dusk of
December,
A magical thing and sweet to remember,
"We are nearer to Spring than we were in
September."
I heard a bird sing in the dark of
December.
Oliver Herford

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"New year, New life", So goes an old Spanish proverb. Well by now the Christmas tinsel has been packed away and New Year's bells have stopped ringing, and we are awaiting the new life of spring, which is just around the corner.

What about your New Year's resolutions? Did you resolve to let us see more of you in 1954? If you did, please stick to it. We need you.

With the coming of more daylight hours the Out-of-Doors will beckon us more and more. That is just where our field trips enter the picture. New spots and old haunts for your enjoyment every third Thursday and fourth Sunday, as usual.

There is yet another plan in the making which sounds good. There have been requests for a Saturday trip. Naturally this would not replace either of the others, but would be in addition. How about it? Would this enable us to see some of you nice folks who heretofore have not been able to join us? Miss Esther Craig, one of our city teachers and a life Audubon member, has promised to "mother" the plan with your cooperation. So, we are assured of good leadership. So beginning with the first Saturday of March and continuing through April and May we'll try it out. The times and places will be given in the Tanager.

Whether we continue it in the fall depends of course, on the success of the trips this spring. If it appeals to you, please pass the word around.

But, whatever day you choose to be with us, here's to good birding and new friendships in 1954.

Our first article this month is one of the series of IMPRESSIONS OF A NATURE HOBBYIST that Dr. William Lloyd has contributed. We have noted from time to time Dr. Lloyd's classes in nature work for scouts held in Audubon House, his donations to our museum of publications, mounted shells and eggs, and his part in our programs. Dr. Lloyd was largely responsible for the development of the Museum at Cabrillo Beach, was director of it till his retirement a year ago, and donated to it his large collections. We were all shocked to learn of his death from a heart attack on Christmas day. Our society has lost one of its most useful members. We extend our sympathy to Mrs. Lloyd.

A PELICAN NAMED JOE

Don Bleitz

In the spring of 1950 I visited a small pelican colony near a popular fishing area. A group of uninformed fishermen had visited the area, shot several of the old birds and broken up the nests. They believed the pelicans were responsible for the decrease in game fish in the lake. (White Pelicans are classed as predatory birds by our Fish and Game Commission, Ed.) Actually, pelicans are beneficial as they catch small non game fish and thereby conserve the food supply for the others. We saw two young pelicans swimming about the island and later found another one hidden by some large dirt clods. We brought this one home and my friend raised it as a pet. He became completely tame and really enjoyed being with people. He ate a surprising amount of fish and meat scraps. Anyone who visited my friend could go over and reach safely right inside the pouch (held obligingly open) to deposit a fish or any small edible object. His wings were never clipped and he was allowed the run of the ranch but never left.

After a year and a half my friend became tired of providing food and desired Joe to do his own fishing. So one day in early December Joe was taken for a ride in the station wagon (which he always enjoyed) to a small back bay where White Pelicans sometimes rest. When we arrived there were no other pelicans. Joe, after swimming around for half an hour and taking a short flight over the water, came out ready for dinner. Just then a group of eight White Pelicans circled over and alighted on a small mud flat about 200 yards away. We put Joe back in the water and tossed a fish out ahead of him, then we got in the station wagon and drove up the hill where we could watch. After a few minutes Joe came back to look for us. When he found no one he flew around a couple of times and then landed again near shore. He seemed puzzled out after fifteen minutes swam slowly over and joined the others. As it was starting to get dark we left. The next morning all the pelicans had left and that was the last I heard of Joe.

From the Book of Western Birds being written by Don Bleitz, illustrated by the superb color photographs, a few of which were exhibited in the museum in October.

OBSERVATIONS --December 15 - January 15
Ruby Curry

- GREBES:** In Los Angeles Lake Ruby Curry saw on Jan. 4, 2 Pied-billed, 1 Horned, 6 Eared and 1 Western.
- HERONS:** In Fairmount Lake, Dec. 15, Reginald Julian saw 1 Anthony Green Heron, 2 American and 6 Snowy Egrets. On Jan. 4 near Los Angeles Lake, 1 California (Great Blue) Heron and 7 Black-crowned Night Herons, 6 in a Eucalyptus tree, one at edge of lake.
- DUCKS:** Pintails, Green-winged Teal, Baldpate, Shovelers, Red-head, Ring-neck, Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy have been reported by various observers on the ocean off the jetty at Del Rey a huge flock, over 1000, Pintails resting, then flying overhead on Jan. 4 (Southwest Bird Study Club).
- SHORE BIRDS:** Wilson's Snipe, Los Angeles River bed, Dec. 27 (R.C.); 4 Royal Terns, Zuma Beach, Dec. 31 (R. McCune); 15 Surf Birds, Ruddy and Black Turnstones, Del Rey jetty, Jan. 4 (S.W.B.S.)
- SWIFTS:** R. Julian writes "When I went to lunch, Dec. 21, there were over 100 White-throated Swifts flying over the L. A. River just west of Laurel Canyon. I've never seen them here before in my 13 years of observing in the area."
- CHICKADEES:** Chickadee, Titmice, flock of Bushtits, Forest Lawn Dec. 27 (R.C.)
- THRUSHES:** Hermit Thrush, San Diego Wren, 6 Bluebirds, Griffith Park, Jan. 11, (S.W.B.S.Club). Robins, a dozen or more daily, feeding on fallen avocados Santa Monica (Hastings).
- GNATCATCHER, PIPIT:** Western Gnatcatcher, Ave. 41, Dec. 19, (K.Hardt); 35 Pigits Forest Lawn, Dec. 27 (R.C.)
- BLACKBIRD, ORIOLE:** Kay Hardt reports a female Hooded Oriole, Ave. 41, all of Dec. Hundreds of Brewers Blackbirds attracted by food on the ground at the Zoo, filling tree tops when not eating, Jan. 4 (R.C.)
- SPARROWS, FINCHES:** 132 House Finches, 40 Willow, 13 Greenbacked Goldfinches, Riverside Drive area, Dec. 27 (B.E.) Mrs. L. Hoogenboom reports a Thurber's Junco, N. Ave. 22, first she had ever seen of these; Flock of Pine Siskins near picnic tables in Zoo, Jan. 11, (C. Weedmark).

What's Gone On in the Society

Grace H. Phillips

AUDUBON meetings were resumed with the AFTERNOON PROGRAM at the County Museum, January 7. Our Conservation Chairman, Mrs. Ruth McCune, gave a report on the proposed County Recreation Area around Bixby Slough. Plans call for facilities for boating, both with Oars and motors. But this will scarcely encourage birds to stay and nest, and so far no place has been set aside as a bird sanctuary.

Our program was of Big Things, Kenneth Stager's presentation of the Bird of the Month was not the bird itself but the fossil egg of the huge Aepyornis, presented to the museum by its Director, Dr. Jean Delacour. This great bird, 9 to 10 feet in height, was extinct in most places before man appeared on the scene. The egg is displayed in the Bird Hall, with eggs of an ostrich, a hen and a hummingbird for contrast.

Dr. Theodore Downs, Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology, spoke to us briefly of the work done at the La Brea Tar Pits, then led the group to Hancock Hall, where he pointed out reconstructed skeletons of various animals found in the Pits, no longer present on the North American continent, dying or moving out before the advent of man: the mammoth, giant sloth, camel, horse, sabre-tooth cat, and others.

The film shown was "ANIMALS UNLIMITED" Large game animals in Kruger Park in Africa, including elephants, akin to our mammoths taken from the Tar Pits.

REPORT ON BIXBY SLOUGH

Ruth McCune, Chairman of Conservation and Public Relations.

On December 21 last, Mrs. Alma Stultz, Mr. Goodall, and your Conservation Chairman met with Mr. Nichols of the Park Department at Lake Machade (Bixby Slough). Despite accounts in the papers, no provision has been made for a Bird Sanctuary. Apparently, we have not made our wants known as vociferously as other groups. Plans have been made for a golf course, a swimming pool, and separate areas for small boats and power boats, both commercially and privately owned.

This is all very fine, but also many people who would enjoy a "quiet" area that will afford a necessary resting place for wildlife as well as restoration to the spirit.

The only place feasible is at the corner of Figueroa and Pacific Coast Highway, adjacent to the proposed golf course. Letters to the Park Commission, giving reasons for designating such a spot as a Sanctuary and assuring support of a bond issue for such a purpose are needed.

Although there is money on hand now, it will be needed for acquiring privately owned land in the vicinity and development and beautification will have to be raised. Since \$100,000 was granted by the State Wildlife Commission, one wonders why there was not some demand for the Sanctuary made. We hope that something like Lake Merritt may be developed, as great an asset to the area as any other attraction.

OUR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every participant for making the Christmas Count the success that it was. Those especially to whom I am indebted are Miss Bessie Pope (Society President, Miss Elizabeth Patterson (mimeographing), Mr. Jim Clements (publicity), Mr. R. H. Julian (restaurant), Mr. George Hastings (Tanager), Mr. John Cunningham (compiler, Santa Monica Nature Club), Mrs. Alma Stultz (area assistance) and last, but not least, Mr. Robert Pyle who laid most of the foundation for conducting the count. Altogether 122 people (46 of whom met afterwards at the Ontra Cafeteria) took part recording 153 different species among the 42,506 individual birds seen. This compares with last year's total of 151 species among 63,339 birds seen by 116 observers. The drop in total birds is undoubtedly due to the very dry year, one of the driest in Los Angeles' history.

Some of the rarities listed were Swainson's Hawk, Costa's Hummingbird, Warbling Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Slate-colored Junco.

The full report, as well as all others from across the nation, will be published in Audubon Field Notes, the April issue.

Herbert Clarke

CHEEPS AND CHIRPS

Mrs. Grace Sharritt Nelson writes that her membership in the L. A. Audubon Society goes back to 1945. "I was a free-lance writer traveling through California and finally landed in Los Angeles when there was a five-day limit on hotel rooms. When my time expired and I was about to be disgorged onto the street with my typewriter and luggage - that angel, Alma Stultz, came along and winged me into her home. I wrote there, and with great success, beneath her Eucalyptus tree with the singing of the mockingbird at my elbow and the cooing of Chinese doves above me. Ah me, what memories! Today there is a ground blizzard whirling about my window, ravens in the skies, Clark's Crows on the feedingboard, and a herd of elk down in the swamp out of the wintery wind.

I came to Jackson Hole that same year on an assignment from Nature Magazine and Audubon Magazine to cover stories on the largest elk herd in the world. The rest that follows is history now. I married the manager of the elk refuge, Almer P. Nelson, and have been an eskimo ever since.

I am very proud of my association with the friends I have made in the L. A. Audubon. Never have I seen such avid birders as in L. A. (And I am a founder of the Detroit Audubon Society). In fact, last year I was made an Honorary Life Member - which has made me feel very much like the grand dame indeed!

I retain my membership in L. A. because I do so enjoy the Western Tanager - and then it gives me a feeling of still belonging to a group of warm-hearted people. And when the wind blows cold here, and the elk and swans are obliterated by blizzards, I curl up in my big arm chair and like a pupa weave the threads of past memories about me."

Mrs. Salmon tells of a recent experience in Tucson, Arizona. "I heard a bird singing and at first thought it sounded like a glorified linnet. Under the tree I saw a bird about 7-1/2 inches long with a crest and long tail, in color gray and red with much the appearance of a female cardinal. I could not find it described in Hoffmann's Birds of the Pacific States. Later I found that it was a Pyrrhuloxia. That was the thrill of my trip."

AN INVITATION TO ARIZONA

The Cooper Ornithological Society will hold its annual meeting in Tucson on April 22 - 24. A splendid program is being prepared and one of the highlights will be a symposium on warbler migration in desert areas. At this time of year the bird migration is at its height, making Tucson a very interesting place to visit. The scientific sessions are open to the public and Audubon members are especially invited to attend.

OUR LIBRARY

Dr. Loye Miller has sent us "These of the Forest". Mrs. Salmon says she finds the book delightful. Dr. George Sutton has said of it, "I wish I could find words for the way this book has affected me, written with the most profound reverence, it is a beautiful and profound piece of writing."

And will whoever has taken Porter's Birds of the Bible from our library please return it. No record was made of its withdrawal.

DESERT-ALPINE NATURAL AREA ESTABLISHED

A unique area to be known as the White Mountain Natural Area was established on November 13, 1953 by the U.S. Forest Service to preserve and protect in its natural state a rare stand of Bristlecone Pine and associated flora.

The area consists of 2,330 acres of remnant timberline forest. About two-thirds of the area is covered with living and dead pines. A 26-inch tree was determined to be 900 years of age. The largest trees in the area exceed 12 feet in diameter. The White Mountain Natural Area is located northeast of Bishop on the east slope of the White Mountains at elevations from 9,900 to 11,419 feet.

From the Pacific Coast Newsletter.

We congratulate the San Bernardino Audubon Society on the decision of the County Supervisors to permit no grazing in the Warm Creek Wildlife Refuge. We know that the Society is to be credited with the establishment of the Refuge and encouraging the visits of Audubon members and groups of young people, and others interested in wildlife and nature.

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
OFFICERS, 1953-1954

President Miss Bessie Pope, 912 Victoria Avenue, Los Angeles 19.
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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY

Thursday, February 4: AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING, Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park at 1:30. Mr. Kenneth Stager will present, "The Bird of the Month". Mrs. Alma Stultz, Director of the Audubon Center of California, will talk on "ALASKAN VACATIONS". The talk will be illustrated by color pictures by Mr. and Mrs. Ray E. Smith. Mrs. Smith will tell of her experience in flying over an erupting volcano in 1953.

Members and friends are invited to meet for lunch in the museum cafeteria at 12 and then spend the time till the meeting in informal study of museum exhibits.

Thursday, February 11: MEETING OF THE BOARD at the home of the president, 912 Victoria Avenue, at 7:30. Members are welcome at these meetings to see how the work of the society is carried on.

Thursday, February 18: FIELD TRIP, to Cabrillo Beach and the Sloughs along the way. The trip will start at 8:45 at the end of the street-car line on Vermont where automobiles will pick up any who need transportation. Take "E" car to 116th Street. Stops will be made at the various sloughs along the way ending at Cabrillo Beach where lunch will be eaten about 12. A tour of the museum will follow lunch. Cars will plan to be back at the car line about 3:30.

Thursday, February 25: STUDY CLASS at Plummer Park at 10 A.M. First hour - Miss Ruby Curry will show a film, MARSH AND SHORE LIFE. Second hour - will be on BIRD STUDY.

Sunday, February 28: FIELD TRIP to Playa del Rey for the study of shore and water birds. Meet at the south end of the lagoon at 9 A.M. In the afternoon those who wish to will caravan to Malibu Creek for further birding. Bring lunch and friends. Leader, Dorothy Groner.

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

Robert C. Hermes ONCE UPON AN ISLAND.

Saturday, February 6, John Burrough High School, 600 So. McCadden Place, 2 P.M.

Tuesday, February 16, Virgil Junior High School, 152 No. Vermont Avenue, 7:45 P.M.

Every one interested in nature and the out-of-doors, is welcome to these meetings and trips. Admission is free except for the Screen Tours Lectures for which admission may be paid at the door.

AUDUBON CENTER OF CALIFORNIA

664 N. Durfee Ave., El Monte

Phone - Forrest 0-1872

Mrs. O. M. Stultz, Director

Mrs. M. Gertrude Woods, Assistant

Nature Museum open daily 2 - 5, except Sundays and Mondays.

Guided Field Trips second Sunday of each month, at 9 A.M. Led by Pat Gould and Bill Hawkins.